



Expression of Public Opinion and Sentiment of Online Gender Antagonism in China-- A Case Study of Yang Li and her Talk Show

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ABSTRACT

In 2020, a Chinese stand-up comedy competition series 'Rock & Roast' went viral because of gender issues. Yang Li, one of the comedians, labeled men as "ordinary but confident men" by saying, "How can he be so average, yet so full of confidence?" in the show. In a December episode, she talked about telling a male comedian her new jokes. He replied that she was "testing men's limits." "Do men even have limits?" Yang sarcastically asked, triggering a fresh wave of criticism. Yang Li divides some common issues between men and women into gender, and his own bias will naturally lead to debate. It seems men and women almost "fight" with each other on the Internet. Because of this, this paper took Yang Li and her show as a typical case, mining the review data on Sina Weibo employing various methodological approaches, concluding the content analysis, word frequency analysis, semantic network, and sentimental analysis. In this paper, we objectively showed a trend of user attitude, distinguished different gender groups are negative emotions, presented the evolution of public opinion of each period, and further discussed the reasons for the formation of the "gender antithesis" event and the underlying social problems.

Keywords: gender antagonism; review data analysis; characteristics of public opinion

INTRODUCTION

With the rapid development and popularity of social media, people can easily express their opinions on the Internet. Controversial events in life tend to ferment into hot events after multi-level dissemination on the Internet. Group emotion may become emotional or even extreme in mutual communication, resulting in group polarization. In the increasingly severe group confrontation on the Internet, "gender confrontation" has always been an essential issue with sharp attitudes, intense emotions, and broad influence.

In 2020, a Chinese stand-up comedy competition series '*Rock & Roast*' went viral because of gender issues. Yang Li, one of the comedians, labeled men as "ordinary but confident men" by saying, "How can he be so average, yet so full of confidence?" in the show. In a December episode, she talked about telling a male comedian her new jokes. He replied that she was "testing men's limits." "Do men even have limits?" Yang sarcastically asked, triggering a fresh wave of criticism. As a talk show artist, Yang Li divides some common issues between men and women into gender, and her own bias will naturally lead to debate. Such "agitation on women issues" always generates a backlash; it has taken different forms since the beginning of the twentieth century (Wu & Dong, 2019).

The debate about Yang Li developed from the initial collision of views to senseless censure and emotional catharsis. The destructive emotions caused by it have permeated the whole network and even extended to real life. So, this article mined reviews data on Sina Weibo (Twitter's Chinese counterpart) as a sample, trying to conclude the evolution and characteristics of public opinion. We hope to objectively show a trend of subject participants' attitudes and emotions, distinguish different gender groups are negative emotions, present the viewpoint of each gender, and further discuss the reasons for the formation of "gender opposition" events and the underlying social problems. This paper also proposes positive guidance for online public opinion on gender and other social issues. It is crucial to building a more rational, equal, and harmonious online public opinion environment.

LITERATURE REVIEW

A review of feminism

Gender issues are not only important content in the field of communication but also a focus of attention of the international community. The improvement of the economic level and the emergence of new media platforms have increased the self-awareness of Chinese women. In the summer of 2018, the women's rights movement "me too" began to respond on Weibo. Many female KOLs and netizens exposed similar experiences in comments and retweets. The Weibo platform became the primary position for Chinese women to speak out. When gender communication is in the ascendant, social media platforms have seen much dissemination of anomie and gender-conscious content, stereotypes, and emotional trafficking resulting in a "post-truth" situation.

