

The Construction of the Public Opinion Field and the Role of Media in the Anti-corruption News Incident in China

Taking WeChat as an Example

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Abstract—In China, where the number of Internet users is the largest in the world, with the development of the Internet and the maturity of the mobile terminal, the audience is turning the public opinion field of network revelations, followers and opinions from Weibo and BBS to social media represented by WeChat. High traffic, high concentration and high interaction prompted the media to start to pay more attention to WeChat public opinion field, including the network anti-corruption news event that public opinion reacted strongly and expected to be followed up. The media take WeChat as platforms to actively participate in the construction of public opinion field, play a different role from before, and obtain their own social and economic benefits.

Keywords—network anti-corruption; media role; public opinion field; WeChat

I. INTRODUCTION

In China, "network anti-corruption" is an important part of the Internet era in which the media meets the needs of the public and participates in public opinion and responds to social concerns.

Starting from the "extravagant director" in Nanjing in 2008, more and more new news events appear in the field of public opinion with active participation of the audience based on the development of the Internet and the rapid growth of the Internet community. Some audiences are more and more inclined to disclose information through the Internet, so as to gain the attention of the media and the public and achieve the purpose of anti-corruption and reporting. Another part of the audience is accustomed to paying attention to events, expressing opinions, tracking progress through the network, and satisfying the venting of emotions and the satisfaction of the sense of participation and promotion of the subsequent development of the event. This is the online anti-corruption news event. With the rise of WeChat and other social media, online anti-corruption news events have also begun to take WeChat as the main platform of public opinion. As the main participants in the construction and maintenance of the public opinion field, the media with a strong sense of competition and crisis warning under the impact of we-media also began to change their role

in the public opinion field, playing their role in the public opinion field, reflecting the existence, and obtaining benefits from the traffic and attention.

II. THE PUBLIC OPINION FIELD TRANSFER OF NETWORK ANTI-CORRUPTION NEWS EVENTS

The network anti-corruption news event has become an important type of public opinion field, which is the result of the network of audience's usage habit, choice way and participation mode, and the product of "new media mode will inevitably bring new social reform" in McLuhan's "media is information". The earliest online news anti-corruption incident was that in December 2008, Zhou Jiugeng, former director of the Jiangning district property management bureau of Nanjing, Jiangsu Province, caught the attention of the public because of his attitude toward "low-priced sales of real estate". Netizens found a picture of him smoking cigarettes that cost 1,500 yuan a bar, and then attracted attention in Nanjing local BBS, the public opinion field was quickly formed, and the group of audience spread from Nanjing to the whole country, the media have intervened and reported from "where the extravagant smoke come from" to "how can he afford it", and even urged the price control department to introduce the policy of fixing the price of tobacco. In February 2009, Zhou Jiugeng was investigated.

With the advancement and development of communication technology, the characteristics and laws of communication are constantly changing in the Internet age. After the "extravagant director" incident, the public is more interested in such online news anti-corruption incidents. The public opinion field thus formed is actually a public domain. The audience actively participates in it, the media maintains and guides it, and the parties are free to facilitate opinions, and promote the progress of the event. This kind of situation, which is exposed by ordinary netizens, arouses public opinion attention and media participation, and finally promotes the progress of anti-corruption work, is known as "online news anti-corruption incidents" in academic circles. According to Shen Yang, a professor at the School of Journalism and Communication at Tsinghua University,

there are both hard and soft revelations. And with the regulation of Internet speech, netizens tend to be cautious about the disclosure. "Online anti-corruption has achieved a 'double upgrade', and the accuracy of netizens' Revelations is improving."

The key to the success of the Internet anti-corruption news event is the strong concern of public opinion and the high activity of public opinion field. With the mass migration of the audience using the platform, from the initial post, to the later Weibo, to the current WeChat, the public opinion field of online anti-corruption news events has acquired a new platform.

According to data released by China Internet Network Information Center (CNNIC) in February this year, by the end of 2018, the number of Internet users in China has reached 829 million, ranking first in the world. Among them, the number of mobile Internet users represented by smart phones and so on has further increased, reaching 871 million, accounting for 98.6% of the total netizens. Further research on China's mobile Internet users also shows that social media represented by WeChat and QQ has more than 90% of platform share, satisfying the needs of users to interact, understand public opinion, and share topics. According to data from research institutions such as eMarketer and iResearch, WeChat has become an important platform for audiences to participate in the construction of public opinion fields and play an increasingly active role.

