

# Research on the Expression and Communication of Public Opinion Hot Events by Weibo Users ——Take Fangfang Diary as an Example

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## ABSTRACT

This paper studies the expression and dissemination of public opinion hot events by Weibo users under the social media environment. Taking the online public opinion of "Fangfang Diary" in Sina Weibo as the research object, this paper studies the comments of Weibo's main posts and follow-up posts by means of content analysis and observation. In this hot event of public opinion, it is found that the overall public opinion in Weibo is consistent, the folk power is strong, the evaluation dimension and emotional dimension are diversified, and there is no obvious consistency. Moreover, the netizens of public opinion in Weibo are generally of high quality, most blog posts and comments are rational, and personal attacks and uncivilized terms are few. In addition, Weibo users' expressions of "Fangfang Diary" hot events usually fluctuate greatly when the event process has important development. When the heat of the event climbed, more and more leading individuals and official accounts joined the heated discussion of the event, which made the event familiar to more and more netizens and spread widely.

**Keywords:** *public opinion, weibo, user expression, spread, Fang Fang diary.*

## 1. FOREWORD

In recent years, there have been many incidents caused by online public opinion, especially during the epidemic in 2020. Under the general environment that the public experienced the gradual deterioration of the epidemic and the prevention and control at home and the abnormal life in the past two months, it is inevitable that all kinds of emotions will arise. The Internet has almost become one of the most important channels for citizens to obtain information, express their opinions and vent their emotions, and thus online public opinion has become particularly important.

According to the joint survey data of the Health Communication Working Committee of Chinese Medical Doctor Association and other institutions, during the Covid-19 epidemic in 2020, the public mainly obtained the epidemic information through the emerging Internet communication platform, among which WeChat accounted for 71.13% of the survey population, Weibo 57.74%, website 54.8% and traditional TV 48.29%. Weibo, as one of the new media with high national degree, has the characteristics of fast information dissemination and high activity of netizens, and contributed a large-scale public opinion field of

COVID-19 epidemic during the epidemic period.

At the beginning of March, 2020, the topic of # Fangfang Diary # caused a hot discussion among netizens on Weibo. This topic has reached 730 million readings and 281,000 discussions, which is one of the most controversial topics in the severe stage of the 2020 epidemic. Taking the topic # Fangfang Diary # as an example, this study mainly studies the expression and dissemination of public opinion hot events in Weibo from several aspects, such as the dissemination time, dissemination object and dissemination content.

## 2. RESEARCH PURPOSE AND SIGNIFICANCE

This paper attempts to comb and analyze the "Fangfang Diary", a hot event of public opinion during the 2020 epidemic, analyze the expression and dissemination rules of Weibo users for hot events of public opinion on the basis of the phenomena revealed in the research, show the current situation and dissemination rules of online public opinion against the background of the times, and discover the pure problems and influences of online public opinion at this stage by combining with specific real cases.

Taking the topic # Fangfang Diary # as an example, this study puts forward the following research questions:

Research question 1: What is the expression of Weibo users of the "Fangfang Diary" public opinion hot event in the network public opinion with Weibo as the medium?

Research question 2: In the network public opinion with Weibo as the medium, how is the expression of Weibo users of the "Fangfang Diary" public opinion hot event spread?

### **3. LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **3.1. Internet Public Opinion**

Internet public opinion refers to the popular Internet public opinion with different views on social issues, which is a manifestation of social public opinion. It is the public's influential and tendentious remarks and opinions on some hot and focus issues in real life.

In his thesis "A Brief Discussion on the Concept, Characteristics, Expression and Dissemination of Internet Public Opinion", Liu Yi thinks that public opinion is the sum of various emotions, attitudes and opinions held by individuals and various social groups in a certain social space for various public firms that they care about or are closely related to their own interests. And "public affairs" includes social events, social hot issues, social conflicts and social activities, and also includes what public figures say and do, and so on[1].

In the book *Folk Expression in Virtual World*, Zou Jun thinks that the broad sense of network public opinion is simply the social public opinion expressed through the Internet. It includes all forms of public opinion, whether there is any filtered public opinion, news media opinion, false public opinion created by various interest groups, and official public opinion. The narrow network public opinion refers to the public opinion expressed by netizens on the Internet[2].

#### **3.2. Weibo Users' expression of Public Opinion Hot Events**

As one of the most popular media in Weibo, users' opinions on hot events are often characterized by rapidity, difficulty in controlling and irrationality. Zhu Liang holds that the diversity of Weibo's functions determines the diversity of its users' expressions and strategies in his thesis "Research on Weibo's User's Opinion Expression Based on Silent Spiral Theory". The main strategies and expressions include taking the initiative to express Weibo, spreading "forwarding+comments", peer-to-peer comments and replies, and so on. Different expression strategies have different communication effects.

