

Analysis of New Media Communication Based on Lasswell's "5W" Model

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Abstract

Harold Lasswell is well known for his "5W" model of communication, which focuses on "Who (says) What (to) Whom (in) Which Channel (with) What Effect". In Lasswell's model of communication, the communication process is divided into five parts including communicator, information, media, audience and effect, such five research fields provide a very good point of view to study the new media communication. In the process of new media communication, these five elements are developing with their own characteristics. First, communicator is becoming more diverse, organization or individual, anyone can be the sender of information. Second, information is becoming massive and multimedia, text, image, audio, video, animation, etc., can be seen everywhere. Third, media is becoming more interactive which is the most important characteristic with new media technology development. Fourth, audience is becoming more personalized, showing more participation and initiative. In addition, effect of communication is presented rapidly, and at the same time, it is more intelligent to evaluate it. Under new media environment, communication process and the research of such five elements will have greater opportunities and broader prospects for development.

Keywords: New Media, Communication, Harold Lasswell, "5W" model, Interactivity

1. Introduction

1.1 New Media

With the continuous development of information technology, computer, internet, mobile phones and tablets, a new pattern of media arises at the historic moment, that is the "new media" people often say. Referring to the new media, we will think of digital technologies, such as the Internet, computer multimedia, video games, augmented reality and so on. However, new media does not include analog broadcast, paper-based publications and other traditional media, unless they contain technologies that enable digital interactivity (Manovich, 2003). Thus, a lot of media are digital upgrade version of the traditional media, such as digital broadcasting, digital TV, etc. New media is just a relative concept, because of this, we also often hear some associated media concepts, such as digital media, mobile media, network media, all media, and so on.

1.2 Lasswell's "5W" Model

Harold Lasswell is an American political scientist and communication theorist, in 1948, while he was a professor at Yale Law School, he developed the model of communication (Muth, Finley & Muth, 1990), which is regarded as "one of the earliest and most influential communication models. (Shoemaker, Tankard & Lasorsa, 2004)" In his article "The Structure and Function of Communication in Society", Lasswell (1948) wrote: "convenient way to describe an act of communication is to answer the following questions:

- a. Who
- b. Says What
- c. In Which Channel
- d. To Whom
- e. With What Effect?"

We call that "5W" model. (e.g. Fig. 1)

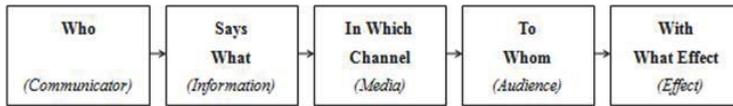


Figure 1. Lasswell's "5W" Model

Lasswell's model was put forward as early as 1948, although at that time the development of media is relatively traditional and simple, also there are a lot of controversy in the study of the model, but it explicitly divides the communication process into five parts or elements, and correspondingly limits to five research areas. With that, researchers can effectively describe the communication process and plan for the study of communication. Now, such five research fields provide a very good point of view to study the new media communication.

2. Who - Diversification of Communicator

In mass communication, the communicator is not one person, but some organized institutions, such as newspapers, radio stations, television stations, websites, etc. Content of communication is designed and developed by professional, such as reporters, editors, web developers, etc. Because of the emergence and development of computer and network equipments, new media communication moves towards to the public, at the same time it also gives the public abilities of producing, publishing, transmitting information, this is a subversion to the traditional media (Liu Liwei & Guo Xiaoyang, 2013). New media directly promotes the development of we media era. We the Media is a book written by Dan Gillmor, published in 2004 (Dan, 2004). In this book, the Internet tools is regarded as an opportunity for journalists, such as weblogs, RSS, SMS, peer-to-peer, etc.

In May 2015, ITU in Geneva published data of information communication technology in 2015. At present, there are a total of 7 billion mobile subscribers in the world, but in 2000, the number is only 738 million. Around the World, 3.2 billion people are using the Internet. From 2000 to 2015, the popularizing rate of the Internet users increased almost 7 times, it increased to 43% of the world's population from 6.5%. According to the data in July 2014, the total number of Facebook users is up to 2.2 billion people, occupying one third of the world's population. Considering the dominant position of network media and mobile media in interpersonal communication, the large crowd using base number determines the diversification of the communicator.

