



# Exploring Online Social Behavior Based on Macluhan's Theory: A Case Study of Sina Weibo

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**Abstract.** With the rapid development of the Internet, people have stepped into an era of information sharing, and the Internet of everything has become the main trend in people's life. However, with the continuous enhancement of the Internet trend, people have begun to be restricted by the Internet, and there are various negative and even inappropriate influences on society on some social platforms, which distort the facts of the development of events and have a great negative effect. This paper aims to show readers the extension of people's comprehensive senses in the Internet environment by means of a case study. This article will help people know some crises under the background of the Internet, allow people to keep rational thinking, correctly understand the role of itself in the context of the Internet, and warn some negative behavior, which let people keep a sober mind, at the same time also help related social platform to strengthen the regulation of platform environment, to better build a harmonious network environment. This paper draws a conclusion by studying McLuhan's theory and establishing its relationship with network social behavior. Through the method of case study, the case used the incident of a bus falling into a river in Wanzhou District, Chongqing, China, and it is concluded that people need to use network social platforms correctly and rationally develop their own views.

**Keywords:** McLuhan · Media · Weibo · The Extension of Sense Organ · Thinking

## 1 Introduction

The 21st century is the era of rapid development of science and technology, the Internet gradually swarms into people's life. The Internet is just like a net, which connects people closely. Today's daily necessities are inseparable from the Internet. The Internet is closer to people's life, people's clothing, food, housing and transportation, and these factors are basically inseparable from the support of the Internet, especially for the young people. Online shopping, takeout, living, travel, all kinds of apps to your life provide a variety of convenience. The rapid development of the Internet has brought people into an era of information sharing, and the Internet of everything has become the main trend of people's

life. However, with the continuous enhancement of the Internet trend, people have begun to be restricted by the Internet, people have brought some negative effects on the Internet, these negative effects not only restrict the development of individuals, but also have some negative effects on the family and even the society. On some social platforms, there are all kinds of negative and even improper influence on the society, which distort the facts of the development of events and have a great negative effect. These negative effects may lead to the increase of the number of victims, or even make the victims suffer in the shadow of network violence for their whole life. To date, most studies of this phenomenon shows the change of media extension under the new environment, including the extension of a single senses such as vision hearing the extension transformation of the extension of the senses, but few studies have showed the comprehensive extension of influence on the person's psychology and expression way, and less research reflects the sensory extensions of the negative effects on the society. Most of them reflect the convenience that the comprehensive extension of senses brings to people's life. This paper mainly analyzes the negative impact of the comprehensive extension of senses on people's life, thoughts and society in the new environment through case study. This article will help people know some crisis under the background of the Internet, allow people to keep the rational thinking, correctly understanding the role of itself in the context of the Internet, and warning some negative behavior, which let people keep sober mind, at the same time also help related social platform to strengthen the regulation of platform environment, to better build a harmonious network environment.

## 2 Theoretical Foundation

Media is the Extension of Man: This is the concept proposed by McLuhan in his book *Understanding Media: On the Extension of Man* [1]. In his opinion, media is an extension or extension of human sensory capacity [2]. Any medium is nothing more than an extension or extension of the human senses and senses: writing and printing media are an extension of human's visual ability, radio is an extension of human's auditory ability, and television is a comprehensive extension of human's visual, auditory and tactile abilities. The most important idea is that "the medium is an extension of man". One example that immediately comes to mind is, "A wheel is an extension of a foot." So the camera is an extension of the eye, the text is an extension of the language, the telephone is an extension of the mouth and ears, and so on [3]. Note that the "media" here not only refers to the telephone, television and other communication media, but also refers to all media in daily life. If we change the word "medium" to "tool", "tool is an extension of man", then everything is self-evident. All media are essentially tools, they are extensions of some organ of the human being to achieve some purpose.

"The electronic medium is an extension of the central nervous system, and the rest are extensions of the individual organs of the body." Because electronic information can be used anywhere, "the technology of the past was incomplete and fragmented, whereas electric technology is complete and all-encompassing [4]." In other words, electronic agents can replace any organ. It sounds a bit implausible, but a clear example is that Hawking can speak without moving his mouth and controlling things with his mind is becoming more realistic. This, of course, is based on the continuous development of information technology.

