

The Construction and Influence of Celebrity Personas

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Abstract. In modern society, the rapid development of technology and media is gradually making the act of "star-making" more efficient and convenient, while the prevalence of consumerism, the strong involvement of capital and the changing concept of social groups also make such a significant part of "star-making" which means the construction of the "Public Persona" has become an important part of today's media in an era that cannot be ignored. Therefore, this paper analyzes the construction and influence of the celebrity's "persona" through the preexisting example and theories. Previous research shows that the "persona" of celebrities is inseparable from the injection of capital and the promotion of fan groups, and it is also connected with the characteristics of individual celebrities. Due to the complexity of its construction, the "persona" of celebrities will have an impact on themselves, their fan base, and the larger society; these impacts are often long-term and heterogeneous.

Keywords: Public Persona, Celebrity Personas.

1. Introduction

Nowadays, the flourishing of information channels and communication media such as the Internet has led to an increasingly prosperous celebrity-centered culture, and those topics related to celebrities, whether they are trivial matters such as clothing, food, housing, and transportation, or events with more ambitious themes, have occupied an increasingly large share of the public's horizon. In such a context, the fast-food entertainment culture makes the extremely simplified and labeled celebrity persona a product of multiple constructions [1]. In addition to serving as a highly generalized individual, a public persona also has certain connotations and external meanings. As a social trend and a consumption symbol, it has gradually become an important representation of contemporary culture and a presence that cannot be ignored in the communication media of the new era. Meanwhile, the phenomenon of the "collapse of celebrity's persona" triggered by internal tension is common [2]. These events have immediate or far-reaching effects on the stars themselves, their fan groups, the capital behind the stars, and even the direction of society as a whole.

This study will discuss the construction of the public persona and the influence of the public persona on different individuals and groups by using case studies. Although, in the current stereotype of the public, the establishment of a celebrity's "persona" is often a kind of logic with the implication of entertainment subterfuge and capital operation, and is a kind of labeling and assembly line production; however, it should be recognized that the existence of "persona" still has its meaning and rationality, so the meaning and purpose of this paper will point to how to guide "persona" to become a positive publicity and marketing tool, and try to avoid its negative effects on individuals and the public. This will not only help the media and marketing planning of the current society but also provide some support to reveal the cultural connotation of the celebrity phenomenon.

2. The Definition of Public Persona And Its Construction

2.1. Definition of Public Persona

The term "persona," short for "character setting," was initially a term used in subculture creation [3]. Currently, "persona" has developed a new connotation and expression in the real-world. On the one hand, the new era of network technology and high-tech media has subtly influenced people's communication and exchange methods and formed a new trend. Under this trend, using the qualities

of "effective," "superficial", and "fast" "persona," people can communicate with each other in real and virtual social networks. On the other hand, in social media, celebrities and other individuals who have received much attention are keen to show their unique character and traits, which is essentially a marketing tool to enhance the stickiness of attention and attract consumption. At the same time, the numerous incidents of "persona collapsing" often lead to heated discussions on social networks. In this context, this paper will discuss the following three aspects of the construction of the "persona" of celebrities and other public figures, taking into account the individuals and groups related to them.

2.2. Construction of Public Persona

2.2.1. Persona under Capital Packages

First of all, the public persona cannot be separated from the brokerage company behind the capital to create. A good example of this is the popularity of the controversial youngster Xukun Cai. Xukun Cai's agency tried to package him as a multi-talented sports boy in the early casting stage and hoped to attract more fans, especially the male group, with basketball as his speciality. What was not expected by the capital was that Xukun Cai was criticized by many professionals due to his stiff dribbling movements and strength that did not match his glamorous experience at all and was thus pushed to the forefront of the limelight. Five years have passed, but today, Cai Xukun is still often the target of ridicule by some groups, especially by the capital, and his basketball-loving "persona" has become a laughing stock for everyone.

2.2.2. Persona under Fan Impetus

Moreover, the construction of the celebrity's persona cannot be separated from the driving force of the fan group. Some celebrities do not have a clear "persona" at the beginning of their career, but at an important point in time, such as playing a certain role that makes their film or TV production very popular, or their character and habits shown in a certain event attracts the attention of public opinion, thus attracts much attention. The individuals behind this kind of attention have a strong goal; they want the star to continue this trait, i.e., "persona," and under this influence, the star will consciously or unconsciously package themselves and establish a unique label, thus achieving the purpose of increasing their own attention.

