

Live stream Shopping from the Perspective of Media Convergence

-The Case of Co-operation between Television Anchors and Star Streamers

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Abstract: With the trend of media convergence and the impact of the epidemic on the economy, live streaming is developing rapidly. On April 6, 2020, CCTV launched a series of “ Thank Your Group Buying for Hubei “ public welfare live streaming. Since then, it has started the multi-IP cooperative live broadcast mode of “television anchor plus star streamer”. This paper takes six cooperative live streaming in the first half of 2020 as the research object, and analyzes their causes, characteristics and communication effects by using media convergence theory. Among the reasons why cooperative live streaming has received much attention and continued to grow, the government has encouraged policies on live streaming, assisting agriculture and the integrated development of media. Their common characteristics are the integrated development of media and e-commerce, multiple IP, multiple platforms and the public welfare theme of assisting agriculture. They have also contributed to the high sales volume, the improvement of the product chain and the win-win of television anchor and star streamer. The study of this paper will provide a feasible path for the deep integration reform of traditional media and new case for the study of media convergence theory.

1. Introduction

The COVID-19 epidemic in 2020 swept all over the world, which pushed countries in the world to hit the pause button of economic growth. When traditionally offline transaction was handicapped, newly media marketing played more roles. CCTV (China Central Television) launched a series of public welfare live streaming named Thank Your Group Buying for Hubei, which was the first appearance of that television anchors and star streamers cooperated in live online shopping. Ever since then it has begun the cooperated model, like television anchor and star streamer, and other multiple IP of cooperated models to which government officials and pop stars are also invited. The product of this kind of public welfare live streaming, usually, is agricultural and sideline products from the village in Hubei whose economy was critically hobbled by COVID-19 epidemic. These streaming not only had the great sale volume, more importantly, through this practice, completed the industry chain in village, promoted to find new market of agricultural products and provided valuable experience for the development in future.

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1 Media Convergence Theory

In a 1979 speech, Negroponte proposed the concept of “intersection of three circles,” referring to three fast-growing industries at the time which are printing and publishing industry, broadcasting and animation industry, and computer industry. He noted the increasing convergence of the three media industries at the time, as shown in the picture where the three circles overlap (Cao Yina, Fu Yujie, 2009).

Later, Pool first coined the term “Media Convergence” in his 1983 book *The Technologies of Freedom*. In 1987, Negroponte systematically put forward the knowledge framework of the concept of media convergence. He believes that media convergence this term has two kinds of concepts in a broad sense and a narrow sense. In the narrow sense, media convergence refers to the fuse of different media forms, which will lead to “qualitative change” and form a new media form, such as electronic magazines, blog news, etc. The broad concept of media convergence has a wider scope, including the combination, convergence and even mixture of all media and its related elements, including not only the integration of media forms, but also the integration of media functions, communication means, ownership, organizational structure and other elements (China Social Sciences Network, 2018).

On this basis, many domestic and foreign scholars’ research on media convergence theory has promoted the development of this theory.

Some scholars put forward that media convergence is not the only trend. Cao Yina and Fu Yujie put forward the concept of media differentiation based on Roger Fiedler’s view in their research (Cao Yina, Fu Yujie, 2009). They believe that scholars have neglected the part where the three circles do not intersect in the concept of intersection of three circles, which is the respective competitive advantages of the media. In addition, they discussed the relationship between media convergence and media differentiation: based on the Marxist philosophy, the unity of opposites between media convergence and media differentiation is inevitable, and both of them are trends in the process of media development (Cao Yina, Fu Yujie, 2009).

3. Case Study

3.1 Causes Analysis of Cooperative Live Streaming

3.1.1 The Government Encourages to Develop the Economy of New Business Forms Such as Live Streaming and So on.

The media marketing model of live streaming for products has been developed in China to some extent and the momentum is fierce. According to the 46th Statistical Report on Internet Development in China released by China Internet Network Information Center (CNNIC), in the first half of 2020, live streaming of e-commerce, as a typical representative of a new form of business, has become one of the Internet applications with the most rapid development momentum. As of June 2020, China’s e-commerce users of live streaming reached 309 million, up 16.7% from March 2020, becoming the fastest growing personal Internet application in the first half of the year. In the first half of 2020, domestic e-commerce live broadcast exceeded 10 million times, with more than 400,000 active anchors and more than 50 billion viewers (China Internet Network Information Center, 2020).

