The Dynamics of Weibo Charities
A case study of “The Free Lunch Program”

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ABSTRACT

Since 2010, Weibo is not only a tool for transmitting information, but also for conducting all kinds of charity activities to attract more public attention and give people more power to influence public welfare. The purpose of this thesis is to explore Chinese citizens’ knowledge of Weibo charities and their motivation for participating in Weibo charities by carrying out a case study of the Free Lunch Program. The study relied on using a qualitative approach with thirty-three interviews in two different cities --- Beijing and Korla. In response to how citizens understand Weibo charities, the answers varied as to whether Weibo charities are a good platform to participate in charitable action, but Weibo charities still need to be more transparent and well-known. The study demonstrate social media, Internet penetration, digital literacy has the most influence on participation and levels of awareness of Weibo charity, and the socio-economic status and education, previous engagement are not have significant impact on it. Weibo charities as a platform encouraging civic engagement and making information and finical transaction transparent and accountable.

Keywords: The Free Lunch Program, Internet and Social Media, Weibo Charity, Beijing, Korla, Civic engagement, Online Activism, Slacktivism
Acknowledgment

The writing of this thesis marks the end of my two-year master’s program in Asian Studies at Lund University. Here, I would like to thank everyone who helped and encouraged me during those two years, without your help and encouragement, I would not have been able to finish my studies.

My sincere thanks and appreciation go firstly to my supervisor, Marina Svensson, whose suggestions and encouragement have inspired me and given me much insight into my thesis. I am also greatly thankful for her patience and professionalism.

Secondly, I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to all those who helped and participated in my study and made this thesis possible.

Finally, I would like to express my special thanks to my beloved family for their great confidence in me all through these years. Thanks to my twin sister, Yujie for listening to me and helping me work out my problems, calming me down, and thanks to my parents for their support whenever I needed it.
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1. Introduction

1.1 Background

On April 2nd, 2011, the Free Lunch program was officially launched by journalist Deng Fei, and dozens of mainstream media through the micro-blog platform (Weibo) (Mianfeiwucan.org.com, 2015), the Chinese equivalent to Twitter. The Free Lunch program aimed to change the situation of poor students/school children in the countryside. The program set out to offer free lunches for those students who are unable to get a nutritious lunch. Since the program was launched, a new type of charity has obtained widespread attention in Chinese society. In the same year, on October 26th, the former Prime Minister Wen Jiabao, at a state council meeting, decided to implement a project to provide school lunches to students in poor areas. The central government allocated 16 billion Yuan per year to support this project (News.cn, 2011).

The Free Lunch program was the first online charity program in China. In order to make sure the donations were used correctly, the volunteers started to use Weibo to make the daily payment information public so there could be citizen oversight. This program transformed Weibo's role from that of simply reporting public welfare undertakings to actively organizing charities. In addition, Weibo has created a space for public opinion so that users can supervise civil charities and how they used the donations.

The Free Lunch program has shown how civil charities can inspire national charitable action (ifeng.com, 2011). In this way, the Free Lunch program not only provided children in poor areas with lunch, but also enabled the grassroots supported charity to have good interactions with the government. The program's success means that more Weibo charities might play an increasingly important role in civil society.
1.2 Aim and Research Questions

Nowadays, information is more rapidly transferred than ever before. Because of this, people are more aware of social justice issues, they expect more public welfare undertakings from the government, and they also want to get involved themselves. Weibo has changed the previous pattern of information transmission from offline to cyberspace and sharing information has become popular, creating a new social reality. Since 2010, Weibo is not only a tool for transmitting information, but also for conducting all kinds of public welfare activities to attract more public attention and give people more power to influence public welfare.

Many researchers have conducted studies about Weibo in general. These studies address Weibo’s potential for assisting protests, its role in the Chinese society and its role as a new tool of governance. However, so far there are just a few studies on Weibo charities, and the reason for their emergence. These often focus on the user, and the characteristics of Weibo (Danni&Li, 2014; Svensson, 2014; Wu, 2012 et al.).

The aim of this thesis is to investigate the citizens’ knowledge of Weibo charities and their motivation for participating in Weibo charities by carrying out a case study of the Free Lunch program. Knowledge of this case may help to understand future trajectories, possibilities and limitations for charity work in general, and Weibo-based charity in particular.

The thesis is primarily concerned with the following research questions:

1. Why have Weibo-based charities emerged in China?
2. For what reasons do Chinese citizens participate in Weibo Charities? And what theoretical model can capture and explain this?
3. Do factors such as regional development, income and education level have an impact on Weibo charity involvement?
The above questions will be addressed in the study of how people participate in Weibo Charities in the capital Beijing and in Korla, a small town in Xinjiang, since they represent different tier cities. In order to study the phenomenon of Weibo charities, the author will do a case study of one particular organization - Free Lunches. The study hypothesizes that social media use, socio-economic status and previous civic engagement, including charity, will have an impact on an individual’s inclination and ability to donate online. Given the digital divides in the country it also hypothesizes that regional differences affects the level of awareness of the charity. The study will focus on the knowledge of, and involvement in, Free Lunches in Korla and Beijing. The study will consist of literature review and interviews with the organization and individuals in Korla and Beijing. The technique of snowball sampling was used and 15 people in each location were interviewed.

1.3 Limitations

There are several micro-charities platforms in China and they are set up by Internet companies such as Sina and Tencent. There are a lot of projects that are based on those micro-charities platforms, for example, the Free Lunch program, a program for helping trafficked children, and so on. The author focuses only on Sina Weibo Charities and the Free Lunch program. The reason for choosing only the Free Lunch program is that the program is one of the most successful cases of civil charities. A lot of researchers (such as, Chen, 2014; Du, L., Qian, L., & Feng, Y, 2014; He and Yang, 2013; et al.) have done studies on the Free Lunch program, and their studies demonstrated the importance and value of the program. The Free Lunch program got the central government and people's attention, and after it was launched, the quality of school children’s lunch has indeed improved. Therefore, we should pay more attention to the question of how charity work in China develops.

It is important to look at two different cities that vary in terms of geographical location, income, development, education level, etc.. Beijing belongs to the first tier
city in China, and Korla is among the fifth tier cities of China (news.sohu.com, 2014). Other studies have studied Weibo charities, which included a lot of factors, such as politics views, characters of Weibo charities, regional difference, income and education difference and so on. The author will not take all these factors into consideration. The author will only examine the motivation of Chinese citizens participating in Weibo charities, with a focus on the impact of region, income and education level, in order to investigate, for example, if Weibo charities address inequality to help the poorest in China.

The study did not present the whole picture of Weibo charities, since there are so many programs/projects, and the Free Lunch Program is a very special case, which was launched after the traditional charity was faced with a cold reception. The Free Lunch Program was the first online charity to receive a lot of attention, and the main founder Dengfei is a journalist, he is an active Weibo user and he is really good at using social media to promoting charities. The study is limited because of the sample size, the author interviewed 33 interviewees, who cannot represent all the people, and the different interviewees may have different answers to the interview questions. But the study can still, through the limited responses, contribute to an understanding of citizens’ knowledge of Weibo charities and their motivation to participate.

1.4 Thesis overview

In total, this thesis consists of eight chapters. The first chapter briefly introduces the background, the aim and research question, and the limitations of the study. To give the context for the empirical study, chapter 2 provides the literature review, which gives an overview of the research on the Internet and social media developments in China, civil society developments and the charity landscape in the country. Chapter 3 presents the research design and the motivation for the choices of research design and data collection methods, and also takes consider of ethics. Chapter 4 presents Weibo charity in general. Chapter 5 has a short introduction on the Free Lunches program
development and features. **Chapter 6** presents a theoretical framework that addresses civic engagement, online activism and Slacktivism. **Chapter 7** presents the empirical findings and analyzes the collected data from the interviews. Finally, **chapter 8** reaches conclusions from the research.
2. Literature Review

2.1 Internet and Social Media Development in China

The world “Internet” is an abbreviation of “interconnected networks”, and it is one of the most important inventions ever made. It began at the end of the 20\textsuperscript{th} century and has transformed people’s lives in many ways. The Internet is a result of long-term human technology development beginning with the “ICTs (information and communication technologies) revolution” in the early 1970s (Su, 2010:1). Although China implemented the opening-up policy in the late 1970s, the development and use of the Internet did not appear until the late 1980s (Liang and Lu, 2010:103). China’s Internet development boomed since 1994, when the first Internet connection with a global computer network was made (Ibid.). In 1997, Chinese Internet users reached 0.62 million, and by the end of 2008, the number of Chinese Internet users rose to 298 million (CNNIC, 1997, 2008). As a result, in 2008, China overtook the United States with the largest number of Internet users in the world (Liang and Lu, 2010:103).

\textbf{Figure 1:} Size of Internet user in China and Internet penetration (2002–2010)

![Graph showing Internet user size and penetration rate in China from 2002 to 2010.](image.jpg)

Source: CNNIC, Statistical Survey on Internet Development in China, 2011
Figure 2: Size of Internet user in China and Internet penetration (2010–2014)

The number of Internet users and Internet penetration have rapidly developed during 2001-2010, and after 2010 the numbers continue to increase, but more slowly (Figure 1 and 2). The Statistical Report on Internet development in China by CNNIC (Chinese Internet Network Information Center) indicates that by the end of June 2014, China had 632 million Internet users (CNNIC, 2014). Despite its uneven distribution across geographical regions (rural area users are fewer than urban areas), the penetration rate of the Internet was 46.9%, and of this number, 28.2% were rural users, which already surpassed the world average for rural Internet coverage (22%) (Ibid.).

China’s Internet development has been accompanied by tight control and regulation from the government over Internet infrastructure. The Communist regime successfully established an ideological hegemony over recent decades (Tong&Lei, 2013: 296). Thus, the Internet “has been constrained by the wider sociopolitical and economic context of China”, and human rights groups and activists have criticized China’s censorship systems, describing them as the “Great Firewall of China” (Liang
and Lu, 2010:103-104). Despite the uneven development and the government control, Internet development in China indeed has transformed the Chinese society.

