

Effects of cyber public opinions on government decision-making

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Abstract. The cyber public opinion is a very important component of China's social opinions and generates both positive and negative effects for government decision-making. It thus can be seen that double-sided effects of cyber public opinions on government decision-making exist objectively. So, government sector should pay high attention to and correctly treat cyber public opinions so as to improve the ability to integrate cyber public opinions and practically utilize cyber public opinions to perfect government decision-making. This paper discusses main features of cyber public opinions, sets forth positive and negative effects of cyber public opinions on government decision-making and proposes countermeasures to rationally apply cyber public opinions to perfect government decision-making mechanism.

Introduction

Nowadays, internet has become a convenient and significant public opinion platform for vast masses to express popular will and participate in economy, society and political life. Thus, the expression ways and space for popular will continue to expand and brand-new popular will type gradually forms, i.e. cyber public opinion. So, government decision-making should scientifically and rationally treat cyber public opinions in reality. This has become an indispensable important issue for Chinese government decision-making.

Main features of cyber public opinions

Cyber public opinion mainly means the public opinion is presented via internet. It inherits and surpasses medial public opinions in traditional sense and profoundly changes deep-level structure of medial public opinions. Its essence is that the public apply internet to express their opinions on public affairs and interest appeal. The public undertake many roles in internet simultaneously, such as information releaser, release approach, reviewer and voter. The purpose is to apply internet public platform and apply public platform and idea integration of numerous netizens to generate wide opinion collection and information transfer. It can influence people's social life and influence the government to formulate public policies. Main features of cyber public opinions are as follows:

1) The cyber public opinion is virtual. It is a typical feature for internet media different from other traditional media. In cyber space, the website and netizens process information together. Netizens will survive and contact through signified state to form consensuses and specific cyber public opinions, and release to the majority of non-specific people with the whole world as the coverage. In this way, under virtual environment, the subject identity of public opinions is not just diversified, but also anonymous. The topic design is quite wide. The communication process shows interaction state. Thus, virtual space which is completely different from traditional public opinions forms.

2) The expression mode is direct. After internet platform emerges, one-to-one, one-to-many and many-to-many communication modes. The development of internet forum provides the exchange and communication platform for vast public to express freely so that the subjects of popular will can make speeches and discuss freely without any limit. Netizens can break through the limits of traditional media and comprehensively realize online expression of their thoughts and will without the need of others' strength or approach resources at higher cost. Cyber public opinions can not just be delivered to the top leaders to provide great convenience for decision-makers to rapidly master

grass-roots popular wills, but also can be delivered to social public to rapidly magnify various opinions and interest appeals so as to arouse great attention of social public and influence government decision-making.

3) Participants are equal. In current cyber space, netizens can communicate equally through text, audio and video, regardless of the complexion, age and nationality. Every individual can deliver his opinions according to his preference. This communication situation quite contributes to eliminating various discriminations and prejudices in society so as to create a fair and favorable environment to personal will and interest appeal. Cyber public opinions established under such specific environment have practically broken through traditional inherent pattern (i.e. control through media elites) and reflects strong popularization feature.

Positive effects of cyber public opinions on government decision-making

1) Cyber public opinions can provide comprehensive and true information so as to greatly improve decision-making scientificity and normalization. Information is the foundation of decision-making, while scientific decision-making should be ensured by sufficient information. With accelerated development of informatization, internet has become an important approach for Chinese governments at all levels to practically know information, collect the widest popular will and make vast masses realize their interest appeals. Understating popular situations and gathering popular will via internet should become a required course of personnel in government sector. The government should issue relevant policies and schemes on internet, actively solicit opinions of the public or carry out public discussions so as to greatly expand information sources and improve decision-making relevant policy.

2) Cyber public opinions can expand decision-making subjects to boost democratization process of government decision-making. The decisions made by the government should be an interaction process between decision makers and the public and also a dynamic process of continuing to solicit public opinions and feed back. The government sector needs to enhance communication with the public and timely release important issues and decisions closely related to interests of the masses. Meanwhile, the public also need to express their opinions on relevant matters more sufficiently so as to timely know the whole decision-making process. When the government sector makes decisions, social publicity and hearing should be carried out, which cannot be separated from internet. Social publicity and hearing can be conducted online. Government decision-making must be supervised with the force of internet.

3) Cyber public opinions can change original information asymmetry so as to boost transformation of government functions and continuously reduce decision-making cost. Nowadays, Chinese management environment is unusually complex. The number of decisions grows with each passing day. All kinds of unconventional and non-programmed decisions increase continuously. Information control becomes more and more difficult. This needs decision makers to return some decision-making rights to the public. In other words, some matters which should be decided by the government are managed and decided by the public so as to accelerate change of government functions. Meanwhile, this is quite to the benefit of reducing power rent-seeking and corruption and better controlling decision-making cost.

4) Cyber public opinions can release decision-making balloon to correct faults in public decision-making. The decision-making balloon is one of exploratory means to widely listen to popular will to the largest extent in the process where related departments consider how to formulate the policy after some public issues have been formed and some policy appeals are generated. The main practice is to apply media to communicate relevant information so as to motivate the public with the difference in benefit orientation to participate in discussions. Such way can not just effectively avoid decision-making faults, but also shape and intensify the ability of the public to bear public decision-making and to own good policy execution ability. Government decision-makers can release the decision-making balloon via internet so as to skillfully collect popular will and make sure the decisions comply with current popular will.