3.1.2 The Government Encourages to Assist Agriculture through the Electronic Business on

Internet.

In the No. 1 document of the central government in the last five years, we can see analogous content to “promote the upgrading of agricultural industry and sales of agricultural products through the Internet”. On February 25, 2021 in the Summary and Commendation Conference on Poverty Alleviation, Alibaba Group (China) co., LTD., won the honorary title of advanced collective of national poverty alleviation. At the same time, some Taobao shop owners also received the title of National Advanced Individual of Poverty Engines who are in this company and devoted themselves to run Taobao shops to help poor people out of poverty. With the support of the government and the encouragement of the company, many consumers and brands of e-commerce actively explore the way of live streaming to achieve the dual goal of profit and agricultural assistance.

3.1.3 The Government Encourages the Integrated Development of Media.

Since the 18th CPC National Congress, the CPC Central Committee has attached great importance to the in-depth development of media convergence reform. In particular, traditional media, such as the newspaper industry, broadcasting industry and television industry, have been exploring the path of convergence with other media and have formed certain practical experience.

In terms of newspapers, Nanfang Media Group has taken the initiative to create a three-dimensional communication matrix of the whole group, which consists of Nanfang Daily, Nanfang Magazine, Nanfang Net and “Nanfang +” client, etc. In terms of television, many viewers have found that CCTV has become the China Media Group (CMG). The reason is that it was formed from the merger of the former China Central Television, China International Television, the former China National Radio and the former China Radio International in 2018. In addition to changes in organizational structure, the China Media Group is also exploring various forms of innovation and convergence in terms of news reports, content products and industrial development.

3.2 Characteristic Analysis of Cooperative Live Streaming

3.2.1 Convergent Development

This kind of cooperative live streaming, especially TV station plus e-commerce platform, essentially reflects the marketing trend of media plus e-commerce. It is the advantage of TV station - no matter how media technology develops, TV station, as authoritative media, always have a great influence. On the other hand, the strong impact of e-commerce on the economy also means that e-commerce will assume greater social responsibility. On June 21, 2020, the 2020 China E-commerce Innovation and Development Summit Forum was held in Yiwu. One of the priorities of the summit is how to better and more effectively contribute to poverty alleviation in rural revitalization. Media and e-commerce have their own advantages and common goals, which are of certain significance to the convergence and development of the two, and are directly reflected in the cooperation live streaming this time.

3.2.2 Multiple Ip

Single IP programs and media can no longer satisfy the audience, so multiple IP mode is needed to achieve better effects of live streaming. The joining of the television anchor is a new form and innovative change under the dual IP mode or even multiple IP mode. It was only after the epidemic that more television anchors joined. The role of the television anchor here is different from that of other stars, or in other words, the television anchors can provide the authoritative voice for the live streaming in addition to the flow and popularity.

The protagonists of CCTV's live streaming of "Thank Your Group Buying for Hubei", are television anchor Zhu Guangquan and star streamer Li Jiaqi, television anchor Ouyang Xiadan and entertainment star Wang Zulan, television anchor Li Sisi, Nigemaiti, Long Yang, Zhu Xun and 30 Hubei county magistrates. In this series of live streaming, it has the most authoritative media IP of CCTV, the characteristics personal IP of television anchor and the most popular personal IP of star streamer.

3.2.3 Multiple Platform

In this series of cooperative live broadcast, there are many platforms involved in every links such as publicity, sales, logistics and after-sales service. For example, in terms of publicity, the three live streaming of "Thank Your Group Buying for Hubei" on April 6, April 12 and April 15 all adopted online and offline publicity. In the online publicity, Taobao, usu. JD.com, Pinduoduo, Toutiao, Gome Mall, Suning Tesco, and Life E-commerce APPs set up special pages for the event, CCTV news advertised them on all media platforms, and many county magistrates and secretaries of many cities and counties in Hubei Province endorsed the live streaming. In the offline publicity, the offline stores of platforms such as Hema Fresh, QixianFresh, Gome, Suning and Carrefour have set up a special area of Group buying for Hubei, and display the public benefit posters of micro-initiative in stores nationwide by means of electronic screens and display boards. On April 13, star streamer Viya and star guest Wu Qian's live streaming of "Hubei Duck" was publicized by the People's Daily. The live streaming of "Domestic products are in vogue" of Li Jiaqi and Zhu Guangquan on May 18 was promoted and previewed by CCTV News on all media platforms. In terms of sales, live streaming platforms such as Alibaba, Tik Tok and Sina Weibo also fully support such live streaming. In terms of logistics and after-sales service, almost all logistics companies have joined in to help deliver products to consumers. Many platforms have joined the public welfare live streaming, which is a broader sense of media convergence.

