

Research on the Communication Path of Network Public Opinion in the Context of New Media

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Abstract: In recent years, the spread of network public opinion has gradually come into public view. Fully promoting relevant work against the backdrop of new media is conducive to an in-depth understanding of public opinion information and enhancing the ability to control such information. Currently, the dissemination of network public opinion presents new characteristics, such as improved communication efficiency and the breaking of inherent barriers in public opinion transmission. Based on these characteristics, exploring the communication paths of network public opinion in the context of new media can provide useful references for relevant practitioners to improve their public opinion management capabilities. This paper focuses on investigating and analyzing this issue, and proposes optimization paths, including improving the public opinion research and early warning mechanism, deepening the understanding of network public opinion communication paths, and constructing a complete network public opinion communication system, aiming to provide assistance for the governance and control of network public opinion.

Keywords: New media; Network public opinion; Communication path

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1. Introduction

Nowadays, humanity is entering a new era—the new media era. Against this new background, drastic changes are taking place in various industries, and the same applies to the spread of network public opinion. Network public opinion refers to a new phenomenon formed with the rapid development of network technology. The battlefield for expressing public sentiments and opinions has shifted to the internet, making this type of public opinion an integral part of social public opinion^[1]. People should leverage new media to empower the spread of network public opinion, seize the opportunities brought by its transformation, and better meet the challenges. To this end, relevant practitioners can ride the wave of new media to build a scientific public opinion governance system. On this basis, exploring its communication paths will make this empowerment journey smoother, more stable, and sustainable^[2].

2. Core characteristics of network public opinion communication in the new media environment

2.1. Advances in new media technology drive the improvement of network public opinion communication efficiency

New media technology, featuring digitalization and instantaneity, can enhance the communication efficiency and effectiveness of network public opinion in multiple aspects, such as transmission speed and interaction frequency. Compared with traditional media, new media no longer adopts the process of “interviewing, writing, editing, and publishing”; instead, it disseminates public opinion information through algorithmic recommendations and user-initiated sharing mechanisms, with a diffusion speed measurable in seconds. Once an event or viewpoint is clicked and posted by a user, it can reach a massive audience via channels like social software and short video platforms^[3]. For instance, after a user posts a social hot event on a short video platform, it can garner millions of views and reposts within just a few hours, triggering widespread public discussion. Currently, almost everyone owns one or more mobile smart devices, such as smartphones and tablets, enabling users to participate in public opinion communication without temporal or spatial constraints—undoubtedly accelerating its diffusion. Users can browse and comment on information during fragmented time, shortening the fermentation cycle of network public opinion from occurrence to the formation of a scale effect to merely a few hours^[4].

2.2. The role of new media development in breaking inherent barriers to public opinion communication

Traditional public opinion communication is influenced by multiple factors, such as space and communication subjects. The emergence of new media technology helps break these inherent barriers. In terms of space, new media can leverage the inherent characteristics of the internet to assist public opinion in transcending geographical or national boundaries, becoming the focus of global attention^[5]. In terms of carriers, new media is no longer restricted by traditional vehicles like newspapers and radio stations; instead, it can disseminate public opinion information in various forms (e.g., text, images) at any time, bringing new breakthroughs for users in terms of information access time and carriers. In terms of communication subjects, the new media era has given ordinary users a “microphone”—traditional media no longer monopolize information release. Individuals, enterprises, and other entities have begun to occupy an important position in initiating and disseminating public opinion information, altering the single-patterned traditional public opinion transmission^[6].

2.3. Complex chain reactions of network public opinion triggered by new media

In the new media environment, the mode of network public opinion dissemination has undergone significant changes. It is no longer a chain-like diffusion but triggers chain reactions that involve multiple dimensions and levels, presenting a new communication trend of “one cause leading to multiple effects”^[7]. After a user posts a public opinion event on a new media platform, it first attracts the attention and real-time interaction of other users, such as posting bullet comments (danmu) to express support or criticism, leaving comments, or saving the content. These interactions are not irrelevant information; instead, they become new information sources in public opinion communication, enriching the public opinion topic. Subsequently, self-media accounts and KOLs (Key Opinion Leaders) from various fields enter the fray. They often interpret the event from their own perspectives and conduct secondary creation, thereby deriving new viewpoints and forming opinion branches. For example, regarding the same social hot event, self-media accounts focus on different aspects: emotional self-media emphasizes humanistic

