

The Role of the Media in LGBT Rights Movements Around the World

Miaorui Lan^{1,*}, Yujia Cheng²

¹School of Journalism and communication, Jilin University, Changchun, Jilin Province, 130012, China

²Westphal College of Media Arts & Design, Drexel University, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, 19104, United States of America

*Corresponding author's e-mail: angela@cas-harbour.org

ABSTRACT

The LGBT rights movement has been carried out all over the world. With the increasing attention of all walks of life, media force has gradually emerged in such equal rights activities. With the development of information technology, people's access to information is almost monopolized by the media, and most of the relevant media have a certain political color. It is necessary to explore the changes of the role of the media in the 1940s, the 1970s, and our current times for an appropriate analysis of the LGBT rights movement. This paper mainly discusses about the role of the media in LGBT rights movements around the world, especially focus on the United States and China—with a particular attention to LGBT developments in the 1940s, the 1970s, and the current era.

Keywords: *The LGBT rights movement, the role of the media, media, sexual minorities*

1. INTRODUCTION

People's prejudice against sexual minorities has gradually disappeared, but at the same time, LGBT groups in some parts of the world are still suffering from unfair treatment, for example, according to news reports from HAN XI NET, politicians in some countries lose their jobs because of their sexual orientation, and also some people are excluded from their jobs because of their different sexual orientation [1]. So the LGBT rights movement still needs to continue.

With the development of society into a more democratic environment and the improvement of education, minority groups consciously begin to strive for their rights. The LGBT rights movement has been carried out all over the world. And with the increasing attention of all walks of life, media force has gradually emerged in such equal rights activities. But with the development of information technology, people's access to information is almost monopolized by only a few media moguls, and most of the relevant media have a certain political color.

And media statements have a direct impact on the effect of the equal rights movement. For this reason, it is necessary to explore the role of media in the LGBT rights movement in different periods and backgrounds.

The research method in this paper is horizontal and vertical joint research, also with different backgrounds and different periods as conditions. This paper compares the information obtained horizontally and vertically and explores the role of media in the LGBT rights movement.

2. THE EFFECT OF MEDIA ON CRISIS COMMUNICATION

The role of media in crisis communication cannot be simply summarized as usefulness and uselessness, good or bad. In the process of dealing with unexpected events, the media may play both positive and negative roles because of the different nature of the events and the role of the media.

The positive role of the media in dealing with crisis communication includes the public opinion guidance, the information screening and verification, the maintaining social stability, and dialogues between the government and the masses. And the negative effects of media in crisis communication are as following: incitement rumors, incompleteness of participatory communication and uncertainty of source.

The media's participation is reflected in the follow-up report of crisis communication, and through the guidance, authenticity, support and propaganda of crisis communication, the intervention and influence on the process and results of crisis communication are realized.

The first role of the media is guiding public opinion. News reports of various events often have certain guidance. Taking Seoul Summer Olympic Games in 1988 as an example, Robert Dover, an American equestrian athlete, made his homosexual identity public before taking part in the competition. The media's reports on this matter highlighted the advantages of the athletes themselves, and also made the identity of "homosexual", or even LGBT words began to "lift the ban" in the hearts of the masses. Facts also prove that, no matter when and where public events occur in society, if the media can join in, and conduct

the correct guidance of public opinion, the promotion of the media will accelerate the process of events and promote the eventual development of events to a better outcome.

The role of media in sudden occurrences also includes maintaining social stability. In an accident, the media plays the role of screening and checking information. The huge and complex information is conveyed to the audience by the media, so the auditing role of the media is very important. Only by conveying the audited information to the audience can the media achieve the desired results, such as maintaining social stability and appeasing the people.

At the same time, the media also plays a role as the intermediary between the government and the masses. The media can help the government propagate new ideas and policies to the masses, or help the government issue directives to the masses, as well as inform and reassure them about major events. Similarly, the media can also help the masses to appeal, protest, make suggestions and express gratitude to the government.

Similarly, the media may also play a negative role in some incidents. Because of the over-reliance of the masses on the media in the information society, the media orientation may make the public opinion develop in an uncontrollable direction, and then unable to control the trend of events.

The uncertainties of the source also put the role of the media in a grey area. With the development of the network, new media relying on the Internet occupy the mobile media. Because of the complexity of network information, the uncertainty of the source of information has become a major problem in media reporting. Many small media companies use false information to attract the attention of the public in order to achieve profitability, but at the same time, this false information may also lead to the proliferation of online rumors and the panic of the masses. Therefore, the media should not only maintain its positive role in crisis communication, but also gradually overcome the negative role of the media in dealing with crisis communication with the development of the times.