Negative effects of cyber public opinions on government decision-making

1) False information in internet may lead to decision-making faults. Nowadays, an outstanding problem exists in cyber public opinions. Due to the limit of information sources, there is quite large distance between cyber public opinions and the truth. Some pieces of news are not very accurate and some are even rumors. Before the rumors are clarified, cyber public sentiment with increasingly bright tendency will gradually trigger and deviate from the truth. However, most internet users will seldom query information authenticity when seeing the information. Thus, group blind follow and even impulsion will be generated. Decision makers may make wrong decisions due to misleading false information in internet.

2) Excessive internet information may result in blind decision-making of decision makers. Scientific decision-making is very in need of appropriate and timely information as the support. Internet has changed the shortcoming of too small information amount. But once the amount of information is too much, decision-making blindness will also be caused. Excessive amount of information will lead to the difficulty in selecting schemes. Under the limitation of excessive information, the advantages and disadvantages of various schemes cannot be measured for a short while. This will cause the decision makers at a loss and can only follow their feelings so that the selection of schemes is very random.

3) Monopolized cyber speaking right will affect scientific decision-making. Although internet can provide every netizen with the opportunity for equal expression, the equality is often limited to internet users. Besides, information acquisition asymmetry will also happen due to various causes. This to a large extent increases knowledge asymmetry and causes that some of the poor in terms of information have to be in the speechless state. Those users who receive good computer education and master the equipment can fully apply internet advantages to gain information supremacy in network era so as to dominate the mouthpiece of cyber society. However, for those who do not solve basic living needs and cannot afford a computer or will not use the computer, internet technique is of no any significance. This will lead to political participation imbalance.

4) The development of emotional public opinions will influence decision-making. Internet development not just makes public opinions become opener and freer. Besides, extreme sentiment and vulgarization of public opinions exist. Cyber public opinions are mainly emotional public opinions and the omens of public opinion and tendency. But there is often short of rational and clear train of thought so that irrational social emotion is motivated. Once public opinions are misled, social harmony and stability may be affected. Of course, there is a special phenomenon of exchange hint deficiency in internet communication. In other words, people can easily form imaginary group identity when they find large quantities of ideas approaching their ideas. The information released by netizens in internet often as distinct personal emotional tendency. Thus, decision makers can be easily induced to carry out one-sided decision-making.

Countermeasures to rationally apply cyber public opinions to perfect government decision-making mechanism

(I) Form correct internet view to improve the ability to guide cyber public opinions

The essence of contemporary democratic politics is the politics of popular will, while popular will is the legitimate foundation for the government to formulate policies. The Party Central Committee proposes to guarantee the right to know, participation right, expression right and supervision right of the public. It is entirely possible that these are realized in current internet era. Government administrators should collect the most extensive popular will by fully applying traditional media resources. On this basis, it is required to cognize cyber public opinion expression more fully so as to form accurate internet view, improve existing administrative information management system, continuously boost information identification and integration ability, gradually standardize interactions and communications with netizens and respond to the opinions and ideas related to government work expressed by netizens. In this way, popular will can be well guided so as to master dominant right of public opinions in current internet era and provide better foundation for

the government to make rational decisions.

(II) Perfect information right distribution to make public opinion expression approached unblocked

Social conditions and public opinions represent real voice and wish of the masses. The final implementation effect of government decision-making will depend on the support and approval of the public. So, opening up green channels for social conditions and public opinions has distinctly important significance for government administrators to continuously improve work, achieve more scientific development and build a harmonious socialist society. In reality, relevant government departments should pay high attention to cyber public opinions, positively encourage to collect opinions and suggestions reflecting their voice and living conditions through other channels and methods, listen attentively to vast vulnerable groups and practically list cyber public opinions in reference index system of government decision-making, but cyber public opinions should not be regarded as the decisive factor.

(III) Pay attention to rational supervision of cyber public opinions

Netizens are the group outside the system, but own very strong sense of participation and requirements. Their expression purpose may not be echoed by net friends, but they concern whether it can gain the attention of relevant government departments and hope to realize their appeals by use of the influence of government decision-making. Therefore, for government management workers, they should first maintain the speaking right of netizen groups to eliminate confrontation, drive continuous progress of Chinese society and make vast netizens rally feel goodwill of the party and the government. Secondly, to effectively prevent various non-mainstream opinions from mixing and confusing the public, it is required to cultivate a large batch of opinion leaders to boost the force of mainstream speeches rather than simply isolating so-called non-mainstream speeches, so as to positively guide the development direction of cyber public opinions. Finally, the government sector should enhance cooperation with legislation and judicial department to boost internet legal system construction and strengthen professional ethics construction for internet workers so as to better perform duties and form better speech environment.

Conclusions

To sum up, internet promotes national administrators and common people to get rid of the wide gap and the fall from the top of the pyramid to the ground. Through cyber public opinions, senior leaders can span the barriers of bureaucrat system and directly face popular will. Such transparent exchange has become a way to gain popular will that other ways cannot reach. Although there is certain distance between cyber public opinions and real popular opinions, once cyber public opinions are standardized and selected through corresponding technical means, they will have very important reference significance. As long as the government administrators carefully screen and identify cyber public opinions, it is easy to find out valuable information. This has great effects on promoting scientization and standardization of Chinese government decision-making.

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