

Television guests as interlocutors: an analytical study of value systems and public image

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Abstract. A vital content analysis component is investigating the "persona" of the people featured in portrait interviews. The people in these interviews are usually well-known and respected individuals with a clear public persona. These values are a significant focus for viewers and have contributed significantly to their public recognition. In portrait interviews, hosts blend pre-recorded segments, live dialogue, and archival clips to reveal the guest's true character. Drawing on this approach, our study focuses on the "distinguished Mongolian individual," examining how their journey is revealed through the interviewer's thoughtful questions and storytelling. Against this backdrop, our primary subject is the "distinguished Mongolian individual," whose life story emerges through the interviewer's craft. By comparing portrait interviews broadcast in Mongolia and Inner Mongolia, this research examines three interrelated dimensions: how the guest's persona is co-constructed on screen, how deeply held values are articulated, and the pivotal influence of the journalist's questioning techniques. Our analysis reveals that while all featured guests share certain traits, each possesses unique self-presentation facets. Crucially, these qualities surface most vividly when hosts employ well-planned, value-oriented questions delivered with professional finesse. This study reveals the shared themes and individual nuances of these distinguished individuals, emphasizing the role of the interviewer's mastery and commitment in revealing those characteristics. The findings demonstrate that the personas of these "distinguished individuals" exhibit both shared and unique characteristics, which are effectively elicited through strategically structured and professionally executed journalistic questioning.

Keywords: portrait interview, guest interviewer, distinguished individuals, persona, journalistic questioning, professional competence

1. Introduction

To portray people or social groups in a way that reflects their authentic identity, radio and television shows are designed to construct and convey a multifaceted representation of them.

The host reveals essential facets of the interviewee's worldview, social position, value system, personal history, successes, failures, and insights gained from lived experience through carefully planned and contextually sensitive questioning.

These programs create a complex public image by combining psychological and factual elements to accomplish their representational and communication objectives.

In recent years, Mongolia's media landscape has seen the rise of several notable portrait interview shows, which suggests a growing cultural and journalistic interest in the lives and values of celebrities. In Inner Mongolia, comparable efforts have been implemented with similar results in a different political and cultural setting. The rise of these media texts presents a significant opportunity for scholarly comparison, especially regarding how journalistic mediation influences and constructs personal beliefs and public identities.

Although Mongolia and Inner Mongolia broadcast portrait interviews featuring prominent Mongolian figures, significant distinctions may arise due to their divergent socio-political contexts. The ideological, political, and cultural contexts of Inner Mongolia, an autonomous territory of the People's Republic of China, and Mongolia, an independent democratic nation-state, are opposed. Core values and individual identities may be interpreted, represented, and received differently due to these contextual variations. This study posits that such differences substantially influence how values are expressed and negotiated within portrait interview formats.

Scholarly studies that look at how journalistic skill, specifically, the deliberate use of questions and framing techniques, influences how interviewees are portrayed in portrait programs are conspicuously lacking. Furthermore, how these portrayals vary among the various media ecologies of Inner Mongolia and Mongolia has not been examined through a comparative study.

This study aims to close that gap by examining how the "distinguished individual" character is created in portrait interview programs, particularly focusing on the host's journalistic proficiency. The project intends to provide empirical insights into the relationship between media representation, national context, and professional interviewing procedures to further media discourse analysis, comparative journalism, and cultural studies.

1.1. Theoretical framework, methodology, and materials of the study

1.1.1. Theoretical concepts and framework

Journalistic writing is generally categorized into three main types: informative, descriptive/portrait, and analytical. Within this classification, the subject of our research—portrait interviews—falls under the category of descriptive or portrait writing and is further identified as a subtype of interview format, referred to as a free-format interview, which is traditionally known as a portrait interview. Accordingly, this study situates itself within the defining features of "portrait writing." Batbaatar [1] explains that portraiture is divided into two primary forms based on its method and structure: "(A) Interview. As a form of portrait, the interview does not consist of continuous narrative prose but is composed entirely of the questions and answers exchanged between the journalist and the interviewee. (B) Journalistic feature. A feature article is constructed according to journalistic techniques and principles, prioritizes timely information, and is characterized by its abundant use of 'live' quotations that capture people's thoughts and realities on the topic under discussion". This taxonomy provides the theoretical and methodological foundation for our analysis of portrait interviews. Thus, the conversational structure of a portrait interview, with its "question–answer, question–answer" format, serves as the core framework.