3. THE EMERGENCE OF MEDIA IN LGBT RIGHTS MOVEMENT

Until the 1960s, social awareness of homosexuality remained unchanged, including the harsh treatment of homosexuals by law. In 1960, the sexual revolution and civil rights movement brought about the rise of women's and minorities' equal rights movement, which led to the expectation of sexual minorities for equal rights [2]. With the development of the equal right movement, homosexuals realize that they are a sexual minority, which is completely different from the discriminatory definition of homosexuality as "heresy". As a result, gay communities based on gay bars are developing and beginning to take shape in the city center.

Contrary to the trend that homosexuals are becoming more aware of themselves, their social forces are very weak, especially when compared with feminist groups and black civil rights organizations. The disadvantage of homosexual

groups was related to the status of the media at that time. Before the 1970s, because the media had the subjective wishes of publishers and also represented the views of most people in society on events, unfair treatment of homosexual groups was inevitable.

Before the 1970s, the media participated in oppressing the LGBT community. But the formation of homosexual groups marks the beginning of a unified understanding and expectation of homosexuals. This is also the beginning of the LGBT community's struggle for rights. They realize that they are one of the countless ordinary people in the world. Then, because of their common orientation and situation, they came together and prepared to fight for their rights.

Stonewall Riots is the most iconic symbol of LGBT rights struggle in the 1960s and 1970s.

The weekend of June 27-29, 1969 was a turning point in the struggle for LGBT equality because of the Stonewall Riots. Gay and lesbian activism certainly existed prior to this time, but the confrontations between police and demonstrators at the Stonewall Inn in New York City catalyzed the movement and inspired gay men and lesbians to move their cause to entirely new heights utilizing entirely new tactics. The birth of the Gay Pride Movement was not without controversy, however, and there continue to be debates about what actually occurred during the riots. Nevertheless, the Stonewall "Rebellion" indisputably holds an honored, if contentious, place in LGBTQ mythology and history [3].

In fact, before the Stonewall riots, some gay rights movements had been on the rise. Since the unfair treatment of homosexuals in the 1940s and 1960s was intolerable, homosexuals faced crises of being convicted of mental illness, harassed by the police and losing their jobs to make ends meet. At that time, media neglect of homosexual appeals was also the trigger. Matthew's Association is the first national gay organization in the United States. Later, the media "Chicago Sun" and "Chicago Tribune" even refused Matthew's advertising request, which led to local protests, homosexual rights issues were pushed to the forefront. Before the Stonewall Riots, kissing, holding hands and even appearing at gay parties were all the reasons for police arrests. The social situation faced by homosexuals is very serious. But after the Stonewall Riot, new LGBT organizations were established and the first gay pride parade was organized, with participants in the Stonewall Rebellion leading the way, including playwright Dolick Wilson.

This is the beginning of the LGBT rights movement, because the Stonewall Riots occurred in June, so most of the pride movement is held at the end of June every year. In this situation, the status of the Stonewall Riots in the homosexual rights movement is very important.

From this we can see that the role of the media in the LGBT equal rights movement has become more and more important with the pass of the time. The initial LGBT rights movement groups started from the riots, and the media intervention enlarged the effect of the riots to a certain extent, resulting in the pressure of public opinion. However, with the development of information society, the one-sidedness of media in event reporting may magnify the effect of equal rights movement on the one hand, on the

other hand, it will also generate rumors and create unnecessary obstacles.

4. INTRODUCTION OF MEDIA RELATED TO LGBT GROUPS

Introduction and summary of media (magazines, TV programs, etc.) related to LGBT equal rights movement. First, start with magazines, there are 26 more influential magazines related to LGBT as of 2015. The rest are magazines related to LGBT and most of them are English. In fact, these magazines represent the media's research on the diversity of sex. Of course, there are TV programs talk about LGBT. The LGBT-related TV programs include TV dramas, movies, and other types of programs involving homosexuality, bisexuality, cross-gender topics, and the identity or relationship of sexual minorities as important plots. In terms of ideology, the United States has always been more open and advanced [4].

And on film culture, it is differentiated by country, different countries have different acceptance of LGBT films.

The most typical case is China, whose acceptance of LGBT culture varies from region to region due to its one country, two systems policy. In China, LGBT movies are usually shown in Hong Kong and Taiwan, and most of them are filmed in these two regions. In contrast, the mainland's LGBT movies account for a minority.

In China, films about LGBT are often literary and artistic films, because such films that express the author's ideas are more easily accepted and have a relatively fixed audience. Moreover, the content of LGBT mentioned in such films in mainland China is very obscure, which conforms to the consistent style of mainland Chinese films and meets the needs of viewers.

