Dilemmas and Reflections of Officials Live Streaming in the Context of Rural Revitalization

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Abstract. Officials live streaming is a new exploration of rural revitalization based on the mode of rural e-commerce and grassroots governance. Officials as anchors have a certain political symbolic colour, which has a special added layer for them to drive the sales of agricultural products and handle political affairs online. Through analyzing the subjectivity and professionalism of officials anchors in live streaming practice, it is found that the coupling of officials live streaming and rural revitalization in practice often breeds the problem of subject trust in the identity of officials, the problem of media practice for the government to promote the implementation of rural revitalization strategy, and the problem of emerging discourse governance in cyberspace. For this reason, officials anchors need to consider weakening political symbols, visualizing personal IP, and promoting the normalization of live streaming, so as to promote the transformation of rural governance logic, rural governmental solutions, and rural products to increase income.

Keywords: Officials live streaming, rural revitalization, development dilemma, innovative ideas.

Fei Xiaotong mentions that Chinese society is a society with special characteristics of rural society from the perspective of grassroots level in From the Soil .[1] When the rural area thrives, the nation thrives; when the rural area declines, the nation declines. The construction of rural area has been a topic of great concern to social managers at home and abroad since ancient times. From the Xiangsui system in China in the Western Zhou Dynasty to the Lv's Village Covenant, the earliest written village covenant in the Northern Song Dynasty and from the reconstruction and transformation of the rural areas in Western countries after the WWII to the today's sustainable and intelligent construction of the rural areas in the European Union, they all reflect the importance of the countryside as a grassroots organization.

As a productive force, science and technology plays an important role in promoting social development. The development of the Internet, especially the HLS protocol, coupled with the technology of big data and artificial intelligence, has made it possible to transmit online audio and video information in real time, thus ensuring the popularity of live webcasting. The rural revitalization strategy was put forward at the 19th National Congress of the CPC and the successive laws introduced in 2021 also clearly proposed to adhere to reform and innovation and implement rural revitalization, while better playing the role of the government. Digital villages and smart villages are new perspectives for scholars at home and abroad to focus on rural development research. Digitalisation can accelerate the transformation of rural economic informatization, make up for the technical shortcomings of rural local industrial development and broaden rural economic growth channels. As a technical tool with a low barrier to entry, live streaming is no more difficult to understand than biochemical agronomy. As long as you have a smartphone, you can start a mobile live streaming at any time. This kind of micro live streaming meets the media use needs of users for real-time interaction, changing the main pattern of traditional media and influencing the modern industry and social structure. Therefore, the use of live streaming in rural revitalization has already been a major trend.

It is noteworthy that among the subjects of live streaming practice, apart from villagers, who are the core figures of rural revitalization, many officials have also begun to try, thus forming the media spectacle of officials live streaming on major short video platforms. Officials live streaming refers to the use of online media by government officials to broadcast live. With authoritative status as social managers, the professional live streaming skills trained through procedures and the carnival nature catalyzed by the network environment, they have achieved certain achievements and many

successful practitioners emerged. However, at the same time, the coupling of subject identity, professional skills and network field in the practice of live streaming for rural revitalization is often biased and out of harmony, thus breeding the problems of subject trust in the identity of officials, media practice in the government's promotion of rural revitalization strategy, and the emerging discourse governance in cyberspace.

1. The confusion of equality and authoritarianism: the structural dilemma faced by the live streaming spectacle of officials

Robert Scoble once stated that "Whoever can dominate the context will win the future". [2]What is the context? The context is the field plus spectacle. The field in the Internet is a virtual place that exists with an information interface as the medium, current information as the content, and information interaction as the purpose. While the spectacle is the landscaping of the field. The dominant nature of contemporary social existence is mainly embodied in a kind of spectacle that is shown. [3]The context of live streaming is composed of a field based on Internet technology and a spectacle created by symbolic live stream decoration, performative live communication techniques and IP-based anchors.

