

The Role of Online Media in Public Opinion the Small-Town Swot Incident as an Example

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Abstract: Online media is based on the development of network technology and the needs of society and plays an increasingly important role in our lives. Most current studies on online media and public opinion are highly generalized and summarised analyses of social phenomena, with few studies combining the whole case with analysis. The research in this paper adopts a qualitative approach, analyzing the role of social media in various aspects of public opinion through a step-by-step analysis of the development of public opinion and the comments made by the public-on-public opinion in the media. Perhaps it can provide a new research idea for subsequent related studies.

Keywords: social media, small-town swot, star, small-town swot, compilation, netizen

1. Introduction

Most of the current studies on the relationship between online media and public opinion discuss the formation, governance, guidance, and handling of public opinion, and the content of their research is primarily a high-level summary of the widespread social phenomenon, with little analysis of the role of online media combined with specific cases. This paper combines the analysis with specific cases, showing the whole process of public opinion development and is more conducive to our discovery of its details. However, the shortcoming of this article is that it only combines one case study, and there are undoubtedly many omissions that prevent a comprehensive analysis of the role of online media.

There are six chapters in this paper.

Chapter 1. Introduction: includes the background to the chosen topic, the research methodology, the content, and the significance of the study.

Chapter 2. Review of the literature. The concepts of the relevant theories are explained.

Chapter 3. Research Methodology.: The data collected from the comments were analyzed, mainly by providing a general retelling of the public opinion events.

Chapter 4. Results: Summarises the role of social media in public opinion.

Chapter 5. Discussion.: The role played by online media in the various stages of public opinion is explored and analyzed.

Chapter 6. Conclusion: Significance of the research in this paper.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Accessibility of Social Media

The Internet is a disruptive technology. Unlike the traditional media supply chain of creation, aggregation, distribution, and consumption, the Internet facilitates the aggregation and distribution stages of the media supply chain. Based on advances in Web 2.0 technology, social media has given mass users another identity besides consumers of media content, that of producers of media content [1,2]. The lowering of barriers to media use, the diversification of content, and the plurality of distribution channels constitutes the high accessibility of social media today.

2.2. Aggregate Behaviour of Web Clusters

In a sociological sense, the cluster concept is related to social groups. A sociological cluster is an unorganized group with the following characteristics:

- Members of the cluster share common motivations.
- Contact between members is brief and irregular.
- Participation in the cluster is episodic.
- Once the cluster dissolves, the members' sense of belonging and oneness disappears.

A cluster is the spontaneous, unstructured behavior of many people. It has three characteristics:

- (1) It is significant in number. It is carried out by many people simultaneously and in the same way.
- (2) Unorganised. It is usually spontaneous, irrational, unpredictable, and rarely in equilibrium.
- (3) Actors are interdependent [3]. In the virtual space of networks, there are also virtual clusters and large-scale aggregation behavior.

Both web and real clusters share qualities such as anonymity, over-reactivity, emotionality, suggestibility, and non-judgmental. The difference, however, is that the vast and rapid spread of the Internet makes web clusters easier to establish than real clusters [4].

2.3. Compression Of Time and Space

Time and space have existed since the beginning of the universe, and as times have changed, these terms have been given different meanings. David Harvey wrote *The State of Postmodernity* in 1989, proposing his famous temporal compression theory [5]. This theory argues that temporal compression occurs as a result of technological innovations driven by the global expansion of capital, condensing or eliminating spatial and temporal distances, including coed-up production cycles and reduce capital turnaround times. This theory is currently being refined as time develops and progresses.

2.4. Small-Town Swot

The term "small-town swot" first came from a posting by a user in the "985 Waste Introduction Project" discussion group on Douban and was later summarised by a user in the group. The term was later summarized by a user in the group "Fruity Candy" as referring to "young students who come from small towns, study hard, are good at exams, and lack vision and resources" [6].

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Question

- ① The rise of public opinion about the incident of small-town swot.
- ② The attitude and response of users on various social media platforms to the incident.

- ③ The role of social media in this communication of public opinion.

3.2. Research Methods

The whole research process was carried out using a combination of qualitative research, literature research method, and situational analysis method. Firstly, the author collected relevant literature from the internet, reviewed the whole process of public opinion, and divided communication and travel technologies due to the need to overcome spatial barriers, open up new markets, split the whole public opinion event into three stages: cause, fermentation, and end. Finally, the author collected comments from people with different views on public opinion from several social media and used the situational analysis method to analyze these comments to complete the second and third questions.

