

From Banter to Revelry: the Dynamics of Emotional Communication on the Internet and Cultural Reflection

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Abstract: The evolution and development of media ecology have maximized the public's communication power, and emotional communication has become a new landscape in information communication. As a popular emotional expression technique on social media platforms today, banter generates a metaphorical meaning process and communication process with banter expression symbols as the basic constituent unit in the process of deconstruction and construction, presenting the characteristics of more diverse production, freer discourse and more vitality of communication in cyberspace. However, the excessive ridicule and maliciously guided carnival mood also conceal the crisis of group polarization. This paper focuses on the current situation of emotional communication in cyberspace, explores the evolution trend and generation logic from banter expression to group carnival, and indexes the banter expression behavior of netizens, so as to attribute it, then realize the correct guidance and benign construction of the potential harm of this behavior.

1. Introduction

As a derivative of humour, banter is a way for netizens to soften their emotions. Usually the cloak of "playfulness" and "humour" does not completely cover up the actual tough demands of netizens, and at the same time leaves certain flaws. The playful expression uses the evocative subjective description, the narrative means of appealing to emotion, and the implicit participation of "deep politics" to attract the attention of more netizens, to form a resonant and thought-provoking society, as to realize the social mobilization of "anti- kitsch"^[1], realize the dual transmission of information and entertainment, and derive a unique "playful aesthetics" and artistic resistance strategy.

2. From banter expression to group carnival: the dynamic path of emotional communication in the network

In the process of deconstructing the authority of the subject and the new construction of the discourse paradigm, a metaphorical process of meaning and communication with the basic unit of playful expression symbols is generated^[2], and a group of expression carnivals are formed in the process of forwarding, continuous polishing and new construction.

The resonance group in the expression of banter is bridged by emotion, and attracts more audiences with attractive banter words, triggering a new round of emotional radiation and bringing together new resonance groups. Emotional decoding and narrative have built a highly infectious cyberspace communication ecology, and netizens carry out carnival-style group performances under the dual force of emotional superposition and confrontation of opinions. As Huang Ping said: "Joking laughter" is the opposite of "empty laughter" in popular culture^[3]. Joking expression is an important channel for netizens to seek identity and emotional rescue, and it is also an excellent means to rationalize and legitimize rebellion against authority and escape from discipline(as shown in figure 1).

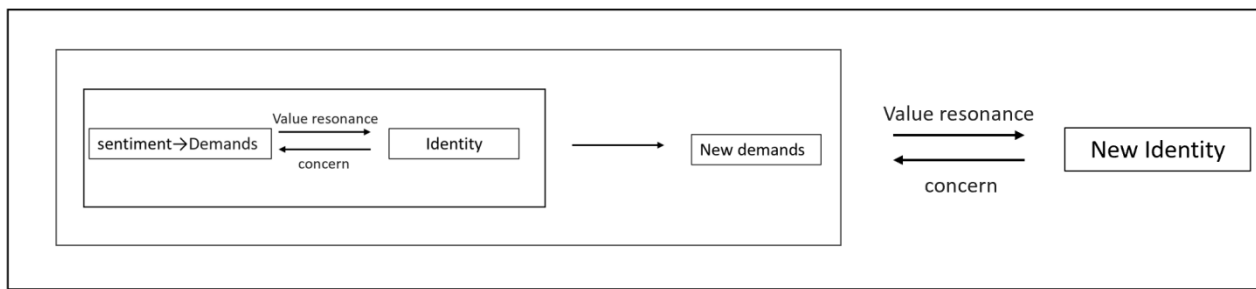


Figure 1 Emotional appeal pattern of joking expression.

After collecting, sorting out and analyzing the contents of bantering expression on social media platforms, it is found that the topic entry points of expression mainly include public politics, economic commerce and value orientation, and the discourse modes mainly include five forms: self-ugliness, duplication, eye-catching, reverse irony and intentional deception. With the topic entry point gradually penetrating into the body of netizens, the expression techniques gradually expanding, the activity performance and behavior orientation constantly strengthening, the emotional expression of the whole banter is also constantly strengthened, the emotional polarization tendency is more and more obvious, and the consensus of public opinion is gradually condensed in the ritualized group carnival.

As for the medium of expression, the public deconstructs and reconstructs the traditional written expression through the medium of text, recreates the original meaning of discourse, and forms a new discourse representation. By using the modes of "limericks""dialogue simulation" and "new meaning of old words" to reconstruct characters, and skillfully using rhetorical devices such as homonym, irony and contrast to maximize the expression effect, text expression paradigms such as "crazy literature" are derived. At the same time, the development of new media technology has upgraded the expression medium of netizens in cyberspace in an all-round way. The expansion of senses has also brought more immersive emotional resonance and information reception scenes to the audience. Netizens can also comprehensively use images, videos, audio and even construct three-dimensional space scenes to express their opinions and attitudes.

