The Rise of Female-led Narratives in Decentralized Social Platforms

----Explore the Power of Women's Voices in Decentralized Social Platforms

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Abstract: This paper investigates the reason for the change of the female narrative right in the transformation between centralized and decentralized social platforms. Through an analysis of the marginalization of women's voices within centralized media and an exploration of the dynamics behind narrative empowerment on decentralized platforms, this research unveils the intricate dynamics shaping the female discourse. The online debate of "whether the high-speed rail should sell sanitary napkins" illustrates the power of online voices and describes the dilemmas women face in today's decentralized online space. This paper argues that the empowerment of women by decentralized platforms enables them to obtain a change in narrative power. At the same time, the characteristics of the decentralized platform also give space for the survival of negative phenomena such as feminist stigma. Ultimately, this paper explores and redefines the understanding of the interplay between digital platforms, narrative authority, and gender dynamics in the web 3.0 era and also points out the new challenges faced by women's narrative in the context of web 3.0.

Keywords: Social Media, Decentralized, Feminism, Gender Research, Chinese Society

1. Introduction

Historically, centralized media, which is established forms of media such as television, radio, and newspapers, has always marginalized and underestimated voices and viewpoints that do not conform to the mainstream ideology of society. However, the emergence of decentralized social networking platforms and 3.0 technologies, such as Twitter, Instagram and Weibo, has subversively changed narratives and storytelling in centralized media. This brand-new narrative environment has altered the traditional power structure prevalent in conventional media and created a narrative space for the voiceless groups in formal media communication [1]. Such changes could lead to a reshaping of social power dynamics and hierarchies, helping to foster social change, foster identity, and address inequalities.

This paper will identify and analyze the reasons for the limitations of women's voices in centralized media, focusing on how decentralized online platforms can help to establish the female-led narrative in a patriarchal society and how women can create their own digital identities in it. Existing research

mainly discusses women's voices and plights in decentralized platforms and cross-considers the relationship between gender and other social identities in social media in specific contexts. For example, Chengting Mao interviewed with Media Monitor for Women Network to reflect on the opportunities and challenges encountered by the development of feminism in Chinese society [2]. Geraldina Roberti's 2022 article analyzes the online identity construction of female online influencers in Italian society [3]. This paper will explore how the transition from centralized media to decentralized online platforms is driving this shift in female narrative power. Through the evidence of social events, proof the discourse in the decentralized platform can promote women's rights and collective demands. Illustrates the importance of decentralized platforms in challenging existing power structures and amplifying women's voices in the digital sphere, as well as their potential to foster inclusion, a space where women's stories and perspectives can flourish. Finally, it pointed out the malice and challenges women are facing in the online space of decentralized platforms and gave suggestions.

2.   The dilemma of women in Chinese centralized media

In any country, decentralized media and centralized media exist simultaneously and are interdependent. The Central Propaganda Department (CPD) plays the role of a central entity in many centralized media in China. Like most central entities of centralized media, the CPD is responsible for censoring information on Chinese centralized media to make them serve society and the people. The CPD is responsible for guiding the cultural propaganda of Chinese society, with the purpose of strengthening the public's trust in the national government and facilitating governance [4]. It is undeniable that the CPD has a political stance and hopes that the media positively promote the country to improve public satisfaction. Chinese early Internet media was launched in 1999 with the screening and support of the Central Propaganda Department [4]. Since then, with the reform and progress of media technology and the market, whether it is the marketization of media or the emergence of decentralized network platforms, the CPD has always played a key role in it.

In the centralized media influenced by the central entity, considering the social context of China and the influence of the long-standing patriarchal system, female narratives face the dilemma of channel castration. However, the centralized media does not seem to pay enough attention to this issue. There may be many reasons for the centralized media to make this choice.

