

## Research on Media Ethics of Network's Special Report on Women

**Gao Delong<sup>1,a,\*</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>University of Electronic Science and technology of China School of politics and public administration,  
Sichuan Chengdu, China

<sup>a</sup>2272326188@QQ.com

\* corresponding author

**Keywords:** cyberspace, female, reports, media ethics

**Abstract:** There are many special reports on women in cyberspace, and now the cyberspace is becoming the home of reports on women by many means of communication, such as text, pictures, motion graphs and videos. However, the image of women in these reports tends to be vulgar and kitsch, with the prejudice to materialize and belittle the female. This unfair, non-objective network coverage violates the basic ethical norms of network communication. This paper takes Sina female channel as an example, with the methodology of the content analysis, to conduct a sample survey of Sina's female channel. This paper aims to analyze the sex discrimination on female of online space, so as to explore the media ethical norms for reports on women and the shaping of their images.

### 1. Introduction

The well-known American sociologist Douglas Kellner once made it clear that the influence of media culture was related to gender, and that the media instilled or shaped "what meant men or women." Julia Wood suggests that the media shapes the sex image in a way that is not easily perceived and hints the audience through gender image and relationship between men and women, as male and female, what should their individual gender image be like.<sup>[1]</sup> With the development of society, women's social status has been greatly improved, and their self-awareness is also growing. The development of the Internet brings tremendous changes in the transmission environment, but the bias in the coverage of the female and their image still exists.

### 2. Sina and its Women Channel

According to the statistics in Alexa(<http://www.alexa.com>), female users in Sina(more than 50%) outnumber their male counterpart. With respect to user's education background, most of them obtain a degree below college, however, the browsing location indicates that a majority of users are from schools.(Figure 1) Sina Women's Channel is the largest and most famous female network brand, which provides the most comprehensive information about women in Chinese. It is divided into six primary sub-channels, i.e., fashion, beauty, emotion, gossip, marriage and best-choice, and these sub-channels are subdivided into 26 fixed sections. The writer conducts a summary of the proportion of Sina female channel visits, the proportion of page visits and page views per page, and it shows that in recent months (April - May) the access ratio is 0.96%, the page access ratio is 0.35% and the per page views is 1.35, it also indicates that more than 90% of users are women. From the Sina female channel access ratio and the proportion of page access, the visitor volume is low, but in terms of the per capita page views and the proportion of women visitors, it can infer that the viscosity of Sina female channel is strong.

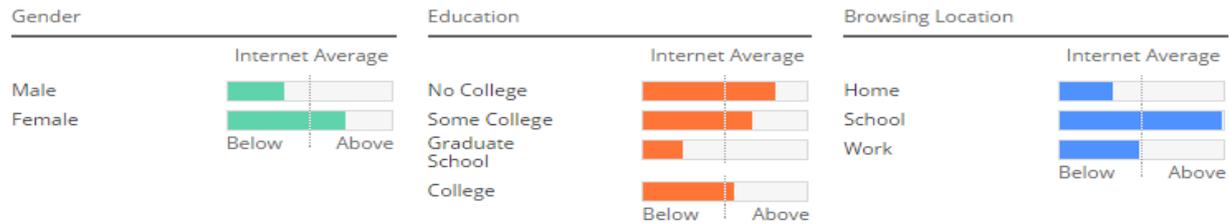


Figure 1: Basic information of Sina users

### 3. Methodology

#### 3.1 Object of the Study

There are many columns in Sina female channel, for the study needs, the writer selects the "latest" sub-column recommended by Sina female channel and focuses on the reports in this column as a research object. On the one hand, this part of the channel contains the largest proportion in layout and content, on the one hand, it is helpful to ensure that the content is released from Sina's female channel, instead of the users discussion. The writer selects the reports on March 15, April 15 and May 15 in 2016 in Sina female channel as the source.

