From Sharing Life to Shaping Online Image
Analysis of Wechat Moment Based on Goffman's Drama Theory

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ABSTRACT

The new media environment provides us with a new way to communicate, interact and show ourselves. Similarly, people begin to discover and display more diverse selves on new media social platforms. Wechat moment is such a social media, which is widely used in Chinese groups in China and the world, and is also accepted by many countries in the world. Different user groups have constructed different online images at Wechat moment time. This paper mainly uses qualitative research methods and takes Wechat moment as a specific case. After analyzing the basic functions and characteristics of Wechat moment, this paper mainly uses Goffman's drama theory to analyze the differences and commonality of self-display of youth groups on social platforms. This paper holds that the social platform itself is a social circle of acquaintances based on real society. Its strong interpersonal relationship and unique characteristics of high social pressure make individuals more inclined to the "frontier" in Goffman's "drama theory" in their daily life. People continue to show themselves on Wechat moment to meet the imagination of the audience and the expectations of the society. This paper will provide a new case for social media research.

Keywords: *Wechat moment, Goffman, Female, Self-presentation*

1. INTRODUCTION

Based on the dramatic thought of British writer Shakespeare, the sociologist Goffman proposed that "life is a performance, and society is the stage", and everyone plays a different role in interacting with others [1]. The emergence of social media has provided us with new ways of social interaction. It has changed the order of time and the constraints of space, allowing us to establish contact in the "Earth Village". In the virtual world built by social media, we can break the limitations of time and space and deliver more diverse and diverse self-images to the other end of the network. As one of the virtual stages for displaying users' self, Wechat moment helps people deliver timely information and maintain social interaction, while also providing people with a new platform for self-presentation, showing the new development direction of people's self-presentation. At the same time, there are still problems with the new way of self-presentation under the environment of "context resolution".

The interactions studied in Self-Presentation are face-to-face interactions in everyday life, but in an online society where social networking is common, social accounts such as WeChat, QQ and Weibo have become the stage for everyday interactions between people, and people are also performing on these social accounts. Does the idea of theatrical performance discussed in The Presentation of the Self in Everyday Life also apply to interactions in the absence of each other's bodies in online social networks? With this in mind, this thesis attempts to explore how this theory is presented in new media platforms.

In order to explore the image building status of youth groups in Wechat moment, this paper used the observation method in qualitative research. This paper selected ten of my friends, five men and five women. They are all between 20 and 30 years old. By observing their image shaping in Wechat moment and their actual life, this paper compares the differences and commonalities between them, and explore the way people talk about their social images on the Internet.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Self-presentation is to present oneself to others in a certain way and convey one's own image to others [2]. In the book "Self-Presentation in Daily Life" by the famous sociologist Goffman, Goffman compares

interpersonal interaction with drama from a sociological perspective [1]. Goffman believes that the behavior of all social roles is actually a performance, and any individual's behavior in a certain environment can be divided into "front-end" and "back-end". "Foreground" is a place for a specific performance, equivalent to a stage. Performers have to play a social role with a certain degree of ideal concept in front of the "audience"; while the "backstage" is an area that is not seen by the audience. In order to maintain their own image in the minds of others, "performers" have to deliberately take some measures to manage impressions when presenting themselves [1]. In Self-Presentation in Everyday Life, Owen Goffman uses a theatrical performance perspective derived from the principles of the performing arts, formal research and informal memoirs by previous authors as illustrative material, and his own year-long field observations of a sharecropping economic community in the Shetland Islands, to provide a sociological perspective on the detailed presentation of participants in social life in front of others [3]. Owen Goffman's work is a dramaturgical account of the activities of participants in social life as they are presented to others.

Owen Goffman views in-role activities as role-playing or "acting". Owen Goffman argues that individuals in the presence of others influence their impressions of the situation and the interactions of other participants through a series of actions. A performance consists of two parts: the kind of performance and the framework of the performance, which can be divided into a performance subject, a performance area and a performance script [1]. Goffman classifies performance subjects as performers, spectators and outsiders: performers are generally referred to as "the troupe that controls the stage setting", which is a collection of individuals who work closely with each other to maintain a particular situation; another troupe in the interaction is referred to as the audience; and individuals outside the two troupe are referred to as outsiders. Owen Goffman examines three bounded zones: the frontstage zone, the backstage zone and the outsider zone. The performers are present in the front and backstage areas; the audience is present only in the front area; and the outsiders are excluded from these two areas. The front of house area is the area where the performance is taking place; the back of house area is the area that is associated with the performance and contributes to the performance but cannot be shown in the front of house; and the out of house area, also known as the residual area, is the area other than the front of house and back of house. The front of house is divided into a stage set and a personal front of house, where the stage set is the backdrop item that provides the set and props for the performance, such as a hospital [1]. The personal front is an expressive piece of equipment consisting of two types of stimuli: "appearance" and "mannerisms". The script is a predetermined pattern of actions and routines that enable the performance to proceed properly.

