

Thought on Communication Strategy of Chinese Public Service Advertising in New Media Environment

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Abstract

With technical update and media development, new media age comes, which offers unprecedented development opportunity for communication of Chinese public service advertising. Meanwhile, numerous challenges are encountered. Based on analysis of “ice bucket challenge” public service activity which has swept the globe, the author studies public service advertising of Chinese new media, analyzes its development space, ponders over the plights and tries to offer relevant strategies suitable for new media for public service advertising of Chinese new media.

Key words : New media; Public service advertising; Communication strategy

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INTRODUCTION

Since the reform and opening-up policy was implanted 30 years ago, a series of social ethical issues which come with rapid development of China’s economy have received much attention. At present, social development guiding ideology has turned to a new stage of “complementation of economic development

and moral development” from original “economy dominance”. While the society changes quietly, public service advertising receives more and more attention due to its social ethics function. The document of State Administration of Radio, Film and Television explicitly stipulates that the proportion of public service advertising in commercial advertising should not be less than 3%¹. Aiming at unsound management and incentive measures of Chinese public service advertising and low topic quality and production level of public service advertising, relevant provisions on public service advertising are also issued in new Advertising Law executed on September 1, 2015². The Propaganda Department of the Central Committee of the CPC and propaganda departments, discipline inspection commissions or administrations for industry and commerce in various places will organize public service advertising contests. Some scholars propose that public service advertising level of a city, a district and a state is an important mark to measure culture, ethics level and social morality of this city, this district and this state (Li, 2006). But, due to the rapid rise of new media, propagation ecology of public service advertising changes significantly. Original operation mode and

¹ Note. Notice on further publicizing public service advertising (GSGZL No.289) jointly issued by Propaganda Department of the Communist Party of China, Central Civilization Office, State Administration of Industry and Commerce, State Administration of Radio, Film and Television and General Administration of Press and Publication in 2002 stipulates the proportion of public service advertising for every kind of media.

² New Advertising Law (it was passed by the 10th session of the 8th NPC Standing Committee on October 27, 1994; it was modified by the 14th session of the 12th NPC Standing Committee April 24, 2015; it started to be executed on September 1, 2015). Newly revised Advertising Law of the People’s Republic of China was officially implemented on September 1. This is the first time to revise Advertising Law since it was implemented 20 years ago. The modification range is very wide, including specifying the definition of false advertising and typical form, newly adding legal obligations and responsibilities of advertising spokespersons and intensifying supervision of advertising release by mass communication media.

propagation effect are doubted. How to carry out effective communication under the new media environment and achieve social ethics function of public service advertising becomes an important topic.

1. THOUGHT ON “ICE BUCKET CHALLENGE”: PUBLIC SERVICE ADVERTISING COMMUNICATION CHANGE IN NEW MEDIA PERIOD

Public service advertising refers to “advertising serving for the public”. It is issued by mass communication and aims to enhance public understanding of prominent problems, influence their views and attitudes to such problems, and alter their behaviors and practices so as to promote the solution of social problems (Gao, 2001). As a kind of public service information reflecting social responsibility, the functions of public service advertising in the harmonious society have been recognized, such as driving spiritual civilization construction, communicating mainstream value, influencing moral idea, outlook on life, values and world outlook, and restraining bad mood of society.

Benefiting from mobile terminal development and internet popularization, public service advertising communication with the help of digital technology has played an important role in new media environment. In new media ecology, information communication of public service advertising presents a new mode and effects. In 2014, “ice bucket challenge” public service activity which has swept the globe expanded in social media. Famous people in political circles, giants in scientific and technological circles and celebrities participated in the activity one after another. The challenge among famous persons rapidly expanded to media and enterprises. More and more people participated in it. They applied mobile phone video, media text, social network website and microblog etc. to mobilize. As a result, “ice bucket challenge” game makes a strange disease “ALS amyotrophic lateral sclerosis” well known by the public in the world. According to the statistics, 307,598 new donators were joined American ALS Association due to “ice bucket challenge” from July 29 to August 18, and USD 15.60 million was brought for the association, far exceeding USD 1.8 million in the last year. Chinese charity organization received RMB 2,679,178 yuan within 5 days, exceeding year-round social donation in the last year. Public service advertising and public service activities present thriving vitality and embody completely different path and mode with traditional public service advertising.

1.1 All-People Property of Communication Subject

In the past, communication subjects of public service advertising were generally government sectors,

enterprises and organizations, and the communication mode was mostly one-to-more at a macro level. Such top-bottom public service revelry that all people participate in expanded to Lei Jun, giants in Chinese high-tech field and Chinese entertainment circle from giants in high-tech field. Later, People’s Daily and other media reported it in succession, spread and shared it in a challenging form and by social celebrities in new media. As more and more celebrities participated in it, fans clubs and vast net friends were stimulated to take active part in it. In social media, all receive information and communicate information, and the topic of all-people participation is created. Therefore, such public service spreads globally like virus and forms a trend.