#### 3.2 Dimension of the Study

Dimension is introduced to construct categories of this study. First collect data from the object, then browse the content and analyze the samples. When the initial category establishes, experiments will be made to construct a more comprehensive category related to this study. Annotations will be made to on words and phrases that show discrimination towards women. Attitudes revel in reports will also be recorded as positive, negative and neutral, the negative category includes explicit and potential prejudice, and the positive category shows approval comments.

#### 3.3 Statistics of the Analysis

According to the statistics, the reports in these three days are 83 in total, 13 of them are recommended by Sina Female, and the rest are the latest released. Among these reports, 17 of them are about men, while the rest of them are all about women. In these 66 women related reports, 27 of them are about emotions, which accounts for 41%; there are 13 reports about beauty and make-ups, accounting for 20%, besides, the categories mentioned above are all neutral in tone. There are 26 reports about entertainment and celebrities, luxuries, cars and houses and bodybuilding, accounting for 39% in general. 48% of the reports revel negative attitudes towards women, 16% of them are neutral and another 16% for positive tone. Negative reports are those reports showing explicit or implicit prejudice towards women, and this prejudice indicates the loss of media ethics.

The category setting in Sina shows the things that people suppose women to care about, like fashion, emotion, beauty and entertainment, while the issues like female culture and their career or economical achievement are less concerned, besides, the topics of sex are over discussed.

### 4. Problems in the Content of Sina Female Channel

#### 4.1 Materialization of Women's Image

The standard image of a woman, in Sina, is a gorgeous, sexy young lady with a graceful figure, sometimes sexually attractive as well. Women therefore become the object of men's illusion. The external materialized characterization of female is the potential media standard Sina female channel presents. In the commercial reports, the media emphasizes more on the ornamental value of women. When a woman is not treated as a complete individual, including intelligence, courage and other qualities, only to be seen when as an object, its ornamental (or beautiful) level determines the woman's value.<sup>[2]</sup> In the Sina female channel, phrases like "beautiful breasts", "white, rich and beautiful girl", "long legs", "chest", "beauty" are frequently used in reports about women, which

indicates that they tend to report women's external beauty instead of internal characteristics. The illustrations in the report are mostly exposed pictures of the female body, thus drawing the attention of the viewers. Although Sina female channel's visitors are mostly women, its media show they still stress the importance of women's appearance. Even in the reports of women in the workplace, the body and beauty are seen as a standard of success.

#### **4.2 Vulgarization of Women's Emotional Life**

Sina female channel pays special attention to women's emotional life and sex life. Marriage stories between couples, sexual life, family relationships and details of marital status are often published on the channel with the phrases like "extramarital affection" and "mistress" to dwarf the female image. In addition to this, women are always related to money, power and sex, as these reports tend to exaggerate details in sexual life. Titles of these reports always have sensational, or sexual words, for example, *Decryption Erotic Massage Service--Actress Invited to Watch The Mystery, Drunk Friend Insisted in Sleeping between Me and My Husband*, making women's images vulgarized.

#### **4.3 Over Entertaining**

The over entertaining phenomena in reports indicate a blind pursuit of gossip, and that also exists in Sina female channel as actress' anecdotes, emotional life and even daily life have been disclosed in detail. This way of reporting badly impacts the discourse environment, thereby causing prejudice on women. Against the public welfare of the media, reports like this would label women in a discriminating way. Network communication has a strong shaping power, in the cyberspace virtual shape of the female image and the misconceptions of gender ideas will be refracted into real life.

#### **4.4 Consuming Women and the Imbalance of the Right to Speak**

Internet economy is an important force in the media economy. The media, carried by the Internet, makes a high degree of integration of technology and communication. In order to gain an advantage in the media competition, many internet sites take page view, click rate and traffic as measurements of network media economic performance. The media, therefore, will continue to meet the audience and to maximize the benefits. Once the logic of business dominates the media, the media will put people's emotions and human instincts as commercial resources, which has formed a serious phenomenon of cultural materialization.<sup>[3]</sup> Consuming women means the media will shape the image of women and turn women themselves as products to the audience. In order to meet the need of information, women were molded into a variety of characteristics, their bodies or physical parts were exaggerated, moreover, young and beautiful women become the mainstream of the media. These reports separate female images from the real life, and then evolved them into physical and chemical goods, decoration, as goods to meet the desire of male consumers.

