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Analysis of the Roast Expression Mechanism of Online Public Opinion (Postprint)

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Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic has catalyzed the rapid proliferation of online discussion programs since 2020. The popularity of roast-style talk shows appears to have increased public inclination toward employing punchlines and satirical expressions when engaging with online discourse. This study therefore investigates, through the theoretical lenses of priming effect and ripple effect, whether exposure to such programs influences individuals' expressive mechanisms and depth of cognitive processing regarding social public opinion, utilizing questionnaire surveys and interviews. Cross-analysis reveals a positive correlation between viewing frequency and propensity to employ punchlines in self-expression, alongside a tendency toward more superficial analysis of public opinion. Furthermore, this study finds that excessive consumption of roast-style content contributes to increased irrationality in public discourse, elevated incidence of online violence, and additional societal impacts.

Full Text

Preamble

Analysis of the Roast Expression Mechanism in Online Public Opinion

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Abstract: Due to the pandemic, internet discussion shows have expanded rapidly since 2020. With the rising popularity of roast talk shows, people increasingly employ punchlines and satirical language when responding to online public opinion. This paper examines whether watching roast talk shows influences individuals' expression mechanisms and the depth of their engagement with social issues, drawing on priming effect and ripple effect theories through

questionnaire surveys and interviews. Cross-analysis reveals that frequent viewers of roast talk shows demonstrate a greater tendency to use punchlines in their expression and tend to analyze public opinion more superficially. The study further finds that excessive consumption of roast talk shows may contribute to more irrational public discourse, increased cyber violence, and other negative impacts.

Keywords: roast talk shows, priming effect, ripple effect, network propagation

1. Introduction

Beginning in 2022, the global economy has deteriorated beyond the International Monetary Fund's projections, while new Omicron variants continue to spread. As the offline economy struggles under pandemic conditions, online chat shows like "Roast" have continued to gain viewership. However, researchers have observed that with the growing popularity of these programs, online public opinion has increasingly favored punchlines and satire, contributing to heightened irrationality and online violence. This raises an important question: Do roast talk shows alter how people perceive problems? Do they influence how individuals express themselves?

2.1 Literature Review of the Talk Show Phenomenon

Numerous academic studies have examined how talk shows influence audience cognition and behavior. Applying the General Theory of Verbal Humor, scholar Mary Muthoni Githatu analyzes the discursive themes of the Kenyan comedy show Churchill Live, finding that hosts can address socially sensitive topics through humor, thereby helping resolve social problems in Kenya. Srikrishna Vasupradha employs critical discourse analysis to study celebrity talk shows, arguing that these platforms have become vehicles for celebrity branding or rebranding. Chinese researcher Zhang Ning investigates the humorous language of talk shows through corpus analysis, identifying four distinct types of humor. Feminist scholar Xue Jing examines how talk shows contribute to discussions of gender issues and advance feminist discourse. Using "The Big News Event" as a case study, researcher Li Yue concludes that roast-style talk shows create interactive communication that benefits both media and audiences, with viewers experiencing emotional relief and other positive outcomes.

2.2 Literature Review on Priming Effects

The priming effect, also translated in Chinese as the guiding effect or foreshadowing effect, originated in psychological research on memory information processing and was applied to communication studies around the 1980s. Berkowitz introduced the priming effect to communication research in 1984 to examine how information padding influences violence. In their 1987 book *Important News: Television and American Public Opinion*, Shanto Iyengar and Donald R. Kinder connected priming to agenda-setting research, pushing beyond the

perceptual boundaries of traditional agenda-setting theory's understanding of media effects. Chinese scholar Liu Hailong continues this line of inquiry from an agenda-setting perspective, exploring the second level of agenda-setting research and its significance for political communication on television and its application in China. Scholars Pan Ji and Zhang Junfang analyze the mechanism through which priming effects occur, arguing that they result from external stimuli causing activation labels to gain salience, a process related to individuals' cognitive base models and schemas.

2.3 Literature Review on the Ripple Effect

The ripple effect, also known as the imitation effect, was developed by American educational psychologist Jacob Kounin and colleagues in 1988 to explain why the ultimate impact of an event can exceed its initial effect, even to the point of "breaking the circle." Leschine applied this theory to conduct a detailed analysis of oil spill risk amplification within a social risk framework. In China, most studies begin with specific cases to analyze the ripple effect's characteristics and impacts from a micro perspective. Deng Ying and colleagues, using hazy weather as an example, studied public opinion risk characteristics in the era of new online media. Yang Binbin examined the generation characteristics, challenges, and governance mechanisms of online public opinion through the case of a female driver crashing a Maserati in Yongcheng, finding that the ripple effect of online public opinion features multiple information bursting points, wide impact scope, and difficulty in management. She proposed governance mechanisms for such incidents from multiple perspectives, including consciousness, society, and offline dimensions.

However, existing research has not examined the influence of roast talk shows on online public opinion from the combined perspectives of priming and ripple effects. Therefore, this paper addresses the following questions through these theoretical lenses: Do roast talk shows affect people's expression mechanisms? Do they influence the depth of people's thinking about social issues?

3. Research Methodology

This study employs questionnaires and interviews to investigate whether people's thought processes change due to priming from talk shows and whether they analyze public opinion through a roast expression mechanism. The target population comprises individuals who watch roast talk shows and are active online. The study uses simple random sampling, incidental sampling, and snowball sampling methods, distributing questionnaires primarily through the internet. Interviews serve as a supplementary method to achieve greater depth while ensuring questions remain answerable, reducing waste, and improving survey quality. The interview period lasted from January 2023 to February 2023, conducted via telephone and text messaging. The basic profile of interviewees is shown in Table 1 .

