Research on the Status Quo and Problems of Women's Discourse Power in the Context of New Media

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Abstract: In the new media era, the convenience, speed, and low access threshold of the Internet provide channels and access to women's originally compressed discourse, releasing women's discourse to a certain extent. This paper focuses on the manifestations of women's discourse being liberated in the new media context, what problems still exist, and provides relevant strategies to solve them. The purpose of this paper is to reveal the innovations, difficulties, and breakthrough methods of women's discourse in the development of the Internet, and to provide references for subsequent research. This paper will discuss and study women's discourse as the main research object through literature analysis, typical case analysis, and data comparison of previous reports. It can be concluded that although women's discourse has been developed and expanded in the new media environment, it is still suffering from problems such as patriarchal social gaze and alienation of self-expression, which need improvement from multiple parties such as media, society, and women themselves to improve.

Keywords: New media environment, Female discourse, Social platforms.

1. Introduction

This paper explores the opportunities, challenges, and solutions for women's discourse in the era of the high-speed development of new media. This paper will firstly analyze the gender data ratio of Internet users and population, and the cooling-off period of divorce, and explore the progress of women's discourse in two aspects; then it will analyze the phenomenon of "net popularity" and women's portals and public websites, and argue the gender discrimination and "male gaze" in women's discourse. Finally, the study will propose reasonable solutions from three perspectives: society, media, and women themselves. By studying women's discourse, analyzing its specific contradictions, and providing practical strategies for women's discourse, the goal is to be able to change the patriarchal culture of traditional media, eliminate gender discrimination, truly liberate women's minds, and achieve gender equality in society.

2. The Current Situation of Women's Discourse in the New Media Context

Discourse power refers to discursive power and discursive rights. In his theory of discourse and power, Foucault believed that discourse and power are inseparable, and that power is transmitted and realized through discourse. According to him, "all human knowledge is acquired through discourse, nothing exists apart from discourse, and the relationship between man and the world is a

discursive one. Discourse means the process by which a social group establishes its social status and becomes known to other groups by spreading its meaning through society according to certain rules. "[1] Thus discourse is a manifestation of the subject's true social status, and female discourse is the right of women to gain access to channels to express themselves, to communicate through media resources, to focus on women's individual and independent development, and is often seen as a countervailing force to male discourse. [2]

In the past, women have been in the second position in society due to social constructs and the power gap between men and women, and gender relations have tended to be stronger for men and weaker for women. As a result, women's voices had been restricted to various degrees. However, in today's new media era, information recipients are not only receivers but also disseminators of information. The relaxation of communication channels, the acceleration of the speed of communication, and the decrease in the price of communication media have allowed more women to make full use of social platforms and new media to express themselves.

The specific manifestations of women's expanded access to voice are mainly presented in two aspects.

2.1. Women Have Gained Greater Freedom of Expression

In the traditional media era, men were the main symbols of news coverage. In exploring women's news, Feng Yuan mentioned that male news characters were photographed, appeared, and were used far more frequently than women; men were the overwhelming protagonists of both text and photo news: 83.19% of men and 16.81% of women in major character news; 71% of male characters and 29% of women in major news with photos being taken; in positive news coverage 82.28% for males and 17.72% for females. [3] The degree of neglect of women in the traditional mainstream media, although not directly suppressing women's status in society, had resulted in a significant marginalization of women in the news and a "symbolic devaluation" of women's voices.

The absolute voice of men in the traditional media era has been improved in the new media era. According to the 48th Statistical Report on the Development of China's Internet by the China Internet Network Information Center, as of June 2021, the ratio of male to female Internet users in China was 51.2:48.8; [4] and according to the 7th census in 2021, the gender composition of China's population was 723.34 million men and 688.44 million women, with the ratio of men to women being 51.24:48.76. In terms of quantity, the ratio of male to female Internet users is further close to the gender ratio of the population, and the number of female to male Internet users is close, and both occupy almost half of the Internet.

