

Analysis on the Phenomenon of Lurking and Vocalization in Online Opinions Taking the "Yang Qian Event" as an Example

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ABSTRACT

Internet public opinion is a product of the development of information. Under the new media communication mode, the emergence of vocalization and loss of voice is a news phenomenon accompanying the change of the media environment, and there are many reasons behind it. Studying this phenomenon can guide the audience to face the online public opinion objectively, so as to reduce the negative effects. As one of the most representative network hot events in 2021, the "Yang Qian event" has been accompanied by vocalization and lurking from the beginning to the fermentation of public opinion, to the reversal and cooling down. Through the method of case analysis, this paper preliminarily analyzes the main causes of this event based on the historical review of this event, uses opinion leaders theory and spiral effect of silence to analyze the occurrence of the event, and finally makes further reflection. This paper holds that the phenomenon of vocalization and lurking, along with the generalization, localization and fragmentation of information, and the phenomenon of group polarization caused by the information cocoon, have brought many challenges to the network environment. Vocalization and lurking, being two diametrically opposed phenomena in online public opinion, are closely related to each other. A dialectical look at the reasons for the phenomenon of utterance and loss of voice is of great significance to objectively understanding the society. Discussing the phenomenon of loss of voice and vocalization, and recognizing its adverse effects, can provide a beneficial reference for effectively solving social problems.

Keywords: *Lurking and Vocalization; Online Opinions; Self-media communication model*

1. INTRODUCTION

With the continuous development of Internet technology and the popularity of social media, netizens can have the opportunity to express their views and positions publicly. Such communities are becoming increasingly pervasive in contemporary society, enabled but not determined by the underlying technology [1]. At the same time, this development has also broken the traditional media's reporting form of news [2]. Various news clients and social media have emerged. The self-media communication model led by Weibo has become the main information acquisition method for the Chinese public. Such a change will also change the psychology of the audience. How to deal with online public opinion has become a common concern for the media and the audience. It is not difficult to find that behind every hot event, there are obvious phenomena of vocalization and loss of voice.

According to CNNIC's 47th "Statistical Report on China's Internet Network Development"[3], the number of Internet users in China has reached 989 million, an increase of 85.4 million from March 2020, and the Internet penetration rate has reached 70.4%. The number of mobile phone network users in China reached 927 million, an increase of 76.33 million from March 2020, accounting for 93.7% of the total Internet users. Among them, the number of Weibo users was 873 million, an increase of 100 million from March 2020, accounting for 88.3% of the total netizens. With the development of new media and network technology, everyone has the opportunity to speak up on the Internet. Various types of information are amplified through social media media, and the characteristics of generalization, limitation, and fragmentation of information have been maximized [4]. Rumors and fake news spread rapidly on the Internet along with fragmented news fragments, and even some media and

individuals deliberately released and disseminated inaccurate information in order to catch others' eyes, which greatly compromised the authenticity of the information. It is difficult for the audience to rationally judge whether a piece of news is true or false, and it is easy to follow their intuition to form their own opinions [5]. Under such a background, it is not difficult to find that most of the Internet hotspot incidents will follow the audience's comments. That is, the solidarity, condemnation, insults, and silence corresponding to the utterance.

With the emergence of big data technology, social media can accurately push specific messages to audiences based on algorithms, but it has also exacerbated the emergence of information cocoon rooms. The information cocoon rooms have led to the simplification of audience information acquisition and ideological guidance and intensified public opinion "one size fits all". This trend has also given soil to the polarization of the group, and intensified the audience's vocalization and loss of voice.

This phenomenon has greatly affected the media environment, society, and individuals on expressing themselves or losing their voices. Accompanied by the radicalness and silence of online public opinion, both the media and the audience are facing tremendous challenges.

2. CONCEPTS AND METHODS

2.1. Definition of related concepts

2.1.1. Definition of "Lurking"

The original meaning of "lurking" is to read messages without contributing on an Internet discussion forum (from Collins), specifically refers to the phenomenon of individuals staying silent in the group, keeping silent and not expressing opinions. In the context of social media, "lurking" is extended to be unwilling to express ideas that are different from mainstream opinions, even if they are different from one's own opinions [6]. The phenomenon of lurking frequently occurs on the Internet. Even if people see information that they think is incorrect, they are unwilling to refute it. They view the problem from the perspective of a bystander. This is the meaning of loss of voice.

2.1.2. Definition of "Vocalization"

Vocalization here means willing to explain one's own opinions, specifically refers to the interpretation of individual opinions in the group. Including both positive and negative ones.

2.1.3. Definition of "the Information Cocoon Room"

The Information Cocoon Room refers to the phenomenon that people's attention to the information field will be habitually guided by their own interests, thus shackle their lives in a 'cocoon house' like a silkworm cocoon [7]. With the development of big data technology, the platform can push relevant content according to the audience's preferences. In the long run, the audience will see more of the content they are willing to see and ignore the things they do not agree with or accept. The reception of information becomes singular, and the understanding of the content is one-sided, and polarization will occur.