In addition, she also believes that the public expression of opinions by users in Weibo is mainly due

to their own interest, understanding and attention to topics, which make the opinions expressed by users in Weibo personalized. Judging from the influence of various factors on users' expression, most users in Weibo are more willing to forward or comment on their own opinions and posts, instead of posting on their own initiative or putting forward different opinions. This shows that there is a herd effect in the expression of users' opinions in Weibo [3].

#### **3.3. Communication Characteristics of Hot Events of Network Public Opinion**

Social hot events generally refer to events that arouse widespread concern, participate in discussions, arouse people's emotions and arouse strong repercussions in society. In his paper "From Discourse Equality to Discourse Re-centralization: A Study on the Communication Mechanism of Social Hot Events in Weibo", Li Biao believes that "Weibo Hot Events are the social events with the widest spread and the largest number of participants in Weibo, and are the concentrated release of offline social reality contradictions and social structure tensions[4]."

Zhao Ruihua believes in the paper "Research on the Characteristics and Functions of Network Public Opinion" that network public opinion has the characteristics of openness and communication, group, evaluation, consciousness, and history, which are common with traditional media public opinion, but also beyond the richness, diversity, transparency, blindness, dispersion and aggregation, and cynicism of traditional media [5].

To sum up, with the popularity of the Internet, the Internet has increasingly become the main source of information for real social events and problems. In view of the characteristics of new media, such as fast transmission speed, transparency, openness and individuation, the transmission of hot events of network public opinion has the characteristics of network itself, such as openness, transparency and timeliness, as well as the characteristics of social hotspots and network public opinion, such as complexity, herd mentality, irrationality and so on.

### **4. RESEARCH DESIGN**

#### **4.1. Research Samples**

In this study, Fangfang Diary, a hot event of public opinion from March to June, 2020, is selected as the research case. Fang Fang, formerly known as Wang Fang, was born in Nanjing, Jiangsu Province in May 1955. He is a contemporary Chinese writer. He used to be the president and editor-in-chief of *Celebrity Today* magazine and the chairman of Hubei Writers Association. At the beginning of March, 2020, Fang Fang updated her

diary with the theme of COVID-19 epidemic in China on Sina Weibo, describing what she saw and thought as an ordinary citizen in the Covid-19 epidemic. Once the diary was sent out, it caused intense discussion among netizens on the Internet.

**4.2. Data Collection and Measurement**

In this study, the content of "Fangfang Diary" in Sina Weibo is taken as the research object, and the main posts and comments of Sina Weibo are analyzed. Every post comment of Weibo or Weibo is the analysis unit. In this study, the period from the beginning of the online outbreak (March) to the basic end (June) was selected, which was roughly 3 months in total. Due to the huge number of related posts and comments in Sina Weibo, in order to systematically analyze the text content of online public opinion, the typical sampling method is the most effective way to do content analysis.

Selection principle: the selected research objects are the posts with a large number of views and discussions in the topics related to # Fangfang Diary # in Weibo from March to June, 2020. Using the advanced retrieval function of Sina Weibo, the key word is "Fangfang Diary", and after combing the micro-topics, the posts and comments with high popularity and reading volume under each related topic are inquired, and the inquiry period is from early March to June 2020. In this study, "Celebrity Weibo" was chosen because most of these users are active on the Internet, and they are big V identities certified by Sina Weibo, most of them have a wide social range, rich access to information and typical characteristics of "network opinion leaders". Selecting the posts of these hot bloggers can better guarantee the reliability and validity of this study. In this study, 400 samples were selected, of which 50% came from March to April, 2020, because the "Fangfang Diary" event occurred roughly in this time period and had higher heat than other time periods, which made the samples in this time period richer, more suitable and convincing. The remaining 25% samples came from April to May 2020, and 25% samples came from June 2020.

Weibo Tag	Reading Quantity	Discuss Quantity
#Fangfang#	1.83 billion	488,000
#Fangfang Diary#	730 million	282,000
#Fangfang's small property rights villa into a profit of ten million#	230 million	157,000
#Fangfang's Wechat Moment#	300 million	122,000
#Fangfang Diary describes her niece leaving Wuhan#	76,232 million	48,000
#Fangfang Diary rumor lang nurse died#	64,378 million	24,000
#Fangfang demanded an apology from Zhang#	53,581 million	15,000
#Fangfang Wuhan Diary#	15,403 million	12,000
#Fangfang Diary rumor Guangxi aid Hubei nurse died#	21,856 million	3,800
#Fangfang's Epidemic Diary#	3,916 million	3,300
#Fangfang banned Mr. Mingde's account#	19,02million	12,000
#Fangfang @baoyuming@xiaozhen gives an interview to Chinanews#	545,000	1,000
#I beat gongs & Fangfang#	36,015 million	4,400
#Fangfang lockdown Diary#	1,473 million	1,200
#Huijin Fangfang#	9,082 million	5,800
#Fangfang distorted the original meaning of wuhan girl's video#	5,798 million	3,400
#Fangfang made the front page of the Los Angeles Times#	2,058 million	1,700
#Fangfang cursed Keshen logistics fortune disaster#	3,788 million	2,300
#I hope Fangfang will go to America to write her diary#	12,089 million	2,000
#Fangfang daughter tore up the court summons#	2,141 million	2,030
#Fangfang Apologizes#	2,712 million	530
#Support Fangfang#	2,174 million	2,500
#We have something to tell Fangfang#	4,489 million	3,700
#Fangfang Diary phenomenon#	2,245 million	1,800
#White House praises Fangfang#	2,192 million	1,500

