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Research on the Causes of "Feminism" Becoming Negative on Chinese Weibo

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ABSTRACT

In Today's China, the discussion about gender conflict on social media is becoming increasingly heated and affecting social harmony and gender equality. This essay uses McLuhan's 2 media theories (The medium is the message & Global village) to discuss why "feminism" becomes negative on Chinese Weibo. We can draw a conclusion that Weibo's users have access to negative feminist messages all around the world based on the 'Global village' theory. In addition, the ranking function and the comment function have drawn the attention of ordinary users to negative feminism and made negative feminism discussion more widely based on 'the medium is the message' theory.

Keywords: *Feminism, Gender topic, Social media, Weibo, McLuhan*

1. INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, with the gradual popularization of social media, anyone can express their opinions, so women can make their voices heard through social media, which is conducive to women's assertion of their rights. According to the Weibo 2020 User Development Report, the proportion of young female users born in the 1990s and 2000s on Weibo is higher than that of male users, especially female users born in the 2000s account for 61.6%[1]. More female users mean that women can better express their opinions on weibo, and some scholars like Liu and Li have found that Weibo provides a channel for Chinese women to speak out, which is thought to be good for women's right[2][3].

But actually, more women speaking up could probably lead to extremes of opinions. The discussion of women's rights on weibo has become more and more extreme, deviating from the original meanings of feminism[4] and becoming Chinese extreme feminism. The Chinese extreme feminism would aggravate gender conflict and make the meanings of feminism misunderstood by the public, which is not conducive to the protection of women's rights and is detrimental to gender equality.

Gender conflicts in contemporary Chinese society were amplified through social media (Weibo) ,and it is gradually destroying gender equality and social harmony, which is worthy of attention and research why "feminism" becomes negative on Chinese Weibo.

So this essay attempts to study in what ways does social media make things worse, why "feminism" becomes negative on Weibo. Firstly, this essay will use McLuhan's theory of global village and media as information to analyze that the internet and 2 key functions of Weibo promote feminism to become negative, and then propose suggestions for improving the negative Image of feminism on Weibo. This study reveals the reasons for the stigmatization of feminism in Chinese social media, which has important implications for the understanding of feminism in cyberspace, and can promote gender equality and social harmony.

2. ANALYSIS OF THE CAUSES OF "FEMINISM" BECOMING NEGATIVE ON CHINESE WERIBO

2.1 Global Village & Weibo

In McLuhan's Understanding media, he writes: 'Today, after more than a century of electric technology, we have extended our central nervous system in a global embrace, abolishing both space and time as far as our planet is concerned' [5]. Weibo allows users to learn about the feminist movement all over the world at their home. Some extreme feminist discussions, such as the extreme feminism in South Korea, continue to spread and cause fierce debate on Weibo. And gender extremist sites

and comments on the Internet will stigmatize feminism. For example, gender extremist websites in South Korea like 'Ilbe', have deepened the conflict between men and women in South Korean society, and the occurrence of hate crimes has aroused the fear of gender hatred in the whole society and the youth, not only on the Internet but also in the real society[6]. With the spread of extreme feminist comments on Weibo, ordinary users, even teenagers, are afraid of feminism and think feminism is negative.

The Internet that connects the world allows Weibo's users to know about feminism, including some extreme feminist ideas. Normal users just type in the search box "Korean women's rights" on China's Weibo, he or she can access to hundreds of   searches. These searches not only exposed ordinary people to the concept of feminism, but also to negative feminism. However, there is no clear distinction between feminism and negative feminism among ordinary people, which leads to a certain misunderstanding of ordinary feminism among ordinary users on Weibo. So living in the global village, Chinese Weibo users can get information about feminism in other countries, including negative feminism, which led to the spread of negative feminist messages on Weibo.

2.2 The Medium is the Message & Weibo

The application function of Weibo makes "feminism" become negative on Chinese Weibo. McLuhan pointed out that technology is part of people's bodies, electronic media is directly connected with people's central nervous system, and our senses and bodies are controlled by media[7]. Weibo has created a cyberspace for feminist discussion, where users' debate on feminism are interfered and manipulated by media companies and commercial interests. Users' attention represents business interests, therefore, Weibo pushes controversial topics like feminism to users through its application function, obtaining users' attention and making things worse.

