Analysis of Network Public Opinion from the Perspective of Social Psychology

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Abstract: Online public opinion refers to the behavior of individuals or groups of people discussing, commenting, and expressing their views on a particular topic or event on the Internet through various forms of social media. With the popularity of the Internet and the rise of social media, online public opinion plays an important role in today's society. It is not only an important channel for information dissemination but also an influence on social trends, public opinions, and values. Therefore, the analysis of network public opinion has important theoretical and practical significance.

Keywords: Social psychology; Online public opinion; Analysis

1. Introduction

Social psychology is a discipline that studies the thinking, emotion, and behavior of individuals and groups in a social environment. In the analysis of online public opinion, the perspective of social psychology can help understand the process of people forming opinions and attitudes on the Internet, as well as the impact of online public opinion on individuals and society. By applying the theories and methods of social psychology, the formation mechanism, propagation pattern, and dynamic changes of online public opinion can be studied to provide a scientific basis for public opinion management and social governance.

2. Generation of online public opinion

2.1. Orientation function of the media

The media, as an important source of information, guides public opinion by reporting, commenting, and so on. Both news media and social media can have a direct impact on social opinion. The reports and interpretations of the media often have a direct impact on the public's perceptions as they construct their own opinions accordingly. The authority and influence of the media determine their voice on the Internet. For example, different reporting perspectives and different interpretations of the same event by the news media will affect people's different perceptions of the event, which in turn leads to different opinions on the network.

2.2. The role of individual experience and emotional factors on individual psychology

When people judge a matter, they usually base it on their own experience and feelings and thus generate their own opinions. Individual experiences and emotions have a certain degree of subjectivity, and thus have their unique influence on online public opinion. If someone posts his or her own experience online, others will be influenced and develop similar views. In online public opinion, the influence of individual experiences and emotions cannot be ignored.

2.3. Communication effects of social networks

Social networks are characterized by fast and wide dissemination of information. In social networks, people can express their opinions through sharing, forwarding, commenting, and so on. If a certain opinion gets a lot of shares and comments on a social website, the opinion will get higher attention, and then become a hot topic and cause more discussion among people. In social networks, Internet users form a huge information transfer network, and opinions can spread to a wider group in a short time and have an important influence and impact on online public opinion.

2.4. Influence of online groups

There are many different online groups, such as interest groups, political groups, and so on. They exert a certain influence on public opinion on the Internet through organizing activities and initiating discussions. When the opinions of a group of people are accepted by the public, they have a greater influence on the discussion. Internet users who share the same values and interests express their opinions and voices through online interactions and in groups, thus exerting an important influence on the formation of public opinion on the Internet.

3. Impact of internet public opinion on society

3.1. Impact on personal and social values

Online public opinion refers to the fact that netizens express their views and opinions through the Internet and can spread information and opinions quickly. When an opinion is widely spread and accepted on the Internet, it can easily affect people's values and beliefs. This is an ideological influence for individuals and a value adjustment for society.

3.2. Impact on political and social dynamics

Internet public opinion is characterized by fast-spreading speed and wide influence, which can trigger public attention and discussion in a short time. It can not only raise people's awareness of political and social events but also provide a platform for people to express their own views. The influence of public opinion on the Internet prompts governments and other organizations to pay more attention to public opinion and demands, and thus make more responsible and rational decisions.

3.3. Impact on the reputation and image of individuals and organizations

The rapid spread and wide reach of opinions on the Internet make the reputation and image of individuals or organizations highly vulnerable. A negative opinion can spread quickly, with significant negative consequences for the individual or organization [1]. Conversely, a positive viewpoint can also quickly increase the visibility of an individual or an organization. For this reason, individuals and organizations need to pay more attention to online public opinion and take the initiative to manage their image and reputation.

3.4. Social and cultural consequences

The diversity of speech on the Internet facilitates the exchange of different cultures and ideas. This has played a positive role in promoting multiculturalism and strengthening cultural exchanges. At the same time, Internet public opinion also helps disadvantaged groups to speak out and promotes fair treatment. However, Internet public opinion may also give rise to disputes and conflicts, so multiple measures should be taken to maintain harmony in cyberspace.

4. Social psychological analysis of online public opinion

4.1. Influencing emotions

From the perspective of social psychology, emotion orientation is a common strategy for online public opinion management. Users of social media platforms are usually very sensitive to emotions and are easily swayed by them, leading to changes in their views and attitudes. Therefore, when using the emotion-orientation strategy, it can effectively stimulate users' emotions and thus achieve the sharing of their views [2].

For example, a message about environmental protection has gained a lot of attention in social media. The network public opinion guidance group can consciously select materials that can stimulate the emotions of netizens. For example, news about the school management system has triggered a heated discussion on social media. In the online opinion-led group, they can consciously select materials that can arouse the emotions of netizens, such as exposing the unreasonable situations in the school management system and restricting the freedom of students. They post relevant articles, photos, and videos on the Internet to expose the problems in the school's education system, thus arousing strong discontent among students. Such an emotional orientation will lead students to have a negative view of the school's management system, which will in turn lead to the active dissemination of negative statements and complaints through social media, which will in turn lead to a change in people's views.

4.2. Group identity

Online users usually search for people with similar interests to gain identity and belonging. This group identity mentality can be utilized to guide online public opinion. It can create consensus and identity among members of that group, thus influencing their opinion tendency by creating topics or events related to a specific group.

