

## **An Exploratory Study on Chinese Females' Social Media Self-Presentation: A Case Study of WeChat**

**Ting Yang**

**Southwest University of Political Science & Law, China**

**Sangho Seo<sup>1</sup>**

**Konkuk University, Republic of Korea**

### **Abstract**

Based on Goffman's dramaturgical theory and self-objectification framework, this study examined: 1) Chinese female's WeChat self-presentation, 2) the impact of WeChat usage on female self-objectification, and 3) the impact of self-objectification on WeChat self-presentation tactics. An online survey was conducted. The main findings include: 1) most of the participants chose to beautify their pictures and videos before they posted them, 2) the respondents attached higher importance to appearance-based body attributes than competence-based ones, 3) the most frequently applied self-presentation tactic was ingratiation, 4) WeChat usage was not a predictor of Chinese women's self-objectification, and, 5) along with extroversion, self-objectification had an impact on ingratiation, supplication, self-promotion, and exemplification. Meanwhile, use of the electronic curtain and audience sifting to control who can see a post and for how long demonstrated the empowerment of the users when they conduct self-presentation.

*Keywords:* dramaturgical theory; social media usage; self-presentation tactics; self-objectification; China; WeChat; female; online survey

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<sup>1</sup> All correspondence concerning this article should be directed to Sangho Seo at Dept. of Mass Communication, Konkuk University, 268 Chungwon-daero, Chungju-si, Chungcheongbuk-do, 27478 Republic of Korea or by email at [sangho@kku.ac.kr](mailto:sangho@kku.ac.kr).

The status of Chinese women has undergone a major transformation in recent decades; they are becoming more active in society and making important societal contributions. On the other hand, there are recent calls from media effects scholars for more attention to women's self-objectification and what scholars have identified as an over-focus on attractiveness and appearance, which is mainly caused by mass media exposure (see, e.g., De Vries, 2014). Internet-based social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram are among the platforms for users to interact and present themselves.

Currently, among Chinese young women, video and photo apps with beautification functions are very popular. One of the most popular apps, BeautyCam, describes its function on its site as intelligently recognizes and analyzes facial features to customize exclusive beauty style. Adjust any details that you feel like optimizing and provide natural effects from top to bottom (Meitu, 2022). With this type of app, users appear much more beautiful on social media, and they receive more "likes" and praising comments. It seems that Chinese women accept or even enjoy being evaluated on social media, and followers give positive responses, which possibly causes a higher level of self-objectification. Previous studies, which we have discussed more in the Literature Review section of this paper, have verified media (e.g., magazine, TV advertisements) as one of the predictors of women's self-objectification. When we began this project, the relationship between social media and self-objectification had not been examined in China. One of the main aims of this study is to conduct an exploratory study on Chinese women's social media usage and their self-objectification, based on data collected from an online survey.

## **Literature Review and Research Questions**

### **Self-Presentation**

The concept of self-presentation can be traced to symbolic interactionism (Zhang & Ma, 2017; Zhen, 2019), which is a frame of reference to better understand how individuals interact with one another to create symbolic worlds; and in turn, how those worlds shape individual behaviors. According to Guo (2011), in 1902, Charles Horton Cooley proposed "the looking glass self" theory in his book *Human Nature and*

*the Social Order*. Cooley explained that as we look in the mirror to obtain our self-image, people understand themselves through the perceptions held by others, which is not accessible without interpersonal interaction. George Herbert Mead, who created symbolic interactionism, illustrated that the *self* is comprised of the *I* and *me*, and the *me* is formed during the process of interaction with others and the environment (Guo, 2011). So, individual development is a social progress of presenting and adjusting.

The concept of self-presentation was proposed by Goffman (1959) in his book *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. Instead of giving a definition, Goffman illustrated self-presentation through a dramaturgical approach. He demonstrated self-presentation in daily life as a series of performances performed on the “stage” with the individual as the “performer.” People play different roles on different “stages,” which are distinguished as “front” and “back,” and people use different interaction skills and content to realize the transformation of the two. Front is the expressive equipment of a standard kind of intentionally or unwittingly employed by the individual during the performance. Goffman distinguished “setting” and “personal front” as standard parts of “front.” “Setting” refers to the scenic part of expressive equipment and “personal front” refers to the performer's other items of expressive equipment that most intimately identify with the performer, including clothing, gender, age, looks, manners, etc.

