



Research on the Image of Female Entrepreneurs in Chinese Newspaper

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Abstract. Entrepreneurship is often thought of as a male-only activity, and as a result women tend to be less successful than men in starting their own businesses. This phenomenon is particularly widespread in China. The environment for female entrepreneurs is not open and inclusive. Despite this, there is still a tendency in some mainstream media to use words that describe men to describe female entrepreneurs, such as using words like conquest, risk-taking, domination and control. The objective of the study is to find the image of female entrepreneurs in Chinese newspapers and public's perceptions of these women. In order to address the research question better, this study will use content analysis to answer the question. The results of the study revealed that both men and women are the same at a personality level and have the same abilities, and there is no situation where a particular gender will have a particular advantage. In this modern society, female people are gradually playing an indispensable role in the society, so we should be sensible about the importance of gender in the workplace and in our lives.

Keywords: female entrepreneurs · the public · image · Chinese newspapers

1 Introduction

1.1 Research Background

Entrepreneurship is often thought of as a male-only activity, and as a result, women tend to be less successful than men in starting their own businesses. This phenomenon is particularly widespread in China because the most famous of these cultures is Confucianism. Confucianism is one of the most enduring and influential forces in the Chinese value system, and these ideas are present in all aspects of Chinese people's life, and are used as a code of conduct and moral principles. [1] Confucianism is also present in the business decisions of Chinese entrepreneurs [2]. Traditional Confucian patriarchal thinking holds that men should be assertive and dominant, while women should be warm and emotionally charged. In this circumstance, men are considered more in tune with the competitiveness and leadership needed in business. As we see in everyday life, most entrepreneurs are also men [3].

1.2 Current Situation

According to the “2018–2019 Women’s Entrepreneurship Report” published by Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM), nearly 6.2% of women worldwide already have their own businesses. Despite this, there is still a tendency in some mainstream media to use words that describe men to describe female entrepreneurs, such as using words like conquest, risk-taking, domination and control [4]. Furthermore, the news media always report on women entrepreneurs with headlines that include words such as appearance and marriage, often ignoring their hard work and dedication. These phenomena suggest that there is an implicit bias against women entrepreneurs in the media, which questions the ability and influence of women in the workplace. Social media are an important tool for social change and they can influence and shape public attitudes towards political issues and social problems. The social media environment in China is active compared to other places [5], therefore I will discuss Chinese female entrepreneurs in the contexts of the mass media.

1.3 Research Purpose and Problems

The research question of this paper is: what are people’s impressions of Chinese female entrepreneurs? In order to find the answer, The author will focus on reports about Mingzhu Dong, who is the chairman of the Gree Electric Company. What appears in official newspapers often represents the views of the media and is not representative of the public’s attitudes. So I wanted to investigate what the public’s impression of female entrepreneurs was by studying the comments made by viewers in online newspapers.

2 Literature Review

Research has documented that entrepreneurship is often perceived as a male-only behaviour and therefore female entrepreneurship tends to be less successful than that of men. [4] In China in particular, the environment for women entrepreneurs to grow up has not been very open and inclusive. According to the “Global Gender Gap Report in 2018”, China ranks 103 and 86 out of 149 countries respectively in terms of equal economic participation and opportunity.

An important reason why gender inequality is prevalent in the Chinese workplace is due to China’s long-standing cultural environment. [6] As one of the most enduring, far-reaching and deeply held forces in China’s 5,000-year-old value system, Confucianism is present in all aspects of Chinese people’s production and life, and has become a commonly respected code of ethics and behaviour [1]. At the same time, Confucianism is also reflected in the business decisions of Chinese entrepreneurs. [2] Traditional Confucian patriarchal thinking sees men as synonymous with confidence and dominance, while women represent warmth and emotional expression. As a result, men are considered to be more in tune with the competitiveness and leadership needed in business, and most entrepreneurs we see in our daily lives are also male. [3] In contrast, there is a mismatch between society’s perception of women’s gender roles and those of entrepreneurs, and there is a widespread belief that women should be more responsible for their obligations

in the home, like doing housework or taking care of children. The erosion of women's autonomy has resulted in them having fewer opportunities than men, both in terms of entrepreneurial knowledge and management experience, and in terms of social capital and business opportunities.

It was not until the beginning of the 21st century that this form took a groundbreaking turn. China's export market was squeezed as demand from foreign markets fell sharply. [7] Other governments were willing to adopt market interventions to stabilise the economy [8], but the Chinese government was reluctant to implement such measures and had to look for alternative ways to develop the economy. The Chinese government sees women's self-employment as one of the most important forces for economic recovery, and gradually women entrepreneurs in the cities have become a new image of citizenship, representing the new values of the times, namely freedom and independence, self-management and self-employment. These women entrepreneurs have contributed greatly to the social development and economic development of the country and their stories have gradually become a hot topic in society.