The live streaming empowered by Internet technology has continued the user's idea of equality because anchor and audience are in the same live channel without monopoly of the channel, which makes information accessible to everyone equally. So there will be a situation that people are in the same live stream, listening to the same explanations for the agricultural products from the same place. From the perspective of subject demand, officials anchors and the public satisfy each others' material and spiritual pursuits through information interaction behaviors: officials by selling more products to get the recognition and praise of their political achievements from the public and the public by buying products with reasonable prices or by the officials' narrative words to get confidence in the government's governance. Live streaming has brought vitality to rural revitalization, yet what needs to be reflected upon is that although the Internet has brought us an equal media experience, our use of and access to the Internet itself is actually a process deeply constrained by power structures. [4]

From the subjectivity of the officials anchors, what distinguishes officials from general netizens is that they come from a power structure and will inevitably be in a more authoritative position in the exchange of information. However, Internet live streaming is a decentralized and unauthoritative field, which makes it difficult for officials to effectively communicate with the public in the live streaming due to their authoritarianism. For example, once a head of the business section was invited to make a live streaming, but the head read the script word for word from beginning to end, and the script was serious, with the content of the population of the county and the gross product of the county. This informative discourse was rather like holding a work seminar, and instead of making full use of the identity rectification function of mobile live streaming, it made the government officials' identity labels fixed. This means that officials need to get rid of the structural idea of authoritarianism when making a live streaming and try to communicate with the public with equality.

In terms of the initiative of the officials anchors, they gradually improve the dialogue strategy and speak about what the people like to hear after a preliminary understanding of the logic of dialogue. For instance, Tao Guanghong , the governor of Dangshan County in Anhui Province, said during the live streaming that "the skin of Dangshan pear is so thin that you can't find it when it falls to the ground." He ate the pears and spoke about the folk proverb, endorsing his hometown products. During the event, the live streaming accumulated 600,000 views, sales up to more than 27,000 orders, and nearly 140,000 pounds of pears were sold. In terms of the pears lagged by the epidemic, it was a great success of the use of live streaming. But such initiative will lead to utilitarianism-oriented and biased choice. According to a leader from a click farm company in Nanjing, Jiangsu Province, he had received "government orders" in many parts of the country, and most customers were officials, asking them to enter the live stream thus making it more traffic.

However, when the live streaming was over, the products would be immediately returned. The leader said that the overall return rate for officials live streaming was even more than 80% in total. So the officials anchors must have an equal concept of dialogue, proactive communication and real responses to demands.

2.The dilemma of the game between identity construction and credibility consumption

Issues concerning agriculture, countryside and farmers are the top priority in rural revitalization, and the focus of solving these issues is to promote farmers' sustainable income. While the live streaming is precisely the new dynamic energy to promote the sales of agricultural products. The biggest difference between the officials anchors and the e-commerce anchors is the difference in the identity of their subjects. Compared with e-commerce anchors, officials as anchors have a special political symbolic colour, which represents the credibility and authority of the national government institutions. Therefore, the act of marketing based on this credibility endorsement increases the credibility and safety of the product. For example, Wang Shuai, the titular deputy governor of Shanghe County in Jinan, sold Braised Chicken, Dezhou Style in a live streaming. His live streaming lasted 6 hours, from 1pm to 7pm, and he ate four chickens and produced many classical sentences. Then on the second day, more than 6,000 chickens were sold out. Such political logic is a unique addition to the officials anchors' practice of live streaming: on the one hand, officials, as personal representatives of government agencies, are an important factor in the construction of the government's image; on the other hand, there is a certain gaming relationship between officials using the government's credibility as a backing in the live streaming process and officials translating their status into effectiveness in selling products by using the convenience of the status.