To summarize, self-presentation can be any behavior that is intended to create, modify, or maintain an impression of ourselves in the minds of other people.

### **Chinese Female Self-Presentation on Social Media**

Compared with face-to-face communication, users of social networking sites have more control over their self-presentational behaviors, creating online self-presentations (Krämer & Winter, 2008). Online social profiles give their authors an unprecedented opportunity to control their public persona through their writing and management of personal information (Mazur & Li, 2016). Online self-presentation changes according to the types and development stages of social media (Herring & Kapidzic, 2015). More recently, research has demonstrated that users tend to manage online impressions with visual content (Ellison et al., 2006). Studies also show that

people tend to exaggerate and are not always honest when they present themselves online. Both genders report experimenting with their online presentation and posting untruthful information to their profiles (Herring & Kapidzic, 2015). Because users have the opportunity to think about which aspects of their personalities should be presented (Krämer & Winter, 2008), it is important to consider personality factors when examining online self-presentation, which has been demonstrated by numerous empirical studies (see, e.g., Abell & Brewer, 2014; Fox & Rooney, 2015; Krämer & Winter, 2008).

Personality is a relatively active research topic in network communication studies, and most researchers believe that network communication is significantly correlated with personality traits. Specifically, Wang (2011) found that there is a significant positive correlation between extroversion and Weibo use. In addition, extroverted Facebook users show significantly higher use motivation (social maintenance motivation, social compensation motivation, social entertainment) than that of introverted users (Lu, 2011). In addition, TikTok user's extroversion characteristics were found to be significantly related to self-presentation strategy (Shen et al., 2020), and WeChat Moment self-presentation is also correlated with users' extroversion (Dai, 2017). In the present study, one of the personality elements, extroversion, as described by Krämer and Winter (2008), was considered. However, there are few studies conducted on Chinese female social media self-presentation. By analyzing content posted by some of the most popular female users of Weibo (China's equivalent of Twitter) from August 10, 2014 to August 9, 2015, Pan et al. (2015) found that they presented the images of "hard working," "life-loving," and "flawless" on Weibo. How female college students present themselves on social media was studied by Chu (2019) from the aspects of page settings and linguistic features, and it has been shown that selfies are one important means of self-presentation of Chinese females on social media. It has also been shown that the boundary of "back" and "front" stages of self-presentation is becoming obscure (Chen, 2020). After reviewing the preceding literature, it was found that there was very little research consistent with the subject of this study.

## **Self-Presentation Tactics**

Among the measures of self-presentation, one of the most widely applied self-presentation tactic scales was developed by Jones and Pittman (1982), who outlined 5 different styles of self-presentation: self-promotion (trying to be viewed as competent), ingratiation (trying to be viewed as friendly and nice), exemplification (trying to be viewed as morally exemplary), intimidation (trying to be viewed as threatening), and supplication (trying to be viewed as helpless and weak).

Another scale proposed by Lee, et al. (1999), categorized 12 of the most studied self-presentation tactics as defensive or assertive. An assertive tactic (intimidation/supplication/entitlement/enhancement/blasting/exemplification) is a behavior used proactively to establish or develop an actor's identity, whereas a defensive tactic (excuse/justification/disclaimer/self-handicapping/apology) reflects an effort to repair or restore an identity after it has been "spoiled" (Lee et al., 1999). The two self-presentation tactic measurement scales were widely applied or modified by various researchers (see, e.g., Huang, 2014; Rosenberg, 2009; Rosenberg & Egbert, 2011; Sadler, et al., 2010). Their studies have provided ample support for the existence and use of various self-presentation tactics. Considering the goals of the present study and characteristics of Chinese females, four categories of female Chinese social media usage were utilized: ingratiation, supplication, self-promotion, and exemplification, based on the scale developed by Jones and Pittman (1982).

