

Research on the Construction of E-sports Discourse by the Weibo Accounts of Mainstream Media

Based on the Agenda Setting Theory

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Abstract—In recent years, many major events in the E-sports circle have attracted much attention to E-sports. E-sports was not understood at the beginning, and is now accepted by more people, during which period the media has played a great role. As one of the important channels for the audiences to obtain information, Weibo has more overlapping audiences with e-sports, so it plays a more effective role in agenda setting. Based on the three levels of agenda setting theory, this paper analyzes the discourse of Weibo published by the mainstream media, to explore the construction of agenda setting, attribute agenda setting and network agenda setting of the e-sports object by the Weibo of mainstream media. It is found that today's media have paid more attention to e-sports and relevant aspects, and changed the previous "stigma", creating a new era for e-sports.

Keywords—e-sports; agenda setting; Weibo of mainstream media; discourse construction

I. INTRODUCTION

E-sports have always been a controversial activity. From not reporting to dominated by negative reports by new media, and now positive reports and rational have become the mainstream. News media have changed the discourse of e-sports, which has guided the audience's emotions to a certain extent at the same time. As important organizations of "environmental reconstitution", news media can change and reshape the image of other things. As a new media platform that "shares things around any time anywhere", Weibo is close to real-time hotspots, and its style is more free and lively; it is more inclusive for subcultures and younger. At the same time, the main consumer groups of e-sports are teenagers, and the main audiences of Weibo also include teenagers; there is a certain overlap between the audiences of the two, which makes Weibo more coincident than other media. Therefore, compared with news websites or newspapers and broadcasts, will the characteristics of Weibo's rejuvenation have different effects? Can the Weibo of mainstream media change the e-sports in audiences' mind?

E-sports are a special activity, and media of different natures may construct it differently. This paper chooses to analyze the report of e-sports by the Weibo account of typical news media, and analyzes the construction of e-sports

discourse by the Weibo account of news media based on the agenda setting theory.

II. DEVELOPMENT OF E-SPORTS

There is no clear definition of "e-sports" so far. The term originated in 1973. Some MIT students designed a double shooting game called Spacewar, and someone held a competition with this game by chance, which was considered the first game of e-sports, and was later considered to be the origin of e-sports.

The term "e-sports" can be regarded as a compound word of "electronics" and "sports". "Electronics" is used as platform and technical equipment, providing the necessary external conditions for sports; "sports" is similar to sports competitions or events, generally referring to two-side confrontation, or multi-side confrontation, but there will only be one winner eventually.

He Wei (2018) divided e-sports into four stages [1] [2]. From 1981 to 1988, it was "the Age of Innocence", when e-sports was regarded as an emerging cultural leisure activity; to 1989, people's views on e-sports changed, since many video games could be used for gambling, e-sports were demonized until 2001; from 2002 to 2008, it was an era of "mixed love and hate", when people began to embrace video game while fearing it; in recent years, in games such as League of Legends, DOTA2, etc., the Chinese team has been continually winning glories and surprising people. Video games may addict teenagers, however, "water can keep the ship afloat or sink it", the game itself is not the original sin of youngsters addiction to it, and e-sports can also become a way to enhance China's international influence [3] [4].

III. ANALYSIS OF THE REPORTS ON E-SPORTS ON THE WEIBO OF MAINSTREAM MEDIA

A. Selection of Weibo Accounts of Mainstream Media

The Weibo accounts of mainstream news media and selected accounts with more than 50 million followers on Weibo, including CCTV News (84.8 million), Breaking News (64.85 million), people.cn (646.30 million), Xinhua Net (62.27 million), China Newsweek (52.77 million) are

screened. Since Xinhua Net's account limits the viewing authority to only the Weibo in the nearly half a month, it is impossible to see the trend of pushing related contents of "e-sports" in recent years, so there is no analysis on it. Therefore, the content of the remaining four Weibo accounts will be analyzed. By searching the keyword "e-sports", all the contents related to "e-sports" pushed by the four Weibo accounts was captured, obtaining 11, 12, 22 and 14 Weibos, respectively, totaling 59 Weibos.

According to the selected samples, it can be found (see "Fig. 1") that the first Weibo related to "e-sports" posted on the news media's Weibo account appeared in 2012. The Weibo account of "CCTV News" posted a video "DOTA 2 International Invitational Tournament: E-sports Contest" on September 4, 2012, in which Chinese players won the championship in this contest and caused quite a sensation. As time goes by, the number of Weibo related to e-sports posted by the mainstream media began to increase, reaching a peak in 2018.

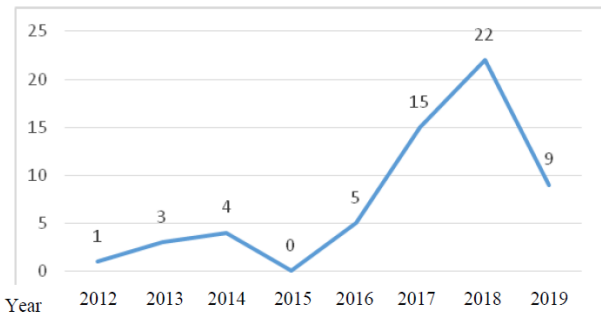


Fig. 1. Number of e-sports related Weibo on mainstream media Weibo account in 2012-2019.