1.2 Initiative of Communication Will

New media gives media users more rights and freedom. Hence, information receivers may abandon the contents with low sense of participation and low informant value. On the other hand, important information with strong enjoyment and sense of participation can change the state of passive reception of information and makes information receivers become information communicators in a moment. In the communication process of “ice bucket challenge”, public service information is supplemented by simple game design to enhance information interestingness and interaction. The appointed challengers receive the challenge and launch a challenge to others. Fans call their idols to wet. All behavioral outcomes become information content communicated actively due to mental attitudes of information receivers. Meanwhile, in the communication process of all-people carnival, the purpose of paying attention to ALS patients and donating for them is reached.

1.3 Fragment Property of Communication Mode

Fragmentized communication of new media is reflected in two levels: the first level is information communication fragmentation which refers to information source diversification, observation angle decentralization, scattered property of informative text and incompleteness of information elements. The second level is fragmentation of opinion information communication. In this sense, fragment not only refers to the scattered property, but also refers to opinion the scattered property and division property. Social opinion conformance reflected in the past media is greatly weakened in the new media platform. Fragmentized communication mode makes all-people participation and all-people communication possible and greatly enhances communication speed and effect of public service advertising.

1.4 Richness of Communication Signs

Compared with single carriers and media signs of traditional media, new media may take technology as the guarantee, regard originality as the foundation and

utilize rich media signs to integrate all kinds of media for accurate communications. In the case of “ice bucket”, there are pictures, videos, texts and FLASH, so it is suitable for different media carriers. Meanwhile, these give the audiences 3D information sign stimulus and gain good communication effect.

It can be seen from the case of “ice bucket challenge” that, new media age has come, which offers new possibility for public service advertising information communication. Compared with traditional communication mode, all-people communication, active participation in communication and information fragmentation communication mode and rich communication signs bring more effective communication effect. In China, powerful communication efficiency of new media has been valued. Besides, new opportunity and challenge are brought.

2. COEXISTENCE OF OPPORTUNITY AND CHALLENGE: CURRENT SITUATIONS AND PROBLEMS OF PUBLIC SERVICE ADVERTISING COMMUNICATION IN CHINA’S NEW MEDIA PERIOD

In China, new media becomes increasingly mature, and moves to the center from the edge with technological development. In addition, new media blend in public life at an alarming rate. Internet media, mobile phone media and digital media are enriching information society and changing people’s survival mode. Update and development of new media technology continuously reminds people that the approval of new media age cannot be avoided or reversed.

2.1 The Government of China Pays More and More Attention to New Media, Which Offers Development Guarantee of Public Service Advertising Development Via New Media

According to scholars’ researches, China’s new media public service advertising originated in 2000 (Tang, 2012). Since it originated, relevant functional department of the government started to participate in organization and communication of new media public service advertising. In 2001, China Advertising Association organized the first network public service advertising activity together with State Administration for Industry and Commerce and other departments. It is the first time to combine public service cause and network media. Meanwhile, it is also the first creation contest in which public service serves as the theme and network serves as the carrier. Multiple famous network media participate. Sina, Chinese advertisement net and people website are united to form public service advertising alliance. From 2005 to 2011,

Central Civilization Office and Ministry of Information Technology and Telecommunications utilized mobile phone media to carry out public service SMS collection activity which aimed to “advocate civilization and transmit love”. In 2008, China public service advertising net sponsored by Radio and Television Commission of China Advertising Association operated formally. This is the first professional public service advertising web portal in China. It is based on public service advertising and fuses film, television, broadcast, plane, outdoor 3D and cartoon. Since 2008, has been added in “new media competition unit” of nationwide public service advertising contests launched by relevant functional departments of government. It can be said that, since the importance of new media strengthens increasingly, the government of China also pays more and more attention to and invests more new media public service advertising.

In the third session of the 12th NPC held on March 5, 2015, Premier Li Keqiang proposed “to formulate ‘internet + action plan’, drive mobile internet, cloud computing, big data and Internet of Things to combine with modern manufacturing industry, facilitate sound development of e-commerce, industrial internet and internet finance and guide internet enterprises to expand international market” the first time in government work report. Thus, “internet +” rises to a national strategy.

With the help of strategic deployment of the government of China, all walks of life attach importance to new media and construct new media at an unprecedented level. Favorable macro-environment offers macro-environment guarantee for construction and development of new media public service advertising.

2.2 Public Service Advertising Communication Opportunity Under New Media Environment

Benefiting from rapid development of technology, media become diversified gradually, and channels of communication increase. These provide multiple possibilities for development of China’s public service advertising so that public service advertising communication is more valuable and effective.