## **Female Self-Objectification**

To objectify someone means to view them as an instrument that is "used, manipulated, controlled, and known [only] through its physical properties" (Calogero, et al., 2011, p. 5). They internalize an outside observer's perspective of their physical selves and they learn to view their own bodies as objects that must be constantly monitored and scrutinized to ensure conformity to internalized cultural standards (Jongenelis et al., 2014). A central postulate of objectification theory is that girls and women internalize this outsiders' perspective on their own physical selves, a tendency called self-objectification (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997). Self-objectification theory was proposed by Fredrickson and Roberts (1997). This theory stems from feminist

thinking (Morris et al., 2014). Before Fredrickson and Roberts, numerous social science scholars researched female sexualization by males in their cultures (see, e.g., Kaschak, 1992), and feminists have criticized sexual oppression which refers to the phenomenon whereby a woman is treated as “a body,” or a woman is represented by “a body,” and the body is only an instrument. Objectification theory posits that girls and women are typically acculturated to internalize an observer's perspective as a primary view of their physical selves. Few would dispute the premise that women are objectified (Morris et al., 2014).

Chinese scholars profiled Chinese women's self-objectification in the context of literature. For instance, He (2017) analyzed Chinese women's self-objectification in the novel *The Field of Life and Death* and Li and Wang (2006) put their insight in the context of the Chinese novel *The Birthmark*. These authors provide evidence on how females were objectified in these novels. However, no empirical studies have been conducted to explore Chinese women's self-objectification level, although it has already become a serious social issue.

Media plays a critical role in conveying objectification information, which is often found in advertisements (Gill, 2008), television programming (Copeland, 1989; Ullah, 2014), music videos (Aubrey & Frisby, 2011; Sommers- Flanagan et al., 1993) and magazines (Krassas et al., 2001; Monk-Turner et al., 2008). The mass media never stops presenting an idealized women's body as the “beautiful” or “popular” woman stereotype. Empirical studies have shown that media is one of the main predictors of female self-objectification. The results of an experiment of 90 Australian undergraduate women aged 18 to 35, found that participants who viewed advertisements featuring a thin idealized woman reported greater state self-objectification, weight-related appearance anxiety, negative mood, and body dissatisfaction than participants who viewed advertisements that did not contain content that leads to self-objectification (Harper & Tiggemann, 2008); and it was reported that media use time and frequency bear a significant positive relationship with U.S. female college students' self-objectification level (Aubrey, 2006). The results were consistent when research was conducted on teenage girls in the US (Harrison & Fredrickson, 2003) and Belgium (Vandenbosch & Eggermont, 2012). Fredrickson

and Roberts (1997) also contended that media that placed women's bodies and appearance at a premium could acculturate women to self-objectify, or to feel anxious or ashamed of their bodies.

Social media is differentiated from traditional mass media represented by TV commercials in several ways. First, the content producer is different because social media content is generated by users themselves, while mass media content is created by professional media organizations. In most situations, idealized women appear in TV commercials, magazines, or movies, and they are often celebrities. This suggests that professionally edited content closely resembles advertising copy. On the other hand, social media content focuses on personal information. Our study focuses on the Chinese social networking site WeChat, which is based on strong relationships. WeChat users can only be found using a WeChat account name or cellphone number. So basically, for ordinary people, the images or "beautified images" that appear in their WeChat are ordinary people. They mainly use WeChat to establish or maintain relationships, build self-image, or search for useful information rather than sell products. Second, the information communication channel is different. Traditional mass media information is transmitted through professional channels and targets a large audience, while social media information is often communicated within the user's social network, which heavily depends on interpersonal relationships. Thus, although the research literature supports that the usage of media that contains objectifying content has an impact on female self-objectification, based upon the above discussion, it is not convincing to propose that social media use is a predictor of self-objectification. Therefore, we propose the following research question:

RQ1: Does social media usage predict females' self-objectification?

