

SURVIVING CENTRALIZED STATE POWER CONTROL: THE CASE OF CHINESE QUEER WEB EPISODE 'ADDICTED'

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Abstract: *This case study examines the survival of the Chinese Queer community and their imagination in the face of high centralization and state power control on social media. The Chinese government's historical policies and cultural traditions have created a challenging environment for the acceptance of homosexuality and LGBT media content. The centralized power of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) further exacerbates the control over media and limits freedom of expression. This study explores the impact of cultural traditions, the CCP's control over media, and the challenges faced by the Chinese Queer community in their pursuit of visibility and acceptance.*

Keywords: *Censorship, Queer, Webisodes, Homosexuality*

Introduction

As a consequence of the strict media control under the Chinese government. The image of Chinese LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) has always been largely absent not only from the big screen but also from the broadcast media. Nevertheless, the rapid expansion of digital technology and the internet led to a steady trend of homosexual webisodes, which quickly attracted audiences, especially young fans when they were posted online. Webisodes can also be called 'Network drama,' which can be seen as a 'Chinese produced owned' online TV series.

Since 2000, the first Chinese web Drama, Original, was born in 2000., It is produced, directed, acted, edited, and uploaded by five students from Chang Chun University. Due to the limitations of the internet at that time, the webisode did not cause too much attention. However, it is the 'original' of the Chinese internet drama. The development of webisodes has gone through a stage from basic shooting, immature technology, and uncreative imitation to professional team participation and video website production. The year 2016 can be seen as the explosion year of webisodes in China, Go Princess Go following by the continued popularity of Go Princess Go, which is produced by LeTV, the first Video Website in China. The show is adapted from an internet novel and tells a time-travel story, which also includes homosexuality, bisexuality and gender identity (www.wikipedia.org, 2016). The web drama successfully gained a lot of attention and considered as the most popular webisode of 2015. However, it still cannot escape from the Chinese censorship department. Following in the footsteps of Go Princess Go, 'Addicted' has undoubtedly become the most heated popular online drama. 'Addicted' is a Chinese high school gay love web show story that was directed by Wei Ding and co-produced by China Huace Film Company and BeiJing Zhenhua Media Company. The webisode is adapted from Chai Jordan's boy love novel 'Are you addicted?' which was also popular online, the webisode describes a story about a same-sex relationship between two high school teenagers, Yinbai Luo, and Hai Gu. The popularity of Addicted is unexpected, due to its particular content, gay love, may not be easily accepted by too many people.

The popularity of Addicted cannot be imaginable, this low budget (with only 5 million investment) web drama was first posted online on 29th of January, and only after 10 days, 9th of February, the webside entered the Top 10 list of most popular web drama. Once the drama was posted online, its click rate, which indicates how many times the show has been watched, has reached 10 million times in 24 hours. Addicted click rate has superseded; this dramatic data has refreshed the click recording which was maintained by Go Princess Go after just one week. After nine episodes were posted online, the online clicking rate reached 80 million. Not only on Video Website but Addicted had also heated almost every headline on the news media and social media. RenMin.com.cn, Xinhua Online and other online entertainment media sites kept advertising reports about this webisode which further attracted other audiences' attention to it. For example, the comments under the web drama are mainly posted by young girls and they have discussed the appearance of the two boys.

What is more, according to the statistics from Weibo, a Twitter-like Chinese social media, one of the leading actors Jingyu Huang (Hai Gu) gained more than 2.4 million followers in a week. After the drama became increasingly popular. Currently, the amount of two main actors' Weibo followers increases 10 thousand every day. Besides, in 2nd of February, three days after Addicted was broadcasted, Jinagyu Huang posted two selfies with WeiZhou Xu (LuoYin Bai) gained 3.2 hundred thousand like on Weibo (www.sina.com). From these incredible statistics, we can easily see the popularity of Addicted.

On the 29th of January, *Addicted* was officially broadcast on Tencent.com.cn, a well-established and traditional Chinese Video Website. The web drama posted three episodes at one time for its first broadcasting. After its first airing, other Video Websites started to broadcast it on their platforms as well. For instance, the AC Fun and Bilibili, which are considered as the most popular Video Website among the young in China, and the House Film Company also posted the episodes on their YouTube channel to convenient audiences overseas and helped the webisode to access more people. However, the drama was suddenly blocked from every mainstream Video Website in China from its fourth week of broadcasting, 19th of February (Wikipedia, 2016) and no one could not access anymore. It became a real issue for the audiences to watch the rest of the web drama. However, online users upload this series source into BaiDu or other sky drives for people to download it or just watch it online. Also, for audiences in China, although the Chinese government blocked YouTube, they can still use VPN (Virtual Private Network) to watch the whole series on YouTube. The constant popularity of *Addicted* has a close relationship with these useful sources and convenient online platforms.