2.2.1 Expansion of Public Service Advertising Communication Channels

Under the grand background of “internet +”, traditional media utilize internet thinking model for transformation and upgrade as well as fusion with new media, TV station, broadcasting station and newspaper office set up official website, microblog and electronic reading materials one after another so that traditional release platform of public service advertising extends.

Meanwhile, network media develops continuously. Various terminals such as smartphone, computer and ipad popularize. Residential block TV, vehicle-mounted mobile TV, touch screen and interactive machine appears. Hence, media environment in China changes greatly, ranging

from propagation path to propagation form and from propagation thinking to propagation content. All these embody the influence of internet thinking. Besides, the richness and development of these media offer diversified channels for all-round communication of public service advertising.

2.2.2 Innovation of Manifestation Patterns of Public Service Advertising

As carrier terminals of public service advertising becomes rich, manifestation patterns of public service advertising emerge in endlessly, including pictures and videos in traditional media, FLASH on network, H5 on mobile phone media, activity participation in social media and greetings during waiting for the elevator. By use of multimedia technology, animation, voice, text and video are blended in public service advertising. In addition, interactive property of new media may be utilized to confuse information communicators, and subject identity of information communicators and activity participants. Virus-type communication mode becomes public service advertising communication. By depending on development of new technology such as 3D printing and projection, AR, CG technology, touch screen, image capture, image synthesis and telecommunication technology, public service advertising presents rich and colorful manifestation patterns with good transmissibility through certain creativity performance.

2.2.3 Promotion of Public Service Advertising Communication Effect

Firstly, for communication coverage rate of new media public service advertising, according to the 36th Statistical Report of Development Status of China Internet issued by CNNIC, as of June 2015, the scale of Chinese netizens reached 668 million; internet penetration rate was 48.8%; the scale of mobile phone netizens reached 594 million³. The data are sufficient to verify new media has become a major channel for people to receive life information. New media could basically cover mainstream population and reach high influence.

Secondly, at technology level, new media has solved big data classification and analysis technically. New media can accurately push information according to different standards. New media public service advertising can position target audiences, choose specific media for accurate communication and reach excellent communication effect.

Thirdly, 3D information communication network is established on the basis of fully investigating behavioral habit and reception psychology of information receivers. With the help of rich manifestation patterns and strong interaction of new media public service advertising, aesthetic demand and amusement enjoyment of media

audiences not only ensure participation of information audiences, but also guarantee contact probability of information audiences. Some call such mode of receiving information “mode of moistening things silently”. Such mode will not make people generate disgust and can reach good information receiving effect.

2.3 Problems of Public Service Advertising Communication Under New Media Environment

With the changes in medium ecology, rich media form injects new power for development of public service advertising and offers a new base. Although China’s new media public service advertising becomes increasingly rich and develops, certain realistic problems will exist.

Firstly, gap between attention and fund input of functional departments of government. Just as mentioned above, although the government of China has attached sufficient attention to changes in media communication ecology and environment, guided ad supported originality, production and release of China’s public service advertising, it cannot provide sufficient guarantee for funding input. According to statistical data, annual input in public service advertising accounts for only about 3% in the whole advertising market. This forms a strong gap with government’s attention and importance of public service advertising.

Secondly, media need to enhance consciousness of responsibility. As the product of “theory of social responsibility of media”, public service advertising plays an important role in advocating mainstream value and promoting public awareness (Wang, 2010). Therefore, public service advertising should be valued by the whole society and especially media. But in realistic world, because media bears survival pressure in market competition process, it moves ahead under the restrictions of social benefit and economic benefit. In particular, new media is weaker than traditional media in terms of the awareness of social responsibility, because it has no cultural foundation in rapid development process.

Thirdly, ecological characteristic of media is not fully reflected during creative design. Communication ecology has altered dye to the appearance of new media. “Newness” in new media is not reflected in the form, but also lies in communication mode and interaction different from traditional media as well as thinking mode and operation mode. However, for existing new media public service advertising, most still regards new media as a release platform, and ignores “newness” characteristic. Internet thinking is not well applied for originality and production, and the communication characteristic is not fully utilized, either. In addition, for current Chinese media ecology, fusion and complementation of old and new media are a kind of formal state. From the perspective of creative design, it is required to consider how to integrate features and advantages of different media to reach efficient communication effect. In this

³ Note. Retrieved from http://www.cac.gov.cn/2015-07/23/c_1116018119.htm

regard, Chinese public service advertising still lacks originality and production.

Fourthly, there is short of new media advertising professionals. At present, for originality and production of public service advertising, professionals who understand public service advertising originality and proficiently master new media technology are needed to make relevant elements of new media combined with communication, aesthetics and art elements in creative design of traditional advertising. But in realistic talent market. Meanwhile, in talent training scheme of colleges and relevant training organizations, content presentation of the two parts is disconnected. Thus, such talents are extremely scarce.