Figure 1 Weibo Tag

**5. RESEARCH RESULT**

**5.1. Overview of Events**

At the beginning of March 2020, Fang Fang's Diary, written by Fang Fang, the former chairman of Hubei Writers Association, caused a large-scale discussion among netizens in Weibo. Fang Fang updated his diary on his Weibo at the speed of updating one article every day, describing his personal experience when Wuhan was closed at the beginning of the outbreak. Once the article was published, it caused a large-scale controversy. Some people support Fang Fang and think that she shows the most authentic Wuhan when the epidemic broke out; Some people think that Fang Fang's diary has suspected rumors and false elements, which maliciously vilifies the Chinese government and unreasonably accuses the Chinese government of failing to control the epidemic; What's more, Fang Fang is considered a "traitor". The Weibo platform formed a multi-directional and complex network public opinion about the incident.

**5.2. Folk Forces Play a Leading Role in Public Opinion**

During the period from March 2020 to June 2020, this study obtained data from typical sampling and content analysis of social media Sina Weibo. From the coding table, it can be seen that among the 400 samples, there are 361 personal Weibo languages, accounting for 90.25% of the whole, followed by commercial media accounting for 6.75%, while official media accounting for only 3%. This shows that in the discussion of the "Fangfang Diary" public opinion hot events, the personal accounts of netizens play a leading role in the public opinion field in Weibo, and most of them are heated discussions by individuals, with the guidance or evaluation of official media and commercial media accounting for a small part. This also explains why many people are irrational and follow the trend of comments and posts in this incident.

For this incident, there is a lack of guidance from mainstream media, which makes the public opinion develop in a more diversified trend at the early stage of the incident. Many netizens have different opinions. In the discussion of "Fang Fang Diary", folk forces are dominant.

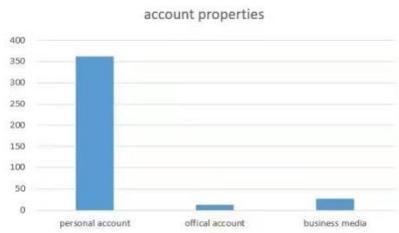


Figure 2 account properties

### 5.3. Public Opinion Has A High Degree of Consistency

During the period from March 2020 to June 2020, this study obtained data from typical sampling and content analysis of social media Sina Weibo. From question 4 of the coding table, it can be seen that the vast majority of Weibo texts and comments in Weibo public opinion field are "opposed" to this event, accounting for 312 out of 400 samples, accounting for 78% of the total. However, there were only 27 comments and posts that supported the incident, accounting for 6.75% of the total. In addition, there are 61 "neutral" opinions, accounting for 15.25% of the total, which is still higher than 6.75% of the "supportive" opinions.

From the research data, it can be concluded that the posts and comments with "opposition" opinions account for the majority of the "Fangfang Diary" event from the beginning, turning point to the end, and the degree of public opinion consistency is high. With the continuous fermentation of the event itself, it has been known by more people, and more and more netizens tend to follow the crowd, which leads to the lack of diversity of netizens' views in this event, which is mainly manifested as follows: Weibo public opinion tends to oppose the "Fangfang Diary" and Fangfang himself.

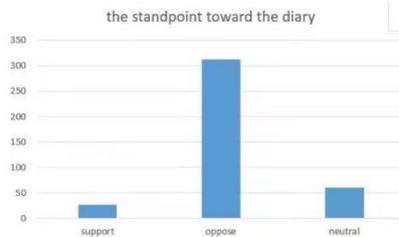


Figure 3 The standpoint toward the diary

### 5.4. The Authenticity and Position of the Diary Content Are Most Questioned

During the period from March 2020 to June 2020, this study obtained data from typical sampling and content analysis of social media Sina Weibo. From question 7 of the coding table, it can be seen that for the topic of "Fangfang Diary", the evaluation angle of users' questioning or supporting diary content tends to be fragmented. As shown in the following figure, among all the options, there are 112 questions about the authenticity of the diary, accounting for 28% of the total; However, there are at least 8 comments on the literary value of diary contents, accounting for 2% of the total. The remaining evaluation angles from more to less are: "position", "political value", "others", "integrity", "fairness" and "economic value", accounting for 24.25%, 13.25%, 12.5%, 11%, 6.5% and 2.5% of the total respectively. It can be seen from this that the netizens have various opinions on the contents of Fangfang's diary, but the authenticity and position of the diary contents are most questioned. Among them, "authenticity" is the most questioned angle by netizens, and the Weibo articles or comments about this angle have obviously increased in the time period after the topic # Fang Fang Diary's rumor that Nurse Liang died # appeared and continued to ferment, which shows that netizens' questioning or supporting angles for events are also closely related to real-time events and public opinion trends.