Firstly, the ranking function has made negative feminism discussion more widely known on Weibo. You & Jia consider that the ranking function of Weibo tends to be entertaining, and the ranking content differs greatly from the public demand[8]. Attention resources and traffic are money, so media companies use the ranking function to deliberately magnify gender conflicts for the commercial target. Take Yang Li, a famous talk show actress in China, for example. She often makes fun of Chinese men and her jokes aimed at men have been top trending on Weibo ranking due to frequent discussion and attention, which has sparked wider attention and discussion. Those Jokes about men are supported and discussed by extreme feminists, but rejected by ordinary users, and this conflict makes feminism extreme and negative on Weibo.
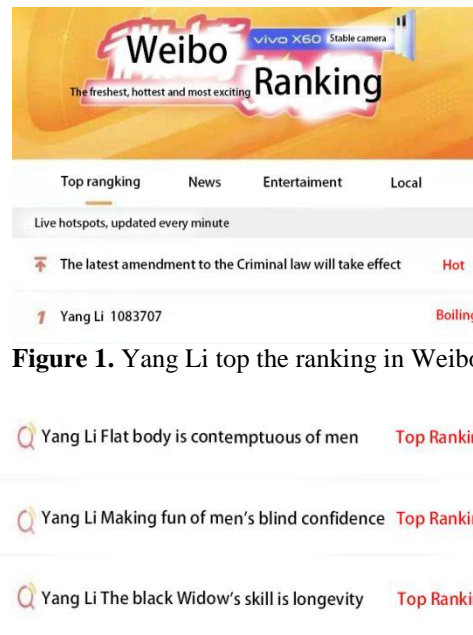

Figure 1. Yang Li top the ranking in Weibo

Figure 2. Yang Li joke man in Weibo

And the media environment influences the perception and discussion of all users according to McLuhan[7], which makes users' views and discussion on feminism are influenced by the extreme feminism in the Weibo rankings. The ranking function brings a lot of attention and discussion of feminism, but at the same time, the constant discussion makes some extreme feminist views appear, and those extreme opinions showed to more and more users by ranking.

Secondly, the comment function has influenced users' perceptions of negative feminism discussion on Weibo. All users can see others comments on Weibo regardless of the personal characteristics of the reviewer and the content of the opinions. This platform feature of Weibo accords with McLuhan's theory of global village[5]. And the lack of comment filtering may allow extreme feminist views to proliferate and make the meaning of feminism negative. The negative comments of others on the website can lead to readers being emotionally stirred up and their comments may become intensified[9]. So the existing negative feminist comments on Weibo would probably influence other users' emotions and make other users' comments more extreme, and these new extreme comments would also influence the next user's comments. Therefore, the lack of filtering function of Weibo makes "feminism" becomes more and more negative.

3. SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVING THE NEGATIVE IMAGE OF FEMINISM ON WEIBO

3.1 Weibo Company

Weibo should play the role of mediator, managing and shutting down some extreme and negative feminist

comments that appears in the ranking function and the comment function for reducing conflicts. In the ranking function, weibo should not deliberately put extreme feminist discussions on the rankings in order to attract traffic, but should remove some extreme hate discussions from the rankings. For the comment function, Weibo should identify some malicious users and bots to post, and ban those users who only post extreme horror views. Weibo company can create a good public opinion environment and ease the contradiction between original feminism and the public in this way.

3.2 Government

The government can publish short videos or organize lectures on Weibo to let ordinary people understand the relevant theories of feminism and allow users to distinguish extreme feminism. By helping users improve their media literacy and their ability to recognize real messages, it can reduce the impact of negative feminist information on ordinary users and increase true feminist supporters. Based on the communication environment of the global village, the Chinese government should establish a public opinion monitoring mechanism to reduce the influence of extreme negative foreign information on the people. And laws should be put in place to prevent media companies from maliciously stimulating public debate for their own commercial target.

3.3 Users

When using social media, users should maintain a good neutral state of mind, have discrimination ability and improve their cognitive ability to the essence of things. Specifically, users should speak based on logic and facts when joining discussions on topics, including reducing the use of uncivilized language and avoiding attack on the gender of others. Only in this way, people can have independent judgment ability and avoid their misunderstanding of feminism.

4. CONCLUSION

Overall, this essay has explored the causes of "feminism" becoming negative on Chinese Weibo. McLuhan's theory 'Global village' can explain that the Internet allows negative feminism to spread in China's Weibo. Moreover, the ranking function has made negative feminism discussion more widely and comment function has made users opinions towards feminism become more negative on Weibo according to McLuhan's theory 'The medium is message'. Through the analyses, we can draw a conclusion that internet, ranking function and comment function make "feminism" becomes negative on Weibo together.

In order to keep feminism from being negative on Weibo, first of all, the Chinese official media and other mainstream media should introduce and discuss feminism objectively and academically. A great deal of coverage of feminism by mainstream media can draw public attention to the original meanings of feminism according to agenda-setting theory[10]. Other Chinese researches also approve this way. Yang considers authoritative and official media should post positive news and messages to guide the public opinion[4]. And Lu support the role of public opinion guidance[12].

In addition, Weibo itself and its traffic bloggers should not discuss of extreme feminist theory in order to attract attention and their commercial targets. Wilhelm, C., & Joeckel, S. have studied the discussion of gender morality in online comments and believed that the hosts and platform providers of online discussions should be sensitive to how gender stereotypes affect online discussions[11]. Media companies and internet celebrities should also value social morality in the social media. Moreover, users should improve their media literacy and pay attention to logic and civil language when discussing with others.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

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