3. Says What - Massive Amount of Information

Development of digital storage and database technology breaks through the quantity limitation of information stored by traditional media, in a particular device, traditional printing information can be edited, stored and delivered in the form of digital information. Take electronic dictionary for example, dozens of large paper dictionaries can be condensed to hundreds of megabytes of data capacity. Similarly, companies such as Google and Baidu make a huge investment in the production, storage and dissemination of electronic books.

Network technology and mobile technology undoubtedly promote massive growth of information of new media communication. Royal Pingdom summarized the Internet data in 2012, the statistical object involved in email, web sites, web server, domain name, global internet users, social media, web browser, mobile users, video and image sharing and so on (Pingdom, 2013). Now we list a few data as below.

In 2012, 144 billion emails were sent per day in the world, 729,571 messages were shown in the Chinese Sina Weibo per minute on New year's Eve, 175 million messages were delivered by Twitter, and there were 1.2 trillion searches on Google. The global mobile data traffic per month in 2012 is estimated 1.3 exabytes, and there were 5 billion mobile broadband subscriptions. The first online video "Gangnam Style" in PSY reached 1 billion views and it achieved it in just 5 months. In addition to these, 300 million new photos were added to Facebook every day, and 5 billion photos were uploaded to Instagram since its start to September 2012.

4. In Which Channel – Interactivity of Media

Interactivity is undoubtedly one of the most obvious characteristics of the new media. As Rice defined in 1984, the new media can enable and facilitate user-to-user interactivity and interactivity between user and information (Schorr, Schenk

& Campbell, 2003). Compared with the "one-to-many" model of traditional mass communication, the new media communication is becoming a "many-to-many" web of communication. With appropriate new media technologies, any individual can produce his or her online media including text, image and sound whatever he or she chooses (Croteau & Hoynes, 2003). Thus the model of mass communication is changing with new technologies. In "What is new media?" Vin Crosbie (2002) described interpersonal media as "one to one", mass media as "one to many", and new media as individuation media or "many to many".

In the process of new media communication, the interactive characteristic of new media can be shown everywhere, and of course, the realization of the interactivity of new media cannot do without more new media technical support such as touch technology, interactive projection technology, augmented reality technology, interactive mirror surface technology, internet of things technology and others.

There are countless advertising cases supported by interactive new media technology, for example, IKEA 2014 product manual was focused on and the combination of the indoor environment and its entertainment. Open the related applications, choose furniture, put the manual where you want to put the furniture, through the APP scan, you can see the appearance of each furniture in the home. The application effect is very intuitive and the choice becomes much easier. (e.g. Fig. 2)

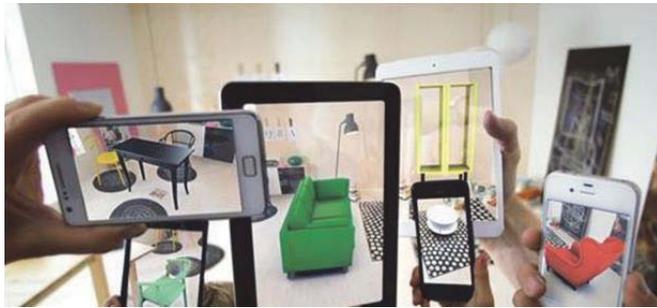


Figure 2. IKEA: "Product Manual" APP

5. To Whom – Personalization of Audience

Us magazine "Wired" defined the new media as "communication from all the people to all the people". Interactivity is a key word of vocabulary of the new media, so the identity of the communicator and audience can be exchanged easily. Today, by sending email or SMS, writing blog, chatting online, one can start mass communication "at any time, in any place, for anyone", that break down the discourse barriers of the traditional mainstream media.

