USES AND GRATIFICATIONS: A DOCUMENTARY ABOUT THE INTERACTION BETWEEN SINA WEIBO USERS AND CHINESE BASKETBALL ASSOCIATION

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Abstract

This is a documentary film that applies the uses and gratifications theoretical framework to understand how users of Sina Weibo interact with the Chinese Basketball Association (CBA). In this documentary film, I used the uses and gratifications approach to set up interview questions to let different users talk about their experiences when accessing CBA-related information via Sina Weibo. Most interviewees in this film have shown positive users’ experiences when they were using Sina Weibo to accessing information about the CBA. However there were also some negative users’ experiences and suggestions for Sina Weibo from the interviewees. This documentary film is the first film to unveil the interaction between social media and basketball in China to an American audience. This documentary film may also be an entry towards further study.
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Introduction

This is the first study regarding social media and basketball in China incorporating uses and gratifications theory to frame the discussion and documentary approach. More specifically, this study explores how users of the Chinese social media platform, Sina Weibo, interact with the Chinese Basketball Association (CBA) to satisfy their cognitive needs, affective needs, personal integrative needs, and social integrative needs. These users are trying to fulfill their needs by accessing information about the CBA via Sina Weibo. The accompanying documentary film entitled “The Impact of Sina Weibo on the Chinese Basketball Association” has been made to visually show the needs of different Sina Weibo users by exploring their experiences using Sina Weibo to access CBA-related information such as the CBA game scores, the status of the CBA players, and CBA entertainment information. The Sina Weibo users introduced in the documentary came from various backgrounds, including a CBA player, public relations staff member, a sports commentator, a journalist and a fan. They were intentionally chosen to cover the diverse perspectives and voices of Sina Weibo users. In the documentary film, these people were interviewed on camera about their experiences using Sina Weibo as a means to access
CBA-related information. It also applies uses and gratifications theory to the interactions of different Sina Weibo users when they access CBA-related information.

The equipment used to record “The Impact of Sina Weibo on the Chinese Basketball Association” documentary included a Canon 5D Mark iii with two lenses: 17-40 f4 and 70-200 f2.8. I used the 70-200 f2.8 for all of the interview footage in order to blur the background and provide a shorter depth of field, which helps to focus the audience’s attention on the interviewees. Regarding the framing of the shots, I followed the standard rule of thirds, which created a more interesting aesthetic framing of the interviewees. I used my 17-40 lens for wider shots, including basketball practices, game shots, and extra footage called “cutaways” which are needed for aesthetic and editing purposes. Based on the lighting situation, I adopted different lighting strategies since all of the interviews were conducted indoors. I utilized a standard three-point lighting set up consisting of one main light, or “key light,” directed at the interviewees, one backlight placed at a high angle behind the interviewees to help create more on-screen dimension, and one “fill” light placed on either side of interviewees depending on the lighting situation. For better sound quality, I used a lavaliere microphone attached to the lapel of the interviewees. To
acquire audio for the cutaways, I used the 5D Mark iii internal microphone. Since the interviews in the documentary film were conducted in Mandarin Chinese, I translated the spoken Mandarin into English subtitles. In addition, as a means to maintain authenticity of this research study, I included all of the original interview footage on a data DVD.

**Background**

Social networking sites have become one of the most important communication channels in our daily life, especially for the younger generation. Social networking sites create an online public society for people to access information and maintain or establish relationships. boyd and Ellison (2008) define social networking sites as “web-based services that allow individuals to construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system”(p. 210-230). After years of promotion, social networking sites have consumed such a large proportion of people’s daily lives that they have gradually blurred the boundary between online and offline social experiences.
Currently China has the world’s largest population of Internet users. According to the China Internet Network Information Center (CNNIC), the population of Chinese Internet users reached over 632 million in 2014 (CNNIC, 2014). There were 527 million users accessing mobile content via their smart phones in 2014 (CNNIC, 2014). China has great potential to develop more Internet users and provide the Chinese Internet market with opportunities for business and marketing.

However, due to the decision in 2009 of the mainland Chinese government to actively block certain social networking sites like Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube, the “Chinese Online Great Wall” closed and locked the gate between China and the outside world in regard to social media. Chinese online “police” set up the block and filter systems that now control Chinese Internet users’ access to information from foreign websites like Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube. In turn, this restrictive situation has also created great opportunities for Chinese local media companies to develop and thrive.

