



Orientation and Construction: A Study on Media's Public Opinion Guidance Strategies in Public Events

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Abstract. Emerging short videos in the Internet have caused chaos in information, including false news, and various news stories. Following the prevailing state of events in the Internet, the current research seeks to identify the underlying causes as well as mass patterns in the various news coverage of the same event. This study will eventually answer this phenomenon by examining certain techniques of production of news such as layout design, reporting orientation, and editing of interviews. In terms of the research methods, the research study will consider the self-media accounts that are run by individuals or teams which possess high levels of influence in the media that will predominately feature commentary on the current affairs or event coverage. Those accounts that are widespread based on accounts of entertainment or lifestyle will be locked out. Simultaneously, pertinent literature on journalism will be consulted in order to locate pertinent materials to justify the arguments of this paper. In performing research based on numerous reports of news as well as literature, the research findings demonstrate that the social opinion environment and the motivations of the media to a certain degree influence the production and display of the news reports, thereby addressing the issues of the problem of the information chaos, which is inherent in the development of the Internet today.

Keywords: Self-media, Short Video Platforms, Public Opinion Guidance.

1 Introduction

In the contemporary world where digitization and mobile internet are largely entrenched it can be said that information dissemination is experiencing a complete paradigm shift - no longer will it be about dominance by the traditional media and the dissemination mode that will be focused on the social media platform. Short videos are a significant source of information distribution with the further evolution of the modern internet. Such platforms as Douyin and Xiaohongshu have gained momentum and become the primary source used by the population to get information. To some degree, such a tendency has also transformed some daily habits of people, affecting the way the public perceives the events, as well as the formation of social issues. Nevertheless, there

are numerous issues associated with this phenomenon. The introduction of short video platforms implies that anyone has become a publisher now. Contrary to the past where individual depended on government websites or news channels to get news, now the information can be spread via different personal channels. This has given rise to a phenomenon, too; the barrier of video dissemination is minimal and the quality of the content varies. Anyone can post content on online sources, making publications less reliable and demanding more effort on the part of the population to distinguish real information and one that contains trustworthy information. Certain media houses can even edit or otherwise manipulate reality to increase traffic or make profits.

This is an act that grossly goes against the fundamentals of journalism. Thus information is one of the major problems presented by the modern internet. In this regard, this paper aims at analyzing how self-media accounts shape human opinion during the reporting of social phenomena to address the following research questions: How do self-media accounts influence social thoughts in terms of copy writing, framework structure and editing? What is the ulterior motive of intentional deviancy of objective facts? Journalism and communication studies are some of the significant issues in the communication studies field. Communication theory deals with information as a discipline area on how people transmit information to the society. It has some theoretical underpinnings as its fundamental principles, namely the authenticity, objectivity, the type of media, content generation, and communications modes. The objectiveness and truthfulness of the news content, as well as the possibility of the media institutions to consciously orient the course of events to benefit themselves, become very significant to the study of the communication studies. Though prior researches have been conducted to examine the main essence of the content of communication studies, the current studies lack considerations of the latest short video problem, particularly the problem of inaccurate news. This is the gap that this research intends to address. This research will examine the possible structures in the news industry using the analysis of different news instances and contents of different media institutions. The anticipated outcomes will be used to design solutions that will be undertaken by the concerned institutions to solve the issue of news chaos. It is a study that will help in enhancing the quality of news communication today.

This paper shall make use of a case study and content analysis. The study will examine the news content posted on the social networks on different media platforms by analysing the content of the news, design of copywriting and layout presentation to identify whether usage of titles or visual options works in strengthening attention captured by the audience. The objective of this research discussion is to silence the concept of opinion guidance by the self-media platforms. In the case of news content, such materials are the most suitable ones to be analyzed through research. Also, the research will reference the literature in the field of journalism in a systematic manner to increase the credibility and reliability of this thesis. This paper will provide the following 3 fundamental research questions: First, what are the particular public opinion guiding principles that the self-media platforms apply in the process of coverage of a public event? Secondly, what are the reasons why the phenomenon is

witnessed with various media having preferred coverage of the same event? Lastly, what are the economic/platform-based reasons that have precipitated these news stories with varying inclinations?

2 Literature Review

The following will provide a review of relevant research literature. The agenda-setting theory, first proposed by McCombs and Shaw in 1972, holds that ‘the media cannot determine what people think, but they can determine what people think about’ [1]. Although the media cannot directly influence specific opinions on an event, they can effectively affect the public's attention to certain facts and viewpoints by providing information. What the news media offer to the public is their agenda.

