



# "The Toad Wants to Eat the Swan?" A Study of Rural Female Chibo through Short Video Format on E-commerce Platforms in China

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## Abstract

With the population of internet users ranking No.1 worldwide, rural Chinese females are the increasing internet users among all the new users under the developing of internet connection and available devices. Chibo videos are not a new media format in China, however, rural females' Chibo videos are new appear on e-commerce platforms since the influence from short video platforms like Kuaishou and Tiktok. The article aims to analysis the new internet activity through different dimensions, including the new media phenomenon of Chibo on e-commerce platforms, the rural Chinese females' real situation in China and the lack of humanistic care to rural Chinese females. Combine with a case studies of Chen Shuo Mei Shi V on Taobao platform, the study aims to figure out the reason why rural Chinese female choose do Chibo videos on e-commerce platforms.

urbanization process, more and more rural populations lose their farmlands gradually. Before and after becoming the female anchors, from the country housewives or factories workers to online anchors, the group of "Rural Females Chibo" anchors experience the occupation transition.

Under the influence of Confucius thought, the "Three Obedience" and the "Four Virtus" are the code of ethics for Chinese females, especially the rural females who are less educated and have a lower family and social status compared to urban females. With the depression of the "Three Obedience" and the "Four Virtus" in real life, and the bored rural daily life, the rural females are set freed by a point to planes' radiation communication through internet videos via social media platforms. On the other hand, through the revenues from live streaming videos or record videos of "Chibo", indicating that the Chinese rural female labors explore new channels to promote their economic states positively. Given that the "Chibo" video contents produced by rural females are gaining popularity, create benefits economically and socially. It aims to investigate how does the phenomenon of "Rural Female Chibo" appear and the in-depth reasons leading the rural female group to it.

## Chibo Based on the E-commerce Platforms

"Chibo" which in Chinese is "", translating into English is "Eating Broadcast", means that the social media anchors broadcast the eating process through live streaming videos or record videos (Cha 2014). Sometimes with exaggerating eating manners to overeat foods, social media anchors accumulate followers quickly in a short period. Though researchers indicate that long time overeating food habits could cause eating broadcast hosts' health disease [1,2]. Eating broadcast first originate from South Korea, "mok-bang" is the vocabulary in Korean [3]. The word "mok-bang" is new created word with the original words "eating" (meokneun) and "broadcast" (bangsong) (Wikipedia 2019). First appeared in the late 2000s [4], Afreeca TV is the first video platform available for eating broadcast, YouTube platform followed Afreeca TV to attract

**Keywords:** Chibo video; Eating broadcast; Rural female; Female anchor; Humanistic care; Media culture

## Introduction

With internet users ranking NO.1 worldwide, rapid increasing of internet users and social media platforms in China, new types of contents keep appearing. "Female Chibo" is not rare on social media. However, "Rural Female Chibo" is a new sort of entertainment video which rural female anchors eat while live streaming or video the whole rural cooking way and eating process, broadcast through social media video platforms. Compare to pretty girls' "Chibo" videos in the past, "Rural Female Chibo" are only the common looking rural female anchors without exquisite makeup and gorgeous wearing to eat in front of the camera, which is the most common and frequent action in life scenarios. Via cyberspace, lower entry barriers bring more opportunities to the group of Chinese rural females, who get less attention, and are poor in facilitation. Under the policy of the acceleration of China's

more viewers in South Korea (Kang et al 2020). However, the situation is different in China. Eating broadcast first showed in Chinese video barrage website Bilibili through the cut off version of popular eating broadcast videos in South Korea by Chinese South Korea cultural favors [5]. Under the block of oversea internet services, from 2014 till now the Chinese internet services of “Chibo” develops the special characters, which are separate from oversea formulates.

Before “Chibo” videos appeared on e-commerce platforms, short video platforms are the main channels to broadcast “Chibo” videos. Kuaishou as one of the most popular short video platforms in contemporary China, in 2018 among more than 200 million users generate contents, 11% of them are food theme, getting third ranking among all themes [6]. From cutting off version on Bilibili to users generate short video contents on Kuaishou and Taobao, “Chibo” videos derivate into different types according to video duration, video scene, gender of anchor, food category, overeat or not and so on. Chibo videos’ types vary from platforms to platforms. From the dimension of video duration, with 15 seconds to 1 minute’ limitation of duration on short video platforms, it could be divided into long eating broadcast and short eating broadcast. Most of the eating broadcast anchors are females, only few are males, facing the fact that most of the network users in China are male users who are in favor of female anchors [2].

