

The Image of Elderly Web Celebrities on the Tiktok

Zhong Yuhuan^{1,a,*}

¹Harbin Institute of Technology, West Straight Street, Harbin, China

a. 1201610101@stu.hit.edu.cn

*corresponding author

Abstract: With the development of China's aging and digitizing, the elderly, as a vulnerable group on the Internet, are gradually marginalized in the wave of new media. However, the emergence of short videos provides a channel for the active communication of the elderly group, and many elderly web celebrities have risen on the Tiktok platform. This study takes the top 30 elderly web celebrities on Tiktok as the research object, and content analysis and literature review are used as the primary research methods. Based on Goffman's theory of drama, the study analyses content on short videos of elderly web celebrities explores the presentation method of their media image and provides strategic support for better guiding the image building and communication of elderly web celebrities. The study found that elderly web celebrity's images on TikTok are rich in types, distinctive features, and positive images. According to the difference between the video content and the positioning of the characters, the research objects are classified into five kinds of characters, namely youthful images, intellectual images, down-to-earth images, humorous images, and other images. At the same time, it was found that the self-image of elderly web celebrities showed specific rules of belonging to the group. In terms of character image setting, plot setting, audience interaction, and so on, it shows the characteristics of the elderly web celebrities. Besides, it is necessary to solve these problems existing in the image building from the aspects of celebrities themselves, platforms, the government, and society, to make the image presentation of elderly web celebrities more valuable.

Keywords: elderly web celebrity, self-presentation, theory of Goffman, Tiktok

1. Introduction

Since the new century, the population aging process has been accelerating, directly leading to a significant increase in the proportion of the elderly population in the world. The spiritual and cultural needs of the elderly should also be taken seriously [1]. At the same time, with the advent of the era of the mobile short video, the population aging process makes the "mass", the applicable object of "mass media", also presents an aging trend. Moreover, due to the relatively low communication threshold, the elderly group abandoned by the Internet can also quickly master the Internet products dominated by short videos. With the development of China's aging and digitizing, the elderly, as a vulnerable group on the Internet, are gradually marginalized in the wave of new media [1]. Meanwhile, some elderly Internet users began to integrate into the digital society with a more positive attitude and enjoy the "digital dividend" brought by innovative media in terms of health, participation, security, and entertainment.

Since 2016, the Chinese short video industry has been in an accelerated evolution period [2]. Many older people present their self-image through short videos and gradually crowd into the web celebrity group, also called silver web Celebrities. Elderly web celebrity refers to elderly 60 and above who express themselves through various short video platforms, thus becoming a new growth point for short video platforms [3]. With the Tiktok platform as the media tool, elderly web celebrity makes the results meet their expectations by presenting themselves and expressing their personalities and meeting the needs of elderly users for self-expression, entertainment, and social interaction. What kind of image of the elderly appears on Tiktok affects the cognition of the elderly to their groups. The elderly web celebrity group on Tiktok presents themselves with a new media image, either out of seeking recognition of self-worth, out of catching up with pop culture, in the pursuit of interpersonal communication or out of the pursuit of economic interests. They present a rich self-image on the platform, which also brings sound effects and reverses the negative media image of them in the traditional media. It encourages them to engage in active media contact, and the types of self-presentation also show a diversified trend. With the rise of the elderly web celebrity market, the elderly group began to appear in the media reports as a positive, healthy, and optimistic new image. In this way, they broke the previous prejudice, strengthened social identity, and aroused the public's attention to the elderly group's life state, inter-generational communication, and other aspects.

At the same time, the older people are no longer presented to the public as "silent people". Elderly web celebrities exercise their right of speech on social platforms to safeguard group interests and highlight group values. The elderly web celebrity group, which is constantly emerging on Tiktok and other short videos, shows multiple images of the elderly, increasing their confidence of the elderly in integrating into the digital society and changing the traditional cognition of the elderly to the elderly. It helps the elderly group to construct and export their values positively and promotes the construction of a positive aging society. Therefore, as an emerging web celebrity group, elderly web celebrity is very necessary for the study of image construction, which may provide reference and help for developing and promoting the communication strategy of elderly web celebrity.