Refers to the blocking of *Addicted*, government censorship in media has always been a serious issue in China. The official reply on *Addicted* blocking is, homosexual, high school campus love cannot be performed in any form of the drama, no matter they are online or offline, besides the name of the web show does not meet the standard, due to it may lead to misunderstanding by the teenager (LuoYin Bai indicate Heroine, the drug). In recent years, the Chinese government has shown more supervision and control on its soft power. Social media definitely can not escape from this. The 2016 new published media regulations lay more emphasis on the internet control rather than (Hou K, 2016). Television as the most influential media in China presents various forms now, and the regulation includes a core thought is that unit the standard of online and offline drama. Due to the profound impact and incredible popularity of *Addicted* and other web drama, the state power set a series limitation which mainly targeted on the webisode, for instance, homosexual plots, puppy love and other forms of abnormal sexual relationships are no longer allowed to show (Hou K, 2016). Secondly, drama plots involve commit incest, time-travel, and sexual abuse can not be performed as well. However, the Internet source can confront the difficulty and threaten the official interpretation of social issues, the problem of stopping interaction between official and nonofficial cannot be solved just by blocking the online drama.

Whether *Addicted* has changed the public's attitude towards LGBT group is a worth studying issue because its the first public high profile LGBT representation on social media which has attracted a massive public attention. As Hildebrandt (2011) explores, the important indication of same-sex relationship or even marriage is impacting from the cultural traditions and the pros and cons of 'institutionalized religion' (pp.1319). Thanks to the information explosion era, the Internet provides more opportunities for the public to access more advanced thoughts and broaden their horizons, from the whole scale, the current society in China does not restrain and oppress the LGBT group on purpose (Hildebrandt K, 2011). There are three social attitudes towards homosexual, 'ignorance, ambivalence, and support' (pp.1319). As Hildebrandt explores (2011) the most common position is ignorance, especially in the countryside, where individuals have no concept in homosexual. Ambivalence, which is more usual in cities where people realize what homosexually is but have no attitude toward them, showing neither support nor oppose, and support, this view presents an increasingly growing trend among the young and developed cities in China; however, it is still the rarest voice. In recent years. With the fast expansion of the online media both individuals and the media, producers gain more opportunities to involve LGBT contents, do these LGBT contents change people's view to

homosexual? The essay will take Addicted for example and analyze the audience response from the website's comments. My research question will mainly focus on how Addicted changes the public mind toward LGBT.

The next chapter will go through the Literature Review to explain keywords and the idea of LGBT representation will be introduced in Chapter two as well as a brief history of homosexuality in China.

Literature Review

There are five points will be discussed in Literature Review, which are history of homosexuality in China, China's cultural tradition impact, the 'Centralized Power' Theory, Whole Scale and History of Chinese Media Censorship (History Of China's Government Censorship In Media, The Overall Decentralization Of Chinese Society In The 1980s. To understand these elements enables the researcher to work on a deeper analysis.

History Of Homosexuality in China

Before the Peoples' Republic of China was born in 1949, there has always been a long history of 'dynastic homosexuality' in China (Hinsch, 1990). Palace love and romance stories between emperors and their ministers of the same sex abound, and these stories was sometimes adapted to idiom, for instance, 'DuanXiuZhiPi', which is still used to describe love amongst gay couples in Chinese society. These various stories of homosexual narratives was collected as literary work in the Chinese Imperial history. This collection is still widely accessible in most Chinese libraries today and online. With this rich history and source, homosexual persons in China can gain more opportunities to acknowledge themselves and understand their orientation and identities (Pan, Wu & Gil, 1995).

According to Hinsch's research (1990) on sexuality in Chinese society, the attitudes toward LGBT changed to a negative and moralistic one, during its more recent modern history. The growing antipathetic attitude towards homosexuality was heightened during the Mao era from 1949 onwards. According to Butterfield, Rum & Tsai (1988) the impact of traditional Confucian morality and the authoritarianism in the newly established government of China ensured that homosexuality would be swept away with bourgeois and other different negative voices. As Ruan (1990), a professor at QingHua University argues that during that period, China's government established a puritanical regime that banned sexual deviant behaviours in the country. In the 1950s, during the Great Leap Forward, Mao published the theory 'renunciation of the heart', the policy denies the personal feeling of romantic love, consider individuals as a group, and firm the absolute position of the group consciousness over individual sense. Dictated by these series of policy, individuals had to work hard through the whole day, and keep the nationalist love in mind without interfering with sexual desire or any personal emotion. In the late 1950s, due to the natural disaster, people were difficult to survive from the hunger. As a result, some citizens began to escape from their hometown.

This population movement had also led to the social phenomenon, divorcing and breaking up (Hildebrandt, 1995). Especially, young people who suffered from the centralized state control were turned to be more 'cynical and dormitories' (Hildebrandt, 1995 pp.3). Also, In spite of the homosexual was constantly denied, young individuals who were separated by gender in the same dorm still escaping into same-sex relationship.