In terms of communication mode, although netizens create their own banter expression in a large proportion, the pursuit of emotional resonance in order to shape identity behavior orientation makes more netizens involved in it, for secondary creation, praise and forwarding. With the increasing number of likes and retweets, the positive incentive of banter creation gradually takes shape, which also means more double benefits of psychology and material. As a result, netizens 'interactive support has lined up for their favorite emotions and opinions, thus entering a cycle of emotional accumulation, gradually gathering public opinion consensus.

3. Cultural Reflection on Emotional Communication of Internet

3.1. Evolution of media ecology lowers the threshold for performance

Neil Postman's central point in *Entertainment to Death* is that media is metaphor. The medium defines the world through a subtle but powerful suggestion, creating unique speech signs^[4]. With the continuous development of media technology, media has gradually become the dominant information, and thus shaped a new entertainment media ecology. The continuous lowering of the technical threshold of content production endows the public with unprecedented topic participation power, the iterative upgrading of network billion-level data transmission greatly accelerates the dissemination efficiency of information, the information flow architecture and cloud storage server improve the information circulation performance, and the continuous development of technology endows the public with more convenience to participate in discussion and express opinions, thus breeding the hotbed of banter expression and self-performance.

3.2. Emotional accumulation and spiritual victory of netizens

The rapid development of modern technology has led to more and more communication between people through virtual worlds, while real social interactions continue to weaken, and people are trapped in algorithmic prisons composed of data while connecting emotions through the Internet. The overload of glossy information on social media has given people more anxiety and intoxication. The more immersed in the virtual world, the more likely it is to be blocked by all kinds of irrelevant "information noise". The dissatisfaction and helplessness of reality continue to accumulate, resulting in emotional flooding and falling into the swamp of compassion and self-blame. When a playful expression causes collective resonance, netizens consciously are endowed with the power of expression, boldly enter the topic field, ridicule themselves with humorous sarcasm, challenge authority, seek a sense of belonging in the opinion confrontation and performance again and again, and pour away the accumulated emotions under the package of playful expression, and breed carnival feast while rescuing themselves.

In the contradiction between the expectation of a better life and the unbalanced and inadequate development, netizens' eager desire for success interweaves with the powerlessness in the face of reality^[5], evolving into dissatisfaction with society and thus deriving pan-moral criticism, and expressing the essence of hidden resistance in a playful way. The mainstream media and expert groups' carving and discipline of the group reality are in sharp contrast to the sting of individual reality, which inspires the anti-secularization psychology of netizens. Anxiety and rebellion turn into banter and revelry, so they choose to escape from reality and seek the shelter of allies in cyberspace, which is manifested in the behavior practice of pursuing illusory freedom and self-performance in cyberspace, in order to achieve spiritual victory and fall into the value dilemma of pleasing others and gaining sympathy.

3.3. The breeding ground of alienation psychology of "flow is king"

In the Internet era of information explosion, due to the shift from passive reception of information in the "mass communication era" to active subscription of information in the "network society", the attention of users, that is, traffic, has become an important means of production in the Internet era, and "traffic is king" has become the main idea of individual IP operation and enterprise development and management. Individual opinions, choices, and even the touch of every emotion can be key influxes of traffic.

With the ecological expansion of social media platforms and the continuous smooth flow of individual traffic realization channels, netizens gradually begin to consciously gather their own private domain traffic in order to realize it, while the opinion exchange field represented by comment area becomes an important channel for private domain traffic aggregation. Every praise is the accumulation and support of emotion, and the recognition and recommendation of algorithms make their opinions get more opportunities for performance. Therefore, under the catalysis of profit-seeking psychology, the content production orientation of "flow is king" promotes the psychological alienation of netizens' opinion expression. Netizens expressed their opinions in the comment area, realizing that the more "out of place" the expression, the more "out of circle", and the hidden dissatisfaction, appeal and resistance of the banter expression just fit with the innate psychological instinct of humor expression and negative emotional resonance, and the "easy excitation" and "easy dissemination" of negative emotions catalyzed the carnival progress of banter expression.

3.4. Public opinion emergency response capacity needs to be improved

With the rapid development of the Internet, the self-media era of "everyone has a microphone" has expanded the public's voice power over public affairs, unblocked the channels for social communication and public opinion, but also brought new difficulties in the integration of different values and weakened the cohesion of mainstream ideology. Its open and efficient way of information dissemination makes network rumors go to the fast lane, greatly increasing the difficulty of public opinion management.