Short video platforms such as Kuaishou and Tiktok, based on user habits recommendation algorithm, after gaining the large users’ amounts successfully, bringing the revolution to network ecology in China with new video forms. To catch up with the new users’ habits trending and appeal to the most popular short video media culture, e-commerce platforms such as Taobao and T-mall embed short videos content function into the platforms. Since China is a developing country in Asia, the e-commerce model varies from the models in Western countries due to the cultural and business philosophy [7]. Chibo videos in the stream media formal on China’s business-to-customer e-commerce platforms is one of the separations. Teo and Liu convinced that consumer trust plays a rather relevant role in consumer decision behaviors on e-commerce platforms in China [8]. Within quite a long-time e-commerce gained criticism in China because of the reason that the real products and services [9], which are purchased through e-commerce platforms do not match the pictures showing by the sellers. So, on the other hand, through Chibo videos’ showing of products and services with more details, e-commerce platforms accumulate customers’ trust gradually.

What makes the differences and connections of Chibo videos on e-commerce platforms comparing to other platforms? Based on the points above, it is easy come to the view that the main purpose of Chibo videos on e-commerce platforms in China is to impact more revenues with more e-commerce platform based direct-purchases through describing more details. E-commerce platforms acquire the advantages in offering platform based direct-purchase and quick delivery service [10]. Chibo videos impact food products retailing and build up the trustworthy relationship between sellers and buyers on e-commerce platforms. However, Chibo

videos on video platforms are mainly focus on entertainment and digital traffic profits sharing network affiliation in China. Comparing to pure funny videos on musically which is popular among teenagers in Westerner countries, Chibo video on platforms such as Tiktok and Kuaishou in China, besides the entertainment element, the indirect-purchases target for e-commerce engagement is the main purpose. Under the lack of intact products supply chain, self-operation delivery service and customers review system, Chibo videos on non-e-commerce platforms have to rely on affiliation network to achieve products selling purpose in China.

## Rural Chinese Female Anchors

Sister Feng, a cyber nickname and her real name is Luo Yufeng, who was born in the rural country of Chongqing could be treated as the earliest representation of rural female influence since 2009 (Wikipedia 2018). However, through her online activities of posting unrealistic marriage notice, she gained negative reputation with criticism from unrelated internet users, and even scholars. Opposite to the most common and frequent mainstream beauty style, sister Feng lacks the fashion looking which appeals to most internet users with her shorty. Sister Feng even suffered cyber violence because of the huge gap between her real situation and her unrealistic marriage target. In Chinese traditional saying, this is a kind of “The toad wants to eat the swan”, since she comes from the rural country with low education level and common looking, but always targeting the upper level males such as the men from Columbia University. In Chinese, “The toad wants to eat the swan” is a traditional saying to describe someone wants to achieve an outstanding goal with ignoring self-disability. Sister Feng is the first rural Chinese female influence, but not the last one. After sister Feng became a household name with revenues through advertisements, sometimes a negative meaning name, more and more rural Chinese females are on their way of being eager to become the anchors.

With development of new information technology, new opportunities and platforms are created to rural Chinese females. Rural Chinese female anchors are part of the Chinese female anchors group with highly network awareness. Dating back to the early time, when Chinese internet users caught the first impression of female anchors. Originated from Hanmai [11,12], which is the massively multiple real time voice broadcast online activities, through sexy, soft and sweet voice with flirting sentences to attract participants and reward gifts.

“Baby, do you love me?”