Understanding the consequences of this subjective experience is one of the aims of the present study. Young adult women present idealized images of themselves on social media. Consequently, women on social media are likely to see idealized images of their peers and compare themselves with these idealized images. Fredrickson and Roberts (1997) illustrated that shame, anxiety, peak motivational state, and alienation from the inner body sensation were the results of self-objectification. On the other hand, some scholars have suggested that another

unexplored possibility was that antecedent levels of self-objectification could drive the selection or avoidance of sexually objectifying media and how women use the media (Aubrey, 2006). This study also aims to research how self-objectification affects Chinese female social media users' self-presentation tactics. Currently, there are few research papers that demonstrate that self-objectification is related to social media usage patterns. Of the research that has been done, Fox and Rooney (2015) indicated that self-objectification and narcissism predicted time spent on social networking sites and editing photographs of oneself posted on social networking sites.

Based on the review presented above, the following research question is examined.

RQ2: Does Chinese women's self-objectification have an association with their self-presentation tactics?

## **Methodology**

### **Selection of Social Media**

WeChat, which was launched by China's largest Internet company, Tencent, in January of 2011, is the most widely used social media in China. According to a WeChat report released by the Tencent company (2018), there are 1,082,500,000 monthly active WeChat users, covering all sexes and various age groups. It is the most representative social media in China.

WeChat Moments is a function on WeChat. Users can post text and pictures through Moments and share articles or music to Moments through other applications. Users can comment on or like new photos or messages posted by friends. In addition, there are some features supporting more flexible self-presentation. First, users can conduct audience management. They can group their friends and tag the groups as "family," "friends," "people I dislike," and so on; they can set their posts be visible to all friends or just one or some of the groups. When posting content, users can make the posts visible to only some of their friends by clicking "who can watch it" and selecting a group or groups that have been created; second, users can set the time Moments are viewable. It can be set to be viewable indefinitely, or for a limited amount of time like six months, one month, or three days. Convenient access on both personal computers



and cell phones makes WeChat popular among people of all ages.

### **Sampling and Procedures**

An online survey site (<https://www.wjx.cn/>) was used to collect data for analysis. A pilot test was conducted from August 26 to August 30, 2019. After 30 female WeChat users finished the survey, some adjustments were made to make the items more understandable for respondents. The formal online survey was conducted from September 1 to 8, 2019. Participants were recruited by using snowball sampling. The researcher contacted female WeChat friends with the online questionnaire link and then asked them to forward it to their female WeChat friends, who, in turn, forwarded it to their friends. In order to limit the participants to active female users, the online survey ended automatically when a respondent chose “male” on the second item. There were 396 participants (20 non-users and 25 males were deleted) and 351 valid surveys. The demographic characteristics of the sample were such that 86.89% of the participants were aged 18-30 ( $n=305$ ), followed by those 31-40 ( $n=37$ ), those who were 41-50 ( $n=6$ ), and those over 50 ( $n=3$ ). The participants were well-educated; 61.82% of them were studying as undergraduate students or had earned a bachelor’s degree ( $n=217$ ) and 31.34% of them were studying as postgraduate students or had earned a master’s degree ( $n=110$ ). Another 5.7% of respondents were studying in or had graduated from technical college ( $n=20$ ), and 1.14% had graduated from middle school.

### **Measurements**

The survey consisted of three main measures: self-presentation tactics, extroversion, and self-objectification. In addition to the three measures, respondents were also asked to provide basic demographic information. Information related to their WeChat use was solicited through 3 questions (How long have you used WeChat? How often do you use WeChat? How many hours do you use WeChat per day?).

### **Extroversion**

Extroversion was measured using the modified NeoFFI scale (Krämer & Winter, 2008) ( $\alpha=.75$ ).

