

# Analysis on the Noise of People's Daily Information Expression During Covid-19 Epidemic

Shangqing Zhang

Beijing No.8 High School International Department Beijing, China

\*Corresponding author. Email: 13241111325@163.com

## ABSTRACT

In today's developed "information explosion" era, the network of new media has become an indispensable source of information in modern society. Nowadays, almost everyone in China relies on emerging information exchange platforms such as Weibo, Tik-Tok and WeChat official accounts to get news, information and entertainment reports. The wave of new media comes and spreads in every corner of people's life. Especially since the harsh December 2019, when the novel Coronavirus outbreak started in Hubei province, China adopted the form of home quarantine for people in blockaded cities to resist the spread and development of the epidemic. The new media platform led by Weibo has become the biggest window for Chinese people who cannot get out of their homes to get the development trend of the novel Coronavirus outbreak, which also provided people an opportunity to do the decision-making of what they' ll react to the situation next. The study focusing on the Weibo site People's Daily of China, which is the most authoritative pair of "eyes" that have helped Chinese people to observe the global situation during the epidemic. This research is mainly to analyze the indirect influence of the news report of People's Daily during the novel Coronavirus epidemic on the development of China' s epidemic situation, therefore leading to the concept of "noise" in communication system. Data collection techniques are Statistical method of data, observation and documentation on the basis of Weibo.

**Keywords:** *The People's daily, noise in communication system, new media, coronavirus*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

During the epidemic, many Chinese young people and even an increasing number of middle-aged and elderly people began to use new media like Weibo to gain insight into the world and learn about the news. And People's Daily is the one that most people generally pay close attention to on Weibo. Because People's Daily has a long history and has been supported and protected by the Chinese government, people generally trust People's Daily. However, through observing the report of People's Daily presented to the public during the novel Coronavirus epidemic, its news report reflected the existence of a concept in communication -- noise. The existence of noise in the transmission makes the news of People's Daily subject to widespread controversy. This paper describes and elaborates on how the People's Daily accidentally spread noise during the epidemic, and explores better ways to reduce noise.

## 2. ANALYSIS

### 2.1. Overview of People's Daily

At present, there are 18 central media outlets in China, including Xinhua News Agency, PLA Daily, Guangming Daily, China National Radio, etc. In the list, the People's Daily ranks first place among all the official central media, and is a ministry unit along with Xinhua news Agency. Among them, the People's Daily, Xinhua News Agency and China Central Television are the most influential, which are called the three mouthpieces of the Central Government.

Among the 18 central media outlets, the People's Daily is undoubtedly the dominant one, largely because of its historical and evolutionary background. The People's Daily, the official newspaper of the central Committee of the Communist Party of China (CPC), was founded at the ministerial level in Lizhuang, Pingshan County, Hebei Province on June 15, 1948. It is the official newspaper of the Central Bureau of North China and assumes the functions of the central Committee. Mao Zedong personally signed up for the People's Daily. On March 15, 1949, the People's Daily moved with the central

government to nowadays' Beijing. On August 1st, the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China decided that the People's Daily would be the official newspaper of the CPC Central Committee, and the issue dated June 15, 1948 would be adopted. In 1992, People's Daily was named one of the top 10 newspapers in the world by UNESCO.

The People's Daily carried this national mission until it became one of the highest-ranking media outlets in the world today. In line with the trend of the times, People's Daily soon changed from print media to new media, attracting more people's attention. At 4:58 am on July 22, People's Daily wrote its first microblog on Sina.com, marking the official launch of the Official Sina Weibo of The First Party newspaper. People's Daily's microblog is managed by the Microblog operation Room under the News Coordination Department of People's Daily. The administrators all graduates from Peking University and Tsinghua University majoring in journalism and international relations, which means that they are the talents cultivated by the best educational resources in China.

