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Social Media Communication and Rhetoric in the Age of Weibo

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ABSTRACT

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The rapid rise and popularization of social media has a profound impact on the society today. The emergence of the social media broadens the channels of communication and the people's vision. Citizens can freely express information such as words and pictures, and freely exchange their views on social media. This study will focus on Sina Weibo which is the most popular social media in China. The purpose of this research is to study how to attract so much attention by protagonist's post and this certain hot event. Simultaneously, it also focuses on attitude and opinions of audience through the comments of this incident. This research aims to do rhetoric analysis and content analysis by selecting the most popular posts and top 100 hot comments. It is interesting to discover that the most feasible ways of attracting attention are creating emotional response, strengthening credibility and persuading in rational approach. This event has received most of the audience support. The audience expressed their concern and compassion towards this event. They share the valuable information in the comments to express their feelings. However, there still exist some different opinions on it. Although it is hard to guarantee the same attitude of the spectators, the huge number of audience on Micro-blog is an important factor in the rapid spread of this event.

Keywords: Social media, Sina Weibo, Rhetoric, Social media communication

Table of contents

Introduction....1
Sina Weibo.... 1
Aim and research questions....4
Previous Research....5
Public opinion 5
Social media can bring participatory democracy 6
The role of Weibo....8
Privacy, public sphere and social media....12
Theoretical frame and concepts....15
Discourse....15
Rhetoric....15
Method and material....17
Material....17
Method....18
Strengths and weaknesses....22
Analysis of result....24
Pathos....25
Ethos....28
Logos and Metaphor....29
Positive comments....30
Negative comments....33
Gender 34
Results of data....34
Discussion and conclusion....37
Reference 41
Appendices....44

Introduction

It is universally acknowledged that internet was firstly put into use in the United Stated and this technology become more mature in western society. The majority of Internet users accepted Internet as a platform for freedom-spreading of discourse. However, the internet is not only dominated by western countries. China has surpassed the United States in the use of internet and has the world's largest population of Internet users in 2008 (Bolsover, 2016, p.115).The rapid rise and popularization of social media has a profound impact on the society today. As Huang (2016) mentioned that social media affect people's social behavior, daily life, values and ways of thinking and many other aspects, as the cyberspace has a new social characteristic, so people's online speech is also corresponding to express thesenew social characteristics.

According to Yan (2016) the emergence of the Internet has brought a great influence to the world, and online freedom of speech is one of its important manifestations. Freedom of speech on social media is the new development of the freedom of speech, which means that citizens can freely express information such as words and pictures, and freely exchange their views. Yuan & Wang (2015) also mentioned that the emergence of the social media broadens the channels of communication and the people's vision. It also provides a better with medium for the realization of free speech. Internet users can speak freely in the world of the social media. Up to June 2015, China has 204 million users of Weibo. The number of mobile Weibo users is 162 million, accounting for79.4% of the total (China Internet Network Information Centre, 2015). This study will focus on Sina Weibo which is the most popular Weibo in China.

Sina Weibo

Sina Weibo is the most popular micro blogging service in China. It has become a potential competitor of Twitter (Zhang & Negro, 2013, p.200). Zhang & Negro (2013),also described that in the first two month of operation, there were one million

users registered Sina Weibo account; in the 14 months of operations, there are already more than 50 million users registered and this figure will grow 10 million users in the next each month."Top users on Sina Weibo have a following of over 70 million" (Nip & Fu, 2015,p.1131). The most successful strategies of Weibo is that Weibo "encourage movie stars, singers and famous business and media celebrities to join the platform and some of these people now have millions of followers" (Zhang & Negro, 2013, p.201).These accounts belong to famous persons or organizations all have official certification marks, which means these user' IDs have already been authenticated and authorized. "Sina Weibo accounts for 57% of all Chinese Weibo users and 87% of the country's entire Weibo activity in 2011"(Zhang & Negro, 2013, p.201)

Comparing Weibo and Facebook, as Bolsover (2016) described that the methods of sharing information by individual user is similar on both platform and users can follow others to form interconnections. In previous years Sina Weibo posts are limited to 140 characters (like on Twitter), Facebook posts do not have same limitation(Bolsover, 2016, p.121). But now there is no character limitation of post on Sina Weibo. Both platforms have similar function. Everybody who has an account can comment or show their preference or forward the post. On Weibo, more attention to comment function, the submit comments button is more prominent (Bolsover, 2016, p.121). "Weibo also allows users to filter comments" (Bolsover, 2016, p.121) to see hot comments or comments of chronological order. "Weibo also seems to encourage user interaction with posts more than Facebook in that they list the number of users who have liked, commented or reposted a particular post or comment as part of the button that would allow a user to do the same" (Bolsover, 2016, p.121).Unlike with Facebook, political speeches on Weibo are likely to be censored.

By the end of September 2016, Sina Weibo monthly active population has reached 297 million, compared with the same period in 2015 increased by 34% (data.weibo.com,

2016). CNNIC[1] (2012) described that Weibo is free and easy to use. From the content point of view, a short length of the posts can reduce the production and reading of information. Weibo does not need long story. That is to say, even some words can be posted to meet the public reading if necessary. From the functional point of view, Weibo has the shortest characters: a word, a picture, a videoor even emoticons and Weibo users have a shortcut to post their own feeling no matter where they are and what they are doing. Weibo Users can follow other people and they can also have followers. For the will that people obtain information and express their opinion online, Weibo service providers strengthen the communication of information function and provide share (repost), comments, "like", private letters and other forms of interaction. The use of Weibo forms and hot topics drive the growth of micro-blogs. According to Zhang & Negro (2013), among the many function of Weibo, there are two functions that can promote people's communication: "comment" function can promote communication directly between receivers and massage senders. Weibo also offer another interpersonal communication function which is "forward (repost)". Weibo users can forward the information to their own pages, if other people are interested in this information, they can re-forwarded or re-re-forwarded to their own pages, the information can be spread in many people in a short time. As Gu (2014) said that any topics on Weibo have potential to attract millions of reposts and comments and Weibo becomes "a news source itself" (cited by Gu, 2014, p.73) "Compared with the stringent centralized control over mainstream media, Weibo is less affected by the state media content supervision regime, thus allowing micro-bloggers to obtain information which is usually not covered by traditional media, particularly messages that embody political implications" (Gu, 2014, p.73). Since Weibo becomes popular, the pattern of human communication has changed. The formation of public opinion effect mechanism has also changed. As Zou (2013) mentioned that earlier dissemination of information model is one-way, in which people can only get information from traditional media. But now the dissemination of

[1]CNNIC: China Internet Network Information Centre

information model is two-way, in which people can not only get information from media but also to be communicators. Individual users can form networks of followers or contacts, which makes possible a rapid spread of information. People can receive information, at the same time they can also send information. Each personal Weibo becomes a communication center. Information through this network can be replicated and be shared extensively in a short time.

Weibo can meet public requirements of open discussion. General public respected this dynamic and convenient way of communication. Even the government public offices register official Weibo accounts in order to communicate with the people, and make use of this direct and equal way to enhance the credibility. So that more and more people want to express their desire and share their opinions through Weibo. This study will focus on one case and research why did a post attract lots of attention and how did people communicate on this post. Previous researches already focused on Weibo promoted communication between citizens and government and Weibo provided a platform for Chinese social media to participate in public affairs. But this article is more focus on the communication of Weibo sender and receivers and using content of the post to analyze what characteristics of the post contributes to attracting large group of people and what aspects of this social event did public more concern about?

Aim and research questions

The purpose of this research is to study the post of the protagonist of the hot event and to study how to attract the attention of a large number of viewers, to review the audience's response in the comment region to understand the audience's views on the event. This study could contribute to fill up existing knowledge about individual usage of social media, and this article can provide important insights and detailed case analysis into the field of social media research in China.

Research questions:

RQ1: How does an individual user of a social network succeeds in attracting attention to a problem?

RQ2: How does the public respond and interact in a viral social network post?

Previous Research

Public opinion

Zou (2013) found that Weibo communication broke the process of traditional agenda setting. Mass media has been influenced by the public's "self-agenda setting" on Weibo which becomes an important channel in daily life. Mass media is not the designer of the agenda any more. It turns to be the recipient. The model of spread is not a one-way "Dissemination –Acceptance" model, people post their need on Weibo to gain the justice. In my selected post, the audience plays a very important role in the dissemination of this thread. As Zou (2013) mentioned that the audiences participate in Weibo public opinion field, which greatly weakened the effect of media disseminate, on the contrary, the audience in the dissemination of the dominant position has been highlighted.

Internet users use online public opinions to force the government to intervene and the government has quickly adapted to use Weibo to maintain control of society. The speed of information on Weibo is faster than mainstream media, which is an advantage in contemporary society. Sullivan (2014) mentioned one point which is "information transmitted by Weibo can constitute an accountability mechanism in the form of online public opinion, but is capricious and unreliable" (Sullivan, 2014, p33) is worth to notice. Form this study, Sullivan (2014) claimed that citizen journalism from Weibo could be more reliably. In the next of this study, the selected posts were sent by citizens, and thousands of micro-blog users chose to believe this post to help the authors forward and give a chance for more citizens to care it.