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Regarding the research on "gender issues," the achievements of scholars at home and abroad mainly focus on gender presentation in the media, empirical discussion of women's media, communicator analysis, audience analysis, actors analysis, theoretical debate and sorting, news

education and research on policies and regulations. Such studies are primarily qualitative descriptions or use third-party data. Articles on feminist media studies were divided into three categories: media stereotypes of women and socialization of images, ideological criticism, and pornography studies (Zoonen, 1994). Gender and communication research mainly includes media production, content, and reception in a review of media and gender studies in mainland China (Chen, 2001). Actors were added as an analytical framework, referring to individuals and organizations who try to improve communication through actions to adapt to the development of women's movements or gender equality activities (Bu, 2006). These research results provide valuable research experience for subsequent scholars. However, no scholars have conducted a quantitative analysis of public opinion information on online "gender confrontation" events and empirical research on the evolution of communication. This paper uses public opinion analysis and sentiment analysis to study hot online events and combines data mining technology, text analysis theory, and network information life-cycle theory, contributing to enriching research methods and results on related topics.

Research on public opinion online

In the network public opinion analysis, the internal power of public opinion evolution depends on the benefit mechanism of the network pusher (Wang & Ma, 2011). There is also a research perspective that focuses on the micro-content of public opinion communication, which claims that the evolution of online public opinion conforms to the law of the "Matthew Effect" and "group polarization" (Liu & Cai, 2013). The research on comment text information mining focuses on text classification, entity extraction, opinion mining, sentiment analysis, semantic analysis, and other aspects Gao et al. (2016). Gao et al. (2013) summarized sentiment analysis techniques, including machine learning and dictionary-based methods. Cong et al. (2021) analyzed the influencing factors of tourists' perception of the destination image through semantic network analysis and sentiment analysis of the review text.

Based on previous studies, this paper mainly uses the theory and technology of online public opinion sentiment evolution to analyze the public opinion communication, evolution mechanism, and guidance and control strategy of the "Yang Li Talk Show" event, which is helpful to enrich the research examples of online public opinion sentiment evolution.

METHODS OF DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

Main methods of analysis

This study took Yang Li and her show as a typical case, collecting the comment data on Weibo (Twitter's Chinese counterpart), employing various methodological approaches, concluding the content analysis, word frequency analysis, semantic network analysis, and sentimental analysis.

Specific procedures are as follows: (1) Take Yang Li as a typical case and prepare the dataset from the comment area of representatives on Sina Weibo. (2) Use the "Baidu Index" (index.baidu.com) to analyze the evolution of public opinion of this hot event. (3) Analyze the commenters and influential comments. (4) In word frequency analysis, the Chinese word segmentation system NLPIR to segment comments, count word frequencies, and explore the core concerns of different genders (Zhang & Shang, 2019). (5) Construct a co-word matrix semantic network graph and analyze sentiment based on a sentiment dictionary in ROST-CM6 (Jiang & Pang, 2019). (6) Objectively summarize the attitudes and positions of various

viewpoints in this incident, and put forward suggestions for dealing with such gender public opinion incidents.

Data selection procedure

According to the report on *the Development of Weibo Users in 2020*, the monthly active users of Weibo are 523 million. Weibo is the largest online social platform and the fermentation field of online public opinions in China. During the two seasons of the Talk show, Sina Variety Show's official Weibo account released two representative microblogs: “杨笠吐槽直男盲目自信” (Yang Li mocking straight Men are blindly Confident, on August 19, 2020), and “杨笠 以后只调侃成功的男” (Yang Li said she just tease the successful men later, on August 17, 2021). Because it describes the show objectively, comments under the two posts are authentic and representative.

Data adjustment procedure

For this study, 4296 first-level comment data were obtained, including textual content of every comment, posting time, likes, commenters' gender, location, number of followers, and registration time on Weibo. Since the comments on Weibo are full of colloquial expressions and meaningless reposts, expressions, hashtags, and pictures, influencing the understanding in the Chinese context, it is necessary to conduct a text-revision of the dataset. Finally, a total of 3352 comments are obtained after adjustment.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Evolution analysis of public opinion

According to the characteristics of the "Yang Li Talk Show," the study uses the "Baidu Index" to analyze the evolution of public opinion. Baidu Index takes the search volume of netizens on Baidu as the database, takes keywords as the statistical object, scientifically analyzes and calculates the weight of the search frequency of each keyword in Baidu web search, and can scientifically reflect the degree of Internet users' attention to keyword searches and continually changing situation. By searching the keyword "Yang Li" from August 1, 2020, to the present through the "Baidu Index," we can get the public opinion dissemination periodicity of the "Yang Li talk show" event in **Figure 1**.

