

The Information Fragmentation in the Internet Era

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Abstract: It is the internet that brings the information fragmentation era, further influencing people's life as well as society. As human beings are stepping into the information fragmentation era, both the input and the output of the information changes significantly, and these changes further bring many influences to the masses and society. In this process, the medium has played an essential role. This study explores the reasons and influences of the information fragmentation era from the perspective of the internet. This study analyzes the features of the internet and the input and output of fragmented information. The study reveals that the internet changes the quality of the information, people's habits of the input, and the output of information. The quality of the information becomes hard to distinguish, and the information is not as deep as it used to be. People are more passionate about reading the information in fragments, and many media also create information in fragments, which is a considerable change led by the internet.

Keywords: The Information Fragmentation, Internet, Media

1. Introduction

Nowadays, human society has stepped into the information fragmentation era. People's fragmented time, such as walking, waiting for a bus or underground, and having a meal, are all occupied by applications like WeChat and Twitter. In this process, people are surrounded and attracted by plenty of fragmented information. Information fragmentation means that in communication, people understand and read much information through the media, but they do not have a deep understanding and memory so what they know becomes a fleeting thing [1]. People are excited about the intelligence of the Internet to get information, while at the same time, they are also confused about whether the information they get is accurate. People's intelligence is influenced by the Internet and the difficulties in distinguishing the genuine from the fake in this information fragmentation world. People enjoy the benefits it brings, but at the same time, they should also learn about its demerits and problems. Only in this way could people make full use of it and alleviate its harm to people and society.

This study will first explore what influence the Internet has brought in the area of information transference. Secondly and most importantly, this report will explore the reason for the change over the fragmentation of information and its influence on people's values. Finally, this report will explore the changes in the information output for the media and ordinary people.

2. The Medium: Internet

2.1. Three Main Features of the Internet

At first, the study will expound on the features of the Internet. Among them, here are three main features that have dramatically influenced people most to explain in detail.

To begin with, the Internet has the nature of timeliness. It means that in the process of information transference through the Internet, the time interval from the moment that the messages were produced from the sources of information after reorganizing and passing to the moment that people received them is pretty short. In other words, its efficiency is very high. In that case, if there were a big event that had happened just now, the masses would learn about it through the Internet in the next few seconds.

What is more, the Internet has the nature of a vast amount of information. The Internet is a wonderful platform to collect various kinds of information from every corner of the universe, and aside from that, the Internet is pretty good at information storage, making the Internet keep all the information it collected and never went missing. Based on the collection and storage, the Internet accumulates an increasing amount of information, gradually resulting in a vast amount of information. In people's daily life, anything that happens anywhere and anytime can be published by anyone through the Internet, the information is produced in an explosive amount, and it will be held by the Internet all the time. It is clear to see that it is a considerable amount.

Last but not least, the Internet has the nature of interaction. It means that the interactive information transference from many directions between the media and the audiences and between the audiences. As people read the information on the Internet, they could also publish their own opinions and ideas as comments or discussions, further increasing the amount of information, which is also one of the fundamental reasons for the second feature of the Internet mentioned before.

Here firstly, takes Sina Weibo as an example, which is one of the most popular online social media in China. In the information transference pattern of Sina Weibo, its website sits at the center of the stage, which means the website is not only the starting point but also the ending point of the information transference. Aside from that, different users of Sina Weibo are both the communicators and the recipients of the information transference. Speaking in detail, for example, the bloggers of Sina Weibo and their followers, who are listeners of the bloggers, are the typical communicators and the typical recipients of the information transference. In the process of the information spreading on Sina Weibo, when the users uploaded the information onto the website through their phones or computers, their followers would get the information from the bloggers right the first time through the Internet and, at the same time, publish their own comments below [1].

Aside from that, the feature of the interaction of the Internet has influenced some political or social events. The impact of Social Media is boiling over into the real world. Political movements across the globe use them to organize protests against repressive governments. Facebook and Twitter played critical roles in the rebellions that swept through North Africa in 2011 and the Occupy Wall Street movement in the United States. Repressive governments fight back. For example, the Egyptian government effectively turned off the Internet to suppress a democracy movement, and Iran tracked down dissidents who used the Internet to organize anti-government demonstrations. Closer to home, conventional approaches to campaigning were upset in the 2016 presidential election cycle as candidates used Twitter and Facebook and voter profiles gleaned from Internet user data to attract supporters. In 2015, Americans were stunned by murderous attacks perpetrated by terrorists radicalized through social media [2]. This spreading process fully embodied the nature of the interaction on the Internet.