3.3. Overview of Events

3.3.1. Causes

On 6 July, a story about top Chinese star Jackson Yee and two of his classmates appearing on the National Theatre of China's "2022 Fresh Graduate Recruitment Planned Personnel" appeared at the top of Weibo's search list, meaning they also were about to become civil servants. However, unlike ordinary candidates, they were exempted from the written exam due to their celebrity status, which led to a mass discussion on whether the matter was fair. On 8 July, Yang Shiyang, director of the culture department of China News Weekly, published an article entitled "Why can't Yee take the editorial exam and why should he?" expressing support for the matter. In the article, he also disparaged the "small-town swot" clan, causing outrage and thus bringing the discussion on "small-town swot" to the head.

3.3.2. Fermentation

After an outcry, there was a heated debate on "star exams for the compilation" and "small-town swot." On the topic of "small-town swot," apart from ordinary people who support "small-town swot," there are many celebrities who also do justice to "small-town swot," who was also "small-town swot." They have also been "small-town swot" and had leaped by doing questions in exams. Three days after the public outcry, the debate on "star exams for the compilation" and "small-town swot" peaked, and public opinion continued to fester. By August 28, the two topics had been read 1.8 billion times and 1.01 billion times, respectively, and discussed 543,000 times and 512,000 times, respectively. Judging from the figures, this is no longer just an online topic but has risen to the level of a social issue.

3.3.3. Ending

On 16 July, the National Theatre of China issued an announcement explaining the recruitment circumstances. The content of the announcement proved that the examination process for the three famous stars was legal and compliant and that there were no irregularities. However, this result was not recognized by the masses, who remained skeptical about the fairness of the event, and public opinion continued to ferment. On 17 July, the masses' doubts were answered when Jackson Yee released a statement on Weibo, announcing that he had given up on entering the National Theatre of China. At this point, the public outcry ended, and the heat of public opinion gradually subsided.

3.4. User Comments

3.4.1. Star Examinations Editorial Topics

(1) Congratulations to Jackson Yee. (2) Did you pass the exam properly? (3) How ironic. (4) Jackson Yee's hard work is evident to all; I do not believe he would use the privilege to take the exam; I hope the National Theatre will give the facts. (5) Congratulations on the Prince's party. (6) The establishment is a tool to give them added prestige, but for ordinary people, it is a job to survive. (7) Stars earn so much money. Why do they need to take the establishment exams? (8) This world is inherently unfair. (9) Why do these people want to advertise their privileges for everyone to know? (10) Why should celebrities be exempted from written exams? (11) Why are so many people being oppressed by privilege and congratulating those who use it? (12) In my next life, I want to be a celebrity and enjoy a privileged life. (13) Congratulations to the NCPA for adding new talent. The NCPA will be better. (14) Ironically, ordinary people work hard for a unit while stars have it so easy. (15) The world is getting weirder and weirder. (16) Are all the stars' fans brainless? (17) Ordinary people take the establishment as their life. What do stars take it for? (18) Congratulations to young actor Jackson Yee.

3.4.1.1. Analysis

- (1) (13) (18). These comments support the star exam for the compilation.
- (4). This one is an extremely rare comment with a neutral attitude.
- (2) (9) (10) (12) (14). These comments express doubts about the fairness of the examinations in which stars are exempted from written examinations.
- (6) (7) (17). These comments question the purposefulness of celebrity examinations, which they see as unnecessary for celebrities to compete with ordinary people for jobs.
- (5) (8) (12). These comments express dissatisfaction with the social class gap.
- (11) (16). These two comments are the dissatisfaction of the opposing masses against the supportive masses.
- (3) (15). These two comments express a more ambiguous meaning, perhaps a questioning of fairness, perhaps a dissatisfaction with the class gap, or perhaps other ideas.

3.4.2. Small-Town Swot Topic

(1) The media should not ridicule the small-town swot, this is essentially class oppression, and people need to stand up and fight back. (2) The small-town swot should not be stigmatized. (3) The small-town swot deserve more respect for fighting their way up the class ladder on their own than relying on their parents. (4) As small-town swots without resources, we are proud of our efforts. (5) The essence of mockery is class struggle. (6) For most people, if it is not a small-town swot, it is a big-city swot. (7) The media does not respect ordinary working people in its cultural psyche. (8) Anyone who fights for an ideal deserves respect. (9) Sometimes, the difference between people is not a lifetime but several lifetimes.

3.4.2.1. Analysis

- (1) (3) (5). These people see it as a conflict between classes.
- (2) (4) (7) (8). These people felt that the media had insulted the small-town swot and that their hard work should not be ridiculed.
- (6) (9). These people showed a negative attitude. They saw the class gap but felt powerless to do anything about it.

