

# An Analysis of Self-Presentation in the Post-90s Micro-Social Field from the Perspective of Drama-Simulator Theory

## -- Take Weibo and WeChat as an Example

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### ABSTRACT

Since Goffman's drama-making theory was put forward, the phenomenon that individuals or groups embellishing their own behaviors by impressions in daily life has attracted wide attention in the academic circle. With the rapid development of social media, Weibo and WeChat have become the main field of interaction among Internet users. Through the interpretation of Goffman's drama theory, the research found that WeChat became the "front stage" for most users to present themselves, while Weibo became the "backstage" for them to perform freely. Based on this differentiated self-presentation, it is hoped that the public can pay enough attention to it, so as to reduce the imbalance in the role-playing process and promote the harmony of interpersonal relations.

**Keywords:** Drama theory, After 90, Micro social, Render themselves

### 1. INTRODUCTION

With the rapid spread and development of Internet information, a large number of Internet media are also quietly changing the way of communication between individuals and groups. With the continuous improvement of technology, these apps accelerate the whole society into the "micro" era. The so-called "micro" era does not mean that its scale and content are small. On the contrary, "micro" actually means that it is huge -- huge information and huge scale. The "post-90s", who were born in the era of the rise of the Internet, have become the new mainstream crowd of mobile Internet. Data show that the user scale of the post-90s reaches a new high of 362 million, surpassing the post-80s. The dependence of the post-90s users on the Internet continues to deepen, spending more than 10,000 minutes online every month, a year-on-year increase of 26.6%. Per capita daily usage time increased by 24.8% year on year to 447.7 minutes, nearly 7.5 hours.[1]. Since 2010, Weibo has occupied an important position in the era of new media due to its immediacy, simplicity and universality of information. Among all Weibo users, the "post-90s" generation is becoming a major force in Weibo social networking, active in super topic discussion, user comments, hot search, chat and other functional interfaces.

Some scholars have studied the differences and connections between Weibo and individual self-presentation in reality. Through research, Lin Ruiyun found that Weibo users will define Weibo situations according to their own work and life circles, so there will be a variety of ways to present Weibo situations, and it will also be gentle [2]. Jing Ming and Zhou Yan (2013) pointed out in their research that the self-presentation process of users in Weibo aims to create an idealized image, which is closely connected with the interactive behavior phenomenon in daily life and jointly becomes the basis for individual body performance interaction and image construction.[3]. Some scholars have analyzed the different self-presentation of different individuals in WeChat media from the perspective of demographics. Tong Hui found that the self-presentation of WeChat mainly occurred in the field of acquaintances, and the "personal information" could reveal the true identity of WeChat. There are also obvious gender and age differences in self-presentation in WeChat Moments, mainly manifested as that women are more active than men, and young people are more active than middle-aged people [4]. Compared with male groups, the original rate of WeChat moments in female user groups is higher than that in male groups [5]. It can be seen that the micro-social field reveals different reasons and group differences.

In the big stage of society, through various digital media, the post-90s Internet aborigines play their own different roles. Data shows that Weibo has become the third largest social media of this group following WeChat and QQ [1]. According to use experience, WeChat with QQ probably more homogeneity on the function, is an alternative and timeliness of the problem, as the growth of the time, use WeChat frequency gradually more than QQ, but exist between weibo and WeChat is relatively obvious difference, especially in its social function of open is especially apparent. Through this study, it is found that this part of the post-90s group has different overall images when facing the two APPs of Weibo and WeChat, and also different cognition of the two APPs. Therefore, from the perspective of self-presentation under Goffman's drama theory, this paper explores the sociological significance of the differentiated behavior of the "post-90s" group in WeChat and Weibo.

## **2. GOFFMAN'S THEORY OF DRAMATURGY**

Goffman is a famous American sociologist and writer. In his academic book *Self-Presentation in Everyday Life* [6], He made great contributions to sociological theory. It promoted the development of sociology.

In his book *Self-Presentation in Everyday Life*, Goffman elaborates on the concept and framework of "Drama-like Theory", and uses it to describe and analyze the phenomenon of interpersonal interaction. He compares life to performance, and society is a big stage on which everyone performs. The term "drama" is used to describe the self-presentation of an individual or group in daily social life.