Taking 30 representative elderly web celebrities' accounts on the Tiktok platform as the research object, the study would like to find out why their image construction has been so successful. The study mainly applies literature study and content analysis to analyze the short video works of the research object. Based on the Goffman dramaturgical theory, the study analyzes the content of elderly web celebrity front region and backstage, performance framework, impression management, and content characteristics and differences.

2. Research on Self- Presentation of Elderly Web Celebrity

In combination with the development background of the times and the review of relevant literature, the research studies the opportunity of the appearance of elderly web celebrity, the reasons that affect the choice of self-presentation of elderly web celebrity and analyze the characteristics of self-presentation.

2.1. Five types of an Elderly Web Celebrity

The study analyzed typical images and summarized five types of elderly web celebrities, namely youthful images, intellectual images, down-to-earth images, humorous images, and other images.

2.1.1. Youthful Images

The first image is youthful. Some people in the elderly web celebrity group have not compromised their life because of their age but have continued to make their lives shine by taking advantage of the times. They live delicately and elegantly and show the demeanor of the elderly with the image of a young “tide”. The most prominent characteristics of young “tide” people are those who wear exquisite fashion and pay attention to the details of life. Through the combination of exquisite old-age life and young fashion, the expression of the image of a young “tide” is realized. This kind of self-image expression and the mentality of showing self-image with fashionable outfits has shortened the distance between young people.

2.1.2. Intellectual Images

The second image is intellectual. Some older people show the image of a knowledge-based wise man. Through the short video platform, they convey cultural poetry, national cultural relics, and other knowledge to users in a different way, which not only breaks people’s stereotypes about the elderly but also allows users to know interesting and knowledgeable older people in a new way them. For example, professor Jianye Dai’s explanation of the poems’ content will output strong viewpoints and combine rich cases. This attractive explanation style allows most netizens to enjoy the joy of knowledge from the professor’s sharing [4]. In addition to speaking poetry, he will also share his values on school, employment, and love on the platform, and give young people life advice, so that they can be inspired when they face confusion and confusion.

2.1.3. Down-to-Earth Images

The third image is a down-to-earth, elderly web celebrity in the short video of Tiktok, who presents users with a down-to-earth image, and the “earth” here refers more to a sense of reality and simplicity. The older people shoot videos in the natural state, presenting and shaping the image of amiable older people. The unique way of short video performance allows the elderly to release themselves and also conveys positive, optimistic, and positive energy to users.

2.1.4. Humorous Images

The fourth image is humorous. An elderly web celebrity infects users with a life-like “interesting” image. They share the relationship between the three generations of the elderly in their daily lives and various “interesting” points around them through short videos, such as sharing life experiences or funny jokes, which let users understand the unique way of life. For example, in Grandma Tian’s video, we gained happiness and a sense of existence. Her expressions, words, and deeds reproduce our genuine emotions. She presents the image of a real, funny, warm, and amiable older man. Through the combination of down-to-earth content and interesting characters, it arouses users’ yearning for family and affection.

2.1.5. Others Images

Moreover, it was found that the self-image of elderly web celebrities showed a specific pattern belonging to the group. In terms of character setting, plot setting, and social value, it highlights the characteristics of the silver hair group itself. It was also found that there is a strong relationship between the media image of the elderly web celebrity and the setting of video content. However, due to the difference in account operation mode, work type, and other aspects, the communication effect of self-presentation is significantly different. Elderly web celebrity presents a positive and

healthy elderly population status to some extent, obtains a good communication channel, and breaks the stereotype created by the media.