As Curran (2012) points out, the Internet provides “a tremendous peace dividend”, which brings improvement of “communication with and improved knowledge of other people, countries and cultures” (Curran 2012:8). In other words, the Internet is a global medium, which provides more opportunities for ordinary people to communicate with others. Global communication became even easier in 2004, when the “Web 2.0” emerged and quickly spread to China (Teng and Mosher, 2012: 31). Web 2.0 presents the second phase of the Web's evolution, it is also called the “people-centric Web”, “wisdom Web”, “participative Web”, and “read/write Web”(Murugesan, 2007: 35). Web 2.0 has promoted the organization of social movements, because of the development of mobile phones and other similar technology support. In addition, Web 2.0 transmission is quick, and information more transparent, which has changed the face of social movements and promotes democracy on a global scale (Teng and Mosher, 2012: 31). After Web 2.0 appeared, social media developed. Weibo, blogs, Twitter, Renren, and Facebook based on SNS (Social Networking Sites), those social media received highly support by individuals, enterprises and society (Min and Wang, 2013:3).

The word “social media” first appeared in the e-book “What is Social Media?” by Mayfield. The author, Mayfield, points out that social media is a new type of online media, and gives users significant participatory space, the ability to create, and spread content (Mayfield, 2008:79-82). Other scholars (Chen, Diao and Zhang, 2011; Min and Wang, 2013; Kietzmann et al., 2011) also point out the definition of social media. Taking these definitions into account, to summarized, social media can be defined as a series of network applications, based on Web 2.0, which can be used by mobile communication technology and internet technology to allow users to share, collaborate, discuss and modify the UGC (User Generated Content) on high interaction platforms.
Since the government censors international social media sites such as Twitter and Facebook, the Chinese social media landscape is dominated by local players, as Figure 3 shows. Popular social media platforms, including Weibo and Renren, are a way to share information and interact with friends, even strangers. Weibo is a form of micro-blogging, equivalent to Twitter. Weibo is based on users sharing and disseminating information and accessing platforms, through their computer (PC) or mobile phone connect with updates of about 140 words of text in real-time in order to visit and create their community (Wu, 2012:140; Danni & Li, 2014:56; Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Duan, 2014 et al.). As Sina itself puts it: Weibo represents a new online experience in China by combining the means of real-time public self-expression with a powerful platform for social interaction, as well as content aggregation and distribution (Ir. Weibo.com, 2015).

Compared to blogs, Weibo provides a more convenient, high-speed spread, with fewer words, and encourages more spontaneous usage. Thus more Chinese citizens
can express their concerns on Weibo and participate in the current debates, as well as “paving the way for interactivity among different groups of people” (Svensson, 2014:168). Moreover, the main characteristics of Weibo are its convenience, and the nature of grassroots participation (Duan, 2014:205). Weibo is providing an unprecedented and simple way for Chinese people to express themselves in public, and interact with others in real time.

The latest statistic (CNNIC, 2015) shows that 47.9 percent of all Chinese citizens (667.4 million Chinese citizens) have access to the Internet and that 38.4 percent of them also use micro-blogs. Although data shows the the number of users has decreased by 7.1 percent during 2014 (CNNIC, 2015), Weibo still has a large user population. As was mentioned previously, Weibo’s features are equivalent to Twitter. However, “the user of Twitter in the West is quite small in most countries - for example, only 18 percent of the American population used Twitter in 2013” (Svensson, 2014:168), so Weibo has a bigger percentage of internet users than Twitter.

Since 2009 the domestic media providers Sina, Tencent, Sohu, NetEase and so on, all have opened a micro-blog business. Weibo became an important platform for public intellectuals and Weibo has “further increased their visibility, enabled them to quickly react to different events and engage in public debates, as well as to network among themselves and with other groups in society” (Svensson, 2014:176).

In China, Sina Weibo has the most users. In March 2014, Sina Weibo had 143.8 million MAUs (monthly active users) and 66.6 million average DAUs (daily active users), increasing from 107.3 million MAUs and 48.6 million average DAUs in March 2013 (Ir.Weibo.com, 2015). It is leading the micro-blogging market since Twitter is not available in China. According to a report from CNNIC (2014), the domestic media company, such as Tencent, Netease and Sohu has reduced spending on Weibo, the users has slipped to Sina Weibo, and therefore, Sina Weibo has
attracted a wide range of users, including ordinary people, organizations, and public figures (CNNIC, 2014).

Weibo is a cultural phenomenon in China. Media use Weibo as a source of news, and a distribution channel for their headline news. Government agencies use Weibo as an official communication channel for spreading information and news, and also to survey public opinion to improve their public services. Individuals and charities are using Weibo to make the world into a better place, for example, by launching charitable projects. The project is seeking some volunteers and donations, using the influence of the celebrities to extend their social influence.

2.2 Civil Society development and Charity Landscape in China

The rise of Internet and social media transformed the Chinese civil society and charity landscape. Social media are tightly controlled in China, and civil society is weak, but there is still the possibility to create the space and the conditions to be “more open to expressions of solidarity and ironic resistance, as well as increasing levels of interactivity between different group in society” (Svensson, 2012:19). Developments in Internet and media provide important platforms both for public debates on urgent issues, as well as for the development of civil society in China (Ibid.).

China is considered to be the world’s largest remaining authoritarian country, which has a one-party political system, and a high level of public security organization and supervision. Teets (2013) found growing convergence of “consultative authoritarianism”, which is a new state–society model in China that has emerged to encourage consultative authoritarianism with civil society (Teets, 2013: 36). Consultative authoritarianism has increased, demonstrating an alternative to Western models in both civil societies and regulatory state, which balances civil society expansion with more sophisticated state control (Ibid.).
Civil society organizations have played a key role in the transition of some democratic authoritarian countries. Spires (2011) has developed a concept of “contingent symbiosis” that “captures the fragility and mutual benefits that characterize the NGO-government relationship” (Spires, 2011:4-12). NGOs aim to meet social needs, while government officials seek to make sure all “problems” in their jurisdictions, especially at the local level, are dealt with by means that do not attract the unfavorable attention of their supervisors (Ibid.). When mutual goals are achieved, NGOs can continue their work, but the local government officials will ignore the illegality (Ibid.). Clearly such a relationship is both fragile and contingent (Ibid.). If NGOs keep their operations small while making no calls for democratic reform or political representation, officials will turn a blind eye and claim credit for any good works of the NGO (Ibid.). However, if an NGO’s work draws too much attention from local officials, or if it oversteps an ambiguous and frequently shifting political line, the organization can be punished or even closed down. As Alagappa (2004) has pointed out, civil society is an arena of conflict, power, struggle, inequality, and cooperation, as well as competing identities and interests (Algappa, 2004:27-32). It is populated with diverse formal and informal organizations, as well as widely varying methods, structures, resources, and purposes.

Teets (2013) also points out the analogous model of state–society, which is called “consultative authoritarianism”. It promotes the simultaneous expansion of a fairly autonomous civil society as well as the development of indirect tools for state control (Teets, 2013 :36). Thus, the relationship between NGOs and authoritarian countries is a symbiotic relationship. The government needs NGOs to help make better use of social resources, at the same time, NGOs are not allowed to participate in national politics, and so the relationship between them is not equal.

Since the early 1990s, Chinese civil society has grown dramatically with the increasing number of registered groups and their participants—from about 400 in 1986 to over 400,000 in 2006 (Teets, 2013 :21). Domestic groups consist of social
organizations, non-profit groups and popular groups, which are engaged in service delivery as well as community development (Ibid.).

China’s charity landscape has changed extensively in recent years, since Chinese social media has created a number of domestic charities and related activities. Charity can be also called philanthropy, a sprawling and complex concept that can be understand as a “collective form of charitable giving”, representing “the ability of donors to use private funds to create social and political change” (Harrow, 2010:132), and the aim of charity is “improving the quality of human life” from “voluntary action/initiatives for the public goods” (McCully, 2008:7). As Li (2013) summarized, the definitions of charity emphasized three elements: voluntary, private and for public goods (Li, 2013:6). The element of “private” emphasizes the difference between “public service provision of the state” and charity action (Ibid.). However, charity actions are not always antagonistic to government, they also can be part of a “contingent symbiosis”.

In 2008, those effected by the Wenchuan Earthquake received aid from an unprecedented number of donors and volunteers. This marked a turning point for charity in China. The earthquake reawakened the awareness of charity in the Chinese, “it quickly became apparent that general awareness about charity organizations and the avenues for giving remained limited, China's restrictive fundraising regulations only allowed a handful of government-backed foundations to publicly solicit donations” (Asiafoundation.org, 2014). Therefore, the government realized it is necessary to using the social resource to develop the public welfare. There are both private and public charities in China. Private charity refers to “voluntary services and donations to private organizations or individuals without involvement of state” and public charities are those where the government is involved in charity directly indirectly (Li, 2013:7).

China’s economy has developed rapidly with a GDP increase by ten percent annually (The World Bank, 2015). However, this unprecedented growth has been uneven,
which has created the need for charity targeted towards those who don’t benefit from the development. While, the government realized “the necessary of mobilizing social resource to fill the gaps of social service provision while promoting innovative social management” (Li, 2013:7). Therefore, the national government had took action on charity, the National 12th Five years Plan (2011-2015) has included China Philanthropy Development Guideline, this is the first time the government promoted and developed this sector.

Indeed, corruption issues have made people mistrust state actives, including state charities because they often lacked transparency. The problem came to the before in 2011, in a series of charity scandals and since then Chinese charities have been in a “downwards spiral” (philanthropy.com, 2011), since a young woman (Guo Meimei), posted photos of herself online with a luxury car and consumer goods. She had also "falsely claiming" this luxury stuff from the Red Cross manager. And this event was suddenly becoming a hot point on the Internet. Therefore, The Chinese government audit of the Red Cross over suspected misspending also attracted widespread attention online and in the media (Ibid.). Another reason of citizen don't believe them because of the money of donation were not enough transparency.