In the trend of Weibo-led social media, the Report on the Development of Weibo Users in 2020 shows that the proportion of all Weibo users is 54.6% for women and 45.4% for men. [5] The coming of the era of WeChat and Weibo has prompted more and more women to establish their own social accounts and publish information on an individual basis.

The above data shows that the new media and Internet environment provide more opportunities and power for women to express themselves, and women can enjoy the same free expression power as men on the Internet.

2.2. Increased Opportunities for Women to Participate in Public Issues

The birth of new media has broken the traditional male perspective as the main perspective to explore public issues. In the face of major social conflicts and public interests, women have moved away from their traditional family roles and have become more prominent as social actors, increasing their sense of presence from being submissive to men's perceptions, remaining silent and confined behind the scenes, to being on the same level of public opinion as men, standing in the

front line of public opinion, focusing on defending their rights and exploring more spiritual expression.

In 2021, the Civil Code of the People's Republic of China announced the implementation of a "divorce cooling-off period", a government-mandated buffer period during which parties are required to separate for a period of time before making a decision. The implementation of this policy caused an uproar on social media. An article from WeChat's "Ge XIII" titled "Divorce cooling-off period will be very effective in reducing marriages" went viral, highlighting women's views on divorce cooling-off periods as a form of black humor and an unnecessary measure. Such comments can be found everywhere on Weibo, with many women bloggers mentioning social issues such as "domestic violence", "prenuptial agreement" and "property division", conveying to society values different from those of men and the mainstream. This has led the public to rethink the demands of women in marriage and has strengthened society's attention to women's interests and safety, creating a certain degree of social influence.

The shift from traditional media to new media has given women a richer social role and identity, achieving an improvement from the initial marginalization and loss of voice to the ownership of voice. Such changes have provided opportunities for women to express themselves freely, improve their social status, and achieve equality in many areas, including politics and economics.

3. Problems Facing Women's Discourse in the New Media Environment

Although women have fought for a certain degree of discourse in the new media era and are free to make their voices heard in a pluralistic manner, women's discourse is still bound by several issues and has yet to fully realize women's autonomous expression. "The new media represented by the Internet provides technical conditions for women to exercise their discourse rights with its low threshold and openness, but due to the influence of patriarchal culture and the control of commercial interests, as well as the passive discourse strategy of women's expression, women's expression in the new media is essentially a 'utopia' of women's discourse rights " [6]

3.1. Women are Still be the "Seen"

As women use new media to explore individualized narratives and personal expressions, the freedom of new media has contributed to a more open outlook on women, prompting them to make more deliberate displays of privacy. Women are no longer ashamed to express body discourse, and some female Internet users even use privacy for profit. Despite the sizeable intellectual liberation of gender equality on the Internet, the privacy of women's bodies remains a focus of male desire. "What has changed is nothing more than the transformation of passive display of female secrecy into active exposure of female eroticism." [7]

With the popularity of short video software such as Jitterbug, many women have chosen to post photos and videos with erotic connotations in order to gain benefits and visibility, known as "erasure" and "soft porn". For example, the online celebrity "Dog Head Lori", who exploded on the Internet in 2021, has an incredible number of followers and video views, and her live-streaming room is also very popular, but this prosperity is due to her "white and thin" appearance and her frequent sexually suggestive facial expressions. This is the result of her "white and thin" appearance and often sexually suggestive facial expressions. There are many similar phenomena, and these netizens either deliberately or unconsciously use their secondary sexuality to become the objects of male viewing.

It can be seen that women's pursuit of change in the new media context is still based on the "male gaze", and they are still not free from the dependence on men. Such alienation is a disguised

use of new media to strengthen male expression, which has a negative impact on women's social status and gender equality, and keeps women as "watched" and "consumed".