However, the format may also accommodate occasional free-form commentary, narrative passages, and enumerations [2]. Therefore, this research will employ portrait interviews to explore the fundamental characteristics of descriptive or portrait writing. In academic literature, portrait writing is typically divided into two types based on its construction methods and stylistic approaches. These distinctions will serve as the theoretical foundation for our analysis, helping to specify the unique attributes of the portrait interview genre within the broader field of journalistic discourse.

Zulkafil [3] characterizes the interview-portrait genre as a relatively recent innovation in Mongolian journalism, having emerged in the early 1990s. He observes: "It aims to reveal the interviewee's inner world through conversational exchange. A person's inner feelings and character are revealed through speech. Therefore, anyone conducting a portrait interview must first be a psychologist".

In unstructured interviews, the optimal choice of source or interviewee is typically "a public figure". Individuals such as artists, athletes, renowned actors, writers, affluent individuals, business leaders, and politicians consistently find themselves in the public and media spotlight, and any minor issue concerning them garners significant attention from their audiences. Notably, all facts and information related to these famous individuals have the potential to captivate the public and transform into journalism. As a result, celebrities and notable figures are invariably at the forefront of journalism, with the media working diligently to make them their primary sources.

Moreover, the hallmark of a portrait interview is the interviewer's ability to probe each dimension of the subject's lived experience—life history, professional background, temperament, and worldview—through guided dialogue that allows the interviewee's own words to shape their portrayal. Thus, it is fitting for the portrait's subject to be someone whose life experiences can serve as a lesson and an example for the audience and readers. Specifically, if the person being interviewed excels over the interviewer in verbal sensitivity and intellectual capacity, they can illuminate the subject's inner essence for the audience.

Finding the interviewee's inner world, their worldview, values, life experiences, and deeply held emotional truths is the goal of a portrait interview. Ultimately, these components highlight the person's fundamental qualities, which form the fundamental principles influencing their public image. The aim of this interview format is only fully realized when it successfully conveys who the subject truly is. In this way, the interview becomes a means of articulating the subject's inner convictions and value-laden identity.

In most media productions, the central figure is a person—an endlessly complex and inexhaustible subject. As such, it is only natural that portrait-like elements often blend into a wide range of television genres [4]. Nonetheless, the portrait interview is the most suitable format for capturing and conveying the depth of an individual's inner world and life experience.

The Persona of the Interviewee in Connection with Core Values. The term "image" has become frequently used in academic and media discourse to describe a person's public persona and values [5].

According to its etymology, the word "image" is derived from English and refers to aspects such as appearance, character, and dignity. Conceptually, it refers to a person's ability to create a lasting impression on others, as perceived through their external appearance, communication style, social behavior, and unique personal attributes [6].

It is generally understood that an individual's accomplishments are often closely linked to their constructed persona [7]. For this reason, public figures—notably politicians and celebrities—devote considerable attention to shaping and managing their public image. Through image construction, a public impression of the individual is formed, serving as a framework through which

society recognizes and relates to them. In short, one's image can be seen as a distinctive representation of how they wish to be perceived and remembered by others.

In the context of portrait interviews, the term interviewee's persona refers to the composite impression formed through their mode of communication, attitudes, beliefs, and values [8]. This persona emerges from the content of their speech, as well as their choice of words, tone, style, and overall communicative expression.

1.1.2. Research methodology

This study employed theoretical research methods, sample surveys, content analysis, text analysis, hermeneutics, interpretation, analytical dissection, synthesis and generalization, observation, and comparative analysis.

1.1.3. Object of study

This study analyzes eight portrait interview episodes, two from each of four television programs. The selection was guided by the working hypothesis that the featured interviewees represent "individuals with distinct personal values." Emphasis was placed on the guests, and programs with comparable formats and stylistic features were deliberately chosen to support coherent analysis.

Four episodes were drawn from two leading television productions in Mongolia: *Mongol Tulgatnii 100 Erkhem* ("The 100 Greats of the Mongol Nation") and *Mongoliin Ündesnii Tsag* ("National Hour of Mongolia"). The programs were selected for their cultural significance and exemplary use of portrait interviews as a narrative form. The study aims to explore and analyze the value systems expressed by the interviewees within these episodes.

