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The Research on How Twitter Influence Homosexual Community

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Abstract: The impact of social media on the homosexual community is a topical issue of social concern. Some researchers have found that Twitter has an important impact on the gay community, however, there is a lack of uniform explanation on how it compares with the impact of social media on the gay community in other countries and how to improve its social environment and functional settings. Therefore, this paper lists the basic characteristics of the gay community on Twitter, analyzes the dilemmas faced by the gay community on Twitter and compares it with Weibo in China. After analyzing the functional settings currently adopted by Twitter, the paper explores how to improve the survival of the gay community on Twitter. The study finds that there are still some problems with the survival and use of the gay community on Twitter, and that some of the functional settings of Twitter have both positive and negative influence, and that Twitter needs to take measures to alleviate these problems.

Keywords: social media, Twitter, homosexual community

1. Introduction

The impact of social media on the homosexual community is emerging as a social issue of concern. Caleb T. Carr and Rebecca A. Hayes redefine social media that allow users to opportunistically interact and selectively self-present with both broad and narrow audiences who derive value from user-generated content and the perception of interaction with others [1]. In contrast to the majority of social media in China, twitter, facebook, and youtube have significantly higher visibility of the gay community and present a more comprehensive and objective image of the gay community. This paper takes Twitter as an example. Twitter has the universal nature of social media itself, and in tweets, the gay community tends to express more opinions, including more rational judgments, especially on topics related to politics. By posting tweets, republishing them, and commenting on them, the gay community is able to convey and exchange information in Twitter. However, based on the difference between the gay community and the mainstream community, there are still some problems in the social environment created by Twitter. This paper enumerates the current situation of the homosexual community on Twitter and analyzes the impact of Twitter's function settings on the gay

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community,and suggest the direction of improvement for Twitter's social environment and function settings.

This paper is divided into two parts. The first part analyzes the basic characteristics of the homosexual community on Twitter and compares Twitter with Weibo in China in terms of the current situation of the homosexual community. The second part analyzes the impact of Twitter's function settings on the homosexual community and proposes future directions and suggestions for improvement.

2. The Basic Characteristics of the Homosexual Community on Twitter

2.1. Basic Characteristics and Related Fields

2.1.1. Politics-related

On Twitter, users are extensively targeted at government and politics.They tend to express political or social views,and actively engage in organizing collective action against the target [2]. Similarly, the homosexual community, as a special part of Twitter users, discusses mostly in terms of their own fight for equal rights and their views on the laws. They target their confrontation more against, gay and lesbian equal rights issues including child adoption rights, education rights, employment rights, religious rights, etc., legal issues including policies related to homosexual, full legalization of marriage, etc., homosexual-related activities including rallies and marches conducted by gays and lesbians to fight for their equal rights, and others [3]. In twitter, they tend to reveal more points of views, including more rational judgments, especially on topics related to politics [2].

2.1.2. Self-presentation

Caleb T. Carr and Rebecca A. Hayes redefine social media to include social media allows users to opportunistically interact and selectively self-present [1]. Like most social media, Twitter provides users with Relatively visual anonymity, allowing users to engage in more self-presentation when posting tweets [4]. This is obviously confirmed by the overall characteristics on Twitter. Based on this article,Twitter users can be divided into two categories. Search for keywords about homosexual and related topic discussions on Twitter,when analyzing the general public users, the general public users' postings about the homosexual community include, attitudes towards gays and lesbians' fight for their equal rights in political and social issues, their opinions expressed for the homosexual community, and the content of the postings include support, opposition and neutrality.When analyzing the homosexual users, their postings on homosexual-related content include,fighting for their own political, social and other rights,their views expressed on related topics as a homosexual group, and their views on related users who are also homosexual groups,and the content of the postings also include support, opposition and neutrality. Thus, regardless of the category of users, for the homosexual community, Twitter provides a platform for self-presentation.

2.1.3. Organization Activities

The communication on Twitter is mainly based on sharing and exploring information related to "people and organizations that (users) care about" [5], so in addition to individual users (profile accounts), some businesses, companies, etc. act as organizational users, developing brands or making profit.One example of which is a hashtag campaign called #ILoveGay on Twitter launched by an organization that aimed to promote their social media networks.A Twitter hashtag reflects users' participation in content related to the task of organizing information [6]. In the hashtag #ILoveGay, all users are invited to post content related to the topic in a variety of formats such as videos,

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photographs, and article comments. During the event, the LGBTQ community, including homosexual users, participated in the event to share content and there are also supporters to give voice to it. Despite criticism and prejudice, the presence of the organization provided a public space for the homosexual community to have a collective expression on Twitter.