Sina Weibo

Sina Weibo is one of the most popular microblog companies in China. Sina Weibo was
launched by Sina Corporation in August 2009. According to the Sina corporation annual report, the Weibo microblog now has 156 million monthly active users (MAU) in Jun 2014 (Sina News. 2014). Sina Weibo is a microblog that combines the content characteristics of both Twitter and Facebook. People can share their written thoughts, pictures, and videos with their friends on their Sina Weibo account. Like Twitter and Facebook, Sina Weibo allows users to post messages of up to 140 characters and provides a cross-platform stage for people and organizations to interact with others. Social networking sites have made a tremendous impact on online computing by providing users opportunities to connect with others and generate enormous amounts of content on a daily basis. Sina Weibo supports millions of users, almost all of who are located in China and post in the Chinese language (Yu, Asur, & Huberman, 2011).

There are two types of user accounts on Sina Weibo, regular user accounts and verified user accounts. A verified user account typically represents a well-known public figure or organization in China. Sina Weibo has reported that it has more than 60,000 verified accounts consisting of celebrities, sports stars, well-known organizations (both government and commercial), and others (Yu, Asur, Huberman, 2011). The Sina Corporation has built a wide
network that users can access anywhere in China to socialize with others. They use Sina Weibo as a main information source while they go about their daily life. For example, some users engage with Sina Weibo while on public transportation, getting information that interests them during their transit.

Chinese Basketball Association

The Chinese Basketball Association (CBA) was established in 1995. At that time there were only twelve teams in the CBA league. In 2001, the Sina Lion basketball team from Taiwan joined the CBA organization. In 2002, the Hong Kong Flying Tigers basketball team became a member of the CBA league, but after one year both teams quit the CBA league. The Dongguan Leopards joined the CBA in 2005, followed by the Zhejiang Lions in 2006, and both the Qingdao Eagles and the Foshan Long Lions joined the CBA in 2008. In the 2009-2010 CBA season, the Yunnan Bulls basketball team left the CBA because of financial problems that resulted in their not being able to pay their players’ salaries. The SiChuan Whale basketball team became a member of the CBA during the 2013-2014 CBA season. At present, the CBA has eighteen teams in total, and is undoubtedly the largest professional basketball league in Asia,
with the highest salary level and greatest social influence. The CBA league has a large population of fans who are constantly accessing new information about the league. The majority of CBA games are played to nearly sold-out crowds. Many current and former US National Basketball Association players have played in the CBA, such as Tracy McGrady and Stephon Marbury. The rapid development of China’s economy has insured that CBA’s development has continued to rise (Sohu Sports, 2011) and it is undoubtedly at the forefront of Asian basketball.

Sports and media have a vital connection and by cooperating, bring benefits to both parties. The cooperation between the CBA and Sina Weibo provide opportunities to have better user experiences at both the individual and organizational level. From the individual perspective, fans can access CBA-related information via Sina Weibo to get current information and post opinions and comments on the topics they are interested in. CBA players can socialize with fans via Sina Weibo to create and maintain their fan base by posting new information and replying to their fans. From the organizational perspective, CBA teams can use Sina Weibo as a form of communication to publish new information and get feedback from the fans to develop future promotional strategies. Social networking sites have opened up the world of sports organizations
to individual users in China.

**Uses and Gratifications Theory**

The main objective of the uses and gratifications theory is to explain the psychological needs that shape why people use media and what motivates them to engage in certain media-use behaviors for gratifications that fulfill those intrinsic needs (Stone, Singletary, & Richmond 1999). The uses and gratifications theory assumes the users are active in their media behaviors and that their behaviors are goal-directed. Ko (2005) mentions that users are aware of their needs and select the appropriate media to gratify these needs. Uses and gratifications theory is considered a psychological communication perspective that focuses on individual use and choice by asserting that different people can use the same mass medium for very different purposes (Severin & Tankard, 1997). A study by Korgaonkar and Wolin suggests that people use the Internet not only for retrieving information, but also to find entertainment and to escape (Ko, Cho, & Roberts, 2005). Sina Weibo provides the opportunity for users to access CBA-related information via various channels, such as CBA fans using Sina Weibo to get first-hand information about game scores and players’ status, or a CBA team’s public relations staff.
member posting text, pictures, and videos during a game as a way to communicate with fans.

