Analysis of the Public Opinion Tendencies Caused by Misinterpretation During the Dissemination of News Events on Short Video Platforms

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ABSTRACT

This paper takes the Chongqing bus falling into the river accident as an example to study the direction of public opinion caused by misinterpretation on short video platform. Based on the framework theory and the post-truth theory, this paper discusses how the misinterpretation is produced and spread, in order to provide ideas for the governance of this phenomenon. In this paper, literature analysis and empirical research are mainly used to study the influence of public opinion caused by misunderstanding in the process of news event dissemination on short video platform. In the case analysis, the different effects of short video platform and other media forms and the distribution of public opinion tendency are obtained with the data of Tik Tok as the support. By analyzing the questionnaire, it is concluded that the authenticity of information on short video platform should be paid more attention, so as to change the current imperfect situation of its management, and meet the needs of this growth trend. This paper will provide new cases for the news communication research of new media platform, and provide some reference suggestions for the operation of new media platform.

Keywords: Short video, Public opinion, Social media

1. INTRODUCTION

By June 2021, the number of users of online videos (including short videos) in China had reached 944 million, 17.07 million more than in December 2020, accounting for 93.4 percent of the total number of Internet users. Among them, the number of short video users was 888 million, 14.4 million more than in December 2020, accounting for 87.8 percent of the total Internet users [1]. With the rapid development of short videos, the platform presents the characteristics of large user base, high frequency of use and strong stickiness. In addition, the release threshold is low, which fits the current mobile, fragmented and fast-paced reading mode of netizens, making it the "source" and "fermenting pool" of a large number of public opinions [2]. The short video platforms have endowed the public with the right to produce content and disseminate content in a large range. On the other hand, it has also endowed the public with the opportunity to quickly learn about social events and contact others' thoughts in large quantities. Both of them make the direction of public opinion more uncertain and more powerful. Among the effects, the misinterpretation of events and their negative effects are the main research direction of this paper. This paper takes the public opinion ferment of Chongqing bus falling into the river as a case study.

On October 28, 2018, a Chongqing bus carrying dozens of people was traveling from Jiangnan New Area to Beibin Road. When the bus reached WanZhou Yangtze River No.2 Bridge, it collided with a small car (with only the female driver in the car) driving in the opposite direction of the bus, causing the bus to lose control and break through the guardrail and plunge into the Yangtze River. The small car driven by Kuang was damaged and the driver was injured. After the incident

occurred, the online public opinion rapidly fermented. Without knowing the truth, people violently attacked the "female drivers" represented by Kuang and Kuang herself on the Internet, and the online public opinion turned to the denial of the car driver. After a series of investigations, it was determined that the accident was caused by a physical altercation between a female passenger and the bus driver, which caused the steering wheel of the bus to lose control, and then the bus crashed into the river after colliding with a car.

In short video platforms, the one-way information transmission mode of "elite-mass" and "expression-acceptance" in the traditional discourse space has been gradually replaced by the "point-to-point" communication mode guided by "opinion leaders" and "individual microphones", which makes the misinterpretation propagation path more diversified [3]. The control of information is released from the hands of news editors and transferred to the hands of every information acquirer, therefore people without professional literacy become the real leader of information [4]. Under the influence of bottom-up grassroots opinion expression mechanism of social media, the recognition of core values is weakened [5], thus forming a large number of absurd trials by public opinion. "The truth after age" represented by short video platform of social media presents a kind of pluralistic, variable of the ecological environment of public opinion, the audience at the same time of receiving information, also in the "processing" new information, which will eventually lead to the accuracy of the information and accuracy worse and worse, and the main body of public opinion is associated with events from the event itself to minor matters [6].

However, in the news report of the bus falling into the river, the relevant mainstream media not only did not act as a good "scavger" of false news, excessively pursued news timeliness, but also became the main communication channel of false news [7]. In the process of tracking the development of public opinion on this incident, it was found that there are many influential media such as "Beijing News" and "Ifeng.com" published misleading reports. They created an atmosphere of public opinion that "the tragedy was caused by the driving skills of a female driver", catering to the public's stereotype of female drivers as "poor skills" and "road killers", thus causing public criticism of female car drivers and Internet violence [8]. In addition, the government cannot also make good use of information channels for timely public opinion governance [9].

Based on the above analysis, this study traces the development process of public opinion and supplemented with a questionnaire, and believes that short video platform is the catalyst for the spread of "misinterpretation", and provides ideas for news release and public opinion governance of short video platform.

2. METHOD

This paper mainly adopts the following two research methods: literature analysis and empirical research. This paper refers to the existing research results in many fields such as online public opinion and short video platform at home and abroad, and forms the research perspective and viewpoint of this paper on this basis, forms the main line of the research, and provides comprehensive theoretical support for this paper. In the study of influencing factors, this paper obtains the data of information interaction behavior habits of users in the mobile short video platform by issuing questionnaires, and conducts data analysis. In the study of transmission characteristic quantity, the data collected on the same platform and under the same topic are analyzed and compared.