Merovitz made in-depth thinking based on Goffman, and extended the behaviors of "middle area", "deep back area" and "front area" that arise when scenes merge or separate [4]. "Impact on Social Behavior" proposed that new media will produce new scenes, and new scenes will produce new behaviors [4]. Electronic media has changed the boundaries of social scenes. The emergence of new media has brought new changes and provided new ways for people to present themselves.

Goffman's theory is still enlightening to the research in the new media era. A number of academic achievements use Goffman's theory for multivariate analysis. Some scholars study the self presentation of social media, some discuss the differences of different social platforms, and some analyze the "performance" in the Internet environment [5-8]. This paper also mainly uses Goffman's drama theory to study.

3. RESULTS

3.1. Features of Wechat moment "Stage"

In Self-Representation in Everyday Life, Erving Goffman examines three bounded areas of everyday life, namely the foreground area, the background area and the residual area [1]. If one takes the Wechat friend zone interface as the foreground, then the editing page of the Friend Zone is the background corresponding to the foreground. If one takes one's real life as the foreground, then the Wechat friend zone with access is the background relative to one's daily life [1]. This article agrees to make the first division between the front and back of the Wechat moment circle of friends, because unless the content posted in the circle is set to 'private', there is an audience for it. In this way, we can discuss the front and back of the circle of friends in more depth.

3.1.1. A safe stage dominated by acquaintances

Unlike public social platforms such as Weibo, most of the friends in Wechat moment are people you know in life, and they are based on a certain understanding of each other. Circles have "access principles". To become Wechat moment "friends", you need to apply for "addition" and wait for the other party to "accept" before both parties can be included in each other's circle [9]. At the same time, when users like and comment on the content posted by their friends in the Wechat moment, these interactions are not visible to everyone, only each other and the mutual friends of both parties can see. Such a circle of friend's stage is more like building a safe and closed small space between friends. It is a small "social circle" belonging to each other,

allowing users to feel more relaxed and at ease when sharing content and expressing opinions.

3.1.2. A stage where the audience can be preset

Before users post their Moments updates, there is a preset "audience" in their hearts, and the content sent out will be seen by these "audiences". They will presuppose their attitudes and opinions after seeing them in their hearts, and then they will deliberate on the wording. Whether it is appropriate and whether the content is appropriate. Some content is not suitable for some friends to see due to various reasons. Users can select the "Who can watch" feature when publishing to group friends, choose which groups are visible in this dynamic, or set "Don't show it to anyone". In this way, a dynamic can be selectively presented in the circle of friends of some people, but not visible to others, and the information conveyed will be selectively presented to a specific "audience".

3.1.3. A stage with preset viewing range

"Visible for only three days" in Moments has gradually become the "protective umbrella" for many people. In Moments, you can set the time range for friends to view, and the optional range is from the last three days, the most recent month, the most recent six months to all. The user chooses to set the time range either to hide the past and protect his "small world", or to keep a certain distance from the newly added strange "friends" and retain some of his privacy. The circle of friends with a designated time limit also provides a "protection period" for users' self-expression.

3.1.4. Interactive feedback mechanism on stage

The function of likes and comments in the circle of friends is also a feedback mechanism. Friends' comments after seeing the dynamics enable users to know their friends' evaluations and attitudes towards them, and to check whether their self-expression is effective and whether the information is correctly delivered. At the same time, the distance between each other can be shortened during the interaction, and the weak relationship may be transformed into a strong relationship due to the increase of interaction.

3.2. The shaping of the network image on the Wechat moment stage

In the Wechat moment, user postings are active "self-disclosure". While maintaining a certain sense of distance in a virtual community, through these disclosures of personal preferences, living habits, attitudes, etc., you can pass on what you think can be known to others, and then create the image you want to

shape in the hearts of others, to put a certain type of image label for yourself.

At the same time, the user's online image is also shaped by others. The American sociologist Charles Cooley put forward the theory of "self in the mirror" in the 20th century. The theory holds that "a person's self is formed in the attitudes and evaluations of others towards oneself." Personal behavior is largely determined by Self-knowledge, which is mainly formed through social interaction with others [10]. At this time, the evaluation or attitude of others towards oneself is a mirror that reflects the "self". Through this mirror, we learn the attitudes of others towards us, improve our understanding of ourselves, and further influence our own behavior. Social interaction is a social interaction. We cannot ignore the opinions and evaluations of others. The self in the eyes of others will also affect us. In the interaction of the circle of friends, users get the evaluation of others, understand their own image in the eyes of others in the communication, and then make efforts to continue to maintain the image that others expect. In this sense, the online image is not only created for others, but also created for oneself through the hands of others.

3.2.1. More than one online image

Due to the grouping settings for different "audiences", users play different roles in different groups of groups. Therefore, a "performer" may have multiple online images at the same time. For example, a user I have observed is a good child who is diligent and studious in the eyes of parents and teachers, while in the eyes of close friends, he is a travel expert who can play and eat. In the eyes of alienated people, he is a quiet and introverted classmate who likes to clock in and read. When the circles delineated by users are separated from each other by a sufficient distance, the online image of the same person, which is far apart or even conflicting, can be maintained. If different circles communicate and merge with each other, it is easy to cause confusion in behavior and cognition, and it will be difficult to maintain an online image.