The selected episodes are introduced below, along with a brief description of their distinguishing characteristics:

From *Mongol Tulgatnii 100 Erkhem*, produced by Hero Entertainment Studio, the study includes the following two episodes:

- An interview with Tenger, a renowned singer from Inner Mongolia, and
- An interview with Borjigin Gerelt, a prominent scholar from Inner Mongolia.

From *Mongoliin Ündesnii Tsag*, a documentary and dramatized broadcast series, the study includes the following two episodes:

- "Lombiin Erkhembayar: A National Figure Who Grew Up from the Eye of a Needle – Raised in Humble Circumstances"; and
- "Damdiniin Bayarsaikhan: A National Human Rights Advocate for Mongolian Herders" also features his spouse, Oyungerel.

2. Research and analysis findings

This study distinguishes itself from previous investigations on portrait interviews because of the use of three content-centered analytical dimensions to examine:

1. The relationship between the interviewee's identity and their unique personal values;
2. The interviewer's techniques in structuring questions to elicit and elucidate the interviewee's values.

Since portrait interviews frequently feature well-known and esteemed individuals, the conversation usually focuses on their core principles and beliefs. This section uses content analysis to investigate how these values are expressed and highlighted in the interviews (see Table 1).

Using content analysis, we identified and categorized the core values most frequently emphasized by the interviewees in each episode. Values that were repeatedly mentioned and given importance in the guests' responses were coded, and their frequencies were recorded accordingly.

Table 1. Frequency of core values expressed by interviewees

Program Title	<i>Mongol Tulgatnii 100 Erkhem</i>		<i>National Hour of Mongolia</i>		Results
Guest-source	Tenger	Gerelt	Erkhembayar	Bayarsaikhan	Total
Core values					
1. Homeland	3	1	0	0	4
2. Tradition	0	1	1	3	5
3. Native Land	1	0	0	0	1
4. Heritage and Culture	2	0	0	1	3
5. Chinggis Khan	1	3	0	0	4
6. Nation	5	4	0	0	9
7. Responsibility	1	0	2	1	4

Table 1. Continued

8. Parents	1	3	1	1	6
9. Children	2	0	1	2	5
10. Spouse	1	0	0	3	4
11. Native Language	0	5	0	0	5
12. Mongolian Culture	2	2	0	0	4
13. Future Generations	1	1	2	1	5
14. Profession and Education	1	3	3	2	9
15. Talent and Ability	1	0	2	1	4
16. Community	0	1	4	1	6
17. Diligence and Effort	0	2	0	2	4
Total Core Value frequency	22	26	16	18	74
Number of Distinct Values	13	11	8	11	1< 9

Three key characteristics were identified through systematic observation by tabulating the frequency of core values mentioned by the interviewees. These were subsequently formulated, analyzed, and interpreted as follows:

1. The most frequently mentioned and explicitly emphasized core values
2. The collective set of core values articulated by each interviewee during the program
3. The key or dominant value, defined as the interviewee's most cherished and recurring core value

2.1. The relationship between interviewers' values and identities

Based on this perspective, an analysis was conducted to examine the connection between the interviewees' identity-reflecting beliefs and values.

2.1.1. Tenger's identity and core values: A relationship (based on the Mongol Tulgatnii 100 Erkhem television interview)

Tenger is a uniquely gifted singer with an exceptional and distinctive voice, through which he has achieved fame and recognition. The interview segment emphasizes this natural talent and focuses on his musical journey. For example, Jantsannorov remarked, "You are truly a treasure to Mongolia. People may not realize it yet, but they must. Other singers are trained, but you are genuinely a born artist."

Tenger responded: "Yes, I never learned from any teacher. I have just kept singing freely like this and reached where I am today."

While the conversation primarily revolved around his musical talent, Tenger's pride in his "Mongolian identity" subtly emerged throughout the dialogue. This recurring sentiment gradually shaped a new and respectful public image of him as an artist and someone deeply grounded in national values.

One of the most striking moments occurred near the episode's conclusion, when Tenger stated: "Mongolians care for their people. Only a Mongolian will truly love another Mongolian; no one else will."