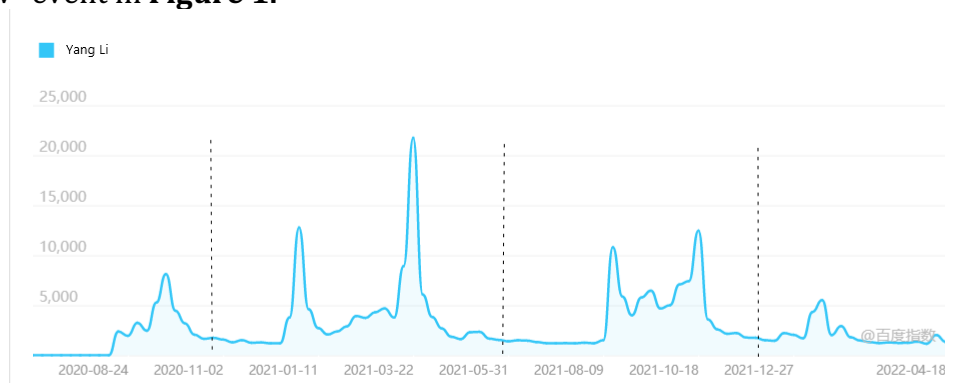


Figure 1. Baidu Index search trend of keyword

The analysis of the event, combined with the information life cycle theory and the different stages of network public opinion (Wang, 2010), divided the public opinion evolution cycle of the "Yang Li Talk Show" event into the following four stages:

Formation stage: controversial discussions arouse fierce discussion among netizens

In August 2020, talk show actress Yang Li created a gender controversy by saying, "How can he be so average, yet so full of confidence?" on *Rock & Roast*, which quickly went viral. Some people see her as a representative of "women's rights," while others see her as a representative of stirring up gender antagonism. The event's popularity dropped below average after the *Rock & Roast season3* ended in November 2020.

Upsurge stage: the evolution from topic controversy to individual attack

In December 2020, Yang Li said, "Do men even have limits?" The controversy was further expanded, triggering a "gender confrontation" war. With the popularity of feminist issues on the Internet in the past two years, Yang Li's bold ridicule and "offensive" humor quickly gained the support of a large number of female audiences. Coupled with the marketing discussion of relevant media, Yang Li herself is a symbolic "feminist symbol" on the Internet. Controversy attached to this issue followed. The content of the discussion shifted from the debate on the feminist movement itself to the personal criticism of Yang Li. This criticism peaked in March 2021 when Intel officially announced Yang Li as a product spokesperson. In a promotional video, Yang Li said, "Intel's vision is too high, even higher than my vision of picking boyfriends," and captioned, "How Yang Li rehabilitates workplace computers." After many offended men boycotted Yang's endorsement of Intel, women who supported Yang launched an Internet movement about "Support Yang's endorsement" to counter male users who opposed Yang. The incident reached its peak as the online debate between men and women continued to escalate.

Fluctuating stage: intermittent remarks make gender issues re-focused

As public opinion gradually gets weak, the topic seems to have been forgotten by netizens. However, after the launch of *Rock & Roast season4* in August 2021, Yang Li talked about gender jokes again in her show, setting off another wave of discussions in cyberspace. It can be seen that the debate on gender topics has not subsided, and occasional controversial remarks may once again spark public opinion.

Dilution stage: the disappearance of controversial remarks reduces attention

With the end of the *Rock & Roast season4*, Yang Li herself and her controversial reviews disappeared from the public area, making netizens' attention to the incident continue to decline, and the online public opinion of the public opinion incident began to fade.