Firstly, from the perspective of a grassroots governor, the words and actions of officials in the process of live streaming no longer only represent them personally, but also reflect the political symbols behind them. So the choice of words for the live streaming will become particularly cautious. For e-commerce anchors, the use of playful and sensational words is common, such as Li Jiaqi's frequent use of "All the beauties!" "Oh my god!" The tone of these words is light-hearted and humorous, and incorporates the emotional language of acquaintance status, constructing the sale of goods as a source of emotion from the perspective of emotional appeal. As a social manager, he or she needs to construct a certain majestic identity. If he or she just banter and humour will to a certain extent dissipate his or her authority. Therefore, when officials shoulder the responsibility of selling agricultural products to help farmers, their live streaming will include two tasks: firstly, to maintain a certain level of government authority and credibility, and secondly, to break the public stereotype of the government's image and enhance its affinity by interacting with the public. However, in real-life scenarios, these two are often not well coordinated. For example, Cui Danni from The Administration for Rural Revitalization of Yichuan County, Yan'an City, Shaanxi Province, was once questioned by netizens during a live streaming, "Don't you feel ashamed that a public official is playing AAuto Quicker every day?"

Secondly, from the perspective of an anchor, boosting the amount of agricultural and sideline products sale is an important criterion for assessing his or her job performance. Therefore, the performance appraisal of the official's live streaming has also become an important part of the evaluation of the official's performance. Government officials are actually rational "economic people" whose basic motivation tends to be the pursuit of maximum personal benefit. It is precisely by virtue of their unique political symbols that officials can use the government's credibility to stand up for their products and pursue "digital performance", which tends to breed the problem of corruption in which officials pursue power rent-seeking in order to unilaterally pursue performance, as well as the problem of loss of trust due to the abuse of the government's credibility. For example, in the live streaming activities of the county governor of Chenggu County in Hanzhong City, Shaanxi Province, a notice was issued requiring the county's support cadres to purchase

live-streamed agricultural products for no less than 50 yuan. Such behavior not only violated the laws of the market, not really increasing sales of agricultural products, creating a kind of false data, but also defeated the original purpose of its live streaming, reducing the happiness of farmers' lives, and weakening the public's satisfaction with the government's actions and convincing.

3. The dilemma of the conflict between frontstage performance and popular revelry

The implementation of the rural revitalization strategy intends to break the long-standing development framework of urban-rural dichotomy, as China's rural areas, agriculture and farmers have always been at the bottom of the "stigmatization chain" of the industrial structure, suffering from discrimination and stigmatization. [5] With the empowerment of new media, especially live-streaming technology, ordinary people can become superhuman, such as the new generation of rural netizens; small things can become big, such as various rural public events that are exaggerated. This kind of empowerment is inseparable from the logic of performance. Whether it is rural villagers or government officials, in the process of live streaming, they need to pay attention to their own behavior.

Officials are known to be serious. According to Goffman's "dramaturgical theory", the social role officials play in the foreground is servants of the people, and the social expectation they bear is to work for the welfare of the people. The more exciting the performance on stage, the more exhilarated the people are off stage, and the live streaming of the officials is essentially an act of carnival. First, it symbolizes a kind of equality between government officials and ordinary people in visual rights, which means that the Panopticon prison with anchors as the main staring subject is changed into the common prison with the public as the main staring subject. Second, it even reflects a shift in the power of the subject between the anchors and the public, as the public is no longer the traditional image of a fan, but has the power to manipulate the anchor. This leads to a conflict between the skills or "performance style" of the government officials in live streaming and the carnival mentality of the users.

