

Regulation of Media in the Electronic Age

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Abstract. In the electronic age, people's social interactions are entirely changed, which is caused by the internet. Oversharing makes the social media be full of "too much information" (T.M.I.), reducing people's capacity of judgement. It will bring a deleterious effect on the quality of information circulating. Thus, the internet has become an immense source of entertainment easily. Judging from the "culture industry" proposed by the Frankfurt School, it can be seen that social media has become a new "culture industry". This "culture industry" incentivizes mass production of low-quality entertainment. Therefore, the social media regulation and possible remedies to the psychological effects of social media must be valued.

Keywords: electronic age, oversharing, entertainment, Frankfurt School, culture industry.

1. Introduction

With the development of today's technology, media technology is also developing rapidly, and we are continuing to enter an electronic age. With media as an extension of human senses in the electronic age, our communication breaks the traditional concept of time and space, and consequently we seem to live in a global village (Mullen 377). However, is this kind of communication between individuals without limits really beneficial? Thanks to the freedom and convenience of Internet communication, people are more and more willing to share their own information, learn about others' information, and form their own opinions. This is supposed to be a positive development, where individuals are more connected and everyone can share their thoughts, but there is a significant problem—oversharing. Along with the development of science and technology, people's living standards have been improved. Once the material needs have been met, people need to be satisfied in the spiritual and emotional needs, so they will seek entertainment to develop their spiritual and cultural life. As a result, the Internet, as a new medium, has diminished people's social life and strengthened its own entertainment function. This has tried with another phenomenon—the rise of media entertainment as an industry. In the twenty-first century, people's attention to media entertainment has been increasing, like a virus quietly coming: not only can one not deny its existence, but it is also difficult to control its development. These two phenomena—a decrease in social life and an increase in entertainment consumption—have caused people's judgment to deteriorate, becoming a passive audience. In turn, because of passive audiences, the quality of the social media environment has continuously deteriorated. The results are harmful: cyber violence, control of public opinion by social media trends, and more. I will argue that, to prevent the social media environment from continuing to deteriorate, governments around the world should set some regulations on social media.

2. Oversharing

What does "Oversharing" mean? Ben Agger wrote that oversharing means people "divulge more of their inner feelings, opinions and sexuality than they would in person, or even over the phone." (Agger 11). How often does one witness this? Here are several common examples of oversharing. While talking with friends, some talk about their successful interview experiences and offer details, making one feel anxious about preparing one's own interview the next week. Some people make their lives vulnerable to surveillance by posting their daily lives online. Some people record all of their social media 'stories' with their partners and post them online. For future mothers to see all kinds of marriage experiences, or childbirth experiences on the Internet, could make them fear marriage or childbirth. When unwelcomed information about private behavior is shared, information recipients can have doubts, or anxiety. In a Chinese research survey of 200 college

students, "94% of respondents said they witnessed excessive sharing, resulting in more than half of respondents appearing confused, and nearly 80% of respondents feeling discomfort." (Cheng *et al.*) It appears that oversharing has become a common social phenomenon and has a certain negative impact on people's emotions.

Why does this oversharing happen? First, from the angle of media, as mentioned in the introduction, people's communication has become freer and more convenient, and people have begun to share more and more personal information online, leading to the emergence of "too much information (TMI)". (Agger 4) On a psychological level, sharing too much personal information often occurs when one has excessive anxiety. When people are too anxious, they release our stress by outputting repressed content through sharing, or by sharing personal information to satisfy their desires and deal with social relationships. The coming of the electronic age acted as a catalyst to maximize the has acted of filling one's psychological desires by passionately sharing information to capture the interest of others, engage with the crowd, and assert one's sense of self. On the Internet, everyone hides behind the keyboard, which magnifies the courage and scale of people to share information. However, media entertainment homogenizes information on social media, weakens people's cognitive ability and judgment, and thus weakens people's judgment on whether information is too personal. "If everyone else posts this way, I'll post this way"—when people think this way, oversharing worsens. As a result, the information on social media is full of TMI, and the information is more and more homogeneous. It means that information with various with various subjective relevance is received by people. When people accept so much low-quality and mixed information, their ability to judge declines; just like a broken gauze, they simply accept the information on the Internet passively, which leads to the declining quality of public debate.

Ben Agger suggests that TMI and gossip are interrelated, "A tells B something about C, or perhaps A tells B that C said something about B." Gossip involves exchanging information about others. In the spread of gossip, information is exaggerated and becomes less and less credible. (Agger 4) oversharing degrades the quality of discussion and content online. For instance, numerous small events will be amplified on the Internet. Maybe in the past it would be a common thing for there to be a conflict between employees and their bosses. But now with the Internet, these contradictions and conflicts will be infinitely magnified. It is easier to arouse the opposition of people of various viewpoints online.