However, recently, the charity landscape of China has changed this situation a lot. Mobile phone and online payments have become the optimal choices for making donations, for reasons of transparency. Public welfare initiatives have obvious advantages on social media because they can directly and rapidly mobilize people who are most likely to support the same target and make a contribution in today’s China.
3. Methodology

This chapter discusses the research strategy, data collection and ethical considerations of the study and discusses their validity and reliability.

3.1 Methods

This project study the reason for Chinese citizens’ participation in Weibo charity through a case study of the Free Lunch program employing qualitative research methods. It take a constructivist approach since qualitative methods are more useful to “study a phenomenon in depth to uncover general mechanisms and to generate new empirical findings” (Heimer and Theøgersen, 2006:72), and “it tends to be more open-ended research strategy than is typically the case with quantitative research” (Bryman, 2012:412). Using qualitative research methods, the researcher can be more “open to unsuspected phenomena that may conceal by prior instrumentation” (Silverman, 2010:122).

The study is conducted through a study of secondary materials including books, academic papers, journals, websites, etc., as well as semi-structured interviews, and a case study. It helps the author understand and identify current trends in Weibo charity and the Free Lunch program, and the roles and functions that Weibo charities are playing in Chinese civil society. It also gives a broader understanding before conducting fieldwork. The fieldwork is conducted in Beijing and Korla to provide abundant information on the research topic, with regional, income and education level variations.

3.2 Research Design

This study will also apply some of the techniques and methods described in Rogers’ book (2013) “Digital Methods”. This study will also use online databases to access and process data. Weibo charity (gongyi.weibo) and The Free Lunch program
(mianfeiwucan.org) will be used to obtain quantitative data about the background context, as well as to process the quantitative data.

Firstly, I will use social media and networks to promote the research to find a number of users as interviewees. After that, I will conduct interviews (30 interviews) and code some interviews to reach some conclusions.

3.2.1 Case Study
The case study is an intensive analysis of an individual unit stressing developmental factors in relation to context (Flyvbjerg, 2011:304). The central feature of the case study is to provide in-depth information, which is a necessary requirement for the aim of this research. Therefore, the author will try to answer the research question from a wealth of information in the context of the case study.

In order to demonstrate the potential influences of variations in region, income, and levels of education in Weibo charity and the Free Lunch program, the author of this thesis choose two cities from different levels of city tire, so therefore, they could “replicate each other, either predicting similar results or contrasting results for predictable reasons” (Yin, 2003:4). The author of the thesis is native Chinese from Xinjiang Province. After fieldwork in Korla and Beijing, the author has witnessed different levels of attitudes to charity in those two cities, and the Free Lunch program is more concentrated in eastern China. However, western China is poorer than the east, and the people there need more help than those in the east. The author of this thesis is interested to study what the dynamics of participation in Weibo Charities in those two different regions.

3.2.2 Choice of the locations: Beijing V.S. Korla
The author chose Beijing and Korla as the locations for the case studies because they represent different levels of development and rates of Internet penetration. Almost all
the main charities headquarters are found in Beijing whereas Korla just has a few charity branches.

**Beijing**, which is the Chinese capital, is the center of political and cultural life. In 2014, the income of urban residents who live in Beijing has been reached 43910 Yuan per year, and the income of rural residents who live in Beijing had reached 20226 Yuan per year (bjstats.gov.cn, 2015). The latest data (bjstats.gov.cn, 2015) shows that the resident population in Beijing is 21.516 million people at the end of 2014. In 2012, a total of 91 colleges and universities are found in Beijing (bjstats.gov.cn, 2013), including Peking University, Renmin University and Tsinghua University of China; those universities are the most famous universities in the country. There are about 580 000 students each year, and about 210 000 masters student in Beijing each year (Ibid.). Thus, Beijing is the center for national institutions of higher learning since it brings together the most famous universities in the country.

**Korla (Kuerle)** is a capital of Mongolian Autonomous Prefecture of Bayingolin (Bayinguolengmengguzizhizhou) in Xinjiang province. At the people’s income aspect, in 2012, the income of urban residents who live in Korla has reached 18100 Yuan per year, and the income of rural residents who live in Korla has reached 13356 Yuan per year (xjkel.gov.cn, 2013). According to the 2013 statistics (xjkel.gov.cn, 2013), Korla has about 550,000 residents, and about of these 400,000 people are a floating population. The population includes 23 ethnicities such as Han, Uyghur, Hui, Mongolian; the Han nationality population accounts for about 69.9 percent of the total population and about a third of the total population are ethnic minorities. It is worth mentioning, according to latest statistic, that the total population in Xinjiang province is about 22.328 million people (egov.xinjiang.gov.cn, 2013), which is almost the same population as the city of Beijing. There is no university in the whole city, and only 13 colleges and universities are in Xinjiang province in total (Li, 2015).
Moreover, as CNNIC (2014) indicated the different region of the Internet for penetration declined from 3.37 in 1997 to 0.24 in 2014. However, there are still apparent differences between the developed provinces and less developed provinces. In Beijing, the number of Internet users are 15.93 million, and the penetration of the Internet is 75.3%. However, the whole Xinjiang province has just 11.39 million Internet users, and the penetration of the Internet is 50.3%. (CNNIC, 2014)

Comparing those two cities, the differences are quite clear based on population, educational level, incomes, and penetration of the Internet. The author of this thesis thinks that to compare the two cities is very interesting and may help explain the motivation of the people participating in Weibo charity and the limitations of Weibo charities to solve inequalities and welfare issues.

### 3.3 Data collection

Objectivism means that social phenomena confront people as external facts, which are beyond reach or influence (Bryman, 2012:33). Constructivism asserts that social actors are continually accomplishing social phenomena and their meanings, which implies that social phenomena and categories are produced through social interaction (ibid.). Therefore, there will be interviews as primary data, and summaries of previous research on the subject as secondary data.

#### 3.3.1 Interviews

First I used social media and networks to promote the research and find a number of users as interviewees. I try to interview 30 people who participate or do not participate in Weibo charity in two different cities (Beijing and Korla), and each interview will take around 20 minutes.

Secondly, I have adopted structured interviews for both groups of people (those who participate in, and those who do not participate in) the Weibo charity or program. The
aim of structured interviews is that all interviewees should have precisely the same context for questioning (Bryman, 2012:210), according to whether each person knows about the Weibo charity, the program, and how they understand. Therefore, I will ask all interviewees the same questions.

Thirdly, I have adopted three semi-structural interviews with the people who work on the Weibo charity or the Free Lunch program. The interview of qualitative semi-structural with topic questions, it is focusing on the role of Weibo charity and their particular program—the Free Lunch program, and according to each person knowing to have deeper understand of Weibo charity, the program (Bryman, 2012: 438 -439). The advantage of using semi-structured interviews is that they allow me to obtain the information according to the focus question of the thesis (Ibid: 464).

During the interview period, I will choose a quiet place to do the interview and written notes as soon as I can do. I will avoid leading, biased or complicated questions and stop the interview when there is data saturation.

After the interview, I will review all the notes and transcribe them and try to do so within the same day. I will, through those 33 interviews, make and code interviews for further findings and analysis. There will be an emphasis on how cases can change individual’s lives and how charities change individual’s lives by letting subjects speaks of their experience (Bryman, 2012: 321).

**3.3.2 Ethical considerations**

Before I do the interviews, I will firstly introduce myself and the research to the participants. I will let respondents and the others who are participating in my project know their roles in my study and the conditions for their participation. I will make sure that participation is voluntary and the participant will be guaranteed anonymity, and all data, which will be collected from interviews, will be treated confidentially, stored safely and will only be used for the master thesis. I will let the participant know
how I gathered data and ask their permission and consent before I collect it. I won’t offer money, substantial gifts, or other advantages to participants during my thesis project. I shall respect their opinions and their cultural/religious differences in my research.
4. Weibo Charities

4.1 Definition

With its launch in 2010, Weibo charity is a new type of charity, which has high participation and is gaining momentum in China (Du and Qian et al., 2014:1639). In the official Weibo charities website, they describe themselves as an interactive platform used to aid communication (Weibogongyi.com, 2015). Moreover, Weibo charity can also be defined as a charity participation mode based on SNS that is initiated by ordinary individuals and organizations to realize specific charity needs through extensive charitable participation (Du and Qian et al., 2014:1640).

4.2 The Reasons Behind the Emergence of Weibo charity

The Chinese words “gongyi” and “cishan” are all related to the concept of charity, but, “gongyi” literally means public goodness, and “gongyi” is used more often in official context (Li, 2013: 11). Moreover, Weibo charity (Weibo-gongyi) plays a social assistance role to satisfy the basic needs of vulnerable people and it started to come into the public view, taking full advantage of the characteristics of grassroots to achieve rapid propagation. Weibo charity appeared after traditional charity systems had a crisis of trust. Since the Guo Meimei event, the traditional charity has been faced with a cold reception. And based on the Internet and social media development, Weibo has given people a channel to express their concern and participate in society, since China hasn’t many channels for citizens to have self-expression. However, this situation had created good conditions for Weibo charity to spring up.

4.3 Characteristic

Compared with traditional charities, following the characterization made by Du and Qian (2014), we can identify three features that distinguished Weibo charities from more traditional ones. First, while traditional charities are promoted by government or government-owned nonprofit organizations, Weibo charity is usually organized by
individuals or charity organizations, thus in Weibo charity, the role of initiator is shifted from the government to ordinary individual (Du and Qian et al., 2014:1639). Second, Weibo charity is small in size and economy, but more focused on particular cases, while traditional charity is designed to carry out large-scale fundraising of large amounts of money (Ibid: 1640). Third, Weibo charity online is based on a web of social networking sites (SNS)(Ibid.), it is more convenient to have interactions with donors, however, most of traditional charity consists of offline donations, and inhibits interactions with donors.