care, while financial self-media focuses on economic impacts, expanding the scope of public opinion diffusion. Additionally, public opinion flow is not confined to a single platform but crosses platforms. A hot topic on one platform may be reposted or screenshot-shared by users to other platforms. The enthusiastic discussions among users on different platforms can even promote offline activities, such as public welfare events organized around a specific topic ^[8]. Such chain reactions lead to rapid changes in the public opinion situation, making public opinion guidance and control more complex ^[9].

3. Optimization paths for network public opinion communication in the context of new media

3.1. Optimize the public opinion research and early warning mechanism

The communication of network public opinion in the new media context is inseparable from the construction and optimization of a public opinion research and early warning mechanism. By building a public opinion information monitoring network, the effectiveness of management and control can be improved ^[10]. To this end, it is necessary to vigorously integrate data resources on new media platforms, such as topic popularity on social software and playback volume on short video platforms, leverage big data technology to capture real-time data, and conduct comprehensive analysis to identify public opinion clues. At the same time, attention should be paid to the setting of key monitoring indicators, such as the frequency of specific keywords and the growth rate of negative comments. If these indicators reach the preset threshold, an early warning signal will be automatically triggered, enabling the timely capture and handling of public opinion information. In addition, to better conduct public opinion research and judgment, emphasis should be placed on building a professional research team. When selecting team members, priority should be given to those with interdisciplinary knowledge—such as expertise in new media operations and data analysis—who can quickly assess public opinion information, determine its nature, and grasp its potential impacts and development trends to facilitate effective public opinion response ^[11].

Optimizing the public opinion research and early warning mechanism also requires enhancing the transmission and effectiveness of early warning information. For this purpose, a cross-departmental early warning information sharing platform should be established to transmit early warning information in a timely manner, thereby creating conditions for effective and prompt responses ^[12]. Meanwhile, clear processes for early warning response should be formulated: different early warning levels correspond to distinct response measures and responsibility divisions. For example, grass-roots teams are responsible for low-level warnings, while high-level warnings require more than just grass-roots participation—they demand cross-departmental collaboration and cooperation. Furthermore, an early warning effect evaluation mechanism should be established to conduct timely reviews of early warning information, including assessments of information accuracy and response effectiveness. Based on the evaluation results, monitoring indicators and response processes can be adjusted and optimized to enhance the practicality of the early warning mechanism ^[13].

3.2. Deepen the understanding of network public opinion communication paths

To better grasp the driving force behind public opinion diffusion, the sorting out of network public opinion communication paths can start from the perspective of communication subjects. An analysis of these subjects in the new media context reveals three categories: core initiators, key communicators, and ordinary participants. Each plays a distinct role in public opinion communication. Core initiators generally refer to event witnesses and self-media accounts—their release of initial information marks the starting point of public opinion dissemination.

As the name suggests, key communicators play a pivotal role: relying on their large fan bases and personal influence, they can rapidly spread public opinion information. Ordinary participants, through actions such as liking and saving, enable public opinion information to fully penetrate social networks^[14]. Analyzing the roles and responsibilities of different communication subjects helps accurately grasp public opinion transmission, identify key nodes, and provide direction for subsequent public opinion guidance.

In analyzing network public opinion communication paths, attention can also be paid to communication carriers and content flow to comprehensively track diffusion trajectories. Different new media platforms have distinct communication characteristics: social platforms focus on interpersonal communication, where information dissemination relies on user relationship chains; short video platforms emphasize visual communication, with rapid information diffusion driven by short video transmission. When selecting communication carriers, public opinion information aligns with platform characteristics. For example, the transmission path of initial information may involve small-scale discussions on social platforms first, followed by short video creation by users on relevant platforms, and finally becoming a hot topic through algorithmic recommendations on news platforms. During dissemination, public opinion content is not static but constantly evolving: the initial stage involves event descriptions, the middle stage includes opinion comments, and the final stage features derivative topics, with content flow spanning multiple phases. Only by following these evolutionary rules can we accurately predict the development trends of public opinion^[15].