Goffman's theoretical framework of "performance" is universal in social groups. It can be said that it is a generalized social norm and norm. It is not only a cognitive norm among individuals, but also a norm that individuals or groups follow when performing in daily life. "Performance" can be divided into two kinds. One is the performance under the state of involuntary performance, that is, the performers do not know that they are performing; The other is the performance under the conscious state, that is, the performer knows that he is performing. This process is similar to the phenomenon of individual self-expression in the process of interpersonal communication. However, in the second performance state, I am not a real self, but a self that has been symbolized. In today's society, a large number of web celebrity anchors, in the process of self-presentation with the help of the Internet and mass media, actually have carried on the "impression decoration" to their own performance area and presentation mode.

Individual performance areas can be divided into "front" and backstage. "Front stage" is a specific situational area where individuals conduct social activities. The meaning and purpose of individuals' activities in this area is to be known to others, aiming at making the audience understand the intention of the performers themselves. Compared with the "front stage", the "backstage" is a part of the field invisible to the audience, which can be compared to the rest area where the performers break away from the performance. The actors in the "backstage" area can get rid of the obligations assigned to them by the role, and then become the real themselves and perform the behaviors in the real state. Performers in the "front stage" can be aware of the presence of the audience and other interference factors, so as to make conscious and symbolic behaviors, while performers in the "backstage" will carry out social activities based on the real state.

## **3. "FRONT STAGE" AND "BACK STAGE": WECHAT AND WEIBO**

"Drama-mimicking" is a theory of human interaction in real life, but it can also be applied to online human interaction. This research is conducted by online questionnaire survey with the post-90s as the objects. In addition to the basic information of the respondents, the content of the questionnaire mainly involves the time, frequency and function cognition of the two APPs, such as WeChat and Weibo, as well as their views on the content of WeChat Moments (Weibo) published by the post-90s. A total of 585 questionnaires were collected, including 12 invalid ones, and 573 valid ones with an effective recovery rate of 98%. There were 289 boys and 284 girls, so there was almost no gender difference. Through preliminary analysis of the questionnaire data, the following findings are obtained:

### **3.1. WeChat Is The "Front stage" For User Self-Presentation**

Weibo and WeChat belong to two different "stages", and corresponding to them also have different "audiences", so the self-presentation on the two platforms is also different. The survey study found that users in WeChat friends is far more than the Weibo, at the same time, the part WeChat friends than Weibo friends a bit complicated, not only have a peer groups (including the familiar and unfamiliar peer groups), there are a number of intergenerational members, family within other elders such as parents, teachers, fellow students and other persons, etc. The above differentiated friends complicate the audience in the field of WeChat communication media, and each user is the performer in the field. In the eyes of intergenerational friends, they have positive behavior expectations for the performers: For the audience such as family members, they are more likely to expect the performers to show a healthy and

green life, busy and fulfilling work or study, and harmonious social relations. For the audience such as teachers or seniors, they are more likely to expect the performers themselves (students) to show a positive state in learning. Rather than frequently posting things that have nothing to do with school, such as eating and drinking with peers or other members; For the audience of other members of the younger generation, it is more necessary for performers to establish a role model that is not only positive but also hard working.

"It would be convenient to call this component of the performance 'the fore ground,'" says Goffman, "a part of the individual performance that operates in a regular and fixed way and defines the situation for those observing the performance." [7]. As the survey study found that the performers tend to positive emotions including forwarding news, publication something about study, work, happy things. WeChat circle of friends, and for some negative dynamic, performers may choose to group shielding, set the audience to members of the invisible, even choose to give up directly release WeChat dynamic circle of friends, In order to cater to the audience for the role of the performers themselves good expectations. The vast majority of users are influenced by Goffman's "impression dressing" theory, and tend to present themselves in an image that fits their current interpersonal context in order to ensure that others will judge them favorably. Based on the complexity of friends composition and the influence of impression decoration, WeChat users, as the performers in this field, unconsciously regard this communication medium as the "front stage" in Goffman's Drama Theory, and constantly obtain others' recognition of their acquired roles through their own behaviors.