The author agrees with Du’s and Quian’s analysis, and the author also identifies three more features. Fourth, Weibo charity more easily creates a project, unlike regular charities, which need complicated formalities. Weibo charity is only based on charity needs. Within organizations, there is no limitation of numbers’ social status, career, age or regional, people are free to decide whether, when to join, it is only connected with charity needs (Fang, 2013:124). Fifth, Weibo charity has higher effectiveness than traditional charities since Weibo has a significant amount users and high transmission. Charity projects can go through Weibo to post and repost in order to get wide range attention. Sixth, Weibo charity has more publicity and transparency than traditional charities. After trust issues of traditional charity, people have strong intentions to ask charity systems to become more public and transparent. Donors want to know where their money is going. Weibo charity can satisfy this demand. The manager of Weibo charity can post the progress of charity project in regular time, and so people can feel safe to join the charity event.

4.4 Overview of Weibo Charities

Since it’s beginning, Sina Weibo charity has launched about 11010 projects (2015) to assist public welfare organizations. Weibo charity has signed a cooperation agreement and provided service to 88 traditional charity organizations, which including China Social Assistance Foundation (Zhonghua shehui jiuzhu jijinghui), China Social
Welfare Foundation (Zhongguo ahehui fuli jijinghui), China Charities Aid Foundation for Children (Zhonghua ahaonian ertong cishan juzhu jijinghui), and One Foundation (Yi jijing) and so on. (Gongyi.weibo.com/static, 2015)

The latest data shows, since Sina Weibo charities platform was launched, just three years ago, it has accumulated a total of more than 20 million Weibo users participating in donations, and raised 240 million Yuan for charity. Moreover, Guangdong, Beijing and Jiangsu have the highest donation rates of 11%, 9%, and 7%, respectively. Citizens who use mobile phone to make donations account for 67% of the total users, which is more than compute users, but when it comes to amount, computers donations account for 69% more than coming from mobile phones. A 2015 survey based on three years of all Sina users’ donation behavior shows that women account for most donations at 72%, 88% of the donations have bachelor degree or above, and people born in the 90s make up the largest group for 44%, those born in the 80s are second, and account for 21% of total users. Other age groups have account for 35%. (gongyi.weibo.com/thirdyear, 2015)

4.5 Limitations

Weibo charity has taken full advantage of the Internet and received widespread attention, but there are still limitations according to some of my interviews.

1. Most of the public donations foundations and other public welfare institutions are regulated and have qualifications from the government, whereas private agencies do not have the qualification, therefore, some projects lack legitimacy, because their public offering behavior is not recognized by law (Interview Pro#27-Zhen, March 27th 2015). Nowadays, the government is still sensitive about many aspects; the government hasn’t total opened the channel for charity (Interview Pro#33-Fang, April 3rd 2015). Therefore, the NGO and the government still need “contingent symbiosis”
2. Weibo charity indeed belongs to individual moral behavior. With the development of scale, Weibo charity needs more specialized operations and standardized management, it currently relies more on personnel and volunteers (Interview Pro#27-Zhen, March 27th 2015).

3. Weibo charity has large amounts of information, mostly personal information with high-speed transmission, which makes the review of public information very difficult. Often there is false information, making the user feel confused (Interview Aca#13-Huang, February 16th 2015). “If I found out that what I re-posted was false information, I would feel cheated, and in future I’d find it hard to believe its authenticity” (Interview Aca#3-Li, February 6th 2015). Therefore, “In the posting and transmission of public information we must ensure its authenticity, so that the public power can truly effectively spread to people who need help” (Interview Aca#12-Wang, February 12th 2015).

4. Fang, who has worked in the Free Lunch Program for 4 years and participated in this program from the beginning, think, small donations are too scattered and limited. Moreover it is also difficult to track donors with technology, and difficult to thank donors and get feedback in order to ask for their second donation (Interview Pro# 33-Fang, April 3rd 2015). One of the problems of social media is, although there is convenience, tracking donors has become difficult, making it difficult to get subsequent donations.

The report of China’s public welfare undertakings annual development in 2011 has indicated, “Weibo charity opened up a new charity mode of civil government interaction model”. Weibo charity developed through the idea that “everyone can participate in public welfare” (RenrenGongyi), which not only promoted the way of doing good, but also led to a new social relationship and method of communication. The author argues that, for now, Weibo charity is no longer just a platform; it is more like the way to influence individual’s awareness of Weibo charities.
5. The Features and Development of the Free Lunches Program

5.1 The Emergence of Free Lunch Program

The Free Lunch program is one of the most successful cases in Weibo charity. The year of 2011 was a turning point for charity in China. With the widespread distrust of Charity, the media has revealed several scandals of government. Most Charity programs lost citizens’ trust, as the data from the Chinese Ministry of Civil Affairs shows, in 2011, “donations to the country's nonprofit groups and foundations totaled $132-million from June to August this year, down some 86 percent from the previous three months”(Philanthropy.com, 2011). In the same year, the Free Lunch was program established.

After the Spring Festival in 2011, journalist Deng Fei attended an awards ceremony, and while their met Cai Jiaqin, a supporting education teacher (zhijiaojiaoashi), from Guizhou Bijie, the poorer counties. She told Deng Fei, her students do not have lunch during the school day, and are hungry. Deng Fei also grew up in the countryside, and he listened to this story, and so decided to build a dining place for the children. In 2011, March, Deng Fei received donations of 20000RMB (about 3076 US dollar), and started to build a dining place in Bijie. The same year, on April 2nd, Deng Fei decided to launch the Free Lunch program for China’s rural children. Moreover, he invited the public to participate in this program --- a donation of just 3RMB (about 50 cent US dollar) can help one child have nutritious lunch. He received donations of 46000RMB (about 7076 US dollar) from journalists, enterprises and ordinary individuals across the whole country, in just 24 hours. (Deng, 2014:2-89)

5.2 The Development of the Free Lunch program

The Free Lunch program is based on Weibo charity, and the aim of the program is that school children have free lunch. Deng considered the issue of transparency regarding donation money, and his team decided to use the Internet volunteers to help created a Free Lunch program website (mianfeiwucan.org) and official Weibo page
for the program. Firstly, the website can combine with Weibo charity platforms in order to actively introduce the program to society and call for positive contributions. Secondly, their own website/Weibo publishes details about how donations are used. With the high transparency, comes high trust, even the local governments have join in the program, such as Xinhuang (Hunan province), Hefeng (Hubei province), have begun to attach great importance to the school children’s access to lunch. They carry out the “2+1 model”, which means the program pays 2 Yuan, and the government pays 1 Yuan, in total 3 Yuan are guaranteed for the school children to have lunch (Deng, 2014:90-97).

It is a good start that the program is involved with local government. On October 26th 2011, the then Prime Minister Wen Jiabao, at a state council meeting, decided to implement a project to provide school lunches to students in poor areas. The central government allocated 16 billion Yuan per year to support this project in 680 villages and fed more than 26 million school children (Zhang, 2012:245).

The Free Lunch program was initiated by new media -- Weibo, and compared with traditional charity, the program’s fundraising methods are more diverse. According to Zhang’s (2012) summary, it is mainly composed of four methods: firstly, individual or enterprise donations by bank transfer to China Social Welfare Foundation of the Free Lunch program of charitable donation owners account. Secondly, Alipay (Zhifubao), online donation; thirdly, Free Lunch program selling charitable souvenirs in the charitable store in Tmail (Taobao); fourthly, as part of the local financial revenue, such as “2+1 model”.
The latest data shows that, since the Free Lunch program establishment, the campaign has received donations of 128.16 million Yuan (about 19.72 million US dollar) in total, and in total surveyed 440 schools in 23 province across the country, however, through the distribution map (Figure 3), we find that most the Free Lunch program is in the eastern China, with just 2 projects in the Xinjiang province, which belonging to west China and at least 129,932 students have free lunch (Mianfeiwucan.org, 2015).

The reason for the uneven distribution is regional participation. In the south the participation rate is higher than in the north, and the main reason is habit (Interview Pro# 33-, April 3th 2015). Since citizens who live in the south are Buddhists. Buddhism promotes that one good turn deserves another, which also could be expressed as “do well and have well”(haoyouhaobao); therefore, the charitable action is more active in the south.
5.3 Features of the Free Lunch program

The reason for the success of this program is its special features.

Firstly, it is civil spontaneous behaviors, since it is initiator is journalist and volunteers, and the participators are from the grassroots.

Secondly, there is broad-based use of social media. Fang, the director of the Free Lunch program official Weibo, told the author that the most important aspect of the program’s success is the founders competence as journalist, in using social media to make the program better and more transparent; (Interview Pro# 33-Fang, April 3rd 2015). Except the posting of daily payment information, they also post and show the plight of children in poor areas in order to draw the public’s attention and spread the influence of the program.

Third, the program has concerns about the nonprofit sector’s transparency. The Free Lunch program is based on a social media platform to promote the charity project. In order to ensure the proper use of funds, the program volunteers have launched official Weibo account to make daily payment information public, to be supervised by citizens.

Through the website (Foundationcenter.org, 2015), the user can see the balance of the Free Lunch program and the latest funded school list, in order to supervise how they use the money. As Deng Fei writes in his book, the money can only can go to two places, which are either a small team managing the money or to village school for children to have lunch (Deng, 2014:161). The way the program uses social media is a new model of charity, and promotes transparency to gain trust from citizens.

