

Dramaturgical Theory in social media

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Abstract. In the current age, daily life is highly integrated with electronic devices and inner software. The intensive social media use of people is the most striking; the structure and the functions of social media are advanced, which can be an extension of the real world. The online society has become another independent social field for people. Social media mix the traditional front stage and corresponding backstage, and the unique communication method also brings many methods to build self-version for users. However, people socialize in this online area, which forms some unexpected good and bad results. Hence, even though there are previous studies that summarized the differences between the traditional social area and the social applications, it can be found that some aspects are not discussed by the former research about the dramaturgical theory in reality. These are contemporary or newer fields to discuss. Therefore, this paper attempt to infer how Goffman's dramaturgical theory plays a role in a new stylish social platform and aims to analyze the mixture clearly. Finally, this paper finds that the combination of the dramaturgical theory with the social websites will produce some differences and changes in users, and these impacts will cause harm and positive results at the same time.

Keywords: Sociology, Dramaturgical theory, social media.

1. Introduction

Nowadays, the development of technology is more and more relevant to daily life; the internet as a media of technology, representing the diversity of its development, has a massive impact on various aspects of people's experience. With the rapid development of electronic technology, social media regards all different types of people and fields as its potential target users and new marketplaces; its functions are becoming increasingly comprehensive and humane, also constantly evolving with convenient unexpected details at the same time. Caused by the wholesome functions, innovative technologies, and novel social ways of social media platforms, it successfully attracted most people to use and fond. Hence, the nowadays cyber world has become an extension of the real world, which adds another social place or area to our traditional offline one [1]. People can find most of the social alternatives to offline social interactions in the virtual world; they even can possess two parallel and independent character settings and social circles. For example, Weibo is one of the most popular social media in China; it is the largest sharing and public communication platform; it is the most commonly used by Chinese people and the easiest to check current affairs, comment on their personal opinions, publish their posts and express their views under plenty of different topics or chat with others randomly. Due to the features of the long distance between every user and the existence of personal online space, they easily possess two parallel and independent character settings and social circles in different social areas. Hence, the dramaturgic theory also applies in this new world, with noticeable changes to traditional social intersections.

Therefore, this essay will discuss the dramaturgic theory in social media, which is mainly focused on how the theory developed in a new environment. Firstly, it tends to analyze the basic structure of the online social area that can connect different kinds or classes of people in the same place at first and go through a change of social method in it from the traditional social field, such as text communication or video sharing. Then the essay will reveal the original boundary between the front stage and backstage and focus on how social media led to the integration of the two stages. On top of that, the self-page of the new platform brings a unique pattern to interact with others and build a unique way to do online impression management. Also, this emergency social pattern brings some

misunderstandings and even online trolls in online communications. For instance, it is normal to witness some people who cannot stand cyberbullying and choose to kill themselves.

This essay is trying to figure out how the theory is embodied in the different social platforms, like Weibo and Wechat, and aims to explore more details about this theory. Undoubtedly, Goffman's dramaturgical theory is classic, and papers from other scholars researched this topic deeply; however, it is rare to find an essay that discusses the relationship between the theory and social media in detail. The time Goffman and others established the whole theory has passed lots of years, which is reasonable to be limited by time and other new technological and social improvements, such as the sudden happening of current social media and various types of social software.

2. Migration of Social Field: The Integration of Front Stage and Backstage by Social Media

Goffman's Theory of Mimesis, also known as dramaturgical theory, is the study of everyday life by means of the analogy of theatre. Goffman's dramaturgical theory is a theory developed from symbolic interaction theory and has its own characteristics to explain the interaction between people in everyday life. It is a theory of human interaction in everyday life, developed from the theory of symbolic interaction, and has its own characteristics. It was developed by the Canadian sociologist Erving Goffman, who compared society to a stage and its members to actors in order to explain people's everyday lives. What is more, since, in Goffman's theory, everyone who lives in the world is an actor, people are all trying to present an idealized version of self in every interaction with others [2, 3]. From the definitions of Goffman, each interaction is based on a temporary front stage of the current, such as when people who work in the company, the company is the current front stage, and their colleagues and bosses are other actors in the play [2, 3]. At the same time, each stage, called the front stage, has a corresponding backstage. Just for the last example, the opposite backstage for the company is home or the entertainment venues after work [4].

However, the existence of social media has changed this rule. People are likely to post their activities backstage on a platform that includes their colleagues who are originally on the front stage. In this process, the integration of the front and backstage made the old bound obscure [5]. Due to this high integration, social media also have become a part of the online front stage, and people must act in the cyber world; the whole interactions and impression management should be decided by both online and offline worlds; they will affect each other [4]. For example, if someone is nice in real life, but is mean online, then this person will still leave a weird or even bad impression on his/her colleagues.

In addition, the social applications also form front stage and backstage types [6]. If Instagram, which can be followed or viewed by everyone, is the foreground software, Facebook, which can only be seen by our friends, is the background software [7, 8]. Therefore, the predecessors tend to use the scope of interaction to distinguish the property of different social software. On top of that, the biggest difference between the online and the real worlds is that people can have a concrete and visible online personal space in both kinds of software; this space records and shows their feelings, thinking preferences, states, and more on the whole platform sustainable for other users [9]. This made the self-page more like a personal exhibition. People who become a curator just choose what they like to display, and everyone can browse the pages. Hence it is hard to decide the property of the personal online space [10]. Meanwhile, everything about this "exhibition" is unpredictable, and people cannot guess the time, emotions, views, and even identities of "visitors". Although it seems like people can just post unlimitedly or whatever they want, the "visitors" or "audiences" also will produce their feedback directly or privately, such as emotions and own views, at the same time. Once they reflect on their feedback on the poster, it might affect future relationships. For instance, when a friend posts something on the internet that the browser does not agree with and even dislikes and hates, their relationship is easy disappears, gets worse, or blocks the former friend straightly.