Gratification can differ even among users who are accessing the same information because different users have different needs and intentions when using Sina Weibo to access CBA-related information; for instance, CBA fans may want quick updates about game scores, while CBA journalists may want to gather information about different CBA games, and CBA commentators may want to use Sina Weibo as a channel to communicate with fans during the game. All of these users interact with Sina Weibo differently based on their interests and needs. The CBA journalists need more information about multiple games; the CBA public relations staff need to keep posting new information on Sina Weibo to attract more attention to their teams or for other public relations purposes; and CBA commentators use Sina Weibo to offer fans an interactive channel to communicate during a game.

Katz, Gurevith, and Haas (1973) have developed thirty-five different needs from the social and psychological functions of mass media, which they have summarized and put into five main categories: cognitive needs, affective needs, personal integrative needs, social integrative needs, and tension-release needs. These needs are also represented in the interaction between
social media and sports, which are in alignment with the purposes of this research. In this research study, I will focus on four of the five main needs Sina Weibo users have and who accesses CBA-related information. I believe these needs match the most when people interact in between sports and media.

Cognitive Needs

Cognitive needs are the basic need of acquiring new information and knowledge. By refreshing the Sina Weibo application installed on their smart devices, fans can receive personal information about their interests and follow CBA players, learning where they are, what they are doing, and what they are thinking about; thus, Sina Weibo is a convenient way to receive new information about CBA-related activities.

Affective Needs

Affective needs in the uses and gratifications theory include emotion, pleasure, and feelings, which users are expressing and receiving feelings when using the Sina Weibo social network site. It allows its users to post comments and opinions on others’ “walls”, and this communication can be asymmetrical or symmetrical. Users can start conversations by creating
and/or replying to the comments and opinions of other users, and their opinions may be changed
when they see others’ comments and opinions or feel supported when they see others sharing the
same feelings and emotion. In that information can be viewed by numerous people when using
social networking sites, Sina Weibo offers a convenient way to express one’s personal feelings
and opinions, especially when others share them as well. This specific characteristic of social
media is more conducive to express collective sharing of sentiments.

Personal Integrative Needs

Personal integrative needs include credibility, stability, and status. People are trying to
create good online reputations by posting information via social networking sites. Users are
posting and replying with different information to develop credibility, stability, and build status
among other users. For instance, some CBA players will post information about extra workouts
on their Sina Weibo account, indicating that they are working very hard to build a strong and
committed reputation among their fans and other audiences on Sina Weibo. Other users, like
those working in CBA public relations, can give their personal perspective by publishing
information related to what the organization looks like and how it operates as additional means
to develop credibility, stability, and to build the CBA’s status among fans.

Social Integrative Needs

Social integrative needs include interacting with family and friends to maintain and establish relationships, while using social networking sites to socialize with others in an online society. Sina Weibo creates an online basketball society for fans, players, and organizations to communicate with each other. Relationships between diverse users can be built and maintained based on different purposes and intentions. For example, CBA teams are creating a family mentality among their fans by creating more familiar relationships, and CBA players and fans are also connecting with each other to establish and maintain relationships for various purposes and interests.

Uses and gratifications theory can help explain the motivations of people who choose specific channels to communicate with others. Based on four of the main needs from uses and gratifications theory, my research study explores and analyzes why people choose Sina Weibo to access information about the CBA and what kinds of gratifications they are experiencing when approaching it.
Treatment

The treatment of this research study is a documentary film that visually shows both the needs and experiences of users when diverse people are accessing information via Sina Weibo.

There are ten participants interviewed in the documentary, all of whom are popular players in the CBA who have many fans and use Sina Weibo often. Three of the interviewees are CBA players from different CBA teams. Their social integrative needs include interacting with family and friends to maintain and establish relationships using social networking sites to socialize with others in an online society. Sina Weibo creates an online basketball society for fans, players, and organizations to communicate with each other, and relationships between diverse users can be built and established based on different purposes and intentions. Two of the interviewees work in CBA public relations and use Sina Weibo daily. One interviewee is a spokesperson for the Chinese Men’s National Basketball Team. Two of the interviewees are journalists who cover the CBA (CBA journalist) and share their views from a media professional’s perspective. Lastly, three of the interviewees are fans.