The perception of an issue by the media and the public is not a simple alignment; it correlates with the extent of media exposure. Individuals who frequently engage with mass media exhibit greater consistency in their mass media agendas [2]. People's attention will focus on which information the media emphasizes and how it is presented. The factors influencing the audience are not limited to the agenda emphasized by the media; they also include other factors, such as the impact on attitudes and behaviors.

Gatekeeper theory constitutes a foundational concept within media studies concerning information filtering, referring to the editorial selection of content during communication processes involving journalists, editors, and media organizations [3]. This theory posits that participants from societal institutions such as governments and advertisers, alongside cultural ideologies, collectively constitute factors influencing decision-making. Traditionally, gatekeepers shaped social reality by controlling information dissemination, with outcomes influenced by internal factors such as individual cognition, news production processes, and organizational characteristics. Today, the gatekeeper role has expanded beyond experts to encompass ordinary users [4]. In the digital age, search engines permeate every stage of news construction, emerging as a new form of digital gatekeeper.

Communication Theory is a discipline examining the transmission of information within individuals and society. Its core concepts encompass theoretical foundations such as journalistic authenticity, objectivity, media types, content production, and communication effects [5,6].

In recent years, self-media platforms have increasingly favoured emotional and personalized narrative frameworks to foster resonance and amplify dissemination. Concurrently, short videos employ synergistic visual, auditory, and textual symbol systems to construct their frameworks. Journalism studies emphasize four core principles: authenticity, objectivity, impartiality, and public service [7]. Within the self-media ecosystem, these principles frequently face varying degrees of erosion due to traffic competition and algorithmic incentives. Prior to this, numerous studies have highlighted issues within journalism. For instance, scholars have argued that algorithmic ‘black boxes’ render news unknowable; information disorder (including the proliferation of fake news) stems from the decline of professional standards; and opinion polarization has become the norm [8]. The rise of short videos has granted

many individuals the opportunity to produce news, thereby increasing the exposure to unverified or non-authoritative information: Modern digital technologies have precipitated the 'professionalization of news production: the proliferation of producers, the homogenization of reportage, and the erosion of professional principles like objectivity [9]. Concurrently, prior empirical studies and media sociology research have documented how certain news outlets prioritize timeliness over veracity and employ sensationalist headlines, attributing these practices to market-driven profit motives and professional deficiencies [10]. The aforementioned research reveals structural issues manifested through algorithmic amplification, weakened professional gatekeeping, and profit-oriented market logic. This study will analyze how such news emerges from these problems and explore why news media construct content to guide public interpretation and emotional response.

3 Divergent Media Narratives and Framing Strategies in Disaster Reporting

The framework analysis approach will be used in this research to analyze every single piece of content in the following four dimensions: The first one is the theme, meaning whether the report is about reporting the disaster, causal investigations, or accountability: Examine which aspect of the event is the news report focusing on. The second dimension will be the narrative framework: What are the perspectives of these reports? Are they objective narration of the whole event, emotional mobilization techniques, questioning a particular issue in a critical way or asking people to do some certain actions? The third dimension looks into whether there is an enhancement in emotions like fear, anger, or sympathy, so by evaluating text, images, or videos, one can check whether provocative headings, or emotion-inducing visual materials are employed to promote emotional direction. The question of the usage of big font titles to arouse the emotions of the population, and the selective focus of images or videos on emotionally heated parts. The fourth dimension is information: Is the provider of the message an on-site, authoritative report or a leadership speech? Note whether or not ambiguous sources such as the online reports or rumors are explicitly marked?

To start with, the study will analyze the fire that recently happened in Hong Kong as a case study. The Tai Po Market fire was a recent one hence it can be considered as a good research topic. This study will include some news reports through an introductory examination and review of the news about this event. The study will give a fundamental meaning of news content and editorialization based on their content and the reporting direction.

The initial one is informed by Lianhe Zaobao, one of the largest mainstream media in Singapore. Its report on the Hong Kong fire reports as follows: level 4 fire broke out in Hong fuk court in Tai Po, Hong Kong. At 2.51 pm on Sunday, the scaffolding on the exterior wall of Hong Cheong Court caught fire, and several residents alerted the authorities. Upon arrival firefighters sent a search and rescue team to put out the fire. As stated by Hong Kong 01, the fire spread to Level 3 at 3:02 pm and Level 4 at 3:34

pm - to buildings such as Hong Tai Court and Hong Sun Court with fire spreading into some flats. The second media source is a free news paper. It is reported that Yang Enjian leaked information to the media that initial investigations pointed towards the affirmation that the fire had started on bamboo scaffolding found on the first and second floor of the building. The third news source is Cavatw, a Taiwanese news organization whose news was geared towards the cause of the fire. According to this report, the bamboo scaffolding did not trigger this fire. It had already disclosed a year ago that legislators had confirmed that the protective netting was not of specifications. The fourth news organization, the 84-Hot, had a victim-based approach to its news coverage. The interviewee reported that she was searching her family on the street, hoping to receive the news that they were not killed - it was an emotional experience.