Homosexuals were persecuted during Mao's time (1949-1978) by beating the homosexual persons and treat differently, like lock them in a single house without light and so on. Homosexuality was also considered a form of mental illness under Chinese policy until 1980s (reference). Homosexuality as a social orientation was denied was denied in society (Hinsch, 1990), and the only time it was acknowledged was to put more punitive pressure on it. (Gil 1992). However, even as the Chinese society ushered the opening and reforming in the late 80s (GeMing) period, the Chinese Central Party was still highly ideological about the presence and identities of homosexuality in society (Gil 1991), hesitating to admit the realities of a homosexual population and the unequal treatment between homosexual and heterosexuality. However, this cultural prejudice does not erase the fact that LGBT has been put on the table. What is more, with the development of the internet, individuals gain more opportunities to access LBGT contents and communicate with each other. According to the statistic from www.renkou.org (2016), which is the official Chinese Statistical board, in 2015, there are around 65 million homosexuals in China, which estimates to be 1%-5% of the China's population.

China's Cultural Tradition Impact

Culture always is considered as the most important element to understand or treat homosexuality (Timothy, 2011). The pros or cons of institutionalized religion, play a particularly crucial role in the same-sex relationship. Even in Western countries, homosexual persons are still keeping fighting for their own equal right, however, homosexual there can be more readily accepted, and their relationship is framed as a human right (Kollman, 2008). Through extending perception to China, which nowadays lack powerful local institutions that are popular in other countries, the homosexual should share the equal 'and cultural costs' (Timothy 2011). China could still be impacted by the traditional ideas, such as Confucianism, which lay emphasis on the 'traditional conceptions of family' (Tomothy 2011, pp.1320), this understanding of traditional household for example, husband and wife, are rooted too deep in the whole society. Furthermore, there is a cultural and social stigma attached to sexual difference. Hence, it could be hard for society to accept homosexuality. To evaluate the accuracy of cultural discussion, it is beneficial to make a comparison regarding attitudes towards homosexuality within two other areas (Singapore and Taiwan) which share the same Confucian backgrounds and culture traditions, although they share the same experience, their policies regarding LGBT are quite different. The Singapore government has set up strict laws against homosexual and homosexual behaviors and homosexuality is still banned. However, Taiwan shows a more open attitude towards LGBT, and same-sex marriage was legalized on 24 May 2019. These two examples prove that Confucianism is not the only element to determine the attitude towards LGBT, it should be explained from a broadening and the full scope of tradition.

In China, the fast development of economic and government design may assist the erosion of traditional practice. As D'Emilion (1983) states, the overcapitalized may lead to the distance from the public to conventional expectations. Since Deng XiaoPing's Great Openess and Reform in 1978, the coastal cities have experienced rapid economic development, which led to increasing population migration as well. What is more, with the strict one-child policy, Chinese families have to be made small, and the proportion of sexes has now deviated to males. When government policy came across Chinese traditional values, no one could disobey the government policy more than Confucian ideas. Hence, government policy and concern are another crucial reason that impact LGBT. Due to these strict policies and the traditional culture view towards LGBT,

From these two sections, it can be seen that, the homosexual persons are not widely accepted in China's society, let alone, LGBT media content. Hence the block of Addicted is not only impact by the strict censorship but also traditional culture.

The 'Centralized Power' Theory

The media and society are managed by the CCP (Chinese Communist Party) with two principles, which are totalitarianism control towards the society and the traditional Chinese Marxist understanding on regulating the media (Gries and Rosen, 2004). The first principle indicates the government should control every side of the society. The close relationship with Beijing is considered to be a powerful assurance for China's well development and security (Tong, 2010). In the second principle, according to the 'traditional Chinese Marxist understanding' (Tong 2010, pp.927), the media should be the 'mouthpiece', a totally propaganda tool, of the leading Party. The CCP holds an absolute monopoly on information flow so that it could propagate its ideology among the public, to examine its governance and to eliminate protest (Huang, 2006).

These two principles indicate that the Chinese media should take the responsibility of the government's watchdog; the media should speak for the party and disseminate its latest policy to the close unit of the country. As a consequence, journalists now are tending to be a government officer who are more likely to voice for the party rather than express the truth or their own views (De Burgh, 2003; Hong, 1998; Zhao, 1998). There is no doubt that, the CCP totally leads the media contents and coverages. CPD (Central Propaganda Department), as the most powerful propaganda department of the CCP, is functioned as monopolizing the content, controlling the individuals' ideas and supervising both online and offline media (Brady, 2006; Lynch, 1999; Zhao, 1998).

According to Sparks (2008), although the China society has gone through the economic and media reformation for two decades. The Chinese media is still considered to be constantly under the high strength control of the state power. As Zhao (2000) states, even strength the awareness of liberal consciousness, boosted by citizen and investigative journalism, is still regarded as the progress of middle class but still in the track of party principles. The state power control and centralized also draw a serious impact on the market leading journalism (De Burgh, 2003). In the late 1990s, 'a false marketization' of Chinese media appeared, which indicates the boost of commercial media is under the government directives and dissemination rather the real market driven (Sparks, 2008). This fake marketization has led to the centralized of economic and keep the small group of elite class stays control in prevent the China's media system from the real liberal media market function (Sparks, 2008).