### ***3.2. Weibo Is The "Backstage" Of Users' Self-Presentation***

In terms of dynamic release content, there are obvious differences between Weibo and WeChat. In this study, the tendencies of Weibo and WeChat in publishing trends were divided into five specific indicators: happy things in daily life, complaints and complaints about daily life, happy things in study or work, complaints and complaints about study or work, and (forwarding) related news trends. At the same time, the happy thing in everyday life, study or work in the happy matter into positive dynamic, complaints and complaints and to study or work on the daily life of the whining and combined into negative dynamics, through statistical analysis found that after the 90 college students group selection in weibo and WeChat platform release negative dynamic ratio of 65.6%, 21.8% respectively. Comparatively speaking, there is a big difference. More members tend to post the news containing negative emotions to Weibo than WeChat.

There are obvious differences between Weibo and

WeChat in terms of dynamic permissions. Comparatively speaking, Weibo has a more open visible range of friends than WeChat. According to this survey, it can be found that in most cases (97.3%), users will select all their friends to see the updates posted on the Weibo platform, and there will be no blocking of some friends. However, under this option, the percentage of WeChat is only 5.4%. The study also found that when the respondents posted negative events (including complaints, frustration and other negative emotions) in WeChat or were irrelevant to a certain group of friends, they were more inclined to block some of their friends, accounting for 52.5% and 42.1% respectively, while the proportion of Weibo blocking was very small under the same options. It can be seen that almost all users will choose to display more positive and optimistic trends in Weibo and WeChat without reservation. Even if they publish negative trends on WeChat platform, they are more likely to choose to block some of their friends.

Based on the composition of friends and the features of media functions, Weibo becomes the background of performers. Just as Goffman's Dramatic Theory maintains, the backstage is the area not seen by the audience, which is at the end of the stage of the performance. It refers to the part of the stage that the performer does not want the audience to see and outsiders to enter. Here, Weibo, as a background field, also contains a number of audiences. The difference is that most of the audiences in Weibo are peers that correspond to the purport of the performers' personal life. Based on the platform, performers can interact and share each other's dynamic content. All the audience in this field basically belong to the insiders in the personal field of the performers and have obvious identity boundaries with other friends in WeChat. As long as it is within the scope permitted by law, the performers can show freely in this kind of audience, and the behaviors of all the characters are basically not affected by the expectations of the roles. Through the survey research shows that most users tend to contain the negative sentiment of dynamic content released without reservation to the Weibo platform, as ways to express emotion, even if will be released the same dynamic to WeChat circle of friends, also can choose to group shielding, audience with behavior constraints can be left out in the visible range. In the background of Weibo, users almost get rid of the restrictions on behavior and can get a temporary relaxation. Within the scope allowed by the law, users can post updates at will to express their true feelings.

## **4. CONCLUSION**

As the most commonly used social platform for "post-90s", WeChat and Weibo has become a different field for users to present themselves. In this paper, the "90 after" groups in WeChat, weibo self presents the comparison and analysis of the two platforms, that in the

process of self-presentation, in the use of time, the number of friends, the content and update the dynamic frequency, emotional expression, there are evident differences in many aspects, such as, and using the Goffman to play theory analyses the causes of these differences and interpretation, It is endowed with sociological significance and provides a theoretical basis for the self-presentation behavior of individuals in this field.

Undeniably, the booming development of Internet social media has provided great convenience for individuals' daily life and communication and interaction, which is of great significance. Many social media provide individuals with different performance fields, in which individuals are performers. In order to meet the needs of different audiences, they perform different performances, so as to satisfy the psychological and cognitive consistency of both parties as much as possible, and achieve the coordination and harmony of interpersonal relations. Based on the framework of Goffman's Dramas Theory, this kind of differential self-presentation can meet the different psychological needs of performers and help them fulfill their obligations so as to better play their roles. However, the negative meaning that may be generated by this kind of performance transformation cannot be ignored. Behind to perform conversion, is bound to have a psychological role consciousness, the greater the difference of self-presentation, more individuals play in different roles and transformation in the process of cognitive dissonance, the more obvious, also represents the different roles and the greater the relationship of the friction between the target audience and may be harmful to human relations. Therefore, through the in-depth analysis of the above phenomena, this paper hopes to arouse the public to pay enough attention to the different presentation modes of individuals in social media, reduce the role cognitive differences as much as possible, and thus promote the harmony of interpersonal relations as much as possible.

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