

Research on audience psychological communication in the era of new media--taking the MBTI phenomenon as an example

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Abstract. This article adopts a literature analysis method, taking the popular phenomenon of MBTI (Myers Briggs Type Indicator) in the current era of new media as the background, aiming to study the emergence and development process of MBTI from the perspective of audience psychology. The author conducts analytical research on communication psychology-related theories such as usage and satisfaction, selective contact hypothesis, and interest groups, deeply explores the application of MBTI in audience psychology research, analyzes its value in understanding audience behavior and psychological characteristics, and explores its challenges and prospects in practical applications. While MBTI has become popular, it has also brought some negative orientations due to its labeling, such as stereotypes and group anxiety. The fanaticism and initiative exhibited by individuals in the congenial group trigger group effects through communication. In the era of new media, with the rapid development of various media matrices, how to rationally view the emotional interactions of individuals and even groups constructed by MBTI, how to use the power of new media to correctly meet audience needs, and how to make the emergence and dissemination of MBTI conform to the benign trend of social development are all issues worthy of in-depth research.

1 Introduction

The full name of MBTI is "Myers Briggs Type Indicator", proposed by American psychologist Isabel Briggs Myers and her mother Katherine Cook Briggs in the 1940s [1]. It is a personality type theory model based on the eight psychological types classified by Swiss psychologist Carl Gustav Jung, which puts the theory of personality psychological types into practice. This testing tool measures individual differences (behavior, emotions, thinking patterns) in four dimensions, each including two directions: E (Extraversion) and I (Introversion), N (Intuition) and S (Sensing), F (Feeling) and T (Thinking), as well as P (Perceiving) and J (Judging). Combined, there are a total of 16 different personality types. In today's society, audience psychology research has become a focus of attention in multiple fields such as marketing, advertising, and psychology. The psychological characteristics,

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preferences, and behavioral patterns of the audience have a crucial impact on the promotion of products or services. Among them, the MBTI personality test, as a widely used personality analysis tool, provides a new perspective for audience psychology research. This article aims to provide valuable references for research and practice in related fields by deeply analyzing the relationship between MBTI personality types and audience psychology.

2 Audience Psychology: "Uses and Gratifications"

This theory was proposed by renowned scholar Katz in 1974, emphasizing the importance of placing the audience in the main position, affirming the audience's initiative in media contact and use, and believing that the audience's exposure to specific media is to meet their specific needs. The basic needs of the audience include obtaining information, personal identity, interaction, and entertainment [2]. The needs of the audience are the psychological inclination of the audience to be satisfied due to feeling a certain lack, and also the motivation to participate in and disseminate MBTI.

2.1 Use and Effect Mode

In the 1880s, communication scholar Wendell proposed the "use and effect" model, which focused on the audience's dependence on the media. He found that the more the audience desired satisfaction from the media, the more they would convince themselves to rely on it [3]. Many information senders even categorize products according to MBTI, personifying MBTI to make it accessible to almost all audiences. For example, referring to ESTP personality as "sunglasses boy"; ISFJ is known as "Nurse" and when promoting products, titles such as "movies loved by Little Butterfly (INFP)" and "must visit attractions for Happy Doggy (ENFP)" are also given. When the audience determines their personality classification through testing, if their personality matches or matches that of popular public figures or people they like, they will feel emotional value gained from it and continuously strengthen their attention to MBTI personality on social media. With the support of big data, the media network and daily life of the audience will soon be filled with MBTI-related information.

2.2 Realizing the Needs of the Audience and MBTI - Personal Identity and Collective Social Interaction

The reason why MBTI testing has become popular on the Internet in recent years cannot be separated from the fact that in today's Internet media information dissemination environment, it has achieved great satisfaction in the process of meeting audience needs, especially in the aspects of personal identity and collective social interaction. According to the theory of self-development, an individual's self-awareness can be divided into three stages: physiological self, social self, and psychological self. The formation of the social self and psychological self relies on the social norms and interpersonal communication set by the media. In the era of new media, audiences continuously achieve self-awareness through the use of media. On this basis, the MBTI test strengthened the audience's identification with their identity and met the subjective needs of self-recognition.