These excerpts suggest that Tenger embodies the dual identity of a "gifted artist" and a "nationalist," taking pride in his heritage and cultural roots.

2.1.2. Borjigon Gerelt's identity and core values: A relationship (based on the Mongol Tulgatnii 100 Erkhem television interview)

Borjigon Gerelt, a prominent scholar, presents a compelling persona shaped by exceptional academic achievement and has brought pride to Mongolians globally. "I synthesized a molecule for the treatment of HIV/AIDS," Gerelt said in response to a question concerning the subject of his scientific research at the beginning of the conversation. Few people were working on that project at the time. This statement highlights his significant contribution to pharmaceutical chemistry and positions him as a trailblazing figure in the global advancement of science. However, as the interview progressed, Gerelt shifted from discussing science to sharing his background and culture, revealing fundamental principles that shape who he is. He clarified: "I grew up in a rural area. I became an orphan after losing my father when I was ten years old. I was just a country Gerelt and did not have a good memory. However, I learned English in England, Japanese in Japan, earned a doctorate at the University of Tokyo, and returned home to study chemistry. Traditional Mongolian medicine is no less superior than that of others. An individual from a herding nation, irrespective of their intelligence, may struggle to learn swiftly when they enter the learning phase. The underlying concept

is that a person from Mongolian culture should not fit into stereotypes and should continually strive to innovate. That is why we must be proud to be Mongolian."

This narrative reveals a multifaceted identity: Gerelt emerges as a driven and accomplished academic, as well as an individual profoundly devoted to his cultural heritage, with a global perspective that enlightens us all.

2.1.3. Lombiin Erkhembayar's identity and core values: A relationship (based on the Mongoliin Ündesnii Tsag television interview)

Lombiin Erkhembayar is presented as a patriotic figure who, by leading the public, has developed the company *Tumen Shuvuut* and actively contributes to Mongolia's development and progress. In a segment of a televised interview, he was asked, *are you generally working for the people, or for whom and for what do you think you are working?* In response, he stated, "I am doing this work for Mongolia, ourselves, and our shareholders." He went on to elaborate on his social aspirations, noting, "I'm thinking of starting a campaign to engage the public. I want to help kids develop a strong work ethic from a young age."

Later in the conversation, the interviewer acknowledged Erkhembayar's civic contributions, stating, "I consider national producers, employers, and taxpayers patriots. Is that fair, in your opinion? You seem like a patriot to me. Erkhembayar responded, "If you can support yourself and contribute to society, that is patriotism. The work you do for your country—that is your contribution."

2.1.4. Bayarsaikhan 's identity and core values: A relationship (based on the Mongoliin Ündesnii Tsag television interview)

Bayarsaikhan, a two-time national champion herder, is a modern herder who deeply respects his traditions and supports his community while excelling in the agricultural business. At the end of the interview, when asked, "If Bayarsaikhan were to define himself as a Mongolian national in terms of time," he responded, "I would describe myself as a producer and an entrepreneur." In reply to follow-up questions, he stated, "These days, we should concentrate more on the quality of our livestock rather than the quantity. Animal husbandry encompasses a significant portion of the overall business sector. Thus, we can achieve a fulfilling life if we apply our intelligence and seize this opportunity within the industry. Based on his responses, he is a top entrepreneur who adapts well to contemporary demands.

Table 2. In summary, our interviewees possess the following traits

Interviewee /Program/	Primary Image	Image as Reflected by Values
Tenger / Mongol Tulgatnii 100 Erkhem /	Talented Individual	Nationalist Person
Borjigon Gerelt /Mongol Tulgatnii 100 Erkhem /	Hardworking Person	Nationalist Person
Lombiin Erkhembayar /Mongoliin Ündesnii Tsag/	Excellent Leader /Manager/	Patriot
Damdini Bayarsaikhan /Mongoliin Ündesnii Tsag/	Champion Herder	Excellent Businessman

In this way, the interviewees present themselves in their usual image on the program and emerge with a new persona before the audience through the values they communicate (see Table 2).

2.2. An analysis of the host's communicative competence

In this study, we analyzed the host's communicative competence by examining how effectively they could identify and highlight the interviewee's core values and construct their public persona during the interview process.