2.2. The Dilemma the Homosexual Community are Facing on Twitter

2.2.1. Cyberbully

Nowadays, Twitter operates as one of the largest foreign social media reflecting dominant public discourse. It offers the homosexual community a platform to speak out, make friends and date positively, but sometimes it's still full of opposition and attacks, and the hashtag and stigmatization of the community is still rampant. Public discourse in some countries, where the homosexual community are seen as heretical and perverted, has been influenced by other anti-gender movements around the world. As the situation grew, more and more tweets began to disparage and insult the homosexual community, in an attempt to preserve the order of heterosexuality that the public has long been accustomed to. Moreover, the public on social media platforms often tend to make shorter and more emotional statements to attract attention and generate buzz, instead of discussing from a comprehensive and objective perspective. So it's easy for most Twitter users to take things out of context and fill in the gaps with their own presuppositions and understandings, which is also an factor that leads to the one-sided nature of many online discussions on the Internet. Besides, the anonymity of online discussion also weakens people's concern about the consequences of cyber attacks on the Internet.

2.2.2. Privacy Leakage

Homosexuality status is one of the most sensitive private information which should not be collected without explicit consent. Even as some homosexual people come out publicly, others remain anxious and fearful that their family, friends and colleagues will find out their homosexual status. The possibility of changes in social relationships and the harm caused by different positions were the main reasons for their concern. The wide adoption of OSNs raises privacy concerns due to personal data shared online. Privacy control mechanisms have been deployed in popular OSNs for users to determine who can view their personal information. However, user's sensitive information could still be leaked even when privacy rules are properly configured [7].

2.3. Contrasting the Survival of the Homosexual Community on Sina Weibo in China

Sina Weibo is currently the most registered microblogging product in China. Similar to Twitter, when using Sina Weibo, users can get information about various fields including politics, economy, society, entertainment, etc. Users can update their status in their personal pages including personal opinions and comments,and users can follow or unfollow other users, retweet other people's tweets, and so on. Meanwhile,Sina Weibo differs from Twitter in terms of commenting and retweeting feature-settings, personal privacy rights, and community. Therefore, the different social environment and function settings make the survival of the homosexual community in Twitter and Sina Weibo different.

2.3.1. The Advantages

For the function setting of commenting and retweeting, Sina Weibo adopts the form of commenting in the original microblog content or retweeting, which makes the comments in non-retweeting only exist with the original microblog commenting system, and it is difficult to be seen by the original author and to get continued dissemination. AS Twitter must be commented on the basis of retweets,

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and the information related to both retweeting and commenting can be seen by the original author [8].After the tweet is promoted these comments will be discussed and spread again, which makes the channel of information dissemination greatly extended and accelerated. At the same time, Twitter has a large number of community forums about the homosexual community, and these community forums under the influence of the rapid dissemination of information and the wide range of communication,users who comment and retweet tweets can also interact more with users who post them, and the social relationship of these organizations are more closely connected. This allows the homosexual community, as a minority group in society, to be more involved in discussions and to more fully express themselves. In terms of online censorship, China's Internet law explicitly prohibits content that undermines national unity, which allows the Chinese government to restrict freedom of expression for ideological, political, and national security purposes [9].In contrast, protected by freedom of speech online, the homosexual community is more freer to make statements on Twitter and can cover a wider range of discussions, providing convenience and freedom for the this community to use Twitter.

2.3.2. The Disadvantages

While the rapid and widespread dissemination of information and the lack of platform restrictions have to some extent enabled the homosexual community to better express itself, but this has also led to the possibility of more cyberbully and privacy leakage. Because Twitter is geared to a more complex type of users from different countries, and it is more difficult to handle and respond to different national cultures.There is also a lack of content appropriate to different national discourses and issues in the internal discourse mechanism of the homosexual community, which leads to controversies and polarized sentiments among a wider range of users about a particular gay-related issue [10].In addition, although both Sina Weibo and Twitter tweets have messages with a 140-character limit (Twitter has raised the limit to 280 characters in addition to Chinese, Japanese and Korean), due to language differences, the 140-character English usually can only express part of a small amount of content, while in contrast, Chinese can express a wider range of meaning and more detailed information.Since not all users are well informed about this minority group, a more detailed expression of views can, to a certain extent, enable other users to receive more valuable information and thus facilitate the communication of the views of the homosexual community.

3. Measures for the Survival of the Gay Community and Future Improvements on Twitter

3.1. Measures

Although not specifically targeted at the gay community,certain function settings of the Twitter platform have had an impact on the existence of this group on social media (Twitter) to some extent. The following is the list of the function settings of the Twitter that affects the gay community and the environment that Twitter has constructed,which have both positive and negative effects on how the gay community uses social media, generates emotional value, and supports related movements.

First,Twitter has the general characteristics of social media itself, such as being free to use, opening to the vast majority of users, and easy and inexpensive to access. In contrast to traditional media such as radio and television, newspaper news, etc., as an online social media, Twitter does not have a dedicated management organization to filter and control posts [11]. Second,Twitter hashtags are keywords or acronyms with a # symbol prefix, annotated in twitter as a specified topic tag. The use of hashtags to organize topics on twitter was first proposed on August 23, 2007, and today hashtags are used as search terms to filter certain tweets. The more hashtags there are, the more chances users have to be identified [12]. Many gay movements launched through twitter are discussed through the use of hashtags, where news, tweets and posts are compiled in a specific hashtag. Third,the gay

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community has a degree of visual anonymity when it posts graphic and video content on twitter that does not reveal personal information. They can choose to remain anonymous in the group when they do not tend to expose their personal situation to the general public [13].