Forth, there is high participation. Weibo charity has no threshold, and everyone can participate. The website (Mianfeiwucan.org/donate/donation/, 2015) also has a donation list, which clearly shows that no matter who you are, or how much money you want to donate, you can easily participate in this program.
**Fifth**, Big V and famous people join the promotion. As Svensson (2012) points out in her article, that “with the advent of Weibo we are seeing a tendency among some investigative journalists to write and forward posts about different urgent individual cases and social causes, and various actives in the civil society sector. An even more striking phenomenon is their active involvement in different forms of charity work, with some starting fund-raising campaigns that have later developed into registered organizations” (Svensson, 2012:27). The originator Deng Fei is a famous journalist, he used his popularity to advertise the program, at the same time, Yili Ma (famous star/big V) and other celebrities have joined, further expanding its reach.
6. Theoretical Framework

In the literature review, the author based introduced the Internet and social media development in China, and civil society development and charity landscape in China. The development of social media brings not only convenience, but also self-organized behavior, which mean the various applications of social media can weaken the government’s management and control. In the West, the media is widely expected to play an important role in strengthening and consolidating democracy and civil society (Svensson, 2012:19). Specifically, “a vibrant civil society and media that serve as watchdogs of public and corporate power are crucial to ensure a well-informed citizenry and genuine participatory democracy” (Ibid.). Weibo and Weibo charity can play an important role in this respect, because they help spread information and allow citizens to act as supervisors, as well as giving a voice to marginalized groups in society. Normally, journalists are the reporter on injustices and the situation of marginalized groups in society. Journalists with the same interesting can form a group, but indeed with tight controlling of Internet, they are “not able to create their own independent organizations” (Ibid.). Through the reporting and commenting on public events on Weibo, journalists and others can “interact with many different groups in society, and become part of a larger community of people who share the same ideals and struggles”, and moreover, “some journalists go one step further and set up or become actively involved in charity work and civil society organizations”, such as Deng Fei (Ibid.).

Therefore, in the theoretical framework, I use Jia (2010), who describes the theory of civic engagement. She identifies three elements of civic engagement with Chinese characters. Further, Arnstein (1969) has written a famous article, called “a ladder of citizen participation”, which presents the three levels of eight degrees of participation, which can help us to understand the current situation in China.
6.1 Civic Engagement

After the Arab Spring protests, most Asian political leaders were distinctly concerned about the potential effects of the event (Abbott, 2013:579). Therefore, a new state–society model in China encourages consultative authoritarianism with civil society (Teets, 2013: 36). Consultative authoritarianism has risen, demonstrating that an alternative to Western models in both civil society and regulatory state, which balances the civil society expansion with more sophisticated state control (ibid.).

In the past decades, Chinese political and legal reforms have greatly improved the channels of citizens' grievances. The government has stressed that "citizens can have orderly participation"(gongmin youxu canyu)(Jia, 2010:1). Moreover, Spires (2011) argues that the relationship between the Communist Party and associations (NGOs) can best be characterized as a “contingent symbiosis”, a concept which can capture the fragility and mutual benefits characterizing the NGO-government relationship (Spire, 2011:1). The “contingent symbiosis” has stressed the importance of civic engagement in democratic politics and that dialogue, negotiations and discussions between the citizen and government can have great significance.

Civic engagement is usually referred to as public participation that aims to influence public policy and public life (Jia, 2010:1). Civic engagement has three basic elements. The first is the citizens are main body of civic engagement, which refers to those citizens who demand to participate, either as individuals, or as various civil organizations. The second is the field of engagement - citizens can legally engage in the public sphere (Ibid.). The main characteristic of the public sphere is the common public interest (Ibid.). The third is the engagement channel, there are a variety of channels in today’s society, and through these channels citizens can influence public policy and public life (Ibid.). Recently, civil society has developed further, and the scope of civic engagement has been expanding from the formal sector to the informal sector of society.
Only through civic engagement can democratic politics really work. First, civic engagement is the basic way to realize the rights of citizens and the main route for individuals to achieve their rights (Jia, 2010:1-2). Secondly, citizen participation can effectively prevent the abuse of public rights and corruption. Constraint of power is necessary to avoid abuse. Effective exercise of public power needs internal balance in the legal system, and also needs external constraint based on civic engagement (Ibid.).

Civic engagement mainly includes electoral engagement, civic engagement in public policy, and the new management concept of engagement governance (Jia, 2010:22). Civic engagement can be seen as the ability of citizens to achieve their right in society. NGOs and Weibo charities are both forms of civic engagement.

**Figure 5: Eight Rungs on the Ladder of Citizen Participation**

![Eight Rungs on the Ladder of Citizen Participation](image)

Sources: Arnstein,1969:241

Arnstein (1969) defined participation in civil rights based on the degree of citizens power and distinguishes the three levels of eight kinds of citizen participation patterns. The first is the highest level of “citizens' control”. The second is the “delegated
power” and shared power with “partnership” to constitute the first level of engagement, namely “citizen power”. The engagement at the second level is referred to as a “tokenism”, which contains “placation”, “consultation” and “informing” at three levels, they all involve civic engagement, but the final decision-making still lies with the government. The engagement at the third level is referred to as the “nonparticipation model”, referring to “therapy” and “manipulation”, it means the government through civic engagement achieves their goal (Arnstein, 1969:240-242). The eight degrees of ladder has a point of view that citizen participation also has degree difference.

6.2 Online Activism and Slacktivism

With the development of the Internet and social media, civic engagement can be present on the Internet, and it is becoming more obvious nowadays. In this thesis, the author also draws on online activism to make the argument that the Internet and social media development is better for user engagement in society, creates online activism and brings self-organized behavior in order to strengthen and consolidate democracy and civil society. Online activism that emphasizes online activity based more or less on the Internet, not only limited to the network, and often extending beyond the web (Yang, 2009:3), is especially useful to my analysis as it allows us to think through the motivation of citizens participating in online charity.

Yang (2009) explains that online activism is the consequence of multiple forces of interaction, dynamics that comes from “a broad spectrum of converging and contending forces, technological, cultural, social, and economic, as well as political...The dynamics are multidimensional.” Activism depends on the network and other new information technology, but are not limited to the network, and it often extends beyond the web (Yang, 2009:3-7).
The main features of online activism are “prevalence, issue multiplication, organizational base, modest goals and non-disruptive forms” (Yang, 2009: 31). Regarding the prevalence of online activism, “contentious conversation” describes the common concept of social movements and the “perfect way of talking about online activism” (Ibid.). The use of cyberspace for this type of conversation is very common in China, and “contention happens daily in Chinese cyberspace” (Ibid.).

The second feature is the issue of multiplication. In general, offline contentions in activism have a corresponding presence on the internet, but some network contentions do not happen in the offline world (Yang, 2009 : 31).

The third feature is organizational base, which means that some cases of online activism have an “organizational dimension” (Yang, 2009: 31-32). Those cases of online activism are based on legitimate and independent organization, including both formal to informal organizations, and are internet-based (Ibid.).

The fourth feature, includes those cases of online activism that are spontaneous responses to offline injustices or are launched by individuals (Yang, 2009 :32). Those cases rely on individuals, who participate in online activism, and may create a contentious website and/or just a single posting (Ibid.). Those instances of activism have the chance of being widely circulated in society.

The fifth, according to a report from CNNIC, suggests that major participants in online activism are mostly young people, who are urban residents. Apart from this, the participants vary in age, gender and occupational background (Yang, 2009 :32).

Activists take full advantage of apps, blogs and social media sites or other social media tools to promote their information in order to gain support (McCafferty, 2011:17). However, online activism has been accused of not being complemented by
offline participation, and is often seen as slacktivism (Štětka & Mazák, 2014: 3 Knibbs, 2013:18). The term slacktivism combines the words “slacker” and “activism”, and it has been commonly used to describe a gap between the action and consciousness of the user using social media. Slacktivism allegedly satisfies the immediate desire and grants self-satisfaction through views or “liking” the commentary of social issues, yet has little or no impact on actual actions (Štětka & Mazák, 2014:3; Knibbs 2013:18). Slacktivism has in general received criticism in the past few years, since this sort of click-and-like activism falls short of real activism (Knibbs 2013:18). Slacktivism has been described as a negative contribution, but maybe re-posting can be positive, since reposting also can be looked at as a way to propagate the Weibo charities and encourage online engagement. As Bennett and Segerberg (2014) points out in their article, from the Arab Spring to Occupy Wall Street demonstrates that civic engagement are not only limited in using digital media to sending and receiving messages, but also “can involve well-established advocacy organizations, in hybrid relations with other organizations, using technologies that enable personalized public engagement” (Bennett and Segerberg, 2014:739).

Civic engagement, online activism and slacktivism let ordinary people widely engage in charity action, through the network to “find a new sense of self, community and empowerment” (Spire, 2011: 2), no matter how the action will or will not impact the society. The network era increases the citizens’ power, and of the citizen's action network is the power of social change. Therefore, I agree that civic engagement; online activism and slacktivism are important theories to use in the analysis of the Chinese use of Weibo charity.
7. Empirical Finding and Analysis

7.1 Demographics of Interviews

I interviewed 33 people who had different levels of education and the age range was between 19-31, and in this age group includes “generation Y”. Generation Y refers to those people born between 1978 and 2000, and are better educated than their parents’ generation (Min and Wang 2013:47). They have grown up with the Family Planning policy (one child policy), and with the development of the Internet and social media. This group is relatively younger, and have a strong ability to accept new technology and they are also the main users and participants of the Internet and social media. Moreover, from the development of the Chinese Weibo Report (2014), the age group between 19 and 35 accounts for 72% of the MAUs of total Weibo donation active (Ir.weibo.com, 2015).

Beijing. The interviewees consisted altogether of 6 men and 9 women, in the age-range between 20-31, which describes the generation born in the 80s and 90s. They are all Internet and Weibo users. Six of those interviewees study a bachelor’s program in economics, government management or public administration. Two of them are doctoral students in Peking University. The remaining people are the ordinary citizens, who work in newspaper offices, design companies, sellers and they have all stayed in Beijing for more than 3 years. Moreover, I also interviewed and had conversations with three people who work in the Free Lunch Program.

Korla. The interviewees consisted altogether of 7 men and 8 women, in the age-range between 19-29. They are all Internet and Weibo users and live inside the city. Four of them are university students and grew up in Korla. The remains are workers in banks, government, property management and design companies.

In Korla, nine of the fifteen people knew about Weibo charities, six people knew about the Free Lunch Program, eight were willing to forward information, and only
one was willing to donate money. In Beijing, thirteen out of fifteen people knew about Weibo charities, ten people knew about the Free Lunch Program, and six of them were willing to forward information, and four were willing to donate money. The purpose of their using Weibo was for entertainment, for instance, to search for information and share their life online. They all express that if they knew the project was true, they are willing to donating the certain money to them.