I wanted to present a variety of perspectives from Sina Weibo users who access
CBA-related information. The interview questions were designed to find out how Sina Weibo users interact with the CBA based on uses and gratifications theory framework.

The documentary is approximately fourteen minutes in length and contains a visual montage opening, time-lapse images, title graphics, voice narration over accompanying footage and utilizes a standard sit down interview format recording without an on-camera interviewer. In that the interviews were conducted in Mandarin Chinese, subtitles are used for the English translation.

**Interview Questions**

I asked each interview question twice to gain more information from each of the interviewees. These questions where framed utilizing the uses and gratifications theory, with all questions being open-ended to allow for additional information and personal commentary. Each of the interviewees came from unique backgrounds and use different approaches when accessing CBA-related information via Sina Weibo. The questions are as follows:

1. Why do you choose Sina Weibo to access information about the CBA?

2. How often do you use Sina Weibo to access CBA-related information? What devices
do you use and why?

3. What parts help you get information or not when using Sina Weibo to access CBA-related information? Please be specific.

4. What areas should be improved in order to help you better access CBA-related information when using Sina Weibo? What are any of the limitations you may be facing?

5. What are some suggestions you would recommend to Sina Weibo for the purposes of providing better users’ experiences in the future when accessing information on Sina Weibo?

**The Budget**

I own the cameras and software and other equipment used, therefore the cost for conducting the interviews and producing the documentary were minimized. Additional in-kind costs included airfare and other incidentals such as hotel and food. The entire research study and documentary budget was approximately US$600.

**The Process**

Pre-production
The process of producing this documentary film was a great learning experience for me in that this was my first documentary production. Before I traveled to China, I spent time learning what elements helped to make a good documentary film. In order to prepare for this documentary, I searched for similar film examples and performed test interviewee production shoots. In order to produce a documentary film of good quality, one needs to include accurate lighting set-ups, proper framing, clear sound, and a variety of cutaway shots. I worked through these vital filmmaking principles before beginning to shoot the film. With this basic knowledge of how to conduct a good quality documentary film, I chose to use a 70-200 f2.8 lens and a 17-40 f4 lens to help me frame the shots. I learned how to set up a three-point lighting system to properly light my interviewees. I also borrowed a lavaliere microphone from the School of Communications’ Media Lab and learned proper microphone placement techniques to collect clear and intelligible audio. According to University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa research regulations, I needed to first receive approval from the Internal Review Board (IRB; see Appendix A) before I could conduct any video interviews. Upon IRB approval, I contacted the interviewees to schedule the interview dates and time. I decided to do all the interviews within the same week for efficiency and to save
on costs since I needed to travel to Shanghai to conduct the interviews. I have learned that planning ahead is very important especially if you are doing it by yourself.

**Production**

I calculated how much time I needed to set up the cameras, lighting, and sound equipment during my test shoots, which was about 30 minutes; therefore, I needed to be at the interview place at least 45 minutes early to have time to scout the location and plan my camera angles for the frame settings. I also needed to set up proper lighting based on the light sources in each particular interview environment. In order to get better responses from my interviewees during the interview, I asked them to answer my interview questions twice. Usually the second response was smoother and better organized. I used the 70-200 f2.8 lens to shoot the main interviews, as this type of lens creates a shorter depth of field and helps to increase the production value of the documentary. A three-point lighting set-up was used for most of the interview shots. One main light (key light) was in front of my interview to light up their face; one fill light was on either the left or right side of my interviewee at about a 45-degree angle to put fill light on their face, which is about 50-60% less intense than a key light to create more
dimension on interviewee’s face; and, one back light was lit from up behind about 45-degree angle to shed light on interviewee’s hair in order to create more on-screen dimension. A lavaliere microphone was properly attached to the interviewee to collect clear audio sound. All of these set-ups were planned and executed to gather optimal footage for the purpose of producing a good quality documentary film. I have learned that I still need to improve my lighting set-ups, since some of the fill light were slightly over-exposed; also, if the interviewee is wearing glasses, for example, the key light should be higher to avoid the reflection from the glasses.