First of all, as a patriarchal society, China has been always influenced by the traditional culture and awareness, which has lasted for over 1,000 years. At the same time, the centralized media supported by the CPD prefers to present social stability rather than making conflicts for gender and antagonism. In a stable society, rights movements may, to some extent, mean a threat to society and even pose a potential threat to public security [5]. "The Arab Spring" movement in 2010 is an actual example of this statement. Mass protests erupted in December 2010 when Mohamed Bouazizi, a fruit vendor in Tunisia, set himself on fire in protest over the government's humiliation and unfair law enforcement practices [6]. The movement, which sought freedom, human rights, and social justice, eventually led to large-scale civil unrest and military coups in several countries, involving many deaths. The media played a massive role in this incident. Elfatih A. Abdel Salam mentioned that many related literatures have emphasized how citizens affected by "The Arab Spring" use decentralized social media to bypass state-owned centralized media to initiate and conduct collectivist actions [7]. Ahmed K. Al-Rawi points out that Zogby's interview showed that in Arabia, 37 percent of people believed that "The Arab Spring" was driven by social media. More than half of Arabs believed that social media accelerated the process of the revolutionary movement [8]. In this example, decentralized social media is used as a political tool for citizens to gradually advance the rights movement into a revolutionary agenda. "The Arab Spring" is also a typical case of rights movements leading to coups and social unrest, and decentralized media is an essential communication medium

in this event. Therefore, considering the excellent orientation and group arousal of media speech, centralized media will avoid talking about topics that violate mainstream values and arouse public dissatisfaction. This may be one of the reasons why centralized media has not changed women's narrative plight. It is worth mentioning that this behavior has also led to increased marginalization of marginalized groups.

Second, centralized media operations need to consider the high cost and news value of events. Compared with unfair incidents suffered by individuals in society, other incidents covering a certain social group will be more discussed and attract more clicks. Similarly, the traditional public sphere tends to give priority to topics that are constructed by the social context as universal, collective, rational, and mainstream, leaving little room for personal, marginal, and emotional content [9]. Individual women's issues are often associated with the latter. Under such circumstances, the media usually pays more attention to the gender issues of women as a group, such as the women's federation fighting for women's collective rights, etc. However, it is still difficult for individual women to get attention. This state of the news has left many of the issues posed by gender inequality unaddressed. There are two obvious examples: First, due to the nature of the individual cases and the personal identity of the victims, individual gender-based violence cases lack channels to receive sufficient attention. Victims may not receive fair judicial treatment and social support, resulting in insufficient attention and improvement to the issue of gender-based violence. Second, the marginalization of women's labor rights issues. Although China has a comprehensive labor law, some potential gender discrimination in employment has not been incorporated into the law. This kind of non-illegal potential gender discrimination is difficult to find a way to solve. Compared with group incidents, centralized media pays less attention to the unfair treatment of individual female workers at work. This situation makes it difficult for women's rights and interests in the labor market to be exposed and resolved.

At the same time, the loss of women's voices in society also contributes to gender oppression in social and traditional cultures. Feminism entered China in the 20th century, and in the reform era, the country also took feminism as a guideline for solving gender issues [10]. Although the Chinese Communist Party government has vigorously promoted gender equality since the reform and opening up, and the public has held several women's rights movements, some dross of Confucianism that has dominated China's value system for over two thousand years still exists. In such an environment, it is difficult and lack channels for female victims to express resistance that is "contrary to the mainstream voice."

To sum up, there are many reasons for the narrative dilemma of women in centralized media, and to a certain extent, it hinders the progress of gender equality and women's rights. However, with the rise of social media and decentralized media, individual voices and issues have gradually gained more attention and dissemination. This ushered in a new era of gender equality and feminism.

3. Changes brought about by decentralized media

In contrast to the centralized architecture, a decentralized social platform is not monopolized by a single central entity or server. Users of social media platforms are allowed to create personal digital identities, interact with other users, and publish content [1]. Cade Diehm pointed out that it is users' pursuit of a balance of power that has led to the emergence of a decentralized social platform [11].