This paper choose "Chongqing Bus crash incident" as the main case of this paper. Due to Tik Tok's overwhelming dominance in the market share of short and medium video platforms, this section continues to use Tik Tok as the main source of data. We collated the relevant data by manual calculation. The specific process is as follows: First, the number of views, likes and comments of short videos related to "Chongqing bus falling into the river accident" in Tik Tok was collected. Second, the proportion of various views in the comments section of relevant videos is counted. The time line of the event occurrence and the wide spread of misunderstanding related public opinion is sorted out, the data of seven valid tags are counted, and the data of various viewpoints in the relevant video comment area are visualized.

The questionnaire was divided into two parts: user basic information and short video communication behavior. The communication behavior investigation part included 21 questions (including 17 single choice, 2 multiple choice, 1 matrix single choice and 1 question and answer item). Each measurement variable corresponded to 2-5 items, and each item was composed of a group of statements. Before the questionnaire was formally distributed in large quantities, a preliminary survey was conducted in a small area of the group, and some problems such as unclear expression, insufficient understanding of professional vocabulary and unclear expression of questions in the questionnaire were corrected. Finally, a large number of sample questionnaires were distributed. The questionnaire was distributed electronically in the form of Snow Balling, and a total of 286 valid questionnaires were distributed and recovered. Table 1 shows the statistics of basic information of questionnaire respondents.

Table 1. Basic information statistics of respondents

Statistical magnitude		Frequency	Proportion
Gender	Male	76	26.57%
	Female	210	73.43%
Age	＜18	23	8.04%
	18 to 30	120	41.96%
	30 to 50	115	40.21%
	＞50	28	9.79%
Region	Rural areas	41	14.34%
	Country	105	36.71%
	Prefecture-level cities and large cities above	139	48.6%
	Hong Kong, Macao and Taiwan or overseas	1	0.35%
Education	Junior high and below	8	2.8%
	Senior high school	50	17.48%
	Regular college course	208	72.73%
	Master Degree Candidate	15	5.24%
	Doctoral degree or above	5	1.75%

3. CASE STUDY

3.1. Timeline of the case

Name: Chongqing bus falling into the river accident

Time: 10:08 on October 28, 2018

Location: The Second Yangtze River Bridge of Wanzhou, Wanzhou District, Chongqing

10:08 on October 28, 2018: A No. 22 bus plunged into river after colliding with a red car on the deck of the Second Yangtze River Bridge of Wanzhou. After the accident, many media including the Beijing News, China Daily, Tencent News, and Phoenix.com posted photos of the scene of the accident and the female driver of the red car wearing high heels sitting down on the side of the road to major online platforms, and claimed without confirmation that the bus fell into the river because of evading the red car travelling on the wrong side of the road.

17:00 on October 28, 2018: The police issued a bulletin. The original text reads as follows. According to the preliminary accident scene investigation, the bus suddenly crossed the center line in the course of driving, hit the car normally running on the other side of the road, broke the guardrail and fell into the river. Based on the investigation and surveillance video of the road, it was confirmed that there were more than 10 drivers and passengers on the bus. The cause of the accident is under further investigation.

14:20 on October 29, 2018: After the public security organs investigated, it was initially verified that the amount of missing persons was 15 (including 1 bus driver).

00:50 on October 31, 2018: The black box inside the bus was fished out of the river and handed over to local police.

23:28 on October 31, 2018: The bus was fished out of the river.

15:00 on November 1, 2018: 13 bodies have been recovered and all have been identified. 2 people have been still missing.

10:15 on November 2, 2018: News conference on the cause of this accident was held. The reason why the bus plunged into a river was revealed. Video from the black box inside the bus showed a heated argument between a female passenger and the driver causing the bus to lose control.

3.2. Drift of public opinion

10:08 on October 28, 2018 - 17:00 on October 28, 2018: The public, led by the media, vehemently accused the female driver of the red car of wearing high heels and driving on the wrong side of the road, even formed gender discrimination.

17:00 on October 28, 2018 - 10:15 on November 2, 2018: After the police said the red car was traveling normally, the public began to blame the media for inaccurate reports, speculate about the cause of the accident (including the bus driver's fatigue), and question the progress of the rescue efforts.

10:15 on November 2, 2018 - present: After the news conference was held, the public condemned the female passenger, called for protection for the bus driver and expressed pity at the tragic accident.