Wang & Liu (2015) found that, comparing with public opinion leaders and mass media, public opinion leaders will mostly express support to people with depression. When the influential users communicated stereotype, then they would be stigmatizing. But when the influential users communicated personal, genetic, medical, social responsibility claims, they would get more support. Wang & Liu (2015) believes that people should improve their awareness of depression and enhance support for depression. It is worth noting that public opinion leaders have power over their followers. Direction of my research is different with this study. At the beginning of this study, I found that the heroine of micro-blog did not have many followers, but she still got a lot of attention.

According to Xiong (2013), the conflict between secular ethics and professional ethics creates a different perception of the general audience. The conflict between the flaws in news reports and professional ethics has caused the audience to criticize the reports. Changes in audience of the Internet era is obvious, because the role of the audience changes, media face attitude of audience should also change, from the original simple "Dissemination – Acceptance" model change to dialogue and conversation relationship. But in this study Southern Weekly did not actively engage dialogue. Acceptance effect and response should also be the content of journalism ethics. People have their own opinions to choose what kind of information they interest in. For different type of events, Weibo users have different opinions to state. Thus, citizens should take into account that not everyone will support them when they want to release micro-blog. In my research, I'll consider that the attitudes of the audiences are the key to the second issue in this research.

Social media can bring participatory democracy

Gu (2014) found that Weibo promotes communication between citizens and government. Weibo provides a free platform, people can not only to freely express their views (some sensitive topic of political speech will censor on Weibo) on Weibo but also can grasp the real-time government policies. Weibo has gradually become a

government supervision platform to review the government's performance, it also promote the communication between citizens and the government. Gu (2014) mentioned that people are gradually gaining autonomous right through participatory supervision and actively participate in decision-making and public discussion. The government can understand the real thoughts of citizens through Weibo. Citizens can supervise government performance, and propose questions, requests and suggestions. Gu (2014) involves a key point which is Citizens express their views through Weibo, Weibo provide a platform, so more and more people choose Weibo to express their demands. Thus, as Huang& Sun (2013) said that the issues post on Weibo are seen as an extension or substitution in real life. Although there will be political control on the Weibo, but internet users express their opinions online is unproblematic, except that sometimes their comments or posts will be remove (Bolsover, 2016, p.122). Therefore, social media provides a platform for citizens to participate in politics. The public through the social media to participate controversial discussions, and successfully put some of the recommendations into the government's public agenda, which proves that social media is a way to achieve democracy. It is a current trend in china that people want to obtain rights through micro-blog. What kind of personal postings can attract the attention of the audience deserves more study.

Chen (2015) also figured out internet can bring participatory democracy. Internet as a communication tool and virtual public space, it has important implication for environment activism in China. Because of China's political system, the traditional form of street protests and public rallies is not feasible for Chinese people. Therefore, it is impossible that all of micro-blog postings will get so much attention although citizens are more likely to express their needs through micro-blog. So what kind of personal postings will cause a lot of attention is a subject in the next research.

As Bolsover (2016) mentioned that, in the dynasty of China, the emperor had right of rule, people should went to the capital to deal case to the emperor. The boundaries of

acceptable political speech in modern China are opaque (Bolsover, 2016, p.119), and China has tight control of organizational infrastructure (Huang&Sun, 2013, p87).Jiang (2014) believes that Weibo provides a platform for Chinese social media to participate in public affairs, and Weibo also provides a channel for Chinese citizens to express their opinion. In most cases, government will respond to the trending topic. This study also found that the problems which are about nationalism, anti-corruption and social events will influence state-controlled media's agenda. But some political sensitive topic on Weibo cannot change agenda-setting. In the course of this study, censorship on micro-blog is a very important factor.

The role of Weibo

Poell, Kloet& Zeng (2014) described that Chinese government believes online communication can directly reflect the public voice. The authors chose two common cases, through the text and visual records to explore two online controversies and research new expression of publics are articulated. This study found that citizens regard Weibo is a platform for social and political contention. Online protest is general on Weibo. Defense of personal rights and interests becomes people main purpose on Weibo. Sometimes website welcomes controversial events so that it often makes language war. They also mentioned Sina Weibo effectively provides clues and facts, but 140 characters are limitation of Weibo, "it is impossible to fully present evidence and make an argument" (Poell, Kloet& Zeng, 2014, p.9). However, with the constant updating of Weibo functions, long post breaks the limitation of 140 characters now. Some explanation will not be done within 140 words and some content maybe need more details in the whole article to understand. Thus, no limitation on words is closer to the user in the natural state of life habits and this action also meets the trend of social media practices. It is the very reason that micro-blog gains a large popularization due to its short passage. In the process of viewing blogs, the 140 words are still the main body expect for the attractive content appealing citizen to open the rear link. Little changes are happened to micro-blog, in

a long term, it will provide a long article with more space and better the experience of users.

Zhang & Negro (2013) mentioned that Sina Weibo is the most popular Weibo service in China, most people though that Weibo had changed their lives and they believed Weibo was one of the most reliable information sources. People can use Weibo to get news and information. They could also find other people's opinion on some public events and express their views on comments area. Zhang & Negro (2013) noted three points that Weibo plays an important role in today's society. Firstly, Weibo increased online concern and supervision of the government. Secondly, Weibo is a platform for individual to achieve the power on social problem. Thirdly, Weibo as an information tool allows Internet users to communicate with each other. Zhang & Negro (2013) also describes that people can not only broadcast information on their own Weibo pages but also can "forward/ repost" link form others' pages on their own pages and the link can be re-re-forward by other followers. Zhang & Negro (2013) mentioned two main factors, one is "following" and the other one is "follower". Citizens can follow anyone whom they are interested in and they can also be the followers on other people's pages. "Since every Weibo user has their own 'Following' and 'Follower' group, there is always a possibility to share posts not only within the same group of users but also with others outside this group. Outsiders may generate this sharing with another group of users" (Zhang & Negro, 2013, p.207). Zhang & Negro's research is very helpful for my research. The post is attractive enough to drive more internet users to read and forward if an individual user does not have a large number of fans at the beginning. And this will lead to more attention. That means one post could have lots of potential readers. However, how unknown individuals can attract attention to a problem through Weibo, it is worth to research. I will analyze this point in the later section.

Sarapin& Morris (2014) found that "pressing the "Like" button on a Facebook page is an act of intentional communication" (Sarapin & Morris, 2014, p151) and "Like"

button constitutes speech. “Liking” someone or something on Facebook should be considered protected speech” (Sarapin & Morris, 2014, p152). Weibo also has the function of “Like”, the more people click “Like”, the more attention of this post. When I do my research I will notice the data of “Like”.

Huang & Sun (2016) emphasized social media’s ability of communication and coordination, and they highlighted the effect of social media on protests. This study found that social media promote “individualized expressions of the preference of opposition” (Huang & Sun, 2016, p397). The reason of the protest is “the lack of transparency and limited public participation in decision” (Huang & Sun, 2016, p398), these protests will have a negative impact on the government and leading to distrust of the government. But on the other hand, it will put pressure on the government and forcing the government to improve its efficiency. At the beginning, people mainly used Weibo to express their personal preference revelation, which shapes a powerful public opinion, during the street protest days, people used Weibo to express distrust to government.. Huang & Sun (2016) mentioned that Weibo just used for mobilization, because political protests are still sensitive in China. The location of open discussion is relatively limited, it undermine the foundation of democracy. But the emergence of social media provides an online public sphere for citizens to discuss openly and freely.

Ji (2015) found that there are lots of remedy attribution and causal attribution which cannot help government to make decision for questions appeared in Weibo discussion. These attributions sometimes caused indignant or sorrowful emotions. Ji (2015) analyzed the emotion of Peking University students in the discussion of air pollution on Weibo. Ji (2015) found that indignation is the main emotion on environmental policies and south- north conflicts. Angry causal attributions tend to blame. Ji (2015) concluded that Weibo users hasty blame to the government is the main character about air pollution and citizens regard Weibo as a sphere to blame/criticize authorities. Research also found that compassion among the public has enough power and it usually gains moral advantage. It can promote political

change when the public power is gathered together. Weibo has a censorship system, some sensitive words will be censorship. But China has long historical culture，people can use metaphorical words and language games to comment or express their opinions. Ji (2015) found that some emotional expressions create opportunities for online interaction. What kind of emotional expression will attract viewers in the posts of individual users? More details will be given in the following research.

Huang & Sun (2013) found that networking and communication on Weibo can promote the “scale shift” of homeowner collective action in contemporary China. Weibo is a valuable platform for activists to expand the geographic area of their network work. When the posts match the potential audience's interest, it will attract lots of attention of Weibo users. Meanwhile, the use of people's sense of consensus can achieve better communication effect. This study mentioned what kind of sender is reliable, the identity verification function in Weibo is very important in information dissemination. As people tend to follow and disseminate reliable information that is trustworthy, identity verification is considered to be a source of information people are more likely to believe in. Ksiazek (2015) mentioned that online civil comments constitute a common public sphere，But there are still some hostile words in these comments. Ksiazek (2015) figured out some organizations set up programs that people must register and then they can comment or post information in order to create a healthy and positive public sphere for discussion. In the study of Ksiazek (2015), he found that most of the news sites need to register to comment. People will realize that when they want to post hostile messages, these messages will be combined with their identity. Ksiazek (2015) also suggested that the quality of the comments on the news websites should be improved; using effective filtration censorship to inspect comments or posts. The “reputation management system” (Ksiazek, 2015, p.567) is used to supervise the discussion platform, the presence of a reputation will improve the quality of the comment. The authentication of micro-blog's individual users is also important for the reliability of the post.

