The Influence of the Internet on Chinese Homosexuality Group

Yiqiao Wang[1,*]

[1] *Maple Leaf International School, Chongqing, 400000, China*
[*]*Corresponding author. Email: 19041090@students.mapleleafedu.com*

ABSTRACT

In the 18th century and 19th century, homosexuals are not acceptable by society and are isolated. This paper introduces the effect of the Internet on the Chinese homosexual community since 1995 when the Internet had entered China. In order to find the role of the internet in the homosexual community inside, this study sorts and summarizes the previous studies. Through this study, it can figure out what influence the Internet can bring and why it happens. The data and content may help the scholars to deeply study the homosexual group. By analyzing 12 papers screened by keyword searches, the Internet has influence on homosexuals' socialization, exclusive communication words, and their culture. Most of the time, they use certain applications and chat groups to find encounters. Homosexuals find companions online and feel a sense of approval. More and more gays and lesbians start to share their lives on social media. The Internet not only connects homosexuals themselves but also links mainstream society and homosexuality.

Keywords: Homosexuality, China, Internet, Influence.

1. INTRODUCTION

The Internet has gradually become an indispensable part of people's life. It creates a diverse platform for subcultures to the front of the stage. One example is homosexuality. Chinses traditional concepts, for example, procreation is the most important, and if a son does not have children, he is unfilial, lead to that heterosexuality is always the mainstream and homosexuality is not acceptable. The current condition for gays and lesbians in China is complex. The assessment of homosexuality in society is not friendly. Most news on Chinese websites about homosexuality is about Aids, promiscuous sexual behavior, and the legalization of homosexuality. Generally, the older generation hardly accepts people around them who are homosexual especially their children. However, the new generation shows a greater tolerance, resulting in that homosexual people can only find approval in front of close friends and the same kind of person. This study will pay attention to how the Internet influences homosexuals and their group in today's world from three aspects: socializing, exclusive communication words, and homosexual culture based on existing papers. Previous studies about the Internet and homosexuality have discussed how and why different age cohorts treat homosexuality under the Internet influence and the effect of various factors such as living environment, education background, and race on people's attitudes to same-sex marriages, etc [1]. Also, the transmission of the topic of homosexuality on the Internet and how homosexuals make friends on the Internet are the objects scholars have studied before [2]. However, most of the studies are about the connection between homosexuality and society, meaning that these studies are either how the Internet works on the tolerance towards homosexuality or the homosexuals' condition in society or on the Internet. Only a few focus on the changes and influence caused by the Internet inside of the homosexual group. At the same time, these reports are over 3 years. Some results may not be applicable today. This study is for discovering the effect of the Internet inside of the homosexuality. This paper used "Internet", "China", and "Homosexuality" as keywords searching articles from 1995 to the present on Google Scholar and a total of 10 papers were selected in this paper.

2. THE INFLUENCE OF THE INTERNET ON THE CHINESE HOMOSEXUALITY GROUP

The following contents will discuss three sections of the influence of the Internet on the homosexual community from the way of making friends and

communicating words to the homosexual culture, by analyzing 12 papers (See Table 1).

Table 1. Analysis of 12 papers containing the phrase "Chinese homosexual

No. of papers	Context of "Chinese homosexuality"	Reference
5	Influence on the way of making friend	[2], [3], [4], [5], [6]
3	Influence on the exclusive words in the homosexual group	[7], [8], [9]
4	Influence on the homosexual culture	[10], [11], [12], [13]
12	Total of 11 papers that included the phrase "Chinese homosexuality" in full text search of 11,200 documents available in electronic form.	

