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Blogging China's Internet Video Programmes

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1 Introduction

The internet video industry in China has become a cash cow: China's internet users in the industry now number more than 504 million, taking up nearly half of the national population. In this industry, where internet users drop by, relax, and derive most of their entertainment, leading internet video companies are oligopolising the market with powerful approaches to building their brands. The rise of the internet video industry represents not only the success of enterprise marketing and the mass accessibility of internet and communications technologies, but also follows on from an earlier participatory wave in social media. It is important to study these participatory mechanisms, since they blur the boundaries between supply and demand, broadcast and reception. This is particularly relevant because the internet video industry has enjoyed broad mass appeal, and has become integrated as a part of digital social life. In this thesis, I study blogging an essential approach in the branding strategy of participatory social media production enterprises that sell variety programmes and video products. My research question is what role is the corporate blogs in the rise of internet video industry.

Blogging as an accepted media form has become a vital means of marketing corporate brands in China's internet video industry. This study focuses on corporate blogs to explore the impacts of social media on network society in China. When blogging becomes corporate, this affects marketing communications and the role of transition between bloggers and corporations, as well as the usage of new media in society. Corporate blogs serve businesses, and their construction and maintenance require direct sponsorship and commercial advertisements. This leads to doubt about trust and authenticity among blog readers, as Rettberg (2014) points out. Corporate blogs affect individual bloggers, as corporate dynamics transform the roles of bloggers and celebrities, compromising their ability to function as online journalists, blurring the public sphere and the meaning of privacy in a networked society.

Discussions about marketing communications and corporate blog functions are commonplace among blog readers and consumers in the brand-based online social network. They participate in the package of 'video programmes plus blogging' and make up participatory media network merge, which is employed by video corporations. Beyond that, social media in the digital era seem less sustainable over time. Powerful companies have emerged within a very short time spans and their services also update when new media forms

appear, such as apps. This paper explores how the internet video industry flourishes, by conducting content-based analysis of blogging brands in participatory media.

China's video industry surrounding blog articles by online celebrities that accompany their televised activities is a digital issue with regional emphasis. Therefore, I will conduct content-based analyses that take the social backgrounds of the bloggers into account. The contents I have selected cover several concerns in current blogging theory, including trust and journalism. Derived from Meyers' research on celebrity gossip blogs (2013), my methodology involves visual and discourse analysis of certain corporate blogs on Sina Weibo. The blogs I analyse accompany a representative video programme called '*Qipashuo*' (奇葩说, meaning Weirdo Talk) whose production company is iQiYi.com (爱奇艺). The interface and media contents are indicative of what corporate blogs can tell us in general. Furthermore, in order to study the internet users behind the corporate blog, I make analyses of sponsorship in blog and also focus on blogging censorship. I will examine statistics about blog readers' posts to determine whether there are counter-corporate voices in the corporate blogs. Using a certain topic tag, like the #Qipashuo in this paper, is revealing in terms of proving the resemblance of new media to journalism. All selected materials of iconography, discourse, content, and corpus, as well as any external links, are in Mandarin Chinese, which assures consistent empirical results.

Thanks to the rise of China's online TV, corporate blogs have co-evolved with China's social media. In order to understand blog contents more fully, I will first discuss the predecessor of online videos, reviewing China's TV in the past and present. This will show how TV provided a model for the online video industry. Then, I will assess the rise of China's video industry, covering the major online video producers and online TV programmes, and comparing them with the TV channels and the traditional TV industry model. Next, I will cover the major arguments in blogging theory to determine the focus of state-of-the-field new media theory. With those theoretical points in mind, I will then explain my research methods and present an analysis of the official corporate blogs I have studied. In conclusion, I will present my findings in relation to current blogging theory to assess the status of participatory media in Chinese society and beyond.

2 Screen entertainment media in China

In this section, I make a review of screen entertainment media in China. Since the popularity of TV in 1990s, screen media provides Chinese people for seeing the world. When screen media evolves to internet video, there are questions about development reasons, production patterns and the connection among different forms of media. I will start from the TV entertainment first at the aspects of audience engagement, media celebrities, production patterns, etc. Transitioning from TV channels to online video production, I will present the dynamics of Chinese TV offline and online, answering the following questions: What are the general conventions in traditional TV productions? What are the features of the Chinese TV production model? What is driving the transition from TV productions to web video production? How are the two types of production connected? Then I am intent to investigate if there exists connection between online video entertainment and TV entertainment in China. I argue that online video entertainment has been extensively influenced by TV entertainment.

2.1 The legacy of TV entertainment

With the popularity of TV sets in China after the 1990s (Lull 1991; Zhang 2004; Zhao, Y 2008; et. al.), TV enters everyday life and becomes a major source of domestic entertainment that is grounded in the beliefs, feelings, and articulations of Chinese people themselves (Lull 1991: 2). As a major form of mass media, TV delivers novelty, laughter, and relaxation to the audiences, as well as the audiences' entertainment preference. This shows that since the success of marketization in the 90s, TV has symbolised people's voices in society (Ming 1987), which forms the production pattern on Chinese TV. Following the logic of marketization, I assume that audience is an important approach to study the TV production. Audience's affection on TV has synchronised with the popularity of TV as an entertainment way in China. Social media from then on infers a strong engagement on the part of the Chinese audience (Kamer 2006).

In Lull's classic work *China Turned On* (1991), he pointed out a wide range of aspects on TV that affected Chinese audiences and showed how these affects turned into resistance against the established political order in the times (Keane & Donald 2002). The direct attraction on TV is the celebrities shown on TV. They are the new stars evoking the tradition of model in Chinese society (Hassid, et. al. 2015). Although the party-state power takes the advantage of the tradition as the cult of personality (Zhao, Y. 2008; Hopper 2013), the new TV stars lead the trend of TV entertainment among the Chinese people, such as the

imitations (de Kloet 2010) on haircuts, dressing, glasses and so on. Another affectionate aspect for Chinese audiences results from the TV's introduction of western culture. "TV brings about people's curiosity on western exoticism (Lull, 1991:183)."

Here, the examples of audience engagement above are quite implicative to social-political background. Lull at his times focuses on the tension of audience's resistance to the social regime[1]. Later on, TV becomes a platform to exhibit the social realities close to people's daily life. Those realities range from educational competition, employment pressure, housing prices in big cities, etc. Contemporary as his study is, he associates traditional values among Chinese audiences on heroes, which are symbolised in the range of Confucius, political figures, to TV new stars.

So far, I review that the TV production model is shaped by the celebrities who build a strong connection with the audiences. Apart from the personnel values behind the TV programmes, research on China's TV often considers the hard indexes to measure the profits in market and beyond. Those research data are still applicable in video media, such as audience ratings, sponsorship, demographic segregation[2] (Zhang 2009), advertisement funding in TV stations (Rigi & Prey 2015), etc. Those measurements are applicable to other media forms, including internet videos.

While those indexes reflect mass survey on Chinese audience, it requires further categorisation on the genre of entertainment. Lull (1991) points out "variety show becomes the most popular genre in light entertainment". This seems quite indicative to the genre selection for our current online video companies. While audiences' affection on drama series differs from that on variety shows, TV entertainment requires further categorization because each genre is featured differently.

The genre of TV programmes is a matter of production, as is comedy TV entertainment which spreads hilarity to many Chinese households. Although the TV production mechanism in China now rarely follow the 'top-down' order (Schneider 2010), it combines hard and soft regulatory mechanisms in ways that rely on the market and on the

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[1] It is worthwhile to refer to his research background: The Students' Movement in Tiananmen Square in 1989. TV at that time became a bulletin board to express the power of the state regime and the Chinese people's pursuit of freedom. Decades later, my intention for reviewing Lull's work is not to debate state power but to present social media as a medium for popular voices.

[2] Demographic segregation includes a great variety of factors, such as age, region of residence, education, profession, etc. Those factors are usual in audience research (AGB Nelson, CSM homepage www.csm.com.cn CNNIC).

collaboration of (private) producers to function. For instance, China Central Television (CCTV) is the state-owned central TV station that accounts for the features discussed above. It is directly subject to the authorities on press and publications[3]. In the meantime, it attracts commercial sponsorship for entertainment productions. Beyond that, local television stations are obliged to defer to the cultural governance in China (Schneider 2010). The SARFT, an authority on press and media, requires that all legitimate media producers should hold production permits[4], which is an essential method for maintaining censorship. The feature of uniformity deals with programme contents and form, which is close to audiences' affection, as I mentioned in the previous paragraph. It is due to the dynamics between state regulation, market dynamics, and audience preferences that consistent features emerge.