First, this individual users control of their data and content empower women who are passively marginalized in centralized media, empowering users to shape their online presence and narrative. They can choose what they share, convey their thoughts, and build online identities. The formation of these online communities with common interests and values also provides a platform for communication and cooperation for collective action in pursuit of women's rights. Also, it helps feminist topics become visible in the public context. However, traditional feminist activities outside

the Internet background are not public. In the traditional actions of women's associations like the Women's Federation and Gender Watch Women's Voice, all the people participating in the actions are feminists, and the content of their actions will be monitored by other groups. However, in decentralized social media, the high visibility makes online feminist actions subject to the scrutiny of all users. This change from a closed background to a public background not only demonstrates the examination of the patriarchal society but also promotes the redoing of feminism in the context of the Web 3.0 era. Users actively renegotiate gender power [12].

Secondly, decentralized social media usually implements a comprehensive review mechanism; that is, a community-driven review mechanism is added in compliance with the requirements of laws and regulations. In a community-driven review mechanism, users can participate in content review and governance and report inappropriate content. This approach to governance is more democratic and takes into account different values. Female users can also create a more positive and safer environment for female narratives by actively participating in online community governance. In addition, the intelligent recommendation algorithm of the social platform also plays a role in promoting the solidarity of women's power. Relevant blog posts and content will be more likely to be pushed to users with similar ideas and interests to help them gain a sense of group belonging and find identity.

Finally, as mentioned above, right movements normally destabilize social phenomena. The government will restrict it for social stability, and feminism needs to act without affecting the public environment. Feminist organizations must avoid politicizing their efforts, not spread their positions against the state, and can't pursue women's demands through offline protests. As a result, feminist organizations lack effective ways to advance the feminist agenda. However, individual users in the decentralized social platform will not face such a dilemma, and personal feminist dissemination will not become a public agenda [10]. By posting under the same label, users can use similar personal experiences to show the collective expertise of facing inequality and realize the invisible expression of personal experience in centralized media [12]. The decentralized nature of online platforms allows them to act independently of the organization to pursue collective aspirations, emphasizing the interaction between the individual and the collective. However, from another perspective, this is a helpless way out for Chinese feminist individuals to be marginalized in the centralized platform in the social context.

Although some topics are still prohibited from being discussed on Chinese online platforms, the decentralized change in national online identity has allowed some non-mainstream voices to emerge and provided a channel for marginalized groups to speak out. They offer an alternative to traditional centralized social media platforms. This liberal regime facilitates the spread and rise of decentralized social media and promotes the principles of user autonomy, data privacy, and free speech.

4.   The Power of Women's Online Voices

This chapter will use recent social examples that have sparked massive discussions on the Chinese Internet to demonstrate the practical utility of women's empowerment in online spaces.

On September 15, 2022, a netizen posted that she had sudden menstruation while taking the high-speed rail (HSR) but failed to buy sanitary napkins on the high-speed rail. She expressed the hope that relevant departments can consider women's physiological conditions and sell related items on the high-speed rail. On September 16, 2022, the topic of # high-speed train up menstruation cannot buy sanitary napkins # appeared on Weibo's hot searches, reaching 1,458,756. Among them, the one with the highest reading volume was a Weibo post posted by Pear Video with 880,208 likes and 44,143 comments.

Later, the Jimu News reporter called the China Railway Administration, and the customer service said there were no sanitary napkins for sale on the high-speed rail. The issue of "Should sanitary