Post-production

I used the Final Cut Pro X editing software to edit the documentary film. Since all of my interviews were conducted in Mandarin, I needed to translate the Mandarin into English for English audiences to understand the content. I went to the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa Media Lab to record my own voice as the narrator. Since English is not my first language, the differences between Mandarin and English and the culture differences made it more difficult to translate properly. In addition, as a narrator it was difficult for me to fully pronounce the words or make them sound clear enough for American audiences. For future work, I would prefer to
hire a professional English narrator and other native English speakers to perform voice translations instead of creating and including subtitles on the screen.

In the future, as a filmmaker, I want to introduce more images about China to American audiences to let them know more about China, and promote communication channels that link China and the United States.

Discussion

Within the framework of uses and gratifications theory, the documentary film portrays the needs of Chinese users when they are accessing CBA-related information via Sina Weibo. The interviewees came from various backgrounds and careers, and represented four major perspectives of users: CBA public relations staff, CBA players, CBA journalists, and CBA fans. Through the interviewees’ conversations, they have shown varying interests and needs when they accessed information via Sina Weibo.

For cognitive needs, fans indicated positive experiences when using Sina Weibo to access information about CBA game scores, following CBA players’ personal accounts and posting or reposting comments about CBA games. For personal integrative needs, the CBA public relations
staff indicated that Sina Weibo has been a great public relations tool for them to communicate with fans. Sina Weibo helps them to get new information out very quickly and gives them the ability to hear feedback from the fans. This symmetrical communication channel has made their work easier. For the affective needs, the CBA players have shown positive user experiences when using Sina Weibo to post their practice photos and videos; they also indicated that communication with fans via Sina Weibo has fulfilled their need to build their image and reputation among fans in order to gain more support. For the social integrative needs, the CBA commentators use Sina Weibo to communicate with fans during the game as a requirement for their job while also noting that this has garnered positive feedback from fans and that the quality of communication has improved. Fans who are communicating with CBA commentators are also most likely to be long-time CBA fans that have a lot of information about the game and have unique opinions. Most of them agree that Sina Weibo provides users with an online society, allowing them to fulfill their varying needs by accessing information via Sina Weibo.

China has a large population of Internet users as well as a large potential market for more social networking sites to develop. The connection between the CBA and Sina Weibo has
provided an online society for the Chinese basketball community to interact and share

information with others. Sina Weibo has offered different users the ability to fulfill their diverse

needs by accessing information about the CBA via Sina Weibo. For the majority of the time,

Sina Weibo has served its users well by offering a variety of information sources and an online

stage to let their voices be heard. However, there are still some areas that Sina Weibo needs to

improve in order to better serve the users and improve their experiences. For instance, several

interviewees noted that in the future Sina Weibo should require real-name registration to avoid

language attacks on CBA players by those who have registered anonymously. So far, some

unidentifiable users have posted offensive language on some of the CBA players’ Sina Weibo
.accounts. Because CBA players are public celebrities, they have verified their Sina Weibo
accounts with their real name and so are not able to reply to the anonymous accounts that have
posted offensive language. Having anonymous accounts could also cause public relations
problems and so, in order to avoid receiving offensive language attacks from this group, some
CBA players are choosing to post less content via their Sina Weibo accounts, therefore offering
less content for fans to respond to. This example also affects other CBA celebrities on Sina
Weibo, such as famous CBA commentators, the CBA public relations staff, and some CBA journalists. For the purposes of encouraging CBA celebrities to post more content on their Sina Weibo channel, Sina Weibo may take the real-name registration into consideration. In order to thrive and to continue developing more users and increase its social influence power, Sina Weibo still has a long way to go.

**Limitations**

I traveled to China alone in the summer of 2014 to shoot this documentary. I produced the documentary entirely on my own, including preparing the story line, scheduling the interviews, setting up the camera, lights and audio equipment, recording the film, asking the interviewees questions, and editing the film in postproduction. This was my first time taking all of these tasks as a one-man crew. I stayed in Shanghai with the Shanghai Sharks Men’s Basketball Team for six days. In postproduction, due to the language and culture differences between China and the United States, there were some issues in which the translation was not coherent enough for American audiences to truly understand the real meaning in context; for example, the “CBA family” in Mandarin can be used as a very authentic and academically
meaningful combination. However, in American English the combination of “CBA family” is not appropriate for academic use. Also as a means enhance the documentary filmic structure and appeal, I would prefer to replace the English subtitles with different American English translations and voice performers instead of using subtitles.

