

MASTER'S THESIS

Digital activism in the networked age: the case of #MeToo movement in China

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Abstract

Digital activism is an increasingly popular field in academia. However, scarce attention has been paid to the process of cultural and political mediation that have shaped different examples of the contents of digital activism as well as the character of actors who collectively utilize this instrument and also personally respond to the specific context in which digital activism emerges and evolves. This study investigates the #MeToo movement in the context of China as a concrete example of digital activism in a manner that ascribes attention to both digital technologies and activist practices. With regard to the practices of social movement, this study aims to capture the discursive processes that enable different actors to be recognized and make sense of themselves in public in the #MeToo movement in China. From the digital perspective, this study attempts to identify the characteristics of activists who participated in China's #MeToo movement.

This study combined content analysis and discourse analysis with social network analysis to analyze the process and discourses on the #MeToo movement in China and examined the characteristics of actors who contributed to the promotion of the #MeToo movement on a networked public space. Following the three-stage model of social drama, five themes were identified in the narrative form of China's version of the #MeToo movement. This study also found that advocates and opponents of the #MeToo movement achieved their narrative agencies through the intersection of gender, sexuality, class, and culture in the Chinese sociocultural context. Finally, this study revealed that the expressive repertoires manifested in the reposting network of China's #MeToo and testified that homophily could exist between pairs of Weibo users along with similar attributes including gender, location, and engagement.

Table of Contents

Declaration.....	i
Abstract.....	ii
Acknowledgements.....	iii
Table of Contents.....	iv
List of Tables.....	vii
List of Figures.....	vii
Introduction.....	1
Literature Review.....	3
2.1. Study Context: The #MeToo Movement in China.....	3
2.2. Narrative Form and Agency of Digital Activism.....	7
2.3. The Homophily Underlying the Repertoires.....	11
Method.....	15
3.1. Study Focus: Sina Weibo.....	15
3.2. Data Collection and Analysis.....	15
3.2.1. Qualitative approaches: Content analysis and discourse analysis.....	15
3.2.2. Quantitative approaches: Content analysis and network analysis.....	20
Narrative Form of China's #MeToo Movement.....	26
4.1. Victims came Forward, then Media Followed-up.....	26

4.2. The Confrontational Voices of those Supported or Questioned	35
4.3. Reintegration and Implications of #MeToo	42
4.4. Summary	46
The Narrative Agency of China’s #MeToo Movement	47
5.1. Nomination	47
5.2. Predication	52
5.3. Argumentation	55
5.4. Summary	64
Homophily in the Reposting Network of China’s #MeToo Movement	65
6.1. Network Properties	65
6.2. Characterizing #MeToo Digital Activists	66
6.3. Homophily in the Reposting Network	68
Discussion	73
7.1. Three-stage Narrative Forms in an Iterative Cycle	74
7.2. Agency Presented Through Sexuality and Class in a Confucian Society	76
7.3. Homophily-based Expressive Repertoire in Mobilization	78
Conclusion and Limitations	80
8.1. Conclusion	80
8.2. Limitations	81
8.3. Implications and Directions for Future Research	82

Appendix I: The List of Search Phrases	98
Appendix II: Inductive Coding	100
Appendix III: Translations of Nominations and Predications	101
Curriculum Vitae	116