The content analysis method and the text analysis method are combined to analyze the text content of 59 Weibos among the samples, including the emotional color of the posted content and the classification of related aspects of the e-sports reported.

B. Sentiment Analysis of the Reports

Based on all the reports since 2012, there are fewer negative reports, accounting for only 10%, and the content of positive reports reaches 46% (see "Fig. 2"). Ignoring the fact that half of 2019 has passed and there are incomplete data factors, from 2012 to now, there number of positive, neutral and negative Weibo contents posted has fluctuated, but they have all increased (see "Fig. 3"). Positive reports peaked in 2018, and the number of positive and neutral reports was always higher than negative reports during this time period. This indicates that the mainstream media mainly present a positive image in the discourse of e-sports on Weibo. In recent years, the mainstream media have become more and more positive about the discourse of e-sports, changing the saying of "dreadful monster" of e-sports in the 1980s [1].

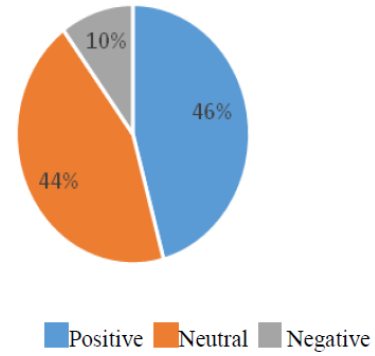


Fig. 2. Emotional proportion of Weibo reports in 2012-2019.

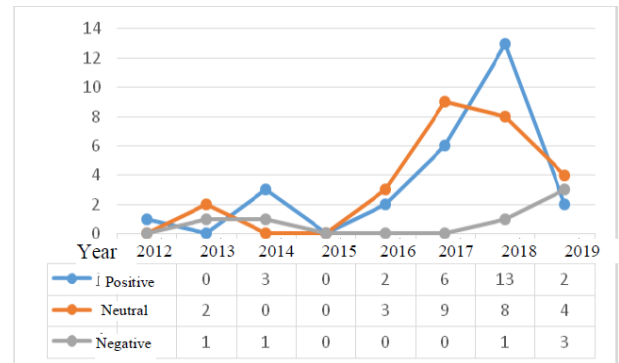


Fig. 3. Number of Weibo with different emotions in 2012-2019.

C. Analysis of the Key Point of Reports

After reading the 59 Weibo texts among the samples, it is found that each of the posted content has different emphasis, so the contents of Weibo are divided into four categories: "e-sports competition", "e-sports industry", "impact of e-sports" and "e-sports characters". It can be seen from "Fig. 4" that the number of Weibo related to "e-sports competition" is the highest, such as the global events of each game or Chinese teams' excellent performance in competitions. Especially in August 2018, China's "E-sports National Team" of League of Legends first participated in the Asian Games and won the championship; in the League of Legends Global Finals in November 2018, Chinese team IG won the first world championship in the competition among the teams in the China region. These two events were the annual hotspots of the e-sports circle in 2018, and all media posted Weibo to cheer for China's e-sports. Secondly, there is also a large number of Weibos related to "e-sports industry", mainly including the establishment of e-sports related majors in some universities and training in recent years; in April 2019, e-sports players finally became a formal occupation, indicating that e-sports is increasingly recognized by society as an industry.

In the Weibo of the mainstream media, there is more Weibo about "e-sports competition" and "e-sports industry", the next is the "impact of e-sports", and the number of Weibo about "e-sports characters" is the least. This shows that they

pay more attention to the discourse modeling and agenda setting of "e-sports competition" and "e-sports industry", and feel that these two aspects are more worthy of attention, while the "impact of e-sports" and "e-sports characters" are slightly weaker.

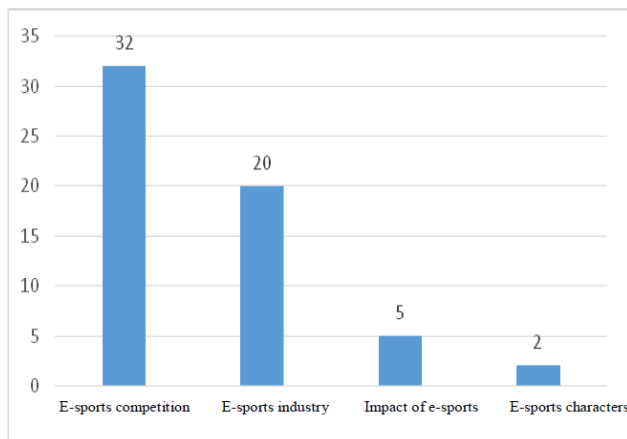


Fig. 4. Number of Weibo about each type.