2.2.1 Research on the Collective Social Interaction Needs of MBTI Audiences from the Perspective of the "the looking-glass self" Theory

The "looking-glass self" theory was proposed by American sociologist Cooley in 1902. This theory suggests that the formation of human self-awareness stems from social interaction with others, and the evaluation and attitude of others towards oneself is a mirror that reflects oneself, through which individuals observe and understand themselves [4]. This influence

not only shapes the audience's self-awareness but may also affect their personality types. The collective social interaction needs of MBTI audiences are mainly reflected in self-positioning and cognition, building new platforms for self-cognition, promoting social interaction and topic opening, building collective identity and sense of belonging, and satisfying emotional needs and psychological comfort. According to Zigmund Bauman's reflection on postmodernism, the division of group identity in today's society tends to be fluid and unstable. People no longer rely on the definition of groups to confirm their identity but hope to obtain more detailed self-division. MBTI provides audiences with a concise and clear self-awareness platform, on which people can gain a deeper understanding of their inner world and better understand the personality traits of others. The audience of MBTI 16 personality traits is automatically divided into 16 circle groups. As long as you hold the test results, you can join this circle without any threshold and receive equal external recognition. In a highly mobile social environment, this relatively stable and secure group undoubtedly provides people with a great sense of security. At the same time, although the existence of MBTI has the potential to label personality definitions, it can also solve many difficulties in social environments, such as attributing problems to personality traits. Of course, the underlying logic behind this is also a means of collective escape from reality, but it can also serve as a buffer for social interaction, alleviate oppression, and prevent social deviance [5].

2.2.2 Starting from the "Barnum Effect" to Study the Personal Identity Needs of MBTI Audiences

"Identity" is a psychological concept, and Giddens pointed out that self-identity is an individual's reflection on their own experiences and understanding of themselves, which is their inward exploration. Individual reflection originates from the role of reflexive consciousness, also known as self-reflection consciousness or self-awareness, which refers to an individual's conscious, proactive, and critical understanding of their thinking, emotions, behavior, and environment. It involves individual reflection and examination of self-existence, self-worth, and self-development, and is an important component of individual psychological development. Reflexive consciousness not only focuses on the individual's inner world, but also the relationship between the individual and the external world, serving as a bridge connecting the individual with society, culture, and the environment.

The Barnum effect refers to the belief that a vague and general personality description accurately reveals one's characteristics, even though this description is generally applicable and very vague for most people. This phenomenon reflects people's tendency to view vague and universal information as an accurate description of their characteristics [6]. The reasons for its formation are as follows: 1. The audience has incomplete self-awareness, limited ability to self-awareness, and is prone to relying on external evaluation and control to recognize themselves, so it is easy to resonate with vague and ambiguous descriptions. 2. People tend to accept information that meets their expectations and ignore information that contradicts them. This subjective verification mindset makes vague descriptions more likely to be considered accurate. In certain social and cultural contexts, supernatural beliefs and practices are widely accepted, and this cultural environment also promotes the formation of the Barnum effect. The application of the Barnum effect to MBTI can be understood as the test results enhancing the audience's self-awareness through vague and vague descriptions, meeting their subjective needs for self-confirmation. In addition, if users spend a lot of time and cost answering questions, they are more inclined to agree with the answers after answering the questions.

3 Hypothesis of selective exposure

the hypothesis of selective exposure was proposed by communication scholar Lazarsfeld. This theory suggests that the audience is no longer just a receiver of information in today's era, but also bears the responsibility of communication. The prominent psychological manifestation of the audience is that they are more willing to contact information that is close to their existing views and positions, and tend to reject views that contradict their positions [7]. According to research on the collection of survey information for MBTI users, a considerable number of users in the MBTI test are not based on their objective understanding and practices when answering questions, but on their ideal actions they hope to do. It is precisely because many audiences have a vague understanding of themselves that the final test results are not their true personality, but rather the ideal personality of the users obtained after the audience selectively focuses on the parts they are willing to accept. This corresponds to Jung's principle of synchronicity, which is "meaningful coincidence"[8]. After obtaining this recognition of personality, the psychological changes it brings will drive the audience to verify the results through behavioral practice, ultimately forming a closed loop, which is the "Pygmalion effect". For example, a new media user sees the "MBTI16 Personality Income Ranking" on a social platform and finds out that the ESTJ personality has the highest income and the INFP personality has the lowest income in this ranking. Based on this cognition, the user then conducts a test, and during the test, the answer tends to choose the option that makes it possible for them to be classified as an ESTJ personality due to the psychological desire to belong to a high-income personality, ultimately resulting in the ESTJ personality. Perhaps there is a possibility that the audience's answers may not be their true thoughts, but they will still be happy to have a hopeful personality. In the subsequent life, perhaps this user will constantly tell themselves that "I am an ESTJ type personality" so that their words and actions can be as close to this direction as possible. After a period of habit, it may look no different from an ESTJ-type personality. Meanwhile, the different personality types of MBTI may indicate that individuals have different preferences and tendencies in information processing. For example, extroverted individuals may be more willing to interact and share information, while introverted individuals may be more inclined to introspect and think. These different information processing preferences may indirectly affect their behavior when selectively accessing information. From the hypothesis of selective exposure individuals with different MBTI types may be more likely to be exposed to information that matches or is similar to their personality type. For example, thinking (T) individuals may be more inclined to access and analyze information with strong logical and rational thinking, while emotional (F) individuals may focus more on content related to emotions and interpersonal relationships.