7.2 Weibo Charity Perception

Weibo has changed people's understanding of public welfare. Before Weibo appeared, individuals were limited in their ability to receive charitable information, so people thought public welfare was only related to vulnerable groups/people, and there was a long distance between the vulnerable people/group and donators/volunteers; they were willing to help but unable to do so. “Weibo Charity made me feel that charity is not that far way from my life, not like tradition charity only related to government or government related foundations” (Interview Aca # 12-Wang February 12th 2015). And, “In the Internet era, the appearance of Weibo charity is more convenient and quick to donation, that's good”(Interview Aca # 17-Qi March 1th 2015).

Weibo charity has become an important and new development in charity. It shows that many Chinese citizens are interested in expressing concern at a more personal level. Weibo lets more people speak, the connect and witness social problems since 2011 (Svensson, 2014:178). Further, Weibo users can get together, people can find their partner, and strangers aggregate into the same action group (Tong&Lei, 2013:292-294). Weibo charity can play an important role in this respect, because it through the transmission and via the supervisors, people can see and hear the voice of the marginalized social groups from Weibo. Investigative journalists let the bottom be heard, further strengthening civil society in China. Such as Sun said, “Weibo charities were good, it lets me know about other poor people’s life, and gives me a channel to help them, even I can’t donate much as a student, I still can through the reposting to
let others know” (Interview Aca #6-Sun February 9th 2015). The information that people obtained from Weibo is increasing faster than traditional media, and the charity is easier to know and lets citizens gradually participate in the charity field. The action of charity is no longer a dispensable, occasional gesture of sympathy, but, now, charity is with their interests and life closely together through the Weibo charity, “I can see my “charity records” (Gongyijilu) from the Weibo charity website, it records how many times and how much money donated to charity, and it makes me feel good” (Interview Aca #31-Li April 1th, 2015). Further, “Weibo Charity has played an important role in the propaganda and let me see the plight of the children who do not have lunch.” (Interview Aca #22-Sun March 19th 2015).

Therefore, in response to how citizens understand Weibo charities, the answers varied as to Weibo charities are a good platform to participate into charitable action. Furthermore, the re-posting and donation function of Weibo is significantly helpful for citizens to participate in charity since people may re-post information and send it to their followers. A growing and varying group of Chinese citizens are using Weibo to link up people who have the same mind (Svensson, 2012:26). They post, read, comment and donate on different current events, protests, which usually do not repost in the traditional media (ibid.). The messages might be transferred tremendously quickly to people as much as possible (Tong&Lei, 2013:292-294). Those functions allowed Weibo charity to change and develop the charity landscape in China.

7.2.1 Online Activism

Weibo charity lets people share, practice and learn anytime and everywhere, thereby creating more flexible, more effective charity groups and a community. Weibo Charity represents a kind of online activism, which emphasizes an online activity based more or less on the Internet, and some of charitable actions not only limited to the forwards and donation online, but also extend to the society. The Free Lunch program was launched online and used Weibo to promote their program, but the
action of the charity was not limited to being online, the volunteers can also do action offline to guarantee the poor students/school children are able to get a nutritious lunch.

Citizens are using Weibo charity to come together in new ways to make their views known. First of all, the Weibo users are divided into two categories, individuals and organizations. Among them, the individual users can be divided into grassroots, which means they are ordinary users (grassroots), and other people, who include stars and famous people from all works of life, those people who have high amounts of followers (big V/opinion leader). Organization users include public welfare institutions and NGOs. The individual users are the largest number of the population on Weibo charity. The main purpose for using Weibo charity is to carry out social activities, to express and show one’s personality, and access to information.

7.2.2 Civic Engagement and Slacktivism

Since 1978, China has implemented society transformation, from the national comprehensive control of society to open some private space (Jia, 2010:8). It means that with the implementation of the opening up policy, China has started to have a certain private space and public space to promote civic engagement. In China, civic engagement is facing two challenges: first citizen participation is always under the government system, and their participation and mobilization is conducted in a way that the government needs and wants, so, in fact, the citizens have only the "appearance" of rights; secondly, during the process of social change, people have more interests to demand, which has yet to find a suitable channel for expression (Ibid: 16). In Arnstein’s (1969) definition, Chinese civic engagement still stay in the second degree of civic engagement, which is “tokenism”. With the Internet and social media development, citizens have the rights of “informing” (zhiqingquan) and citizens also can present their ideas/opinions of society, but the final decision still belongs to the government. Recently, civic engagement has been expanding in many
fields and citizens are somehow legally engaged in the public sphere. Promoting citizens' orderly political participation and the realization of effective governance are good ways to strengthen civic engagement.

The main body of civic engagement is the citizens who demand to participate (Jia, 2010:2). When Weibo was closely linked to people own right, people will pay more attention to the depth, process, and results of the participation, since the basic condition for civic engagement is to let citizens realize the rights, and main route for individuals to achieve their rights (Ibid.). Based on the emergence of new ICTs development, these social movements tend toward more individual action, and the digital collective action form becomes broader, faster and more flexible (Bennett and Segerberg 2012:743). Despite ICT’s development, uneven development and trust issues were the reasons behind the emergence of Weibo Charity. Charity can provide service and addresses inequality issues, which the state does not do. Weibo charity is a good way for people to know who needs help, and how we can help them (Interview Aca# 14-Li, February 16th 2015). Further, “some organizations use Weibo to collect money and advertise. And some opinion leaders are using it to encourage people to donate. It is a good way to let more people know and participate” (Interview Aca# 28-Huang, March 29th 2015). Therefore, Weibo charity is based on civic engagement and relies on individuals, who participated in online activism. Therefore, instances of individual online activism have a chance to be widely circulated in society (Yang, 2009: 31-32).

Based on my research question, I also hypotheses that previous charity participation makes people more likely to take part in online charities. Through the responses, five interviewees think that offline donation is more convenient for them, since online payment is too technological or they do not trust charity activism in China, but they are willing to make donations of real goods, such as books, pens and so on. However, 16 interviewees think that online payments are more convenient, “just using my mobile, I can make donations and help others, that’s amazing for me” (Interview Aca#
28-Huang, March 17th 2015). Among 16 interviewees, six interviewees think Weibo charities are a new way to participate in charity, so they take a part in online charities, “re-posting is easy, there is no cost, but I know I am doing a good thing” (Interview Aca#20-He, March 3rd 2015). Only two interviewees express they have made donations before, and now they are more likely to take part in online charities. Some others interviewees also express that: “Before the boss asked me to make donations and required to know how much money I was donating, which I didn’t want to do” (Interview Aca#4-Wang, February 6th 2015). Therefore, the answers demonstrate that previous charity participation does not make people more likely to take part in online charities.

However, it cannot be ignored that enterprises’ Weibo and the NGOs’ Weibo are also important parts of the public welfare group. The enterprises’ Weibo is used to improve the enterprise to a well-known degree, set up the enterprise brand, and expand economic benefit. The NGOs’ Weibo is used in order to pursue a more accessible way of communication to the public, therefore expanding the influence of public welfare activities. However, those community/organizations need “contingent symbiosis” with government. The government's tolerance and cooperation is also very important. “Contingent symbiosis” is a concept that is useful to understand the likelihood for further development and the success of Weibo charity. Moreover, in a well-functioning charity environment, the enterprises that join the Weibo charity landscape are also important. Companies also want to make a good impression on their customers.

Bennett and Segerberg (2012:739) have researched the use of digital media in civic engagement, and found that the technology is not only used for sending and receiving messages, but also to personalize public engagement. Their conclusions about the function of social media can be applied to civic engagement in other activities. People usually use social media to connect with others; the similarity of Weibo Charity is people transferred their opinion to networks in order to establish a group, which has
some identity. In other words, they built a wider network of civic engagement, with the power of interactive digital media, and using social network technology through personal social networks to spread out the related information.

During the interview, fifteen of thirty interviewees would like to forward charitable information without giving money. It seems that in Weibo charity, users are more interested in forwarding, which can be characterized as slacktivism. The cost of forwarding is very low, therefore, after reposting many users will think they achieved their goal, so they don't need additional practical work, but the real problem is not solved. Slacktivism combines the pursuit of feel-good charity while not actually sacrificing anything except a single click, so there is no actually significance (Knibbs, 2013; Morozov, 2011). However, slacktivism can draw public attention with very high levels of forwarding. The users describe their activity saying “surrounding and watching is powerful” (Interview Aca # 11-Ge February 11th; Aca # 16-Zhen March 1th 2015). And Hu (2013) also describe slacktivist action as “surrounding is engagement and sharing takes a stand” (Hu, 2013:263). The 18 interviewees think that whether it is re-posting or actually giving money, they are all active charitable acts. “My income was really limited, I don’t have extra money to donate, but forwarding of the information also contributes to charity, I think” (Interview Aca# 9-Wei, February 10th 2015).

Knibbs (2013) has criticized “slacktivism” as a mostly futile endeavor, as well as Morozov (2011) has criticized “slacktivism” as cheap and essentially meaningless expressions of solidarity, but the author thinks slacktivism has not always been negative and thoughtless. Users actually do think about what they are re-posting, that they choose participation means they are supporting this project. Re-posting charities’ information not only “feels good”, but also re-posting has certain significance of engagement and gives people satisfaction. Re-posting is also a way to show their support. Furthermore, re-posting as a form of slacktivism, also increases and promotes charitable awareness in order to encourage civic engagement.
7.2.3 Transparency and Trust Issues

Weibo changed the form and method that people participate in charity. “Media penetration is very important, many NGOs do not know the importance of social media, and we need to tell citizens what we did. Not everyone has knowledge about charity, we should let them know how we gather the donations and how we used those donation” (Interview Pro# 33-Fang, April 3th 2015). One of the reasons Weibo charities and The Free Lunch Program have become so successful is transparency. Charity, for the moment, whether it is launched by who, which groups funded, Weibo charity have in common is the transparency of information, which is the current official overall lack of philanthropy in China. “I trust the Free Lunch Program because there has not been a scandal, and even when there has been some query, they clarify it quickly” (Interview Aca # 18-Nie March 3th, 2015). Weibo charities usually use Weibo as a platform, with the timely release development of charity progress and other necessary information. “We have promoted charity projects on Weibo, because first, we believe that everyone has goodness; secondly, people are not reluctant to participate in charity, the Chinese charity indeed has some problems, since there has been too much negative news, moreover, it is possible that the citizens do not know about charity, we need to let them have information and knowledge about it.” (Interview Pro # 32-Zhang April 1th 2015).