Privacy, public sphere and social media

Privacy appears in every corner of the Chinese society, privacy may strengthen or weaken the relationship between people. In the new social environment and public sphere, the fact that people pay attention to privacy reflects a social interaction model of the new social environment. Yuan, Feng & Danowski (2013) also concluded that "privacy and publicness are mutually implicated notions that are historically and contextually defined" (Yuan, Feng & Danowski, 2013, p1028).Privacy can also help people to understand the relationship between "self and others, individual and collectives, private and public, as well as spatial boundaries in broader contemporary Chinese society" (Yuan, Feng & Danowski, 2013, p1029). When people post information on Weibo, it may have risk of exposing personal information and bring some negative impact for people. The privacy will be also disclosed by posting experience on micro-blog and this will trigger some negative comments. "Privacy is understood on Sina Weibo for both its intrinsic values and instrumental purposes" (Yuan, Feng & Danowski, 2013, p1028). Micro-blog in the comments area is the best place to understand the communication amongst audience. It is a focus of my research to grasp the attitude of the spectators through comments.

According to Shao& Wang (2016), attracting public attention through social media has become a trend, and social media is a development of traditional public sphere. News media is an important part of the public sphere, due to the development of social media. Mainstream media has been replaced by social media. Social media has changed the relationship between mainstream media and the public sphere. Social media has changed the structure of modern public sphere, it has become a very important part of democratic life and social media has an important impact on China's political life. This study "underlined the counter-hegemony power in public sphere" (Shao & Wang, 2016, p.694). But the researchers mentioned a very important point that most blogs had few visitors every day, which proved that people who can attract lots of attention in the public sphere do not include ordinary citizens. It turns

out that some regular micro-blog users can still attract a lot of readers without a lot of fans.

By studying previous studies, I found that Weibo provides a platform for Chinese citizens who participate in public affairs through social media, and Weibo also provides a channel for Chinese citizens to express their opinion. Weibo also promotes communication between citizens and government. From those studies, I understand how Weibo be used in China and discover the function of Weibo in Chinese society. Weibo communication broke the process of traditional agenda setting. Compare with mass media, I know what the advantage of Weibo is in current society. The most important thing is that the government has quickly adapted to use Weibo to maintain control of society. Social media is the development of the public sphere, Weibo is a typically social media in China, more and more people express their needs on Weibo.

In this case, the author of the post did not have many followers at the beginning. Among the posts she published, what words are attracting the reader's attention. In the comment area, which discourses in the post will cause people to comment? By analyzing the meaning of words through rhetoric, which can reveal this woman's values and it also can understand the function of discourse of the post in different contexts. People mention rhetoric, they may be linked to poetry and prose, and when talking about social media, rhetoric is often overlooked.

The most of the previous researches focused on the function of Weibo in Chinese society, such as Weibo is a platform for social and political contention (Poell, Kloet& Zeng, 2014); Weibo can promote communication between citizens and government and provides a channel for Chinese citizens to express their opinion(Gu, 2014); Weibo provides a platform for Chinese social media to participate in public affairs (Jiang, 2014); the influence of public opinion on Weibo (Wang & Liu, 2015); Weibo can bring participatory democracy (Chen, 2015) and so on.

However in the field of Weibo research, there are few studies departing for the discourse of Weibo individual user. In recent years, more and more people want to gain assertion of rights through Weibo. Through the result of Weibo data center, the main types of hot topics on Weibo are about celebrities and social problems in 2016 (Weibo data center, 2016). People want to gain assertion of rights through Weibo is a trend in the present Chinese society. What kind of individual post could attract lots of attention of audiences, it is worth to research. The post of the case which I chose was representative and famous. When the woman posted the long blog, many Weibo users cared about this event, the post was forwarded, commented and endorsed by Weibo user for thousands and thousands times. So this case is representative in the social problems. Discourse is not only language that helps people communicate and understand, but also the components of the world and the focus of concern in society. Discourse is a description of reality, it can reflect the reality. Bryman (2016) also described that discourse is the solution to the problem and the focus of investigation. It contains rhetoric which is a way of trying to persuade others. Discourse is a means of conveying meaning. It can describe events in different place (Olausson, 2013).

To analyzing the words of posts and comments, which is a direct way of analyzing discourse. “Wherever there is persuasion, there is rhetoric" (cited by Byman, 2015, p.20). Why this post can attract so many audiences, how does the author structure this post? Rhetoric has analytical ability to find some invisible relationship. Rhetoric is also a good tool to help people to analyze the language of the text and social behavior. So I will combine the concepts of discourse and rhetoric to analyze the posts and comments on Weibo. I will introduce the theory of discourse and rhetoric in the next section.

Theoretical frame and concepts

Discourse

> "Foucault notes that discourse as knowledge: the product of specific social, historical, institutional and political conditions that render certain statements truthful and meaningful, and others false, marginalized and deviant. And he also mention that, discourse can define and address specific things in society" (Orgad, 2012, p27).

As Foucault said that discourse is production of knowledge, and it also can define and address specific things in society. Olausson (2013) also mentioned that, character of discourse is to describe people, events, phenomenon in different place. Those places can be local, own countries, foreign countries in all over the world. Every element is linked together. Bryman also described that: 'discourse' was a term that denoted the way in which a particular set of linguistic categories relating to an object and the ways of depicting it frame the way we comprehend that object (Bryman, 2016, p 531)

Discourse is not only a language helps people communicate and understand, but also a component of the world and the focus of concern in society. Discourse is a description of reality, it can reflect the reality. Bryman (2016) also described that discourse is the solution to the problem and the focus on investigation; it contains rhetoric which is a way of trying to persuade others. Discourse is not only a means of conveying meaning, but also a thing that people do in conversation and writing.

Rhetoric

> "Wherever there is persuasion, there is rhetoric. And wherever there is 'meaning', there is 'persuasion'. Food, eaten and digested, is not rhetorical. But in the meaning of food there is much rhetoric, the meaning being persuasive enough for the idea of food to be used, like the ideas of religion, as a rhetorical device for statesmen." (cited by Eyman, 2015, p.20).

As Eyman (2015) described that almost all interpersonal relationships contain rhetoric, so rhetoric can be used for all communication practice. Rhetoric is a persuasive artistic means of communication, it also the art of shaping society. Medieval rhetoric is mainly used for missionary and legal letter writing. Rhetoric is also the main style of writing poetry. During the renaissance rhetoric is applied to private discourse. In the Enlightenment, the style of rhetorical is constantly changing. Contemporary rhetoricians argue that rhetoric is a study of language which can affect people's behavior (Eyman, 2015, p.24). Eyman also mentioned the viewpoint of Chaim Perelman that: “rhetoric is useful for undermining any claim to any form of knowledge that is absolute (and therefore beyond argument); instead knowledge arises through argument (persuasive rhetoric) within communities that share assumptions and beliefs” (Eyman, 2015, p.25).The power of rhetoric is that it can produce persuasive discourse. The meaning of rhetoric is its use and context, it can reveal ideological action.

I will regard the discourse and rhetoric theory as my theoretical framework. As Bryman (2016) stated that discourse is a flexible way to analyze articles and texts. Analyzing discourse does not take into external determinant. It concentrates on text and looking for potential implications in discourse. Language is a way of behaving, and it can be used to present oneself. Flick (2014) noted that analyzing discourse not only includes daily conversations, but also includes interviews, media reports and articles. “Rhetorical analysis emphasizes the ways in which arguments are constructed either in speech or in written texts and the role that various linguistic devices (such as metaphor, analogy,andirony) play in the formulation of arguments”. (Bryman, 2016, p 539)

Rhetoric has analytical ability to find some invisible relationship. Rhetoric is also a good tool to help people to analyze the language of the text and social behavior. In study of rhetoric, the text is the form of expression of controversy or persuasive

discourse. When studying the text, “textual, contextual, cultural, temporal, intentionality, and intertextuality” (Eyman, 2015, p.32) should be considered, which will helps me to analyze the text and understand the purpose of the text author. I will focus on the author's expression. With the evolution of modern social means of communication, rhetoric is adapting to changing, but it is often difficult to find rhetoric in these new media. In social media, rhetoric is often underutilized or incorrectly used. If social media users use the rhetorical correctly, they will create more influence. They will also gain the ability to use emotion to attract support. Social media can become a platform for the development of social influence, only if people can use rhetoric effectively. When I am doing rhetorical analysis, I will combine original post and comments to do argument and analysis. I'll find some typical sentences to do rhetorical analysis. Audiences commented because they were interested in a point of the article, which prove the rhetoric of the post attracted the attention of the audience. So combining the audiences’ comments is a way to find rhetorical sentences of the post.

Method and material

Material

On January 24, 2017, an event made a great sensation on Weibo. A woman posted a long post which has 18000 Chinese characters on Weibo. In general, the average length of post on Weibo is 140 characters. Most Weibo users use less than 140 words combine pictures to share their lives. 140 characters are enough to express people’s normal mood in daily life. But the author used 18000 characters to describe this event and express her mind at that time, which is quite unusual on Weibo. The woman described she was brutally beaten by some men when she travelled in Li Jiang (a city in China). This post also included some pictures that the face of the woman was seriously disfigured. This post attracted thousands of people to pay close attention in a short time. At the beginning, the author did not have many followers on Weibo. But this post can also attract lots of attention. Many people reposted and commented on

this post. Till I collected the data, the author had more than 260 thousand followers. In my research I will analyze one original post which is the hottest on this woman's page on Sina Weibo. This post also include 9 pictures, those pictures will help me to analyze the content of the post. I chose 100 comments which from this post to do the second research question.