### **Self-Presentation Tactics**

Four categories of female Chinese WeChat usage were utilized: ingratiation, supplication, self-promotion, and exemplification (Jones & Pittman, 1982). Questionnaire items for these categories were constructed based on previous research (Huang, 2014; Ahmed, 2014; Sadler, et al., 2010) with some modifications made to assess presentation displays on WeChat. All the items were measured on a 5-point Likert scale (*strongly disagree* = 1; *strongly agree* = 5). Ingratiation was measured by three items exemplified by “I regularly upload photos that make me look attractive on WeChat Moments” ( $\alpha=.79$ ). Supplication makes one’s weakness known with the hope of obtaining the help and concern of others. It was measured by three items exemplified by “I often seek help from my friends on WeChat Moments” ( $\alpha=.72$ ); self-promotion tells others one’s positive quality, it was measured by three items exemplified by “I tend to post the achievements of my work on WeChat Moments” ( $\alpha=.78$ ). Exemplification exists when online users attempt to create an impression that they are morally superior or more preferred than others (Jones & Pittman, 1982). It was measured with two items exemplified by “I try to set an example on WeChat Moments for others to follow” ( $\alpha=.70$ ). Overall, the alpha coefficient of this scale was  $\alpha=.73$ .

### **Self-Objectification**

Self-objectification was measured with an adapted version of Noll and Fredrickson’s original Self-Objectification Questionnaire (Vandenbosch & Eggermont, 2012; Teng et al., 2017). The questionnaire was designed to show how respondents attach importance to their physical appearance by comparing it to their physical competence. Respondents were asked to evaluate the importance of six body attributes on a 6-point scale ranging from 1 (*not at all important*) to 6 (*very important*). The difference between the mean scores of appearance-based body attributes (appearance, coloring, body measurement) and competence-based body attributes (strength, energy level, physical coordination) was applied to indicate the level of self-objectification (range -5 to 5).

## Findings

### Moments Viewable Setting

According to Goffman's theory, people perform at the front stage. Moments is a very convenient platform for self-presentation, and the friendly interface encourages users to share texts, pictures, and videos. It is a digital front stage where they perform themselves. Goffman distinguished "setting" and "personal front" as standard parts of "front." "Setting" refers to the scenic part of expressive equipment. The survey results revealed that: first, only 35.61% of the respondents chose to set "Moments" as viewable indefinitely, and the rest of respondents ( $n=226$ ) applied an "electronic curtain" for their front; 34.76% set Moments to be visible for three days, followed by 16.24% set it to be viewable for six months, 10.54% for 1 month, and 2.85% for three months.

### Self-Presentation Content

According to the results of the motivation section of the survey, 76.92% of the respondents use Moments for posting about their personal life, 66.1% of them use Moments for showing their work or study. It was also used for interests (56.98%), presenting personal views (36.75%), news and information searching (20.80%), other (18.23%), and product promotion (12.54%). More of our respondents used Moments for recording their personal life than for any other purpose.

### Self-Presentation Tactics

According to the descriptive statistics, the most frequently applied self-presentation tactic was ingratiation ( $M=3.02$ ,  $SD=.63$ ), followed by self-promotion ( $M=2.10$ ,  $SD=.78$ ), exemplification ( $M=2.41$ ,  $SD=.82$ ), and the least used strategy was supplication ( $M=2.24$ ,  $SD=.69$ ).

Meanwhile, according to the survey results, 50.43% of the respondents group their WeChat friends, and 65.20% of them set their Moments content viewable to specific groups. In other words, they are selecting their audience in order to achieve better self-presentation effects. T-test analysis revealed that users who conduct audience management reported higher ingratiation and self-promotion values than those do not ( $p<.05$ ). In other words, the users who group their friends and set their

posts to be visible to some of the groups use more ingratiation and self-promotion tactics when they present themselves in Moments.

Concerning the personal front, 45.30% of the participants responded that they were using or used their own photos as the profile pictures; 83.19% of them reported they “apply beautification applications to optimize their pictures and videos, if they appear in them, before posting them;” when asked about their willingness to post pictures and videos without beatifying, only 18.23% ( $n=64$ ) were willing or very willing to do so; 21.08% of them refused or strongly refused to do so; 60.68% said "it depends on the situation." The survey results revealed that the respondents attached higher importance to appearance-based body attributes ( $M=4.20$ ,  $SD=.10$ ) than competence-based ones ( $M=3.98$ ,  $SD=1.01$ ). The self-objectification level ( $M=.23$ ,  $SD=1.09$ ) was computed as the difference between appearance-based attributes and competence-based attributes.