The analysis showed that the evolution cycle is longer than ordinary public opinion events, reaching one year. 80% of the public opinion events last fewer than 30 days. When an online "gender confrontation" event occurs, anyone involved should promptly respond rationally to the controversial event and avoid emotional expression. Furthermore, there have been many outbreaks of different degrees of online discussions in public opinion evolution. Each episode was caused by Yang Li, who became a symbolic symbol of the "gender antagonism" discussion in this event. Complex feministic assertions and gender issues were simplified to the judgment of specific individuals.

Analysis of the commenters and influential comments

There are more female users of Weibo than males. Besides, there is also a rise in female rights protection awareness, so women posted more comments than men, with 1,266 comments made by male users, accounting for 37.8%, and 2,086 comments made by female users,

accounting for 62.2%. In this incident, most commenters lived in central and eastern cities. Most of these users have registered on Weibo for five years or more, and there are few new Weibo users.

It is not difficult to find in **Figure 2** that most of the commenters have been users of media platforms for many years, familiar with cyberspace and the ecological environment of Weibo. Most of the commenters lived in Chinese central and eastern cities, which are economically developed, reflecting that gender issues are more concerned in the cities with higher levels of economic development. There are more job opportunities for women in central and eastern cities, and the awareness of fighting for equal rights has been better germinated and developed in such cities. Women will empathize with the same situation, so they are more inclined to express their opinions regarding women's rights and issues in cyberspace.

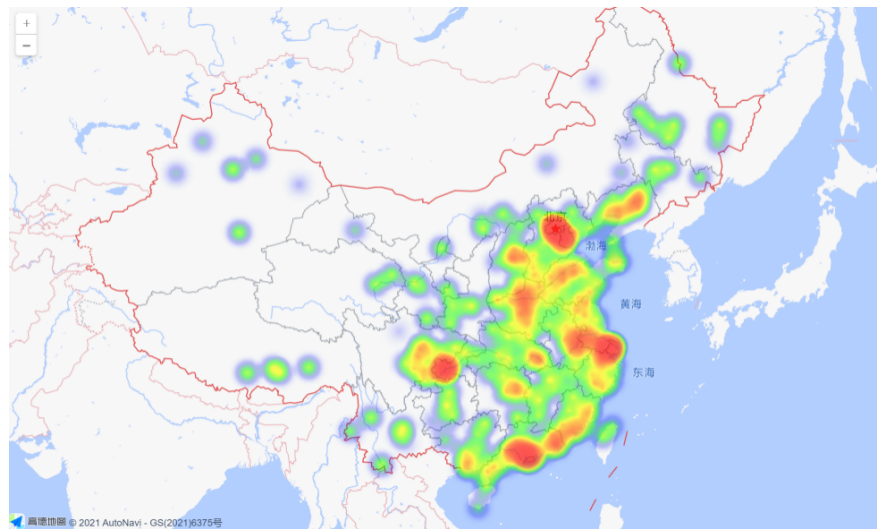


Figure 2. Geographical distribution of commenters

Comments with likes or replies that cause a certain degree of popularity in the general comments are selected. This paper takes the number of followers as the abscissa and the number of likes as the ordinate to obtain the heat map, as shown in **Figure 3**. The redder the color, the more concentrated the comment users are in this area. No matter how many followers there are, most comments have few likes, and ordinary users usually post a high-likes comment with few followers. On the contrary, many opinion leaders with thousands or thousands of fans can not necessarily guide the direction of comments. The voice of Weibo KOL (Key Opinion Leader) in this event may not be widely concerned. Any insignificant statement may spread widely on the Internet; KOL and ordinary netizens should regulate their reviews and behaviors in cyberspace.