Several TV examples are relevant in providing an overview of TV entertainment in China. Chinese entertainment programmes are dependent on both TV production and the audiences. Since the 1990s, China's first variety programme, 'Zhengda Variety Show' (Zhengda Zongyi 正大综艺), produced and broadcasted on CCTV, has led the way in TV entertainment. On local TV stations, there are also persistently popular variety programmes which derive huge economic revenues. These include 'Happy Camp' (Kuaile Dabenying 快乐大本营), 'Where Are We Going, Dad?' (Baba Quna'er 爸爸去哪儿), which both appear on Hunan TV. The genre of variety entertainment has received consistently high audience ratings[5]. In this genre of China's TV programmes, scholars have pointed out that there is great uniformity in content (Lull, Schneider, et al.). Despite the various reasons for this, including censorship, this argument recommends a review of programme patterns in variety shows. Those programmes above usually follow the fixed production model mixed with star personnel, audience participation, flexible themes, and entertaining content. They apply popular elements such as costumes, current affairs, amusing attitudes towards social injustice, and the avoidance of social and political taboos.

Besides the programme forms, overseas hosts or participants also increase programme attraction. The 'hit' show 'Running Men' was adapted from the original programme in South

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[3] 'China Central Television is the national vice-ministerial administration under the state council in China. It is the mouthpiece of the Chinese Communist Party, the Chinese Government and the people'. The research on CCTV in connection with regulation and censorship is extensive, such as *Chinese Television Turned On* (Lull, 1991). The authorities in the area of mass media include the Ministry of Culture, the State Administration of Press, Publication, Radio, Film and Television of the PRC, the Ministry of Publicity, etc.

[4] See the original pilicy on the SAPPRFT websites at the http://www.sapprft.gov.cn/sapprft/govpublic/

[5] Happy Camp (profit: $700 million); Where Are, We Going, Dad? (profit: $500 million).

Korea, which has a more prosperous film and TV industry, after Chinese producers purchased the programme usage rights (Keane and Lamarre, 2015). Overseas hosts or participants also increase the appeal of these programmes. Overseas Chinese nationals, for example, have always been a screen group, even in the 80s (overseas celebrities such as Fei Xiang, Ye Liyi). Most of them are from the Greater China Area such as Taiwan, Hong Kong, and South Korea. Speaking Mandarin is a particularly great selling point for such participants. There is a tendency for popular entertainment to prefer foreign elements, and this also applies to the online video industries discussed in the next section. The foreign people on screen extend the programme scope to the outside world. Their appearance in the programme also fulfils younger audiences' curiosity about novelty.

2.2 China's internet videos and the industry

The rise of internet video programmes in China is not an accidental phenomenon. It closely connects with traditional TV programmes. Even the major TV channels nowadays have developed internet video websites. However, this does not mean that internet videos are the TV content online. As TV has set its production conventions, how do internet videos connect to the TV programmes and that are the differences? Transiting from TV channels to online video production, I am going to present the dynamics of Chinese TV offline and online. When does internet video become popular? What features the internet video in China? What is driving the transition from TV productions to web video production?

In the transition from TV to online video, this link shows not only on media production, distribution and broadcast, but it also constructs the inherited TV model that roots in the Chinese audiences. This implies that China's model of the variety show retains its importance no matter whether it is on traditional TV or the internet. Further similarities between the two forms include the introduction of intellectual property from overseas practices as well as strategies for personnel management.

As there is very little literature on China's internet video industry, I make my review based on the empirical sources such as the national network report and statement from the major internet video companies. The term 'internet video industry' was first officially applied by the China Internet Network Information Centre (CNNIC) in the *2013 Report for Chinese Netizens' Network Video Applications*. In that year, the rise of the internet video industry was greatly dependent on popular access to Wi-Fi, PCs, as well as to smart phones (CNNIC 2013). This implies that the evolution of media technologies plays a vital role in leading Chinese people's engagement in political-civil society. This is similar to the way in which televisions

opened the eyes of Chinese audiences to the outside world: internet and communications technologies (ICTs) provide new engagement in digital social media (Wallis 2010). It creates variety and competition among video producers online and attaches importance to audiences' taste.

The 2013 CNNIC reports that the number of China's web video users reached 428 million, accounting for more than one third of the entire Chinese population. The figure further proves that this is a major network industry with a great amount of people participating. By 2016, China's internet video users numbered 545 million (CNNIC), representing almost the half of all Chinese people. Based on the increasing numbers of video users, this proves that online video multiplies leisure options for internet users and has become a prominent avenue for entertainment.

The three most famous video platforms are Youku.com, iQiyi-PPS, and Tencent Video, which all have similar numbers of users. There are ten platforms whose user scales have reached a 10 % share. According to the CNNIC, one characteristic of the industry is the audience's initiative in maintaining individualised preferences. Internet users search for programmes on well-known video websites or applications where the 'site search' is a dependent function.

Internet video companies are essentially different from the TV stations. Parallel to the TV productions in which large media conglomerates are privileged (Zhao 2008), the internet video industry has become oligopolised by several major video platforms such as PPTV, iQiyi, Youku, etc. (CNNIC, 2009). Their services exceed those of Youtube.com when it comes to internet users sharing films and videos, since these Chinese services also include full online channels and programme productions. The business rationale of emphasizing audience ratings and profits that I mentioned above seems quite successful at moving the variety show model generated from TV productions to the internet. However, the remaining question is why China's video companies took the trouble to move into internet programming and how these internet shows differ from TV shows.

When media production is online, governance becomes less organised by the authorities, but requires strong awareness of self-censorship within the industry. TV production companies are mostly state-owned, with a system of rigid bureaucracy that creates content for the limited broadcast schedules of Chinese TV stations. What is more, censorship procedures for TV products introduce a significant lag between the close of production and the actual moment of broadcasting, which is detrimental to programme freshness and attraction. Taking the New Network Show as an example, all the local TV channels are

obligated to rebroadcast CCTV at 19:00 sharp, which is a major mass media approach for political propaganda. The policy of forced news broadcasting deprives TV producers of any freedom of broadcast. The forced broadcast, however, does entail forced watching. Audiences' watching options are not confined to the 'News Network Show' and new media such as online video offer an appealing alternative from TV sets to smartphone screens (Schneider, 2010).

The study of China's internet video industry should also consider supplementary services. In live streaming video, for example, online payment is an important technical condition for net cast hosts. Since 2008, Alipay has used online trade as a more convenient means than online banking[6]. Furthermore, a direct example in the case of the internet video industry is the barrage function originating from Japanese cartoons. It provides a real-time text space for video audiences to express ideas and feelings on the situation and plot at a certain time. The growing amount of freedom for the video audience, however, faces great challenges from monopoly, censorship, and social environment. These challenges will be intensively discussed later in section 5.

Another development in China's video industry is in the area of paid videos or platform membership. In commercial mode, internet videos are produced with attention to revenues as well as user numbers. As the video industry has grown in prosperity, it is worthwhile to study the revenue channels on those platforms. Chinese audiences seemed to have no awareness of the need to pay for programmes due to governmental funding and political propaganda. In the 2013 Report, there was no paid consuming habit among internet video users because only 1% of users had experience of paying to watch videos. If video users are not the major source of income for the platform industry, then alternatives are found through sponsorship and advertisement. In addition, there is an increasing phenomenon where users pay for memberships and foreign videos (CNNIC 2017). Here, the salient point lies in how sponsorship and advertisement compromise membership and how internet users have come to accept the expense of membership and paid videos.

So far, I have discussed major internet video platforms and user scales in the industry. The internet videos have become an industry closely related to popular leisure and internet business. Platforms have developed audiences' freedoms for video appreciation, such as discretion rights for programmes and barrage functions. The freedom trends, however, are challenged by industry rules, censorship, and social conventions. While the revenues in

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[6] The information is sourced from Alipay corporations, link https://www.antfin.com/.

Chinese TV and films are traditionally sourced from the government, sponsorship, and advertisements, internet video services have also developed transactional awareness among Chinese internet video users. I have not yet addressed some aspects of video usership in the industry. Indeed, in such a mass industry, it is necessary to conduct a survey on users' gender, tastes, and consuming patterns. From the users' perspective, I seek to identify a clue from traditional TV patterns, refer to research into users in CNNIC.

In the last section, I summarise some production features of variety programmes. I argue TV's production model is applicable to internet video. I will describe the production model for internet videos in Section 5.

The evolution of media agencies in China is indicative of greater engagement, participation, and resistance in China's civil society. Scholars' supporting ideas are usually sourced through individual-based methods, such as ethnographic research, interviews or political-social events (Lull, 1991; Zhao, 2008). Here, I argue that there is method transition in different forms of social media. In the digital era, research methodology for blogging can be more digital than that for TV. As my introduction illustrates, the study of digital media allows for scholars to take advantage of digital methods.

