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Political Economy of Immaterial Labor in China's Internet Advertising Production

China has been a special object in research area, within its extended political centralization and free market economy after the reform and opening-up policy. Capital producing process and capital subsumption in China are different with most western capitalism countries, like real subsumption and formal subsumption existing at the same time; new group of labor emerges in the capital producing process. Thus, this research takes the perspective of immaterial labor to analyze the characteristics of capital subsumption in China, focusing on the Internet advertising production. As an important part of contemporary advertising industry, Internet advertising has large developing potential with new advertising forms and promotional models. A new promotional model among these is advertisements disseminated by cyber users through their social networks consciously. Hence, the largest SNS (Social Networking Services) in China, Renren, the most important platform for the new promotional model, is the main analyzing object in the research. Generally, the characteristics of immaterial labor in the website are discovered to meliorate theories of immaterial labor raised by some western theorists, as well as analyze capital subsumption in the industry.

Theory of immaterial labor develops on the basis of political economy, thus research approach of political economy of communication is also generated, theoretical structures such as power relations, industrial development, and organizational structure, are studied in the research. Hegemony borrowed from cultural study is also one of the analyzing frames in the research, especially to study labor's subjectivity, defense and subsumption under capital.

In the research, immaterial labors in SNS are divided into two categories: waged labor and non-waged labor (cyber-users). In order to discover the characteristics of immaterial labor in Internet advertising production, particularly the work situation of waged labor in SNS of Renren, method of ethnography like interview is applied. To study the subjectivity of non-waged labor, the method of observation is preferred. Archive research is another useful method to analyze the whole industry and market.

Ultimately, the research finds that immaterial labor in China's Internet advertising has its own characteristics neglected by most western analysis. Labors in the area are not in real subsumption under capital. Formal subsumption and real subsumption of labor and society under capital exist in China's cultural industry at the same time.