The first is the conflict between the input for preparing for the live streaming and the concentration on his own work. In order to gain the approval of the public, officials anchors need to groom themselves and create a mirror hetero-image by pre-designing make-up, discourse, costumes and scenes. However, in the real practice of officials live streaming, the design of discourse and visuals often fails to meet the expectations of the public. Speaking in dialect, poor Mandarin and slow responses are often common problems in officials' discursive style. On the one hand, speaking in dialect is an important manifestation of officials' realness, which is to a certain extent a manifestation of their true disposition and can effectively attract people with the same cultural background and social memory to come and watch; on the other hand, it also hinders the understanding of other people who do not share the same cultural background, because they often do not understand what the anchor is saying. Luo Yin, deputy mayor of the Jinyang Municipal People's Government in Sichuan Province, mentioned that the most difficult thing about the live streaming was speaking Mandarin, and that he had limited time to prepare for it, and even though he had rehearsed and rehearsed, he would still be nervous and speechless during the live streaming. Known as a good seller on the horseback - He Jiao Long director sold 140 million yuan of agricultural products through live streaming. Through the observation of her live streaming we could find that decent dress, mature makeup, warm scene and friendly words were reflected to the fullest. It is clear that if we want to achieve excellent live streaming effect, we should make various efforts in visual presentation. Government officials hold certain functional responsibilities and are not professional anchors, so there is a certain conflict in dealing with their own work and additional work.

The second is the conflict between the public's expression of opinions and emotions and the officials' inability to cope with them. In the online field, users can express their opinions more

freely and quickly in public. We can rather say officials live streaming is for the public to examine the government's management capabilities than a "show" for officials to perform and for users to watch. The public can interact with other opinions in the live comment section or on the pop-up screen, echoing or voicing their opposition, and sometimes the official anchors are immature in their live professionalism and unable to deal with the public's demands in a timely and effective manner, which may lead to the phenomenon of a clamour in the live streaming, and even more so, causes public opinion on the Internet. The officials will try to interact with netizens in a more equal way by using a variety of live streaming methods, such as doing a bit or making up a doggerel. And some will also use buzzwords and behave casually. From the level of public opinion, although such public officials will be attractive for many fans, but if something unexpected happens and the official doesn't handle it properly, it could easily put the government officials in the middle of a sensitive topic and trigger secondary public opinion, thus affecting the image of the official and the government. Although Qiu Xueming, a cyberstar, also a county head of Guangshan County in Xinyang City, Henan Province, has achieved good results in his live streaming, there is no shortage of voices questioning his expensive prices and low professional standards. Considering that live streaming often requires the use of emotional expressions, and in the face of the diversity of audiences, officials may provoke some negative public opinion due to inappropriate or inadvertent expressions during the live streaming.

4.Innovative development ideas of rural revitalization and officials live streaming

Tong Bing, a scholar at Fudan University, believes that mediatization has become an important driving force in contemporary China. [6] The officials are not only addressing village affairs and selling products, but also exploring a new path of rural governance. The emergence of the live streaming is a strike on the authoritarian governance framework of officials, and also a call for innovative grassroots governance. Officials should present in live streaming with a positive and enthusiastic new image rather than the usual "meeting symbols" of traditional media coverage. Some studies have pointed out that live streams that meet the psychological needs of the audience are divided into three types: lifestyle, curiosity and utility. [7]The type of lifestyle live streaming emphases the restoration of real-life scenes, while the type of curiosity focuses on visual pleasure, and the type of utility is mixed with the specific purposes of individuals. Combined with the identity construction dilemma and occupation-focused dilemma that exist above, these three types of live streaming can be applied to the live streaming practice of government officials to satisfy the audience.

4.1 Weaken political symbols and attract audience through daily contrast

Restore the real state of life and promote emotional engagement of the audience. Officials are representatives of power and it is a given that they carry a certain amount of political overtones. And the characters needed for live streaning are not exalted and unapproachable. Therefore, in order to reach an equal and harmonious communication with the public, lightening the political overtones is the first step. The public's evaluation of the government is often dismissed as "unfounded", but there is no doubt that in the public's cognitive base, the government's mission is to lead social development and national prosperity, and this grand discourse tends to frame the government into a grand and serious perception. Live streaming is a powerful tool to effectively break this stereotype. Officials anchors can fully use live streaming to communicate with the public face-to-face, and if they simply avoid or exclude having an equal dialogue with the public they will further solidify this stereotype. In May 2020, a county intended to sell local persimmon cakes through live streaming, and the combination of MCN plus county governor was used to boost traffic and sales. However, because the leaders thought that words of a carnival nature were not appropriate to say, the final live

streaming evolved into the deputy county governor reading lines from a script, and the live streaming went from over 400,000 people at the beginning to only 30,000 at the end.