3.2. Women Are Still not Free from Gender Stereotypes and Gender Discrimination

While different voices are allowed to coexist in cyberspace, the convergence of voices creates a solidified and reinforced stereotype of women. In his study of online sexism, scholar Chen Yang remarks that "new media are not naturally associated with gender equality and influenced by powerful cultural backgrounds and dominant ideologies, online media, whose content is detached from traditional media, may still unwittingly become complicit in masculine consciousness." [8]

Many public websites and portals with women as the main audience still focus on the traditional role of women, and most of the channels are positioned as lifestyle and entertainment-oriented fashion consumption, family life, marriage, sex, etc., which express the traditional view of the "ego" content of women's gender identity. The public discourse of women is also more inclined to private and entertaining information, and less involved in the "big self" of women's interests, ideas, and values, etc. More rational voices still come from male subjects.

Such expressions reinforce the traditional expressions of women, emphasize the social regulations of women, and further deepen the traditional gender stereotypes. Compared to men, women in the new media have only gained the right to express themselves freely, but their expression is not yet capable of changing the social status quo of gender inequality.

4. Strategies for Solving the Problem of Women's Discourse in the New Media Context

4.1. Social Aspects

Gender equality refers to the equality of power, responsibilities and opportunities for women and men, and the gender perspective refers to the recognition that men and women have the same personality, dignity, rights and development opportunities based on the recognition of biological differences between the sexes. [9] Therefore, an equal social environment requires a balance of forces and each of them has its own role. However, at present, the marketization and commercialization of the media are prevalent, gender stereotypes still exist, and the social concept of gender needs to be truly implemented. In order to build a truly individualized discursive space for women, they must break through the traditional culture and consumerism of a patriarchal society.

Therefore, in the new media context, the state and government should focus on communicating gender concepts, shaping a positive and positive image of women as subjects, and calling for the awakening of women's subject consciousness. We should pay attention to the female-conscious speech, think more about and explore the social value of women in terms of independence and creativity, and inspire more women to explore their inner potential and realize the social value of women.

4.2. Media Aspects

Media literacy refers to the ability of the public to recognize, participate in, and use the media in the information age, including the ability to select, understand, question, evaluate, create, and produce information in the face of new media, and the ability to think and discern, as well as the ability of the press and the public to use the media and media information to serve their personal lives and social development. [10] The media, as "gatekeepers," need to raise the gender consciousness of their staff and transform themselves from the traditional patriarchal gender concept of inferiority and superiority to the service of patriarchal consciousness. Such media quality education requires

the efforts of schools and society, and audiences need to have a certain degree of textual judgment and gender awareness in order to question and rebel against the information disseminated, thus accelerating the change of the media.

At the same time, the media regulatory system needs to be improved to monitor and stop media messages that degrade and deny women in a timely manner, to reflect women's needs and social rights and interests in practice, to provide a favorable public opinion environment, and to create an online media space that is conducive to the development of gender equality concepts.

4.3. Aspects of the Female Subject

Women are still too emotional and private in their self-expression, which leads to a lack of social influence. Therefore women should make adjustments to themselves, strengthen their self-knowledge, and try their best to get rid of the stereotypes shaped by the traditional media environment. They should strengthen their sensitivity and participation in political and economic topics, so that they can effectively and reasonably use new media tools to participate in social public issues and speak out for their rights and interests.

It is also necessary to cultivate more excellent female opinion leaders to spread feminist ideas, form the initiative and participation of women's expression, help more women transform from "the seen" to "the participant", and strengthen women's voices on the Internet space, exert their to change the male-dominated narrative.

5. Conclusion

This paper analyzes the two main manifestations of women's expanded voice in the new media environment, and also points out the problems that still exist in women's voice, and proposes strategies for society, the media and women themselves to solve them. Although women's power of self-expression has increased significantly in the new media environment, they are still not free from the "male gaze" and gender stereotypes and need to be improved through the efforts of all parties in society in the future. Due to the limitation of data search, this paper is a little short in summarizing the problem. Future research can be done to improve the completeness and timeliness of the data, as well as to conduct specific research on the issues mentioned in this paper.

Acknowledgement

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