Although the openness of cyberspace improves women's right to speak, and there are some developments in women's media action, the prevalence of consuming female still widen the gap between men and women in the right to speak. As it is known to all, one of the aims of women's self-awakening and female movement is to obtain equal discourse and form a female discourse system.

### **5. Media Ethical Review of Internet Special Report on Women**

Gender discrimination is the reflection of the role, status and image of women in the development of history in people's psychological consciousness.<sup>[4]</sup> Gender discrimination itself is the ethical problem of society, the media, when talking about gender issues, especially for the image of women, should pay attention to the media ethical norms.

#### **5.1 The Equal View of Women 's Special Report**

Discrimination on female is influenced by social culture, commercialization and other factors. Network, as a combination of a variety of ways to spread the information, should always be alert to

sex discrimination or stereotyped behavior of female images. Once the cyberspace becomes the unbridled bearer of the spread of sex discrimination in women, it will commercialize or materialize women, causing the widening of gender barriers, thus affecting the process of equality between men and women. In this case, it is necessary and important for the network to follow the norms of equal ethics.

The modern philosopher Ross suggested that there is always one or more ethical values that are "competitive" in our ethical choices. If the specific ethical environment is equal, then these competing ethical claims are equal. Since in the network space values diversified, the corresponding value theory is also pluralistic. But Rose points out that when we enjoy our share of happiness, we should ensure the fairness and the welfare. In shaping female content and female images, the network reports should treat men and women equally, especially to the maintenance of gender dignity and value. Network communication provides a new living space for mankind and because of the characteristics of interaction, virtual and openness of the network, the communicator and the receiver of information share some kind of initiative. Cyberspace that delivers reports for women should give women due equality and respect the dignity of them. Equality also indicates that women want to build their own discourse system, and express their voice through the network. In this circumstance, women hope that their personality, dignity can be guaranteed by the media ethics.

### **5.2 The True Principle of Online Special Reports on Women**

The network communication is virtual and anonymous, therefore the real society turns to virtual symbols in the cyberspace, the information of the communication subject, the source and the content are obscured. Although the network improves the degree of freedom of information spreading, it also weakens the credibility of information. Truth is the essence of information reporting, a message should first be the objective fact. Online reports of women must be real story, instead of distorting images of women by resources like "allegedly report" "suspected news" or "friends reveal", all information should be documented. In the network agenda settings, there can not be the over-rendering of a particular or special female behavior, so as to prevent labeling women with certain impression.

There are many ways to interpret the information in network communication, while in the dissemination of contents about female, one needs to show a ethical evaluation towards the facts, moreover, gender should not always be the focus of information interpretation. Reports that strongly emphasize the youth and beauty of women and see them as the ultimate value should be avoided. In the question of the authenticity of the network information, women should remain vigilant or gender awakening as the media would imperceptibly mislead women's self-awareness. When women access to the network information, they should also be objective towards what they see. It is necessary to resolutely resist the distortion of the image of women, and fight against the misrepresentation of reports about women.

### **5.3 The Fair Perspective of Network Special Report on Women**

Some online reports portrait women in a outstanding position or advantage situation, and would strongly emphasize this situation, however, if men achieve the same position, few reports would stress that. This preference in reporting making women become special when she be respected in certain fields or make certain achievements, while for men, being extraordinary is justified. Peng Jiafa once pointed that Celino summed up the 'hidden bias' in the news media into twelve items, including: prejudices in news sources; prejudices in news choices; prejudices in news omissions; prejudices in visits; prejudices in publications; prejudices in titles; prejudices in the choice of words; prejudices in the illustration; the use of editorials to distort the facts.<sup>[5]</sup> The fairness of reporting on network refers to the observance of network ethics and the proper conscience in the network communication. To achieve this, the network communication organization should be fair and unbiased, so that both sides express their own voice. When the event involves the interest of both parties, it should be dealt with in accordance with the principle of impartiality, instead of being linked with gender and other interests of the event, so as to prevent labeling the female or using stereotyped expression to demonize the image of women.