By contrast, the United States is relatively open to LGBT-related films. Traditional cultures in different countries have influenced the way of thinking of the masses. Different traditional cultures and ways of thinking have also created different ways of appreciation of literary and artistic works, so people in different countries have different degrees of acceptance of ideas. Whether it's magazines, TV programs or movies that involve LGBT content, they are conveying the ideas and lifestyles of this group. From the initial imperceptible role of science popularization to the present transmission of an idea and a way of life existing between sexual minorities are all changing and guiding the audience, so as time goes on, the acceptance of people to LGBT group and its unique culture is gradually improving.

5. TODAY'S ATTITUDES AND FUNCTIONS OF MEDIA TOWARDS EQUAL RIGHTS OF LGBT GROUPS IN CHINA

On May 24, 2017, Taiwan Justice Court Justice Chief Justice interpreted the Constitution and declared that it was unconstitutional to prohibit same-sex marriage. This made

Taiwan the first region in Asia to legalize same-sex marriage, and Taiwan's special law on same-sex marriage came into force on May 24, 2019. Taiwan became the first region in Asia to implement the special law on same-sex marriage.

In 2000, a male student in a middle school in Taiwan was bullied by his classmates because of his negative personality. He was called "sissy". Later, he has been found died in the school toilet, causing a riot in Taiwanese society. This incident has promoted the implementation of the Gender Equality Education Act 2004 in Taiwan's primary and secondary schools. After the implementation of the Act in primary and secondary schools, it also promoted anti-sexism education in Taiwan, and had a subtle impact on primary and secondary school students in Taiwan at that time. During this period, young people who grew up in Taiwan had a high acceptance of LGBT Group.

According to the Basic Survey of Social Change in Taiwan published by the Institute of Sociology of the Taiwan Academy of Sciences of the Central Academy of Sciences in early 2017, in a survey conducted in 2015, "homosexuals should also have the right to marry", the approval rate and the opposition rate were 59% and 41%, respectively. Yes, higher education and the support rate of young people are higher. Even more than 80%. According to the situation at that time, Taiwan was also listed as the most enlightening place in the world.

As for the LGBT rights movement in Taiwan and China as a whole, the most representative media are Phoenix and Pale Blue[5]. The main sources of Phoenix's reports are network media and traditional newspaper media. The media's reports on LGBT rights movement will reveal the attitudes and opinions of media reporters towards the target audience. According to the data analysis, Phoenix's neutral position on LGBT issues accounted for 47.7%, while entertainment tendencies accounted for 25.81%, negative tendencies accounted for 14.19%, and positive reports only accounted for 12.26%. From the data, we can see that Phoenix's reporting tendencies were neutral, but at the same time, entertainment and negative tendencies were more serious. But at the same time, Phoenix's report on LGBT group reflects the preference of the upper class, ignores the lower- and middle-class LGBT group, and falls into the dilemma of differentiated treatment.

Different from Phoenix, the main report of Pale Blue comes from self-compiled, which better reflects the reporting position of Pale Blue on LGBT issues. From the self-compiled proportion, the report of LGBT by Pale Blue is a process of active dissemination. In terms of reporting standpoint, the neutral standpoint accounts for 45.98% and the positive report 42.91% of the self-compiled reports on LGBT content by Pale Blue. According to the data, the neutral and positive reports of Pale Blue account for the majority. In addition, the survey shows that Pale Blue is most concerned about the fight for and protection of LGBT rights, but rarely involved in crime and AIDS. While Pale

Blue Net has become a channel for LGBT groups to fully voice, it also has a certain uniformity-side. The LGBT population in the report is mainly middle- and upper-class noble people, less attention to marginal vulnerable groups. Phoenix and Pale Blue, as two websites closely related to LGBT, both hold positive attitudes on LGBT rights and also create positive images of LGBT groups. However, negative images also account for a large proportion in the reports of Phoenix, while Pale Blue holds a more positive attitude.

6. THE FUTURE EXPECTATIONS OF THE ATTITUDE OF THE LGBT EQUAL RIGHTS MOVEMENT TOWARDS THE MEDIA

6.1 The attitudes and effects of media on LGBT groups in different periods

The role of the media in the LGBT rights movement is influenced by many factors. The role of the media in the LGBT rights movement is different in different periods. The three stages mentioned in this paper are the 1940s, the 1970s and the current era.

In the 1940s, the main forms of media communication are paper media and broadcasting. Although television has gradually developed, it has not spread to millions of households. In some more backward countries at that time, even homosexuals were beaten and driven away by the masses and even burned as monsters.

From 1930 to 1940, the era of television gradually took shape. Until 1966, more than 10 million color TV sets were installed in the United States. With the development of TV from black-and-white to color, the ability of communication is also increasing. The combination of image and sound makes TV the easiest medium for the masses to understand and accept. With the recognition of LGBT rights by TV media in some areas, this recognition and respect has also been disseminated, and affecting more people.