napkins be sold on high-speed rail?" has aroused much discussion on the Internet. In this question, the women's appeal is that some emergency necessities can be provided on the high-speed rail, but this view is opposed by many male netizens. They pointed out that this is a personal item and not suitable for sale in public. Some netizens asked, "Why don't you put sanitary napkins in your bag when you know your menstrual period?" Some people even think that this is not a necessity and that selling it on the high-speed rail is "occupying public resources." Many women fought against this, saying that this is the physiological need of nearly half of the population and is uncontrollable. Many women began to do physiological science popularization, looking for evidence that sanitary napkins should be sold on high-speed rail and calling on everyone to face up to women's physiological needs. On September 18, 2022, the topic of # China Kunming high-speed railway sanitary napkins accumulated sales of more than 10,000 packages # was hot on the search, and the heat reached 603408. The screenshot shows that the sales of sanitary napkins in Kunming high-speed rail are second only to playing cards. More and more users talk about their sudden physiological conditions under this topic and express their reasonable demands for sanitary products. The discussion continued for a long time after that. On September 25, 2022, # Sanitary napkins don't have to be put in black bags; it doesn't matter. # This becomes a trending topic on Weibo to call for eliminating menstrual shame. On May 15, 2023, # High school girls spontaneously put sanitary napkins in the toilet to help each other # became a hot search. On July 9, 2023, the topic that had been discussed for a long time finally came to the results that made women happy. "Sanitary napkins are finally being sold on high-speed trains," a netizen named Qiannian posted. On the same day, the hashtag # HSR finally sold sanitary napkins # on Weibo hot list, announcing the victory of female netizens in this struggle for rights and interests.

The high-speed rail sanitary napkin incident shows that gender inequality still exists in the context of Chinese society and shows that decentralized networks are an effective way to fight for women's rights.

5.   Challenges in Feminist Online Spaces

Chinese women have long lived under the background of the Confucian ideology system, which is essentially patriarchal. Although the government has promoted gender equality after the reform and opening up, gender inequality still exists widely. Under the influence of this long-standing and deep-rooted cultural thought, in the face of women's words and deeds to break through the traditional shackles, misogyny on the Internet has inevitably become a significant challenge for Chinese women to seek gender rights in online platforms [5].

In Chinese social networks, the stigmatization of feminism widely exists. The reasons for this phenomenon are, firstly, the social context of Confucianism and patriarchy. The second is that in the decentralized social platform, the discussions of women's groups are publicly accessible. These discussions may make some men feel that their masculine norms and values have been questioned and challenged and thus generate hostility. It is undeniable that although decentralized social media has built an important platform for the dissemination of feminism, the stigmatization of anti-feminists and feminism will also take advantage of this platform. Words to stigmatize feminism, such as "feminist bitch" and "feminism cancer," have also been coined and heavily used on the Internet. Because claiming to be a feminist on the Internet may be attacked by the masses, in online discussions on certain gender issues, the vocalists will avoid some attacks or be attacked by refusing to admit their identity as a feminist. Similar to the development of feminism in other countries, stigma and misogyny have become typical rebounds on the road to women's equal rights [2]. Han pointed out a consensus among many authors on gender issues in Chinese cyberspace: stable patriarchy is a key factor for blatant sexism, and even the gender norms for women in cyberspace are more serious than in the real world [5]. Therefore, she emphasized that although the decentralized social platform

provides opportunities for female voices, it is more of a space for women to struggle. China still has a long way to go in the face of the difficulties of spreading feminism and the stigmatization of feminism.

6. Conclusion

In centralized media, considering various reasons such as social system and news value, the transmission of female voices is subject to many restrictions. From centralized to decentralized media, the successful establishment of personal online identities and free, evident discourse determine the transformation of women's narrative power and advance the feminist agenda. Internet hotspot events also prove the importance of women's narratives in negotiating and striving for women's rights. However, in the process, the nature of decentralized platforms also exposes women to stigma and malicious behavior online. Decentralized platforms present both opportunities and new dilemmas for women's voices.

Overall, the paper highlights the significant role of decentralized social platforms in boosting female narrative and feminist communication in society. The research in this paper is based on Chinese unique social culture and ideology, which has limitations. From a development perspective, users and platforms need to improve further the review mechanism to solve possible challenges in the network and promote the continuous improvement and development of decentralized media.

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