Even in the face of the same "audience", "performers" in different periods also show different image characteristics, and the network image will change as "performers" grow.

3.2.2. The boundaries of interaction scenes in social media are more blurred

Although self-presentation in social media breaks the limitations of time and space, due to technical limitations, such self-presentation often lacks a specific context. The concept of "context resolution" proposed by the communication scholar Boyd is used to summarize the digital social context that brings

"contradictory, inaccurate, and misleading contextual clues" to users. Boyd believes that contextual cues are mainly divided into interpersonal contextual cues and situational contextual cues [11]. Unlike interpersonal interactions that take place face-to-face in places with clear boundaries, the boundaries of interaction scenes in social media are more blurred. Fusion and separation can easily lead to confusion in behavior. Although the information is obtained in time, the problem of "context resolution" is difficult to solve due to the lack of contextual clues. Even if a virtual "here and now" is reached, it is difficult for the "audience" and the "performer" to have the same insights.

4. DISCUSSION

In the circle of friends, users are actively "self-disclosing", revealing their personal preferences, habits, attitudes and so on, while retaining a certain sense of distance from the virtual community, in order to convey to others what they think they can be known for, and then create the image they want to portray in the minds of others, labelling themselves with a certain type of "persona". The user's "persona" is also a way of revealing his or her personal preferences, habits and attitudes.

At the same time, the user's "persona" is also shaped by others. The American sociologist Charles Cooley developed the theory of the "mirror self" in the 20th century, which states: "The human self is formed in the attitudes and evaluations of others about oneself. Individual behaviour depends to a large extent on the perception of the self, which is formed mainly through social interaction with others [10]. In this case, the evaluations or attitudes of others are the mirror of the "self". Through this mirror, we learn about the attitudes of others towards us, improve our understanding of ourselves and influence our behaviour. Social interaction is an act of social interaction, and we cannot ignore the perceptions and judgements of others, who see us as we are. In the interaction of friendships, the user receives comments from others, learns how they see themselves and works to maintain the image that others expect of them. In this sense, a "persona" is both an image that one creates for others and an image that one creates for oneself through the hands of others.

Wechat moment avatars are one of the basic symbols in the shaping of a Wechat moment personal image. For example, people who use a picture of themselves as their avatar often portray a sunny and confident image of themselves. Wechat moment avatars also show some group characteristics, with people who use brightly coloured flowers or landscape photos as their avatars often being parental Wechat moment users. There is even some intergenerational conflict over avatars, with parents often expressing discontent with their children's avatars, for example.

Before posting, most people organise their language, choose their images carefully, and even go online to find copy that fits the image. There are many different purposes for posting a circle of friends, some of which are to create a specific image for themselves through the performance of their circle of friends. For example, people often share positive energy content to create an optimistic image of themselves and release content related to learning will create a daily study of the "school bully" image. Some people once teased in their circle of friends that they were afraid to look for the most important thing is that you can't find your friends who are in English every day to chat with you, for fear of disturbing their studies.

WeChat's circle of friends also has a number of false performances, most often posting selfies and photos that have been carefully embellished in the "backstage" area. There was a trend on Weibo that said: "Most people on social networks don't see each other in person anyway, so why not make the photos a bit more graphic? The purpose of this fake show is to give the viewer a social image that looks good. For example, some people post a positioning in their circle of friends every time they pass by a five-star hotel, showing that they are staying in a five-star hotel, in order to present a personal image of being a "tycoon" to their circle of friends.

Many people will share content from third-party platforms through their Wechat moment circle of friends, giving rise to a new type. This type has given rise to a new form of tasteful performance -- text performance, where people can show others their taste by tagging music they have listened to and books they have read. The most common example is the sharing of music in WeChat's circle of friends, where the songs shared are symbols through which individuals can show their taste to others. Through these symbols, individuals are able to show their interests and tastes, creating a style and role for themselves on the social platform. Through these symbols, individuals are able to showcase their interests and tastes, creating a style and persona for themselves on the social platform. Style building also helps individuals to find an audience with the same tastes as themselves. When the number of like-minded people reaches a certain number, sub-groups may form. They can interact through Wechat moment groups and chat groups, get favorite content, comments or chat, and draw a line with other people with different tastes.

5. CONCLUSION

This paper mainly uses qualitative research methods and takes Wechat moment moment as the specific research content. After grasping the basic functions and characteristics of Wechat moment, this paper uses Goffman's self-display theory to analyze the differences and commonality of self-display of youth groups on

social platforms. This paper holds that a social platform itself is a social circle of acquaintances based on the real society. Its strong relationship and unique characteristics of high social pressure make individuals more inclined to the "front area" in Goffman's "drama theory" in daily life. People constantly show themselves in Wechat moment by catering to the imagination of the audience and the expectations of the society. In the new media environment, various social applications provide new ways for us to communicate, interact and present ourselves. We are able to discover and show more diverse selves. Different audience groups in Wechat moment allow users to build different online images. The construction of multiple images on the same platform was unprecedented before the birth of online social media. This paper will help to enhance the modern significance of Goffman's theory and provide new cases for social media research.

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