

MASTER'S THESIS

The social roles of Chinese political blogosphere in the age of "we media": a case study of Lianghai Blogs

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**The Social Roles of Chinese Political Blogosphere in the Age of “We
Media”----- A Case Study of Lianghai Blogs**

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the social roles of Chinese political blogosphere in the age of “we media” and takes Lianghai blogs (i.e., blogs about NPC & CPPCC) as a case. To achieve a meaningful and coherent understanding of the emerging political blogosphere in China, the study aims at concluding the characteristics of the blogosphere, investigating the inter-media agenda-setting between newspapers and Lianghai blogs and probing blogs’ impacts on the online public opinion aggregation and their effectiveness in expanding the offline public sphere into the cyberspace.

Content analysis is mainly adopted as methodology while experiments are also used as supplements to support arguments. Integrating the data-based quantitative content analysis on both newspapers and blogs, the study coded 1197 pieces of news items across four newspapers (People Daily, Beijing Evening News, Wen Hui Bao and Xinmin Evening News) and 1401 pieces of blog posts across three blog service providers (*Qiangguo*, Sina and Eastday).

The results shows that Chinese political blogosphere possesses unique characteristics including being rife with government-related posts written in an unfavorable tone and elite bloggers identified as congresses delegates and famous reporters representing “we” in the virtual platform. While compared with the US counterpart, it is also indicated that Chinese bloggers prefer to question the news judgment of peer bloggers rather than criticize the journalistic practices of professional reporters; they prefer to correlate the news coverage from the mainstream media rather than monitor them regarding the news content.

Furthermore, the results show that newspapers and political blogs influence each other, in which the agenda transfer is asymmetrical featuring by newspapers having much first level agenda-setting effects on all kinds of political blogs while only political blogs written by congress delegates and famous reporters having some weak first and second level agenda-setting effects on the newspapers. And Chinese political blogosphere has constructed a virtual platform for public opinion aggregation and accordingly functions as ice-breaker in expanding the offline public sphere into the political blogosphere.

Finally, the study finds out that the monopoly of the official media in reporting political news has been gradually broken up by the emerging Chinese political blogosphere. The developing blogosphere has offered an extra channel for political news delivery and it informs the public through providing integrated information from diversified sources.

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