2.2.1. The communicative craft in the episode featuring Tenger

Table 3. Portrait interview 1: "Mongol Tulgatnii 100 Erkhem", guest: Tenger. Key value identified: national identity

Program Sections	Group of Questions	Questions Concerning the Core Value
In the Introduction	4 questions	2
In the Development	31 questions	2
In the Climax	4 questions	2
In the Conclusion	1 question	1

Out of a total of 40 questions, divided into three groups, asked by the host during the interview, seven questions were designed to reveal the core values (see Table 3).

In the introductory segment of the interview, the host skillfully guided the conversation with a probing question: *"Nowadays, it has become easy to come and go. What feelings do you have when you come to Khalkha (Outer Mongolia)?"* This question inadvertently revealed the interviewee Tenger's key value—nationhood. After that, the host asked a more critical and dialectical question: *"You seem to have a deep affection for the Ar Mongol people. How come that is? You do realize that Ar Mongol has a lot of bad people?"* This line of inquiry further validated and reinforced the guest's fundamental value.

In the development section, the host's questions continued to target the theme of nationhood. For instance, the question *"What if the state of Mongolia ceased to exist today? The country is gone. Then, suppose only Inner Mongolia remained—how would that feel for an Inner Mongolian person?"* was a thought-provoking and deliberately provocative question, intended to challenge the guest's perspective. This bold line of questioning effectively reawakened Tenger's sense of national identity. The following query is, *"What makes the Mongol nation proud among the 55 nationalities?"* The well-crafted question, *"In what ways are we superior?"* kept the audience interested while advancing the conversation about national pride and significance.

In the climax of the interview, the host skillfully connected the key value to the interviewee's creative work by stating: *"Now, the song 'Bi Mongol Khümüün' ('I Am a Mongol Person') has become a declaration of identity for every Mongol."* This approach inspired the interviewee to rearticulate his national consciousness through his response. Additionally, the question *"You composed a song about Chinggis Khaan and boldly sing that the Mongols shall flourish, don't you?"* allowed the guest to further elaborate on his core value of nationhood, inspiring the audience.

In the concluding segment of the interview, the host posed a reflective, dialogic question: *"I feel like our conversation has become just like a meeting between fellow Mongols who have longed to see one another. Would you agree?"* The response that perfectly encapsulated the ideology of nationhood: *"Mongols love their fellow Mongols. Only a Mongol person can truly love another Mongol. No one else will."* Through this exchange, the interview concluded with a powerful reaffirmation of national sentiment, underscoring the mutual longing and emotional connection among the Mongols.

2.2.2. The communicative craft in the episode featuring scholar Borjgin Gerelt

In the latter part of the interview, B. Lkhagvasüren posed two questions concerning temples and the guest's object of spiritual reverence. These questions successfully drew out Borjgin Gerelt's profound veneration for Chinggis Khaan, revealing a core personal value rooted in spiritual and national reverence. Moreover, the host skillfully guided the guest in expressing a broader cultural appeal, urging all Mongols to uphold Chinggis as their supreme spiritual symbol, fostering unity and togetherness among the audience.

Table 4. Portrait interview 2: "Mongol Tulgatnii 100 Erkhem " guest: Borjgin Gerelt, key value identified: Chinggis Khaan

Program Sections	Group of Questions	Questions Concerning the Core Value
In the Introduction	3 questions	0
In the Development	29 questions	0
In the Climax	5 questions	2
In the Conclusion	1 question	0

Out of the 38 inquiries made by the host during the show, two successfully highlighted the guest's core value (see Table 4). At the **climax of the interview**, the host posed a particularly insightful question: *"For me, instead of visiting a temple to carry out rituals, I hold the divine within my heart. Do you perhaps also carry a deity in your heart?"* This question managed to reveal Borjgin Gerelt's most valued figure—Chinggis Khaan, as a source of reverence. Following Gerelt's response, *"I pray to Chinggis..."*, the host inadvertently posed a startled and somewhat dubious follow-up question, confirming that this figure held the highest spiritual and cultural significance for the interviewee and giving the conversation more depth.