3. SEEKING BREAKTHROUGHS: THOUGHT ON PUBLIC SERVICE ADVERTISING COMMUNICATION STRATEGY IN NEW MEDIA PERIOD

3.1 Multiple Parties Cooperate to Guarantee Favorable Growth and Communication Macro-Environment for China's Public Service Advertising

It is known from comparison with the regions with developed public service advertising in the world such as America and Japan, the development duration of China's public service advertising is not long, and perfect systems and norms are not formed. The interactions among the system, enterprises, media and non-profit organizations are weak. Public service advertising campaign in China has top-bottom administrative orientation color. Single fund input and the lack of funding input are prominent.

As social democracy develops and people's livelihood awareness strengthens, such publicity means of "megaphone type" has fallen behind. The megaphone, media, education institutions and social families should participate and support extensively. Based on fully respecting audiences' reception psychology, it is required to focus on social service content and establish social consensus so as to cultivate public service culture. Only when the whole society fully forms public service consensus can be good macro-environment for growth and communication of China's public service advertising form.

3.2 Construct Market Operation Mechanism and Enhance Fund Input Channels for Public Service Advertising

At present, single fund input channel and fund shortage are important factors restricting development of public service advertising. In the face of limited government investment, market operation mechanism may be established to give full play to the advantage of non-government public service organizations, such as bidding publicly, opening up investment channels, carrying out

public service marketing and transforming economic benefit.

3.3 Enhance Responsibility Consciousness of New Media, Integrate Media of Different Communication Forms and Construct All-Around Communication Paths for China's Public Service Advertising

As an organization which should bear social responsibility, media should shoulder the due responsibility and obligation in public service advertising communication. Only when media own the consensus on media responsibility can integrate communication network be achieved.

The addition of new media alters communication pattern and ecology of China's public service advertising. Mew media emerge in endlessly. Traditional media still own powerful strength in communication channel. "Integration" becomes the most popular world and the most effective means under existing media pattern. Tradition media (such as TV and newspaper), new media (such as network and mobile phone) and alternative media (such as advertising board and DM) have their respective advantages. They may be integrated for all-around communication path of public service advertising and to form 3D communication network. Integrated public service advertising communication can reach the communication effect of "1+1>2".

3.4 Master Features and Communication Rules of Various New and Old Media and Create Public Service Advertising Contents Suitable for New Media Communication Ecology

For current Chinese media pattern, there are many different kinds of media, and the number is amazing. They have formed a living state of mutual competition and complementation. All kinds of media firm respective advantages and features in competitions. Especially after new media join, the operation mode and thinking mode present the features widely different from traditional media. How to utilize widely different and coverage of traditional media to create public influence of advertising; how to utilize interaction and accuracy of new media to trigger transmissibility of new media; how to complement advantages of new and old media to jointly innovate for advertising form and content... These questions must be considered in current media pattern. Mastering complement each other's advantages and features of various media and creating public service advertising and form suitable for new media communication ecology will become key evaluation indexes to judge the success of communication.

3.5 Change Original Talent Training Mode and Explore Talent Training Mechanism and Approach Suitable for New Media Ecology

In present information age, talents are one of the scarcest resources. The retention and leaving of first-class talents

mean the prosperity and decline of an industry. On the one hand, we are so glad to see many originality talents spring up in the development process of public service advertising and play an important role in this field. On the other hand, talent shortage is caused by information asymmetry. To solve this problem, each party should make joint efforts, construct advertising discipline, reconstruct educational concept and integrate advertising education resource on the basis of healthy and sustainable development of advertising education. Meanwhile, sufficient preparation should be made to welcome new changes in the industry and new trend of media development.

CONCLUSION

The change in medium ecology offers more capacious development space for new media public service advertising, but huge adjustment space exists in the communication environment, subject, approach, form and content. To better adapt changes in the media environment and boost originality level and communication effect of China's new media advertising, the author deeply thinks macro-environment creation, communication approach construction, communication content production and communication talent talents and provides corresponding strategies. (a) Macro-environment creation is the precondition for development of new media public service advertising. Only when the government, media, educational institutions and social families cooperate can be favorable macro-environment for public service

advertising communication created; (b) introduce market operation mechanism and solve fund input problem of public service advertising; (c) integrate relevant media and make efforts to construct 3D communication approach; (d) features and thinking mode of new media are different from traditional media. This will certainly change originality thought of new media public service advertising and generate communication content of new media; (e) talent training is the development key of new media public service advertising, so it is necessary to explore talent training mode adapting new ecology.

When China regards "internet +" as the basic strategy of national development, China's new media development prospect is promising. The exploration of China's new media public service advertising is in progress. The author hopes as the research goes deep and makes progress, China's public service advertising can better give play to social benefit and make greater contributions to spiritual civilization construction and harmonious development of China.

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