4.1 Analysis of Survey Sample Characteristics

A total of 224 questionnaires were collected, with 197 respondents having watched roast talk shows and 27 having never watched them, yielding 197 valid questionnaires. The gender distribution was nearly equal, with 102 males (51.78%) and 95 females (48.22%). Age distribution showed that individuals under 18 and over 60 accounted for 3.05% combined, those aged 18-38 comprised 72.63%, and those aged 39-59 comprised 21.32%. This indicates that the roast talk show audience is predominantly young and middle-aged, with young people forming the majority. Regarding education level, those with education below junior high school and those with master's degrees or above accounted for 9.13% combined, while those with high school and university education accounted for 90.87%. Descriptive analysis revealed that 54.9% of respondents watched roast talk shows 2-5 times per month for approximately 2-5 hours. Among them, over 60% reported using punchlines from talk shows in daily life, and more than half believed that watching roast talk shows had influenced their everyday expression.

4.2 Correlation Analysis Between Roast Talk Show Viewing and Roast Expression Mechanisms

The analysis used the frequency of watching roast talk shows from the questionnaire's second section and related questions from the third section as variables. Pearson correlation analysis revealed that "frequency of watching roast talk shows" correlated with "desire to use punchlines" at $p < 0.000^{**}$, indicating that more frequent viewing leads to greater use of punchlines both online and in daily life. Thus, research hypothesis H1 holds true.

4.3 Analysis of Correlation Between Roast Talk Shows and Thinking About Online Public Opinion

In examining the relationship between watching roast talk shows and thinking about online public opinion, the study used questions from part 4 (social opinion analysis) and part 2 as variables to analyze the relationship between "frequency of watching roast talk shows" and "superficiality of social opinion analysis." The research hypothesis H2—that more frequent viewing leads to more superficial analysis of social opinion—is valid.

5.1 The Impact of Roast Talk Shows

Questionnaire results confirm both hypotheses proposed in this paper: more frequent viewing of talk shows leads audiences to use more punchlines, and more frequent viewing correlates with more superficial analysis of social opinions.

5.1.1 Reinforcing Audience Propensity for Roast Expression

Questionnaire analysis revealed that 68.53% of respondents use punchlines from talk shows in daily life, 72.08% use punchlines they've seen when surfing the internet, 76.14% use talk show punchlines in daily life, and 74.62% reported that watching roast talk shows has affected their online expression. This indicates that most people are influenced by roast talk shows and have altered their expression mechanisms. Clearly, in the process of watching these programs, audiences not only learn punchlines but also absorb the roast expression mechanism subtly—a phenomenon worthy of attention.

5.1.2 Weakening Audience In-Depth Consideration of Social Opinion

Analysis of the relationship between roast talk show viewing frequency and superficiality of social opinion analysis found that only 12.69% of respondents believed that social opinion analysis in talk shows would not affect their own views. In interviews, when researchers conducted in-depth discussions about why people use punchlines more frequently online than in reality and which talk show views might influence opinions on social issues, responses aligned closely with priming and ripple effect theories. The main reasons for preferring punchlines online include: “hot topics” often originate on the internet and can quickly break established patterns; there are always people online who understand “using punchlines,” providing a sense of identity; and no one wants to become disconnected from existing circles by failing to understand new punchlines. This dynamic increases punchline dissemination, creating a ripple effect. However, as Interviewee 4 noted, while they maintain their own views on social opinion events involving traditional ethics and morality, they are easily influenced by talk show perspectives regarding emerging social trends, lacking depth in their analysis of social opinion.

5.2 Negative Implications

5.2.1 Prevalence of Irrational and Superficial Views

This study finds that excessive consumption of roast talk shows negatively impacts expression tendencies and analysis depth, potentially leading to more irrational discourse, cyber violence, and related consequences. Audiences should maintain correct stances when watching entertaining roast talk shows and avoid being easily led by superficial views presented in these programs.

5.2.2 The Communicative Nature of the Roast Expression Mechanism

Beyond the above findings, questionnaire item D2 asked: “Have you ever tried to express yourself in a talk show style or create a punchline when encountering social opinion?” An overwhelming 79.91% answered “yes,” indicating that most respondents have attempted to create their own punchlines. This raises questions: Where do these audience-created punchlines go? Are they copied

within smaller circles? Researchers argue that awareness is needed regarding how the roast mechanism propagates to audiences' immediate surroundings, as such small-scale autonomous transmission is more likely to create ripple effects that may influence more people through roast expressions.

6. Summary

This study employs questionnaires and interviews to investigate whether roast talk shows affect thought patterns and whether the roast expression mechanism influences analysis of social opinion, theorizing connections between talk show popularity, priming and ripple effects, and punchline usage in online public opinion. The findings suggest significant relationships between watching roast talk shows and both expression mechanisms and social opinion analysis. Additionally, this research presents novel findings on priming and ripple effects as emerging phenomena in contemporary China driven by rapid internet and talk show development.

Limitations include small sample sizes and inadequate examination of social opinion topics in roast talk shows, leaving gaps in research about variables influencing social opinion analysis and the communicative nature of the roast mechanism. Future communication research should pay greater attention to issues like online roasting and punchline usage, expanding investigation into factors affecting people's analysis of social opinion.

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