An Analysis of Dialogic Communication for Chinese Museums on Weibo

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ABSTRACT

The dialogic communication of Chinese museums on Weibo tends to be more interactive and collaborative. The study of the dialogic features between Chinese museums and publics is significant to the promotion of the relationship between the cultural organization and the public and the improvement of the service. This article, based on the dialogic communication theory, makes a study on the current situation of the Weibo dialogue between Chinese museums and publics through a content analysis. The result shows that most Chinese museums use the dialogic principles in Weibo dialogue. The conservation of visitors’ principle and the dialogic loop principle positively influence users’ interactions.

INTRODUCTION

The research of Chinese Users’ behaviors on Weibo in 2014, which is published by iResearch, indicates that Weibo took up 70% of all Internet services in 2013, followed by social network and SBS, which took up 43.9% and 43.2% separately. Considering the quality and the quantity of its users, more and more public organizations open their own Weibo account to communicate with people and to establish good interactive relationships. The WEB2.0 has redefined the communication between museums and publics by transferring the one-way communicated webpages to interactive platforms. This phenomenon matches the view of the former research, which indicated that the relationship between museums and publics are developing in a more interactive and cooperative way.

Due to the fact that the current situation of Chinese museums’ dialogue on Weibo hasn’t been mentioned yet, the article aims to find out whether Chinese museums has used the dialogic principles on Weibo and how they use those principles. In addition to it, after working out the features of dialogic methods, the writer expects to find out the main factors between public and organizations’ dialogic communication.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The first scholar came up with the theory of organizations and publics relationship under Internet background in 1998, arguing that the relationship between organizations and publics can be created, adopted and changed by the Internet. Furthermore, Kent
and Taylor recognized one particular Internet communication model, which can be used to promote dialogues and to build up good relationship with publics and stockholders. Based on it, they put forward the dialogic principles, which includes five principles, i.e. the dialogic loop principle, the usefulness of information principle, the generation of return visits principle, the ease of the interface principle and the conservation of visitors principle.

B. Watkins and R. Lewis redefined the dialogic communications based on Twitter; that is, answering, asking from/to publics to/from organizations. Rybalko and Seltze deleted the ease of the interface from the dialogic principles, considering that users had same interfaces in Twitter. Wei Zewu pointed out that Weibo played a positive role in encouraging dialogue between organizations and publics. He argued that the continuing dialogue established the belief of publics to official Weibo account.

Based on researches by the former scholars, the general aim of the study was set out in two research questions:

RQ1: Does the dialogic principles apply to the official Weibo accounts owned by Chinese museums?

RQ2: Does the dialogic principles promote users’ activeness of the official Weibo accounts owned by Chinese museums?

**METHODOLOGY**

The article used content analysis for the research. According to the list of the top50 Chinese museums’ websites, based on click rate by Alexa.com, the article selected 25 official Weibo accounts, which were officially verified and registered, as research subjects. Considering the seasonal features of museums’ exhibitions, the article selected three weibos per month from one account at random, raging from February 2014 to February 2015. Finally, 900 weibos were selected in total and each museum36 weibos.

**Analysis of Dialogic Communication**

Among the selected weibos, those who hadn’t answered the users’ questions in comment within one year were regarded as having none-dialogic communications. Others were regarded as having dialogic communications.

**Analysis of the Dialogic Principles**

The analysis of the dialogic principles was put forward through the dialogic principles of Kent and Taylor. The ease of the interface was particularly deleted, considering that users had same interfaces in Weibo. Therefore, the article analysis weibos in four principles, the dialogic loop principle, the usefulness of information principle, the generation of return visits principle and the conservation of visitors principle.

**Analysis of Users’ Activeness**

The contents of users’ activeness are their reactions to weibos, including reposting and commenting. Therefore, the article used the number of reposting and commenting as the standard of users’ activeness.
FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The results of RQ1 show that the dialogic principles have significant relevance with weibos, which have dialogic communications. Furthermore, the dialogic loop principle, the generation of return visits principle and the conservation of visitors principle have significant relevance with these weibos (Table I).

The theory also applies to the Chinese Internet, and the dialogic principles still applies to the official Weibo accounts owned by Chinese museums. However, though most weibos have used the dialogic principles, fewer weibos have dialogic communications with users.

The results for RQ2 show that the dialogic principles have significant relevance with users’ activeness. Furthermore, the dialogic loop principle and the conservation of visitors principle have significant relevance with users’ activeness (Table II).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DIALOGIC COMMUNICATIONS</th>
<th>Usefulness of Information</th>
<th>Dialogic Loop</th>
<th>Generation of Return Visits</th>
<th>Conservation of Visitors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>None-dialogic Communication</td>
<td>Count</td>
<td>695</td>
<td>544</td>
<td>217</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>s</td>
<td>Partial (%)</td>
<td>89.8%</td>
<td>70.3%</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>s</td>
<td>Total (%)</td>
<td>77.2%</td>
<td>60.4%</td>
<td>24.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dialogic Communication</td>
<td>Count</td>
<td>117</td>
<td>126</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>s</td>
<td>Partial (%)</td>
<td>92.9%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>39.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>s</td>
<td>Total (%)</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>5.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pearson chi-squared value</td>
<td>Count</td>
<td>1.153</td>
<td>50.295</td>
<td>7.044</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig (bilateral)</td>
<td>0.283</td>
<td>0.000**</td>
<td>0.008**</td>
<td>0.003**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* means significance is under 0.05  
** means significance is under 0.01

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>USERS’ ACTIVENESS</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Variance</th>
<th>Usefulness of Information</th>
<th>Dialogic Loop</th>
<th>Generation of Return Visits</th>
<th>Conservation of Visitors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>t</td>
<td>0.492</td>
<td>6.462</td>
<td>2.338</td>
<td>3.405</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig (bilateral)</td>
<td>0.623</td>
<td>0.000**</td>
<td>0.160</td>
<td>0.001**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>t</td>
<td>0.445</td>
<td>10.976</td>
<td>2.246</td>
<td>3.023</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig (bilateral)</td>
<td>0.657</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.025</td>
<td>0.003</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* means significance is under 0.05  
** means significance is under 0.01

Actually, using the dialogic loop and the conservation of visitors can promote the relationship between museums and publics. For one thing, encouraging users to stay makes it possible for the users to spend time in knowing more about the museum. For another, answering questions in time makes publics realize that they are fully respected,
encourages them to keep interactions. What’s more, the good relationship will be built up between museums and publics thereafter.

CONCLUSIONS

From the results obtained, we can conclude that the dialogic principles also apply to the Chinese Internet environment. More importantly, the dialogic principles can promote the users’ activeness for these official Weibo account owned by Chinese museums.

The statistics show that dialogic loop principle and the conservation of visitors’ principle have significant relevance with users’ activeness. Therefore, to build up better relationship between Chinese museums and publics, these accounts’ owners should keep optimizing the links they added and answering issues that publics concern more efficiently.

However, the statistics also points out that Chinese museums’ Weibo accounts lack in efficient dialogic communications with their users, which means they should spend more time in answering questions camp up from comments, and to interact with publics more frequently and timely.

REFERENCES