

The Analysis of Internet Celebrities' Impression Management Tactics on Social Media from the Perspective of Dramaturgical Theory

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Abstract: With the flourish of web celebrity industry, a large number of influencer start to apply different psychological tactics into their own business in order to attract more views and followers. Impression management tactics is one of the most significant methods they used, which entails the actions where individuals strategically present images of the self to others to manage others' views of the self, attitudes, and behaviors. This paper analyzes the strategy of internet celebrities used on social media from the perspective of dramaturgical theory and the paucity of information on current studies.

1. Introduction

Impression management as a concept and method of self-presentation has been studied extensively in the existing studies. In a conceptual study of the impression management methods of vloggers allied to the "Kumit Project" account on social media, Krisnawati conceptualized impression management as a method of self-presentation^[1]. According to the researcher, impression management entails the actions where individuals strategically present images of the self to others to manage others' views of the self, attitudes, and behaviors. He further argues that it is an attempt to create particular impressions of the self to others that allows other people to interpret identity per the individual's intentions or preferences.

2. Self-Presentation Tactics

Self-presentation, a communication strategy, which principally aims at steering others' perceptions and judgements through carefully personal photos, videos, and provide information to create positive impressions. Studies of impression management in real life examine how people use verbal and non-verbal communications and cues to manage others perceptions of the individual^[2]. According to Rosenfield et al, the conscious acts of managing self-presentations, both online and in real-life, connects the idea of the idealized self to the outside world^[3]. Jones and Pittman developed a taxonomy of impression management strategies based on the view that people's strategic self-presentation is consistently anchored on social motives^[4]. This taxonomy, which has been employed in subsequent sociological and psychological studies of self-presentation, including Krisnawat, situates individual's impression management strategies in five major categories: Ingratiation, self-promotion, intimidation, exemplification, and supplication^[1].

According to Jones and Pittman, ingratiation is the most visible strategy in individual's self-presentation behaviors^[4]. Here, the individual seeks to achieve an attribution of likeability, based on the principal assumption that others like the person or attribute positive attributes to the individual. Self-promotion, on the other hand, seeks to attain attributions of competence or perceptions that the individual possesses a high level of skill in an area of interest. Intimidation self-presentation strategies, is antithetic to ingratiating actions. Intimidating strategies, when used for self-presentation, seek to convince the target audience that the actor is dangerous^[5]. In contrast to ingratiating actions where the actor seeks to be liked, the intimidator aims to create the perception of a dangerous individual while eliciting fear about themselves. The authors affirm that

while exemplification strategies might bear similarities to self-promoting behaviors of self-presentation, the former aims to project integrity and moral worthiness^[4]. The final strategy in Jones and Pittman's taxonomy, simplification, involves clarifying the person's dependability to obtain help. According to the authors, individuals frequently employ this final strategy when they lack sufficient resources to use the aforementioned strategies of strategic self-presentation.

3. Dramaturgical Perspectives on Self-Presentation

Erving Goffman's dramaturgical perspectives on self-presentation have been employed extensively in studying impression management in various fields. Goffman's likened people's lives to a theatre stage^[5]. In a metaphorical reference, author supposes' the individual's life is consistently characterized by drama and a stage setting. According to the author, people are actively and consistently involved in performances where they perform the role of the self to the outside world, which equates to an audience in a theatrical setting. Accordingly, the character of people's self is perceived based on how they arrange their performances. In a dramaturgical analysis of celebrities' impression management, Krisnawati emphasized supposition of the existence of a front and backstage in the dramaturgical performance of people's lives. Here, the front stage comprises the stage settings, actors, and the expressive dimensions of performance that contribute to the individuals' self-presentation. The backstage, on the other hand, refers to the hidden dimensions of performance that might vary from the expressive elements of the performance. According to Goffman's dramaturgical theory, managing self-presentation satisfactorily is essential for others' evaluations and interpersonal behaviors influenced by the perceptions from the impressions formed of the individual^[5].

Goffman's dramaturgical theory supposes that, as performer, the individual has significant control over their performances. According to the author, this conscious control over the metaphorical performances on the life's stage means allows the performer to emphasize and highlight particular elements of the performance in ways that elicit favorable evaluations by others. In other words, individual's self-presentation involves intentionally portraying images of the idealized self by emphasizing the factors that are consistent with the desired image. Per the theory, the performances of self-presentation entail actions and the portrayal of a self-image that reflects the officially accredited social values consistent with the prevailing cultural values, norms, and beliefs. Goffman contends that the life performances that entail employing carefully-selected combinations of verbal and non-verbal cues in the performance allow the actors improved control over the conveyed message, and subsequently, their success in manipulating others perspectives of the person consistent with the idealized self.

4. Online Impression Management

Social media's rapid proliferation in the digital age has changed how people communicate, interact with others, and gather information about their surroundings^[1]. Multiple studies, including Krisnawati examine social media in terms of its development consistent with human's social and psychological rudimentary needs to not only socialize, but also present themselves in particular favorable ways to others to appeal to these needs. Social media's ubiquity and facilitation of extensive virtual interactions even in the absence of face to face communications has increased the platforms' popularity as the media for self-presentation and self-actualization^[1]. Using Walther hyper personal model, Chatchaiyan conceptualized social media communications as a more effective for relationship management than traditional media and other communication pathways^[6]. Extant studies, including Paliszkiewicz examine how participants of social media create profiles comprising strategically selected personal information and communications elements to align the perceptions of other users with their desired or idealized self-images^[7]. In other words, social media facilitates the strategic management of the individual image in online spaces and communications through users' self-presentation.

5. Current Studies of Celebrities' Impression Management

Celebrities' online self-presentation is a crucial element of the new media culture in where, like other users, social media has increasingly turned into presentational media to construct images of their desired selves and manipulate others perceptions of their images. Marshall conceptualized celebrities' self-presentation on social media as a form of self-production anchored in a presentational culture^[7]. Accordingly, the opportunities for impression management afforded by the technological affordances of social media are instrumental for celebrities' strategic self-presentation to create images of the self that are consistent with the idealized self. This is particularly important in the context of self-presentation as a performance where breakdowns in performance could expose elements of the backstage that jeopardize the effectiveness of efforts at impression management^[5]. According to Marshall, celebrities' self-presentation on social media as a critical component of the presentational culture occurs within the economic constraints of the consumer culture and capitalism^[8].

There is a paucity of studies on internet celebrities' impression management on social media despite the growing focus on online self-presentation in the recent decades. The existing studies of Chatchaiyan have primarily focused on celebrities and politicians' self-presentation and self-promotion on social media^[6]. Chatchaiyan found patterns of strategic and selective self-presentation by Thai celebrities on social media for self-promotion and brand promotion. A limited number of studies focused on internet celebrities, with the exception of Krisnawati's research on vloggers' social media impression management^[1]. The studies' narrow focus on vloggers, however, excludes other crucial categories of internet celebrities whose social media self-presentation behaviors might be unraveled by the current study.

6. Conclusion

Social media facilitates the strategic management of the individual image in online spaces and communications through users' self-presentation. As central characters in this culture, celebrities represent and reconstruct themselves consistent with a celebrity culture that has grown with the advance of social media. The concept of celebrity pedagogy where, as individuals with a massive following in real life and social media, celebrities consistently teach the society how to consume and self-production consistent with the consumer culture.

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