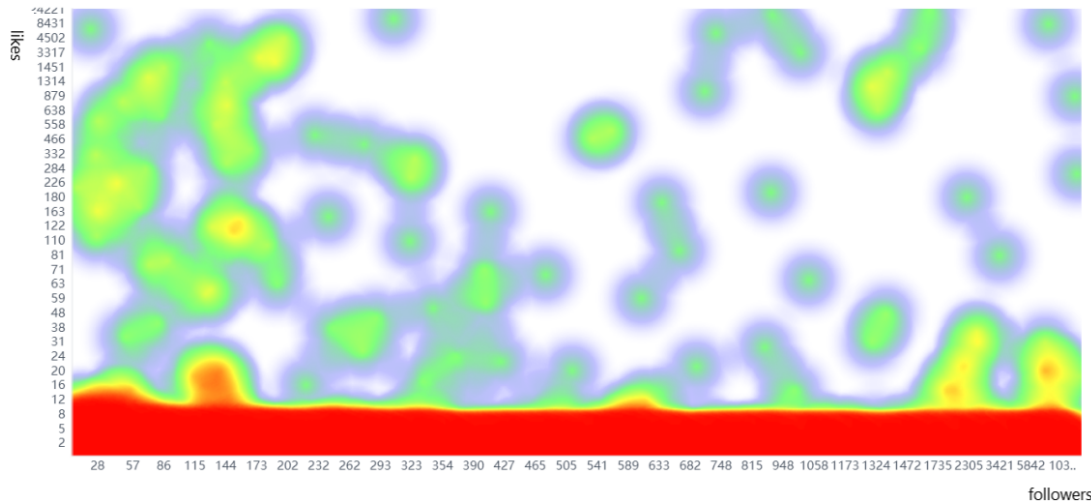


Figure 3. Heatmap of commenters

Word frequency analysis

NLPIR was selected to segment Chinese comment data into a single comprehensible word in this study. The research mainly uses new word extraction, keyword extraction, batch word segmentation, and word frequency statistics in NLPIR.

Table 1. High-frequency Words in the comments section (Top40)

General comments		Men's comments		Women's comments	
Words	Frequency	Words	Frequency	Words	Frequency
men	732	men	342	men	390
women	531	women	268	Yang Li	275
Yang Li	414	Yang Li	139	women	255
self-confidence	217	ridicule	138	sister Li	139
ridicule	204	successful	105	self-confidence	127
sister Li	167	self-confidence	90	reality	106
successful	152	Talk Show	66	ridicule	66
Talk Show	121	gender	66	very hilarious	64
real	112	differentiation	66	Talk Show	55
gender	97	Weibo	50	male chauvinist	54
differentiation	97	male chauvinist	40		
male chauvinist	94	ordinary	39	teasing	49
teasing	75	confident men	33	successful	47
jokes	75	jokes	31	exasperation	43
very hilarious	73	ordinary	29	jokes	42
ordinary	73	truth	28	friends	38
confident	73	sister Li	28		
Weibo	71	web traffic	28	match himself	37
ordinary	67	opposition	27	ordinary	36
truth	58	feminism	26	ordinary	34
match himself	57	wealth key	26	confident men	32
cornered	52	teasing	26	dear sister	32
				world	30

blind confidence	51	society	26	blindly confident	29
friends	49	show	25	truth	29
the elder sister	41	blind confidence	22	superb	25
superb	39	wish	21	Sister Yang	23
society	37	match himself	20	excellent	23
feminism	37	attack	18	kill mad	22
excellent	36	provoke	17	Weibo	21
wish	36	confident female	16	the comments section	18
opposition	36	ban	15	girlfriend	17
traffic	34	feminazi	15	boyfriend	16
show	33	gist	15	gender	16
provoke	30	web traffic key	15	differentiation	16
wealth password	30	boxing	15	gender antagonism	15
sister Yang	29	superb	14	laughable	15
attack	29	reality	14	severe	14
gist	27	China	13	come on	13
severe	26	hot search	13	provoke	13
laughable	26	offense	13	boyfriend	12
China	25	fall in love	12	Li Li	12
it slaps	23	ordinary people	12	China	12
				successful man	12

Comparative analysis shows that the top words are "male," "female," "Yang Li," "confident," "successful," and "ordinary." These words are the "source words" of the event, which are the content of the talk show video itself and the core focus of divergent discussion in the comments section. By observing the high-frequency words in comments of different genders, it can also be found that some male users can objectively view the artistic effects of talk shows, believing that such displays are suspected of provoking gender confrontation and earning traffic wealth. Some male users think that the program's content is offensive to the male group, and there is also the existence of "ordinary but confident," and such program artists should be banned.