3.3. Construct a comprehensive network public opinion communication system

A fundamental prerequisite for building a network public opinion communication system is establishing an information collection and analysis system. To this end, big data and artificial intelligence technologies should be leveraged to develop a professional public opinion analysis system, enabling the timely collection, classification, and analysis of public opinion information. This system should be equipped with diverse functions, such as multilingual recognition and topic clustering, to screen and highlight valuable content, and generate corresponding analytical reports. Through these reports, relevant practitioners can obtain key information, including the developmental stage of public opinion and audience characteristics. Meanwhile, a sound public opinion information update mechanism should be established to enhance the real-time performance and accuracy of analytical data, facilitating the smooth implementation of subsequent links in the communication system.

In constructing the network public opinion communication system, efforts to improve the public opinion guidance and feedback system should not be overlooked. For public opinion guidance, a professional team should be formed to formulate strategies based on the specific development of public opinion. Information should be disseminated through multiple channels, such as official accounts and KOLs, to clarify the truth of events, guide the public towards forming scientific and rational perceptions. For the feedback link, a public opinion response mechanism should be established to promptly address public doubts and demands. Issues raised by the public should be taken seriously, with effective measures implemented in a timely manner, and the results publicly released via new media platforms upon completion. This forms a complete closed loop: guidance first, followed by feedback, and ultimately improvement. In addition, a public opinion effect evaluation system should be established to conduct regular assessments of guidance effectiveness, analyze guidance content, and understand public acceptance and feedback. By adjusting and optimizing guidance strategies, the communication system can fully exert its functions.

3.4. Promote the construction of a sound and systematic network public opinion communication mechanism

Laying a solid foundation for improving the systematic network public opinion communication mechanism requires focusing on the development of a classified public opinion management mechanism. Public opinion should be graded based on factors such as its nature and urgency, specifically divided into four levels: general public opinion, major public opinion, significant public opinion, and particularly significant public opinion. Additionally, it can be categorized by the field of the event, including political, economic, social, and cultural categories. Different levels and categories of public opinion call for distinct management strategies and response processes. For example, political public opinion emphasizes policy interpretation, while social public opinion focuses more on people's livelihood concerns. Such hierarchical and classified management ensures targeted handling of public opinion and enhances its effectiveness.

The construction and improvement of the network public opinion communication mechanism cannot do without a guarantee mechanism; therefore, a cross-departmental coordination and linkage mechanism should be established. Network public opinion communication is a systematic project involving numerous fields and departments. To this end, bold innovations are needed to break down traditional departmental barriers, such as information silos and functional boundaries. The coordination and linkage mechanism can enhance the ability to manage and control public opinion. Furthermore, each department should clarify its own responsibilities in public opinion communication, improving the level of public opinion governance through a dedicated division of labor. For instance, the publicity department is primarily responsible for public opinion guidance, the cyberspace administration supervises platforms, public security departments focus on rumor investigation and punishment, and industry competent departments are responsible for event disposal. Meanwhile, a communication and consultation system should be established for emergency incidents to strengthen inter-departmental collaboration, making information sharing and experience exchange a regular practice. When major public opinion events occur, this system can be used to formulate emergency plans, form a joint disposal force, avoid fragmented actions among departments, and ensure effective responses.

4. Conclusion

In the context of new media, network public opinion communication presents new characteristics. Exploring its communication paths should not be divorced from these characteristics but closely integrated with them, so that the paths can fully exert their effects—namely, improving relevant practitioners' capabilities in network public opinion governance and control. This paper proposes optimization paths, including optimizing the public opinion research and early warning mechanism, deepening the understanding of network public opinion communication paths, constructing a comprehensive network public opinion communication system, and promoting the construction of a sound and systematic network public opinion communication mechanism. These paths aim to comprehensively advance public opinion governance, transforming it from a passive response in the past to proactive guidance. Through governance upgrading, the level of handling public opinion crises can be improved, and negative impacts can be reduced.

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