According to Tong & Spark (2009), in Chinese society, the increase of investigative and citizen journalism is always seen as the most potential occupation to inspire the liberal conscious, however, as a consequence of 'economic and the political risks', investigative journalism is predicted to show a rapid decline in the 21st century. Hence, the media can be seen not only controlled by the state power but also the party-market unit which is censored by the ruling party (Lee et al., 2006). As Gries and Rosen demonstrate (2004), under such a circumstance, the government media control is autocratic and monopoly for three reasons. To begin with, the strong and blind belief in the political and party power in China's development. This high authoritarian state leadership is seen as hence the development of society security and settle social issues. This deep belief in the significance of party power is an fully explanation of the

former This wide belief in the importance of the party-state's power is an extension of the former totalitarian state control argument that the state should control all aspects of society.

Secondly, the traditional Chinese view of Marxism are still regarded as the the national propaganda principle, which sees that media should be functioned as a tool for the central government to conduct their political policies. Given this, although the China's society has been through a dramatic change in economic and media, however, the party's core policy towards media stays the same, which keep media still in high strength under the media. According to Yunshan Liu, the head leader of the CPD, demonstrated in Seeking Truth, a Chinese official academic journal which is owned by the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party, it is crucial for the party to hold a high strength control on the media control, by publishing a precise standard on what should the media do. Last but not least, informed by the two reasons above, although Chinese media now be commercialized, the nature and core idea of the Chinese propaganda system. Basing on Brady's (2006) statement, the party keeps taking a crucial role in leading ideology and supervising the whole structure of Chinese society. The CPD issues, along with its local censorship department, the Chinese media and the propaganda indications which refers to that media have to obey and carry out just for satisfying the national profit and need. In recent years, the continual political suppression on factors of the Chinese media have been served the purpose for information flowing to get the CCP's standard. The media's compliance with CCP or CPD instructions of the high tendency concentration control.

From the whole scale, there is still a long way to go for China to process the homosexuality. However, it can be ensured that both the cultural traditional and the government policy impact the public attitude towards LGBT.

Whole Scale and History of Chinese Media Censorship (History Of China's Government Censorship In Media, The Overall Decentralization Of Chinese Society In The 1980s)

As Qiuqing Tai, a schooler of communication and media studies in China demonstrates the rapid expansion of various digital technology and the internet supposed made the Chinese censors feel more and harder to curb the media. However, China, as the largest authoritarian country in the world, the Communist Party has consistently hold incredible control on media from 1949 to now. Although the press structure has gone through a dramatic change, from nationalized to commercialized since 1978. The following section will mainly the history of China media censorship in details, which includes the overall decentralized of China society in the 1980s, and the pressure from SARFT to those private media institutions.

The History of Chinese Censorship

According to Shirk (2007), there was no journalism and news media but Commit Party propaganda until 1978, the reform and open. At that stage, the primary role of Party Propaganda is to publicize and centralized the fundamental ideas of CCP and ZeDong Mao to stable the government control on every single individual. In late 1978, XiaoPing Deng, the former State President of China, launched his reform and opening policy (Ezra, 201). This essential decision has drawn a profound impact on every aspect of the China's society, and the China society had gone through a dramatic change, not only in the economy but also the media industry. As Tai explores (2016) explores, the Communist Party divided its centralized media power to boost the development of the economy and fasten the China society's transformation. As a result, the print media, TV media and radio media started to voice for people (Stockmann, 2013). For instance, local television was set up and the advent of online Video Websites. However, the government censorship on media does not relax for every single minute; the party keeps

supervising and controlling the media contents, for instance, political movements, right human actions, and blocking foreign websites, such as YouTube, Twitter, and even Google. In the past few years, with the popularization of various online social media, such like Weibo, government feel harder to control the information coverage altogether and to monitor the detailed media contents (Liebman, 2011). However, the sensor development has also strength the controlling system of surveillance the online information. According to King, Pan, and Roberts' (2013) report, the administration department employs auto detective programs and hundreds of online police officers to supervise and delete the incorporate across boundary information. Take Weibo for example, as the expansion of state power; the online control is acting increasingly arbitrativ. Weibo users who set out of the line such as criticizing the government or leaders may get their account block, or even be arrested in the reality world. And the journalists and editors may get fired as the increasing tightens of the propaganda department. All these series of high supervision actions are done with a continuous absent of transparency ([www. Nieman Reports.com](http://www.NiemanReports.com)).

From the economic side, the CCP centralized media faces multilevel management as well. Departments from both central and local level gain the right to indicate regulation points (King, Pan, and Robert, 2013). In the primary level, the SARFT and CPD are the core sensors. The SARFT controls the contents of TV and Film media, which is to say, what can be shown on broadcast media, now even the internet contents are controlled by them. Also, they set the regulations that media workers must obey. The CPD, established in late 1977, it is an essential part of the China propaganda system, which is in charge of sending the most recent instructions to the news media about the topic selections. CPD are considered as the throat and tongue of the China Communist Party, which has much more power than the SARFT. 'Minstry of Education, the Ministry of Public Security, SCIO (Sate Council Information Office) and so on are the central-level censor department as well' (Tai, 2014, pp.188).