4 Congenial group

MBTI congenial group refers to a group formed based on MBTI personality type theory with common interests and goals. As a social and cultural phenomenon, the dissemination mechanism of the congenial group is worth exploring. Some scholars believe that the congenial group presents a hierarchical system, where participants who first enter this field often have control over management. This phenomenon can also be seen in the MBTI congenial group. The congenial group composed of MBTI enthusiasts is different from another congenial group in that it is not based on the love and pursuit of certain people or materials but on the self-awareness of each individual within the entire group. Therefore, the MBTI congenial group is exploring inward rather than outward.

Before the rapid development of media communication and the rise of MBTI testing, it was only a tool for individual reference and did not form a settlement. Nowadays, the development of media has facilitated social connections, making it easier for MBTI audiences to conduct free tests through social media and find a large number of their own "peers". According to social identity theory, "social classification helps people find their

place in society and develop a sense of identification with the group they belong to" [9]. At the same time, individuals can also find their meaning in the group and reduce their uncertainty by gaining recognition [10]. In the process of information circulation, there are very few voices and viewpoints that can be seen opposing MBTI and its theories. The reason is that most of the audience who choose to take the initiative to express their opinions on MBTI issues hold a positive view, while those who do not support them often choose to "not pay attention" and no longer become their followers while retaining their own opinions to avoid unnecessary conflicts and group attacks caused by supporting groups. Over time, the two sides seen in the media lose balance in their opinions, and the field is filled with one voice while the other is almost silent, forming the phenomenon of Neumann's "spiral of silence" [11]. Another important reason for forming MBTI interest groups is the role of opinion leaders within the group. Among MBTI's audience, there are many users with high communication productivity who contribute more production and dissemination functions to the group content than most audiences, such as artists and writers of articles and comics, video editors, and users with a large number of fans who can provide high media network influence. This type of audience plays the role of opinion leaders in the group, responsible for the stability of the interest margin group. The other audiences may also rely on the group to gain inner stability due to their uncertainty about themselves [12].

5 Conclusion

This paper has given an account of and the reasons for the widespread use of MBTI testing, and an analysis was conducted on the new psychological patterns derived from the dual influence of MBTI's audience in the social context of the new media era and the theoretical framework of traditional communication psychology. The research found that although MBTI has emerged on the Internet in recent years and is a new product supported by the new media era and the growth of youth groups, in the final analysis, it does not go beyond the traditional psychological category of human behavior research. In the era of new media, the way and speed of information dissemination have undergone tremendous changes. At the same time, the psychological characteristics and behavioral patterns of the audience also exhibit new characteristics. The study of MBTI audience psychology provides us with new perspectives and tools to understand the audience. By deeply analyzing the MBTI personality types and behavioral patterns of the audience, we can better understand their needs and expectations, and continuously explore more effective information dissemination strategies. It can also remind us to fully consider individual differences and diversity when conducting research on audience psychology, pay more attention to the personalized needs of the audience, and achieve more accurate and effective information dissemination effects. Finally, several limitations to this study need to be considered. For example, there is no clear solution to the combination of psychological theory and MBTI, and the specific research sample is too small. This is also worth further exploration and refinement in future research based on these theoretical supports.

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