Next, it moves to case discussion, the first one: Lianhe Zaobao, it was reported that there were periodic explosions at the scene and some residents phoned in requesting help since they could not get out. At least four and five injured including two in critical and one in serious condition people were killed by the incident by 6:00 pm. There was a death of one firefighter in the rescue mission. The local Fire Services Department Commissioner, Mr Yeung Yan-kin came to the scene of the hospital at approximately 5 pm to see what was happening. In this report, the Hong Kong fire incident is introduced in a rather objective manner and captures the five w of the occurrence; who, when, where, why, and how. It includes all of these elements in several short paragraphs and thus allows the audience to understand the basic flow of the events in comparatively very little time duration. This style is effective to present the development of the incident. The second case: it is most of the content made up of these statements. These loud headlines instantly attract the attention of the population, as they direct the opinion of the people. Would this news item make people assume that the fire spread was as a direct result of using bamboo scaffoldings? The coverage subjectively directed the way society was talking in this process. This impact can be deemed to be unintentional since the report uses direct quotes. Since the whole news item is based on the direct quotes of an interview with the Commissioner of Fire Services Department, Yang Jian'en. At this point, the news organization was only passing along his words and not providing any interpretation to them. The third case is the effects of this incident will attract the general people to consider its underlying reasons. As an example: It is questioned whether the methods of bamboo scaffolding used in Hong Kong have their own safety risks, and that they may be the catalyst to the fire. The craft has received criticism in the hands of others who claim that it is a form of art that is not up to date and hence should be phased out to reflect the modern needs. Such a shift indicates a definite process in news coverage, thus causing the attention of the population to be put away of the safety of the scaffolding structure to the safety of the regulatory standards of protective nets. It is this poor quality protective net that contributed to the spread of the fire to the neighboring buildings. The last is the accident could have claimed the lives of their relatives or friends. They could have worked for years and years and finally made it out of the fire scene but their houses were going to be swept away by the fire that was likely to happen - this was what they had worked so hard to have - and this accident totally altered their lives. The suffering of the affected people was passed by

the report. With this emotional appeal and moral recognition, this report will resonate with the audience at a certain level, making people sympathize with the victims or causing them to think of the value of holding on to happiness of the present as no one knows when one comes first tomorrow as the adversity.

The study discovered through these four news reports that the elements of news reporting do not confine to the same event but also create numerous different narratives based on discussions of the communities. This resembles a tree that has its trunk at the centre and that the roots have various directions indicating that one public event may produce multiple paths of reporting based on various discourse frameworks. This paper demonstrates that the self-media institutions frequently use the emotional features of narratives and focus-shifting patterns in the guidance of the popular opinion, which is motivated by various reasons, such as the economic principles of the traffic creation and ideological standpoints. As an example, the name Hotspot 84 arouses the personal empathy of people by highlighting the opinion of the victims, and Kavat helps to divert the people working on the problem of safety of bamboo sheds indicating instead the technical issue of faulty protective nets. Moreover, content that is controversial or emotional is typically heightened by the recommendation systems of platforms, further rigorously polarizing the opinion of the population. This method of direction of public opinion through the help of the algorithm contradicts the professionalism of the journalism industry and threatens to the sense of rational discussions in the population.

4 Conclusion

This analysis has affirmed that there is actually a process of guiding the people opinion during the covering of the events that are of a social nature on the self-media sites. The guiding strategies are diversified in nature and have close relationship with the platform and traffic. The following recommendations can be offered to enhance the current information ecosystem: Firstly, the platform should improve its transparency and create a comprehensive review mechanism, prioritizing to indicate the high-quality news content to the population; Secondly, media professionals are offered to work on the media literacy of the Internet news, mark the origin and position of the information, follow the fundamental ethical principles of a faithful journalist and cover the events with the most objective attitude; Final, a cross-platform collateral governance should be promoted by the relevant regulatory agencies to ensure optimal control over the news in the modern Internet sources as well as avoid destructive Education of media literacy in the public needs to be enhanced in an effort to enhance the capacity to discern news information as well as to see the ability to distinguish objective content.

This is a case study with one event and the sample that was used is small and therefore the validity of its conclusion needs to be validated. Further, this research did not undertake further research on Hong Kong related videos. The guiding effect is analyzed primarily employing text and content logic since there is no empirical measurement of the staff attitude changes. The scope of the case could be further extended with regard to future research incorporating questionnaire surveys or experiments to improve the credibility of the research.

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