In the workplace, women are still frequently plagued by some boring and useless questions, such as how they balance their family and work, whether they are vulnerable to unequal perceptions from partners, how they use their femininity to overcome the problem, and whether they have experienced workplace harassment during their working life, rather than how they work hard to achieve their dreams step by step. In addition to media coverage, a relatively small proportion of academic literature examines women entrepreneurs. Articles often focus on the physical characteristics of female entrepreneurs, or their ages, marriage conditions and families. What is more, mass media like to compare the performance of male and female entrepreneurs. One of the most popular comparisons is the ability to control emotions between men and women. The stereotype is that women are less likely to be rational and objective than men, and are more likely to get angry during "special period". The public awareness is that the skills of objectivity and emotional control are essential in the workplace, especially when facing some important decisions. As a result, the professional competence of women in the workplace is often questioned. Under this stereotype, women's unconscious words are misinterpreted by others and amplified into the whole society where women in the workplace are irrational and emotional, and their judgement in decision-making is questioned on this basis. The existence of these phenomena is in fact a side reflection of the implicit bias of the media and the public towards female entrepreneurs.

3 Method

In order to address the research question better, this study will use content analysis to answer the question. The content analysis method is able to "describe typical patterns or characteristics" and to find a relation between the findings examined. [9] This method is suitable for my research because the content in online newspapers only represents opinions of the official media and does not represent the attitudes of the majority of the public. So I wanted to investigate what the public's impression of female entrepreneurs was by studying the comments made by viewers in online newspapers.

4 Sample Selection

The sample for this study was drawn from the Microblog comments of the online newspaper People's Daily on Mingzhu Dong's report. The People's Daily is the largest newspaper in China and one of the three official newspapers, with 150 million followers on Microblog. Ms. Dong is the Chairman and President of Gree Electric Appliance Co., Ltd. What is more, she has been listed 13 times in Fortune Magazine's "World's Most Influential Women in Business", making her a typical representative of Chinese female entrepreneurs.

The social media platform chosen for this study, Microblog, is one of the most popular and widely-accessed social media platforms in China. Microblog data shows that there are 530 million monthly active users in 2021, with 94% of mobile users and 230 million daily active users, making it uniquely competitive in the social field [10].

The People's Daily praised Dong's initiative, because Dong said she would offer all her employees apartments within a few years. Young people have huge pressures, and what they need are a sense of stability. The People's Daily believes that other companies should learn from Ms. Dong's measures to address the anxiety of young people and look forward to more similar style supplies.

5 Analysis

There were a total of 1,691 comments below the article, and these comments provided a wealth of data to understand how the public perceives female entrepreneurs. Before coding, I scaled down the data for the study, reducing the 1,691 comments to 433, examining only those related to Ms. Dong, in order to arrive at a more convincing conclusion and fit the purpose of the study better. This paper draws on Big Women's research methodology [11], where all comments were entered into a column during the coding stage, which was used to record the thematic elements and codes that emerged when reading the material. Each valid comment was recorded individually. After reading the 433 valid comments, "awesome", "committed", "dominant", "admired female entrepreneur", "brand identity" and other words appeared frequently in the database. After reading the comments in the form several times over, I regrouped the material and associated codes to explore further informations and refine the content.

The methodology I used for this assignment was content analysis. The sample for this study was drawn from Weibo comments of the online newspaper People's Daily on Dong's report. I researched 435 comments related to Ms Dong.

6 Findings and Discussion

Since becoming Chairman of Gree Electric, Dong has enacted a series of measures that are beneficial to employees. To retain her employees, this time she has enacted a new preferential housing scheme in an effort to improve the working environment, employment environment and sense of belonging of her employees. The People's Daily published a report praising her initiatives and arguing that other entrepreneurs should learn from Ms. Dong's approach and strengthen their care and love for their employees

(Weibo, People's Daily, 23 February 2017). As Weibo is a Chinese social media platform, the content is all in Chinese. To facilitate subsequent research, I have translated the relevant content into English and categorised the 455 valid (related to the content of the story) comments.

These online comments can be broadly divided into three categories: 1. Praise 2. Value recognition 3. Expectation.