“If you love me, then send me 1314 flowers”

“If you love me, send me 999 flowers”

Above is one flirting example of one female anchor from QQ Talk (QT) platform, which used to be the biggest competitor against YY Talk. In Chinese, both the numbers “1314” and “999” have the deep love meaning. “1314” means all of my life, and “999” means forever love. Normally, 1 flower reward gift charges 1 RMB Yuan on Hanmai platforms, with large sum of flowers reward, on the one hand, the participants generate

the purchase action; on the other hand, the female anchors get the revenue share from the platforms. The implied meaning of pornography could attract large sum of male followers and participants in a short time, and that is the reason why female anchors groups with vulgar label. Since the obscure pornography meaning vocabularies lead male followers full of imagination, especially without seeing female anchors' looking. Given the ignorance of female anchors' looking, Hanmai is one of the channels for rural Chinese females to achieve popularity through cyber.

Under further developing of media and telecom technology, the appearance of short video platform Kuaishou brought a new window to rural Chinese females. Hero et al. convinced that with Kuaishou's trending in the second and third tier cities of China, giving the "unlikely creative class" rural Chinese females the new change [13]. On Kuaishou, rural Chinese female anchors create a new Chinese Chibo style through short videos, which are distinguished from the South Korea eating broadcast. Since most of the users on Kuaishou are not from cities, eating broadcasting with pretty female anchors in exquisite makeup are not as popular as before. Finally, on Kuaishou platform, Chibo videos formulated into a style with artless sentences, common cooking situation and straightforward call to action slogan.

"Remember to give me a red heart with subscribe"

"Double click 666"

"Dude, in next video will start to eat"

To appeal users on Kuaishou, sometimes the non-rural Chinese female anchors even wear the rural females' cloths as their costume, saying the sentences above to pretend they are the real rural Chinese female anchors. From Hanmai on voice live show platforms to Chibo videos on short video platforms, different call-to-action sentences' style indicates the transition that rural Chinese female anchors are gaining marketing shares gradually with internet users' taste are changing. At the same time, companying with information and telecom technology's development, and China's acceleration of urbanization process, developing the rural country markets becomes the new strategy for Chinese business to customer e-commerce companies. Alibaba group as the e-commerce marketing leader in China, Taobao is the first experimental unit of rural e-commerce since 2014, aiming to short the disparity between rural country and urban city under the capital and government's strategy support [14].

Digital cultural production industry also focuses on the rural Chinese female as their potential labors, who have potential to be the female anchors [11]. With the impact of the digital cultural production industry, more and more rural females join the Chibo videos. Since daily cooking is the most common scenes in rural country life, and rural Chinese females play the key role in this scene. What is more, crop farming in China rural country provides the natural advantage for rural female anchors' Chibo videos. Getting the food material from crop farming directly is another advantage for rural female anchors' Chibo videos distinct from other Chibo videos.

## Lack of Humanistic Care to Rural Chinese Females

The concept of humanistic care originated from humanism, mainly from medical and health caring fields [15-18]. Gradually, the concept was applied in the education research field [19-21]. Miller defines humanism as the habit manner to behaving humanly (Miller & Schmidt 1999) according to Aristotle's definition of virtue [22]. Based on the theory, with humanistic thinking and behavior, different vulnerable groups should be treated with humanistic care. As the biggest developing country in Asia, education and medical resources have an imbalanced distribution between female and male, rural country and urban city, Westerner religion and Easterner religion. As the result of the imbalanced distribution, it leads to multiple sociological results, including but not limited to the connection between income distribution and education distribution [23], the model of income distribution and human capital [24-26].

Regarding to females' rights in China, Dorros reckons that traditionally speaking, China only has a better record than Japan and some of the Islamic countries [27]. Formulated by Confucianism, with society developing, moral standard such as the Three Obediences and Four Virtues are still the main principles for rural Chinese females besides law [27-30]. Though feminism had already been advocated from American and France since the late eighteenth century [29]. The Three Obediences mean the female should obey to the father before marriage, after marriage obey to the husband, and obey to the son after the husband's death [30]. "Four Virtues are morality, proper speech, modest manner and diligent needlework" [30]. From original meaning till modern meaning, the core meaning is still unfaded. Son preference and male superior female are other aspects modulated by Confucianism. Rural Chinese females, on the one hand, affected by the son preference concept from parents' generation, they got less chance for education compared to male siblings before get married [31]. On the other hand, when play the role of pregnant women and mother after get married, the rural Chinese females' family status is decided by the son preference and male superior female.

