The Cases Studies on How Positive and Negative Media Messages Shape People's Behavior and Personal Well-being

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Abstract. Network public opinion events have brought a series of influences to the society and people's life with an evolution trend different from the traditional public opinion in the past. The research on the evolution of its process and rules will ultimately help the government to adjust the strategy of network public opinion management and guidance. In terms of exploring the process and rules of the evolution of China's network public opinion, the paper first introduces the related research on the evolution of network public opinion, defines the concept of network public opinion, and summarizes the role and effect of network public opinion. Then, in the research of the evolution process of online public opinion, the existing search index data in Baidu Index and 40 annual major online public opinion events summarized by the Institute of Social Sciences of China in 2011 ~ 2012 are used as samples to classify the process model of the evolution of online public opinion. At the same time, detailed analysis of the network public opinion evolution process of each stage of the development of the state. In the research on the evolution law of network public opinion, 120 major network public opinion events from 2007 to 2012 are selected and the social science statistical software SPSS16.0 is used for detailed statistical analysis to depict the evolution law of China's network public opinion, and some enlightenment is drawn from the research on the evolution process and law of network public opinion. The effective strategies to deal with and guide online public opinion are carefully analyzed. In order to manage public opinion reasonably, the government can build an online interactive platform for the Olympic situation, strengthen the communication of public opinion, improve the early warning system of the online Olympic situation, and prevent problems before they occur. At the same time, an overall mechanism for online linkage of relevant departments can also be established, effective information can be delivered in a timely manner, and government affairs can be disclosed in a timely manner.

Keywords: Online public opinion · Public opinion events · Evolution process · Evolution law · Guide strategy

1   Introduction

"Network public opinion" has been a hot research topic in academia in recent years. As an emerging research field that has just emerged in recent years, research on the evolution process and rules of online public opinion has been constantly expanded and innovated in the close combination of relevant theoretical research and the outbreak of real life events. The research on the evolution process and rules of online public opinion will help maintain the healthy, stable and orderly development of China's online media and promote a good relationship between the government and the public.

Since the Internet came to mainland China, the research on network communication has not been interrupted, but the research on network public opinion is still in its infancy. At present, the research on the evolution of online public opinion in China is mainly carried out under the theoretical framework of traditional communication and public opinion. The research focuses on a few major online public opinion cases to find out the formation, characteristics, communication mode, supervision of online public opinion, function and influence of online public opinion evolution. There are, however, few empirical studies on the evolution process and rules of online public opinion in China, despite a large number of major online public opinion events over the years as samples.

Study of network public opinion evolution process and law, with the empirical analysis to obtain all kinds of public events and policy implementation effects of information feedback, and timely solve the problem of public interests, and promote people to participate and ensure that rich people are masters of the country's democratic channel, realize the harmonious development of society and so on, all have important practical significance.

2   How Negative Media Messages Shape People's Behavior

The 21st century is known as the age of the Internet. Living in this era, our life has been significantly changed by the rapidly-developed technology. It's impossible for us to imagine having a day without social media, television, video games, or movies; in other words, these things have become so indispensable that they are omnipresent in our day-to-day lives.

Undoubtedly, there are beneficial changes as a result of the existence of technology. People talk to each other through e-mail instead of sending physical letters by mails. Portable laptops have replaced heavy desktop computers, which enables people to work anywhere at anytime they want. Daily entertainments become much more diverse. Movie theaters and video game centers are equipped in almost every city for citizens to relax and enjoy themselves. Moreover, technology has also participated in education with the involvement of online resources and e-books [3].

Although these advantages are unquestionable, there are still numerous downsides that make the use of technology a highly controversial topic. The internet is attractive and fascinating; thus, for the majority, it is very easy to become addicted and unconsciously waste a huge amount of time. Furthermore, the information online is multitudinous, which means both good and bad things have equal possibilities to be seen and quickly spread out. Consequently, psychologists doubt whether or not those bad things, especially

those violent and aggressive behaviors, leave an impact on children and young teenagers [4].

2.1   The Cases Studies on the Relationship Between Media Violence and Antisocial Behavior

In the field of psychology, the theory of observational learning, which is also known as modeling, triggers psychologists' interest in the relationship between media violence and children's aggressive behavior. The theory of mirror neuron is another important support. These special neurons function to transform specific sensory information into a motor format. Originally, they were discovered in the premotor and parietal cortex of the monkey; later, neurophysiological and brain imaging studies proved they are also present in humans. Based on the aforementioned two theories, it is assumed that when a child observes a character from a movie performing an aggressive action like shooting, the mirror neurons inside his brain are activated and would automatically code the action. Thus, the child learns the same behavior even though he himself does not effortly memorize and imitate it [5].