McLuhan's point of view is to explain the influence of communication media on human's sensory center [5]. Therefore, in his eyes, the developing history of media and society is also the history of human sensory ability from "unity" to "differentiation" to "reunification". The auditory culture of prehistoric people is unified in sense. In this era, although the sense is mainly grasped by the ear, it also affects the interaction and interaction of all senses. Therefore, the sensory ability of tribesmen is generally balanced, and their behavior is integrated with their environment. On the other hand, the visual culture of civilized people, which is mainly based on text and printing media, is characterized by focusing on details and separating them from the whole. The eye, working in isolation, observes a single continuous world, and can only focus on one part at a time, so that the shift from spoken to written and printed language actually expands only one sense separated from the cluster of human senses [6]. This sense separation caused by the division of the sense field makes human beings have a great active role in the environment, because it can promote people's abstract and deep understanding of things, but at the same time, alienation from other senses and only focus on vision will also produce emotional separation, so that people's overall sense ability imbalance or decline. But modern electronic media, especially television are changing the status of the civilized men dominated by visual, television not only expand the human vision and hearing, and because of its strong sense of presence and contacts which expand the human touch, as a result, modern people are losing "overall" feel for a long time, back to a state of feeling balanced.

### 3 Case Study

#### 3.1 Case Description

With the progress of Internet technology, Wechat, QQ, Weibo and other network information platforms have been further developed [7]. New network platforms such as Weibo and Wechat have gradually become mainstream information exchange platforms. In recent years, Sina Weibo has become the main driving force for collecting public opinions on social networks as the main place and channel for the explosion of emergencies and hot topics. Weibo comments are a collection of different public attitudes towards hot issues. We can clearly find that the scale of China's netizens and the penetration rate of the Internet are gradually rising over time, not only in China, but also gradually becoming a global trend. In Table 1, it clearly shows that the scale of China's netizens and the penetration rate of the Internet are gradually rising over time, not only in China, but also gradually becoming a global trend.

As an important part of Sina Weibo, Weibo comment aims to set up language expression and resort in the form of forum, so that people can convey their views and express their personal opinions through this board [7]. At the same time, all citizens can make their voices heard and show their views through this board. This open platform has a good starting point. It can give citizens certain rights and show respect for human rights. It is also a platform and channel for free speech.

However, while ensuring that everyone can make their voices heard, micro-blog comments also bring a lot of problems. In this age of "everyone has a microphone", commentary is increasingly diverse and complex [8]. In the comments, we can see all

**Table 1.** Size of Internet users and Internet penetration rate in China

Time	Size of internet users	Internet penetration rate
2018.6	801660000	57.7%
2018.12	828510000	59.6%
2019.6	854490000	61.2%
2020.3	903590000	64.5%
2020.6	939840000	67%
2020.12	988990000	70.4%
2021.6	1010740000	71.6%

manner of men for the same event made different comments, and these comments often filled with some strong personal emotion and irrational comments, these comments don't want to go to the rational evaluation of this event, but through the forefront of public opinion to aggrandize attention or gain the concern of people, or use vulgar words to vent anger, to convey personal anger, such comments, in the modern era of Weibo comment section is common.

In 2018, a bus plunged into a river in Wanzhou city, Chongqing, China, causing a sensation across The country. The incident was actually caused by a fight between passengers on the bus and the driver, which caused the bus to malfunction and fall into the river. But the first time the media release pictures of the scene, Internet users saw a red car close to the bus, the car owner was a woman, and someone noticed that this female drivers was wearing high heels, at this moment the comments on the female driver increased with the quickest speed. Critics said the bus plunged into the river due to the female driver's error, and that the bus was forced into the river because the female driver's high heels made the red car impossible to brake. These comments caused the public anger, they thought so many lives are all derived from the operation of the female driver, they then started in Weibo comments against the driver, and even the human flesh searched out the driver's license plate and the driver's home address, so that the irrational behavior caused great influence to the driver, this kind of network violence let women drivers in deep pain. But in the end, the facts appeared, people found that it was not the female driver who caused the occurrence of this incident, and the Weibo comment wave gradually weakened, but the commentators did not think that the impact of these comments on female drivers was a lifelong implication.

User comments on Sina Weibo contain the opinions and attitudes of Weibo users on this topic [3]. In today's society, some major events and emergencies have attracted many people to comment and reply below. In the user comment information, both support praise and oppose to belittle, and some users maintain a neutral attitude towards this event. However, some Microblog users use the Microblog platform to maliciously attack others and spread rumors, which can easily cause bad social influence.