Method

To study the first research question which is how does an individual user of a social network succeeds in attracting attention to a problem? I chose a post which is the most attractive on the woman's Weibo page. Till I collected the data, this post has 537925 comments, 604602 people "Like" this post, and this post was forwarded by Weibo users 445252 times. This paper intends to conduct a rhetorical analysis of the post of Weibo. Aristotle defined rhetoric as "the faculty of discovering the possible means of persuasion in reference to any subject whatever" (cited by Zhang, 2016, p.9). Language is very important to study human communication. People's words can form attitudes and induce the behavior of others (Zhang, 2016, p.9). Rhetorical analysis can help me find that whether the post is persuasive.

Any language can reveal some truths; by analyzing the meaning of words can reveal the values and ideology, so that we can understand the different meanings of different discourses in different contexts (Zhang, 2016). "Online posts are rhetorical in that they seek self-promotion and articulate personal experience, attempting to put individuals in a desirable light" (Zhang, 2016, p.9). In addition, "a primary focus of rhetorical analysis is on interpretation of language regarding its use for the purpose of influencing others" (Amos, Spears &Pentina, 2016, p231). According to rhetorical theory, we can analyze the persuasion of the post through several means. I choose four classic rhetorical means: the credibility of the woman (ethos), emotional appeals (pathos), logical appeals (logos) (Amos, Spears &Pentina, 2016, p.231) and Metaphor. When I study this question I read the original Chinese post and translate it to English. According to four means (Ethos, Pathos, Logos and Metaphor) to analyze it and found

some typical sentences combine with whole context to research how the author persuade audiences.

To study the second research question which is how does the public respond and interact in a viral social network post? I selected “Hot comments” to do research. “Hot comments” is a unique part of Sina Weibo, which relevant because the response to them is higher. In comments area, we can choose two ways to browse comments, such as “hot comments” and “in chronological order”. “Hot comments” is representative, the responses is more, so that the comment can arouse more interest of audiences. The collection of the top hot comments was collected manually, because the data was protected by Sina Weibo. The data cannot be search through the search engine, such as Google. I found the post of Li Jiang Event was posted by the woman, and comments to the post can be displayed right below the post itself. Then I collected the data, there were 537925 comments below the post. The comments were divided into two categories, one is “hot comments”, the other is chronological order (see figure 1). I selected top 100 “hot comments” to do quantitative content analysis. I used SPSS to do quantitative content analysis. Quantitative content analysis is an approach to analyze texts, pictures and oral texts. It is a flexible method which can be used to different media to generate data for analyzing text. SPSS can help me to explain the phenomenon through the numerical analysis, which is used for the objective and quantitative analysis of the content. I want to study the contents of the SPSS encoding. The data, analysis of data changes are clear via SPSS and draw a final conclusion.

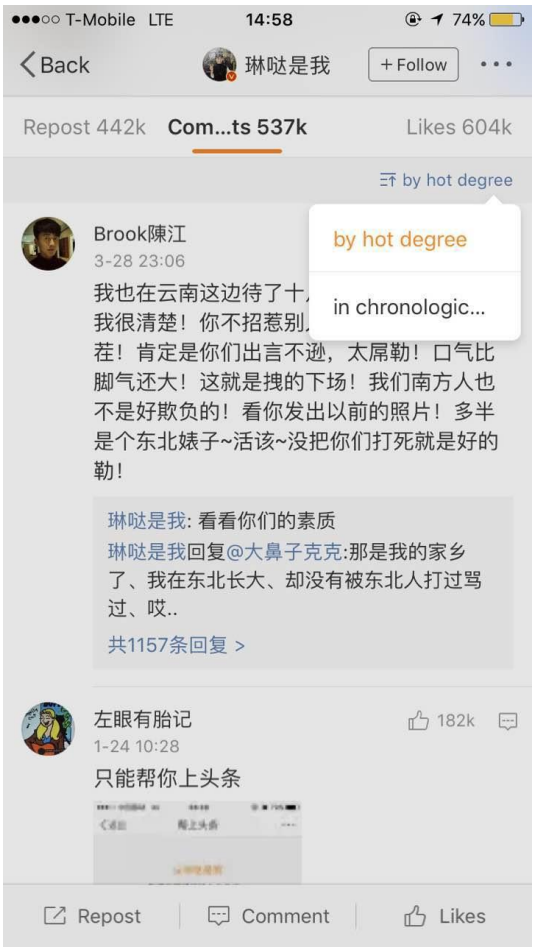

Figure 1 *comments were divided into two categories* retrieved from: http://weibo.com/u/5526045431?topnav=1&wvr=6&topsug=1&is_hot=1

According to Bryman (2016), I create a codebook with variables and code in SPSS by following my code book,I coded 5 variables, e.g. sex of post's responder, attitude of comment, number of "like", number of people response comment, date gap between comment date and post date, each variable corresponded to some values.

No.	Variable	Values
1	Gender	1=male 2=female
2	Attitude of comment	1= abuse, nonsupport 2= doubt this woman 3= supported, sympathy, expressed concern about this event, give best wishes to this woman 4 =shared useful information

		5 =denounced Li Jiang police 6 =expressed attitude that they don't want to travel to Li Jiang and criticize tourism industry of Li Jiang 7 =expressed anger to the perpetrators
3	Number of people endorse comment	1=less than 100 2=101-1000 3=1001-10000 4=10001-100000 5=100001-200000 6=more than 200001
4	Number of people response comment	1 =Less than 100 2 =101-1000 3 =1001-5000 4 =5001-10000 5 =More than 10001
5	Date gap between comment date and post date:	1 =Less than 24 hours 2 =24hours- 1 week 3 =1 week- 1 month 4 =1 month- 2 month 5 =2month- 3 month 6 =3 month- 4 month 7 =more than 4 month

The ways of interaction of public on Weibo are comment, "like" and forward. It is more difficult to find the forward contents on Weibo, but the number of people "like" comment and the number of people response comment are easier to search. So I coded one of the variables is attitude of comment, and I classified the selected comments. The gender of post's responders, attitude of comment, number of people "like" comment, number of comments' replies and the reply time of each comment are clearly on Weibo page. In application of Weibo, each person only clicking "like" one time, they cannot repeat to clicking "like". But people can repeat to reply one comment many times. By analyzing the relationship between attitude of comment and

other variables, which can analyze what kind of comments can get more interaction and responds. The result of data was showed by frequencies tables and crosstabs. In the analysis, I will combine the content of the original post and the comments of the audiences to do the analysis and research. Because the original text has 18000 Chinese characters, I will choose more representative sentences to analyze. The codebook and tables will be posted at the end of this thesis.

Strengths and weaknesses

The post of the case which I chose was representative and famous. When the woman posted the long blog, many Weibo users cared about this event, and the post was forwarded, commented and endorsed by Weibo users for thousands and thousands times. That I used quantitative content analysis to conduct this research showcases objectivity. According to Bryman (2016), content analysis is a research technique for the objective, systematic and quantitative description of the main test content of communication. Content analysis is not only about counting, but also about creating meaning from what is counted and measured. The advantage of quantitative research is that it can provide descriptive data. However, sufficient samples are required to obtain the validity of a statistical test to determine whether the results are accurate. The sample of my research is relatively small, which may not be sufficient to yield statistical significance. The amount of sampled comments is 100 which is not a large number in this research, but the 100 comments which I chose were among the hottest ones. Therefore, the results can be trusted.

Figure 2 *long Weibo post,*retrieved from:
http://weibo.com/u/5526045431?topnav=1&wvr=6&topsug=1&is_hot=1

As Bauer & Gaskell mentioned that “documents can be analyzed rhetorically to very good effect” (2000, p.218), rhetorical analysis is a flexible and interpretive way to analyze texts. “The power of rhetorical analysis is its immediacy, its ability to talk about the particular and the possible” (Bauer & Gaskell, 2000, p.211). Nevertheless, “the main weakness of rhetorical analysis is the extent of its formalisms” (Bauer & Gaskell,2000,p.218). Rhetoric is a kind of qualitative analysis. It is mainly by virtue of intuition and experience of the analyst, as well as information and characteristics of the analytic target to make judgment.

Quantitative content analysis is appropriate to analyze data with a big sample size and is usually less specific than qualitative research methods. Qualitative research methods handle a smaller sample selection and include a deeper analysis. I combined these two methods which are complementary. Qualitative analysis is the basic

premise of quantitative analysis. If there are not qualitative analysis methods, quantitative is blind and worthless. Quantitative analysis methods are more scientific and accurate, which can lead qualitative analysis to draw more profound conclusions.

Analysis of result

To address RQ1, firstly, the object of the analysis is a post written by a woman. If a blogger wants someone to share his/her posts extensively, the premise is that he/she needs to have enough followers. Zhang & Negro (2013) noted that every Weibo user has his/her own "Following" group and "Followers" group, but the post not only can be shared by users in group but also be shared by outsiders. “Communication through Weibo starts from an individual sharing with their follower groups and then, after several layers of group sharing, the message may reach the mass” (Zhang& Negro, 2013, p.207). However, the woman did not have many followers at the beginning. Then why did this post still receive a lot of reposts and comments? Moreover, this post has more than 1800 Chinese characters. Weibo is a platform of social media, and such a long post like the woman posted on Weibo is relatively rare.