The frequent occurrence of "feminism" (*Nü Quan*), "feminazi" (*Nü Quan*), and "boxing" (*Da-Quan*) from male comments indicates that men ware of the equal power of women fighting for gender equality. However, they regard feminists as feminazi, "feminism" has become a dirty word in popular discourse and has been stigmatized on Chinese media platforms. Some female users called Yang Li "sister Li" (*Li-Jie*), "dear sister" (*Jie-Jie*), "sister Yang" (*Yang-Jie*), and "Li Li," believing what Yang Li shows on Rock and Roast is sharp and consistent with their own experiences. Although the talk show artists have some artistic processing for effect during performing, the result is worth-thinking. Chinese contemporary women face far more problems than the show presented. Some women think the comedy effect of the performance is good. They regard it as a humorous "joke," "very hilarious" (*Xiao Si*), and "laughable" (*Hao Xiao*) appears many times. Other women called men "male chauvinists" (*Zhi Nan*) and "confident men" (*Pu Xin Nü*), believing that men were trying to hide what they were, and emotional comments were mixed in such comments. At the same time, a small number of women can objectively and calmly make comments, considering that the show is provoking gender confrontation. The difference in the way of thinking between men and women can be seen in the difference in the positions of men and women. However, no matter whether it is male or female, the evaluation of Yang Li is not one-sided. To a certain extent, both men and women

"wealth," "program" and "actors." Therefore, to reduce gender antagonism in real-life situations and cyberspace, it is crucial to make macro supervision and guidance focusing on the core discussion points of the event itself first. Then explore the attitudes and views extended by the public. Decisions should be made based on the nature of the issue to promote a more harmonious and beautiful cyberspace and social governance.

Sentimental analysis

Online comment data usually have an emotional tendency. By analyzing the sentiment of Weibo comments, we can understand netizens' attitudes, views, and opinions on the event. This paper uses ROST EA software to analyze the overall emotional tendency and male and the female emotional tendency of the comments extracted from Weibo. We use two measurement methods of "emotion type" and "emotion polarity and intensity" for quantitative analysis works. The emotional value of each comment text is calculated based on the emotion dictionary, and the emotional tendency of the text is judged accordingly. Finally, the emotion type is divided into three categories: positive emotion, neutral emotion, and negative emotion, and the emotional intensity is divided into three categories: ordinary, moderate, and high emotion. The analysis results are shown in **Figure 5** and **Table 2**.

Sentiment type analysis

As shown in **Figure 6**, Weibo netizens' emotional cognition of the "Li Yang Talk Show" event shows a trend of polarization. Both negative and positive emotions account for a high proportion, and the negative emotional comments are slightly higher than the positive ones. Specifically, there were 1,929 negative comments, accounting for 57.55%; 1383 positive emotion comments, accounting for 41.26%; 40 neutral comments, accounting for 1.19%. The statistical results show significant differences in netizens' attitudes towards this event. The comments are filled with emotional expressions with obvious emotional tendencies, and the negative emotions are slightly dominant.