WeChat has become the main field of public opinion, which is supported by massive data. According to its 2018 statistics, the monthly average number of active users of WeChat is close to 1.1 billion.

On the one hand, WeChat has a large number of active audiences in the public opinion field. Audiences actively participate in the construction of various public opinion fields by publishing information, making comments, forwarding and recommending, browsing and consulting, etc. On the other hand, the high level of activity of WeChat has attracted the media to participate in it, and to seize the opportunity for participation and maintenance of the public opinion field by opening public accounts and providing small programs. At the same time, WeChat successfully cultivated the user's fixed usage habits with its social attributes, and the information of the public opinion field was "one-click reprinted" by other platforms, thus forming an information content system including various public opinion fields. It further satisfies the needs of the audience to participate in the public opinion field.

III. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF WECHAT PUBLIC OPINION FIELD IN THE PRACTICE OF NETWORK ANTI-CORRUPTION NEWS

No matter from the information released by the public opinion monitoring center of People's Daily or the monitoring data of China Internet Network Information Center (CNNIC), WeChat is undoubtedly the construction platform of anti-corruption news and public attention events promoted by it. Some scholars believe that, whether it is we-

media account or a single web page of the website, the channel for the audience to receive information is still the link to the content forwarded on the WeChat platform. Therefore, WeChat is undoubtedly the main framework platform of the public opinion field. After the public opinion is gradually formed and spread through the WeChat platform, the focus of attention and the peak of comments will be formed in a short time, and the competition for the direction of public opinion and subsequent development will be carried out again. Although the frequency and activity of the public opinion field will decrease with the passage of time, the huge user base of WeChat supports the heat of the public opinion field, and the newly announced news triggers another round of "incitement".

As for the construction source of the WeChat public opinion field, one is the information consultation that the audience found on other platforms, including media reports and netizens revelations, and the moment also contributed a considerable part of the source information. After the information is reprinted or directly sent to the WeChat platform, the participation of the audience is formed, which constitutes an active field of discussion on relevant topics, and prompts the information audience constantly add new information to the public opinion field. When the activity level of the public opinion field reached a certain level, the media captured the frequency and hot words, and then began to follow up. This kind of professional reporting and comprehensive information integration provide powerful assistance for the superior opinions in the public opinion field, and may directly influence the orientation of the public opinion field. When it reaches this level, "news events" will be upgraded from "news" to "events", thus becoming visible to the audience to promote the occurrence and progress of events, and reaching the architectural purpose and active peak of the public opinion field.

From the perspective of the formation characteristics of WeChat public opinion field, it originates from information disclosure, and its structure is based on the advantages of progress broadcast. In this link, netizens continuously disclose and try to attract the attention of the media, the government and the public. The media responds to this need by constantly tracking and trying to provide surprising details. After the spread of onlookers brought by such live broadcast, the continuous forwarding on WeChat platform not only increases the traffic and attention, but also is forwarded and commented continuously, forming the heat, and even plays a joint role in other platforms, jointly supporting the active and influence of the public opinion field. At this time, the public opinion field entered a period when some audiences cooperated with the media to conduct in-depth excavation. More media continued to get involved, and more netizens actively participated. The information mining continued to be in-depth and comprehensive, the subsequent development of the event has also been concerned, and the direction of public opinion field gradually formed or reversed. At this time, the public opinion field is stabilized, the audience's opinion orientation is basically fixed, and the social effect of the public opinion field

continues to increase, which directly promotes or influences the handling and appeasing of the event.

From the perspective of the frame time and frequency of the public opinion field, the construction time is shortened, the conversion frequency of different fields is intensive, the audience and media participate in more fields, and it becomes faster from the completion of the architecture to the disappearance. Initially, the "extravagant director" was investigated after the public opinion field was active for three months, and the "director wearing luxury watch" was investigated only in one month, and then only four days for "Secretary Yan". It requires less time and becomes more effective, and the audience's activity in the field of public opinion is increasing, but it is easier to transfer the active field of public opinion.

IV. THE ROLE OF MEDIA IN THE WECHAT PUBLIC OPINION FIELD

Based on the electronic media, Levinson interprets McHuhan's media environment theory, believing that people are actively driving the media, commanding and creating content. He also proposed that although in the era of digital media, the concept of people has been diluted, and users have the dual identity of communicator and audience, and have more autonomy and choice. But at the same time, the identity of the media is more diverse, the psychology of participation is more diverse, and the methods of participation are more varied. The media still plays an important but different role in the framework of the public opinion field.