3 Blogging internet video programmes in China

Next, I will provide an overview of China's online videos and the industry to introduce the necessary concepts in new media studies. Then, I will review the blogging theory in the context of online video entertainment in China.

Blogging is not new in media studies. This is not only due to its early origin nor its enormous usage rate. "Over 61% of Chinese internet users have created blogs, and over 80% of internet users in China have read blogs (Dean, 2010: 133)". Blogging, however, fascinates in new media studies due to its compatibility (Dean, 2010). Walker (2005) asserts that 'Weblog is a frequently updated website that consists of dated entries arranged in reverse chronological order'. In this definition, blogs feature a timeline but blur the forms of online media. Jodi Dean (2010) argues that 'blogs aren't confined to a sphere separate from other media. They are situated in a rich communicative habit consisting of multiple platforms and applications'. This means that blogs are compatible with other types of internet media, including online videos in China.

Blogging theory does not stop at determining its compatibility to various media forms. The timeline drawn by blogs is socially-related. Rettberg (2008) compares blogging with journalism to understand its position as a means of new media. His argumentation lies in three similarities: (1) immediacy, (2) depth in detail and (3) gatekeeping to mass media: 'blogs can provide first hand reports from ongoing events.' This important feature of blogs is a matter of network efficiency. In the digital era, voices expressed on blogs are accessible to individual internet users, and transporting the voice only needs one click. Although blogging enables instantaneous posting, transmission, and receiving, it is a timeline for expressing society and the people. The immediacy embodies the technical efficiency in this form of new media. Specifically, blogging shows the efficiency of forming network communities in parallel to the real society.

The word 'gatekeeping' indicates that new media is in a creditable position in respect of mass media. It is possible for bloggers to create online mobs, however, by presenting distorted facts. New media enjoys the benefit of updated network efficiency, which does not mean that it represents facts without prejudice. It is worth studying the credibility of sponsored bloggers (Rettberg 2010) after examining their company revenues. Commercial bloggers are likely to be puppets of the companies, used to manipulate the consumers who also read their blogs. Although new media's relationship with online society is uncertain, it essentially empowers internet users to counter the power of mass media. Rettberg's blogging

theory compares new media with journalism, evaluating the impact of both on civil society. Dean's scepticism towards bloggers' ethical standards is similar to the arguments made above.

Here, I would apply the word divergence to mass media, instead of gatekeeping. The word gatekeeping indicates new media is in a creditable position to the mass media. Blogging is likely to present more detailed report to counterfeit the mass media. Bloggers are likely to specialise their particular interests and make an even thorough investigation. Beyond that, gatekeeping mass media shows speech freedom. However, it is possible for bloggers to create online mobs by presenting distorted facts and opinion leading. New media enjoys the benefit of updated network efficiency, which does not mean it testifies the mass media without prejudice. Still in the example of the sponsored bloggers, it is worthy to study their credibility (Rettberg 2010) after making the company's revenues. Commercial bloggers are likely to be puppets of the companies to manipulate the consumers who also read their blogs. Although new media's direction to online society is uncertain, it essentially empowers internet users to counter the power of mass media.

Dean (2010: 34) argues that 'accompanying the apparently rising rates of blog death was a phenomenon indicative of blogging's vitality even as it was a culpable suspect in the death of blogging – the rise of 'corporate blogs'. From then on, I would apply the term corporate blogs to refer the blogs involved with business corporations. This means that 'bloggers' are not confined to individuals, but can also be corporations. By 2009, 70% of bloggers were blogging about business brands (TechCrunch, 2009). In a similar way to the rise of the online video industry, blogging – especially in its corporate form – makes money.

So far, weblogs can be a mix of social media, and bloggers can also be corporations in addition to individuals. In Dean's point of view, this is best understood via the reflective circuit of 'drive'. Drive is likely to be a strategy for bloggers to capture readers. This might result from social-political events which stir up internet users' various emotions. The drive of blogging shares similarities with the motivation of Chinese people's TV habits. Lull (1991) interprets the drive for watching TV either as curiosity for exoticism, or admiration for the new stars. In the study of blogging, the question should be what incentivises blog production.

Dean's point of view (2010) is best understood via the reflective circuit of drive. The drive is likely to be a strategy for bloggers to capture blogger readers. The drive might result from social-political events which stir up internet users' various emotions. The drive of blogging shares similarities with the motivation of Chinese people's TV watching. Lull in my review interprets the drive for watching TV either as curiosity on exoticism or admiration on

the new stars. In the study of blogging, the question should be what drives blogging and blogging makes what changes.

4 Methodology

This research studies the impact of corporate blogs on internet videos and network society. As a category of blogs, corporate blogs specify the corporation property of all blog components. When bloggers become corporate and readers participate in corporate blogging, it is necessary to examine the dynamics of the bloggers, blog sites and corporate content. Under this logic, I design the methodology as follows.

As Chinese entertainment celebrities are vigour on various media forms, I will then analyse whether the blog celebrities have the same effect in videos. I am intent to get access to sufficient background information on corporate bloggers. Through blogs, then, I will analyse the bloggers' public sphere and private sphere to investigate how blog readers participate in the corporate blogs. Next to the corporate bloggers, I focus on the corporate blog sites to examine how the blogs become corporate. As I assume it is unfair to compare Weibo to Twitter's equivalence, I will make a visual analysis of the corporate blog interfaces to answer the questions like how Chinese new media serves to the rise of online videos. Apart from the interfaces, I will calculate the frequency of the programme keywords on other platforms. If keywords in the show are rare on other media platforms, then there is the decline of symbolises on blogging internet videos. The blogger and blog analyses will direct to the research on the featured aspects of corporate blogs, such as commercial sponsorship and media censorship.

I will conduct case studies on sponsorship and censorship to examine how sponsorship operates in corporate blogs. What are the attitudes of corporate bloggers and readers? In terms of video censorship, how do the corporate blogs get involved with it?

Blogs as means of new media are usually interconnected with other media entries (Hills; Dean, et al.) including websites, videos, texts, and pictures. In this sense, I will compare the compatibility of Weibo blogs with the features of other media platforms, such as Baidu Tieba (Post bar), the programme official websites. This analysis focuses on the technical features of blogs.

There are many challenges in methodology. My limited technical knowledge fails to deal with the large amount of blog readers and their feedback.

5 Analyses and findings

I organise the analyses by five aspects. They are about corporate bloggers, programme blogging, sponsorship, censorship and media compatibility. Those aspects cover the relations of bloggers-readers, media-feedback, bloggers-corporations, and other new media forms.

5.1 The corporate bloggers

Media is a medium for media producers and the audiences. Similar to the evolution of screen media in China, corporate blogs are evolved from the individual blogs due to commercial media industry in Chinese society. Under this premise, I first take the approach of corporate bloggers as the initiators. In the previous review, I have considered how media reflects from the Chinese society from four aspects: the dynamics of Chinese TV as massive media, the video commerce, blogging as a compatible form of new media, and branding blogs. Those aspects present social relations among the Chinese people. They apply for discussing the real society from the media users' perspective. These aspects reflect social relations among the Chinese people. They are relevant to the discussion of real society from the media users' perspective. In the following analyses, I begin with the leading components in corporate blogs: the bloggers themselves.

Name	Roles in show	Background: Sexuality/Education/Region/Occupations		
Ma Dong	Debate Judge (Season 01-03) Debate leader/coach (Season 04)	Male Heterosexual	Chinese - Beijing Film Academy - University of Technology, Sydney	• Well-known <u>host in CCTV</u> (2001-2013) • **CEO** for MEWE Media • Former CCO for iQiyi
Kevin Tsai Pinyin: Cai Kangyong	Debate leader/coach (Season 01 - 04)	Male Homosexual	Taiwanese - UCLA School of Theatre	• Host for *Kangxi's Coming* (2004-2016), an influential Taiwanese talk show in the Greater China Area • Author of the *Cai Kangyong's Way of Speech*
Gao Xiaosong	Debate team leader/coach (Season 01 & 03)	Male Heterosexual	Chinese-American - Tsinghua University	• **CEO** of Alibaba Entertainment • composer, songwriter, music producer, director
Jin Xing	Debate team leader/coach (Season 02)	Female Transgender	Chinese - PLA Institute for Dancing - Overseas studying in dancing	• ballerina, modern dancer, choreographer, actress • Host for *Jin Xin Show* (2015-present) • **Owner** of Jin Xin Dance Theatre
He Jiu	Debate Judge (Season 04)	Male Uncertain	Chinese - Beijing Foreign Studies University	• Host for Happy Camping (1998-present), • a lasting-popular variety show in Mainland China • singer, actor, director • a former Arabic teacher

Table 5.1.1 Related personal information for the main hosts in Qipashuo

Table 5.1.1 presents information background of the corporate bloggers. I will first link their personal media background with media development in China. Three of the main hosts have hosted TV shows for more than ten years, while Jin Xin is an internationally recognised

modern dancer. When TV was the main form of mass media, media producers and presenters built popularised brands of various programmes. Even given the present media transition, they have maintained their reputation amongst the different generations in the Chinese audience and have taken advantage of the new media. Here, from the point of view of media inheritance, I prove that the media transition in China is not only inherited based on content and censorship, but that the media producers and presenters on TV represent the personnel resource to realise the transition. No matters in the TV station or online video production, the hosts' experiences are sufficient contents for the show and the blogs corporate and individual.

