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Internet Shaming

With the rapid development and change of technology and internet, people can share the unreasonable phenomena in society they have encountered more easily and conveniently through the social media. Moreover, they are also able to express their opinions on events published by others. Therefore, the events that are special and sensitive, like events related to unequal treatment and damage to environment can be posted online immediately and publicly with criticisms shared by a numerous number of people, which causes enormous public opinion pressure to the clients involved in the event. Consequently, Internet shaming should be used as a tool to promote social change because people are able to utilize online humiliation to address society’s power inequality and the world’s environmental damage.

Firstly, people are able to encourage social change by implementing social media to shame people who have higher and unequal right in society to protect people of low status. Nowadays, there are many people still considers people are born to have a different status, and individuals cannot simply change this notion. Nonetheless, Beard (2016) points out that people can gather others who have the same mind to express their criticism online, which can amplify the influence of shaming (p. 1). There is an old saying goes that there is strength in numbers. Therefore, when they use internet to shame people who insist on the notion that they have higher hierarchical power than that of LGBTI people and the disabled, pressures of public opinion will be generated by the voices of a large number of people and effectively affect those self-righteous (Beard, 2016, p. 2). As a result, social progress can be promoted by endless challenges on unequal phenomenon by shaming online.

In addition to protecting people’s rights to promote social change, online shaming can also be an effective way to achieve it by rectifying and avoiding companies’ profiteering behavior that causes damage to the environment. Since customers and consumers are the source of income for companies and banks, companies and banks have to defend their reputation by catering to people’s needs and values. For example, Devitt (2015) indicates that companies like Google and SeaWorld will change their behaviors if they receive objections and shame from consumers (p. 2). Moreover, the consequences of going against the will of the public can be serious. The public's dissatisfaction after watching the documentary of Orca lakes made SeaWorld's stock fall 60%, and it also stopped the banks from funding coal companies that were removing the mountain tops (Devitt, 2015, p. 3). Therefore, by gathering people online to shame companies that behavior inappropriately, like damaging environment, the environment of society can be supervised effectively, which conducted social change in a positive way.

In contrast, it has been argued that using online shaming as a tool to change current social situation and condition will be ineffective, though shaming will cause short-term influence. After shaming comes up over and over again, they will know that they are just one symbol of online shaming and not to take it seriously (Pogue, 2016, p. 1). Nevertheless, Devitt (2015) argues that if a problem can attract a lot of attention on social media, it will have a great impact, and even though social media is developing rapidly, the comments on posts are permanent and searchable, which makes shaming more effective (p. 4). As a result, online shaming can still be an effective way to make change for our society.

In conclusion, online stigma can not only protect everyone's special identity by correcting everyone's mistakes and backward concept of equality, but also prevent companies and other organizations from harming the environment, thus actively promoting social change. Moreover, Foucault states that in medieval times, people put guilty people in suburban prisons, and now online shaming has replaced this way of putting people's behaviors online in the form of videos and other forms for people to criticize, which emphasizes the important role of online shaming in current society (Mallén, 2016, p. 15).

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