3. Self-construction: Impression Management in Personal Space

Usually, people located in the real world tend to use the body language, especially some gestures, and the oral language, to manage their impressions and judge others. For example, in the cafeteria or pub, people can try to read a book, play on mobile phones, and the like to show a state of do not disturb or the high frequency of smiling is always easy to gain a favourable impression from spectators. However, due to the different structures in the social media or cyber world, the method of impression management in social media is more direct and more effective than that in the traditional real area. It is easier and cheaper for people to design and fabricate their personalities on the internet. People just select and type something from their mind or real life and post it on the platform without cost [9]. For example, people can use photographs, images from the internet, and some tags to show who they are. After that, all acquaintances or users on the contact list or the same social platform can start to interact and act under the post.

Meanwhile, the third-party platform specially establishes a personal space for everyone. In this space, it only belongs to the users, which kind of monopoly leads the users generally possess high self-aware on the internet [1]. They constantly convey their thoughts to others through straightforward or implicit posts and comments to let others use fantasy and speculation to achieve their idealized version [11].

Caused by these numerous strong autonomous behaviours of users and the high freedom in social media, the personalities in the cyber world can even exist independently parallel to the real world. Therefore, it is also normal to witness lies. Not only this, the degree of the completion of the online personality almost evenly matches the degree of the personality in reality. Therefore, present people do not have a clear boundary to distinguish the difference the online and offline friends. Even online romance often happens in daily life. Simultaneously, the probability of the stigma on the internet is far greater than that in reality, and people who are online users also are far more skilled in remedial measures and acceptance of such stigma than in reality, such as the attitude of people toward scandalous politicians has been remarkably calm online [12]. Otherwise, because of the integrality of the whole structure and freedom, the accompanying negative impacts made by social media are almost equal to those in reality, such as depression, anxiety, and even suicide. According to the statistics of recent years, a sample of ten states in America shows one out of three screeners scored severely depressed [13].

4. The Affection FOR New Social AreaS to People or Audiences

Although people obtain two different and independent versions, they still use the same mentality to present themselves on both platforms. According to the above information, the audiences or other actors must use a brand-new viewpoint to analyze the characters of others. Although only the social area changes, which leads to another way to output our thought with another shape. The internet mainly focuses on expressing oneself through writing, video, and audio [1]. Compared with the both-way conversation or a one-way oral speech in reality, what the audiences receive is more subjective, diverse, and completely different in language style and thinking. The apparent feature of social media is that it closes the gap between people; once they choose the same website, they can mutually witness users from different countries, classes, and minds. Therefore, this has the infinite potential to change many aspects, such as their characters, breaking old stereotypes, helping to decide, and so on.

A pertinent example is that in China, many women became feminism or began to possess more advanced feminist consciousness after they browsed some relevant posts or chatted with other feminism online. At the same time, the huge distance between every user and they're barely having a chance to meet each other in reality causes people to become braver to posting and commenting. For instance, some sexual minorities are quietly active online to reveal and analyze their identity but remain silent or shy in real life.

However, these messy interactions also will be misunderstood by some information receivers, which causes cognitive mistakes. For example, it is usually seen when people meet online friends

offline; they probably find differences between a person whom they face with their imaginary people through online chats. Just like the above said, online users usually possess a higher self-awareness. It makes them express their opinions or get involved in a situation than they would in reality. Subsequently, many bloggers are attacked by massive numbers of users because of inaccurate and incoherent expressions, such as inappropriate, strange, or unsatisfying words and sentences [14].

5. Conclusion

When technology evolved and changed our social way with online applications, the clear and absolute boundary between the backstage and front stage became blended and hybrid. Social media exposes the original backstage life on a front-stage platform, which causes the dramaturgical theory to play a role in the cyber world again. People also started to act in this new world and even distinguish and classify the properties of various social websites; the judging criteria is whether the posts can be seen by the whole users or only the friends in the contacts.

Through all the above preceding information, it is obvious that the unique online personal space is a tool to construct the self-version of every user; this function makes the identity of people turns to the curators of the exhibition. People can build an independent and parallel character through posting, commenting, and chatting; these ways are relatively cheap and direct. Hence, it makes more cheating and depictions happen in the cyber world. Then, people also possess a calmer and more mature attitude on the websites toward many kinds of scandals or frauds.

At the same time, because of the features of social media, people easily show their style, which forms different types of bloggers and users who can change the stereotype and personalities of other users through their internet speech. For example, many girls become feminism after they browse related posts and comments or just chat with feminism.

However, every coin has two sides, and everyone thinks differently about analysing a sentence or an incident. So cognitive mistakes usually happen online; at least one person can misunderstand almost every topic. Likewise, when online friends meet offline, they also will find some discrepancies between the real person and the person in their imagination. Undoubtedly, online cognitive mistakes often lead to some negative consequences, such as trolls and numerous psychological diseases. Because the completion of online society and the real world is equally for most people, hence the attacks on both societies are also the same.

As a result, what should be controlled is the limit between the two worlds and encourage them to focus more on reality and be relaxed to surfing online.

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