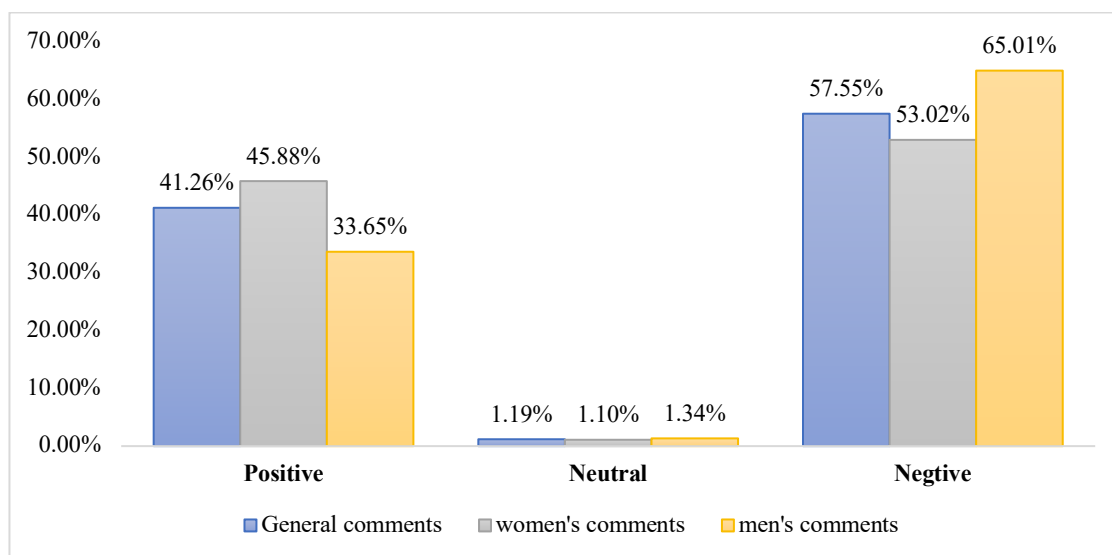


Figure 5. Statistical results of sentiment analysis

Through the comparative analysis of the data on male and female emotional tendencies, positive emotion among females (45.88%) is higher than positive emotion among males

(33.65%), negative emotion among females (52.02%) is lower than negative emotion among males (65.01%). The positive emotional comments of female netizens are mainly to express their support for Yang Li and his opinions, such as "*Li Yang is the best.*" and "*ridicule is too appropriate ! !*", "*I like this part. It is clear what everyone knows.*" Female netizens' negative emotional comments present mainly on mocking men, such as "*unsuccessful and incompetent men will hate people everywhere on the Internet.*" "*Men are a more or less chauvinistic, not blindly confident person but an inborn poser.*"

In contrast, the emotional tendency of male netizens is dominated by negative emotions, among which there are three main views. One is that Li Yang stigmatizes the word "*average but confident*" for example, "*average but confident was originally a word of encouragement, but now it has become a strange word. Ordinary people do not deserve confidence, and they should be deprived and degraded.*" The other is that Li Yang sensationalized gender issues and provoked gender confrontation. For example, "*To sensationalize eyeballs and attract attention, she deliberately provoked gender conflict between men and women.*", "*Wealth key is equal to gender confrontation.*", and "*what is it if it is not engaging in gender confrontation? All I know is this stupid topic.*" The third is the attack on Yang Li and women, such as "*why no one makes fun of women's blindly confidence,*" "*how did she fight (regard feminism as feminazi),*" and "*the same as women, it shows that women are hysterical and unreasonable.*" Of course, some people support Yang Li in the comments of male netizens, such as "*I feel it very good to be said in the call names what quarrel with people on the Internet you correct yourself straight, you will find no matter communicate with male or female will be more comfortable.*", "*It is too right, as a man even feel there are too many chauvinistic men.*"

It can be seen from the above analysis that in the event of the "Yang Li Talk Show," most of the men, as the teased party, were opposed to Li Yang's views, and the comments showed strong negative emotions and aggressiveness. Since most female netizens supported Li Yang's ideas, some women's anger and traditional patriarchal thoughts had a fierce confrontation with the negative comments of male netizens, resulting in an extreme situation of entangling.

Sentimental polarity and intensity analysis

According to the segmented statistics of the emotional tendency (See Table 2), the two parts of the male and female texts are nearly neutral. That is to say, the positive and negative emotions of the average degree account for the highest proportion. This result indicates that although netizens' comments have an apparent emotional tendency in this event, most comments have low emotional intensity.