**RQ1: Does social media usage predict females’ self-objectification?**

Regression analysis was conducted to examine RQ1. WeChat use and extroversion were entered into the analyses as predictors of self-objectification. The results (Table 1) indicated that neither WeChat use nor extroversion or a linear combination of both serve as a predictor of Chinese women's self-objectification ( $p>.05$ ).

**Table 1**

*Social Media Use and Self-Objectification: Regression Coefficients*

Model	Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
	$\beta$	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	-.15	.35		-.42	.67
Social media use	-.03	.09	-.02	-.34	.73
Extroversion	.003	.09	.002	.04	.97

*ANOVA*

Model	Sum of squares	<i>df</i>	Mean square	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>
Regression	.14	2	.07	.06	.94
Residual	415.97	348	1.20		
Total	416.11	350			

*Note.* Dependent variable: self-objectification

Predictors: (Constant), extroversion, social media use

**RQ2: Does Chinese women’s self-objectification have an association with their self-presentation tactics?**

Four regression analyses were conducted using each of four WeChat use tactics against extroversion and self-objectification. Regression results (Table 2) indicated that extroversion and self-objectification indeed serve as significant predictors of ingratiation ( $R^2=.10$ ,  $p<.01$ ), supplication ( $R^2=.03$ ,  $p<.05$ ), self-promotion ( $R^2=.07$ ,  $p<.01$ ), and exemplification ( $R^2=.09$ ,  $p<.01$ ). However, self-objectification alone has no significant association with self-promotion ( $p>.05$ ).

**Table 2**

*Regression Results*

Dependent variable	Independent variable	$\beta$	$p$	$R$	$R^2$	Adjusted $R^2$	$F$	$p$
Ingratiation	extroversion	.31	.00	.32	.10	.10	19.82	.00
	self-objectification	.08	.00					
Supplication	extroversion	.14	.01	.16	.03	.02	4.50	.01
	self-objectification	.08	.03					
Self-promotion	extroversion	.25	.00	.27	.07	.07	13.13	.00
	self-objectification	.09	.08					
Exemplification	extroversion	.26	.00	.31	.09	.09	18.80	.00
	self-objectification	.18	.00					

**Discussion**

**Chinese Self-Presentation on WeChat**

***Empowerment: The Usage of "Electronic Curtain" and "Audience Sifting"***

The survey results revealed that only 35.61% of the respondents leave Moments viewable indefinitely, and the remainder ( $n=226$ ) chose to set Moments to be viewable for a set amount of time, like 3 days, 1 month, 3 months, or 6 months. The setting worked as an "electronic curtain" for the front stage. This function allows the performance content to be "hidden" when a "performance failure" occurs. As a

remedial measure, it helps users to orchestrate self-presentation more effectively.

According to the survey results, 50.43% of the respondents group their WeChat friends, and of those, 65.2% set the content accessibility in terms of groupings. In other words, respondents are intentionally managing their friends' access. Prior to dissemination, information that is not conducive to self-presentation or does not meet image expectations is hidden. This mechanism allows users to create different image features in front of different audiences. Furthermore, the t-test results revealed that users who make choices about which audiences to access when they present themselves are more likely to utilize ingratiation and self-promotion tactics ( $p < .05$ ). In contrast with face-to-face interpersonal communication, Moments makes it possible for individuals to present a variety of selves on the same stage. The user is empowered to post and manage impressions.

### ***Self-Presentation Tactics and the Performance Mask***

According to the results, the most frequently applied self-presentation tactic by Chinese women is ingratiation. The results are consistent with several previous findings. For example, Ahmed (2014) suggested that ingratiation was the most common type of self-presentation strategy used by social media users in the United Arab Emirates; the same conclusion was supported by a study of Chinese middle school students ( $N=1,549$ ) in five developed urban cities (Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou, Shenzhen, and Xiamen) (Huang, 2014). Ingratiation is adopted when someone attempts to get others to like them, and the impression is based on flattery. Consequently, ingratiation can always be accomplished by doing favors for others or showing positive personal characteristics. Deceitful content may appear when users adopt this tactic.

In addition to setting, personal front is the other element that Goffman distinguished as a standard part of front. It includes items of expression that most intimately identify the performer, and the user's looks belong to the personal front. The survey results showed that 83.19% of respondents use beautification apps to make their own pictures and videos more beautiful and only 18.23% of them were willing to make a post without pre-beautifying.