What is more, traditionally speaking, regarding to Confucian's ideology, rural females should spend more energy and time on taking care of the family elderly and next generation, instead of developing social network [12]. According to Zhang's research, large rural population occupy the Chinese population, a large percentage of suicide in China is contributed by rural young female suicides [12]. No direct evidence and research data link the rural Chinese females' suicide rate with humanistic care together directly. However, compare to married females from Westerner countries who get more social support, rural Chinese females lack the support from both social and network [12]. As a result, humanistic care should not only be applied in rural females' special medical period such as pregnant. The overall life of rural Chinese females, most of them go into the marriage at a young age in Twenties, some even under the age of twenty. To

lighten the family financial pressure and raise the family income, rural Chinese females are part of the main force of migrant labors to coastal cities and economy zones, since farming revenue in rural village China is not able to afford the common life spending.

For rural Chinese females, Confucian ideology sets a high moral and behavior standard for them, especially the married rural females comparing to unmarried and Westerner married rural females. On the one side, rural Chinese females still hold the idea that they are attachments to males who marry them, with the sayings "Follow the one whom you marry to". Once rural Chinese females get married, they get estrangement from the native blood families and family members, trapping into dealing the relationship with mother in law and have a son to breed the family tree. On the other side, both rural Chinese females and the husbands are limited to education level and occupation choices, normally they are the lowest level labors in the factories. Do the work which with high work injury risk, low payment, and lack of respect, not to mention humanistic care. Since social stratification has connection with occupation, under the situation stated above, the social stratification of rural Chinese females is intensified.

With all high requirements and few supports and understandings from family and society, evidently speaking, it is a kind of lacking humanistic care for rural Chinese females. At the same time, to upgrade the rural Chinese females' family and social status is not an easily accessible target in a short duration, regarding the limited education resources in a developing country. All real situation facts lead to rural Chinese females' calling of humanistic care from different aspects.

## Chen Shuo Mei Shi V on Taobao: A Case Studies

Chen Shuo Mei Shi V is a rural Chinese female Chibo channel active on Taobao platform, which is an e-commerce focus platform. According to the tracking of timeline on each video platforms, including Bilibili, AcFun, Haokan Video and Taobao, the first Chibo video posted by Chen Shuo Mei Shi V was on Haokan Video, which could be dated back to 30th. March of the year 2018. Haokan Video is the first video platform posting the Chibo video for the rural Chinese female anchor Sister Chubby, followed was the Bilibili from 7th. June 2019, and then post on the AcFun platform since 2nd September 2019. With no post time record on Taobao, no detail post time could tell of Taobao platform. Since the post stopped from the 25th. July, 2019 on Haokan Video and the 26th. October, 2019 on AcFun, now the latest Chibo videos are only available on Bilibili and Taobao platforms.

From the daily update frequency of the Chibo videos on Chen Shuo Mei Shi V, Chibo anchor is the full-time occupation of Sister Chubby, which is the new income channel for rural Chinese females. Since from 26th. October 2019, Bilibili and Taobao are the only platforms available for Chibo videos of Chen Shuo Mei Shi V. However, compare to the video focus platform Bilibili, the biggest difference between Bilibili and

Taobao, is the e-commerce attribute of Taobao, which gains the advantage of bringing revenues through e-commerce shopping link directly. What is more, e-commerce platforms create shopping festival such as Single's Day Shopping Festival since 2011, at the day of 11th. November. As a result, Chen Shuo Mei Shi V gave up the operation of other platforms, started the update on Taobao.

Take an investigation to all the Chibo videos on Chen Shuo Mei Shi V, each video is mainly made up by two parts, the first part is the process of cooking food, and the second part is to the eating broadcast. The circumstance of all the videos are the real scenes in rural village, normally in the outdoor with green trees and companying with the sound of stream and animals in the background. Or in the real rural village kitchen with traditional stove burning with wooden but not gas. Generally, the cuisine Sister Chubby cooks is the home cooking dishes, which is access available for common housewives to prepare. Her way to eat and chew the food is distinct from the majority pretty female anchors' way, which is the way that eat with mouth full without cautious and spread the indication that the food is delectable. A totally rural female style, though with little bit exaggerating and drama component. With Sister Chubby's rural Chinese female image, it is for her to catch the video viewers. Ponytail with black hair is the hair style, a face without make up, and always the tops with positive colors such as the bright red and the khaki, nothing relates to fashion and good wearing taste.