2.2. The Quality of the Information

This study will also expound on the negative influence of the Internet on the quality of information. Here the study will explore the influence and the reasons for it.

2.2.1. The Decreasing Quality of the Information

It is clear to see that the influence is that the quality of the information was decreased. The loss of quality mainly embodies in the three parts below.

First of all, the information on the Internet lacks accuracy. The majority of the information in the internet information organization is all in a state of a mess as well as disorder, and they do not have comparably high uniform standards, which has influenced the requirement of the users in the process of information searching [3].

Aside from that, the information from the Internet lacks completeness; in other words, it is scattered. The internet information resource presents a kind of condition of dispersal and disorder. People could connect websites related or similar to the topic they are looking for through a kind of website that they are browsing, and similarly, this website may also be connected to another website. In this process, the information is in the condition of freedom and disorder [3].

Last but not least, the information is in danger of being polluted. The Internet world is filled with polluted junk information such as rumors. Some of the information is fabricated, some of the information is taken out of context, and some of the information is exaggerated from its actual fact. These phenomena make it hard for people to get instrumental and valuable information.

2.2.2. The Reasons for the Decreasing Quality of the Information

The study asserts that the loss of the quality of the information is the result of the information publishing mechanism on the network. Since the Internet has gradually stepped into people's life, an increasing number of the masses have been fond of transferring information through the Internet, which has changed the quality of the information.

First and foremost, the primary information producers became diversified. In the internet era, the primary information producers are no longer the traditional media organization. Up to the professional social organization and the ordinary people, the only thing they need is a computer or a phone and then mastering some essential operation, they all enable to create as well as publish information freely. Internet users are the critical basis for the prosperity of the Internet, the producer of a large amount of Internet information, and the primary customer of Internet service providers [4]. Unfortunately, most of the netizens as internet information producers are only browsing Sina Weibo or playing WeChat, for example. Therefore, the information they produce is not being thought deeply; its logical construct is also very careless. The ways of the information transference became diversified, which is the condition for the producers to diversify. In China, Sina Weibo, Tiktok, Wechat, and other social media are extremely popular among the masses, and aside from that, the emerging technology means have been dramatically developed. People could synthetically apply various kinds of means, such as words, videos, and so on, to create and publish information [5].

What is more, the internet information is at a lack of checking mechanism. For example, in the past, people often obtained the information they wanted by purchasing or borrowing some books and other reading material. The publishers carefully check all the words and punctuations in them. Compared to the past, information on the Internet does not have too many checks, which makes the low-quality information on the internet mix with the good ones.

3. The Input of the Fragmented Information

With the arrival of the internet era, the reading need of people also generates some changes. The masses are more passionate about getting and reading the information in fragments. Here the study will explore the reason for this change and the influence it brought on people's values.

3.1. The Reason for Changes in People's Reading Needs

The study asserts that the reason for this change is the fast development of internet technology, which makes people unconscious of fickleness.

To begin with, the development of internet technology mainly takes the process of information fragmentation into three aspects. First of all, it is the fast development of internet communication technology. The most direct influence that the development of the internet communication technology brought is the enhancement of the information transference speed. The time that the same number of words need through the Internet to spread becomes shorter than it used to be with the development of things like "5G" technology, which means at the same time, the quantity of the information could be enhanced in the same spreading time. Secondly, the speed of upgrading the portable mobile device accelerates. For example, phones have become small instead of heavy and intelligent rather than clumsy, and various kinds of applications can be carried on them, making people obtain more approaches to get and publish more information. Thirdly, it is that the price of internet communication becomes lower. With some government policies, internet communication prices gradually decrease, generating more internet users and more fragmented information [6]. All in all, the three points above ensure the technological basis of the generation of fragmented information, which is the objective reason for fragmented information.