## 2.2. Some Controversial Contents of the People's Daily on Weibo

### 2.2.1. Specific cases of People's Daily publishing news

With novel Coronavirus raging in China, the official media of Microblog People's Daily published an article at 22:54 on January 31st, 2020, titled "Shanghai Pharmaceutical Institute and Wuhan Virus Institute jointly found that 'Shuanhuanglian (a kind of Chinese medicine)' could suppress novel Coronavirus". The news quickly made headlines that night. People rushed to buy shuanhuanglian oral liquid, waiting in long lines at brick-and-mortar drugstores, and major online platforms were also out of stock. Even food products with a similar pronunciation of shuanhuanglian were sold out. At that time, Shuanhuanglian oral liquid became the "effective" medicine to fight the virus in many people's hearts. However, when people queue up, actually even more people are threatened by the infection. Faced with this situation, the People's Daily published another article at 7:33 on February 1st, stating that "suppression is not equal to prevention and treatment! Special note: do not buy up shuanhuanglian oral liquid."

In addition, the People's Daily on Weibo published an article at 18:07 on February 8th of the same year, stating that "transition routes of COVID-19 include aerosol transmission: aerosol formation by droplets in the air can cause infection". However, a day later, at 18:02 on February 9th, the People's Daily published a new article: "There is no evidence that aerosols can spread the virus".

During the same period, the People's Daily also frequently published positive encouragement microblogs with the theme of "donations from the elderly", such as: "The veteran donated 10,000 yuan to Wuhan and then left," the People's Daily concluded, adding: "The people leaving with his hands in his pockets is so handsome!"[3]

### 2.2.2. Ambiguous noise from People's Daily

News like this from People's Daily was abundant during the epidemic. From the content itself, people can see that the original intention of People's Daily is positive, hoping that the news can alert and guide the Chinese people during the epidemic. However, after the publication of "Shuanhuanglian report" and "Aerosol report", the results often backfired. Large crowds gathered in front of the drugstore until late into the night, which increase the risk of being infected. The so-called popularization of aerosol science increased people's panic. Many ordinary old people at the bottom of the social ladder are encouraged to donate what little money they have, even if they are struggling financially. The content provided by People's Daily did not achieve a positive effect. In fact, the concept of "noise" in communication can explain this phenomenon.

Noise in a communication system is basically undesirable or unwanted signals that get randomly added to the actual information carrying signal. Resultantly, it causes disturbances in the original signal being transmitted from an end to another. The presence of noise in the system causes interference in the signal being transmitted and this ultimately causes errors in the communication system. [1] "Noise" first appeared in the communication mode "Shannon-Weaver mode" proposed by American information scholars Shannon and Weaver. It refers to anything attached to the signal but not intentionally transmitted by the source, which will increase the uncertainty of information transmission. [2] From the listener's point of view, they do not want the uncertainty caused by the noise. The communicator, also known as the transmitter and information source, is the initiator of the communication behavior, that is, the initiator of the information in the communication process. In social communication, the communicator can appear in the form of individuals, such as interpersonal communication activities. It can also take the form of group organizations, the former such as mass communication, the latter such as mass communication. [4]

For communicators, their main responsibility is to collect, edit and publish news, and the accuracy of their coding is crucial. The accuracy of a news communicator's coding is directly related to the information that the audience eventually receives and understands. The inaccuracy of the code will lead to the deviation of the receivers' understanding. The tendency of encoding will also lead to the attitude change of receivers.

### 2.2.3. Responsibility of the official media

To some extent, the communicator is the source of the noise in the news communication. Without strict control of the source, the possibility of noise during the transmission process will be increased. Therefore, improving the accuracy of news communicator's coding information and correcting its tendency are also the key links in news communication to reduce noise.

For the central and provincial media, it is important to focus on the hot spots and key points and be good at influencing grassroots development with a holistic perspective. The language of news should be truth-seeking and comprehensive, and the quality of news reports should be good, with fewer errors and high timeliness, so as to strengthen the authority of communication agencies.

### 2.2.4. Specific case analysis from the perspective of communication "noise"

The negative result caused by the news posted by People's Daily may have things to do with the noise from its expression. Although they meant to be helpful to Chinese people by spreading the power of warmth and kind, the information that the listeners got can be just on the opposite. In fact, there is an overlooked word in the People's Daily report on January 31 -- "Joint discovery". This proves that in fact, this news can only be regarded as the new research progress and discovery at that time, shuanghuanglian the effect of this medicine has not been clearly proved. Nevertheless, the headline of this news story clearly stated a seemingly positive statement that Shuanghuang could inhibit novel Coronavirus. If the report during the epidemic ignores the rigor and caution, it is likely to increase the noise in the transmission process and make the expression ambiguous. During the epidemic, there was a lot of panic and a lot of uncertainty. At this time, People's Daily on Weibo should be more careful in speaking, choosing words carefully and paying attention to details. Otherwise, it will be like the result caused by the "Shuanghuanglian incident", and make people directly take actions to buy medicine after hearing the unconfirmed news. [6]