3.3. Spread of this event

According to Zhiwei Data, the impact index of the Chongqing bus crashing into the river is 87.8 [10]. Compared with the average value of 57.8 for similar events, it is higher than 98% of events and higher than 99% of social events. A total of 131 important media participated in the dissemination, and the participation rate of the central-level media was as high as 89.7%. On October 28, the public opinion field ranking of the event reached the peak first, accounting for 47%. It can be seen that it has attracted great attention from the whole society. The duration of the event was 11 days and 15 hours. The average propagation speed of the event duration is 174 pieces/hour, while the peak propagation speed is as high as 2020 pieces/hour. Figure 1 shows the trend of events on various platforms. The red line is the total, the orange line is Weibo, the green line is WeChat, and the blue line is online media. Because official accounts such as the national government and public security agencies will give priority to posting messages on Weibo, Weibo has the greatest influence. Due to the large number of users, WeChat has also formed a relatively large amount of discussion. However, it is undeniable that online media, which is prominently represented by short videos, also played an indispensable role in the spread and fermentation of the incident.
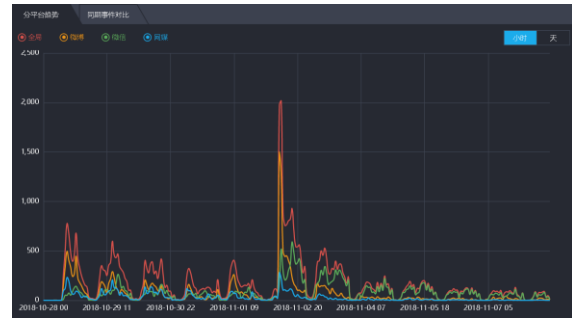

Figure 1 The spread trend of events on different platforms

Due to the long time since the incident occurred, the country's heavy crackdown on online rumors, and the guilt of the media and netizens for their wrong statements, many online violent statements have now been deleted. But we can also restore the heat of violence from iconic incidents. At about 12:00 on October 28, pictures and videos of the accident scene were successively released online. At 13:40, the Beijing News issued an article stating that "The reporter learned from the Wanzhou District Emergency Office that the bus had been crashed with a red car before crashing into the river. The collision occurred and was caused by a female car owner driving a car in retrograde. At present, relevant departments are doing their best to search and rescue." At 14:58, Phoenix.com reported that "According to the Wanzhou District Traffic Patrol Police, the female driver of the red car Kuang has been controlled by the police." As the number of reports about "female drivers" increased, public opinion around "female drivers" began to form. At 10:00 on November 2nd, when the truth of the incident was finally announced, the popularity of the incident peaked at 34,147.

There are 25 tags on Tik Tok related to this event, of which 7 are valid tags, with more than 3 users participating in releasing video content and more than 100 likes on it.

3.4. Impact of Tik Tok's public opinion fermentation

Tik Tok gives everyone a chance to voice their opinions. And because it mainly takes video as the carrier and can contain few words, it is more likely to lead to the limitation of people's access to information and then the production of different public opinion tendencies, including misinterpreting.

Official medias focus on current events and rarely repeat past events. Tik Tok is flooded with we-media, and in order to maintain its popularity and attract public attention, it will repeat the old story many years later. In 2021, during the month of the accident, public opinion suddenly soared. Among the 52 videos under the same Tag of Tik Tok, 38 of them have identical captions and

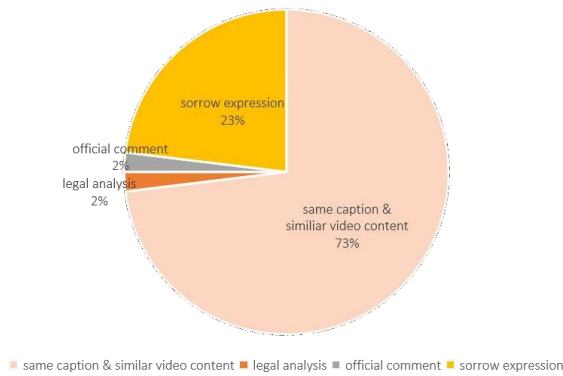similar video content. The proportions are shown in the Figure 2.

Figure 2 The proportions among the 52 videos under the same Tag of Tik Tok

The uploaders are marketing accounts and individuals who try to attract attention by stirring up emotions. They got what they wanted from a large number of likes, comments and forwards. But comments prove that many members of the public have been too overwhelmed by the flood of information to truly resonate emotionally or awaken consciousness.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

From the public's view of short video,for the information obtained in the short video, most respondents still held the attitude of reference only, followed by skepticism. They were not optimistic about the authenticity of the information transmitted on the short video platform.

From the main reasons for the public's discussion and dissemination of short video, the right to freedom accounts for a large proportion, which showed that while people enjoy the right to freedom, people's online speech on the short video platform will also show problems such as randomness. In addition, maintaining social justice was also an important purpose of the public.

