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Media image strategies of Chinese feminists on social networks

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The concept of feminism is "foreign" in China, and therefore feminism is relatively late in its development in China. However, in recent years, with the booming development of social media in China, feminist issues are increasingly discussed on Chinese main social media. As a result, social media has also brought more opportunities and challenges for gender issues.

On the one hand, feminists have more opportunities to speak out for gender rights and equality, and use communication resources to express their own subjectivity, which not only promotes the awakening of female subjectivity, but also enhances the status of women in the family and society [5]. However, on the other hand, this open and free ferment of public opinion has to a certain extent intensified the complexity of gender culture communication, as ideologies have become more diverse and the contradictions between multiple ideologies have intensified under the impetus of new media [4].

Social media platforms are the most important civil opinion forum for "feminism" in China, and the image of "feminists" in them is very complicated. In addition to the new generation of independent, rational women, there are also many negative feminist images in social media. In China, these people are known as "Chinese Field Feminism" ("Cynical Feminists"), which refers to local Chinese feminists with Chinese characteristics but extreme radicalism, with a rather derogatory connotation [1]. Although they also actively defend women's rights and interests, such as anti-domestic violence and anti-discrimination in employment, they advocate male-phobia, emphasis on women's profitability, and resistance to the institution of marriage and family, which is inconsistent with the core value of feminism's pursuit of equality between men and women. Many of the issues discussed in "Chinese Field Feminism" are not common abroad, but unique to China, including bride price, children's naming rights, inheritance rights of daughters, matrimonial joint property of housewives. Even now, any speech involving "feminism" is ridiculed as overreacting to "Chinese Field Feminism," which essentially constituted a gradual stigmatization of feminism. In Goffman's theory, stigma is an attribute, behavior, or reputation which is socially discrediting in a particular way: it causes an individual to be mentally classified by others in an undesirable, rejected stereotype rather than in an accepted, normal one [2]. Therefore, if the stigmatizing label of "Chinese Field Feminism" is allowed to develop, it is not conducive to the actual resolution of gender issues in Chinese society.

Therefore, we might make feasible suggestions from three perspectives in order to promote the positive image of feminists: 1) For communicators – feminists need to express their demands reasonably and fight for more fair rights for women on the basis of respecting gender differences [3], while the media need to report the facts and create a good public opinion atmosphere; 2) For the audience – treat the public opinion critically and rationally, improve their own media literacy and cultivate the consciousness of openness and rationality; 3) For media platforms – they need to play the role of "gatekeepers", strengthen the filtering and screening of information, to ensure the dissemination of high-quality content, highlight the independent and self-improvement aspects of women, and ultimately achieve the goal of guiding public opinion and the audience's perception of feminists in a subtle way.

References

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