As Bauer & Gaskell (2000) described, rhetorical analysis is from who/what/where/when/why aspects to analyze. When doing rhetorical analysis, it is very important to determine the spirit of the rhetoric of the selected text to ensure the analysis is contextualized (p.212). Rhetorical analysis should combine context, text and audience together (Bauer & Gaskell, 2000). The context of discourse is of great importance in order to contextualize the analysis. This woman was beaten when she traveled in Li Jiang, leading to her disfiguration and medical treatments. This post was divided into two sections. In the first section, the woman described the whole process and details about how she was beaten by several men. In the second section, she wrote that after she called the police, the attitude and manner of the police handling the case disappointed and irritated her. In this context, she wrote this long post on Weibo. From the rhetorical point of view, this post is persuasive. The author

used four rhetorical ways, including Pathos, Ethos, Logos and Metaphor. Below I will analyze the rhetorical methods the woman used respectively.

Pathos

This woman was the protagonist of this post, which was written in the first person. This event happened in a very famous tourist city (Li Jiang) in China. The incident took place at 3:30 am on November 11, 2016, and the post was posted on January 24, 2017. The reason for her to post this incident on Weibo could be explained by a quote:"*Record the things at this moment, let you know that I felt wronged and suffer from injustice*". This woman wanted to narrate her encounter through Weibo. This sentence is an appeal to emotion, and she wanted the audience to know the violence she had suffered and the injustice she had experienced. The author created an emotional response to persuade the audience to trust her. From the "hot comments" area we can find a comment which got most "likes" and most responses. The comment said "*Let me to repost it. Hope more and more people can read your post and you can get more help!*" This comment got more than two thousand and sixty hundred "likes" and more than ten thousand replies. This proves that the woman got the support of the majority.

Attitude * Numberof"like" Crosstabulation

			Numberof"like"						
			less than 100	101-1000	1001-10000	10001-100000	100001-200000	more than 200000	Total
Attitude	abuse, nonsupport	Count	5	1	1	0	0	0	7
		% within Attitude	71.4%	14.3%	14.3%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%
	supported, sympathy, expressed concern about this event, give best wishes to this woman	Count	6	4	23	6	1	1	41
		% within Attitude	14.6%	9.8%	56.1%	14.6%	2.4%	2.4%	100.0%
	shared useful information	Count	1	0	4	7	2	0	14
		% within Attitude	7.1%	0.0%	28.6%	50.0%	14.3%	0.0%	100.0%
	denounced Li Jiang police	Count	0	0	6	2	1	0	9
		% within Attitude	0.0%	0.0%	66.7%	22.2%	11.1%	0.0%	100.0%
	expressed attitude that they don't want to travel to Li Jiang and criticize tourism industry of Li Jiang	Count	0	0	8	3	1	0	12
		% within Attitude	0.0%	0.0%	66.7%	25.0%	8.3%	0.0%	100.0%
	expressed anger to the perpetrators	Count	2	2	6	7	0	0	17
		% within Attitude	11.8%	11.8%	35.3%	41.2%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%
Total		Count	14	7	48	25	5	1	100
		% within Attitude	14.0%	7.0%	48.0%	25.0%	5.0%	1.0%	100.0%

Figure 3*Crosstab of Attitude & Number of "like"*

From another point of view, according to the table in Figure 3, among the 100 samples, 48% of the comments got 1001-10000 endorsers, and 25% of the comments got 10001-100000 endorsers. Among the unsupported comments, less than 100 endorsers reached the highest ones and accounted for 71.4% of the comments. In the sample of comments that Weibo users denounced Li Jiang police, 66.7% of the endorsers fell in the interval of 1001-10000, and 22.2% of endorsers in the interval of 10001-100000, while endorsers of less than 100 and 101-1000 were 0%. There were 57.1% of the comments that Weibo users expressed support got endorsed in the interval of 10001-100000. In the comments of sharing useful information, there were 50% of comment got 10001-100000 endorsers.

The audience was also very important to the post of this woman. The audience of the speech and the audience of the text are different. Bauer & Gaskell (2000) stated that the audiences of oral performers are immediate, and the audience of the text should identify through the analysis. The feelings of the audience of the speech and that of the text are totally different. The degree of enjoyment the audience gets from a speech could be affected by the performer's mood, behavior, movement, and expression of the infection, while the text readers can only rely on themselves to analysis and distinguish the experience and emotional content that the authors want to express. To some extent, the micro-blog, as a form of text to post, can also trigger such a stir. This is also very worthy of making a sound research.

The audience is positioned in some way. This post is about social problem. The assertion of rights is a common phenomenon on Weibo, and more and more people gain justice through Weibo in recent years. The audience of this post is extensive. First of all, this post is about a woman's disfiguration. From the pictures in the post we can see that her face was injured severely. In this post the author used emotions to attract and persuade the audience. This skill is Pathos, which is one of the rhetorical methods. For example, the author wrote "*We were hit by them violently until we feel dizzy. Then they dragged me out of the restaurant and exerted all their strength to pull my*

hair. […] My face was beaten and full of blood, and they used the broken bottle to scratch my face […] I vomited blood and I could not breathe". Through this description, the author let the audience understand the experience of her. The audience knew that the woman was beaten by many men. Through the comments of the audience we can see that this woman got a lot of sympathized comments. For instance, "*I sympathize with you.*""*I hope you will recover soon…*""*Come on, everything will be fine…*""*I hope you will be strong and brave…*" "*God bless you.*" The post also attracted some audience to express anger to the suspects. They said "*Those men are rogues.*""*I hate the criminals.*" "*Why those men bullied a woman, so hateful.*"

"Another form of persuasive argument is the appeal to emotion" (Bauer & Gaskell, 2000, p.214). The most important means of persuasion of this post is to evoke emotions. Some of the words in the post can stimulate sympathy and anger. For example, "*…They dragged me out of the restaurant and my hair was pulled by three or four men. They beat me. They not only beat me but also recording video. They felt that the video was not working well, they pulled my hair and let my face turned to the sky…My face was beaten and full off blood, they used the broken bottle to scratch my face… They kicked me venomously before leaving. I vomited blood and I could not breathe…*" This woman described the process and the details of the violence. She described the action of the perpetrators and her state of being beaten. She wanted the audience to be able to experience her pain through her description. For instance, she wrote that "*…three of us were beaten by those men for half an hour…*"She used time to show the duration of pain that she had suffered. This woman expressed her helplessness through the description of the number of perpetrators, the situation that no one helped them call the police in the process of violence, and the difficulties of doing injury identification.

Ethos

Figure 4*Authentication and Logo*

According to rhetorical theory, we can analyze the persuasion of the post in several aspects: the credibility of the woman (ethos), emotional appeals (pathos), "presenting evidence for a given truth" (logos) (Amos, Spears &Pentina, 2015, p.231). Generally, establishing credibility of authorities is critical in the scientific article. In this post, credibility establishment is also very important for the author, otherwise audiences may doubt the reality of what she posted. Confirming her identity is the first step to establish credibility. After her transmitted the post, she applied for authentication to Sina Weibo (Figure 4). A “V” logo can be found at her Weibo home page, which means her identity has been verified. “(Dong a litigant was beaten and disfigured in Li Jiang)” was written by this woman in her brief introduction on Weibo home page.

From this article, angry emotion can also be found. She described that “We were beaten in this barbecue restaurant for a long time. The owner of the restaurant did not call the police and ambulance. When I was beaten by those men, he just watched with no mercy. When I was in hospital, I asked police to do injury identification, but they refused. When nurse was recording the detail of my injury, he did not record the biggest wound; they ignored length and depth of the biggest wound on purpose." She shows her despair by describing these unfair. In this post, the pictures attached can

also express emotion. A post can attach at most 9 pictures on Weibo. In this post, 5 pictures are close-up picture of the woman's face, 2 pictures are close picture of this woman when she was in hospital, and the other 2 pictures are photos of this woman's beautiful face before she got any injury. The visual impact of photos is great. Audiences can see detail of the wound clearly and realize seriousness of the injury. Those pictures were evidence and proving the credibility and authenticity of this post, which is persuasive.

Logos and Metaphor

Logos is a part of rhetoric, which is a logical argument to convince audiences (Beuer& Gaskell, 2000, p.214). In this post, Ethos and Pathos have been used for many times by the author. It is hard to found some obvious Logos sentences in the post. But from other point of view, firstly, the author's narrative style is following in time sequence. At the beginning, the author described the specific time for arriving at the barbecue restaurant. Then she described "Three of us were beaten by those men for half an hour", she also wrote down the specific time when ambulance arrived was 6:30 am. In the second part of the post, the author described the amount of money she lost, the date of police's case issued and number of days it took to process the case. These description is very logical and convincing. Secondly, this post has two parts. The author did not directly express her dissatisfaction to the criminals and the police. But we still can easily catch this feeling from the article in which she emphasized the harm she suffered in Lijiang and through the description of negligence of the police when they processed the case. Thirdly, the purpose of the post is clear. From one sentence "Record reality and let you know that I suffered from injustice. No longer feel alone because of your support." we can see that the author wants to express her grievances and catch audiences' attention. Therefore, when the author wrote this post she was persuading audiences by logic.

Metaphor is not used much in this post, and the most obvious place is the last sentence which is "Even if I am a ghost, I live happily". The premise of this sentence

is "If I disappear after February 11th, then I must be killed in Lijiang by someone". In this sentence, being a ghost means death. This sentence also implies a meaning that the action of posting on Weibo can probably cause danger. But even if it is dangerous, this woman also wants to expose reality to public.