2.1.4. Definition of "Character Setting"

Character setting originally refers to the settings to draw a character's head and three-sided effects at different angles such as front, back and side in animation design. Sometimes it also includes line closures and character hairstyles, dressed in different styles of clothing, and other the character's height contrast and details such as the small accessories worn. In the context of the Internet, it refers to the image that a person shows to the outside world in social media, such as one's own hobbies, behaviors, etc [8]. The essence is a means of marketing oneself to outsiders.

2.1.5. Definition of "The Spiral Effect of Silence"

The theory of "The Spiral Effect of Silence" was put forward by the German scholar Elizabeth Neuer-Neumann. It pointed out that if a person feels that his opinions are in the minority, he will tend not to express himself [9].

2.2. Methods

This article uses a case analysis method to study the causes of vocalization and lurking, focusing on the phenomenon of the masses' vocalization and lurking when Olympic champion Yang Qian suffered online violence on Weibo, combined with relevant examples to analyze and summarize the possible reasons.

3. THE PHENOMENON OF VOCALIZATION AND LURKING

3.1. Review of the "Yang Qian event"

On July 24, 2021, Chinese air rifle shooter Yang Qian won the first gold for China at the Tokyo Olympics. Her Weibo followers increased 500,000 in a day; her celebration message of the gold medal received 2.1 million likes on Weibo. The time everyone sent their

blessings for Yang Qian to win the Olympic gold medal, a message Yang Qian published earlier sharing her Nike shoe collection in December 2020 had started a scolding war. Some crazy netizens believed that Yang Qian's obsession with Nike shoes was unpatriotic. They wrote down "get out of China" under her Weibo, even a well-known director of Beijing Satellite TV also commented under her Weibo. Some netizens also fought back, pointing out that the Weibo was published last year, even before the "Xinjiang Cotton" incident. Under the pressure of netizens, director Liu Hao took the initiative to apologize, but the other people who made rude comments remained silent and disappeared without a trace. Finally, Yang Qian deleted this Weibo. Fortunately, Yang Qian caught up with the craze for winning the first gold medal and got rid of public opinion in time.

After more than a month, on September 22, 2021, Yang Qian was on another cusp of a short video with a funny nature. In the short video, Yang Qian and two friends, wearing several layers of pants, wearing sunglasses, bounce around in front of the camera, and the background music is the popular song "West Coast". Perhaps because this exaggerated dance is very different from the previous appearance of standing in front of the podium, netizens have made a lot of comments on the video, including a lot of accusations and even humiliation. Yang Qian was criticized as "the cancer of the Internet" and "the proudest champion". Someone even said that "Such a champion is really shameful". The malicious comments captured Yang Qian's comment area in just a few days. Finally, Yang Qian could only delete the video and explain.

The "Yang Qian event" can develop into a hot event on Weibo, which is closely related to the following factors. Firstly, Yang Qian is the first athlete to win the Tokyo Olympics, so she carried a lot of clout at that time. In such a special period, more people will pay attention to her and read her Weibo in front. Secondly, before the "Yang Qian event" occurred, in April 2021, the "Xinjiang Cotton Incident" occurred. Trade conflicts between China and the United States were on the verge of breaking out. The slogan "Support Xinjiang Cotton" sparked an upsurge of public opinion on the Internet. People's attitude towards consumerism was radical, so after seeing Yang Qian's numerous Nike shoes, they saw them a phenomenon of criticism. Finally, online empathy and value teamwork also play a great role. In the "post-truth era", people are used to vent their emotions. Under the psychological influence of herd, group emotions will be amplified, and online public opinion often carries emotional bias. Perform value squad. In this process, the inertial thinking of the public dominates, and the overall speech presents an irrational trend. With the guidance of such a large amount of information, it is inevitable that the alternation of lurking and vocalization is inevitable [10].

Throughout the entire process of the "Yang Qian event", the media and netizens are undoubtedly the main driving force for the development of the incident. After the incident broke out in the "Xinjiang Cotton Incident", it was guided by the inertia of thinking, and the intervention of opinion leader Liu Hao attracted the attention of mainstream media. Compared with the completeness of traditional media, many self-media on Weibo have an instant dissemination mode and a connected dissemination structure. In addition, it is the main battlefield for the progress of events and the dissemination of public opinion, but the asymmetry of information and the dissemination of news The low threshold allows netizens to express their negative emotions freely, showing a wide range of influence and destructiveness.

Not only the "Yang Qian event", in many hot events, such as the previous "Liu Xiang incident" and the "Chongqing Bus" incident, we have discovered that many previously supported netizens lost their voices in the follow-up news. What dominates the occurrence of this phenomenon requires further explanations.

3.2. Possible Explanations

3.2.1. New Features of Online Opinions

With the development of the Internet and social media technology, new communication methods have brought new changes to people's lives and entertainment. Through social media, online communication has become the mainstream communication method, and this method has successfully gathered some people with similar interests and habits on the Internet, making communication more convenient. Although this information acquisition mode shortens the physical distance, it may create an information cocoon, which polarizes people's thoughts and produces extreme thoughts.