In the 21st century, with the continuous development of the Internet, mobile client social media gradually occupies the mainstream of information dissemination, and people's access to information turns to emerging media. At the same time, with the improvement of global awareness and education level, people gradually deepen their understanding of LGBT community, and the influence of LGBT rights movement is gradually shown on the Internet.[6] The media's attitude towards LGBT rights is also positive, which has also led to a positive trend of the public's attitude towards LGBT rights.

6.2 An analysis of the possible effectiveness of more media help

With the development of the Internet, the media plays a more and more important role in people's daily access to

information. The media's views on one thing will also lead to the trend of public opinion. To a certain extent, the media's positive attitude on LGBT issues will also help LGBT groups fight for their rights to a great extent. If the media hold a positive attitude in the LGBT rights movement, it can be divided into two situations according to the background of different countries.

In the first case, the support of the media (or the media's non-denial of freedom of expression) will promote the LGBT rights movement. Taking Qiu Bai, a female homosexual student in China as an example, suing the Ministry of Education for mismanagement of homophobic textbooks under the social media environment, LGBT activists inspire the public through social media to create public opinion when they fight for LGBT rights. Within the legal framework and broader scope, in traditional sensitive areas, freedom of speech in social media has become the main tool for achieving desired results. In today's society, young people who accept advanced ideas have become the main users of new media. Under the general environment, if the media give relatively relaxed conditions for speech, due to the provision of network technology and the positive environment of social media, the ability of civil society to mobilize the government to take action has been improved, and the influence of public opinion on society will be larger. The LGBT rights games should be enlarged, so the results are closer to expectations.

In the second case, in some countries with relatively backward ideas, more support from the media will make it difficult for the media or the media practitioners themselves to survive. Mohammed al-Gheiti, an Egyptian host, was sentenced to 12 months' imprisonment for "promoting homosexuality" after interviewing a gay man on a television show on January 20, 2019, according to the BBC. The traditions of some countries and the religions of national generations do not accept the existence of LGBT, which impacts on traditional culture, even though LGBT is no longer recognized as a mental illness, but a general group of sexual minorities. At this time, the opportunity or help given by the media (or media workers) will actually infringe upon themselves.

7. CONCLUSION

According to the relationship between media and LGBT in different periods and backgrounds, as well as the role of media in LGBT rights movement in different periods and backgrounds, this paper compares the information obtained horizontally and vertically, and explores the role of media in LGBT rights movement. The main changes of the LGBT Rights Movement and the LGBT Rights Movement in the 1940s, 1970s and now.

At the same time, based on the past and present attitudes and roles of the media, this paper analyses and speculates the expectations of different countries (several different countries, the United States, parts of Asia and potential areas) for the movement of equal rights for homosexual's development. The rights of sexual minorities remain the goal of ethnic minorities around the world. The combination

of media and LGBT Rights Movement will open up a new way for LGBT group to fight for rights

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

This thesis was supported by our teachers and classmates, who has given us many valuable suggestions and kindness guidance. Therefore, we would like to show the deepest gratitude to them.

REFERENCES

[1] HAN XI NET Seeing Homosexuality (1): Sexual Orientation Discrimination in the Workplace.

<https://hanxinet.wordpress.com/2018/08/28/%e7%9c%8b%e8%a7%81%e5%90%8c%e5%bf%97%ef%bc%88%e4%b8%80%ef%bc%89%ef%bc%9a%e8%81%8c%e5%9c%ba%e7%9a%84%e6%80%a7%e5%8f%96%e5%90%91%e6%ad%a7%e8%a7%86/>

[2] Am J Public Health. 93(7) (2003) 1039. Alfred Kinsey and the Kinsey Report: Historical Overview and Lasting Contributions

[3] Vern L. Bullough, The Journal of Sex Research, Vol. 35, No. 2 (May, 1998), pp. 127-131, Published by: Taylor & Francis, Ltd., <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3813664>, Page Count: 5

[4] A. Matzner. Stonewall riots. GLBTQ Archive. 2015.

[5] K. W. Swain. Gay Pride Needs New Direction. Denver Post. 2007-06-21 [2008-07-05].

<https://www.denverpost.com/2007/06/21/gay-pride-needs-new-direction/>

[6] W. Zhong. Homosexual Reports and Image Presentation of Internet Media in the News Frame: Taking Phoenix and Pale Blue as Examples. 2016, p 31.

[7] D. W. Drezner. Metrics: The Internet's Impact on State-Society Relations. Brown World Affairs Magazine. 16(2) (2010) 31-44.