The change of media's role in the public opinion field structure of WeChat originates from the habit and psychology of the audience. First, audiences in the public opinion field of WeChat expect to get complete information, so as to satisfy their desire for security. Therefore, they will actively expand the source of information, search and pay attention to topics of interest to participate in the subsequent development of the event. Secondly, in such a public opinion field, the audience is more inclined to reflect their social status by participating in the discussion in the public opinion field or following the changes of public opinion hotspots. They are satisfied with the vanity of "opinion leaders" and attribute the development of the event to their own participation. In addition, every audience has a "hero's dream" in their hearts, and realizes heroic actions of "maintaining fairness and justice" and "pursuing the truth" through their positive behaviors in the public opinion field, and satisfies their "heroism" thoughts through the feedback from the public opinion field.

In the public opinion field of WeChat, the media, instead of the past serious and single role of gatekeeping, adopts more diversified roles to participate in the structure of the public opinion field, and tries its best to avoid the dilemma of the decrease of the audience of traditional media and the decline of the guiding power of public opinion, and actively builds its influence in the public opinion field. On WeChat platform, providing information that can be "reprinted with

one click", opening WeChat public account and providing small program push have all become common ways.

The structure of public opinion field requires the media to actively play the role of information provider. By paying attention to the expression of the opinions of the audience in We Media and following the hot spots of public opinion, the media actively adjusts its reporting direction and focuses, and formulates its own management and public relations strategies. Professional reports, comprehensive materials and outstanding credibility reflect the difference in ability and quality between media and We Media. In the Internet era with the rapid rise of We Media, in such sensitive topics as online anti-corruption news events, they firmly hold the key and core position in the field of public opinion, and quietly enhance their influence.

At the same time, the media is also actively playing the role of social participants in the public opinion field as grounded as the audience. By opening the WeChat public account, and even catering to the audience's senses on the name of the public number, it continues to appear in the public opinion field as a "friendly" social partner. Party media, represented by People's Daily and Xinhua news agency, also set up "alternate account" on WeChat platform to participate in discussions with other ordinary audiences, completing the role transition from "lofty defender" to "amiable participant" in the traditional public opinion field, and carrying out the guidance of public opinion and the maintenance of public opinion field more subtly.

WeChat's public opinion field is characterized by rapid rise and replacement, especially the network anti-corruption news event. The early fermentation promotes the progress of the event, but it also needs timely crisis public relations and government image reconstruction. On the one hand, the media guides public opinion through positive actions in the field of public opinion; on the other hand, the media use their natural attributes to plays the role of the topic terminator by actively participating in the discussion of new public opinion fields, and even actively constructing new public opinion fields, thus diverting the attention and the traffic of the original public opinion field, reducing the activity, thus the public opinion field is constantly changing according to the "setting of the agenda", accelerating the resolution of the public opinion field.

More importantly, the media still inherits the role of maintainer in the public sphere under the traditional environment, and still plays the maintenance function of "simulation environment" in the public opinion field of WeChat. Especially in the anti-corruption incidents of online news, it is necessary to conduct public opinion guidance and crisis public relations in a timely manner, alleviate public sentiment, command reasonable catharsis, and maintain social stability. Originally, such maintenance was proactive, because the public opinion field was mostly composed of media architecture, and the initiative of the audience to choose the public opinion field was small. Nowadays, most of WeChat's public opinion field is initiated by the audience. The participation of the media is postponed. It requires more active and effective behavior to distinguish and superimpose

the real environment and the public opinion environment, and adjusts the deviation degree between the audience's free play in the field of public opinion and the real world, on the other hand, based on real life, guides the audience to feedback their psychological imprints into the WeChat public opinion field to ensure that the audience can rationally express and meet their social status needs.

From the perspective of role, with the continuous improvement and expansion of WeChat function, the media has actively involved in moments, WeChat group, instant chat, news search and other means of public opinion field participation, and completed the organic combination of "square" public opinion and "teahouse" public opinion. On the other hand, with the networking of government affairs and the participation and adjustment of the media, the official public opinion field and the public opinion field can coexist harmoniously on the WeChat platform.

V. CONCLUSION

Therefore, in the process of constructing and dissolving the public opinion field such as the network anti-corruption news event on WeChat platform, the media on the one hand play the role of public opinion guidance, supervision, and maintain social stability. On the other hand, paid or unpaid crisis public relations should be carried out to reverse the public opinion field and promote its "rapid resolution". The role of the media is still important and irreplaceable.

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