Fang explains that as a consequence, in recent years, “fundraising has developed faster and faster. In the beginning, the program used five years to help 100 schools have enough money to guarantee lunch for school children, as a result, they just use one year to achieve this goal. Moreover, in 2014, they need ten months to raise ten million, but this year (2015) they need less than four months to raise ten million.” She also stresses the importance of using media to make charity work more transparently, “the Free Lunch Program is successful because Deng Fei knows how to use the media, and make it more professional. For example, other charity organizations don't
know how to operate the media to do propaganda and open the fact process. The traditional way is disclosed as a final result, such as year of audit report, however, the Free Lunch Program lets you understand the project, the whole process in the disclosure the children's meals. When we meet with doubts, we will explain and respond, now we are more trusted than before.” (Interview Pro# 33-Fang, April 1th 2015)

For charity projects as a whole, trust is not enough, citizens do not trust that the government established the project or by call. “I can re-post, but a donation of money, I don’t trust them”(Interview Aca # 11-Ge February 11th 2015). When I asked whether they trust the Weibo charity, such as the Free Lunch Program, only two of thirty interviewees replied with certain trust. Four of thirty interviewees have certain answer of not trust, one of them thinks, “it’s just a show, there is no meaning” (Interview Aca # 21-Zhang March 11th 2015) and “nowadays, the charity landscape in China was bad, too many cheaters exist and they have used charity to earn dirty money”(Interview Aca # 6-Sun February 9th 2015). The remaining interviewees think it depends what kind of project it is and who is in charge of the project, and three of them express that they would like to donate offline rather than make an online donation, since offline donations are more visible. For instance, one of the interviewees pointed out, “there was plenty of news about these kind of organizations abusing the donators. And there’s no good supervision system in China nowadays. I would rather send the money and materials to those in need directly” (Interview Aca # 30-Zhang April 1th 2015).
7.3 The motivation of citizens participating in Weibo Charities

7.3.1 Regional Difference:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Beijing</th>
<th>Korla</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Knowing Weibo Charity</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowing the Free Lunch Program</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Would Like to Forward</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ever Donation</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From the perspective of the degree of regional participation, in Korla, 60% of those interviewed knew about Weibo charity, while 40% knew about the Free Lunch Program among the people I interviewed. In Beijing, the people know that Weibo charity accounts for 87%, and that people who knew about the Free Lunch Program accounts for 67%. On the whole small sample, people in Beijing thus seem more rates about knowing of Weibo charity and Free Lunch Program than people in Korla as well as donation.

Moreover, “it is hard to determine where the donors are from, since some of the donors are anonymous” (Interview Pro# 33-Fang, April 3\textsuperscript{rd} 2015). However, according to her knowledge, most of the volunteers are originally from developed regions, and the local media and Internet developments are really important. Furthermore, it also depends on local behavior; for instance, the first donation (900 thousands Yuan) came from Guangdong. A 2015 survey based on three years of all Sina users’ donation behavior shows that Guangdong province account for most donations at 11%, Beijing is second, account for 9% of total donations (gongyi.weibo.com/thirdyear, 2015). The survey also shows that the developed province/city has a higher rate of donations. However, “if only we look at economic development levels, Shanghai is the most developed city, but the donations from Shanghai are not much, since it is more international and focuses more on community work than charity work” and Fang also said that “my intuitive feeling is that the
participation behavior in Beijing was not very high, since Beijing mainly focuses on environmental protection action, and that there are very high levels of enthusiasm in Xinjiang, but they do not have a good knowledge of charities” (Interview Pro# 33-Fang, April 3th 2015). Moreover, other interviewees thought that “Beijing is too big, too many people need help, sometimes I feel helpless, even I want to, I think the government needs to do something more” (Interview Aca # 19-Li March 3th 2015).

Social media can inspire users who have the same interests to actively contribute and give feedback (Min and Wang, 2013:6-7), and spread awareness of Weibo charities to engage others. For people, who live in Korla, there is no lack of enthusiasm in participation; they are a lack of knowledge and understanding of Weibo charities. All the interviewees are using social media as well as Weibo, the different knowledge of Weibo charity was because they are in different levels of digital literacy. Digital literacy is the skills and behavior used in a wide range of digital devices, such as computers, Ipads, smartphones, all of which can be seen as a network rather than as computing devices (Gilster, 1997:139-152). A digitally literate person will have the ability in a range of digital skills, knowledge and skills in using computer networks, moreover, they have an ability to engage in online communities and find, and evaluate information (Ibid.). Most people who live in Korla express that even when they hear about Weibo charity, they do not know what exactly it is. But the people in Beijing have a better understanding and one of them expressed “I saw their program (the Free Lunch Program) several times online” (Interview Aca# 28-Huang, March 29th 2015). The digital dividend not only means accesss to the Internet, also mean the ability to use the Internet. Moreover, Fang told me, the main donations are given priority within the enterprise; the first-tier cities pay more attention to CSR (Company Social Responsibility) than other tier cities. Especially in Beijing, “most of the state-owned enterprises have certain requirements of CSR each year, they need to achieve the goal that the government set out” (Interview Pro# 33-Fang, April 3th 2015).
Therefore, from the perspective of the degree of regional participation, Beijing is obviously more significant than Korla, since people in Beijing have better knowledge of Weibo charity and the Free Lunch program. The author of this thesis agrees that social media and Internet penetration and digital literacy are the key influences on participation and awareness of Weibo charity.

### 7.3.2 Education and Income Difference:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Donated on Weibo Charities or the Free Lunch Program</th>
<th>Only Re-post</th>
<th>Not interested</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor degree or above</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor degree or below</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income over 3000Yuan per month</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income lower 3000Yuan per month</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

One of the conditions for citizen participation in civil society is education. The study shows that the higher levels of education correspond to high civic engagement, and for people with lower levels of education, civic engagement is also lower (Jia, 2010:11). Another influence on levels of citizen participation in civil society is income level. Civic engagement is related to social economic development levels and citizens’ own income levels, with different economic conditions, there exist different levels of civic engagement (Ibid.). Although income level and civic engagement are not in a simple corresponding relationship, generally speaking, the greater the degree of economic development and income level, the greater the civic engagement (Ibid.). In my findings, the higher levels of education and income among interviewees are not significant for active participation in Weibo Charity, but the other study (three years
of all Sina users' donation behavior) shows that 88% of the donations have bachelor’s degree or above (gongyi.weibo.com/thirdyear, 2015).

7.3.3 Individual Motivation

I have also done research on how Weibo charity can gain more trust and participation. The participants are often more inclined to give to vulnerable groups, such as the elderly and children. “If the recipient is a child, I think I'd like to help them” (Interview Aca # 7-Liu February 9th, 2015). Also important are those “organizations engaged in helping those in poverty, those in need after disaster, and protecting the environment” (Interview Aca# 28-Huang, March 29th 2015).

Moreover, some of the interviewees think the big V/opinion leaders need to more actively participate in Weibo charities; in order to drive and encourage their followers to participate in Weibo charities (Interview Aca# 14-Li, February 16th 2015). The big V, who has a huge following, is asked to take responsibility in social media society since 2013 (Svensson, 2014:171). Because the big V is based on huge followings, they can guide the public opinions (ibid.). Indeed, big V can make those small charities become a big hot topic.

For improvements in the future, the interviewees think that the Weibo charity needs to enhance the authenticity of information and supervisory system. Since “there was plenty of news about these kind of organizations abusing the donations, but there's no good supervision system in China nowadays ” and “we need to give donaters confidence to trust the organizations” (Interview Aca# 28-Huang, March 29th 2015). Transparency is the most commonly mentioned by interviewees. Moreover, some of the interviewees identify what they think Weibo charity needs to promote their project and let everyone who is interested understand the project's purpose and show their contribution to the society.
8. Conclusion

China’s Internet has boomed since 1994, and in 2004, Web 2.0 emerged and quickly spread to China, and it has promoted the organization of social movements using mobile phones and other similar technological support. Web 2.0 is the platform for social media, it allows users to create and generate contents, and those functions have given the user a great participatory space. Therefore, the main characteristic of social media is to give everyone a space to have an ability to create and spread information by participating in Chinese civil society. In 2015, China had 667.4 million Internet users, and 38.4% Internet users are using Weibo (CNNIC, 2015). With the active development of Weibo, new kinds of charity activities have emerged in the form of Weibo charity.

China’s charity landscape has changed extensively in recent years, since the government realized it is necessary to use social resources to develop public welfare. Indeed, corruption issues and scandals have made people mistrust state actives, as well as other charity activities, since the activities often lack transparency. The Internet and social media developments have led some opinion leaders, such as Deng Fei, to express ideas about social media, such as Weibo, to let citizen know about and participate in charity, and at the same time make charity processes more transparent. Weibo charity is a new type of charity, which has a high level of participation and is gaining more attention in China.

The purpose of this thesis was to explore the citizens’ knowledge of Weibo charities and their motivation for participation in Weibo charity by carrying out a case study of the Free Lunch Program. Knowledge of this case study may help to understand future trajectories, possibilities and limitations for charity work in general. To study the phenomenon of people’s participation in Weibo charities, the author also interviewed people who live in Beijing and Korla. The study mainly relied on findings, which includes thirty-three interviews in Beijing and Korla.
The Free Lunch Program is one of the most successful cases of Weibo Charity. The Free Lunch Program was the first online charity program in China and it aimed to change the situations of the poor students in the countryside. During the case study of the Free Lunch Program, I studied the motivation of citizens participating in Weibo Charity, and my findings can be summarized in the following three arguments: media dividend/digital literacy influence the different regional citizens’ knowledge on Weibo charities and further contribution; and high income and education citizen participate in Weibo charities are not significant in my study; individual motivation are prefer on helping vulnerable groups, such as Children. And transparency and widely promotion are important influenced individual motivation on Weibo charities.