There has been 20 years' history on the local governments' control, in the 1980s, the central government started to encourage the local ones to develop their news and media institutions to boost the information spreading on economic development and restructure and centralize the propaganda system (Esarey,2005). The newborn Media undertook the 'dual responsibility system' which means it was controlled by both the local government and the CPD. The local government owns the media's everyday working process and their primary authority. The local departments are taken order from the CPD. However, some conflicts between local officials and the central media are inevitable. Territorial state ownership of China media has caused the problem in term of monitoring media content, especially when it refers to a local negative news. For example, in recent years, ever since Jinping Xi became the State President, the central government has constantly been fighting against corruption and the inefficiency of governance, the central government encourages the news institutions and journalists to expose the local officers' misbehaviours (Tai, 2016). Nevertheless, the local government is likely to protect themselves as well as their power as much as possible. Hence, the conflicts between the central and local on how to be dealing with newsmakers are always existing.

Media freedom is not welcomed by any dictator (Rgorov, Guriev and Sonin 2009). However, the coming of the information era, the popularity of the internet, and the rapid expansion in online media have shown new risks to centralized control of media. In the last few decades, TV Media and Print Media were the only media source to the public, and citizens can not choose what they want to access but only accept. Now, with the development of digital technology, the smartphone can be the media vehicle, let alone, various kinds of video information.

To curb the fast spreading of the webisode, in the 2016 Chinese TV Drama Annual Meeting, JingSheng Li, the leader of SARFT (State Administration of Radio Film and TV), claims that more emphasis will lay on monitoring and controlling the web drama and web show. A series of regulations are waited to be published and practiced (The Beijing News.com).

According to the new rules promulgated by the SARFT, the internet can not be considered outside the law; it should take the same responsibility as traditional media, which obey the settled rules, propagate the right values. Hence, the SARFT lay stress on the unit the standard of online and offline media, and it is the time to strength the monitor and control the web drama's censorship.

To begin with, due to the increasingly mature of online drama, the public has a widely acknowledge of the webisode. What is more, some of the web scenes' click rate have achieved more than 10 billion times, which can compete with the traditional TV show. Under this shocking data, Chinese state power will focus on the web drama censorship, and nothing can stop the trend of unified the standard. Government control on Online media: Webisode, General introduction about online media, but focus down to webisode quickly.

Secondly, from the economic aspect, the profit which webisode brought can not be underestimated anymore. According to the statistic from 199it.com (2016), until the first half year of 2016, the profit of web drama has gained more than 75 billion dollars, and total click rates achieved 80 billion times. Involving such enormous number of economic interests, the China new media regulations (2016) claims that the web drama may miss their direction, as a result, can not guarantee the production quality. Due to the features of web show, which are rapid spread and full influence, the current marketing system of network drama has shown its shape, by advertising, selling platform broadcasting right and online users watching right. Webisodes have already constructed an increasingly mature of a benefitting structure. Hence, as Hou (2016) explores, to enhance the control on webisode to avoid it going to the marketing tragedy, is not only the responsibility that the censorship department should take but also a distinguish progress the web drama should make.

Last but not least, as a consequence of the increasingly social impact of network drama, there is a profound meaning of leading the direction of public opinion and correcting the social norm by enhancing the regulation and controlling the production and spreading of the web drama. As Hou (2016) claims that the broad range of online show may result in an adverse impact to the public, especially the young audiences. Take Addicted, for example, and the state considered gay and puppy love plots may leave a relatively 'unhealthy' impact to teenagers. Therefore, the drama was suddenly disappeared from the public's sight. The following paragraph will take Addicted for example, and mainly focus on the China media censorship on Queer, sexual images. As Qiuqing Tai, a schooler of communication and media studies in China demonstrates the rapid expansion of various digital technology and the internet supposed made the Chinese censors feel more and harder to curb the media. However, China, as the largest authoritarian country in the world, the Communist Party has consistently hold incredible control on media from 1949 to now. Although the press structure has gone through a dramatic change, from nationalized to commercialized since 1978. The following section will mainly the history of China media censorship in details, which includes the overall decentralized of China society in the 1980s, and the pressure from SARFT to those private media institutions.

Methodology

This research adopts a qualitative case study approach to explore the challenges and experiences of the Chinese Queer community, particularly in relation to their representation in web episodes like 'Addicted'. The case study methodology is chosen due to its strength in providing an in-depth understanding of complex social phenomena within their real-life context.

The main data for this investigation were accumulated through a combination of sources in order to guarantee a comprehensive comprehension of the subject. This encompassed: Analysis of the web episode 'Addicted', with a focus on the narrative structure, development of characters, and thematic elements. Review of official statements, policies, and regulations from Chinese media authorities to comprehend the regulatory framework. Examination of secondary sources like news articles, blogs, and forums to assess public perception and reception of 'Addicted'. The collected data underwent the process of thematic analysis, which is a research method used to identify, analyze, and report patterns within the data. This particular approach allowed for a comprehensive exploration of how the portrayal of queer identities in Chinese media is influenced by state control and societal attitudes. This methodology allows for a nuanced exploration of the intersection between state control, media representation, and queer identity in China, providing valuable insights into the complex dynamics of cultural production and censorship in a rapidly changing social landscape.