Furthermore, I assume that media producers and presenters on TV are the personnel resource in the evolution of China's media forms. The media transition in China is not only due to the update of media technologies and cultural governance. The hosts and producers in traditional media play the roles of the main promoters in the change. This research cannot ensure the amount of traditional media personnel in the new media field media, given that young media graduates could promote the media transition. At least, the case of Qipashuo shows that China's top ranked online videos apply the TV presenters due to their influence among Chinese audiences. From the personnel perspective, media transition leaves at least one question for the hosts, which is their motivation in the media change. I present my analysis form the perspective of media marketization as follow.

The corporate bloggers' current social positions are consistently involved with the marketization in Chinese media. The programme initiator, Ma Dong resigned from his host's position in CCTV in 2012 and then started a media entrepreneurship as MEWE Media (See screen-shot 5.1.2 MEWE's corporate blogs). The same business background applies to the remaining two Chinese hosts. Gao Xiaosong is CEO of Alibaba Entertainment, and Jin Xin started her domestic dancing careers after receiving the invitation by the Ministry of Culture of PRC[7]. It is fair to assume that their personal involvement in private entertainment media reflects the marketization of China's entertainment. When the famous CCTV hosts leave state TV stations, their cultural capital allows them to perform on the internet. Throughout the media transition, their previous hosting experiences inform their hosting skills and styles. In the meantime, their past becomes a selling point for audiences' curiosity, which will be discussed in next Section Blogging Programmes.

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[7] Jin Xin is well-recognised modern dancer who has been awarded in many western countries outside China. For further details of her invitation from China's Ministry of Culture, please browse the web link: http://www.mcprc.gov.cn/.

Screenshot 5.1.2 The corporate blogs of MEWE Media (Ma Dong is its CEO.)

Their business background shows the implications for corporate blogs. As corporate bloggers, they are reasonable to advertise their media products in the programmes due to the economic incentives. Programme host Ma blogs MEWE's company office, which receives 2909 likes from blog readers (See blog 5.1.3). In addition to Ma, Gao Xiaosong's music and his speech in the programme as an opinion leader have also been common in his blog and the show.

Blog 5.1.3 Blogging MEWE's offices (MEWE office is not large. Even though, the Qipa are reluctant to walk in the office.)

In some case, corporate bloggers make random connection with the corporate programme. In the blog 5.1.4, Ma posts to drive Uber in Shanghai and attaches a picture where a man stands in front of a car. It is unreasonable to connect Uber with Qipashuo. Uber

does not sponsor the programme. What is more, it is hard to identify the sunglasses man is the real Ma. Maybe Ma just posts for fun and the blog receives more than 4000 likes. To summarise, corporate bloggers are possible to blur their business (MEWE), corporate posts (Qipashuo) and personal jokes together. To the blog readers, they are fond of multiple way of corporate blogging as long as the bloggers update their life.
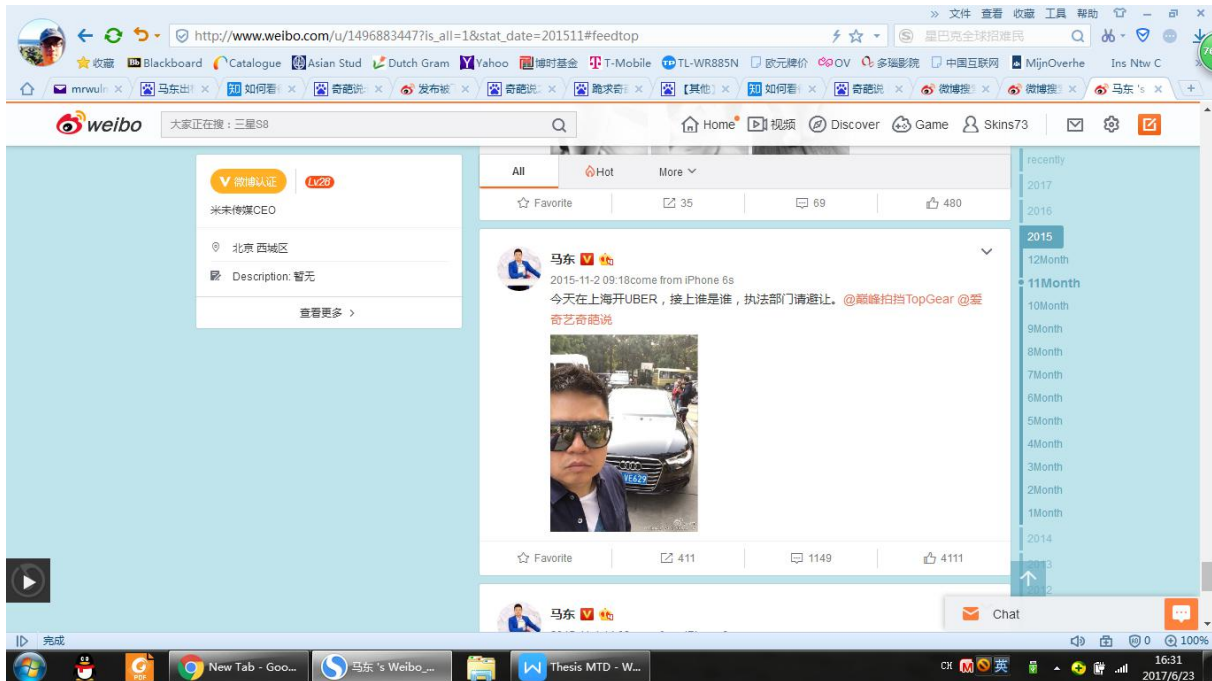
Blog 5.1.4 Unreasonable link in blog (How does Uber connect with Qipashuo? Is it the real photo of Ma?)
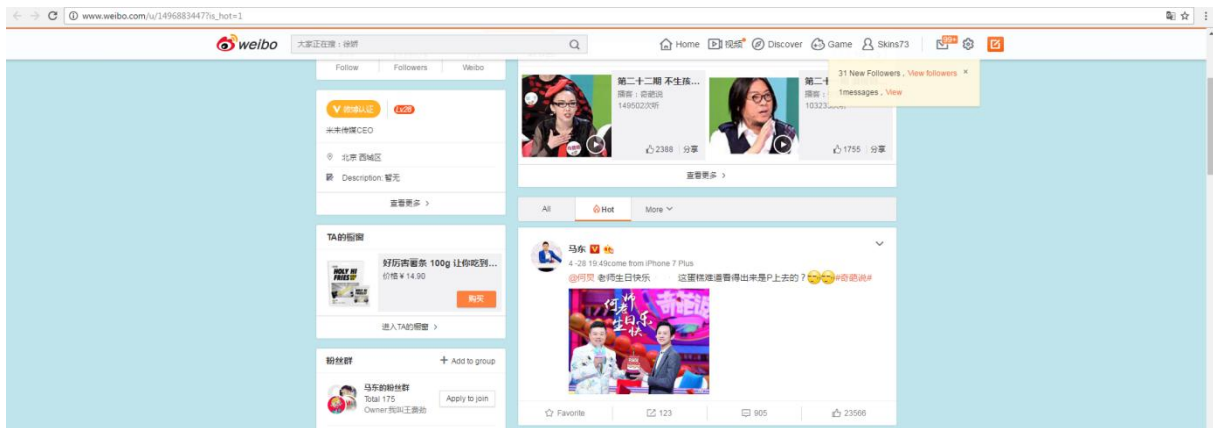
All in all, the identities of the corporate bloggers are more 'average' than 'various'. In addition to their overseas education and sexuality status, all the bloggers are Chinese nationals, mixing Chinese, Taiwanese, and overseas Chinese. Their various identities become resourceful materials in the show as well as brand blogging. The short post 5.1.5 below is an example to show programme novelty in the new season. The blog asks a series of questions about the past of each host. This post has gained 636 likes and received 254 comments. This shows blogging programmes is likely to involve hosts' personal experiences on education, careers, and sexuality. The blog advertises the programme by linking to the past of the hosts. Beyond the advertising function, the corporate blogs are places for audiences' participation in the discussions of the hosts' past, which connects the corporate bloggers and blog readers.