What is more, the Internet makes people unconscious of fickleness. The fragmentation of information, the explosive production, and the socializing spreading of information created an atmosphere of unconscious fickleness. It means the people of whole societies are busy getting information but never calm to read as well as write sincerely, resulting in the circle of "from publishing fragmented information, to receiving fragmented information, and to publishing fragmented information". It is an indisputable fact that on the Internet, not only are almost all celebrities re-rated, but all major "events" are re-rated, which is a kind of new assessment. Most of these evaluations or assessments are based on fragmented "facts" or even "hearsay". Internet users are no longer tolerant of long, grand narratives and prefer to use them actively rather than passively read and watch them [7]. For instance, every day, people wake up and open their eyes; the first thing they did was find their phones and read information from their friends or the public on applications to know what happened when they were sleeping. Most people did not have the interest to calm down to read books whose contents are pretty long. This kind of fickleness leads to the need to read in fragments, and these reading habits make people increasingly fickle, resulting in a vicious cycle gradually. People show up, label themselves, and always spare no effort to protect their virtual images.

Aside from that, getting information from the Internet is more quickly as well as conveniently than from the traditional approaches, as the study talked about above, which gradually changed people's way of getting information because nearly all people enjoy gaining the maximum results but paying the minimum effort. All in all, the Internet stimulates people's unconscious fickleness, further causing the need to read in fragments. It is the subjective reason for fragmented information.

3.2. The Influence of Information Fragmentation on the Values of People

The study asserts that information fragmentation brings plenty of influence to people, the values of people in particular, and whether the influence is positive or negative depends on the quality of the information and its value orientation.

First, the study asserts that the positive influence mainly consists of two aspects. The information of high quality can lead people to shape the correct value orientation, further forming a vibrant social atmosphere. For instance, on Sina Weibo, one of the most popular Chinese social media, there are many reports about some moral models and their meritorious deeds. Another popular application, Tiktok, is also packed with short videos about good people and good deeds recorded by users. In this way, it is easy to generate a positive influence on the value orientation of the masses, leading their values and stepping forward to the correct destination of value development according to social morality.

Furthermore, information fragmentation expands the positive information contact surface, making it more convenient for people to get the lead of the correct value orientation. The internet information transference platforms, like WeChat or Sina Weibo, are full of fragmented information, which presents the features of variety and openness. On these platforms, people could not only get some authentic photos, videos, and words about some good people and good deeds but also watch some other literary works that they are delighted to see and hear [6]. As people all know, the shaping of values is a process in the long term, and the fragmented information has the merit of a low number of words, which enables people to make full use of the fragmented time, like waiting for the underground to learn the information, shaping their values. Information fragmentation brings many benefits for people to shape correct values, further forming a harmonious social atmosphere.

However, the study asserts that compared to the positive aspect, the negative influence is much more, mainly about the features of the fragmented information. The active influence that information fragmentation brings on people's values is in an ideal situation where all the information we see online is high quality without any negative ones. However, the actual situation is much more complex than the study thinks. The quality of the information on the Internet is hard to distinguish. There is some information that is at the correct value orientation. However, at the same time, there is also some information that is at the incorrect value orientation, which will do a lot of harm to the masses, teenagers in particular. The educational content of the values should have been complete, systematic, and logical. However, it seems to be replaced by the messy and disordered contents of the fragmented information, which makes the real connotation of the values difficult to plant deeply into people's minds [6]. Some incorrect value-orientation like utilitarianism is also spread on the Internet, and some value orientations are even inconsistent, disrupting people's attention, making them feel uncertain, and enlarging the difficulty of shaping the correct values.

All in all, the fragmented information will be an excellent helper if the information is of high quality and correct value orientation, which could gradually lead people to the correct destination of the values in some new and interesting ways in the long term. However, suppose some fragmented information is of low quality, it will cause the inverse effect, shaping the incorrect values or gradually changing people's values that used to be positive.

4. The Output of the Fragmented Information

With the changes in people's reading needs, which means that the masses are more passionate about reading the information in fragments, the approaches to the output of the information have also changed, which means that people are fonder of writing in fragments than before in order to meet reader's need, making full use of the features of the Internet the study mentioned above as the bare condition. Here the study will expound on the two groups of people who could embody this change.

4.1. Fragmented Information on the Media

In the market economy, there is a classic saying that demand determines supply, and it also works in the field of information. The media always believes traffic is the king, which means the more significant the traffic is, the more financial benefit they could obtain. Therefore, as long as the people demand to read in fragments, the media will compliantly meet their demand by writing in fragments.