Finding

What Sort of Censorship Issues Are Chinese Media Concerned About?

What are the issues that are actively censored under the Chinese government? Pornography? Sexual expression? The policy of Jinping Xi in promoting social harmony – are these sorts of content, seen to be a division of society? Undue immoral influence?

Authoritarian Censorship in The Era of Web Drama Explosion

In 2015, China online show media has gone through a particular prosperity year. However, good times do not last long. The continually accessible on online drama has completely drawn the censorship department's attention. Addicted was suddenly blocked from every mainstream website as a consequence of presenting the queer contents. Hence, the China's media censorship on LGBT and sexual is worth exploring. The following part will mainly explore the state power on homosexual, sexual or other banned behaviours media practice.

Due to the impact economic development and commercialized of the media industry. People's thoughts toward sex behaviours in China are more open minded, men are more likely to discuss the sex behaviours and habits, there is a great need of pornography consumption. However, due to the cultural traditions and government control, pornography, sexual expression and violence can not be shown on the table. The Chinese government has blocked all show describe gay love as part of a cultural crackdown on "vulgar, immoral and unhealthy content". The China's censorship department has published new regulations for content that "exaggerates the dark side of society" and now deem homosexuality, extramarital affairs, one-night stands and underage relationships as illegal on screen.

Chinese government enforces strict censorship on portrayals of sexuality and violence for broadcast TV, and there are a very limited number of movies or programs that can be broadcast in China, let alone LGBT images. After the new policy on the unit the same standard of online

drama and TV drama, ‘Addicted’ together with most other web comedy shows, is banned in China due to its beautification of sex and homosexual plots, which makes it only accessible via the download resource and using VPN to watch. In the end of 2015, when addicted was first aired, witnessed the rapid development of Internet technology in average households in China. However, since the Chinese government has been more law about cultural matters, “more than 200 million Chinese now have access to web drama online. ...Downloading has become so popular” (Sydell, 2015, para. 2). While the Chinese government has been criticized of controlling media outlets through totalitarian rules (Chin, 2004; Huang, 2008), it holds a rather ambiguous attitude towards web drama TV shows and other cultural products on the Internet. On March 31, 2009, China’s top industry regulator, all domestic and foreign film, television series, animation shows and documentaries transmitted online must be licensed by the administration (“China’s TV fans say they’re ‘turned off’ by media regulator’s planned ban,” 2009). However, the mainstream news website, Sina Web, commented that “The new regulation does not say how websites will be punished if they do not stop sharing the shows” (“Anxious Chinese internet viewers await crackdown on foreign TV shows,” 2009, para. 9). Wang Yafai, Deputy Director of the Beijing Municipal Copyright Bureau, explained this discrepancy of Chinese government’ behaviours as “focusing on the large Internet portals... such as Yahoo, Sina, and Sohu” and not having “the resources to go after small Web pirates” (Sydell, 2009, para. 24). At the same time, most media, including mainstream newspapers, never avoid leading discussions about the popularity of latest web drama. Meanwhile, different from the major traditional media, The Internet provides alternative information and perspectives for people to look at issues and heighten participation (Boyle & Schmierbach, 2009; Castells, 2004). The Internet has also become a new public sphere for people to connect interpersonally and to learn more about local and national issues (Boyle & Schmierbach).

Have The Audiences’ Attitudes Toward LGBT Changed After the Addicted Was Broadcasted? The Relationship Between Media and Audiences’ Reaction.

There is an enormous amount of evidence has clearly shown that media contents do have the impact on certain individuals or even the whole society. Nowadays, with the more open attitude towards homosexual, there is a growing trend of queer contents burst online. However, the arguments of ‘Media Effect’ or ‘Media Influence’ on the public towards LGBT is becoming increasingly intense. The following section will demonstrate the media effect theory to explore whether Addicted changed the audiences’ attitude towards LGBT.

The Audience Reception of Addicted Online

The rapid popularity of Addicted not only makes the four actors well known online but also expands LGBT media market and provides plenty commercial opportunities, along with the unpredictable risks. The next chapter will explore the reasons behind the popularity of homosexual media content, and by using the data analysis. Hence, why the homosexual media content so attractive? Data support, comments from Chinese social media.

Addicted: Fulfill Sexual Imagination of Yaoi Fandomw

Boys’ Love is a Japanese word, which refers to contents describe romantic love story between boys. This sort of stories is mainly written by women, and read by women as well. The Yaoi fandom is refers to women who like to consume these kinds of work. In the current society, the Yaoi fandom group is known by their rapid expansion, effective spread and unpredictable commercial potential. Take a famous Chinese Yaoi fandom communication app as the example, in only two weeks, over one million people has registered the account, and more than four thousand and one hundred writers have posted over eleven thousand original works on the app

(www.groundbreaking.cn, 2016). From this dramatic data we can easily see that, the Yaoi Fandom is believed to be the crucial profit of the media market.