### 3.2 Case Analysis

McLuhan said, “Media is an extension of human beings”, so this paper has also emphasized that human sensory system has changed from a single extension to a multi-sensory extension [9]. People’s views on some basic events in the media have changed from seeing and listening to simultaneous mobilization of multiple senses. Such a combination of multiple senses, coupled with the operation and coordination of people’s personal brain, makes people have different views on different events. According to McLuhan, we are always inevitably “stepping into” the information transmitted by various media, and we are often immersed in the existence of the media without realizing it. This is the scariest part of media power. People living in the world of the Internet, and people’s senses are closely connected to the Internet and some social platform, or even the Internet is an extension of the people and people are used to published his own views on the Internet, so that people are not only benefit from the Internet but also subject to the Internet, this kind of restriction is not completely negative form. These constraints facilitate people’s life, and people’s ability to master information and digital resources is constantly enhanced, and people’s sensory extension and sensory mobilization is gradually diversified. But such a close connection to the Internet has also led to some bad effects. As stated above, people senses completely confined to the environment of the Internet, and people can even feel that as long as they see an event, or see some irrational or even offensive comments about certain events they want to join the ranks. They are likely to go through the computer, and the Internet this tool, let their emotions, their spirit outspread. But such an extension is often accompanied by stress and irrationality, and people sometimes just go for their own pleasure.

Such comments are accompanied by people’s emotions or even the extension of emotions, to distort or even reverse the development of the fact of things and have an invisible incentive effect on people’s emotions. Such an “opinion climate” can stimulate people’s same emotions very quickly [10]. In paper said before, for example, when a net user saw the false comment on the driver of the red car, he will quickly mobilize his own senses and emotions and form an opinion in his brain system, which will simulate the environment of the incident at that time, and then the opinion that the driver driving the red car leading into the accidents roots in the audience’s mind. However, the scene is not the real rationality of form in mind, and the users think that the event development process that they set is consistent, and then begin his own mental and emotional extends through the Internet and social networking platform, but his own comments in the comments section is wanton. Everyone’s opinions may only exist as individuals, but all of them together form a very large group that distorts the facts of events, and emotions are used to accelerate the burning of opinions of other net users, leading to the distortion of the real facts of the event, causing people who have nothing to do with the event to become the suspect of the perpetrators, and even causing negative social impact.

## 4 Suggestions

Media has become an indispensable part of people’s daily life. McLuhan’s theory that “media is an extension of people” has gradually changed from an extension of single sense to an extension of multiple senses. So in today’s society, people’s senses are more

easy to be infected by the “sense climate” and the overall public opinion, leading to these users follow the whole tendency. When the voice of all users violates the truth of the event, this kind of opposition will continue to increase, and the opposition groups gradually expand. And their extreme remarks may even have a significant impact on the trend of the whole event. Therefore, although such a comprehensive extension of people’s senses drives people’s enthusiasm of speech, it will also have a great negative impact. Therefore, the following suggestions can help people to view an event rationally while actively expressing their own opinions to a certain extent, and avoid making comments that are not good for individuals or even the society because of their emotions or interests. First of all, the media or social platforms need to adopt appropriate strategies to restrict the publication of some bad comments. For example, the platform can be monitored in real time, and those comments with great negative emotions can be deleted regularly. Meanwhile, some users who like to post negative comments can be restricted to express their speech. Secondly, the government and administrative departments can introduce some policies or laws and regulations to regulate and restrict the words and deeds of some users, so that users can know that when they are surfing the Internet they also should obey the law, and the bad speech on the Internet will eventually be punished by law. Finally, it is depending on the users themselves. The users need to raise their accomplishment, enhance the ability to see things. They are not supposed to draw some unrealistic fallacy to ignite the opinion atmosphere when the truth of the event has not come out. At the same time, the user should also improve their thinking ability and increase the think time, and they are expected to mobilize all the senses to understand the cause and effect of things. A little more thinking can reduce people’s subjective assumptions and make them calm down and better think about the ins and outs of the whole event. If the above three points can be achieved, the network environment can be optimized to a certain extent, and people’s literacy can be improved, and social stability can be promoted.

## 5 Conclusion

In the era of the Internet, people of the most basic way of looking at things has gradually formed a system of the Internet’s exclusive, so even in the former mentioned in this paper, such a sense of full extension on people’s lives has brought great convenience, which makes people in the era of everything connected to master a variety of information resources, But such a comprehensive extension of the senses also makes people’s minds restricted by other people and the Internet, and people cannot use their own rational thinking. So above all, enjoying the Internet bring convenience to people at the same time, people should also have their own ability to tell right from wrong, so a kind of ability all need people to mobilize their own senses, and the extension of individuals not to control and influence by external factors, so as to better in the context of the rapid development of media extension of promote the better development of the individual and society.

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