Similarly, the buzz and panic caused by the "aerosol incident" is also due to the noise caused by the improper expression of the People's Daily, which enlarges the vagueness of a message and thus leads to misunderstanding and the emotional instability. There is no accurate scientific evidence to prove whether aerosols can help the spread of the virus, but the People's Daily directly translated the speech of the epidemic prevention conference directly to its microblog, which was too hasty and contributed to the negative impact of the news. In addition, the People's Daily's propaganda on the donation of old people's pensions is also inappropriate. The responsibility of the official media platforms is to report the facts as neutrally and objectively as possible and show the truth to everyone. However, the subjective orientation

can be heard in the expression of People's Daily, which strongly praises the deeds of the poor and old people to donate money, which has a meaning of guiding more old people in similar circumstances to donate money.

For news like this, even if the People's Daily published an updated version of the rumor the next day, however, the impact has already been produced and it is difficult to recover, so the so-called rumor has become worthless. Such actions are likely to be seen as undermining the credibility and reliability of the People's Daily's official media. It is more efficient to filter out the most important and reliable information from the beginning than to fix problems later.

### 2.2.5. People's Daily's room for improvement

It may be argued that in times of epidemic tension, news platforms like The People's Daily are unable to judge right and wrong in a timely manner, and that the People's Daily sometimes uses ambiguous words like "found" and "possible" without directly encouraging people to buy medicine. However, a big official media, named by UNESCO as one of the world's top 10 newspapers, should have the ability to filter information. Neutral, objective and selective reporting is much less noisy than "He has a nice back in a pocket". Similarly, from the perspective of communication, when a sentence is ambiguous, the listener's judgment should not be blamed, but the problem of the sentence itself should be reflected upon. It is the duty and responsibility of the media to reduce the noise in the transmission as much as possible. Also, describing results is more accurate than describing processes. Take "shuanghuanglian event" as an example, "Novel Coronavirus proved to be effective (or not) inhibited" is better than "joint discovery". Don't describe the process until you get the results. [5]

People's Daily represents the most authoritative and professional media platform in most people's established impression. And on Weibo's new platform, which attracts so much attention, every word the People's Daily says is taken seriously. The People's Daily is aimed at a wide variety of people in Chinese society, so it is its duty and responsibility to use words carefully and reduce the transmission of noise. The media platform that represents the image of China is a window that influences people's lives and reflects the image of Chinese media. [7] During the epidemic, People's Daily did report a lot of positive and warm contents, which soothed people's fear. At the same time, we should admit that People's Daily is not good enough, so as to make better progress. May the future People's Daily report be less noisy.

At present, there is still little research on the noise problem in news communication, especially in the era of new network media. The maturity of news audiences also needs to be improved, so there is still a great room for improvement in the effect of news communication. Noise reduction in every link in the communication process is still of great significance. [8]

On the basis of learning, this study makes a preliminary exploration of noise in news communication, in an attempt to provide a preliminary reference for the industry and academia to pay more attention to noise in the process of news communication and promote corresponding research.

### 3. CONCLUSION

First of all, the initial general analysis of People's Daily can help people to have a more comprehensive and clear understanding of its important influence ability on the Chinese government and all kinds of people in the society. With the praise and trust of The power of Chinese media, it shows that People's Daily's position is indispensable and hard to shake. The second part of the analysis mainly focuses on five major news reports of People's Daily during the epidemic period, two of which are related to ShuangHuangLian of Traditional Chinese medicine, and the other two are related to aerosol. The purpose of the analysis is to explain why and how People's Daily conveyed information containing noise through written reports through specific cases. Finally, the third and fifth news report is about the poor old people donating money to the affected areas, which reflects the ambiguity caused by the inaccurate expression of People's Daily from a human perspective, which also namely the noise. The last part of the article is a reflection through data analysis, and also through posting present problems in the hope of making People's Daily's official media better in the future.

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