2.1. Influence On The Way Of Making Friends

According to the estimation, there are over 70 million homosexuals in China, taking up 5% of the total Chinese population. The Internet as a new medium has promoted the wild spread of information about homosexuality. Before 1995 when the Chinese history of the Internet had started, the common places for homosexual groups to date were secret bars, ballrooms, and some public places. However, the open activities were not accepted by society and authority. In 1993 Beijing, Yanhai Wan who was a scholar in public health held a remarkable salon called The World of Men in a ballroom to share the knowledge of HIV and homosexuality. This campaign as a tolerant space for homosexuals soon was reported around the world. But a week later, the manager of the ballroom who provided the site for the campaign was dismissed. Several months later, The World of Men was halted by the name of distorting humanity and breaching social morality, and Yanhai Wan was suspended. It illustrated that homosexual activity had not been legalized [2]. Under the unfavorable condition, most of the areas for gays and lesbians to make friends were still public places such as parks, streets, and public restrooms. These places were mainly for those to find occasional sexual partners. The invention of the Internet offered a relatively more private and open place for homosexuals to communicate. The Internet with its anonymous and widespread feature has successfully become the most commonly used way for gays and lesbians to make friends. From the very first TianYa, Baidu Tieba, or Weibo to the applications and websites only for the homosexual group such as Blued, The L, and LesPark, homosexual people can more convenient and safer meet online. Aladao, an early lesbian website set in 2001, currently has 30,000 users. It updates the daily news and different columns. There is a slogan prominently on the home page, "Love has no gender, but it lasts forever." [3] A wildly used lesbian application, The L, contains various functions for lesbians to make friends. Live square is for them to do live shows everywhere. Girls can view the whole network of the L girls to match together. There is a special part called Nearby. This will show the

accounts that are close to where people stay at. The Topic square is used for people to post with or without tags. Sometimes, girls will ask some questions to find help and share interesting topics. Other users are likely to leave comments to help or to express their own opinions. This application can well help lesbians to socialize and find partners. Homosexuals can not only satisfy sexual demands but also find companions for mental and emotional support, not feeling isolated on these platforms [4]. In today's society, homosexuals also use the communication applications such as WeChat to meet local gays or lesbians, but most time for sex. The benefit of using the communication applications is direct and easy. For middle-aged homosexuals, they spent less time on surfing the Internet than the young generation, meaning that they may not download a new homosexual application or post themselves on the public platform. A chat group in the application which they already have is the easiest way to meet the companions [5]. Homosexuals can ask to hang out and meet in person through chat group or the online chat in different platforms. Homosexuality as a marginal group in society inevitably will join the online community to find a cultural identity and socialize. It is a process of natural selection [6].

2.2. Influence On Exclusive Words In The Homosexual Group

Bruce Rodgers published a book called The queen's vernacular in 1972, covering about 12,000 slangs used in the homosexual group [7]. The author observed hundreds of gays in bars, streets and ballrooms then wrote this book. In the Internet era, everyone's words are possible to become popular. People use special words and numbers to describe specific things in their community. These usages are possible to be popular. In a Beijing chat group with over 200 active gay accounts, people use some specific numbers and words to find casual sex. Although the announcement of the chat group indicates that this group can not publish sex text, the real situation in the chat group is not corresponding. The messages in the chat groups are generally about self-description and the description of sexual partners. The content usually

includes the number of height, age and weight, and their sex role. The content is simple, for example, "33 180 70 1". 33, 180, and 70 represent age, height, and weight respectively, and 1 means top who is the dominant person [8]. It may also contain sending person's location, personality, and appearance features. There are also many types of ways to replace words' original meaning, including Pinyin, English and Chinese acronyms, number usage, and homophonic words. For example, C is a homophonic word to represent sissy, ts represents transsexual, and 3 means threesome. All these usages are to transmit the complete idea by using the shortest words. Other people will read these messages and choose which one is more close to their preference. These are the exclusive codes in the homosexual group to introduce their identity and match their sexual partner. Chat groups are a public socializing place but also have a private feature. Anonymous accounts ensure homosexuals' personal information and exclusive codes can reduce the risk of censorship. In the Chinese homosexual community, using numbers to represent sexual preference is universal in gays and lesbians. 1 means top, 0 means bottom, the submissive person, and 0.5 means switch who can switch between the top and the bottom. Another way to describe top, bottom, and switch in the Chinese lesbian group is t, p, and h respectively. The transmission of the information online requires direct and short content, therefore these usages of the number started nowhere but became wildly used. The Internet allows the buzzwords to become popular around in both the gay and lesbian's community. Through the fast and broad spread speed, the names for different sex roles in the homosexual group are even known by straight people. Heterosexuals may not be familiar with the homosexual group, but they may have heared about how homosexuals call each sex role in their community. Halliday illustrates that when a subculture is opposite to the mainstream society, anti-language will occur, to name the non-existent things in the mainstream society and communicate with community members. The easiest anti-language is a relexicalized language, meaning that it still relies on the mainstream language but has a different vocabulary [9]. Besides, the transmission of information on the Internet requires that it is easy to understand and concise. Therefore, it is a tendency for homosexuals to invent their own language to communicate following the requirement of the Internet. Homosexuals' language can help them to be exposed in the mainstream media. It is helpful for the publicity of homosexual culture.