Positive comments

To address RQ2, the table (Figure 5) shows that 41% of the samples expressed support and sympathy to this woman, and they were very concerned about this event. They also gave best wishes to this woman. 14% of samples shared useful information via their comments, such as that they suggest this woman should find a good lawyer to help her and provide some useful detail about litigation. Some people recommended a good cosmetic hospital to her, and some suggest her to take injury identification. 9% of samples denounced Li Jiang police. 12% of samples showed attitude that they would not travel to Li Jiang and criticized tourism of Li Jiang city. 17% of samples expressed anger to the perpetrators.

Attitude

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	abuse, nonsupport	7	7.0	7.0	7.0
	supported, sympathy, expressed concern about this event, give best wishes to this woman	41	41.0	41.0	48.0
	shared useful information	14	14.0	14.0	62.0
	denounced Li Jiang police	9	9.0	9.0	71.0
	expressed attitude that they don't want to travel to Li Jiang and criticize tourism industry of Li Jiang	12	12.0	12.0	83.0
	expressed anger to the perpetrators	17	17.0	17.0	100.0
	Total	100	100.0	100.0	

Figure 5 *Frequency table of Attitude*

In the sample of 100 hot comments, 41 of the comments expressed support and concern. The text also mentioned the fuse triggering the event was the woman's Dong Bei (a*northeast area* of China)accent. So Weibo users who come from Dong Bei paid more attention on this post. Some comments said *"I am a local resident in northeast China. I never meet any violent events before [...] We never bully women, elders, children."*Weibo users who come from Yun Nan province and Li Jiang city are also a large group of audiences of this post, because this event happened in Li Jiang, Yun Nan. There are some comments saying *"I was born in Yun Nan, I was so sorry about you! I wish you all best." "I was working in Li Jiang, I knew those men, they often hurt others when they are drunk." "I come from Yun Nan. No matter who is wrong, I just want to say sorry to you!"*

People whose occupation is related to law are also the audience of this post. In their comments, I found one who is a lawyer. As I mentioned above, the identity of this Weibo user has been verified by Sina Weibo. He commented that "Criminals should take criminal responsibility. The victim should save pictures and medical record well. I suggest the victim to ask a famo*us layer to represent her and deal with this event."* Li Jiang police was mentioned in comments for many times. In the post, the woman has repeated that she had difficulty to pursue justice, so some audience replied that *"What are policemen doing? Those policemen are good for nothing!" "The local police officers were as useless as five years ago to a similar event."*

Attitude * numer of commets' replies Crosstabulation

			numer of commets' replies					
			less than 100	101-1000	1001-5000	5001-10000	more than 10001	Total
Attitude	abuse, nonsupport	Count	3	3	1	0	0	7
		% within Attitude	42.9%	42.9%	14.3%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%
	supported, sympathy, expressed concern about this event, give best wishes to this woman	Count	16	20	4	0	1	41
		% within Attitude	39.0%	48.8%	9.8%	0.0%	2.4%	100.0%
	shared useful information	Count	2	8	3	1	0	14
		% within Attitude	14.3%	57.1%	21.4%	7.1%	0.0%	100.0%
	denounced Li Jiang police	Count	1	6	1	1	0	9
		% within Attitude	11.1%	66.7%	11.1%	11.1%	0.0%	100.0%
	expressed attitude that they don't want to travel to Li Jiang and criticize tourism industry of Li Jiang	Count	0	6	5	1	0	12
		% within Attitude	0.0%	50.0%	41.7%	8.3%	0.0%	100.0%
	expressed anger to the perpetrators	Count	5	4	8	0	0	17
		% within Attitude	29.4%	23.5%	47.1%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%
Total		Count	27	47	22	3	1	100
		% within Attitude	27.0%	47.0%	22.0%	3.0%	1.0%	100.0%

Figure6*Crosstab of Attitude & Number of comments' replies*

According to the table (Figure 6),among comments expressing sympathy and concern to the victim, 39% received less than 100 replies and rate rise to 48.8% for those received 101 to 1000 replies. Both are much higher than other groups. Among comments that Weibo users expressed they do not want to travel to Li Jiang city, 50% received 101-1000 replies and 41.7% got 1001-5000 replies.

As table (Figure 7) shows that75.6% of the comments were replied within 24hours, which all supported and expressed sympathy to the victim. For comments sharing useful information, 92.9% of them were replied within 24 hours. For comments denouncing Li Jiang police, 88.9% of the comments received response within 24 hours. The comments expressing criticism on tourism industry of Li Jiang, 100% of them were replied within 24 hours. For comments contains angry emotion to the perpetrators, 76.5% of them were replied the post within 24 hours.

Attitude * Dategap Crosstabulation

			Dategap					
			less than 24 hours	24hours-1 week	1 week- 1 month	1 month- 2 month	2month- 3 month	Total
Attitude	abuse, nonsupport	Count	0	0	0	3	4	7
		% within Attitude	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	42.9%	57.1%	100.0%
	supported, sympathy, expressed concern about this event, give best wishes to this woman	Count	31	1	0	3	6	41
		% within Attitude	75.6%	2.4%	0.0%	7.3%	14.6%	100.0%
	shared useful information	Count	13	0	0	0	1	14
		% within Attitude	92.9%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	7.1%	100.0%
	denounced Li Jiang police	Count	8	1	0	0	0	9
		% within Attitude	88.9%	11.1%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%
	expressed attitude that they don't want to travel to Li Jiang and criticize tourism industry of Li Jiang	Count	12	0	0	0	0	12
		% within Attitude	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%
	expressed anger to the perpetrators	Count	13	1	1	1	1	17
		% within Attitude	76.5%	5.9%	5.9%	5.9%	5.9%	100.0%
Total		Count	77	3	1	7	12	100
		% within Attitude	77.0%	3.0%	1.0%	7.0%	12.0%	100.0%

Figure 7*Crosstab of Attitude & Date gap*

Negative comments

The table (Figure 5) also shows that 7% of samples abused and disagreed with the victim. Negative comments may include curse words. Someone replied that *"You don't provoke Yun Nan people, they also don't hurt you. This must your fault. You must spoke rudely first. It serves your right! Why they didn't kill you?"* This comment got 623 "likes". Other audience said "You are bitch! No one wants to beat you, because you are dirty", this comments got 21 "likes". The attitude of audiences is important, but no matter what attitude of the audiences is, the number of audience is an important part to spread this event rapidly on Weibo.

According the table (Figure 6) the number of comments in the interval of less than 100, 101-100 and 1001-5000 "likes" are more than other type, accounting for 27%，47%，22% of the samples. In unsupported comments received less than 100 and 101-1000 "likes" are the same (42%).

As table (Figure 7) also shows that, the comments which were released within 24 hours after the event was posted, account for 77%. "24hours-1week" account for 3%, "1week-1month" account for 1%, "1month-2months" account for 7%, "2-3month"

account for 12%. In unsupported comments, 42.9% of comments were posted in 1-2 months, 57.1% of comments were posted in 2-3 months.

Gender

Gender * Attitude Crosstabulation

			Attitude						
			abuse, nonsupport	supported, sympathy, expressed concern about this event, give best wishes to this woman	shared useful information	denounced Li Jiang police	expressed attitude that they don't want to travel to Li Jiang and criticize tourism industry of Li Jiang	expressed anger to the perpetrators	Total
Gender	male	Count	6	17	8	5	7	8	51
		% within Gender	11.8%	33.3%	15.7%	9.8%	13.7%	15.7%	100.0%
	female	Count	1	24	6	4	5	9	49
		% within Gender	2.0%	49.0%	12.2%	8.2%	10.2%	18.4%	100.0%
Total		Count	7	41	14	9	12	17	100
		% within Gender	7.0%	41.0%	14.0%	9.0%	12.0%	17.0%	100.0%

Figure8*Crosstab of Gender & Attitude*

As the table (Figure 8) shows that, 100 hot comments were selected to research. In the 100 samples, 51 responders are male, 49 responders are female. In gender comparisons, male who expressed negative attitude to the victim are more than female. Female supporting the victim are more than male, which means female audiences are more likely to express sympathy because of the same gender. Another thing we need to pay attention is that according to report from Weibo data center, the number of male active user is higher than female, male account for 55.5% of total users, female accounted for 45.5% (Weibo data report, 2017). In the total number of Weibo users, male users are more than female users. But in our sample, male and female responders are almost half to half, which proves that this post attracts more female users to post a response.

Results of data

In this post, Pathos accounted for most of the posts of rhetoric. The author makes more audience to convince through the creation of emotional reactions. This post is the most important means to attract the audience. Some words in the post can arouse sympathy and anger. And more audiences express their attitude to this post and

views in the comments area. Ethos speech in this post is a means to persuade the audience via moral appeal and more credibility. This is also a real reaction in the previous paragraph which mentioned the word of credibility. It is the very first step to establish the credibility of the author of the post by Sina micro-blog authentication. In order to provide more proof of this post and improve the convincing on this post, injured photos are on exposure. The author provides evidence and persuades audience via rational reason. This is rhetoric is Logos although it is hard to find it. In this post, the author is clear about her post and provides details in time sequence logical, details of the event description and Logos statement. Al l of these is the right measures to persuade the audience. The logic thread in the presence of these rhetorical devices makes posts attractive enough, resulting in a wide spread in ten thousands of micro-blog user.