In essence, the audiences not only receive information, but participate in interaction, they are more active and personalized. Any communication process, involve the analysis of the communication object. Who are the audiences of new media communication? What are their characteristics? We have to think about these questions so as to establish a accurate model of the audiences. Due to the audiences' age, culture, education, aesthetics, etc., the way they participate in communication are absolutely different.

Take the visual communication for example, for youth groups, communicators should emphasize modern and different feeling, however for middle-aged groups, they should emphasize more quality and taste and so on.

On the other hand, the object of new media communication is not limited to these general terms such as "men and women, old and young", for example, today's youth groups driven by new media and network technology are subdivided into different concepts, such as "80 after", "90 after", "otaku", and "ant tribe", and so on. Young people have learned to use these symbols to distinguish the social role, so the new media communication will also be necessary to create interactive relationship referring to their own audiences.

6. With What Effect– Intelligentize of Effect

Effect of new media applying in the field of advertising is especially outstanding. Ariel, interactive devices advertising, for example, the world's largest T-shirts, (e.g. Fig. 3) designer designed a five stories' high huge white T-shirt hung in the

outdoor, the gamepads were refitted to Ariel laundry detergent bottles and spice bottles. Many users held bottles of ketchup, soy, mustard oil, fruit juice, and splashed them on the T-shirt; soon, the T-shirt was full with all kinds of stain. The design of this scene is just like we accidentally got stains on the clothes at ordinary times and these stains were difficult to clean, with Ariel, however, we did not have to worry. The huge outdoor device provided us with a convenient way, as long as handheld Ariel products such as laundry detergent, the stain on T-shirts would be cleared off. This activity results showed that the sales increased by 113% in a month, and the brand awareness increased by 300%, more than the public relations value worth \$1 million.



Figure 3. Ariel (2011) / The World's Largest T-shirt – video capture

From the broad sense, communication effect is divided into pre-test and post test. (e.g. Fig. 4) The former is creative effect and the latter is media effect. New media communication effect has its own characteristics in two stages.

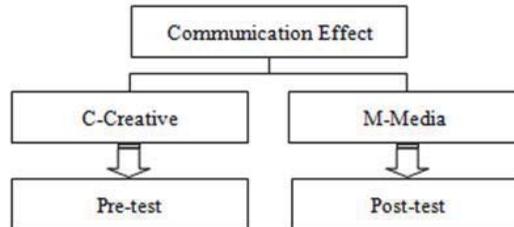


Figure 4. Advertising Communication Effect

With the intervention of digital technology and interactive link, before the release of new media, the creative effect will have more space and possibility. Take the Internet advertising for example, it can use sound, animation, and mouse click to attract audiences' attention. After the release of new media, the media effect will become various and complicated, we need to pay more attention to the users' feedback behavior in order to evaluate quantitatively. For example, combining with the Internet, advertising effect showed by the ROI marketing software of Marketo will be more rapid and accurate.

7. Conclusion

Today, the "5W" communication model by Lasswell is still the basic framework of mass communication researched by scholars. Lasswell proposed that analysis of mass communication process is indeed equal to understanding answers to the 5 basic questions.

Who? – Analysis of communicator
Says what? – Analysis of information
In which channel? – Analysis of media

To whom? – Analysis of audience
With what effect? – Analysis of effect

No matter how long the study of mass communication experiences, and how rapidly the science and technology develops, these five parts are still the fundamental elements in the field of mass communication research. However, Accompanied by time changes and technology development, mass communication under the new media is developing with its own characteristics.

As mentioned above, in the process of new media communication, communicator is becoming more diverse, organization or individuals, anyone can be the sender of information. Information is becoming massive, and also the performance of information is more multimedia, text, image, audio, video, animation, etc., can be seen everywhere. Media changes mainly depend on the development of technology, including network technology, mobile technology, communication technology, etc., either in the form of new media, interactivity is undoubtedly the indispensable media property. Audience is becoming more personalized, showing more participation and initiative. In addition, the effect of communication is presented rapidly, at the same time, it's more intelligent to evaluate it. On the other hand, Lasswell's "5W" model lacks feedback, and the role of communicator and audience is rigid, the interactivity of new media provides the communication study lots of new inspiration.

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