The first type of response is that Mingzhu Dong's action has attracted the attention and recognition of viewers, who believes that "This behavior is more commitment and vigour compared to other bosses", "Admire and respect such female entrepreneurs", "She is the most beautiful female entrepreneur", "Even more dominant and ambitious than many men". The public's admiration for Ms.Dong's femininity did not create a stereotype of female entrepreneurs, they did not believe that female entrepreneurs are less decisive than male entrepreneurs, nor did they believe that women should not invest too much energy in the workplace.

The second dimension of audience response to the article is value recognition. Specifically it is recognition of the brand and wanting to buy the brand's products. They also recognise the company and want to work for it. Many people said, "My air conditioner and household appliances are made by Gree", "I will only buy Gree products from now on", "Is the company still looking for people? I want to work there". These responses showed that the audience resonated with Ms.Dong and supported and praised her initiative. In a way, Ms.Dong even had an impact on their career plans and lifestyles.

The third reaction was the expectation of the workers for the entrepreneurs. For example, some people thought that "if there were more bosses like them, more companies would go global and lead China's economy to grow rapidly" and "if entrepreneurs were like this, workers would be satisfied". These comments show that audiences are very satisfied with Dong as a female entrepreneur, and that they are not prejudiced against women as entrepreneurs, but rather appreciate her actions and recognise her abilities.

In summary, these comments initially reflect the absence of bad satire and criticism. Internet users are now less traditional and stereotypical than the public previously believed, believing that women are unsuitable and do not possess the qualities of entrepreneurs. They rarely have stereotypes. In order to further examine the number of three types of viewer sentiment, and their proportion of the overall comments, I categorised the 435 comments and calculated the number of each category, and the percentage of these numbers to the total number of comments (accurate to one decimal place).

The chart visually shows that the first reaction to attitudes towards female entrepreneurs is praise and appreciation. 290 of the 435 comments praised the woman

People's impressions	Number of comments	Proportion of the total
Appreciations	290	66.7%
Value recognition	99	22.8%
Expectations	46	10.5%
Total	435	100%

Fig. 1. Numbers and percentage of the selected samples (Data collection and statistics by authors)

entrepreneur, describing her initiatives as very attractive, driven and confident. This is a high percentage of 66.7%. The second attitude is value recognition. The audience subconsciously believes that the attitude of the manager also reflects the attitude of the brand, and that the excellent qualities of the manager are replicated in the brand, thus the public have a good feeling towards Gree. Value identification includes not only identification with the brand, but also empathy with Ms. Dong herself, and association by her with their own situation. These comments accounted for 22.8% of the total. Finally is expectations. Around 10% of people were prompted to associate individual actions with collective development. The public believes that if all entrepreneurs love their employees like lady Dong and focus on product quality, then Chinese companies would be better. From Dong's behaviour, netizens went on to offer suggestions and outlooks on the employment environment and corporate development of the country as a whole. We can also see that the conclusions reflected in Fig. 1 are consistent with the preliminary conclusions.

The author refers to the three categories of comments above collectively as positive comments. In addition to the positive comments, the authors also collected some negative comments. The number of negative comments was counted as 13, accounting for 2.9% of the total number of comments. Because of the small number of negative comments, the authors did not use graphical analysis. Another possibility for the low number of negative comments is that in China, paper, internet and social media are subject to strict content monitoring by the government [12]. What is more, Zhang and Fleming [13] argued that media content in China is politically controlled, and all sensitive events or news that threaten public safety and public health are controlled and censored by the relevant agencies. The People's Daily, as the official newspaper, is more stringent in its censorship of comments so all opinions that are not conducive to maintaining the country's image or not in line with socialist values cannot be displayed on social media, so comments about Dong are favourable.

To explore whether the comments under official media and ordinary media are consistent, the authors compared the comments on Dong's report and the percentage of comments (accurate to one decimal place) on the People's Daily and another social media platform.

The author chose the Electrical Commerce Newspaper as the subject of his study. As it has a small number of followers, so do the comments, which are only one tenth of those of the People's Daily. But the advantage of this social media platform is that it is not part of the official newspaper, so there is not as strict government censorship on public comments as in People's Daily. In such a situation it is more conducive for

Social platform	Positive comment	Negative comments	Proportion of positive comments	proportion of negative comments
People' Daily	435	13	97.1%	2.9%
E-commerce newspaper	42	2	95.6%	4.4%

Fig. 2. Comments in two newspapers and proportions (Data collection and statistics by authors)

the authors to study the public's true impression of women entrepreneurs. To make the study fairer and more rigorous, the authors have likewise selected reports about Dong's promise of housing preferential policy for employees. As can be seen from Fig. 2, whether it is the comments of netizens under the People's Daily or the comments of netizens under the Electrical Commerce Newspaper, the vast majority of comments are positive, accounting for 97.1% and 95.6% respectively. Although the 4.4% of negative comments in the Electrical Commerce Newspaper exceeded the negative comments in the People's Daily (2.9%), it was within the normal range. It can therefore be said that Fig. 2 confirms the findings of Fig. 1. The conclusions of form Fig. 2 not only prove that the comments in the People's Daily are true, or at least that this story is true and that there is no strict censorship of public comments, but also prove that people do have respect and affection for successful female entrepreneurs and there are no stereotypes.