Blog 5.1.5 Blogging the hosts' anecdotes

So far, my analyses are based on the identities of bloggers and readers. However, it is necessary to note the dual roles of the bloggers and the readers. The corporate bloggers are also programme producers, while the readers are very likely to be the video audiences. Blogging brands is not only the corporate bloggers' job, but also needs audiences' participation in the show. Another aspect of the post is the number of shares, which exceeds the figure for people commenting on it. When users click the share icon, Sina Weibo provides options for sharing to the general personal Weibo, the Weibo friend circle, and another Weibo user as a private message.

Another tier is about interpersonal connection between corporate bloggers. In blog 5.1.6, Ma Dong posts a picture in programme studio to celebrate He's birthday and it is interesting hat Ma notices two involved parties, @Qipashuo and @HeJiu. I would like to make several reflections of this blog. First, corporate blogs blur the public sphere and private sphere. Although He Jiu's birth year is not stated, Ma as a corporate blogger publishes personal details about Hu Jiu to the public and connects the post to @Qipashuo. Second, blogging birthday takes advantage of exposing individual details in order to advertise the programme and the corporation. Third, as it receives 23,506 likes and 905 comments, blogging host's birthday is successful in building celebrity bonds with potential audiences. No matter the likes mean celebrating the birthday or catching up the fantastic show, the post attracts blog readers to join the programme.

Blog 5.1.6 Blogging He's birthday in the programme.

Corporate bloggers construct the flow of corporate blogs. They operate the blogs by making use of their experiences, corporate authority, interpersonal relations, and multiple identities. In the following analyses, I will prove that corporate blogs are the leading media means in programme publicity. The roles of corporate bloggers are apparent at the aspects of programme contents, sponsorship, and censorship.

5.2 Blogging programmes

Having introduced general backgrounds of the corporate bloggers, my analysis turns to the corporate blogs: Qipashuo's official Weibo. In the review section, I argue that Weibo is not the equivalence to Twitter. The uniqueness of Weibo is embodied in layout design, content infusion and information exposure. I am intent to prove those factors also apply to Qipashuo's blogs as I make a visual analysis of the blog interface. To study the blog contents, I make frequency statistics for programme keywords.

Figure 5.2.1 is a screen-shot of Qipashuo's official weibo on the computer. It applies cartoon style of fonts and pictures in a colourful set. Compare with the programme stage photo in figure 5.1.4 where programme host Ma Dong celebrates He Jiu's birthday on stage. The design of the corporate blogs shares the similar colours on stage. Even the host pictures on the blog site are in a relaxing cartoon style. In the corporate blogs, the blog background highlights the broadcast time and the production company. In this sense, the corporate blogs function as a bulletin board calling for blog readers to watch the shows "at 20:00 every Friday and Saturday".

Screenshot 5.2.1 The interface of the Qipashuo's corporate blogs

In the meanwhile, the blogs highlight the broadcast right of the production company, iQiyi as self advertisement. Next, in the central position is the corporate blog logo, which is the same as the programme logo in Figure 5.3.1. In the blogs, they emphasise the corporate blog authority. There is a certification mark attached to the logo to show the blog developers are certified by the Weibo companies. The corporate blog title in below also emphasises the "official" blog site. Later on, there is an icon for "paying attentions" to the corporate blogs and Weibo provides the service of leaving the private message to the corporate blogs, which is involved with the private sphere.

In terms of the blog structure, the blogs consist of three main modules: homepage, podcast and gallery. The gallery combines stage photos, emoji (.eip format) and blog pictures. The podcast module then contains all the episodes for four seasons. The homepage presents the main content of the blogs. On the right side of the homepage, there lists a timeline of the main blogs and there is a sidebar column on the left. On the top of the sidebar, it lists usage data for the corporate blogs. According to the blog site, the amount of the corporate blog fans has reached more than 12 million. It is reasonable to assume that the Weibo Corporation survey the usage data for the corporate blogs. Below the usage data is the basic introduction to the blogs, which conforms to the Real Name System by authorities. Then, there are 18 blog passages in random time sequences. Under the blog passages, the sidebar makes automatic podcasts for the latest episode.

Next, I take the approach of searching keywords to study blogging programmes. According to the audience rate, it is fair to say Qipashuo is a popular phrase amongst Chinese

youth. The phrase Qipashuo means "a talk show of the Qipa people". The word Qipa originally refers to rare but beautiful flowers, whereas it becomes a popular internet word8 nowadays referring to those who conform to no convention but with strong personality. When the show applies such as an internet popular words, it is reasonable to attract the young internet users as target group. In this definition, it highlights individual uniqueness and calls for getting rid of conventional limit. The values are exactly what the programme advocates. Related to the programme name, the most terms in the show contain the morpheme 'freaking' (Qipa), such as Qixi 奇袭, meaning a surprise speech attack in the debate show. The words Bibi and Tucao 吐槽 mean making sarcastic or cynical speech on the social issues[9].

To examine the decline of symbiosis, I list the frequency of Qipashuo's keywords on different media platforms, Weibo, Baidu, and Sougou. The frequency shows they are common internet language beyond Weibo's context. We can see that some keywords have larger frequency of usage in general blogs– whether corporate or individual – and other main search engines in China's internet. Internet users adapt to communicating with the words. Their usage contexts are not confined in the internet video programmes. Generally speaking, the usage of the words is extensively in Chinese internet. The symbiosis in blogs is not confined to certain network communities, but extends even to other internet platforms like Baidu and Sougou.

Keywords	Weibo	Baidu	Sougou
吐槽	249,181,622	14,700,700	3,522,720
奇葩	306,188,868	16,600,000	1,370,320
奇袭	515,835	11,300,000	165,924
Bibi	5,276,115	10,100,000	32,494,780
消音	5,284,936	12,900,000	1,040,062

Table 5.2.3 Frequency for the Qipashuo keywords on various platforms

In this section, I find out that how the corporate blogs coordinate the video programmes. The blog interfaces apply the similar colour style with the stage setting and highlight programme broadcast time. Furthermore, corporate blogs are equipped with various media forms ranging from video to the passage blogs. In this sense, corporate blogs become an alternative site to watch the show on Weibo. In addition, the blog maintains the feedback

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[8] The item Qipa is sourced from both Modern Chinese Dictionary (Xiandai Hanyu Cidian) and Baidu Encyclopaedia (Baidu baike). Although the mass internet shall not be the academic resource, the sense of this word related to my study is based on internet environment and challenges conventional meanings. This is also a feature of Chinese internet language.

[9] The word meanings are sourced from ...

mechanism for the internet audiences. In terms of Qipashuo's keywords, they are popular internet words and make senses to large amount of internet users. In the case of Qipashuo, the decline of symbiosis is not evident in China's major media entities.

5.3 Sponsorship in Qipashuo

Sponsorship seems sensitive in the blogging theories. When bloggers are involved with corporate sponsorship, they are likely to serve for the corporation's benefits such as advertising, sharing refined user experiences of certain products. Corporate blogs then are likely to cause trust crisis among the readers. In the case of internet videos, however, commercial sponsorship is a vital source for funding the programmes which is different from the Western funding for media production. Chinese people have still not adapted to paid video as the CNNIC reports (2016). As a different situation, I will first examine the sponsorship pattern in the corporate blogs for the internet videos. Then, I list the attitude of the bloggers and the readers toward programme sponsorship.

In terms of the blog logos (Figure 5.3.1), they highlight the main sponsor brands in each seasons. The main sponsors directly name the programmes (冠名赞助) to show their essential support to programme production. The sponsor brands consistently dominate the logos in an explicit way. In Season 01, Meters/bonwe, the mass market clothing brand, name Qipashuo. Then, the clothing brand promotes a dressing-up app to name the show in the following two seasons. At the turn of Season 04, the main sponsor is Xiaomi, the mass-marked smart-phone company. The naming sponsorship is reasonable in internet videos as they are in heavy dependence on sponsor companies.

Figure 5.3.1 Corporate blog logos for four seasons.

On the side of corporate bloggers, they never disguise they are under sponsorship, which contradicts to the blogging theories in the West. To the opposite, they make hard advertisement when blogging the programmes. In the blog below (5.3.2), the corporate blogger highlights the Xiaomi welfare to the programmes. The blog even regards the smart-phone brand as gold lord daddy (金主爸爸, meaning sugar daddy) . More than two hundred

readers like the sugar daddy without questioning his commercial purposes. Here, I put forward a tentative explanation on Chinese audiences' tolerance on sponsorship. I assume that the sponsorship on corporate bloggers is different from that on individual bloggers.