The Reasons Behind Addicted's Popularity

Why boy love media content, especially Addicted is popular by the young?

First of all, 'good-looking' is the most crucial element of gay love story. Jidan Chai, the editor of Addicted produced another gay love webisode, Counterattacks, before, however, this webisode does not draw too much attention due to the main actors' appearance are too far away from audiences' expectation.

Secondly, impact from the Japanese gay love culture, the plots of Chicness homosexual webisode must be romantic enough. The story neither needs to present the inner world of the actors nor the social situation. For example, in Addicted, the relationship was happened in a high school background, which indicates simple and pressure less, they can easily escape from social prejudice and financial pressure. The webisode almost has no core idea and actual plots but a simple vulgar love story. Watching this kind of gay love web drama can help audiences, especially women audiences on escape from their own depressing relationship and massive life trouble, in addition exploring the repressed sexual desire. In the web drama Addicted, the pretty man actor, Hai Gu, is written to have both male and female's pros, he owns many girls features, such like sensitive emotions and detailed consideration but not the negative side, jealous and stinginess. Besides, as a man, Hai Gu have strong family background and abundant financial support, which also fulfill the audiences' imagination towards ideal partner.

Last but not least, sexual contents are one of the most significance elements in the successful of Addicted. In order to escaping the online media censorship, the producing company cut most of the 'sexual contents or the 'suggestive' sexual contents scenes from the web drama, and broadcast them before every official episode as highlights. The production company then claimed on Weibo that these sexual contents will be published in the DVD version, these sexual contents selling market strategy has become the most important element to the popularity of Addicted.

Addicted absolutely gain enormous successful in not only the commercial part but also good reputation. The following section will show comments toward the web drama and analysis audiences' attitude change.

Data Collection from Youtube, Tencent Video and Douban

In this part, I will collect four comments from three websites, Youtube, Tencent Video and DouBan to analysis the audience attitude toward LGBT and explore the impact of Addicted to people's attitude.

YouTube is an American worldwide video website, which includes individual produced videos as well as several media corporations, for instance, BBC, ABC and other media institutions upload their own materials on their channels (www.wikipedia.com, 2016). However, this global wide video website is now still unfortunately blocking in China due to the political reasons. However, people in China have their own ways to access YouTube by using VPN. What is more, YouTube still provide a powerful platform for overseas Chinese people to watch videos which may not be available in China due to the strict censorship. Last but not least, YouTube also offer an opportunity for the foreign people to access Chinese media contents. Hence, I collect some comments from YouTube as it is the most popular and biggest foreign Video website.

Hauce, the Addicted's production company, post 29 related videos on its official channel in YouTube. The data from Youtube (2016) show that till May 2016, the whole episodes have been watched for fifteen million times, and over forty thousand comments have been made. In the first episode, there are only 35 thousand click rates and 324 comments, most of them are discussing about the leading actors' appearance, for instance, as the YouTube user Zihan Wang states 'LuoYin Bai's eyes is so big, and Hai Gu is really good-looking' (www. YouTube.com, 2016). As the increasing popularity of the online drama in China and its YouTube channel shows a steady increase as well, especially its eleventh episode, the click rates have reached sixty thousand and the comments has broken one thousand. And these comments are no longer limit in the actor's appearance, but also discuss about the censorship in China, for example, as iiey stated, it is really ironic for the Chinese gay to watch Chinese production web drama on YouTube (www.youtube.com, 2016). What is more, there are several foreign audiences' comments appear as well. For example, Jenny, from Chicago, the USA demonstrates that the show is very popular among the youth. In the last episode, the click rate stays around sixty thousand, nevertheless, the comments are over one thousand and five hundred. There are several arguments around the political issues between TaiWan and mainland China's online users. And there are more and more comments from foreign audiences, which present their expectation on next season of the show. Only several comments refer to the homosexuality, which hold a positive attitude as well.

Then move to the Tencent Video Website, Tencent Video Website is always believed to own the richest video source in China. The frist online platform aired Addicted is Tencent Video Website, before it was blocked by the Chinese government after its 12th episode's airing, the whole click rate had reached about 70 million times (www.Tencent.com, 2016). The previous statics from Weibo show that, over 20 thousand comments were post online after the first episode was post online, however, audiences in Tencent show more focus on the homosexual content, for instance, user Jian Sen commented that 'Is it a gay love drama? Seems disgusting' (www.Tencent.com, 2016), comment caused a lot controversy under it as well by people who support homosexual and the homophobic. However, situation showed a dramatic change after its eighth airing, more people claimed that they were deeply touched by the story and began to show open attitude toward the same-sex relationship, take hwqddolphin's comment for example, she said after the websiode he started to rethink the relationship between same sex and give more acceptance to them.