2.2.3. The communicative craft in the episode featuring L.Erkhembayar

J. Soyol-Erdene, a journalist, produced the show with great creativity and careful planning. This deliberateness is especially noticeable in the interview's narrative structure and framing. One of the many segments is particularly noteworthy for conveying the visitor's fundamental beliefs.

Table 5. Portrait interview 3: “Mongoliin Ündesnii Tsag” guest: Lombiin Erkhembayar, key value identified: community (collective solidarity)

Program Sections	Group of Questions	Questions Concerning the Core Value
In the Introduction	4 questions	0
In the Development	29 questions	3
In the Climax	4 questions	0
In the Conclusion	8 questions	0

Only three of the host's forty-five questions could reveal the guest's core values (Table 5). *"Do you agree that values are crucial not only for individuals but also for organizations and nations?"* was the direct question posed by the host at the interview's climax. There was a significant response to this question: *"This foundation of values distinguishes humans from animals. Values serve as a steering wheel.* The host went on to pose some thought-provoking queries, like, *"Was it essential for this thriving company to transition into a public, shareholder-driven entity?"* and *"Do you think of yourself as advancing the public interest? What do you think you are working for, and for whom?"* These inquiries demonstrated the Bayarsaikhan's admiration for group power. *"A business can only succeed if it genuinely puts its workers' welfare first,"* the guest retorted. This line of inquiry demonstrated that mutual growth and prosperity are possible if leaders genuinely care about the lives and welfare of their colleagues. These three excellent questions demonstrate the host's skill at guiding the conversation toward the guest's central principle: collective solidarity.

2.2.4. The communicative craft in the episode featuring

Table 6. Damdinii Bayarsaikhan and Oyungerel portrait interview 4: "Mongolyn Ündesnii Tsag", guests: Damdinii Bayarsaikhan and his spouse, Tsegmidiin Oyungerel, key value identified: collective solidarity / teamwork

Program Sections	Group of Questions	Questions Concerning the Core Value
In the Introduction	4 questions	0
In the Development	37 questions	7
In the Climax	4 questions	4
In the Conclusion	5 questions	0

The host posed 50 questions across four interview segments, 11 of which effectively revealed the guest's core value (Table 6).

In the conversation's development phase, the host asked, *"Do you think the assistant herders and workers see themselves merely as employees? What is their attitude? Do they feel like they are just serving a wealthy livestock owner?"* "I consider it my duty to provide them with employment, regular income, and access to the market," he responded, demonstrating the significance of his group and their shared means of subsistence.

The host also asked one of the assistant herders a similar question: *"Khürelbaatar, do you see yourself as an employee working for Bayarsaikhan in the livestock business, or do you feel like your family is simply serving this household? How do you see your role?"* The host's approach to the labor relationship affirms the same fundamental principle—collective solidarity.

This triangulation of responses successfully revealed the guest's guiding principle.

In the course of the interview, the host posed a series of questions that further illuminated the guest's core value of collective solidarity: *"I spoke with your assistant herder, Khürelbaatar. I understand he receives 40% of each brood; you give him the twins, and some herders receive as much as 50%. That is remarkably generous. How does that affect your profitability?"* During cashmere-shearing season, even more people come to work for you, correct? *"Are you also providing a social-welfare policy, or do you see yourself simply as an employer?"*

Through these probing inquiries, the host revealed Bayarsaikhan's commitment to his team's welfare and his practice of sharing both risk and reward. The interview underscored his commitment to supporting and empowering the collective, as well as the profound impact of his actions on his team.

3. Conclusion

As an authoritative figure, the television host creates a public persona that viewers find admirable by projecting their fundamental values through their manner of expression. The values and self-presentation of the interviewees not only reveal who they are to the audience but also bestow upon them the status of 'distinguished individuals' in the eyes of the viewers.

The organization of interview questions into thematic clusters and the effectiveness of the questions in evoking the guest's core values were the primary areas of analysis in this study. The interview's success was attributed to the high degree of interviewing skills possessed by the hosts and journalists. Even spontaneously posed questions at times proved remarkably incisive in uncovering the interviewee's key values.

The principal indicators of interviewing competence were thoughtful grouping and strategic question planning.

The ultimate objectives of televised portrait interviews are to (a) reveal the guest's identity in a novel way and (b) use the guest's stated values to illuminate their beliefs, worldview, and distinctive characteristics.

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