Corporate bloggers' honesty about sponsorship only happens in corporate blogs, instead of their individual blogs. In Ma Dong's individual blogs, for instance, there is no mention of any sponsor brands in his programme (See figure 5.3.3). In the each episode of Qipashuo, however, he spends the fixed time in repeating the advertising lines for the sponsor brands.
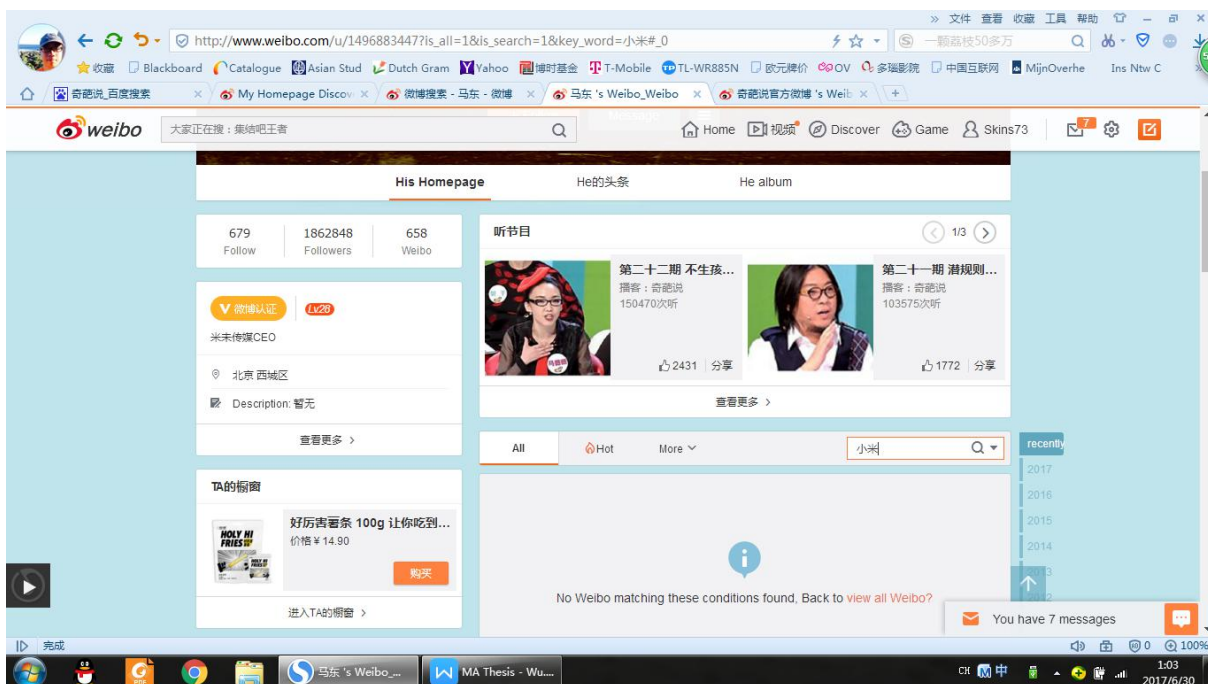

Figure 5.3.2 Blogging the gold lord daddy

Figure 5.3.3 Zero sponsor trace in the individual blogs taking Xiaomi for instance

Then I check readers' attitudes towards blogging sponsorship. Chinese audiences have adapted to enjoying the free programme at the compromise of accepting advertisement. However, the well-accepted naming sponsorship does not affect them to focus on the programme other than the advertised products. Even in Xiaomi's advertising blog, there is almost no feedback on comment the phone. Instead, blog readers continue to make programme-related comments on debate topics, actors' stage performance, etc. Reader's ignorance of sponsored products does not contradict to their approval of sponsorship. There are more readers' likes on the sponsorship blogs than the amount of programmed-based comments.

Next, I make an overview of the sponsor brands in Figure 5.3.4. The sponsor brands are divided into prior sponsor brands and secondary sponsorship. Generally, the prior sponsor products are daily necessaries for all walks of life, such as mass-market clothing (Metres/bonwe, YouFan App) and cheap smart-phones (Xiaomi). The sponsor products are consistent with the style of the programme, which is down-to-earth, fashionable, and affordable to young audiences. Apart from the mass-market feature, the prior product brands generally monopolise the Chinese market. Metre/bonwe boasts more than *** branches in various Chinese cities while Xiaomi is a massive domestic smart-phone brand whose pricing is second to Huawei. For the secondary sponsor brands, however, they are not necessarily life necessaries but include luxuries and quality products, such as high-end organic yogurt, private cars and foreign confections.

Season	Major sponsorship company	Subordinate sponsorship companies
01	Meters/bonwe	Head & Shoulders
02	YouFan App (有范)	Momchilovtsi yogurt
03	YouFan App (有范)	M&M's, Wheat milk
04	Xiao MI Smartphone	Peugeot, Yaha Coffee, Vivo smart-phones

Table 5.3.4 Sponsor brands for Qipashuo in four seasons

In terms of commercial sponsorship in internet videos, I argue that the sponsor companies are interested in large amount of audiences to the show, instead of bloggers' credibility. In this sense, the immediacy of corporate blogs effectively spreads the sponsor brands to network society, whereas the human voices of the corporate bloggers do not matter much to the readers.

Apart from programme sponsorship, I present a special way of blogging a sponsor merchant. Blog 5.3.5 makes one hour countdown for the show time and it highlight the main sponsor merchant, Lei Jun, CEO for Xiaomi smartphone. Next to @LeiJun, the corporate

blog explicitly inquires his satisfaction on the advertisement in the show. The corporate blogger also adds a sarcastic topic of him #LeiJunIsSpolied. The post receives 1424 pieces of feedback from the blog readers. Contradicting to Rutberg's ideas on sponsored blogs, the corporate blogs for internet video programmes never try to avoid the sponsor facts. To the opposite, sponsor brands and the commercial figures are integrated in the programmes and the corporate blogs. Sponsorship becomes an honest topic in reader's discussion.
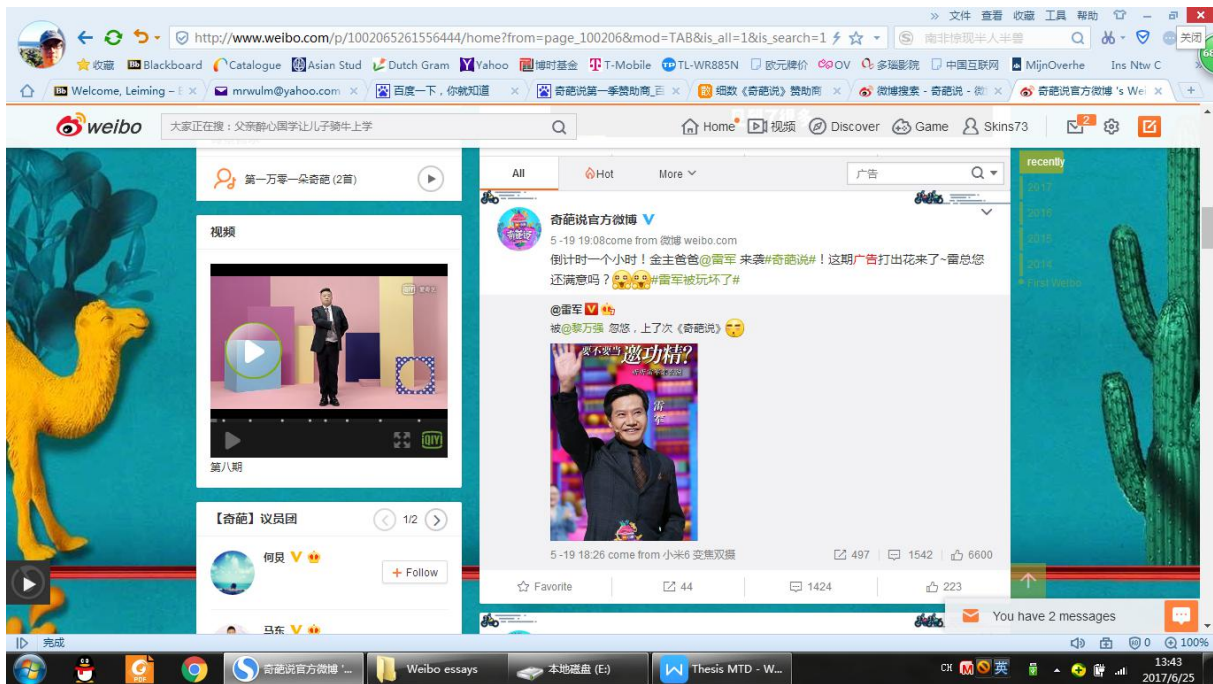
Blog 5.3.5 Blogging sponsor merchant @LeiJun

5.4 Censorship in silence

In Season 02, two episodes of the programme were banned in silence by the authorities. One programme broadcast on 11th July, 2015 debated the question 'should you come out to your parents?' and another on 24th July, 2015 asked: 'should good friends make booty calls?' These were no longer accessible to audiences from 21st August, 2015 after they were banned by the SAPPRFT 广电总局. As the 'hit' show has received great affection from audiences, the month before the banning was much discussed by blog readers. In the case of censorship, I have no way of examining the reason and processes behind how programmes are officially censored. The alternative approach is to survey the media presenters and the audiences. As I name the censorship a silent procedure in the subtitle, the banned content does not stir up online activism among internet users. However, this does not mean there is no response as counter power to the State control. In this media research, I examine the leading role of

corporate media in the silent control for new media. Instead of investigating the officials, my analysis takes the approach of examining the interface and comments of blog readers.