2.3. Influence On The Homosexual Culture

Because of the Internet, the content in homosexual culture is able to enter a wilder group, instead of sticking in its own field. In China, television, radio, and newspaper representing the traditional media lack the report of the homosexual group. The occasional coverage often relates to the crime, HIV, and some negative labels.

In 2007, searching "homosexuality" with the following keywords in Baidu, the biggest research engine in China, presented search volume from the highest to the lowest is: "crime" (including rape, robbery, blackmail, and taking drugs) 30,218 results, "sexual behavior" (including one-night stand and orgy) 28,770 results and "club" (including dance hall, park, and public restroom) 17,140 results [10]. These reports formed a stereotype about homosexuality. However, this situation starts to change due to the rise of the Internet [11]. In one of the most popular platforms Weibo, compared to the traditional media, Weibo as the modern social media is more comprehensive and freer. Homosexuals can spontaneously post their stories or anything on it. With the spontaneous and personalized transmission features and fewer restrictions, the homosexual community who is in a weak position finally finds a place to speak for themselves. They can share lives in their account with the tag "gay" or "lesbian" on Weibo. The content of the post is completely depended on the person who published it. It allows the silent homosexual group in reality, to speak without other people's thoughts. An account called "The second category of love" running by a homosexual had 840,000 followers in 2001. This account usually posted some stories told by homosexuals themselves, knowledge of homosexuality, and the concept of love and life [12]. These contents are impossible to be published on traditional media. But this account does not exist now. Also, some influencers who are gay or lesbian will update their lives on Weibo. An account named CRYS who is a Chinese girl studying in Canada has 1.5 million followers in Weibo. She only posted her daily life with her girlfriend and some pictures. Not all her followers may be gay or lesbian, so the audiences are covered from homosexuals to heterosexuality. The influencers and celebrities like her are facing the entire public, including homosexuality, heterosexuality, and all people no matter what their sexual orientation is. As Weibo is open to all the public, both the posts for publicizing homosexuality and for sharing lives can promote the spread of the homosexual culture. Not only in Weibo, but other social media such as Tiktok and Bilibili, a Chinese video website, homosexuals can freely speak for themselves and let more people know their group through videos and articles. Some cultural products especially movies and online novels have a huge contribution to the publicity of homosexual culture. Very famous homosexual movies Ba Wang Be Ji (Farewell my concubine), Brokeback Mountain and The Handmaiden are watched by 3.1 million people, 960,000 people and 440,000 people respectively, according to the data from Douban, a mainstream website in China to record information to film, books, and music. These films are considered as the approval for both gays and lesbians. In an empirical survey in 2016 to students of 6 universities, 45.5% of 980 people chose "like" or "kind of like" in question "Are you interested in the online homosexual novels or adapted films, anime and series?", 7.5% chose "dislike" and

12.5% chose "not clear". College students think same-sex love is across time, distance, age, and even gender, a revolt against the tradition. These works and products inspire the young generation's tolerance towards homosexuality and the homosexual community can be known wilder [13].