4.1.1. Fragmented Information on the Traditional Media

First and foremost, some traditional media create information in fragments. The news should have been the article to be objective, but at this point, it was divided into many articles of fragmented length. Some articles talk about the process of the event; some pay attention to the background information of the event, and some focus on the follow-up development. For example, some clients of the applications like Toutiao, one of the most popular news media in China, and some Subscriptions on WeChat, like People's Daily, one of the most authoritative news sources, are also filled with fragmented news information.

It is clear that some pieces of information are pretty short, just about one hundred words, and its title is quite attractive, stimulating people's minds to click it. However, fortunately, as the traditional information media, although they are creating information in fragments, their value-orientation is correct, which means that these kinds of fragmented information will not harm the masses. They are spreading positive power to the people and society. At the same time, some other studies stress that the traditional media also harm the masses, and here this study will not talk about it in detail.

4.1.2. Fragmented Information on We Media

The media also create information in fragments, which significantly influences the masses. We media is a way for ordinary people to provide and share their own facts and news after they are connected to the global knowledge system through digital technology. It is the general term of the new media, which is private, civilian, universal and independent communicators and delivers normative and non-normative information to the non-specific majority or a specific individual by modern and electronic means [8]. In the internet era, as "everyone has a microphone", we media gradually grow up like wild grasses. The entering threshold is relatively low. In some applications like Tiktok, users could register their accounts freely, and through these accounts, they could produce and spread information. The platform users are mainly individual users, and they can share their daily life and some hot social news. It is based on the transference view of ordinary people to create fragmented information [9].

The academic levels of media workers are difficult to distinguish; therefore, the quality of the information they create is also hard to distinguish. However, generally speaking, their professional level is low, and the information they produce is not high quality. The existence of we media is closely connected to the business drivers. The various kinds of cheating behaviors are not new to see and have become more serious about attracting people's eyes, obtaining profits, and standing stably in the fierce market competition. There are many kinds of the main cheating behaviors. Here is the naming of cheating as an example. Naming cheating includes two aspects. The first is that some we media name after their users' names by imitating some professional media' names, and the second is that they name after the news with some exaggeration or the interrogative sentence [10]. All of this naming has the same goal---to attract the masses. The harm we media do by writing in fragments is much more than the traditional media to the masses and society. Meanwhile, there are

also some studies stressing that we media did not harm the masses as well as society more than the traditional media.

4.2. Fragmentation in the Daily Writing

Aside from the Media creating information in fragments, the features of the Internet also dramatically influenced the writing habits of ordinary people, which means that the masses are fonder of writing in fragments than before to meet readers' needs. Thanks to the convenience brought by the Internet, people can create information in fragments.

Here take the Moments on WeChat as an example. Users can post text and pictures through moments, and share articles or music to moments through other software. Users can "comment" or "like" new photos from their friends, and other users can only see comments or likes from the same friends. The Moment has become one of the essential platforms for people to interact with friends and share information. It is the primary platform for the masses to create information. The study asserts that the reasons for the ordinary people writing in fragments on the Moments mainly include two aspects. First, it is the writing pursuit of ordinary people. This point consists of two situations due to the academic levels of the masses are different.

To begin with, some people at a high academic level, such as students, are always keen on writing in short words to pursue a sense of simplification, a sense of high class, and a sense of uniqueness. Besides, some people at a comparably low academic level; cannot just write in long words. What is more, it is the interaction effect of the users. The information transference function works based on the people who are familiar with each other. The interpersonal communication of the WeChat users is unfolded from the center based on the individuals. The number of friends on WeChat is limited, most of whom are users' family members or actual friends [11]. They are familiar with one another and comparably close to each other. Therefore, they are much more likely to be influenced by their WeChat friends resulting in an increasing number of ordinary people writing information in fragments.

5. Conclusions

It is the Internet that has brought this information fragmentation era. The features of the Internet brought significant changes to the information quality, which has become more difficult to distinguish than before, as well as the information transference, which enhances the ways of transference. Besides, the Internet not only significantly changes people's habits which means they are unconscious fickleness so that they would like to get fragmented information over the input of information, but also dramatically influences people's values, further influencing the moral atmosphere of the whole society. At the same time, information output changes as people's reading favor changes. The information publishers spared no effort to create information in fragments in order to meet the reader's actual reading needs. The information fragmentation era is not only the result of society's development but also one of the roads for internet development.

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