By extracting the keywords of Weibo related to "e-sports competition" and "e-sports industry", 35 and 24 keywords were obtained respectively. The words extracted from "e-sports competition" mainly include various games and events; and "e-sports industry" mainly includes related training of e-sports professional knowledge and cognitive changes in the e-sports industry.

Among the keywords of "e-sports competition", the word "Asian Games" appeared very frequently for 15 times. The words "champion", "China E-sports national team" and "Chinese team" also appeared many times. It can be seen that the content related to e-sports posted by the Weibo accounts of major media is mainly related to the glory of the country. At the Asian Games in Jakarta in August 2018, League of Legends, Arena of Valor, Clash Royale, PES2018, Hearthstone and StarCraft first joined in the Asian Games as demonstration events, and both the national teams of League of Legends and Arena of Valor won the championship. The Asian Games began to inject e-sports elements and yearn for youth. In 2018, there were continuous surprises in the e-sports circle. From the championship in the Asian Games in August, to the first championship won by IG for Chinese teams in global finals in November, E-sports set off a wave in China for the first, and the major news media posted several Weibos, arousing the attention of all walks of life. The audiences who did not pay attention to e-sports also got to know that "IG won the championship" and "e-sports demonstration events in the Asian Games", and began to understand e-sports, face up to e-sports, and realize that e-sports is not all negative, but also wins glory for the country.

After repeated hot events, e-sports began to receive more attention from more people apart from teenagers, and began its gradual industrialization. Quite a few colleges and universities offer e-sports-related majors and courses for systematic training of relevant knowledge, which is not limited to e-sports itself, but also focuses on the training of e-

sports planning and operation management. In addition, in April 2019, the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security, the General Administration of Market Supervision, and the Bureau of Statistics jointly released 13 new occupations, including e-sports players and e-sports operators, indicating that e-sports has gradually gained social recognition, and gradually develops in an industrialized form.

IV. CONSTRUCTION OF E-SPORTS DISCOURSE BY THE WEIBO ACCOUNTS OF MAINSTREAM MEDIA

The glories that the e-sports circle has won push it to a conspicuous position, attract attention and make the most people change their attitude towards e-sports and give more positive comments. It is true that e-sports is continuously working wonders and justifying itself again and again, which is one of the main reasons that e-sports is increasingly accepted by the audiences. However, as a medium with very similar audiences to e-sports, Weibo reconstructs the significance space of e-sports in terms of shaping discourse and constructing significance, and it also affects young audiences' and even more audiences' views on e-sports to some extent [5] [6]. Next, this paper will explore the agenda setting by the Weibo accounts of mainstream media on the e-sports from the three levels of agenda setting: object agenda setting, attribute agenda setting and network agenda setting.

A. Attention: E-sports That Gradually Becomes the Focus

"The media agenda sets the public agenda" [7]. After the Chinese team IG won the championship in the 2018 League of Legends Global Finals, the major news media such as People's Daily, Xinhua Net and CCTV.com all posted Weibo to congratulate at the first time, not only to e-sports enthusiasts, but more for audiences who do not understand e-sports but are happy to get information on Weibo. The news that IG won the championship quickly became a trending topic on Weibo. Compared with news websites or newspapers of the mainstream media, Weibo quickly seized the opportunity in this hot event relying on its own advantage of "sharing things around any time anywhere". Just around the time when IG won the championship, the Chinese E-sports team won the championship in the Asian Games, and e-sports players and e-sports operators became formal occupations and got recognized. As the hot events of the e-sports circle repeatedly became trending topics on Weibo, other audiences than e-sports enthusiasts have to start to pay attention to and understand e-sports.

The mainstream media on Weibo intensively update Weibo, setting "public agendas" for most of the public. Compared with the ordinary celebrities on Weibo, the mainstream media's Weibo is more credible and authoritative, and can act as an "opinion leader". From 2016, there has been a sharp increase in e-sports related Weibo posted by mainstream media, and the hot events of the e-sports circle frequently became trending topics; Weibo has turned e-sports into a focus, and made it gradually become a significant part of the impression of audiences, which will gradually be seen as a particularly important part by the audiences. Under such a media agenda setting, audiences start the first step of

V. CONCLUSION

In daily life, people have been used to getting information from Weibo. The mainstream media are more authoritative, so it is easier for the Weibo posted by their accounts to set our agenda. In recent years, e-sports have become a fast-growing industry. Under the setting of Weibo, from paying attention to understanding and then to cognition, e-sports has received more and more attention. E-sports has gradually justified itself from the "electronic drugs" in the last century, and made more people understand that e-sports can also win glory for the country and enhance China's international influence.

Through the discourse analysis of e-sports related Weibo posted by the Weibo accounts of mainstream media, it is found in this paper that the Weibo of mainstream media has gradually paid more attention to e-sports, so that the audiences begin to contact and understand e-sports; secondly, it makes the audiences begin to pay attention to e-sports competition and e-sports industry to a certain extent; finally, the mainstream media also set up a network agenda for e-sports through Weibo posts, so that the audiences can learn e-sports from all aspects, which changes the negative impact of "addicting to e-sports" in the past and justifies e-sports.

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