In addition, in a social environment of oversharing, there has been organized use of public news for profit. Some companies control the public opinion of netizens by adapting and spreading false information. In June 2022, there was an incident in Tangshan, China, in which a woman was beaten by a group of men. This incident has attracted a lot of attention, and provoked people's anger. While people are waiting for the follow-up development of the incident and the explanation by the relevant authorities, the public coverage of this incident has plummeted. If anything, there have been remarks that spread false news about the victim, and some organizations and individuals have pretended to be involved in the incident to make money. Some people even search the woman on the Internet, causing great harm to her life and psychological state.

Social media in excessive share of each person, also with a variety of views and comments. Each person in the private information once inflated spread, some indiscriminate criticism abusive comments began to attack the master of information. In the people's judgment ability is abate, a lot of people see these remarks, "justice" is turned on. Instead of thinking about the truthfulness and reliability of the information, they immediately join the critics. In a social media environment full of all kinds of information, people do not care about the reliability of information and have lost their ability to judge at the first sight. Even if people's comments are unfair towards others, under the protection of the Internet, people hiding behind a screen will not feel any regret. This kind of social phenomenon is terrible. If there are no rules to control it, this phenomenon will worsen. Thus, oversharing is a negative phenomenon for it causes social media to be flooded with too much information, weakening people's judgement or exploiting it.

3. Entertainment

Before talking about media entertainment, we should first introduce the critical media theory of the Frankfurt School. The Frankfurt School is one of the main schools of Western Marxism in the twentieth century, which is mainly based on social critical theory, and engaged partly in the criticism of mass media. The criticism of mass culture is one aspect of the media criticism theory of the Frankfurt School. They put forward the concept of culture industry, that is, when people reproduce and spread cultural products on a large scale through modern science and technology to form an entertainment industry system. Culture industry is the commercializing of cultural products and the making of profits from them. The harm done by this is to blur the boundary between high art and low art, leading to people's aesthetic and ideological stagnation, or even to degeneration (Baert). This is effectively a capitalistic control of culture and of people's minds.

In turn, I will refer to media entertainment to speak of the dissemination of information entertainment through media. The root driver of media entertainment is the prevalence of global consumerism, as consumerist culture commoditizes all cultural experiences. Gradually, the commercialized media market has formed, and the increasingly high profits and popularity illustrate the wild growth of media entertainment. For example, Hunan TV, a Chinese television station, first began to implement the concept of entertainment media management. It satisfies people's emotional pursuit of entertainment, is loved by people, and brings excellent economic returns for their company. Such impressive business performance makes more and more media platforms move towards entertainment. From the above examples, it can be seen that the direct cause of media entertainment is the formation of a market economic system. With the rapid development of science and technology, people need to meet their emotional needs more after meeting their material needs. The masses' pursuit of entertainment makes the media entertainment market expand rapidly, and the huge competitive media entertainment market makes people's emotional needs better satisfied, thus further promoting the pace of media entertainment. Visible media entertainment is similar to a vicious circle: difficult to control.

Media entertainment is a phenomenon that occurs "spontaneously" with the development of technology. In the electronic age, people's interaction is more convenient and fast, and the Internet provides a platform to maximize people's spiritual needs, so media entertainment expands rapidly. Too much attention to entertainment in media entertainment will lead to the lack of social aesthetic, social responsibility and social function of media. If people are immersed in entertainment, their free personal space will be reduced. For example, when one wakes up in the morning to get ready for work, one opens the social software full of entertainment information, sees a funny video, immerses oneself in it, and finally wastes 20 minutes of time. Moreover, the development of media entertainment makes social media information more and more homogenized with typical mechanical duplication. Short video platforms have extensive global influence, and many people gain attention on social media and even earn considerable money by posting short videos. This has resulted in many people not focusing on innovation in order to learn these explosive video styles. Just like the machinery of a factory, it is just a blind copy. As a result, the amount and proportion of social media entertainment has soared, but the quality of video has not changed and there has been a lack of innovation.