**Contribution**

I believe this documentary is the first of its kind to present thorough information linking a popular Chinese social media platform, Sina Weibo, with the Chinese Basketball Association (CBA) and provides a gateway for future filmmakers and scholars to invest more time and energy in this area of study. This research study and documentary was designed to help its audience have a better understanding of how Sina Weibo is used to access information about the CBA including how Chinese people use it and reveal their feelings to American audiences and potentially to a global audience. In the future, the documentary film about the interaction between Sina Weibo and the CBA can be more involved in interviewees’ daily activities. To follow them in a period of time to fully explore their interactions between Chinese basketball and the social media tool Sina Weibo.
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China Internet Network Information Center (CNNIC) 2014 Data base.

http://www.cnnic.cn/hlwfzyj/jcsj/


Sina News


*Weibo yong hu liang (The population of Sina Weibo users)*

  http://news.xinhuanet.com/info/2013-02/21/c_132181760.htm

Appendix A

University of Hawai‘i

Consent to Participate in Research Project:

Uses and Gratifications In Using Sina Weibo To Access CBA Related Information

Interviewee Consent and Release Form

My name is Xiang Ji. I am a graduate student at the School of Communications at the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa. I am conducting a research project, which includes a survey and video interviews as a requirement for earning my graduate degree. The purpose of my project is to explore and analyze the user’s gratification in using Sina Weibo to access CBA related information. I am asking you to participate because you recently used the Sina Weibo to access CBA related information.

Activities and Time Commitment: If you agree to participate, I will interview you once at a time and place convenient to you. I will record the interviews using a digital video recorder. The Interview time for each interviewee will be no longer than 15 minutes. The interview will consist 6 open-ended questions. Interview questions will include questions like, “Why do you choose
using Sina Weibo to access CBA related information?” “How often do you use the Sina Weibo to access CBA related information? What devices do you use and why is that?” Only you and I will be present during the interview. I will video-record the interview so that I can later transcribe the interview and analyze the response. You will be one of about 10 people whom I will interview for this study.

**Voluntary Participation:** Your participation in this project is voluntary. You may withdraw at any time from the activities in this research project. During the interviews, you can choose to not answer any question(s) at any time for any reason. After the interview I will mail you a DVD copy of your original interview. If you disapprove of, wish to change, add to, delete, or otherwise change the content of the interviews, you may do so by contacting me with that information at any time up to the end of August 2014.

**Benefits and Risks:** There is no direct benefit to you in participating in this research project. Your participation will contribute to our academic studies and research. We want to create an authentic record and make it available to scholars and the general public as a reliable document. To do that, it is important that your actual name appear as the interviewee on the transcript. In
addition, the transcripts and media files of the interviews will include your name and likeness.

Thus, one potential risk to you is a loss of privacy. As an interviewee in this project, you should be aware of that your opinions or expressions in the video may be criticized by audiences.

By signing this form, you give your permission for any media footage and/ or photographs made during this project to be used by researchers and the public for educational purposes including publications, exhibitions, World Wide Web, and presentations. By giving your permission, you do not give up any copyright or performance rights that you may hold.

I agree to the uses of these materials described above, except for any restrictions, noted below.

Project Name: *Uses and Gratifications In Using Sina Weibo To Access CBA Related Information, Xiang Ji M.A. Thesis Research Project*

Date: ____________________________________________
Questions: Please contact me, Xiang Ji, at xiang@hawaii.edu if you have any questions regarding this project. Also you can contact my supervisor Prof. Patricia Buskirk at pbuskirk@hawaii.edu. If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, contact the UH Committee on Human Studies at (808) 956-5007 or via email at, uhirb@hawaii.edu
Agreement to Participate in

Uses and Gratifications In Using Sina Weibo To Access CBA Related Information

“I certify that I have read and that I understand the information in this consent form, that I have been given satisfactory answers to my questions concerning the project, and that I have been told that I am free to withdraw my consent and to discontinue participation if I respond with that request before the end of August 2014.

I herewith give my consent to participate in this project with the understanding that such consent does not waive any of my legal rights.”