2.2. Method of Self-Presentation

When presenting themselves, the elderly web celebrities have taken various measures to create a good character image. To control the audience's perception of the character, they carefully set the account name and avatar to manage the audience's first impression of themselves, use life-like scenes to render the breath of life to increase the authenticity of the performance, use background music to enhance the performance, and create sound visualization. Based on the above analysis, we further analyzed the self-image construction of elderly web celebrities from four perspectives.

2.2.1. Front Region and Backstage

Firstly, Goffman's "Self-Presentation in Everyday Life" pointed out that the way people interact in social life can be regarded as a kind of performance to some extent. Moreover, the front region and backstage are used to reveal individuals' self-presentation in social interactions [5]. In this paper, elderly web celebrities are regarded as performers. The front region is the space and time where performers present themselves. The content of the Tiktok platform has a vital performance component. Generally, we can think of the Tiktok homepage as the traditional front region, and the shooting and editing interface is regarded as the traditional backstage. However, the division between the front and backstage of the individual is not so simple. While Tiktok has the characteristics of exposing the backstage, its performers also develop a more profound backstage behavior. The traditional front region and backstage seen by the audience have become a whole front region, while the content that actors will not show on the media exists in the deep backstage. Exposing the traditional backstage has become a highlight of the performer's new personal front region. Exposing backstage usually shows the performer's natural and plain image, narrowing the distance between them and the audience and satisfying some audience's emotional needs.

The emergence of short videos has broken the morphological barriers between the front and back of traditional media, blurred the boundaries between the front and back of the performance, and realized the diversified development of scenes. The videos created by elderly web celebrities are processed and produced in the background scenes of their daily life and family environment. They are presented in front of the netizen and turning them into the front desk. On the one hand, it satisfies the curiosity of netizens and shortens the distance between them and the audience. On the other hand, it also increases the authenticity of the content of the self-presentation of the elderly web celebrities, giving the audience a sense of substitution.

2.2.2. Performance Framework

Secondly, Goffman's dramaturgical theory believes that individuals will also present themselves according to a particular performance framework in daily life. Society could be regarded as a stage on which everyone is an actor, and behind his actions hides the playwright's vision, that is, the vision of the social system. Their image of all performers is carefully packaged, and every performance has the existence of a script [6].

On the Tiktok platform, the performance framework is presented as a script. By recording daily life, selecting background music with their style, and then clip videos, elderly web celebrity finally presents the performance framework expected by society and individuals. Therefore, the content that elderly web celebrity shows is not completely real daily life, but through decorating, editing and refining. Among the research subjects, most of the short videos released by elderly web celebrities are based on the script. Story-based situational shaping also needs to conform to the

development rhythm of the current era, cater to the psychology of a new generation of young audiences, and perform script performances with vivid plots, vivid images, and profound themes.

2.2.3. Impression Management

Thirdly, the interaction between people is not real but an act of disguise. This packaging presentation means that the performer creates an idealized image and realizes the relationship with the audience through artistic packaging. To gain more attention, elderly web celebrities need to package their characters and have their own unique and memorable self-presentation packaging. In the theory of Goffman, it is called impression management, which is the goal-directed behavior of controlling or managing information to influence others' impressions of us [7]. By trying various types of theme creations, people can tap their flash points and form their brand characteristics, then fill in the details to make the characters more fully, to lead the social trend.

2.2.4. Interaction

Fourthly, the audience is an indispensable existence besides the actors. Any performance needs an audience, and the performer needs to interact with the audience and get the audience's approval. In the mobile Internet era, the Tiktok platform has become the main stage for people to "perform". The audience's attention to the elderly web celebrities and the number of likes, comments, and reports of the published videos affect the recommendation of the video and, at the same time, reflect the audience's interest in video content. The higher the video interaction rate, the greater the potential for the popularity of the video [8]. Therefore, most elderly web celebrities will communicate and interact with fans in the comment area, respond to fans' concerns, and hope that users can love their performances.