3.1.1. Positive Impact

The features of Twitter listed above provide a certain degree of space for gay and lesbian users to survive on Twitter, and have a positive effect on Ideological impact of the gay and lesbian community and the support of related movements. For example, as an online social media, the basic features has allowed Twitter to provide a free, easy, and transparent environment for the gay community to disseminate relevant information to their target audience by posting or re-posting on Twitter. Using hashtags makes it easier for users to communicate and learn about the gay movement,and these hashtags can also categorize their activities in order to gain new followers and keep current followers by letting them know that someone is following these hashtags [11]. Visual anonymity allows members of the gay community to decide whether to disclose themselves based on their own wishes, for example, by displaying personal information, avatars, and the content of their tweets.

3.1.2. Negative Impact

On the contrary,due to the ease and transparency of Twitter's delivery of information, a spatial environment has been created where the gay community and the gay community, the gay community and the non-gay community can contact with each other, which makes the public's sentiment about the visible issues published, including their bias, exaggeration, misunderstanding, sympathy, etc..It greatly affects the perception of an issue in a wider context and thus lead to polarized sentiments and intensify the controversy over an issue [10]. The aggregated discussion of gay community under hashtags can form a unifying force, but at the same time it can also become a site of division and contradiction, as well as provide a space for hate speech attacking each other, and lead to verbal violence spreading on Twitter [14].Visual anonymity on social interaction in gay community on Twitter can be both good and bad for social interaction.Anonymity in groups can lead to de-individuation, in which users can be impulsive, blatantly aggressive towards one another and even sadistic [13].

3.2. Improvements

3.2.1. Improve Agenda-setting

For mitigating the opposing and offensive verbal violence and stigmatization of the gay community on Twitter According to the agenda-setting theory proposed by Lippmann and its testing and development, the strategy of agenda-setting theory can be applied to improve the survival of the gay community on social media such as Twitter.Traditional media largely fail to set of agendas [15],and the introduction of social media,such as Twitter,has further transformed intermedia agenda-setting dynamics.In the online environment of various discourses on Twitter, positive media agendas can be used to influence the public agenda.For example, the mainstream media play the role of correctly guiding of the public's views on the gay community, creating a harmonious social environment, and providing a good social environment for the survival and development of the gay community on Twitter.

3.2.2. Improve Media Quality Capabilities

For the phenomenon of polarized emotions caused by the topic of homosexuality. Since the homosexual community is still a marginalized group in the current Internet environment, Twitter, for

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example, is often characterized by antagonistic views and comments from the general public that stem from a lack of understanding of the homosexual community and offensive comments made by the community itself. Therefore, to a certain extent, improving the media quality capabilities of the gay community on twitter can lead to a better understanding of this community and thus improve the polarization and contradiction between the gay community and the general public. Twitter, as an important voice platform in social media, can promote the gay community to express positive views and opinions and to be able to participate and contribute to relevant social decision-making, thus promoting diverse interactions and alleviating polarization in the online society.

3.2.3. Improve Functional Settings

For the negative impact that some of Twitter's current functional settings have on the homosexual community.Although Twitter currently supports measures such as users deciding whether or not to improve their identifying information and display it to all Twitter users, and Twitter allowing personal accounts to be set private and tweets to be displayed only to individual users, however,the fact that Twitter currently has no dedicated management organization to filter and control posts puts the gay community at much greater risk of privacy exposure and poses a significant risk of exacerbating speech violence. Therefore, Twitter could mitigate these problems to some extent by promoting the creation of human or machine organizations to filter and vet tweets that have a high potential to negatively impact the homosexual community and exacerbate group antagonism.

4. Conclusion

Through the study, this paper finds that the current statements of the homosexual community on Twitter are more associated with politics and social movements. The functional settings of Twitter such as anonymity and organization allow the homosexual community to make more self-presentation and expression of opinions on Twitter. On the other hand, Twitter has also brought negative issues to the homosexual community, as this study cites Cyberbully and Privacy leakage.In comparison to the current situation of the gay community on Chinese social media, such as Weibo, some features of Twitter have had a negative impact on the this community, such as the polarization of Twitter users and has exacerbated controversial issues about the gay community.Therefore, the recommendations made in this study include improving the agenda setting on Twitter,the media quality capabilities of the homosexual community, and the functional settings.

Most of the current research on the topic of social media and homosexual community integration focuses on the analysis of the impact of social media on the gay community,however,there is a gap in research that compares different social media and makes recommendations.The main contribution of this paper is to analyze the different situations of the gay community on Twitter and Weibo, and to make recommendations on the social environment and functional settings,which will help subsequent researchers to conduct deeper comparative studies and make more practical suggestions for improvement, and promote the improvement of the two representative social media, Twitter and Weibo.

The current study only focuses on the homosexual group on Twitter.However, in the current social media, the survival of minority groups has become a social issue that has received more attention, and the current study does not classify the scope of the activities of the homosexual group on social media in detail but only covers the political and social fields. Future research should focus more on other minority groups,classify and study their social media activities in depth.

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