_________________________________
Printed Name of Interviewee

_________________________________
Signature of Interviewee

__________________________
Date

Provide a Copy of this Consent Form to the Participant
Appendix B

“The Impact of Sina Weibo on the Chinese Basketball Association”

Documentary Transcript

Narrator: China is thriving. After the Chinese Economic Reform in the late 70s, China has shown rapid growth in its economy. The Internet has become one of the most important channels to access information. The Chinese government has greatly invested in its Internet infrastructure because of the rapid growth of Chinese Internet Users. According to China Internet Network Information Center, there has been an increase of 119 million users from 2011 to 2014. Today, China has 632 million Internet users. That is nearly half the population of China. Chinese social networking sites also grew along with the development of the Internet. In 2009 there was a change in the Chinese government’s online policy that actively blocked certain social networking sites like Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube. This restrictive policy closed all social media access between China and the outside world. This change in Internet policy also served to create great opportunities for Chinese local media companies to develop and thrive. Out of the many new social networking sites developed in China, Sina Weibo is one of the largest. Sina Weibo was
created in 2009 by the Sina Corporation. Its large and emerging population of users can access information by using words, pictures, and videos. In 2014, the number of monthly active users on Sina Weibo increased to one hundred and forty-three million and it continues to grow.

**Interviewee - Zhuang Ningyu, CBA Commentator:** I think Sina Weibo takes up a big part of our daily life. Usually the first thing we do after we wake up is to check information on Sina Weibo. Many people use Sina Weibo while on public transportation to pass the time. Now it's a more worthwhile activity to pass the time in our lives. I started to use Sina Weibo in 2009. At that time, it was a new media experience for me. I think it is a fast way for us to access information.

**Interviewee - Zhang Chi, Shanghai Sharks Men’s Basketball Spokesperson:** My opinion about Sina Weibo is that it offers people access to information. Many media or opinion leaders are all using Sina Weibo to express their opinions about major events in our society. By using Sina Weibo, I can choose which information I want to access based on my personal interests. Sina Weibo is my personal information-sharing platform. We also use Sina Weibo as an information-sharing channel to post information for our followers. To put it simply, our lives are
changed after using Sina Weibo.

Narrator: The Chinese basketball association, or CBA started in 1995. After many years of development, CBA now has 20 teams and is one of the biggest professional basketball leagues in Asia. CBA has a large fan base population, and it has a strong social influence in Chinese society.

Interviewee - Zhang Chi, Shanghai Sharks Men’s Basketball Spokesperson: It took around twenty years to develop CBA. CBA is one of the top professional leagues in China. The creation of CBA is well known. It started as a semi-professional league and then became a major league. Now in my opinion, CBA is a well-organized professional basketball league in China.

Narrator: Sina Weibo provides an online communication channel for CBA. It allows CBA teams, players, fans, and journalists access to CBA related information.

Interviewee - Zhu Jun, CBA Journalist: Time is an important factor for journalists. With Sina Weibo we can access and get information out quickly.

Interviewee - Guo Weisheng, Shanghai Sharks Men’s Basketball Public Relations: CBA is using Sina Weibo to popularize its brand. The popularity of CBA attracts more users to Sina Weibo.
Interviewee - Zhang Chi, Shanghai Sharks Men’s Basketball Spokesperson: The birth of Sina Weibo has had a dramatic effect on CBA. It totally changed how information is shared among fans, players, and journalists. Fans can post their comments, journalists can look up information, teams’ public relations staff use Sina Weibo as a discussion board, and CBA players can communicate with fans. They are all using Sina Weibo to let their voices be heard.

Narrator: There is a vast supply of information on Sina Weibo everyday. It offers an online society that allows voices to be heard from different perspectives. Different users have different needs and approaches when accessing CBA-related information on Sina Weibo.

Interviewee - Zhuang Ningyu, CBA Commentator: Sina Weibo is an important part of viewing modern sports. Sina Weibo belongs with new media and user-generated content. Now it is more than an information-sharing platform. It is a tool that allows a wide variety of people to get involved. In traditional sports media, we only hear from journalists and editors. Now with Sina Weibo, we can hear more from players, teams, and even the fans who are watching the game.
Narrator: Sina Weibo has helped users fulfill their need to access information about the Chinese Basketball Association, however some Sina Weibo features could be optimized in the future.