Although the importance of building a consultation and dialogue system in the post-truth era has been emphasized many times at the national level, there is still a one-way persuasion problem in public opinion emergency handling and dialogue consultation at the present stage. The agenda setting function of mainstream media is generally absent, and positive dialogue and guidance consciousness have not yet been formed. The progress of public opinion in the event is led by the independent disclosure of netizens, and the cyberspace is full of teasing, polarized views and even language violence. Once some social phenomenon or event touches the sensitive point of social psychology, the subjective and emotional banter expression of a few social members will spread rapidly, trigger social resonance, and evolve into strong social emotion. At this time, the absence of public opinion emergency treatment will lead to the occurrence of mass carnival.

4. Potential hazards and negative effects

Proper banter expression can stimulate vitality and liven up the atmosphere, but there are also hidden group polarization crises in the deliberate belittling posture, excessive mocking mentality, and the collective rebellion against authority and carnival mood of escaping discipline.

4.1. From shifting focus to inducing rebellion, rumors are rampant and it is difficult to distinguish between true and false

The banter and ridicule that goes to the point often lead to imagination, making the appeal and resistance more obvious, making the incident more complicated. For example, in the event that a college student ate a mouse head in the canteen, playful expressions such as "mouse head duck neck" and "mouse and duck" became synonymous with the event. In the repeated response and reversal of public opinion fermentation, the majority of netizens' enthusiasm for the second creation has been greatly stimulated, playful expression, ridicule swept the public opinion field. The factual evidence is unclear, there are many rumors and suspicions on the Internet, the truth is confusing and foggy. The comment area of the whole event has become a stage for gathering and reveling.

Netizens formed a rebellious force in this incident, and their focus has shifted from the truth and handling of the incident to competing for performances, attracting attention and watching the relevant departments make a fool of themselves. This behavior is undoubtedly not conducive to the proper handling of the incident and the emergence of the truth. It will also cause certain damage to the credibility and contain an extremely unstable social induction tendency.

4.2. From emotional rescue to emotional flood discharge, netizens' group feelings sting reality

As a product of emotional communication, banter expression is inherently irrational and impersonal. The public accumulates real dissatisfaction in their hearts and tentatively seeks resonance in cyberspace in a playful way. Once partial agreement and identity are reached, more and stronger emotions will flow. Under the influence of emotional communication, the audience gathers turbulent emotions into cyberspace, spreads in a rapid way, and sweeps more netizens into the group. With the continuous expansion of the group, the highly concealed network public opinion will evolve into more straightforward resistance, conflict and violence, and the emotions originally derived from reality will be reconstituted into netizens' group intentions, reflecting reality and stinging reality at the same time.

4.3. From deconstruction of authority to social infection, reason becomes nothing

Joking expression not only deconstructs traditional discourse expression, but also challenges the power structure of traditional social discourse. From the micro level, the playful expression mode decomposes and reconstructs the traditional serious written expression, and breeds a new expression paradigm; from the macro level, the playful expression mode and even the group carnival performance mode challenge the traditional and conservative behavior logic and social moral discipline. Traditional elitist serious expression in cyberspace is becoming more and more out of place, and vulnerable groups in reality have established new authority in cyberspace.

Appropriate humor and banter can activate the communication field and shorten the distance

between authority and the public. However, adding excessive carnival and even malicious elements will undoubtedly gather irrational group will, make the behavior logic of ugliness as beauty and madness as normal spread infinitely and infect, form extremely unstable factors of society, weaken credibility and also cause realistic projection of network group polarization.

5. Conclusion

Joking expression breaks the traditional serious and rigid communication mode and public opinion mode, constructs a new paradigm of entertainment, emotion and popularization of cyberspace communication, which has the characteristics of openness and tolerance, and reflects the change of youth, intimacy and vitality of cyberspace subjects^[6]. However, "banter" can not be offline, excessive ridicule and malicious guidance will inevitably be criticized and controlled; at the same time, it is necessary to guard against blindly "upper class online", stereotype and unthinking elimination. Both netizens and managers should be rationally oriented, calmly and objectively respond to new changes and new crises. Relevant departments can strengthen the digital monitoring of public opinion^[7] management early warning, actively set the agenda, strengthen network literacy education, so as to reasonably channel irrational group opinions, guide rational and peaceful social mentality, thus giving play to the leading role of correct consciousness, firm stand, and jointly move towards a healthier network culture development direction.

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