This phenomenon is exacerbated by the flood of information caused by oversharing. In the current era of media entertainment, some non-entertainment content is also moving towards entertainment. For example, some news has gradually become entertaining, and the popular words and jokes on the Internet are used to introduce news. From the social point of view, media entertainment continues to develop and expand, gradually becoming a new way of exploitation and control. In addition, in the overshared social media environment, people are tired of judging the reliability of information and the priority of information, which intensifies the control of media entertainment and makes people immersed in entertainment information. The entertainment side of media makes new media become a new cultural industry, with an increasingly heavy commercial nature and weakened social function. The generalization is applied to the entertainment in media, with no benefit to people's freedom of

thought and aesthetic appreciation, having a negative impact. Second, the indiscriminate development of media entertainment will bring confusion to the masses and make them resist excessive entertainment. Moreover, the excessive sharing of social media will bring discomfort to the masses, which greatly reduces the public's trust in media and is not conducive to the development of media. From the personal point of view, media entertainment based on mass culture transmits information through modern media, subtly changes the way of human thinking, imperceptibly guides and controls people's thoughts. In short, media entertainment makes people's judgment deteriorate, and it is difficult to remedy this degraded social atmosphere. As a result, people's ideas drift with the flow, resulting in the suppression of individuality and innovation.

4. Regulation

As demonstrated, in the electronic age, people's judgment is weakened and their thoughts are easily misled. However, the control of people's minds by online public opinion becomes stronger and stronger due to excessive sharing, and people's values will also change after being misguided. At the same time, fake news, gossip, and privacy violations are gradually taking up a large proportion of social media. Some social media companies have formed monopolies that infiltrate people's lives. Fake news that spreads misinformation, i.e. gossip, allow hate speech to enter our lives, intensifying social contradictions and threatening the social fabric. In addition, people's attention is heavily monetized, and social media platforms push more targeted advertisements to viewers through surveillance and advanced algorithms in order to maximize profits. Finally, social media has made citizens more involved in political issues, making large social media platforms politically important (Khan).

Due to the above effects, it appears that the root cause of these above problems persisting is that social media is not regulated. Excessive sharing and media entertainment are the natural products of technological development, and under the background of the market economy, it has caused a variety of negative impacts.

Arguably, the government could set some requirements, such as real-name authentication for any speeches posted on social media. This would avoid reckless remarks that people make when anonymous, and to some extent reduces over-sharing. More importantly, due to the influence of large social media platforms, these social media platforms should aim to positively guide people's thoughts on social media, so that people can establish correct values. Governments should also give firms incentives or tax breaks to encourage the push. Finally, in the usual methods of education and advertisement, people should be guided to enhance their ability to judge right and wrong. Schools should offer courses to teach students to be a better Internet user. And in the usual teaching to cultivate students to develop the ability of independent analysis.

From the perspective of social media platforms, the government is responsible for its structural regulation and overall systemic changes. Social media platforms have become an indispensable infrastructure of the modern economy, so they must be properly regulated. Just like Amazon has gone beyond online shopping—they have launched their own streaming media, making their own movies and TV shows—such streaming media have given online platforms access to more people's personal data (Khan). So for social media platforms, the right regulatory measure is structural regulation and systemic change. In the past, there was no regulation on social media platforms, which led to social media platforms developing their own personal data algorithms, which played a role in public opinion control for people to place targeted advertisements and even release fake news. Now governments should put some level of restrictions on the operation of social media platforms without restricting people's freedom of speech. Targeted advertisements pushed by social media to audiences should be prohibited, otherwise it will be difficult to eliminate the trap of commercialization and entertainment in social media. As for the collection of people's information, it is necessary to delineate the boundaries of social media platforms obtaining people's personal information, and to uniformly stipulate the kinds of algorithms social media platforms can legally use to analyze data.

5. Conclusion

In general, oversharing and media entertainment are spontaneously generated by the progress of media technology and people's entry into the electronic age. Bluntly speaking, the Internet maximizes the satisfaction of people's psychological desires, which leads to oversharing and media entertainment. And these two phenomena promote each other's development: oversharing makes people tired of judging the information on social media, and then these people become more immersed in media entertainment, thus exacerbating the entertainment side of media. The entertainment side of media makes people's thinking stagnate, with a decline in quality of content and of judgment. As a result, in the overshared social media environment, people are more likely to judge exaggerated or untrue information, which promotes the frequent occurrence of network violence. As a natural product of technological development, we should face them squarely. Yet too much intervention may be counterproductive.

Without restricting people's freedom of speech, we should focus on the root causes of the deterioration of these two social phenomena - the unregulated nature of social media and the fundamental purpose of platform capitalism. The social media platform has developed steadily, and due to their strong economic strength and audience span, they occupy an important position in life, in the world, and in politics.

Only after structural reforms of the social media platforms and the change of the operation mode can its commercial and entertainment influence on the social media be weakened, improving the people's social media environment. With the restoration of people's independent judgment and the establishment of improved aesthetic preferences, the convenience of Internet interaction and sharing can fully optimize people's lives and develop a positive culture.

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