Interviewee - Zhuang Ningyu, CBA Commentator: I have used Sina Weibo for about five years and have used it to access CBA-related information for around four years. So far, I feel good when I use it. In the past, we used text messaging as one of our channels for fans to broadcast their comments during a game. But text messaging is not free. People also texted many trashy messages that commentators had to manually filter out. Sina Weibo is free to use, so it increases interaction between commentators and fans. I think it is very useful. Many people who use Sina Weibo are longtime fans of the CBA and use it to chat with commentators.

Interviewee - Zhang Chi, Shanghai Sharks Men’s Basketball Spokesperson: CBA has its own Sina Weibo account. Teams have their own official account, and many CBA players have personal accounts. Journalists and fans also have Sina Weibo accounts. I am using Sina Weibo as a requirement for my job. Our Shanghai Sharks have our official Sina Weibo account. We are the first team to start an official CBA Sina Weibo account. Throughout the four years of using Sina Weibo, it has become an important medium for announcing information to the public. Many fans
and journalists are getting information about the Shanghai Sharks Basketball team by using Sina Weibo as their main platform.

**Interviewee - Guo Weisheng, Shanghai Sharks Men’s Basketball Public Relations:** Frankly speaking, I admit that I am using Sina Weibo to gain popularity. I need to feel that I exist. I think it is a basic human need. Everyone wants to be acknowledged. Though social networking sites, people can see what other people are doing and voice their opinions. I believe that by posting comments we show that we exist. For example, when I see new information about CBA, I can post my comments. Even if nobody cares about what I’ve said, I still feel that I have been acknowledged by others, because if I don’t post comments that others can read, then they won’t know that I exist and eventually I will be forgotten.

**Interviewee - Li Yaochen, CBA Fan:** On Sina Weibo, I can see the updated information about CBA players, teams, and other entertainment information. I can follow their accounts and know more about them so I can support them better.

**Interviewee - Zhang Chi, Shanghai Sharks Men’s Basketball Spokesperson:** Many times, I don’t post CBA-related information on my personal Sina Weibo account. This is because of my
job. As a Shanghai Sharks public announcer, I need to separate my personal opinions about CBA from the voice of my team. If I use my personal Sina Weibo account to post CBA-related information, it may become a source or reference used by journalists. Sometimes my personal opinion about CBA may not match my job as a spokesperson in Shanghai Sharks. As a part of my job, I need to sacrifice my personal need to share information on Sina Weibo to avoid misunderstandings.

Narrator: The biggest challenge for Sina Weibo is to fulfill the needs of different users when they are accessing information on its site.

Interviewee - Peng Fei, CBA Player: Sina Weibo may need to require a real name registration to avoid posting personal attacks on CBA players by people who use fake identities, and to keep a good social environment on Sina Weibo.

Interviewee - Zhuang Ningyu, CBA Commentator: Usually most CBA official accounts on Sina Weibo are from CBA teams and players. However, there is a lack of information coming from the CBA organization itself. If the top-tier CBA administrators would participate more on Sina Weibo activities, they may start to realize that Sina Weibo can play an important role in
helping to develop CBA. The CBA should develop deeper relationships on Sina Weibo to offer fans an even better online experience.

**Interviewee - Zhang Chi, Shanghai Sharks Men’s Basketball Spokesperson:** Sina Weibo has already played an important role in major events in China. There is no doubt about it. In my opinion Sina Weibo is facing two choices, either to optimize its strengths or try to work on its weaknesses. From my observation, Sina Weibo is trying to optimize its strengths, and considering its weaknesses, it is willing to share the market with other competitors. I believe in the near future it will be a level playing field for all the online social media companies in China.

**Narrator:** If Sina Weibo wants to be successful and generate more social influence in Chinese society, it still has a long way to go.
Appendix C

Here is a checklist I have used before each shot I took during the production period of the documentary.

Canon 5D Mark iii

Canon 70-200mm, f2.8

Canon 17-40mm, f4

Sennheiser lavaliere microphone

Bose headphone

A camera tripod

Three lighting tripods

Three LED lights

Consent form

Three Canon 5D Mark iii batteries

Three LED lights batteries

White board