Sister Chubby is the anchor's name that she calls herself in the Chibo videos of Chen Shuo Mei Shi V. In modern China, traditional authentic preference for the majority has the tendency of being slim and white. Chubby in Chinese is a vocabulary sometimes could have the potential meaning of being fat. So, through calling herself the name "Sister Chubby" is a self-ironic name to this rural Chinese female anchor, which is useful to get close to the viewers from psychology. Experienced Sister Feng's self-branding and rural Chinese females' online broadcast on Kuaishou, more and more rural Chinese females choose the self-ironic style to start the digital anchor career, and Chinese internet users are gradually cultivated and get used to the media content produced by rural Chinese female anchors with lowering the authentic standard. The purpose of rural Chinese female anchors to have a self-ironic name has experienced the transition. From the beginning of Sister Feng's period till now, a self-ironic name has become an effective way to gain profits in eyeball economy. The authentic preference transition from pursuing pretty and anti-ugly, till adapting to the unpretty female anchors, speed up the popularity of Chen Shuo Mei Shi V on Taobao platform.

Eating broadcast authorizes rural females more equal treating compared to the city females through network. It frees the rural Chinese female anchors like Sister Chubby, giving the freedom of showing the real rural Chinese female's image in front of the camera. Broaden her social network through interactive with video viewers. Change the stereotype image of rural Chinese female whose network is only limited within the bloodline and geography connection. Because the

lack of humanistic care of rural Chinese females, internet is the way for them to break the geography limitation, and gain more attention from the cyber space. Treating Taobao platform as the third places [32], with weak social connection between the female anchors and video viewers, the rural morality restriction on rural Chinese females is gone when they were treated as the female eating broadcast anchor. This is one of the reasons impacting multiple rural Chinese females to be the digital anchors.

Through choosing to be the stable Chibo anchor on Taobao platforms, it could incentive the sales of rural farming products, which increases the revenue of the whole rural family. With upgrading the revenue level of the whole family, the rural females like the Sister Chubby becomes the breadwinner of the family. Treat family as the smallest unit in the society, it speeds the social stratification in the rural village. Most of the rural Chinese females are lack the advantage the characteristics which could attract digital traffic and topics. Not to mention choose the Chibo anchor as an occupation. For the majority rural Chinese females, digital anchors are still far away from their daily lives. The increasing income stratification in rural families is unavoidable.

## Conclusion

Regarding to the son preference in the rural Chinese religions, rural Chinese females who were born in rural villages are facing the embarrassed status in the families and the society. On the one hand, under the impact of son preference, the birth rate of rural Chinese females is decreasing. However, the rural females' status is still lower than the rural males. Even though the percentage of rural Chinese female is withdrawing. On the other hand, the core value advocating by the rural families and the whole society to rural Chinese females is still the Confucian's Three Obediences, Four Virtues. The overall role of the rural Chinese females is more like the family tree carry on machine, and it lacks the humanistic care to the rural Chinese females.

The easy connection to internet, provide the new occupation opportunities to rural Chinese females. From the financial perspective, new occupation option infers more chances to ascend the revenue, and lift up the status in the family. However, from the sociology perspective, the ascend income is the catalyst of social stratification. Only the extreme few rural Chinese females who equip the potential characteristics gaining the possibility to share the profits through Chibo videos. The majority rural Chinese females just acquire the new media channel linking to the anonymous.

Compare to traditional occupation for rural Chinese females, which set a low barrier to entry, and consumer the cheap female labor, but lacking of humanistic care to the rural Chinese females in daily labor protection and special physiological period. With self-ironic names and the most common wearing style, it could be viewed that rural Chinese females take advantage of the situation of lacking of humanistic care to gain benefits through Chibo videos. Meanwhile, it could also be treated that Chibo videos enjoy

the natural connection with rural Chinese females, and it is the channel for them to emancipate the personal characteristic. Precisely, the complexity reason impacts the rural Chinese females' choices for being the Chibo anchors.

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