Considering that LGBT rights in China is a sensitive topic, blogging about banned content is an opposite example in determining the gate-keeping impact of new media on society. That means new media does not follow up the mass media and make critiques on it. Rather, blogs become the exclusive source of the banned contents and lead the public opinions that are no longer accessible on mass media. In Chinese media, blogs provide much more freedom of speech on sensitive topics.

Beyond the users' opinion, the celebrities take effects in the censorship crisis. In this episode, the host Cai Kangyong, a homosexual man, loses his control of decency and burst into tears (See Blog 5.4.1), which later developed into the discussion topic #CaiBurstOutWeeping (Topic homepage 5.4.3). In the topped-up blog post, Cai is a model of coming out in the public. In addition, the host Ma Dong joined the blog discussion (5.4.3) and talked to Cai in public, which is another example to show bloggers blur the public sphere and privacy. His posts attract more than 2,000 forwards and more than 1,500 hundred likes. The reader's discussion on the host's conversation mainly revolved around ways of accessing the banned episodes. Blog readers usually use cloud storage applications, such as Baidu Cloud Drive or Weipan, Sina cloud drive, in order to upload offline videos and publish the password to the public in the comment columns.

Blog 5.4.1 The topped-up blog of Cai bursting into weeping. Post time is synchronising with the show at 20:00.

Topic homepage 5.4.2 #CaiBurstOutWeeping

Blogging discussion 5.4.3 The appraisal from Ma on Cai's gentleness and courage in gay admission. "We (Gay) are not monsters! -Cai"

More broadly than the programme, there are 13 million readers of the blog site #ShouldYouComeOuttoParents, where most bloggers post their disagreement on Guangdian's censorship and extend their sympathy on the gay intolerance in China. This shows that the social influence on the coming out topic has gone much further than the programme. Blog platforms realises the modelling effects of online celebrity as well as the extensive exchange of public opinions on homosexual issues in China.

Apart from the blogger-readers sphere, I argue that corporate media itself has a leading impact on network society. In the censorship crisis, although corporate media are not allowed to express corporate opinions about censorship, the official website appear "uncommon" to expose the censorship problem. In the module of the programme episode

archives, the play icons for the episodes on 11 July and 25 July fail to click as Webpage 5.4.4 illustrates. Imagine an internet user encounters the two false icons. It is quite reasonable for him to inquire reason for the episodes in shade. In this sense, corporate media implicitly informs network society of the censorship facts.
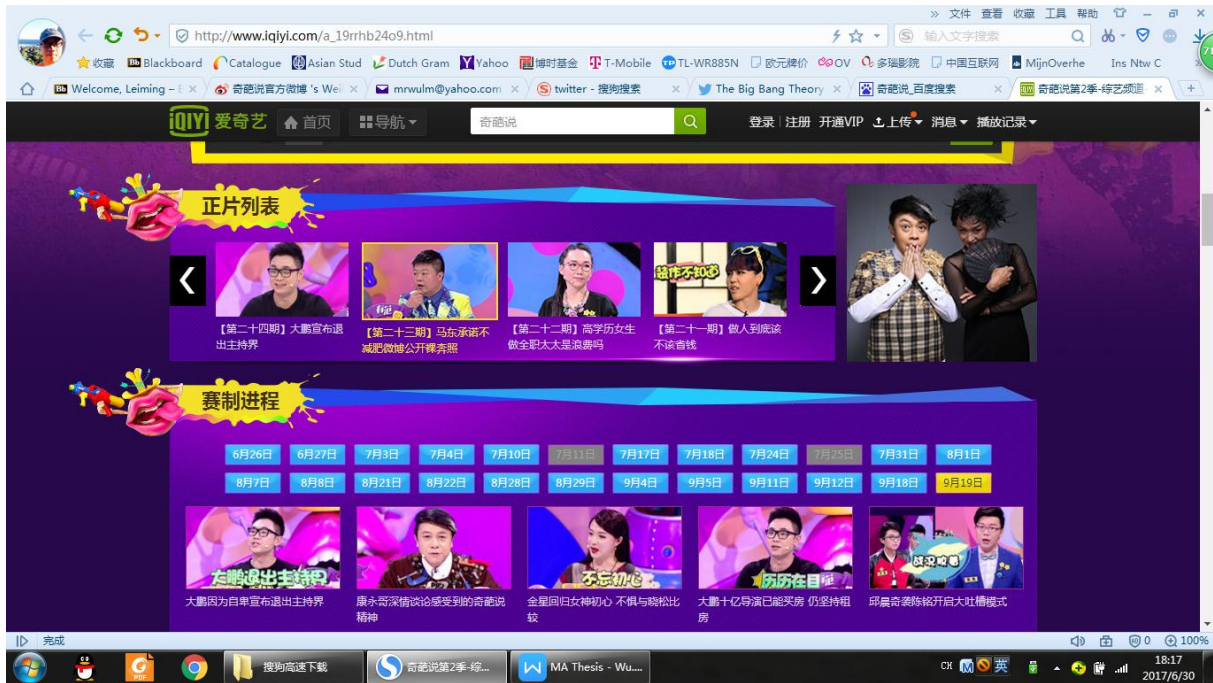
Webpage 5.4.4 Archives of the blocked episodes (The icons of the episodes on 11th July and 25th July are in shade so that they are unavailable to internet users.)

5.5 Internet videos in new media crossroads

According to Rettberg, she defines blogs as websites in certain time sequences and with combinations of media forms. In the analyses above, I have considered the timing of the blogs at the aspects ranging from the corporate bloggers to the censorship cases. The timing in corporate media is correspondent in the real society. That explains the research on corporate blogs could reflect the path of social development, such as media marketization, celebrity effects on leading the public opinions, etc. In this section, I am intent to examine the fusion of multiple media entities in corporate blogs.

The Qipashuo producers provide a new media package for the internet users to get access to the programme. The package includes the iQiyi official websites, Baidu Tieba, Weibo, etc. Those media platforms present the similar interface as the corporate blogs. Even though, I doubt they function as equally as the corporate blogs. Rather, they function with different emphasis. I would like to make several metaphors to compare them.

I would like to apply the comparisons below to proving that the media kits in the internet video do not function in an equal way. The iQiyi official websites are compared to formal notice boards and video archives. The corporate web page emphasises the information output. It serves to publish, release and collect their video products. Compared with corporate blogs, the official web page is lack of interactive mechanism, such as collecting audiences' feedback, discussing with the hosts, or making gossips of celebrities.

Apart from the corporate web pages, Baidu Tieba is a public platform largely in the lead of internet users' preference. One internet user is free to create a discussion topic in a post bar. While other internet users visit the bar site, they are free to make new posts followed by the previous posts. Even based on the same debate question, post bar users are likely to post totally irrelevant information to the programme. There are hardly any corporate settings in Tieba platforms, unless they highlight a topped-up post created by the corporate host. Tieba is a speech playground for post bar users.

In comparison with the official web pages and Tieba, Weibo is a corporation-based platform where corporations design all the topic strands. When corporate bloggers initiate a topic or an event, internet users follow it up to develop their comments. Furthermore, I argue that the compatibility of corporate blogs improve the efficiency in branding the internet videos. For instance, Weibo provides the topic page, such as #CaiBurstOutWeeping where is a speech playground welcome to any information. Blog users are possible to post any individual information regardless the lead of corporate blogs. In this sense, topic home pages (like 5.4.3) replace the function of Baidu Tieba. For the publishing function on the official homepages, corporate blogs set a podcast module (see corporate blog interface 5.2.X). The topic homepage setting and the podcast services proves corporate blogs are in a more central position in the media crossroads than other two media forms.