Given the trend of relying on modern communication technologies such as beautification applications, beautified selfie pictures have flooded social media platforms. This communication pattern has been integrated into Chinese people's lives and preferred ways of communicating. The results demonstrate that the front performance can be presented not only after careful preparation, but also through the functions of beautification to ensure an idealized performance. Under the mask of beauty, the uniqueness of the personal performance tends to be homogenized. After a series of electronic beautification processes, everyone shares the trait of big eyes and small faces, and users gradually lose the personal characteristics of the performers themselves in Moments.

### ***The Blurry Boundary of Front and Back Stages***

The content posted in Moments varies; 76.92% of the respondents post recordings of their personal lives, and 66.1% use Moments to show things relevant to their work or study. Obviously, Moments is functioning as a personal stage where individuals can present their daily life and personal views on specific issues. It can be seen that the boundary between front and back stages is getting blurry. In the past, private life was equivalent to back stage, which is separated from the audience and performance area. However, private content which was supposed to belong back stage, such as entertainment after work and preparation before the performance, can now be presented on the front stage. Even some embarrassing occasions were posted there. The front stage is no longer solemn, is no longer a place where a specific social order must be followed. This front stage is becoming a new form of communication platform through which users create a new self.

Concerning the dimension of the stage, the current flattened communication environment has gradually broken the hierarchy of mass communication and the imbalance of information resources that were present in the past. The individual's back stage behavior can be recorded and spread quickly through a platform like Moments. The reproducibility of the text and the close connection to the audience have expanded the scope of the stage. On the other hand, the mystery of the backstage is disappearing because a backstage image can be made available to the public at anytime and anywhere, and the boundaries of the front and back are blurred and overlap.

## Self-Objectification Level and Its Predication

The survey results revealed that the respondents attached a higher importance to appearance-based body attributes ( $M=4.20$ ,  $SD=.10$ ) than competence-based ones ( $M=3.98$ ,  $SD=1.01$ ). The self-objectification level ( $M=.23$ ,  $SD=1.09$ ) was computed as the difference between appearance-based attributes and competence-based attributes. However, WeChat usage is not a predictor of self-objectification. This finding is inconsistent with research that indicates media use is one of the causes of self-objectification. Regarding self-objectification, scholars suggest that a general phenomenon of self-commodification occurs when people present themselves, and it is probably unconscious as a result of the internalization of media images. In other words, the self-objectifying content of media is the main cause of self-objectification. Therefore, how the self-objectifying content of media is used should be considered when examining its impact on self-objectification. There are different categories of social media. Some are based on text, while some are based on pictures; some are based on weak relationships, while some are based on strong relationships; some are open, while some are comparatively closed. Unlike some social media, such as Facebook, where individuals can search for almost any user and have access to any public posts, WeChat only provides access to users whose WeChat ID or mobile phone number is available. According to WeChat's owner, Tencent, WeChat is based on strong relationships. Generally speaking, WeChat friends are friends or acquaintances in real life. WeChat users can only be found using their WeChat account or mobile phone number. Knowing each other encourages users to post comparatively true information in Moments (Lv, 2018).

## The Association Between Self-Objectification and Self-Presentation Tactics

For better expression management, Chinese female WeChat users can choose their audience with the grouping function and beautify their pictures using relevant apps. Their posts are mainly recordings of personal life and study/work. They bear the feature of self-objectification ( $M=.23$ ,  $SD=1.09$ ). Moments and self-objectification have a significant impact on their self-presentation tactics adoption. Regression results indicate that self-objectification (combined with extroversion) has an impact on ingratiation ( $R^2=.10$ ,  $p<.01$ ), supplication ( $R^2=.03$ ,  $p<.05$ ), self-promotion ( $R^2=.07$ ,



$p < .01$ ), and exemplification ( $R^2 = .09$ ,  $p < .01$ ). In other words, the self-objectification of Chinese women can partially explain why they choose to adopt the self-presentation tactics of “making others like me,” “setting an example for others,” and “showing weakness.”