For example, a social media account that focuses on school life can guide the opinions of netizens through the group identity mentality. The account can post topics related to high school life, such as study pressure, test anxiety, difficulty in choosing courses, and so on [3]. This account can create a resonance and a strong sense of identity among students. This account can also only report success stories of a certain university, causing envy and admiration among students. In that case, it can guide students' views to a certain extent and make them feel more favorably about a certain school. Hence, social media accounts can effectively control the direction of students' public opinion, which in turn affects their evaluation of school, study, and life. However, this manipulation of public opinion can be seen as unethical behavior, which will bring bad consequences to individuals and society. In this regard, rational and independent thinking should be encouraged to not be blindly swayed by public opinion.

4.3. Information overload

Information overload refers to people unable to effectively screen and process a huge amount of information on social media. Under such circumstances, some people may intentionally publish opinions or news that are contrary to their purposes, to confuse public opinion and guide online public opinion.

For example, there is a heated debate on whether to abolish the national admission examination on social media. Some people may put out the message that the exam can evaluate students' abilities in all aspects and thus motivate them to learn. However, this message is likely to be overshadowed by a sea of other information, bringing more attention to the cancellation of the admission exams. In this case, public opinion can be deliberately influenced towards a trend that is for or against the abolition of final exams [4]. Therefore, information overload became a way of manipulating public opinion. By publishing many opinions or news contrary to the intended message, the target message loses its attention and persuasive power among many messages, which has a certain impact on online public opinion. Students need to have independent thinking and the ability to differentiate, not to be confused by information overload, and to view and participate in online public opinion rationally.

4.4. Individual influence

In the social media environment, individual influence has become an important way to influence online public opinion. With the help of influential figures such as big Vs and opinion leaders, they guide and influence the views and attitudes of the majority of people. These people are often highly visible, and their words and actions will attract the attention and emulation of many netizens, thus exerting an important influence on Internet public opinion.

For example, a famous blogger expresses his opinion on Weibo that he is facing great pressure as a student. He shares his experience and provides ways to reduce stress, and he also hopes that the whole society can provide more care for students. Because of his influence and popularity, the idea quickly sparked a lively discussion among students. Many students began sharing, commenting, and voicing their opinions, and it quickly became a hot topic. As students joined in, the idea gained traction online and gained more and more attention. This is the impact of personal influence on the internet. The use of personal influence is not limited to this but can be applied to many different areas and topics. By selecting appropriate characters and combining their influence with their opinions, public opinion in social media can be effectively manipulated and controlled [5].

4.5. Disinformation dissemination

Disinformation dissemination is a strategy to guide online public opinion by deliberately creating and disseminating false information. In the age of social media, information spreads fast and users' sensitivity to information has increased. This gives those who want to manipulate online public opinion an opportunity to fabricate false information to quickly spread and influence public opinion.

For example, a student can fabricate a lie if he or she student wants to lead the public online to take an opposite view of a school policy. The student posts a news story on social media claiming that a school-enforced policy has overworked students, accompanied by a picture of a tired student. The news story easily provokes empathy and anger among students, which is then reposted and commented on, creating a powerful wave of protest. The proliferation strategy of fake news often exploits the user's curiosity and trust in authoritative sources. The proliferation of fake news is, however, a violation of ethics and morality, which can cause the public to have a wrong perception, thus undermining the authenticity and credibility of news [6]. Therefore, students should always keep a sensitive and critical attitude towards information, not blindly believe and disseminate information that has not been verified, and instead actively share truthful and credible information, to promote the rational; development of online public opinion.

4.6. Social pressure

Social pressure plays an important role in guiding online public opinion. Through the interaction and

commenting option on social media platforms, people can like, comment, or share others' remarks, thus expressing their attitudes and opinions. These social interactions are not only a way of communication but also a reflection of social identity. Therefore, when an opinion receives a large number of likes or objections on social media, other users are subject to a certain amount of social pressure and tend to align themselves with the majority to avoid being seen as misfits or outliers.

For example, on the social media platform for high school students, one student expressed an opinion about mobile phone use, arguing that mobile phones have some negative impacts on both study and social interaction and therefore the time of use should be moderately controlled. This view attracted the attention of some students and received a large number of likes and comments. Other students, when seeing this, may be influenced by social pressure and tend to align themselves with the majority and also start to express negative views on mobile phone use [7]. In this way, students who originally held different opinions may also be influenced to adjust their views, thus forming a tendency of public opinion. Guiding online public opinion through social pressure is a common means of opinion guidance. It takes advantage of people's concern for social relationships and the importance they place on others' evaluations, which influences most people to tend to align themselves with others, thus shaping a particular opinion trend. However, students should maintain their ability to think independently and judge objectively, not be swayed by others' opinions and social pressure to view online public opinion rationally, and form independent judgments.

5. Conclusion

In summary, the perspective of social psychology is of great significance in analyzing online public opinion. By applying the theories and methods of social psychology, researchers can study in depth the formation mechanism, propagation pattern, and dynamic changes of online public opinion to reveal the impact of online public opinion on individuals and society and provide a scientific basis for public opinion management and social governance. Future research can further explore the psychological mechanism of influencing online public opinion, as well as intervention strategies and countermeasures for certain online public opinion.

Disclosure statement

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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