4. Finding

From this public opinion, we can conclude the role social media plays in social opinion. Firstly, at the stage of opinion generation, the accessibility, visibility, and persistence of social media will facilitate the fermentation of public opinion, rapidly increasing the heat and expanding the scale of public opinion. Then, in the fermentation stage, social media provides a platform for expressing public opinion and relies on the nature of the Internet to break the limits of time and space, making it easier for the public to exchange their opinions and expand the influence of public opinion. In a country like China, where mass rallies are forbidden, online media can effectively contribute to forming an online collectivist movement. They can have a particular influence on society, which is very significant, and in the process, social media also plays a supervisory role in public opinion.

5. Discussion

5.1. Causes

At the stage of the rise of public opinion, social media exhibited three main characteristics, visibility, accessibility, and permanence. Because of the visibility of social media, public opinion can be seen by everyone on the Internet, which means the boundary of an opinion can be infinitely large until it reaches all the people on the network, which provides the basis for the proliferation of public opinion. Due to the accessibility of social media, the threshold for the masses to participate in the discussion of public opinion has been dramatically lowered, and anyone who can connect to the Internet can come to social platforms to express their opinions, criticisms, and even accusations. Compared to the various limitations imposed on traditional media when publishing information, online media is faster and freer to publish information, significantly expanding the number of people involved and the scale of public opinion. The persistence of social media, on the other hand, provides the basis for the duration of public opinion. If the article that created the opinion is not removed, then the article will always be there; in the meantime, people can always find it. This dramatically increases the time that public opinion is exposed to exist in the public eye, thus prolonging it. In the case context, this opinion reached its peak on the third day of its emergence, from which we can conclude that social media played a role in facilitating the rapid fermentation of public opinion at the stage of its emergence.

5.2. Fermentation

Contextual analysis is used at this stage to analyze people's attitudes to public opinion by collecting their comments. Social media play three roles at this stage: firstly, they break the limits of space and time, which can be explained by spatio-temporal compression. Online information constitutes a mimetic environment or "virtual space-time." The public opinion we see is real, and the information disseminated by the media is factual. When audiences receive this information, they process and internalize it, thus constructing a virtual space in their brains and then filling and repairing the space they have constructed by receiving a constant stream of information, constituting the subject of cyberspace compression [7]. To put it bluntly, social media helps groups break down the barriers of space, allowing people from all over the world to voice their opinions on the subject. It also breaks down time limits, allowing opinions sent at different times to come together. At the same time, social media acts as a boundary, providing a platform for discussion where people are free to express their views on public opinion. Finally, it provides interactivity for the public. In traditional media, the public tends to receive information passively, without having a say and being able to give feedback quickly. In social media, on the other hand, the public is free to choose whom to

communicate with, how long to communicate, what to communicate, and in what way, helping the public to take the power of speech into their own hands.

5.3. Ending

The public opinion ended with Jackson Yee giving up the exam due to the pressure of public opinion. We can assume that the opposing masses won in this public opinion. We can see from this that the public can change the outcome of an opinion through social media. In this process, the actions of people opposed to "celebrity examinations" constitute a collectivist movement, which constantly puts pressure on the other side of public opinion and forces them to take measures to respond. This collective movement pressures the other side of public opinion to respond. There are many other collective movements on the internet, such as the "Admire your face without makeup" campaign, which urges people to put aside their anxieties about their appearance and learn to appreciate their natural beauty. In this campaign, however, the idea is only conveyed, and no one monitors whether others are doing it. In this case, however, the opposing public not only conveyed their views but also monitored the response of the other side of the debate, demonstrating the monitoring nature of social media.

6. Conclusion

The whole research process was carried out using a combination of qualitative research methods, literature research methods, and situational analysis methods. Firstly, the author collected relevant literature from the Internet, reviewed the whole process of public opinion, and divided the whole public opinion event into three stages: cause, fermentation, and end. Finally, the author collected comments from people with different views on public opinion from several social media and used the situational analysis method to analyze these comments to complete the study of the problem.

7. Research Significance

The subject of this paper is novel, and no research has been published on this event. Secondly, while there has been much international research on the role of social media, there has been no relevant research in the specific social context of China. Finally, this study uses a qualitative research method. In contrast, most previous studies on this issue have used quantitative research. Data is collected and analyzed to identify the relationship between social media and public opinion. Perhaps this study can provide a new line of research for future studies.

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