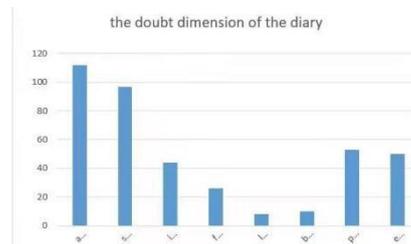


Figure 4 the doubt dimension of the diary

### 5.5. Most Netizens Did Not Associate "Fangfang Diary" with Patriotism

During the period from March 2020 to June 2020, this study obtained data from typical sampling and content analysis of social media Sina Weibo. From question 8 of the coding table, it can be seen that most netizens did not mention the words related to "patriotism" in their comments and comments in Weibo, and there were 232 out of 400 samples, accounting for 58% of all. In the comments of netizens in Weibo, there are 130 articles related to patriotism and 38 articles unrelated to patriotism, accounting for 34.5% and 9.5% respectively, indicating that the majority of them think that Fangfang's diary is related to patriotism.

Therefore, this paper can draw the following conclusions: most netizens did not raise Fangfang's diary to the level of patriotism, nor did they discuss Fangfang's

own position too much; However, quite a few people think that Fang Fang's diary is related to patriotism, and use patriotism to attack the contents of Fang Fang's diary and the views he wants to express.

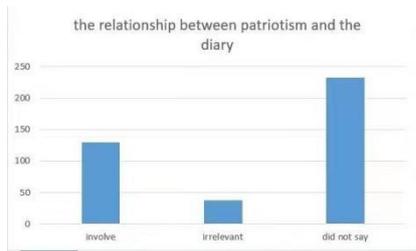


Figure 5 the relationship between patriotism and the diary

### 5.6. The Emotional Dimension of Netizen Comments Is Mainly Negative

During the period from March 2020 to June 2020, this study obtained data from social media Sina Weibo by typical sampling and content analysis. From question 9 of the coding table, it can be seen that the emotional dimensions of netizens' comments and comments on Fangfang's diary in Weibo are generally "anger", "ridicule" and "disgust", among which there are 140 Weibo articles and comments with "ridicule" emotional dimension, accounting for 30% of the total There are 123 articles and comments in Weibo with "anger" emotional dimension, but all of them account for 30.75%. The proportion of these two mainstream emotional dimensions in the whole sample is not much different, and 14 articles and comments in Weibo show "disgust" emotional dimension, accounting for only 3.5% of the whole, but it is still a more mainstream one compared with other emotional dimensions in other cases. Another 123 articles or comments in Weibo show various and disorderly emotional dimensions, which do not belong to the other three mainstream dimensions. It shows that the emotional dimension of netizens' comments on Fangfang's diary is mainly negative.

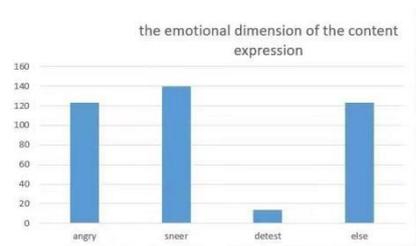


Figure 6 The emotional dimension of the content expression

## 6. CONCLUSION

Through the research on the hot event of Weibo public opinion in Fangfang Diary, this paper concludes that Weibo users tend to take a stand of "disapproval" and "opposition", and the tendency is very obvious. It can be seen from the data that the reactions of Weibo users in the

early stage of the event are more diversified than those in the later stage, and there is little difference in the proportion of "supporting" and "not supporting" positions. However, with the rising heat of the event and the deepening of more event backgrounds, the public opinion of Weibo users gradually becomes "one-sided". First of all, this shows that during the development of the event, with the increase of heat, the users in Weibo expressed their very sensitive reaction to every step of the development of the event. The ups and downs of public opinion in Weibo are directly related to the succession of events themselves. Secondly, regarding the hot events of public opinion, Weibo users have a strong herd mentality. In this case, public opinion will not show strong diversity. In addition, from the samples taken from the research, most of the posts or comments are short and emotional. This shows that a large number of Weibo users' expressions about this event are not thought calmly by themselves, but are "rhythmed" by the whole public opinion field in Weibo.

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