3. CONCLUSION

This paper has argued how the Internet influences homosexuals' socializing, exclusive communication words, and their culture. The Internet completely has changed the way homosexuals date, shifting from meeting in secret bars, dance halls, public restrooms, and streets to the more diverse place, on the Internet. With the wild use of the Internet, its feature of anonymity offered a platform for homosexuals to find their community and socialize. But most posts on different platforms and messages in chat groups are for occasional sex. In addition, the homosexual culture can though the Internet spread to a wilder field. More and more homosexuals and registered accounts post their life on social media and introduce the information and knowledge about homosexuality on the Internet to help publicize homosexual culture. Famous movies and online homosexual novels are also important ways for people to know homosexuality. For scholars who want to understand the current condition of homosexuality or the process of the development of the Chinese homosexual group, the effect of the Internet is an essential topic to dig as the Internet is now the most common medium homosexuals show up on. In the future, the different gender behavior in the homosexual community could be the future research target. How gays and lesbians act in their group and how social media affects them are also topics that need to study.

REFERENCES

[1] T.Q. Nguyen, R.W. Blum, Homosexuality Tolerance Among Male and Female Vietnamese Youth: An Examination of Traditional Sexual Values, Self-Esteem, and Demographic/Contextual Characteristics, in: Journal of Adolescent Health, vol. 55, issue 6, 2014, pp. 823-829, DOI: https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jadohealth.2014.07.011

[2] Y.H. Li, Tong Xing Lian Ya Wen Hua, Inner Mongolia University Press, 2009, pp. 269-277

[3] L. Cai, C.X. Zhao, Wo Guo Wang Luo Mei Ti Yu Tong Xing Lian Ya Wen Hua Chuan Bo, in: Southeast Communication, vol. 9, 2007, pp. 38-39, DOI: https://doi.org/10.3969/j.issn.1673-9579.2007.09.020

[4] W.T. Yu, Hu Lian Wang Shi Dai De Tong Xing Lian Mei Jie Hua Yu Quan, in: Journalism Communication, vol. 7, 2016, pp. 22-23

[5] H. Jiang, ICCGL: cultural communication via the internet and GLBT community building in China, in: Sexualities, Genders and Rights in Asia: 1st International Conference of Asian Queer Studies, Australian National University, 2005

[6] W.B. Yu, Wang Luo She Qu Zhong De Tong Xing Lian Shen Fen Ren Tong, in: Journal of Anhui University (Philosophy and Social sciences), vol. 1, 2013, pp. 144-148

[7] B. Rodgers, The Queens' Vermacular, Straight Arrow Books, 1972

[8] L. Cui, Secret expression of deviant desire: sexual invitation discourse in gay online chat room, in: Chinese Journal of Human Sexuality, vol. 1, 2017, pp. 144-150, DOI: https://doi.org/10.3969/j.issn.1672-1993.2017.01.046

[9] M.A.K. Holliday, Language As Social Semiotic: The Social interpretation of language and meaning, Hodder Arnold, 1978

[10] Z.B. Zheng, Hu Lian Wang Tong Xing Lian Chuan Bo De Xian Zhuang Yu Si Kao, in: News Research, vol. 3, 2007, pp. 46-48

[11] X.H. Wang, W.B. Liu. Internet Use and Public's tolerance for homosexuality: An empirical analysis based on CGSS2015, in: Journal of University of Science and Technology Beijing (Social Sciences Edition), vol. 35, No.3, 2019, pp. 89-97, DOI: https://doi.org/10.3969/j.issn.1008-2689.2019.03.014

[12] Y.T. Geng, Weibo Qun Ti Chuan Bo Dui Tong Xing Lian wen Hua She Hui Ren Tong De Ying Xiang, in: Youth Journalist, vol. 14, 2014, pp.18-19, DOI: https://doi.org/10.3969/j.issn.1002-2759.2014.14.013

[13] K. Zhao, Wang Luo Dan Mei Wen Xue Dui Da Xue Sheng Tong Xing Lian Guan Nian De Ying Xiang, in: Litbraturb Bducation, vol. 1, 2016, pp.62-63