From the results of data, most of samples are the comments of people who expressed their supports. People also expressed their anger to the perpetrators followed by comments and shared the useful information. Postings attract a large number of female users, and female viewers are more likely to express sympathy and support for such emotions. At the same time, unsupported comments also exist, but less. This result should be the woman expected, First of all, no matter what the attitude of audience is, this post had attracted lots of attention of large number of audiences on Weibo.It will attract more people to pay attention to this event, in the condition of being concerned with one post and forwarding it in a large quantity. Secondly, from the data, most responders had expressed concern and sympathy for this woman, some of the audiences expressed anger to perpetrators. In the last part of rhetorical analysis of the post, the author wrote that "*Record the things at this moment, let you know that I felt wronged and suffer from injustice. No longer alone [...] Because of your support*". This woman also hopes that she can get support from audiences.

Some responders expressed that they did not want to travel to Li Jiang city, this kind of comments got the number of replied in interval of 1001-5000, which proving this

kind of comment attract people to discuss and reply. People are more likely to endorse the comments of people expressed they support to the post and comments of sharing useful information. Most of the comments are replied within 24 hours, which proving the post attracted lots of attention in a short time.

Weibo plays an important role in information transmission. In this case, the post caused a lot of public attention, the more public respond, the greater the impact of the post. Information dissemination of Weibo was faster than mainstream media, the data show that 77% of the audience reply the post within 24 hours. But most famous mainstream media of China - China Central Television reported this event 3 days later. Wang & Liu (2015) found that the influential users communicated on Weibo would get more support. This woman did not have many followers on Weibo at the beginning, but her post also can attracted lots of public, this proves that it is not only the influential users would get more support. Internet provides a platform for users to interact, discuss causes and make claims. Social media provides a platform for citizens to participate in politics. In this case, the woman posts the event on Weibo, she wrote her feeling, grievance and demand. This shows that social media can not only achieve democracy, but also help people gain justice. The woman tried to persuade the readers to get attention through the post. The woman describe events and phenomenon, she linked element together to make post truthful and meaningful. Discourse is a way of trying to persuade others. Eyman (2015) said that there is rhetoric where there is persuasion. The reason why this post can attract so many respond and comments, it manages to persuade others.

Discussion and conclusion

Bryman (2016) said discourse is the key to solve the problem, is a description to the reality and is to help people to deepen understand in communication. In the case of Lijiang, the female victim posted a long developing process of this event on micro-blog. She expressed her own ideas through text message. Audience understood the whole event through the post and communicated in the comments area. Bryman (2016) also said that the user in the discourse is our understanding of an object. That means these comments in the public area reflect the feelings on the post and the author. Olausson (2013) also mentioned that the nature of discourse is to describe people in different places, events, phenomena. The author of the post describes his own experiences through the text, express her feelings. Flick (2014) pointed out that the discourse includes not only the daily conversation, but also Interviews, media reports, and articles. Based on these analyze, the post itself is a kind of discourse.

Eyman (2015) mentioned that no matter where there is a persuading, there is rhetoric; no matter where there is the "meaning", there is "convincing". Rhetoric can be used for communication practice. Eyman (2015) also mentioned the power of rhetoric is that it can produce persuasive words. This post can attract a large number of comments of the audience for forwarding and praise. It must proves that there is convincing strength to attract the audience to express their views in the comments area, regardless of whether the audience's attitude is on support or not. The post is successfully attracted the attention of the audience as long as there is a response.

Zou (2013) found that Weibo communication broke the process of traditional agenda setting. Weibo allows people to collect, receive, and publish news and information freely on this platform. The emergence of new media changes the way of people to receive news and information. Speed of Weibo on Information dissemination is much faster than ordinary media. Chinese official media reported this event was latter than Weibo for 15 hours and Lots of people knew this events from the woman’s post.

After attracting more attention of a large audience, this post is forwarded on and on and more users of micro-blog browsed this post. And this is the powerful force of individual users. Compared with the previous ones, individual users are not only able to make friends in social media friends, share life, but also expressing demand and attracting attention. Individual users use social media to express their needs, get forwarded, attract the attention of the audience, and communicate with the audience. It is also a current trend for users to use social media.

Wang & Liu (2015) found that users with more influence will get more attention and support once they express their demand. However, I found that at the beginning of the event, the actress on micro-blog didn't have many followers, but she can still get a lot of attention. I analyzed the reason that the post can attract so much attention of users. And not all of the responding is on support. There still exists some negative attitude. As Xiong (2013) said that people choose their interested information for different events. Micro-blog users will express different views. In my study, it focus on that audience expressed sympathize with the blessing in comment area, and at the same time, the existence of negative attitude is shown. Most of previous studies focused on micro-blog in the Chinese social function. Micro-blog can promote the communication between the government and citizens, can provide a platform for China social media to participate in public affairs and so on. However, in the field of researching micro-blog, micro-blog personal discourse of users is relatively less. My study is beneficial to making compensation for personal users' existing knowledge on social media. And it also provides important insights and detailed case for research in the field of Chinese social media.

The spread information of Weibo is persistent. The spread information of Weibo and general media form stark contrast. Weibo has a powerful ability to forward and share information, if original blogger does not delete the article, you can search information through key words whenever you want. To the people who haven't

received this information, each forwarding one can be regarded as new information release. Some news can be spread over millions of times in a short time, that is to say, this kinds of information is continuous and persistent. The coverage of news or information is widely. The results of my research also showed that 77% of in the top 100 hot comments responded the post within 24 hours.

The main goal of this study was to analyze how did a Weibo user expresses appeal through post, and understand the view of audiences on this post through comments. Therefore, I analyzed the original post and the top 100 “hot comments” in order to see how this author became succeed in attracting attention to an event. To answer the question on how does an individual user of a social network succeed in attracting attention to an issue. The analysis shows that the woman’s post contained effective rhetorical elements which can attract the attention of the audiences. I used four rhetorical ways to analyze this post, which are Ethos, Pathos, Logos and Metaphor. Firstly, author used Ethos for many times, she attracted audiences by creating emotional responses. This woman wanted to get support, except 7% of the sample of top 100 “hot comments” said they did not support, other comments are positive comments. Secondly, Ethos increases the credibility of the post and is also an effective means of persuasion. Thirdly, author also uses more rational and logical approach to describe this event, through the description of time and figures to reflect the author's logic. Those are key points that she can attract audiences to repost and comment.

To answer the question on how does the public respond and interact in a viralsocial network post? I combine original post and sample comments to do the analysis. People replied this post because of the sentences or some words of the post arouse their interest, the response is also focused on what they internet. Generally, positive reviews is majority, some of them expressed support and sympathy, some people expressed anger, some people share the useful information, there are also some people expressed that they did not want to travel to Lijiang city. In short, the

audiences' comments are related to the post closely. Through the study, I also have a clearly understanding of the audiences' views of this post.

In recent years, more and more people want to gain fair and rights through Weibo. Persuasive articles can attract more audiences，"Wherever there is persuasion, there is rhetoric" (cited by Byman, 2015, p.20). The most important thing about this post is the audience's sense of identity. As known to us, the sense of identity could reach a general consensus among the audience sharing the same post. Although there are some people who abuse and challenge it, the public still show a lot of support on it. From the data shown in previous, it is reliable to draw a conclusion that post on micro-blog could arouse a stir beyond imagination. Pictures accompanied by the article offer the readers a more intuitive feel of the woman's terrible hurt. Research shows that this post has more female support than men.Women are more likely to express sympathy, so it attracts a large number of female users. This post arouses a general sense of compassion around the reader, and it is the very reason why this post has been successful in finding audiences. Audiences of micro-blog could express their preference and make comments on their own stand. Therefore, some rhetorical elements can really make the post more attractive to the audience. But rhetoric is only a subsidiary role, the most important elements are the author of the post and the audiences. Weibo provides a platform for people to share information, discuss topics, exchange views and seek help. People are gradually learning to use this platform to meet their own needs.