From the public opinion guidance caused by hot events, the public thought that the advantages and disadvantages of short video were almost equal, and the proportion of respondents who thought that short video had played an ideological guidance role was slightly higher, indicating that the public still had a positive attitude towards the role of short video so far.However, 81% of the respondents chose to wait for the official release of hot events, and held an uncertain attitude about the authenticity of short video messages released by unofficial short video accounts.The survey also showed that respondents had a cavalier attitude towards the trend of online public opinion and felt that it had a general impact on their understanding of the society, indicating that although short videos can reflect social

hot spots, they may not reflect news facts. The low threshold of short video production on the short video platform has also become a major problem.

From the comparison between online media and traditional media, only 8% of the respondents believed that the credibility of online media was high, and most people preferred to believe the reports of traditional media. Once again, it showed that its authenticity needed to be referred to, and the information released by short video platform was characterized by strong confusion and low audit strength.And 89% of the respondents believed that the speed of online media communication was fast, which was also the reason why short video had a great impact on public opinion.

From the survey results, we can see that more and more people use short video software. This trend will promote the rapid development of short video platform. Therefore, the authenticity of information on short video platform should be paid more attention.We should also strengthen the audit and supervision of short video and carry out regular constraints, so as to change the current imperfect situation of its management, and meet the needs of this growth trend.

There are obvious misunderstandings in the process of public opinion dissemination. Through the theoretical framework, the experience of life and the social environment in which you live in create different virtue values and a unique initial impression of news events. Furthermore, the over-interpretation of "unofficial accounts" in the process of dissemination to grab attention resources distorts the authenticity of the event and causes the reader's subjective thinking to be misinterpreted for the event. According to "Chongqing Bus falling into the river accident", due to the misdirection of the title and the non-objective description of the event, the network public opinion presents a one-sided trend. Major mainstream media (unofficial) followed the tag to post news posts, blaming the accident on "red car retrograde". As road monitoring showed a collision between the bus and the red sedan, the public first pointed the finger at the female driver of the red car. On this basis, some groups used the misleading description of the news on the media platform to provoke more serious gender confrontations.

Combined with the life experience mentioned above, there are delays in the process from the happening of the accident to the disclosure of the truth, during which the public will be suspicious of the truth based on their life experience. Road surveillance showed the red car, and video screenshots showed a female driver sitting on the side of the road. Some netizens combined the two things to shift the conversation to "female drivers". Major media accounts (unofficial) have been reporting under the headline "Female Driver" to attract attention, for it could reach a higher degree of discussion. This was because there were more contradictions under the topics

of gender. From the accident on October 28, 2018 to the release of the truth on the official account on November 2, the subject of public opinion continued to change during six days. Thus, the mainstream media and the short video media platform on the information dissemination in many ways, rich channels, low cost (information release does not need to be reviewed). Through those methods, the participation of public in the topic was active. Therefore, there is a connection between different media platforms for the dissemination of social hot events, the emergence of short video makes the way of news dissemination more convenient, but compared with traditional media, short video platform and mainstream media also make the network public opinion more complex.

According to the results of this random questionnaire, the high frequency of Internet access in the survey dominated, which displays that media platform in the field of information dissemination illustrates an important role. In addition, 85% of respondents regularly watched short videos, which was a huge percentage. Despite the widespread use of short video platforms, most users are generally skeptical about the authenticity of their content. Therefore, we found that short video platform was a common tool for information transitions, instead of a news publisher. The influence of short videos released by unofficial media on hot events is considered to exist but is difficult to distinguish between true and false. However, it can still have the effect of guiding the user's thoughts. To sum up, short video production threshold is low and can produce a wide range of impact in a short period of time. As a result, short video platforms are able to reflect more social hot spots than news facts. Most users rely more on mainstream media platforms for news coverage. However, the mainstream media platform also uses "road monitoring" to be misleading.

5. CONCLUSION

This paper mainly takes "Chongqing bus falling into the river accident" as an example to study the influence of public opinion caused by misunderstanding in the process of news event dissemination on short video platform. We found that there are obvious misunderstandings in the process of public opinion communication. Excessive interpretation of a person's life experience, environment or even unofficial accounts may lead to misunderstandings. Although most interviewees believe that they can rationally judge whether the hot events they see are true or false, the low threshold of short video production is still a problem. In particular, some unofficial accounts, in order to grab attention resources, will disregard the authenticity of the events and make viewers have subjective ideas, thus resulting in misunderstanding. Therefore, attention should be paid to the authenticity of short video

platform information, and the current situation of imperfect management should be changed. In the future, more events and hot topics on more platforms will be studied, and more technologies will be adopted to analyze and improve the data selected by the research, so as to make the research on the influence of public opinion caused by misunderstanding more widely applicable.

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