More specific, from the perspective of the degree of regional participation, Beijing is obviously higher than Korla, since people in Beijing have better knowledge of Weibo charity and the Free Lunch program than people in Korla. Beijing has a stronger political character. Therefore, regional development matters and impacts the citizens’ motivation to participate into Weibo charity.

Education and income level are two conditions for citizen participation in civil society; the higher levels of education and income levels are always followed by high civic engagement (Jia, 2010:11). The study of mine found that higher education and income levels amongst interviewees was not significant for their active participation in Weibo Charity, however the study sample was small.

Information and communication technology (ICTs) has been recognized as administrative "potential" (Yildiz, 2007:650). Since ICTs can help to create a structure of network interconnection, service, efficiency and effectiveness, transparency at el (Ibid.). The social media as information transfer as a tool plays an important role in the spread of information about Weibo charity, and it also brings more transparency. Weibo charity not only extends the traditional charity on the quantity, scale, scope, field, but also further enhances the online activism, and
“slacktivism” of repost also can be a charitable behavior. Such as the Free Lunch Program have using Weibo to ensuring that balance of donations and expenditure are full transparency and visualization.

The Chinese charity landscape has made further improvements. Weibo charity makes full use of the Weibo’s characteristics of interaction, greater participation, and the fast speed spread. It collects everyone's resources, the wealth, knowledge, skills and other contributions, and concentrates on the people who need help in society. From the findings, social media, Internet penetration, digital literacy has the most influence on participation and levels of awareness of Weibo charity.

In summary, through the Internet and social media development, individuals and organizations are empowered to express themselves to get attention and acquire the means to express themselves, such as in civic engagement, online activism and slacktivism. The influence of social media and Internet development has changed how Weibo charities advocating for social change generate awareness and participation in civil society.

Regarding the development of Weibo charity’s future work, I also found some limitations and problems. Firstly, there is the question of how to make Weibo Charities receive sustainable supporting. Like Fang said, Weibo charity can be looked at as spontaneous action. If it just relies on a moment of passion, there will become a power shortage. Moreover, Weibo charity and the Free Lunch Program are too scattered from small donations, it is difficult to track donors by technology, and it is also difficult to thank donors, and promote second donations.

Secondly, the Weibo charity model needs to be updated constantly, in order to maintain the enthusiasm of the participants. The Chinese are charitable, but they lack effective channels and methods of participation. Since China has a large population, even small individual donations can lead to large amounts of money. Information
transparency enhances social trust, and only a transparent civil charity will attract trust and support.
Bibliography:


Li Ying (2015), Thinking of Xinjiang education status, *Co-operative Economy&Science*, (02) [Accessed April 1, 2015]


Appendix 1------ Interview Question

Basic Information
Name, Age, Male/Female, Job/Field of Study

Interview question sheet for people who not work on charity:
Q1: What kind, if any, of social media do you use?
Q2: How long have you used those social media for what purpose?
Q3: What kind of organization/purpose and how did you know about it?
Q4: How did you donate money, online or offline?
Q5: Have you ever heard of Weibo charities? How do you understand the term?
Q6: Were you ever using Weibo charity?
Q7: Why did OR didn’t you use Weibo charity?
Q8: What kind of program you willing to helping?
Q9: Do you know the free lunch program? How did you know about the organizations?
Q10: Were you ever-donated money into this project?
Q11: Do you trust this project?
Q12: Why you trust /not trust those seeking help project?
Q13: What do they do you will trust them more? Have you engaged in any other activities related to them? Eg, Forwarding posts, worked as a volunteer, visit their school, etc.?
Q14: Free comments and talk interviewees’ opinion of Weibo charity.

Interview question sheet for people who work on charity:
Q1: How long was you work in Weibo charity/ the Free Lunch program? What is your major area in this program?
Q2: how did you know this project?
Q3: According to my knowledge, the Free Lunch program is firstly initiated on Weibo website, do you think it because of the impact of Weibo in this society? What do you think?
Q4: Do you think the number of participants is increasing or decreasing? Why?
Q5: What do you think of Weibo charity/the Free Lunch program from your knowledge?
Q6: Do you think there is the difference between the Free Lunch program and other charity projects? For instance, more transparency?
Q7: Do you know where is the higher participation rate of the Free Lunch program? Do you think there has regional difference? Could talk about it? Do you think it can be influenced by the economy, culture, educated level? For instance, Beijing and Kuerle?
Q8: Is there has some difficulty of increasing the participated rate?
Q9: Free comments and talk interviewees’ opinion of Weibo charity.
Appendix 2------- List of Interviewees

Aca#1-Yang (Designing Company). Note taken during interview. 15 min, February, 5th, 2015, Korla

Aca#2-Li (Designing Company). Note taken during interview. 10 min, February, 5th, 2015, Korla

Aca#3-Li (Bachelor student, Xinjiang University). Note taken during interview. 20 min, February, 6th, 2015, Korla

Aca#4-Wang (Property management in Chenxin Community). Note taken during interview. 10 min, February, 6th, 2015, Korla

Aca#5-Xiang (Property management in Chenxin Community). Note taken during interview. 10 min, February, 6th, 2015, Korla

Aca#6-Sun (Master student, Xinjiang University). Note taken during interview. 25 min, February, 9th, 2015, Korla

Aca#7-Liu (Bachelor student, Sichuan University). Recorded taken during interview. 35 min, February, 9th, 2015, Korla

Aca#8-Zhang (Seller in Minjia Supermarket). Note taken during interview. 10 min, February, 9th, 2015, Korla

Aca#9-Wei (Bachelor student, Tianjin University). Recorded taken during interview. 15 min, February, 10th, 2015, Korla

Aca#10-Zhou (Worker in Jinchuang Mine). Note taken during interview. 20 min, February, 10th, 2015, Korla

Aca#11-Ge (Teller in Business Bank of Korla). Note taken during interview. 25 min, February, 11th, 2015, Korla

Aca#12-Wang (Restaurant owners). Note taken during interview. 20 min, February, 12th, 2015, Korla
Aca#13-Huang (Seller). Note taken during interview. 35min, February, 16th, 2015, Korla

Aca#14-Li (Teacher in primary school). Note taken during interview. 25min, February, 16th, 2015, Korla

Aca#15-Zhang (Seller). Note taken during interview. 10min, February, 17th, 2015, Korla

Aca#16-Zhen (Work in Newspaper office). Note taken during interview. 20min, March, 1th, 2015, Beijing

Aca#17-Qi (Work in Newspaper office). Note taken during interview. 20min, March, 1th, 2015, Beijing

Aca#18-Nie (Doctoral student, Peking University). Note taken during interview. 25min, March, 3th, 2015, Beijing

Aca#19-Li (Doctoral student, Peking University). Note taken during interview. 20min, March, 3th, 2015, Beijing

Aca#20-He (Bachelor student, Peking University). Note taken during interview. 30min, March, 3th, 2015, Beijing

Aca#21-Zhang (Seller). Note taken during interview. 10min, March, 11th, 2015, Beijing

Aca#22-Sun (Bachelor student, Peking University). Note taken during interview. 20min, March, 19th, 2015, Beijing

Aca#23-Li (Designing Company). Note taken during interview. 20min, March, 22th, 2015, Beijing

Aca#24-Ge (Bachelor student, Peking University). Note taken during interview. 25min, March, 23th, 2015, Beijing

Aca#25-Wang (Seller). Note taken during interview. 10min, March, 24th, 2015, Beijing
Academic Qiu (Bachelor student, Peking University). Note taken during interview. 20min, March, 25th, 2015, Beijing

Professional Zhen (Project stuff of the Free Lunch Program). Note taken during interview. 30min, March, 27th, 2015, Beijing

Academic Huang (Bachelor student, Peking University). Note taken during interview. 30min, March, 29th, 2015, Beijing

Academic Xu (Bachelor student, Peking University). Note taken during interview. 15min, March, 29th, 2015, Beijing

Academic Zhang (Designing Company). Note taken during interview. 15 min, April, 1st, 2015, Beijing

Academic Li (Designing Company). Note taken during interview. 15min, April, 1st, 2015, Beijing

Professional Zhang (Project stuff of the Free Lunch Program). Interviewed over telephone. 20min, April, 1st, 2015, Beijing

Professional Fang (Director of the Free Lunch Program official Weibo). Interviewed over telephone. 45min, April, 3rd, 2015, Beijing
# Appendix 3------ Interview Coding Summary

![Figure 7: The interview coding from Korla](image-url)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Use Weibo</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Weibo Charity</th>
<th>Free Lunch Program</th>
<th>Participate WC</th>
<th>Trust</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yang</td>
<td>Use Entertainment</td>
<td>Know</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Only Repost</td>
<td>Depends</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Li</td>
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<td>Know</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Only Repost</td>
<td>Depends</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Use Entertainment</td>
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<td>Yes</td>
<td>Only Repost</td>
<td>Depends</td>
</tr>
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<td>No</td>
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<td>Not</td>
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<tr>
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<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Depends</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Use Information</td>
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<td>No</td>
<td>Not</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liu</td>
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<td>Only Repost</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zhang</td>
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<td>No</td>
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</tr>
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<td>Know</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Only Repost</td>
<td>Depends</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>No</td>
<td>Depends</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Only Repost</td>
<td>Depends</td>
</tr>
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<td>Use Entertainment</td>
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<td>Donation</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Huang</td>
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<td>Know</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Only Repost</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Li</td>
<td>Use Entertainment</td>
<td>Know</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Only Repost</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zhang</td>
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Figure 8: The interview coding from Beijing

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<th></th>
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<th>Purpose</th>
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<th>Free Lunch Program</th>
<th>Participate WC</th>
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