At the same time, due to the asymmetry of distance, we cannot achieve the same effect in online public opinion as when communicating. Therefore, the personality and behavior of individuals may be reshaped, and a new "character setting" may be constructed, which will lead to maintaining the new "character", they are afraid to speak, which leads to loss of voice, or a relatively anonymous environment leads to the deepening of language extremes [11]. In online public opinion, accounts are also an important part. Unlike before, the rapid development of informatization now makes it easy for people to have two or more identities. The low cost, low difficulty, and low risk of creating accounts have even triggered the generation of offensive public opinion and extremes lead to more offensive "vocalization" phenomena at very low cost and very low punishment.

In online public opinion, there is a group of people called “leaders”. They are individuals who have certain leadership or appeal among voices. Such groups of people are more likely to attract more attention and influence the direction and harvest of public opinion. Others affirmed, such as the famous director of Beijing Satellite TV in “Yang Qian event”.

3.2.2. The Spiral Effect of Silence in Online Opinions

In the times of traditional media, the ‘silent spiral’ theory came into being. This theory was put forward by the German scholar Elizabeth Neuer-Neumann. It pointed out that if a person feels that his opinions are in the minority, he will tend not to express himself. In the times of traditional media, social groups only passively receive information. With the development of interconnection and social media, the mode of communication has long become a divergent structure. While being a recipient all the time, an individual can also become a disseminator through social media, disseminating information. So this led to the birth of the “silent spiral” phenomenon. When individuals are under group pressure, due to the herd and fearful psychology, they will tend to agree with their superior opinions and fear of being isolated.

Therefore, when an incident erupts, a silent spiral will first form in the early stage. However, the spiral of silence will not always dominate. The characteristics of the network environment determine that it can create a strong sense of participation for people. At the same time, this sense of participation is anonymous at the front end, which leads to “isolation”. The sense of fear gradually dissipated. Moreover, the public opinion leaders at the center of the vortex usually have the ability to create public opinion. Through active expression, they also contribute to the development of the anti-“silent spiral” effect. As the main presentation nature in the network environment, anyone can express their opinions, and a few rational people can even insist on their opinions even when they are besieged by the crowd or their voices do not match the “mainstream” voices. This is because they have more independent personality characteristics, daring to express their ideas, emotional catharsis is dominated by rationality, and can make a clearer voice. This situation is also the formation of anti-“silent” in most people's topics.

3.3. Further reflection

In such an incident, the first problem we saw was that the lack of responsibility led to the lack of effective information for the audience. After we have a diverse and instant information exchange platform such as Weibo, the spread of information has become faster, but the role of the audience has also undergone major

changes. When the incident just broke out, individuals would comment, spread, and gain attention without investigating. Such an irresponsible communicator incited the masses and, as an opinion leader, organized a voice. On the surface, some people who lack professional knowledge and accomplishments are expressing their opinions. If things go on like this, it will make the self-media platform lose credibility, trigger a crisis of trust, and cause some people to lurk.

The second problem is the re-dissemination of information by the recipient. Behind every hot event, one-sided phenomenon is prone to appear. When there is no definite news, the receiver's subconscious habit is to believe in most people, to believe in an authority, an opinion leader, and a group of people gathered in this way. People become a voice-making group. In Le Pen's "The Crowd", he wrote that when one person becomes a member of a certain group, he will no longer bear the corresponding responsibility for his actions, and he will not be like a person in normal times. When expressing opinions online, consider whether your own remarks are appropriate and whether they will affect others. On the contrary, under the principle of anonymity, everyone will show their unconstrained side, and the audience will turn from independent individuals to groups with the same consciousness. Their fanaticism and blindness, coupled with the scattered communication methods of Weibo, cater to the instinct of indulging in the senses under the inertia of primitive thinking. This also explains why there are so many consonant insults in the "Yang Qian event". The anonymity mechanism in the network environment greatly reduces the responsibility for speech. The masses are easily manipulated by public opinion, and the rumors are invisibly re-spread, which further promotes the blindness of speech.

At the same time, there are many things in the "Yang Qian event" that deserve our reflection. In the "Yang Qian event", there were a lot of verbal and insulting comments. These abusive comments led to personal attacks on athlete Yang Qian. This kind of rude language is widespread in Weibo, and now the age of netizens is showing a trend of younger age, and the number of Weibo users is also increasing, which has an adverse effect on the dissemination of information.

4. CONCLUSION

"Yang Qian event" is one of the most representative network hot events in 2021. Through the method of case analysis, based on the historical review of the event, this paper mainly analyzes the main causes of the event, analyzes the occurrence of the event by using the theory of public opinion leaders and the spiral effect theory of silence, and makes further reflection. Analyzing the reasons for the existence of the incident, it is not difficult to find that the incident itself contains sensitive and controversial factors such as ethnicity and

consumerism. And Yang Qian herself is an Olympic champion. The identity of such a national hero is easier for people to seek problems of her. They will label the incident and perform an emotional interpretation to win the audience's attention and incite the masses' emotions.

This paper holds that the generalization, localization and fragmentation of information and the group polarization caused by information cocoon, along with the sound and latent phenomenon, have brought many challenges to the network environment. We should dialectically look at the causes of the loss of discourse power, which is of great significance for an objective understanding of society.

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