3.2.4 Public Welfare Theme of Assisting Agriculture

Most products of the live streaming are agricultural and sideline products from areas critically affected by the epidemic. For example, in the first live streaming of "Thank Your Group Buying for Hubei", the main products are mushroom, lotus root, tea and so on. The main products of the second live streaming are Wolong rice crust, Hankou's No.2 Factory Soda, hot dry noodles, Enshi's tea, sweet potato noodles, pueraria powder and so on. The main products of the third live streaming are Shennongjia wild black fungus, Qionghuang hundred-flower honey, spicy crayfish and so on. These characteristic agricultural and sideline products from Hubei were all sold on the day of the live streaming, which solved the biggest problem of farmers. From the perspective of integrated marketing, selling agricultural and sideline products in the form of live streaming is characterized by more concentrated sales, lower cost and closer connection with the market. These advantages are new development opportunities for poor areas. In addition, with the persistent, attention of the media and the unrelenting, efforts of the e-commerce platforms, this marketing method is also worth sustained to develop after the end of the epidemic, which can help solve the problem of difficult sales in poor areas.

3.3 Analysis of the Effect of Cooperative Live Streaming

It obtained a huge of transaction amount and achieved the purpose of assisting agriculture. According to CCTV news, the first streaming of "Thank Your Group Buying for Hubei" had accumulated sales of 40.14 million yuan, the second streaming 61 million yuan and the third streaming 65 million yuan. More intuitive data comes from the live streaming of "Hubei Duck".

Viya and Wu Qian sold 510,000 ducks for a total sale of 180 million yuan. That's just the result of four live streaming. Such a huge transaction amount within a short period of time actually helped farmers solve the problem of backlog of agricultural and sideline products, and achieved the purpose of assisting agriculture in public welfare live streaming.

It improved the rural industrial chain and derived the customer service, logistics and other industries supporting e-commerce. For rural areas, selling agricultural products through live streaming shopping, especially selling agricultural and sideline products through cooperative live streaming, is not only a solution to the most difficult problems, but also a way to open up new sales. At present, the government advocates the convergence and construction of county-level media, which can greatly help to open the market of agricultural and sideline products sales and strengthen the connection between production and sales, between supply and demand and between farmers and consumers. It also drives a series of e-commerce supporting customer service, logistics and other industries. It provides a new direction for the fight against poverty.

Television anchors and star streamers can achieve a win-win cooperation. By carrying out this series of cooperative live streaming on the theme of assisting agriculture, star streamers have realized profits and made contributions to the sustainable economy of the society and the cause of assisting agriculture. Television anchors have enriched their public images, had more stages to show their personalities and their professions and attracted more attention, which provide a foundation and valuable experience for deeper and broader convergence in the future. Li Jiaqi was listed in Time magazine as one of the "Top 100 Influential People in the Next Generation of 2021". Among the five categories of "artist", "outstanding", "leader", "advocate" and "innovator", he is listed in the category of "innovator". When Time magazine introduced Li Jiaqi, it recognized his marketing ability and contribution to public welfare. It noted that he sold 15,000 lipsticks in five minutes in 2018, helped Taobao achieve \$145 million in sales during the Singles' Day shopping gala in 2019, and mentioned how he worked with CCTV to promote Hubei products in a broadcast booth during the COVID-19 epidemic.

4. Conclusion

Under the special circumstances that the epidemic has severely hit the economy, TV hosts and network anchors have been able to complete several high-quality public benefits live streaming through cooperation, which is a successful case of media convergence. But this is only one step on the road to media convergence, and there is much more to be improved and developed. In addition to the common problems of live streaming, such as product quality needs to be strictly managed, the order of live streaming needs to be gradually improved, and the legal literacy and rule awareness of Internet celebrities need to be improved, cooperative live streaming has not formed a complete model and standard, resulting in mergers. Did not play its more role. Traditional media can explore more themes suitable for cooperative live streaming, and the market should also form corresponding regulatory measures.

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