## Conclusions

Moments is a digital front stage for self-presentation, and the friendly interface encourages users to share texts, pictures, and videos. Besides, based on the convenient technology environment, female users were empowered to conduct self-presentation as they wish. Concerning setting, first, the survey results revealed 226 respondents chose to set Moments to be viewable for a limited amount of time (3 days, 1 month, 3 months, or 6 months). The setting worked as an electronic curtain for the front stage. This function allows the performance content to be hidden to some extent when a performance failure occurs; second, 50.43% of the respondents group their WeChat friends, and 65.2% of them report that they are intentionally managing their friends. This mechanism allows users to create different image features for different audiences; third, on WeChat, private content was shown on the front stage, and the boundary between the front and back stages is getting blurry. The front stage is no longer solemn, is no longer a place where a specific social order must be followed. Concerning a personal front, according to the results, the most frequently applied self-presentation tactic by Chinese women is ingratiation; 83.19% of respondents use beatification apps to make their own pictures and videos more beautiful, and only 18.23% of them were willing to make a post without pre-beautifying.

The self-objectification level of Chinese females on WeChat was computed as the difference between appearance-based attributes and competence-based attributes. However, WeChat usage is not a predictor of self-objectification, this result is inconsistent with previous research. WeChat is operated basing on strong ties; consequently, users may choose to post content comparatively consistent with reality. Lastly, self-objectification (combined with extroversion) has a significant impact on all four self-presentation tactics.

### **Limitations and Implications for Future Research**

There are some limitations that have to be admitted: first, sampling was only limited to females in China; if possible, the sampling should include Chinese females residing abroad. The sample size (351), sampling method (snowball sampling), and sample composition (high rate of higher education and limited age range) indicate a potentially poor representation of the larger population; second, the research was conducted basing on Goffman's dramaturgical theory, from which some concepts, such as self-presentation, performance, front stage, and backstage, were borrowed. However, the research question was not proposed completely based on the theoretical framework of dramaturgical theory. Third, the regression results indicated that extroversion and self-objectification indeed serve as significant predictors of ingratiation, supplication, self-promotion, and exemplification, however,  $R^2$  value is small.

Some implications are present here for further studies that examine the impact of social media on self-objectification. First, social media is a technological product whose usage can be much influenced by cultural context. It is necessary to consider culture as an influential factor when studying the effect of social media on human behaviors; second, in order to explore the effect of social media usage on female self-objectification, diverse social media types should be considered; third, self-objectification is not limited to women. Male self-objectification research should be conducted to determine if there is a connection with gender-identification; fourth, the research presented in this paper explored the relationship between personality and self-objectification and also considered the impact of extroversion, discovering a significant positive relationship. Future research should focus on other personality traits to determine their relationship. Fifth, additional research should expand the sample size, and age and background education should be considered when conducting regression analysis.

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### Biographical Notes:

Dr. **Ting Yang** received her PhD in Mass Communication from Konkuk University in South Korea and is now an associate professor in the Department of Global Journalism and Communication at Southwest University of Political Science & Law. Her research interests are in the areas of new media usage & effect, media literacy, and online public opinion guidance. Her research has published in *Journal of Political Communication*, *Asian Journal for Public Opinion Research*, and *International Journal of Contents* as well as the conference proceedings of ICA.

She can be reached at Dept. of Global Journalism and Communication, Southwest University of Political Science & Law, No.31, Baosheng Ave, Yubei District, Chongqing Municipality, 401121 People's Republic of China or by email at 125378726@qq.com.

Dr. **Sangho Seo** received a PhD in Mass Communication from Penn State University in the US and now is a professor at the Department of Mass Communication in Konkuk University in South Korea. His research interests are in the areas of communications technologies & policy, and audience research. His research has published in *Telecommunication Policy, Info, International Journal on Media Management*.

He can be reached at Dept. of Mass Communication, Konkuk University, 268

Chungwon-daero, Chungju-si, Chungcheongbuk-do, 27478 Republic of Korea or by email at [sangho@kku.ac.kr](mailto:sangho@kku.ac.kr).

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