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Appendices

1. SPSS Codebook

No.	Variable	Values
1	Gender	1=male 2=female
2	Attitude of comment	1= abuse, nonsupport 2= doubt this woman 3= supported, sympathy, expressed concern about this event, give best wishes to this woman 4 =shared useful information 5 =denounced Li Jiang police 6 =expressed attitude that they don't want to travel to Li Jiang and criticize tourism industry of Li Jiang 7 =expressed anger to the perpetrators
3	Number of people endorse comment	1=less than 100 2=101-1000 3=1001-10000 4=10001-100000 5=100001-200000 6=more than 200001
4	Number of people response comment	1 =Less than 100 2 =101-1000 3 =1001-5000 4 =5001-10000 5 =More than 10001
5	Date gap between comment date and post date:	1 =Less than 24 hours 2 =24hours- 1 week 3 =1 week- 1 month 4 =1 month- 2 month 5 =2month- 3 month 6 =3 month- 4 month 7 =more than 4 month

2. Comments sample

No.	Date & Time	Content	Number of "like"	Number of comments' replies
1	29.03.2017	I lived in Yun Nan for more than 10 years. I knew the people who live in Yun Nan. You don't provoke Yun Nan people, they also don't hurt you. This must your fault. You must spoke rudely first. It serves your right! Why they didn't kill you?	623	1129
2	24.01.2017	Hope more people can help you!	182874	3532
3	24.01.2017	Let me to repost it. Hope more and more people can read your post and you can get more help!	266222	10188
4	04.05.2017	I think this is your fault. If you didn't speak rudely first, they won't hurt you!	5	6
5	24.01.2017	Your face has been disfigured. Those men commit a crime. Your post is not so clearly, you should find a lawyer to help you!	109225	1526
6	24.01.2017	What are policemen doing? Those policemen are good for nothing!	177804	5802
7	25.01.2017	I don't want to travel to Li Jiang.	163854	7972
8	25.01.2017	I support you to defend your rights. No matter where the police are, they must enforce the law. No matter where the bad people are, if they broken the law, they	18018	350

		should be punished by the government.		
9	24.01.2017	I was very angry! Girls must pay attention to be safe when they go out. Don't engage conflict with others alone. I sincerely hope that you will soon be restored to health.	7424	187
10	28.03.2017	I come from Yun Nan. No matter who is wrong, I just want to say sorry to you! Your face was disfigured, I hope you can be strong and wish you all the best.	604	31
11	25.01.2017	I will help you to repost this post and hope more and more people can help you	1444	31
12	01.03.2017	Hope the government can make a thorough investigation of this event and you can get fair.	540	1
13	27.01.2017	I was working in Li Jiang, I knew those men, they often hurt others when they drunk.	543	79
14	20.03.2017	Those men were so bad.	229	9
15	28.03.2017	I hope you can be brave, you can use law to protect yourself. I wish you all the best.	122	1
16	28.03.2017	I want to repost your post to help you. Hope more and more people can see your post.	96	8
17	18.03.2017	Hi famous person, can you teach me how to beat by others?	98	153
18	24.03.2017	I so angry with those men! How could they hurt a woman?	85	22
19	29.03.2017	Wow! You have already written posthumous papers, why don’t you go die?	78	173
20	29.03.2017	Criminals should be given criminally responsibility. I think you should find a good lawyer to help you!	51	3

21	20.03.2017	It serves your right!	74	0
22	02.04.2017	Hope more and more people can see your post and you can get more help.	36	1
23	19.03.2017	I watch the news that police found 9 criminals.	49	4
24	10.04.2017	I was so angry with those men, why government took sides with those men? Do the criminals had a good relationship with the government?	23	7
25	12.04.2017	You are bitch! No one wants to beat you, because you are dirty!	21	72
26	22.04.2017	I will help you to repost your post	5	1
27	26.03.2017	Has there been any new progress in this incident recently?	27	4
28	18.04.2017	I was born in Yun Nan, I was so sorry about you! I wish you all best.	15	1
29	22.04.2017	Why those men just beat you? Because I think you must speak rudely first, so it serves your right.	15	20
30	25.01.2017	I think I will never travel to Li Jiang again.	3291	169
31	28.01.2017	I will repost your post. I hope I can help you.	208	980
32	25.01.2017	I am a local in northeast China. I never meet any violent events before. Because the northeasterners are straightforward and put every we've got to do something. So, other outsiders think that northeasterners are violent. But we never bully women,	3032	431

		elders, children.		
33	25.01.2017	I am a local in northeast China. We never bully women, elders, children.	3032	431
34	25.01.2017	Maybe they are local gang members. They might have strong backing. They used huge money to buy off local government for helping them.	3073	116
35	24.01.2017	I want to help her via forwarding.	2159	13
36	25.01.2017	I hope more and more people can help you	2954	136
37	25.01.2017	I don't allow you guys to blame the local police officers. They have tried their best to protect the criminals. (smile face)	2543	108
38	25.01.2017	The local police officers were as useless as five years ago to a similar event.	2454	70
39	24.01.2017	I just traveled to Lijiang. The local tourist guide told me to stay in hotel in evening and the staffs in airport are uneducated. The locals know the ugly phenomenon in their city, they also want to keep tourists away from the ugly phenomenon.	103614	6487
40	24.01.2017	I have forwarded this weibo. I suggest this girl to organize the timeline of this event and post some pictures about her injury.	58474	215
41	24.01.2017	I hate the criminals. Those men are rogues	57283	1151
42	25.01.2017	People should keep following up this event. The victim should save picture and medical record well. I suggest the victim to ask a famous layer to represent her and deal with this event	53567	1040
43	25.01.2017	My job relates to judicial expertise. I strongly recommending you sealing up your medical record.	44268	417
44	25.0	. I can offer you free treatment.	36152	1917

	1.20 17			
45	25.0 1.20 17	I truly want to help you. Why those men bullied a woman, so hateful.	3309	85
46	24.0 1.20 17	I think you should back-up your materials.	39465	109
47	25.0 1.20 17	. Lijiang the place where even people from Yunnan Province don't want to go.	38711	4268
48	24.0 1.20 17	Lady, the only thing I can do is to keep concerning this event. Be tough. God bless you	37311	151
49	25.0 1.20 17	Take good care of yourself. I hope you will be strong and brave…	34605	135
50	25.0 1.20 17	Me and my friends also were beaten in Lijiang too	27232	2978
51	25.0 1.20 17	Lijiang can cover everything.	26639	395
52	25.0 1.20 17	My relative works for Ministry of Public Security. If you didn't I can ask my relative to help you.	24691	1228
53	25.0 1.20 17	I am a forensic. I think you should keep your x-rays well. Never settle with the criminals.	19862	344
54	25.0 1.20 17	I advise that everyone should not go to barbecue restaurant in Lijiang's midnight.	18782	3418
55	25.0 1.20 17	It's very dangerous for you to go to restaurant or pub in midnight in Lijiang.	18782	3418
56	24.0 1.20 17	Tourism of Yunnan is suck.	16838	1815

57	25.01.2017	I will go to Lijiang and interview the police officers there.	14698	620
58	25.01.2017	I will always get your back.	12879	748
59	25.01.2017	I support you to get justice for yourself.	12595	289
60	2401.2017	If your story is true. The criminals are suck. The police officers were delinquent.	12805	550
61	25.01.2017	I also used to be threaten in Lijiang. The police officers are suck too.	11986	244
62	25.01.2017	I want to help you.	11714	228
63	25.01.2017	. I used to be abused by three young men in Lijiang. But I fought back to them.	11389	1021
64	25.01.2017	The locals are so suck in Lijiang.	11543	1002
65	25.01.2017	I used to be a soldier in Yunnan. I think it is not a good place for traveling. The security is a big problem.	9856	849
66	25.01.2017	I am a northeasterner. I want to get the number of barbecue restaurant.	9347	2216
67	25.01.2017	I support you to fight back	8981	198
68	25.01.2017	I sympathize with you.	8907	528
69	25.01.20	I have found the restaurant.	8659	250

	17			
70	25.01.2017	If the police officers are suck and do not thing for me. I will use my approach to deal with this event.	8763	1121
71	25.01.2017	You should go to cosmetic hospital at first.	7501	216
72	2401.2017	I met a suck tourist guide in Lijiang last year.	8796	2214
73	25.01.2017	I will never go to Lijiang. The police officers are suck.	7896	186
74	2401.2017	The tourism of Yunnan is so bad.	8025	1375
75	25.01.2017	The people who go to Lijiang are idiots.	7594	838
76	25.01.2017	This event truly shock me.	6909	1457
77	25.01.2017	The woman was beautiful	6612	1017
78	25.01.2017	I have forwarded this event to another social media platform.	6429	103
79	25.01.2017	A local told me that they are not afraid of police officers. The police officers are useless.	6453	399
80	25.01.2017	It's useless to ask police officers to help you. I suggest you ask help for journalist.	4973	819
81	24.01.2017	Lijiang is suck.	5734	654
82	25.0	You can use an application. Then, high rank officials	5181	84

	1.20 17	might know this event.		
83	25.0 1.20 17	They rob you so much money.	5261	146
84	25.0 1.20 17	I am a person in Yunnan. I hope you can get justice in a short.	4716	3373
85	25.0 1.20 17	First they came for the Socialists, and I did not speak out— Because I was not a Socialist. Then they came for the Trade Unionists, and I did not speak out— Because I was not a Trade Unionist. Then they came for the Jews, and I did not speak out— Because I was not a Jew. Then they came for me—and there was no one left to speak for me. Martin Niemöller	4620	42
86	25.0 1.20 17	The criminals started to threaten victim.	4246	488
87	25.0 1.20 17	Lady, if you come to Beijing I can help to find some good doctors.	3854	99
88	24.0 1.20 17	I will repost your post and I hope I can help you.	3054	14
89	24.0 1.20 17	How dare they hurt a lady's face.	4204	106
90	25.0 1.20 17	The high rank officials in Public Security Department of Yunnan are suck. They just want to cover this event	3452	1893
91	25.0 1.20 17	My grandfather used to be a judge. He might help you.	3694	154
92	25.0 1.20 17	Because prime minister is in Yunnan. So, the officials want to cover this event.	3755	126

93	24.01.2017	I will never go to Lijiang again.	3542	175
94	24.01.2017	I hope more and more people will help you.	2533	47
95	24.01.2017	The criminals should be punished.	3109	23
96	25.01.2017	The prime minster please go to Lijiang.	3618	292
97	25.01.2017	We should let high rank officials know this event	3470	276
98	25.01.2017	I hope one of high rank officials' relative can be hurt in Yunnan, Then, they will start to deal with this event.	3581	120
99	25.01.2017	I am local. I apologize to you.	3390	439
100	25.01.2017	Take good care yourself.	2309	43