This assumption is backed up by a recent experiment conducted by researchers from Ohio State University. During the experiment, a group of 8 to 12 years old children were gathered. By random assignment, they were separated into two parts. One of them was given the actual movie clip of Rocketter which contained scenes of gun shooting. Meanwhile, the other group saw the edited movie and the gun-shooting scenes were removed by the researchers. Then both of them were led to a room with various toys and stayed there for hours. According the the researchers, the first group who watched the actual movie clip presented more aggressive behavior when dealing with the toys. Whereas, the other group of children was merely playing around with the toys. This observation showcases a clear and immediate causal relationship between movie violence and aggressiveness. Additionally, when the children were later provided with access to a gun which served as a stimulus that motivated them to do gun-shooting, the first group displayed much greater interests towards the gun. They imitated the movie characters by attempting to pull the trigger and even point it at people [6].

All these results indicate that children's aggressiveness is learnt from watching the violent movie Rocketter, and under situation with proper motive, they would demonstrate the learnt aggressive behavior (Fig. 1).

Nevertheless, there are also some studies that disagree with the above assumption and deny the relationship between media violence and antisocial behavior, like increased aggression and decreased empathy. People who favor this viewpoint argue that the impact of media violence only appears in the short-run but will ultimately disappear as time goes by. With that being said, there shall be no long-lasting influences and changes on people.

To prove this, psychologist Dr. Gregor Szycik established a study focusing on the long-term effects of media violence. The participants were all male since Dr. Gregor Szycik thought males were more prone to displaying aggressive emotion and behavior. Also, in the previous four years, all of the participants had continuously played a violent video games for at least two hours a day. This precondition was required to ensure that the subjects had experienced enough exposure to the violent source. Three hours before the
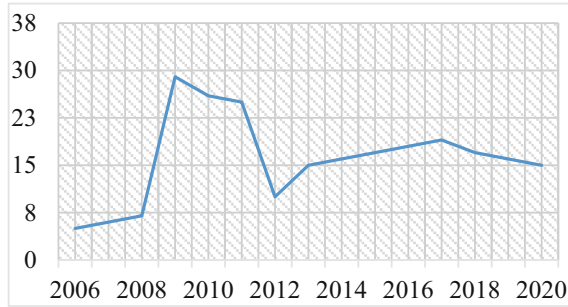
Fig. 1. The number of posts on cyber violence in CNKI

experiment officially started, these participants were forbidden from playing the game in order to avoid the game's short-term effects and only examine its long-term effects.

In the experiment, the scientists designed a series of psychological questionnaires that were able to evaluate people's capacities for empathy and aggression. The participants were asked to answer the questionnaires; and they were also required to have an MRI scan of their brain. Their performance on the questions turned out to show that the violent video games that they had played for years left no negative effect on their capacity for either empathy or aggression, if the exposure did not happen immediately before the test. This result was supported by the MRI scan which was done simultaneously with the questions [7].

2.2 The Conclusion of the Cases Studies

Although Dr. Gregor Szycik's conclusion reveals that the negative impact of media violence would decay overtime, the experiment lacks a strong stimulus that can be used to trigger subjects' aggressive behavior. It is known through the concept of observational learning that human learn by watching others. Nevertheless, we only show the acquired knowledge when we are motivated to do so. Considering that, Dr. Gregor Szycik's study is not complete and convincing yet.

With the experiment from Ohio State University, it is quite apparent that media violence is a major contributing factor to children's aggressiveness. Our behavior and even personalities can be changed simply by watching bad things from Internet. Given that, positive psychologists who are concerned about people's well being are curious if the media has the potential to be used as an effective method for shaping and educating. They argue that if negative media fosters anti-social behavior, then it is reasonable to hypothesize that positive media will encourage pro-social behavior.

3   How Positive Media Messages Shape People's Behavior

3.1   Cases Studies on How Positive Media Can Make People Better

In 2016, Greater Good Magazine published the article "How Positive Media Can Make Us Better People" which mentions a 2012 study conducted by Mary Beth Oliver, a
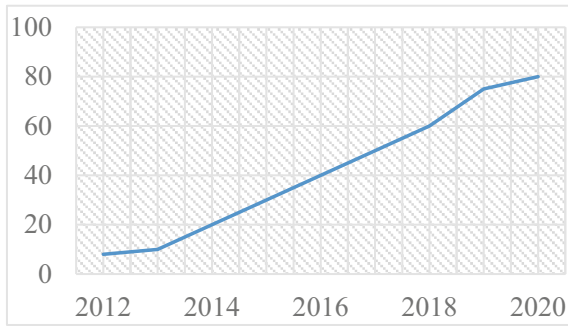
Fig. 2. 2012–2020 how Positive Media Can Make people Better Research trends

media psychology scholar from Penn State University. She uses this study to provide significant insight into the connection between positive media and personal improvement and adopts the result to prove the aforementioned hypothesis (Fig. 2).