The star of the girl group talent show competition, Chaoyue Yang, also relied on the "Koi persona" created for her by fans and supporters to become popular. Although her performance during the competition was not very good, she was called "Koi" by her fans because of her luck in the competition, which led to her successful debut in third place. The fans believe that they can become luckier by forwarding some information related to them. Initially, Yang was not well-liked by many people, and many viewers thought that her real ability did not match her final score. However, with the push of her fan base, more and more people believed in her luck, and with the wide spread of some popular emoji packs, people gradually accepted her "lucky koi" persona and changed their impression of her.

2.2.3. Persona Made by Individual Preferences

Third, celebrity persona is also related to individual tendencies and preferences. Although celebrity personas are often closely related to the power of capital and the likes and dislikes of the fan groups, celebrities themselves, as individuals, also have their own highly individualized directions for further development based on their values, life experiences, and personal preferences. Sometimes, the persona a star wants to create for himself/herself may overlap highly with the judgment of capital and the expectations of the fan base, but there are also cases where the individual's willingness or even ability to develop contradicts the other two, which eventually leads to "blocking/sheltering" (i.e., the capital and agency behind intentionally reduce the star's public appearance in order to dilute the star's (i.e., the capital and agency behind the star intentionally reduce the star's public appearance in order to dilute the star's presence and ultimately diminish their popularity and influence), "mass deflowering" (i.e., losing a large number of fans due to negative events), and "persona collapse" (the

previously established "public persona" (the previously established "persona" does not match the real character traits).

For example, actor Tianlin Zhai wanted to create a "study overlord" persona for himself. However, because his own ability does not meet the expectations of this persona, he eventually made a mistake, i.e., he failed to play his persona well and was questioned by his fans, which caused his created persona to collapse due to suspected academic fraud. The consequences included not only the loss of a large number of fans but also the investigation and punishment that forced him to stop his acting career.

3. Influences Brought by Public Persona

Since the construction of a celebrity "persona" is complicated, and the relationship between the individuals and groups related to it is also intertwined, the existence of a celebrity "persona" has an impact on the celebrities themselves, their fan groups, and society at large. The impact is often long-term and heterogeneous.

In social media, celebrities and other widely followed individuals are able to express their own characteristics, but the trend of consumerism in the entertainment industry nowadays makes it impossible for celebrities to express their personalities as they wish, and they are afraid of the consequences of speaking inappropriately. For example, Na Ying's 2011 Weibo post, "Damn, I am annoyed with the pretentious guys," has become impossible today, more than a decade later, and is even retweeted at regular times of the year by many ordinary netizens who are not fans, nostalgic for the days when celebrities had a high degree of freedom of expression. Today's celebrities' statements on social media and other channels are carefully choreographed and designed to be perfect and highly appropriate to their persona. Under such circumstances, celebrities are prone to "aphasia," with no outlet for their stress, emotions, and desire for expression, and their occasional personalized expressions are often over or even maliciously interpreted, with programmed and masked "business" being exhausting. Therefore, many celebrities often choose to avoid speaking out in the mass media and even choose to close their accounts, cutting off some channels to show themselves and interact with the outside world.

At the same time, fans, as excessive readers of popular culture, are more active, enthusiastic, and participatory than the general audience of popular culture [4]. The recent popular setting of so-called "nurturing" stars aims to enhance fans' sense of involvement, encourage them to invest more energy and money, and please them by arranging the stars to develop in the direction they expect so that their stickiness increases significantly. However, in such a process, the fan base's definition of their own identity and their understanding of the relationship between themselves and the celebrity begin to change. While fan groups believe that they should have a say in the future direction and focus of the star's attention because of the energy and financial resources they put in, the capital behind the star, although they still see fan groups as an important target audience; unfortunately, most of them do not consider fan groups as producers and decision makers similar to themselves who can influence the development of individual stars, but tend to simply see them as simply as consumers, which leads to their dissatisfaction and ultimately to conflict. Therefore, although the emergence of celebrity "personas" makes the preferences of the fan base more focused and identifiable, it still affects their self-positioning and expectations of the individual celebrity.