In addition, the difference between the three intensity values of positive emotion is slight, the average degree of negative emotion is dominant, and the proportion of moderate and high is tiny. It can be seen that extreme negative emotions are the attitude of the minority, while highly emotional remarks are highly provocative, such as "*How frenzied, how hysterical, unreasonable, in simple terms, is the same as women, so women = frenzied, hysterical, unreasonable.*", "*The astonishing narrow-mindedness of so many men, who cannot accept even a single joke, how retarded, ignorant, bossy, and insane are they?*", "*Engaging in these nasty things all day long to cheat traffic has been relying on gender discrimination for years to make money. China has been kidnapped by vulgar traffic and has no hope.*"

Table 2. Statistical results of sentiment analysis in sections

Sentiment	segment	General	Women	Men
Positive	General (5, 15]	22.79%	25.02%	19.12%
	Medium (15, 25]	10.29%	11.36%	8.53%
	Height (25 + up)	8.17%	9.49%	6.00%
Negative	General (15, 5)	52.18%	48.70%	57.90%
	Moderate [25, 15)	3.28%	2.59%	4.42%
	Height (- up to 25)	2.09%	1.73%	2.69%

Online discussions of "gender conflict" events are rife with emotional expressions. These highly emotional statements catalyze gender confrontation and continue to intensify gender conflicts. In a post-truth time, emotionally-charged comments are more likely to spread, and rational voices will be drowned out in a spiral of silence. Therefore, every individual who speaks on the Internet should focus on self-restraint. They should not only learn to distinguish between online rumors and extreme remarks but also keep objective and calm in the face of fierce group emotions. They should restrain themselves and avoid spreading information that hurts others and intensifies conflicts. At the same time, as a hotbed of public opinion fermentation, social media should strengthen self-regulation, intervene in the solidification of radical ideas on the platform, adjust the operation mechanism that only puts traffic first, and give practical guidance to events with significant social influence.

CONCLUSION

A public opinion crisis is a social structure and state, and the public sees social contradictions in some apparent events. Today's media divert certain social governance functions. They play the role of propaganda and social mobilization and generate social cohesion through themselves. However, the companies behind the media are generally "technology-neutral." They have web-traffic preferences and may acquiesce or even indulge in some behaviors that negatively impact society, making the situation develop in an uncontrollable direction.

At the level of public discussion, some discussions in the "gender confrontation" incident have specific progressive significance. It represents the awakening of women's minds. Women defend their rights through unrelenting efforts; it also means the possibility of multiple discussions in the Internet public opinion environment. The collision of different viewpoints is conducive to bringing new thinking. This is conducive to further arousing society's attention to gender issues to promote the development of gender relations in a more equal and rational direction. However, the fierce "gender confrontation" in the current Internet public opinion environment will only lead to the shrinking of public discussion space and the deterioration of public sentiment.

As a talk-show artist, Yang Li divides some common issues between men and women into gender, and his own bias will naturally lead to debate. Maybe it is because the actual actions of gender equality in real life are not outstanding in China. Therefore, men have a slightly wait-and-see mockery of the feminist attributes in the Weibo Yang Li talk show incident. In the ecological environment of Weibo public opinion, the main contributors to comment data are young women. Women are more likely to make emotional remarks, and their attitudes and voices deserve attention compared to men. Because of this "emotional echo chamber" on the

Internet, we should focus on solving the emotional problems of netizens rather than using arrogant means to make public opinion disappear.

It needs to be clear that "gender opposition" is a problem that is difficult to solve fundamentally. There are complex reasons behind it. The chronic diseases left over from the history of human development have been magnified unprecedentedly in the Internet age. The representative "Yang Li" presents many new cognitive perspectives on disseminating public opinion on the Internet. From the standpoint of communication, we should provide a rational online discussion space as much as possible so that those objective viewpoints can be circulated and disseminated. We need to evoke genuine humanistic care and promote online public opinion to continuously move closer to a proper state of harmony and equality.

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