One of the reasons why fans like to watch reality shows of their idols is to observe their private lives and thus reduce the psychological distance between them. The distance between the government and the people used to be like an imposing building, but the live streaming allows the officials in this "building" to get close with the people, giving them the opportunity to show the people how good they really are in their daily lives. Therefore, officials need to fade the image of power in their minds and communicate with the public in a relaxed and natural way. For example, Qiu Xueming, a deputy cadre from Guangshan County in Xinyang City, Henan Province, sold local chickens on live streaming. He went into the farmhouse chicken pen and squatted on the ground to introduce the growing environment and various ways to eat them to the viewers behind the screen. The deputy governor of Renshou County, Sichuan Province, opened the live streaming directly in the local citrus grove, where he enthusiastically and vividly introduced the origin and growth process of the local citrus to the audience, sometimes jokingly saying to them, "Because I often go to the citrus field, I am growing more and more like a citrus." He is also affectionately known as the "Citrus Governor". This creates a strong contrast between the public's perception of him, as an official sitting in the office building and his current appearance as a farmer working on the filed. This contrast will make viewers more willing to stay in the live streaming and expect more performances of officials in daily scenes. So, instead of using official status as an endorsement to boost selling performance, why not seize the opportunity to present yourself and give the public a natural image of the official and a likable image of the government?

4.2 Visualize personal IP and promote recognition with an approachable image

Focus on visual and discursive appeal to enhance anchor's identification. Officials are the epitome of government and need to pay attention to differentiated personal IP performance on top of presenting an affable personal image. It makes sense that officials lack a certain level of expertise in live streaming, and if they cannot devote too much time and energy to training live streaming skills, then they need to pay attention to the shift in governance thinking behind live streaming, where the logic of the internet is to de-center and focuses on interaction. What the public expects is an anchor who hears their voices, understands their demands and gives them feedback on their problems. So how can officials realize these in a live streaming? As mentioned earlier, the spectacle of a live streaming is made up of symbolic live stream decorations, performative live communication discourses and IP-based anchors. The IP-based anchor is constructed by the first two, such as the He director known as the good seller on horseback. She, with her beautiful live studio interior, magnificent scenery of Xinjiang, as well as her atmospheric make-up and cordial communication, has not only made herself an internet celebrity director, but also made Yili visible to more people. Therefore we need to pay attention to the decoration of the live stream as well as discourse on live communication. Considering that the live stream decoration needs to pay a certain amount of financial and human resources, so from the perspective of optimal benefit we may first fall to the live discourse.

In terms of communication attitudes, effective live discourse is divided into banter, participation and sensationalism. The banter style is to communicate with the audience in a light-hearted and lively way, and even set up interactive games; the participation style is to interact with the audience in a "one-to-many" discourse mode, focusing on the overall atmosphere of the live streaming; in the sensationalist style, the language of "acquaintance" is used to create a variety of emotional sources for the agricultural products sale, such as telling the story of the farmers' difficulties in cultivating these products. From the form of expressions, there are Mandarin and dialect with a slight accent, and some officials anchors will worry that dialect will become a problem in the live streaming. For example, Luo Yin, the deputy mayor of Janyang City, Sichuan Province, mentioned that the most difficult thing in live streaming was speaking Mandarin. But dialect can sometimes be a big factor in effectively highlighting personal traits. Li Chengyang, the first secretary assigned to help the

Baoguo Village, speaks Chinese, English and Cantonese. As a graduate of The Chinese University of Hong Kong, he has been able to sell his agricultural products to Hong Kong with the advantage of his dialect since he arrived in the village. In addition, he also shared stories of the village's poverty alleviation with netizens, such as the village's "Baoguo liquor", which he said in the live streaming, "I will use this liquor for my future wedding." His humorous style of speech combined with the use of different languages made the audience remember him and the village.