#### **5.4 Media's Responsibility on Network's Special Report on Women**

The cyberspace is filled with the problem of pan-sexualism, and Que Min thought this phenomenon led to many passive results, that is to say, the materialization of sex and gender issues caused the vulgarization of culture and the decay of morality. In cyberspace, women is regarded as objects to fulfill the sexual desire of men, therefore women are under the control of men's power. Network communication agencies should look at women from a social perspective, as social gender looks at women and men in an objective and dialectical perspective, which is conducive for the network communication agencies to assume the corresponding social responsibility.

The ethicists suggest moral differences, that is, from the certain responsibility to the exclusive responsibility. The network communication platform is not only responsible for the responsibility of the network communication behavior, but also important to adhere to the responsibility in the specific environment. On the gender issue, it is necessary to stick to the responsibility for shaping women's image and do their best not hurt women. In addition, communitarianism in cyberspace argues that ethical choices are not mutually exclusive choices, but rather the integrated choice for the society. Citizens should also be held accountable for their behaviors in cyberspace and they should have a rational understanding of discrimination and prejudice towards women. Of course, the network communication agencies should create a healthy environment for gender culture, and guide the audience to establish a rational gender awareness.

#### **5.5 The Justice Principle of Media Resources of Online Reports on Women**

The media resources of cyberspace are important symbolic resources and discourse resources. Women should have the right access, rights expression, discourse resource use ability and participation opportunities in the internet. Women's agenda setting and the expression of the right to speak should be equal to the right to speak with men as these two are of equal relations, instead of subordinate relationships between the strong and the weak. The fact that men often dominate or manipulate the right to speak while women are marginalized violates the network ethics. "Justice is the need to persevere in trying to listen to the demands of others, especially those who are repressed or forced to be silent -- they are embedded in the system because cultural bias and prejudice force them to keep silence."<sup>[6]</sup> Hugh once said: "Public utility is the only source of justice." The public nature of cyberspace requires that it must fulfill specific social responsibilities and distribute resources appropriately. Habermas pointed out that the media in the community should guard the public interest all along. Therefore, the network communication resources should stress more to respect and protect women's right to speak.

### **6. Conclusion**

Information has become one of the important resources for people to survive and develop. Media ethics in the information age is reflected as the use of information resources, as well as the consideration for the moral value. Media ethics, at the information level, is the consensus of the legitimate and moral norms of using the information. The media for women should take objective, just, true, comprehensive as standards for the media professional ethics and ethical norms, which is conducive to the healthy development of gender relations. In the new media era, traditional media should follow the trend to conduct the media integration, i.e., the network digital platform, the building of "two micro and one end" and so on. The mobile internet greatly expands the way and space of the citizen's discourse. In the context of the internet communication, every citizen is a "small speaker" and very sentence, every event can be emphasized. Internet users or mobile terminal users, when express their views, would be involved in the issue of network media ethics. Both the network communication platform and viewers should abide by the media ethical norms, so as to reach the social moral consensus and promote the realization of social progress as a whole.

### **References**

- [1] Wood J. *Gendered Lives: Communication, Gender, and Culture*[M]. Guangzhou: Jinan

University Press, 2005:186.

[2] Bu Wei. Sex Discrimination in Mass Media[N]. Guangming Daily, 200-7-6.

[3] Wang Yue-chuan. Media philosophy[M]. Kaifeng: Henan University Press, 2004:14.

[4] Shi Yue-ping&Zhang Jian-qi. Negative Influence of "Media Discrimination" on Constructing Harmonious Society[J]. ShiTingZongHeng, 2007(3): 16-18.

[5] Peng Jia-fa, The Principle of Objectivity of News[N]. Taipei: San Min Book, 1994.

[6] Yuan Jing-hua. On the Concept and Dimension of Media Justice - Based on the Model of "5W" in Laswell[J]. Chinese Journal of Journalism and Communication, 2012(4): 36.