After examining the positive comments, the authors went on to examine the negative comments and found that the negative comments in both online newspapers argued that Dong's approach required a huge investment of human and financial resources, so this action was unachievable. For this reason, they believe female entrepreneurs were considered to be less rational than male entrepreneurs. The author does not agree with the comments that Dong's approach is unachievable and not rational enough. This is because any decision made by an entrepreneur will be perceived by the public as not being reasonable or rigorous enough, and this has nothing to do with gender. The fact that a small group of people think that Dong's ideas as a female entrepreneur are not well thought out does not automatically mean that male entrepreneurs' decisions are necessarily rigorous and thoughtful. Garten, Stevenson and Gumpert attempted to find a specific personality type to describe male entrepreneurs and female entrepreneurs respectively [14, 15]. The researchers classified male and female entrepreneurs into four representative personality types.

As shown in Fig. 3 [16] entrepreneurial personalities can be broadly classified into four categories, namely strategists, marketers, organisers and innovators, based on how they describe themselves. Strategists refer to those who are outgoing and good at developing team strategies and leading teams to plan for the future. They tend to have a lot of energy and are therefore very competitive in teamwork. Marketers are also extroverted personalities who have great market insight and are good at developing new market areas, but are less expert at jobs that require attention to details. Organisers, unlike the first two entrepreneurial personalities, are mostly more introverted, but are very responsible, careful and quick to react to things, and therefore good at managing the day-to-day affairs of the company. Finally, there are the innovators, who tend to be introverted and whose hobby is to research new products and develop new technologies. The researchers

Type I: Strategist Male 6; Female 6	Type II: Marketer Male 4; Female:5
Type III: Organizer Male 7; Female 6	Type IV: Innovator Male 3; Female 3

Fig. 3. Personality type

found, after quantitative statistics, that the number of male and female students is similar regardless of the personality type, and that there is no one personality trait that can correspond to male entrepreneurs, nor is there an adjective that can only be used for female entrepreneurs. So it is incorrect for a small percentage of internet users to judge the behaviour of entrepreneurs by their gender.

7 Conclusion

This paper study focuses on public's impressions of female entrepreneurs. From content analysis, we can clearly see the public's attitude towards female entrepreneurs. It is therefore concluded that although the media still uses specific words for women in their headlines, there is a gradual elimination of sexism and stereotypes. There is a strong sense of respect, admiration and affection for capable, driven and successful women, with whom people can relate emotionally and see them as a goal to strive for. However, this has not been completely eliminated and there is still a small group of people who feel that female entrepreneurs do not think deeply enough and do not make good decisions, but this has nothing to do with gender. It is a subconscious thought that exists when people think about things. Research has shown that both men and women are the same at a personality level and have the same abilities, and there is no situation where a particular gender will have a particular advantage. Secondly, we should look at traditional Chinese culture in a critical way, reducing its influence on modern business management. There has been a gradual reduction in sexism and gender bias, and a good trend towards recognising the important role of female entrepreneurs in business and the role of women in economic participation.

This study hopes to contribute to the academic research on media through the study and evaluation of social media platforms. The rise of women will reshape people's perception of feminism, and in future research I will continue to study the relationship between social media and feminism in more depth to understand the impact and role of social media on the rise of female power and the influence of female power on the development of social media.

8 Limitation

Although the author have tried to be fair and rational in the analysis, there are still many limitations to the paper research. This article only examines the coverage of women entrepreneurs in the People's Daily and the Eelectrical Commerce Newspaper. Although the People's Daily is the number one official newspaper in China and is authoritative, and the Eelectrical Commerce Newspaper is not an official newspaper and internet users can express their opinions more freely, these two online newspapers are still not representative of all newspapers. As this is a discussion about women entrepreneurs in China, most of the material is sourced from Chinese social media platforms, so translating from Chinese to English may not fully recreate the context and may result in misinformation due to the different contexts. In the future, related research papers written by author about this topic will be more precise and solid.

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