4.3 Normalize live streaming to revitalize the countryside with media tools

Satisfy the audience for specific purposes and enhance the value of the live streaming. While the officials anchors make live streaming based on innovative ideas for rural governance and expanding the export of rural products, viewers come to watch based on seeing livelihood demands addressed and buying products at good prices. Thus the officials live streaming is an interweaving of business and political behaviour. Although the energy and time officials invest in live streaming can lead to a lack of focus when dealing with their own work, using live streaming itself as a way to deal with political affairs can firstly strengthen public oversight of whether rural affairs are being handled properly and, secondly, improve the efficiency of officials. Hu Rong, the deputy town chief of Huajialing Town in Tongwei County, Dingxi City, Gansu Province, had live streamings on AAuto Quicker, the content of which were divided into two main parts: dealing with village affairs and selling local agricultural products. And most of the time he would openly deal with village affairs in the live streaming, filming himself visiting the town, solving employment problems and so on. At the same time, village affairs live-streaming are now an important means of improving the efficiency of handling village affairs. Chemenduuan Village in Taojiang County, Hunan Province, opens 13 WeChat group live-streams to bring the full range of village affairs to the internet, which is a new path of village governance explored by Chemenduuan Village. Nearly 3,000 villagers participated in the five live streamings last year. More than 200 messages were left on each live streaming. This has led more and more villagers to use the internet for grassroots social governance innovation and rural e-commerce development. The rural area can make progress by live streaming and live streaming will also promote the transformation of the socialization and media paradigm of government services.

In addition to solving the demands of people's livelihoods, officials also need to help export rural agricultural products. The public has natural trust in officials marketing, which comes from the recognition of the quality of products by the government gatekeepers, and on this basis, officials also need to consider bringing viewers the real prices of products, which can not only increase farmers' efficiency and income, but also attract people to buy products of good quality and price. It is important to remember that this is not just a matter of traffic, but also a matter of profit and income. For example, Anyue in Sichuan province is a place that produces lemons in abundance, but due to the impact of the epidemic, the farmers' lemons were not marketed. Official leaders then made live streamings to sell lemons. The original price of lemon was 19.9 yuan, but they set the price to 9.9 yuan, so in 5 minutes, 5,000 lemons were sold out. But they later found that apart from labor costs, courier fees, damage, packaging and other costs, they were still losing money.

As mentioned above, the effect of officials live streaming in promoting rural revitalization is mainly to solve rural affairs and promote the sale of rural products. But in the real practice, they will meet dilemmas of identity construction and dicourse governance. Due to their special status, officials tend to fall into the stereotype of being serious and dull when they interact with the public, and thus become dependent on or abuse their credibility to promote product sales, or even simply create false data, deviating from the original purpose of rural revitalization. However, after a slight image overhaul, officials are easily carried away by the carnival logic of the Internet, thus breeding public opinion risks, and thus return to their original serious image. The solution to this is to understand the demands of the public watching the live streaming, that is to come from the people and serve their interests . Viewers watch live streaming for three reasons: firstly, to see characters on screen are in a state of life that seems different from the norm; secondly, to gain visual or other

sensory satisfaction; and thirdly, to satisfy their own psychological or life aspirations. Therefore, officials can try to reverse their thinking on governance and try to present their natural state of life, and integrate their personal characteristics for display and bring inexpensive products. This will help to build up a friendly image of officials and a credible image of the government, increasing the income of rural residents and promoting the consumption of urban residents, and better adapt the government to the structural transformation of governance thinking in the context of the Internet.

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