

Chapter 32

Commercial Use of Mobile Social Media and Social Relationship: The Case of China

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ABSTRACT

China is well known for its wide and increasing commercial use of mobile social media for various purposes in different areas, ranging from online shopping to social networking. Such a popular commercial use was insightfully examined in relation to social relationship in the age of mobile internet, which enables people of either weak or strong connections to socialize anywhere anytime, leading to scenarios where mobile social media can be leveraged for profits. In what way can user experiences be guaranteed while platforms' value-added targets be achieved at the same time? In addressing that question, the authors of this chapter examined the commercial use of mobile social media in the context of complicated social networks. It is expected from the editor that further studies are to be carried out to comprehensively and comparatively examine the same topic in different countries or cultures.

INTRODUCTION

In the Internet age, especially in the age of mobile Internet, online social networks are making the connection, interaction, and relationship among people even more complicated. The social relationship of the younger generation is also being made more complicated, in which individual roles are being constantly transformed (Luo, 2017). In the past, mechanistic logic and reductionism were applied to analyze the problems of social networks from social sciences perspectives. In fact, the strength of weak

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ties (Granovetter, 1973) could play a more important theoretical role in explaining social networks in the Internet age, which argued that the weak ties in social networks could satisfy some social needs, with those who have favorable resources play a key connecting role as bridges.

Before studying changes in social networks, technical factors should be first taken into consideration. Information technology is clearly the fundamental factor for social reshaping, and in an era where strength and efficiency surpass any source of power, the technical logic has begun to replace the functions of social regulation and cultural traditions in certain areas, which changes people's cognitive and action frameworks. To make people's connection more convenient and meet people's social needs, mobile social media are growing more mature with technology, and developers spare no efforts to strive to occupy every single market. Even though mobile users are so different in their perceptions and expectations of mobile social media, mobile social media have gradually been transformed a communication tool to a living necessity. This development has been driven by business and user traffic, regardless of platforms, channels or media, which in turn would attract more attention and capital. When mobile social media and commercial capital are becoming more maturely integrated, interacted, interconnected, or even interdependent, how mobile social media have been commercially leveraged in the context of the mobile Internet and in the presence of the strength of weak ties of social networking. That is an imperative topic to be fully investigated from mixed perspectives in relation to communication and economics studies.

RESEARCH PURPOSE

Based on the view of strength of weak ties of social networking, the research on mobile social software, driven by Internet technology, is deconstructing the power structure and communication pattern. And when audiences have more power, they will have their own commercial value and they are likely to pay for channels and contents.

Mobile Internet, firstly, is to deconstruct the power structure of traditional society. Fei (2006) proposes 'Differential mode of association' of agricultural society and he thought blood relationship is the basis of agricultural social relations where egoism occupies personal emotions and there is an obvious distinction between public and private, also, violent ruling, without democracy; Industrial society appears '*Group pattern*', where nation controls rare resources and builds a new organizational framework with production materials, employment position and living space, so that it can eliminate the differential mode of association based on the blood relationship. Internet society has brought elimination of those power structures. The decentralization and fragmentation of state power, and the opening and connection of the Internet have changed the scarcity of resources, and the mobile Internet has made information sharing easier, and even the marginal cost of surplus social resources is close to zero. The essence of '*sharing*' makes the Internet burst out with greater energy. Sun (1993) argues that the basic unit of social control and resource allocation gradually loses the power to monopolize social resources and to control social relations. The society becomes a relatively independent source of resources and opportunities, and individual dependence on the state is significantly weakened (Sun, 1993).

Mobile Internet then deconstructs the dependence of traditional media on content and channels and the content is not the key point anymore and channels are not the only choice. In the internet system, Yu (2016) proposes a new developing direction which is 'Relationship Empowerment'. He argues that 'relationship empowerment gives the public right and ability to discuss and participate in public affairs, by stimulating individual value and relationship networking. Hence, the environment and pattern of

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