Technically, corporate blogs take the both advantages of the video websites and the BBS forums. On the one hand, it is never a barrier for blogs to attach other means of media, such as programme posters, video resources, other web-page links, etc. On the other hand, Sina Weibo develops at function and the topic mark discussion. The at function surpasses the forum discussions based on top-down floors while each topics mart page on Sina Weibo is mimic forum where users can apply all the functions of blogs.
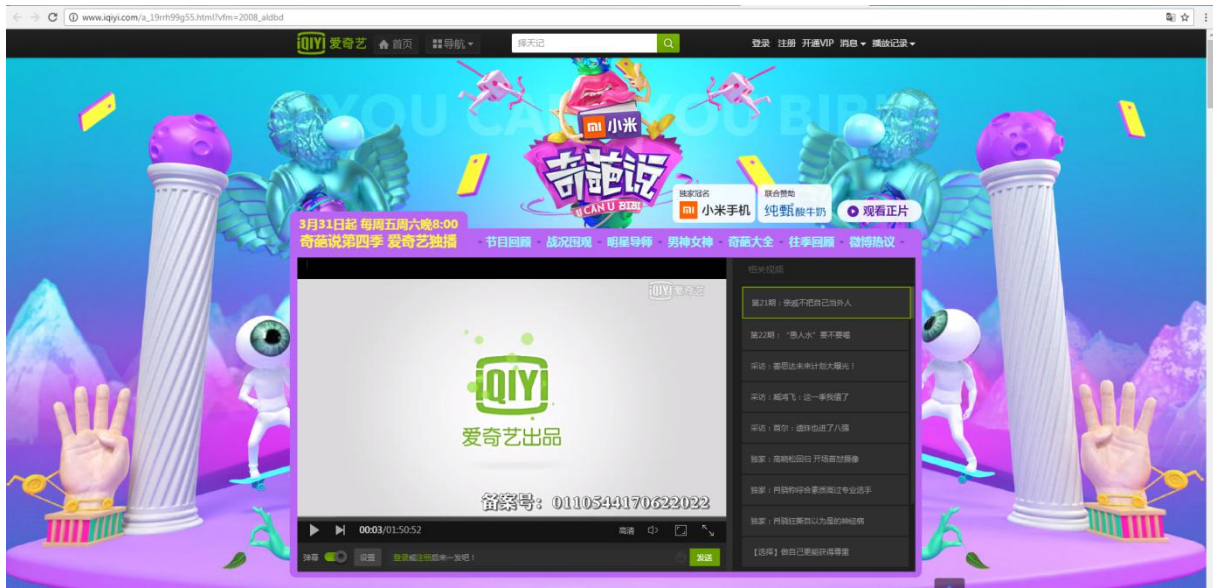
Screenshot 5.5.1 Qipashuo official homepage serving to broadcast the archives of programmes
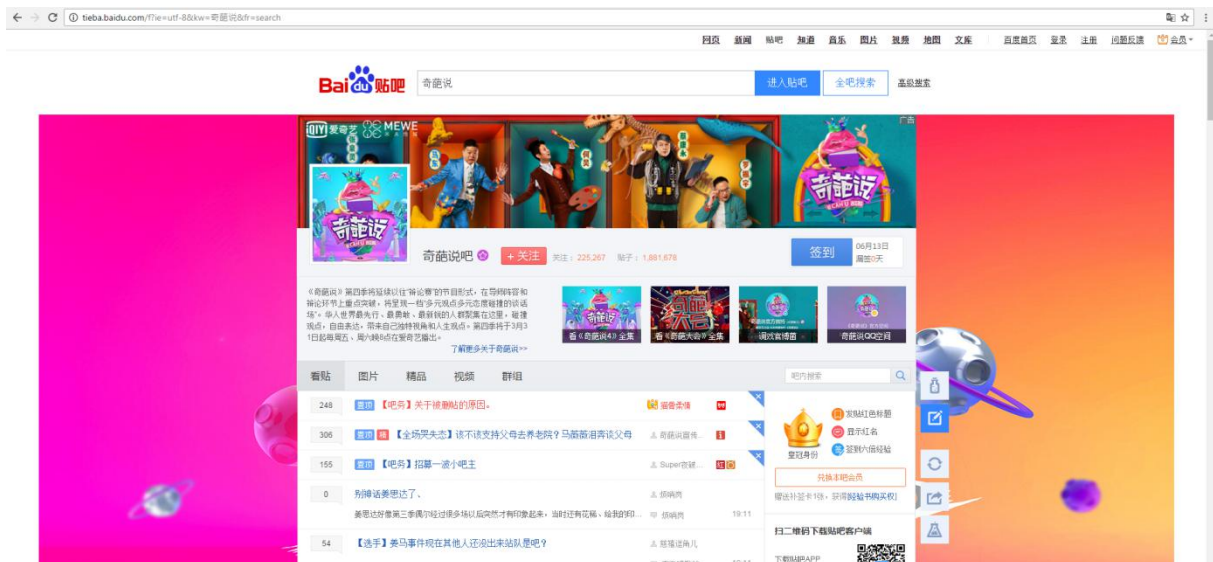
Screenshot 5.5.2 Qipashuo Tieba (post bar) as a random collection of bar users' posts
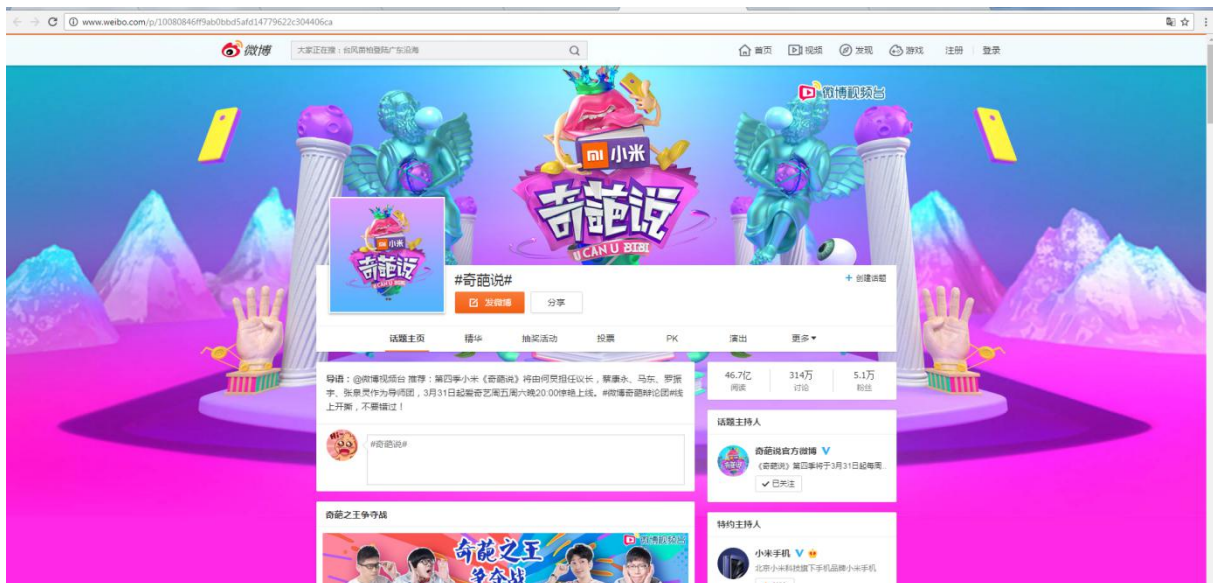
Screenshot 5.5.3 Topic homepage #Qipashuo on Weibo

6 Conclusion

It is a great attempt to apply the current blogging theories to the research on internet video programmes in China. Throughout the analyses, blogging video programmes is an interconnected process to present the dynamics of new media in commercial society. When blogs become corporate, they coordinate corporate marketing in the network society and beyond. In the case of blogging internet videos, the corporate blogs are network communities unique to other media entries, such as official websites and Qipashuo Tieba.

Before reaching the internet videos, I start with reviewing the legacy of TV entertainment. With the popularity of TV sets, Chinese people have present strong engagement in the media content and forms. The audiences' affection on entertainment, exoticism influences production model for TV programmes. On the other hand, culture control in media limits the flexibility of TV productions. In the evolution of media forms, internet videos connect with traditional TV production, but more importantly they bring about viewing freedom and economic profits. The rise of intent video in China presents a media package including media history, media industry, cultural governance, and the audiences.

When blogging meets internet videos, it starts great participatory waves in the new media. Technically, blogs provide participatory room for free speech and maintain feedback mechanism. To the corporate nature, the blogs function as an advertising zone for the network communities. Sponsorship in corporate blogs is inevitable. In the case of internet videos, however, Chinese readers have adapted to commercial sponsorship from TV viewing. It does not cause audiences to suspect the sponsored bloggers or programmers. Even for the censored content, the corporate blogs function as safety valves (Hassid 2012) for blog participants. The participators in new media include corporate bloggers, corporations, audiences and authorities. The bloggers fuse their multiple roles so as to blur their private sphere and the public sphere.

Instead of predicting the future of blogs, I assume that corporate blogs take the lead in commercialised network society. In Qipashuo's case, blogs are no longer new to the users, but blogging the programmes are never old. The corporate blogs are self-evident to show the evolution of new media in commercial societies. Blogging internet video programmes is blogging the future.

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