According to Mary Beth Oliver, positive images and messages would motivate people to elicit "elevation." This warm and uplifting feeling comes to us when we observe others performing moral acts and demonstrating good characteristics like gratitude, generosity, and loyalty. During her study, she asked 483 students to recall a movie that they had watched recently. The contents and themes of the movies should be either meaningful or pleasurable. Then the students followed scholars' instruction and indicated the level of joyfulness and elevation they felt after watching the movie. When Mary Beth Oliver and her co-workers collected and compared the responses, they figured out that while both meaningful and pleasurable movies triggered joyfulness and elevation, students who watched meaningful films responded by experiencing higher level of positive feelings. The reason behind, based on scholars' analysis of the movie content, was that altruistic values were depicted more frequently in meaningful movies than in pleasurable movies.

According to the researchers, these empathetic feelings will in turn motivate people to either be altruistic and become better versions of themselves or seek popularity and an enjoyable life. What's more, contrasting to previous finding that negative media would lead people to see world as a dangerous place, which is known as "mean-world syndrome," there are studies that shown that elevating media is likely to alter people's perception of the world and cause a "kind-world syndrome."

In 2011, Karl Aquino of the University of British Columbia led a study and discovered that the elevating feeling from reading a positive story would make readers believe that the world was full of goodness, kindness, and generosity. Moreover, this "kind-world syndrome" has a variety of benefits, ranging from physical health to emotion. The study indicates that considering humans generally bad is bad for personal health. However, if we see others as generally good, this form of thinking can actually improve both our physical and emotional well-beings.

Except for the above research, the author of the article, Sophie H. Janicke also conducted a study with her colleagues, focusing on the social benefits of meaningful films. According to the 266 students they asked, experiencing elevation would make them feel more connected to friends and family as well as having a sense of compassionate love

for people, especially when watching films like A Walk To Remember or The Blindside. What's important about their finding is that people feel connected to not only people we know but also the strangers, and people even have the willingness to provide help for those who need it. However, Sophie H. Janicke admits in her article that in order for positive media to leave a strong, long-lasting impact on people, it is necessary for us to keep in close touch with it and be consistent.

3.2 The Conclusion of the Cases Studies

It is a sheer fact that social media is filled with both good and bad messages. However, we own the power to decide whether to be influenced in a positive way or a negative way. If the media were used correctly, the mirror neurons and the skill of observational learning would further widen the pathway towards human flourishing—a gift for all human beings.

4   Conclusion

In the era of network information dissemination, the great changes in the media environment of information dissemination have created rich and diversified information dissemination channels. The new media environment not only makes it convenient for people to receive and release information, but also becomes a major distribution center for public opinions. With the rapid increase in the number of Internet users, the emerging public opinion field represented by the Internet has broken the official public opinion field represented by traditional media in the traditional sense. The two public opinion fields interfere and influence each other, and will continue to integrate and develop together. The spread of network information quicker, however, due to the lack of gatekeepers network in the virtual network in the world is filled with all sorts of true and false information, and media literacy training does not catch up with the development of the Internet speed in our country, cause now, weibo, instant messaging, BBS etc. The rise of social networks has become an important platform for people to exchange "false information", and also a channel for criminals to maliciously hype information and spread false information. They provide a catalyst for the spread of harmful information to be widely spread and strengthened by the inherent trust between people and the psychology of approaching worry. By following the crowd, the rumors that are easy to be cut down become "truth" and cause network public opinion events with great harm to the society.

At the same time, in the era of Web3.0, the Internet of Things has turned the virtual community into a fourth dimension that can gradually replace the real social community. In this virtual group, "group convergence effect", "silent spiral effect", "butterfly effect", "halo effect" and "resonance" avalanche effect have become the main driving force for the gradual evolution of online topics into major online public opinion events, and play a role quietly. In order not to be isolated by the group, people tend to give up rational thinking in the network environment and yield to the strong opinions of the group, which also provides a certain impetus for the development and outbreak period of the evolution of online public opinion events, and provides opportunities for those who attempt to maliciously hype, manufacture and spread rumors. So that some information

on the network can be widely and rapidly spread and circulation diffusion in the network environment.

In China, the national government has always regarded the Internet as a platform for people to express themselves freely, and government officials have timely communicated with ordinary people through the Internet. The government's supervision of the Internet is not as strict as other media, and the information gatekeeper is not as professional as other media. However, with the rapid increase in the number of Chinese netizens and the rapid increase in the role of the network, the Chinese government has begun to pay attention to the necessity of timely disclosure of information. "Government Microblog" and "forum exchange" have become platforms for communication and truth disclosure between the government and the people. While avoiding mass panic caused by false information, or large and bad mass incidents caused by illegal elements, it is imperative to quickly improve the credibility and affinity of the government.

At the same time, because this paper is in the process of data collection and writing, due to the lack of time, the information is not enough, I sincerely hope to get teachers' criticism and correction.

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