

Department of Sociology

Seminar

What do people say about Airbnb discrimination? Re-examining Twitter themes and discussion networks on Airbnb discrimination

Speakers: Dr. Yao-Tai LI
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Date: 5 March 2020 (Thursday)

Time: 2:30 pm – 4:00 pm

The seminar will be conducted via Zoom (access link: <https://hkbu.zoom.us/j/892940921>)

Abstract

On Airbnb, where both service providers and consumers have equal digital accessibility and free narrative expression, the discussion of discrimination is presumably diverse and multi-dimensional. Yet, by systematically examining Twitter discussion topics and networks in relation to Airbnb discrimination, this paper demonstrates the existence of an elite discussion network and its “narrative power” in the online context. During retweeting processes, specific standpoints and certain values get reinforced. The retweet network influences and reinforces people’s opinions about Airbnb discrimination. Even though other narratives and individual discrimination experiences are shared, such discussions are not included in mainstream discussion networks. The homogenous discussion network reinforces “selected exposure and confirmation bias” which can lead to the reinforcement of opinion polarization. A few actors dominate the flow of information, even though they link criticisms of Airbnb to campaigns against anti-Semitism, against illegal hotels, or against the illegal occupation of Palestine. This paper highlights that to combat controversial issues such as Airbnb discrimination, network-based interventions are necessary to provide the availability of multiple perspectives for users.

Biography

Dr. Yao-Tai Li is an assistant professor of sociology at Hong Kong Baptist University. He holds a PhD in Sociology from the University of California, San Diego. His research interests include race and ethnicity, social media, and social networks. His work has been published in several scholarly journals including *Current Sociology*, *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, *Critical Sociology*, *International Migration*, and *Discourse & Society*. He is also an associate editor of the journal *Studies in Ethnicity and Nationalism*.

Dr. Mingming Cheng is a senior lecturer in digital marketing in the School of Marketing at Curtin University. He was a lecturer at the Otago Business School, University of Otago, New Zealand. Mingming received his PhD from UTS Business School, University of Technology Sydney. His core research interests and expertise deal with Chinese outbound tourists with a strong focus on Chinese young generations, the sharing economy, data science, and digital marketing. He has published widely in journals including *Annals of Tourism Research*, *Tourism Management*, *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, and *Journal of Business Research*. He is also on the editorial board of *Tourism Analysis* and *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management*.

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