DouBan, is a Chinese social networking website (www.wikipedia.com, 2016). Douban allows users to edit content and record information on music, TV drama, film and books, and the users can even find the latest events suck like concerts and art exhibitions in Chinese cities (www.wikipedia.com, 2016). Different from Weibo and other social media in China, not only the registered users can access Douban but also the unregistered ones. To registered users, Douban provide an open platform for them communicate the atest topic around film and drama with other users, and the website will recommend what they may interested in, such like books, films, music and dramas to users basing on what they have recorded before; for unregistered users, Douban is a convenient place for them to find the rating list and comments of films, dramas and books.

I choose Douban to do the data analysis mainly because it is an inclusive mature films comments website, like the Chinese version of IMBD. Addicted get 8.2 (full score is ten) points in Douban, which was an excellent work. And there are 5912 short comments and 182 long comments on it. On this website, there are more homosexual persons provide different views

toward this episode, for instance, as MissAngle4 states that she is a lesbian herself, she argues that the boy love story shows on the websiopia can not be regarded as LGBT media contents strictly. The web drama just uses 'gay love' as a marketing stunt without the real caring on the LGBT group. However, more people encourage the professional production of web drama and attitude towards homosexual is more open than before. Many people share their own homosexual experience combined with the web drama's plots.

To sum up, according to Newson (1976), 'The principle that what is experienced vicariously will have some effect on some people is an established one and is the reason why industry finds it worthwhile to spend millions of pounds on advertising'. This classic principle-like sentence has shown that media have the impact on audiences. Under this information explosion era, it is crucial for the public to use a more inclusive perspective on both traditional media and social media impact to fully understand the audiences' response. the media effect is used to link whether Addicted changed individual's attitudes toward LGBT.

When discussing impacts, change will be the first word jumped into our heads. There is two core change in media effect theory, which are behavior change and attitude change. In the meanwhile, some individuals insist that the effect must be followed with change. However, as Oliver (2009, pp.37) claims that 'these differences are not only shown in methods needed to measure the effects but also on the types of questions addressed and the kinds of conclusions presented.' The media impact may result in various kinds of changes, which are behavior changes, emotional changes and attitude changes.

From the comments of Addicted, we can see emotional and attitude changes from audiences. Emotional effects. Media can provide various kinds of mood, for instance, Emotional effects. Media may produce different moods, such like scary, disgust, happy, worry and annoying. As Buckingham (2007) demonstrates, these emotional reactions can be classified as 'negative' or 'positive'. Take Addicted, for example, the reason why the web drama was blocked is, the censorship government considered the internet show would draw a adverse impact on the society, for instance, the two boys kissing scene and the implication sex scene may get some of the homophobia, and the straight people feel uncomfortable. In Addicted, individuals' emotion was deeply affected by the plots, for instance, in episode eleventh, when Hai Gu and LuoYin Bai kissed together, audiences apparently react more excitedly.

Attitudinal effects can also be called ideological effects, which refers to encourage individuals to consider themselves as the main actors to feel what they feel in order to fully comprehensive the plots. For instance, addicted make the audiences understand and start to accept the same sex relationship, which changes some heterosexuality's attitude.

According to Buckingham (2007), these two types of 'effect' may sometimes act with each other. emotional responses and attitudes turning can change behaviours, for diverse (Buckingham, 2007). Nevertheless, the real link between behaviors, emotions, and attitudes turned out to be more complicated and varied. It is hard to figure out the pros and cons of the media impact, it depends on different situations and criteria which apply in making the judgment.

Conclusion

Benefiting from the new digital technology and the fast expansion of the internet, Chinese web drama has been through a prosperous year, producing more than 20 headline-heated websiopia,

including two homosexual-themed shows, and the two dramas have been blocked by the state power since the latest regulations on new media were published. This is also an alarm for the Chinese web drama production company and video website, whose show frequently about sensitive information around sexuality, and homosexuality under the background of the Chinese censorship department's conscious control of both the new media and old media.

Media control in China is not doubly acting more and more seriously, it can be seen as a fact of highly centralized political activity. It is more like a system to examine whether the regime is successful or failed. The Chinese censorship of homosexuality or other sexual content has always been very strict due to the high centralized control. Using an academic model, this research essay has shown the whole history of Chinese censorship and analyses why censorship is so strict regarding sexual content.

Although homosexual idiom has been recorded in literal documents since the emperor's era, however, the attitudes toward homosexuality turned to a negative and moralistic one, during its more recent modern history in China's society. Gone through Mao's time, the Great Openness and reforming, and now Xi Jinping's leadership, the attitude towards LGBT has been changing as well. From deny and ignore to admitting and support. However, impacted by cultural traditions and government policy, Chinese society still shows an enclosed and traditional view towards homosexuality.

Last but not least, the audience's reaction to Addicted is also worth discussing. There is enough evidence to show that Addicted has drawn a profound impact not only in the media industry but also on the audience's emotions and attitude. Although Comments from YouTube, Tencent Video Website, and DouBan have shown different focusing points, however, it is clear that individuals' attitudes towards LGBT are more open after the show was broadcast. The last chapter also explores the reasons behind the popularity of Addicted and introduces a new term, Yaoi fandom, which can be considered as the main potential market to the homosexual media market.

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