2.3. New Problems

This new form of content production also creates new problems in the elderly web celebrity self-presentation. For example, excessive entertainment orientation does not harm the realization of the value and significance of communication but also pollutes the network ecological environment, so short video content should grasp the scale. At the same time, there are also some problems, such as rough production, similar content, and vulgar expression [9]. In response to these problems, the researchers believe that platform, media, and society of the elderly web celebrities should work together to solve and make the self-presentation of the elderly web celebrities more valuable. Here present suggestions from three perspectives: the individuals, government, and society.

2.4. Suggestions

Elderly web celebrity, when showing their self-image, elderly web celebrity often uses relevant audio-visual elements in video production to strengthen video innovation, keep up with hot topics, expand connotations, and assume social responsibilities. Furthermore, give full play to their subjective initiative, participate in creating video works, integrate more ideas of self-image construction, expand more video fields, and reduce visual fatigue caused by single scenes and simple places. They should also be open to new things, but not overextended, beyond their cognitive abilities and losing their original image. It is the hope that elderly web celebrities can convey the spirit of the changing times through short videos and present the different lives of the elderly with different experiences. At the same time, the elderly should maintain a positive attitude, keep pace with the times, consciously improve their media literacy and self-efficacy, and actively embrace new technologies.

The government has issued relevant policies to protect the development of elderly internet celebrities. However, it is also necessary to improve the management system for elderly web celebrities, standardize the employment threshold of the elderly web celebrities, and prevent excessive consumption of elderly web celebrities. Set up a supervisory department to strengthen the supervision of the overall video quality of elderly web celebrities and create an originality protection association.

The platform should strengthen the platform monitoring and feedback mechanism, create a sound content dissemination ecology, and guide the elderly web celebrity to spread positive energy. The platform can also hold offline exchange meetings for the elderly web celebrity to encourage them to communicate with each other and stimulate the production and creation of high-quality content. At the same time, it is necessary to provide them with necessary traffic support, encourage them to produce original content, strengthen the review and control of video content, and systematically control the outflow of highly homogeneous content to create an exemplary network environment.

Society, as a whole, should make an influential voice and establish a correct self-consumption concept for the elderly web celebrity and the elderly, leading to positive public opinion. Furthermore, fully protect the development road of elderly web celebrities and support it to create a new situation of sunset life.

3. Conclusions

In the digital age, older adults may experience discomfort and loneliness and become socially alienated. The key to solving the problem lies in acquiring new roles and activities and continuing to socialize. Short videos represented by Tiktok have constructed a new socialization scene for the elderly. The production and dissemination of short video content of elderly web celebrities not only record what they think and do in daily life but also carry the interaction between generations [10]. At the same time, the presentation of the image of the elderly web celebrities crowd in the short video is no longer a single mass media construction but a process in which they actively cooperate with young people to share themselves and reshape their image under the technology. By studying the media images of elderly web celebrities, this paper finds that the content of short videos presented by elderly web celebrities with different images is different due to environmental, personal, and social factors. The author selects representative characters in different content styles as typical cases and analyses five elderly web celebrity images, including youthful, intellectual, down-to-earth, humorous, and other images. In the future, elderly web celebrities should effectively use the platform's characteristics, explore differentiated presentation methods, and focus on personalized expression.

Elderly web celebrity has been integrated into the field of short video creation with a healthy and optimistic attitude towards life. Their rise in the group of web celebrities also reflects the process of the elderly seeking social recognition and realizing personal social value in the ecological evolution of short video, which opens up a new idea for the development of the industry of elderly web celebrities.

This research studies the self-presentation of elderly web celebrities and their dissemination effects on the Tiktok platform and draws rich conclusions, but there are also some problems. In the context of new media, Goffman's self-presentation theory faces enormous challenges. While conducting a targeted analysis of the self-presentation of the silver-haired internet celebrity group on the Tiktok platform, it is worth considering whether it is still appropriate to use pre-media theory to explain the current new media. In other words, whether the self-presentation theory has withstood the test of the Internet environment and what kind of changes it will produce. These are still many questions that need to be explored in future research.

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