Baudrillard's theory of the "coding rules instead of reference" and "self-fulfilling prophecy" speaks to the truth of consumerist society: authenticity becomes blurred, everything can become a commodity and a symbol, and capital can justify its ideology by encouraging mass consumption. Capital justifies its ideology by encouraging massive consumption [5]. According to Luo, the image industry dominated by capital has created a world characterized by the "creation of life through the crowd" [6]. The celebrity "persona" has begun to have a subtle influence on the whole society with the support of many elements such as consumerism and individual symbolization. For example, Jin Dong's "old cadre" persona and the so-called "ascetic" and "fatherly" labels have narrowly defined

and crystallized the image of the ideal spouse and the originally diverse and individualized concept of marriage. The narrowly defined and concrete presentation of the image of the ideal spouse and the originally diverse and personalized concept of marriage will inevitably affect some individuals and groups who are not fans and generate a lot of heated debates and discussions in society. At the same time, people's attitudes toward celebrity "personas" are post-truth, whether they are fans or other individuals and groups [7]. In the judgment of "persona," the standard does not need to be uniform, and the truth or falsity is no longer important as long as "I think/I feel/I believe it is right," which precisely reflects the subjective feeling emphasized in the post-truth era. Therefore, the celebrity "persona" does not only affect and cover a certain individual and part of the fan base but also has a profound impact on the whole of society.

4. Literature References

Overall, the research literature that has taken celebrity persona as a theme largely appeared in 2018 and beyond; they were broadly analyzed and discussed from the following perspectives.

The first is to explore what rhetorical means the three parties use to ensure the stability of the celebrity persona in the new media environment, regarding how the celebrity itself, the capital behind it, and the fans create and maintain the celebrity persona, using three rhetorical mechanisms of sympathetic sameness, antagonistic sameness, and mis-identity to specifically analyze the celebrity persona in social media [8].

Second, it is to explore the triple tension between the front and backstage of celebrity persona maintenance, media encoding and decoding, and fan protection and resistance, as well as the various causes of persona collapse [2].

Meanwhile, Li Liangyu researched and analyzed the three major communication paths of public persona, which are capital, agency, and fans, and also analyzed the mutual influence relationship of the three in the new media environment in order to have a more practical discussion on the communication paths for the study of celebrity "persona" [9].

Some scholars have conducted studies on the characteristics of celebrity "persona" and its construction methods from the perspectives of regulation theory, mimesis theory, symbolic consumerism and social interaction. In addition, they have also partly considered the positive and negative effects of celebrity personas and their coping strategies in their studies [10-12].

Throughout the past studies on celebrity persona and its related contents, scholars have mostly utilized various theories to focus on the influence of the capital behind the celebrity and its fan power in the stages of persona creation and maintenance, and more. In this paper, we will not only focus on the above two but also look at the individual celebrities themselves and explore the interventions of the establishment of personas on the development of specific individuals; at the same time, we will also expand our perspective to a larger group, i.e., to the whole society, and discuss the impact of these behaviors on the weakly related people.

5. Conclusion

In contemporary society, the enthusiasm of individuals and groups in the construction of celebrity "persona" largely indicates their desire and pursuit of pioneering culture and consciousness. Although the traditional, or even stereotypical, image of celebrities establishing a "persona" is often a means of symbolizing individuals that requires vigilance and precaution, one should recognize that the existence of a "persona" still has its meaning and rationality and can still be a positive publicity and marketing tool. In the process of building a celebrity persona, a balance between multiple parties should be sought. The development of capital interests and moral concepts are not mutually resistant but should be conjugate. Only in this way can society avoid the emotional joy of relying on a "celebrity" persona becoming nothingness or even a social atomization crisis.

By analyzing the construction and influence of celebrity "persona," especially the influence on celebrities themselves and the larger society, this paper partially fills the current academic gap in this direction. However, there is a limitation of the lack of statistical data in this paper. Therefore, future research can use quantitative analysis to explore or predict the popular characteristics of celebrity personas or establish a new research paradigm.

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