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Monopolizing a Media Storm: Visualizing and understanding the network of US small businesses

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Abstract

The world has undergone several changes since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic at the start of 2020. While many facets of our daily lives are now starkly different than they were in the days before the pandemic, one of the most glaring changes is the rapid platformization and datafication of daily operations. One example is how small businesses have had to quickly adapt to an increasingly digital world, all without much preparation. While often overlooked in empirical work, US small businesses employed nearly 60 million Americans nationwide, about 47% of the private workforce (U.S. Small Business Administration, 2019). Furthermore, considering how global supply chain issues have disrupted daily operations and led to cost increases across several industries (Swanson, 2022), it is crucial to understand how social media underpins the fabric of small businesses in the US.

With this goal in mind, the present study seeks to expand upon the previously established theoretical notion of media storms. In contrast to routine media use, a media storm describes a sudden surge in news coverage of an event that ultimately leads to a sustained period of great attention (Boydston et al., 2014). However, media storms are not unique to news coverage. Thus, we propose a study that expands upon the notion of media storms in an effort to understand how small businesses engage with major media moments in an effort to optimize their social media presence. We posit that small businesses should be able to leverage these media storms in an effort to connect with potential consumers, and even other small businesses. Through this, we hope to map the network of small businesses on Twitter to better understand how discussion networks breed connections.

Furthermore, we posit that social network analysis can offer several promising advantages for the future of communication research.

To collect data, we employed a random sampling approach to select small businesses that would be examined for their social media activities during media storms. We randomly selected 100 small businesses from a list of the 5,000 fastest growing US-based small businesses in 2020. To obtain the most comprehensive perspective of how small businesses interact with major media moments on Twitter, we collected all tweets issued by these businesses from January 1, 2020, to December 31, 2020.

An activity-based interaction network emerges from all the tweets made by the selected small businesses and their associated Twitter users, including quotes, retweets, replies, and mentions. This network consisted of 10,902 nodes, representing various Twitter accounts, and 11,390 edges, representing interactions among these accounts.

Preliminary findings offer several implications for this line of work. Namely, we have found that businesses that participate in online discussions surrounding media storms are met with heightened levels of engagement. This offers empirical evidence of the relationship between discussion participation and engagement

Submission ID

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How many do online forum posts are created by the real audience? Exploring Atypical Online Coincidental Behavior on critical issues in Taiwan

Authors

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Abstract

This study focuses on atypical coincidental behavior on the online discussion platform PTT^[1], in order to discover whether there have been any attempts at manipulating public opinion from May through August, 2021, during the Taiwanese outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. Another objective is to develop AI tools to help researchers break through the

limitations of human labor and time, and to comprehensively and efficiently analyze tremendous amounts of information.

Since its launch in 1995, PTT has become one of the most used Chinese language online services. According to PTT's^[2] official statistics, more than 150,000 users are online during peak hours. There are more than 20,000 bulletin boards with different themes and more than 20,000 new posts and 500,000 comments per day. All the content on PTT is generated by users and therefore reflects their opinions and ideas. Many local journalists and reporters scour PTT for material to create news reports, which then go on to reach wider audiences, greatly amplifying the impact and effect of those ideas presented within the site.

Since 2018, Taiwanese media and academia have been concerned about the possibility of cyber armies conducting strategic information operations through PTT. *A Pilot Study on PTT in the Context of Influence Operations* [6] introduces the interface, functions, and terminology of PTT. Other studies identified groups of cyber armies on the Gossiping Board of PTT [2, 8]. Apart from previous papers, which were mainly case studies, this research, with a data driven and evidence based approach, comprehensively quantifies "atypical" coincidental behavior and compares the differences between user groups that do and do not appear to demonstrate such behavior.

This study grouped users by phi-coefficient score to measure coincidental behavior, as well as by their use of shared IP addresses. We also compared their times of activity, their narratives, the emotional content of their comments, and the potential for their comments to incite other users. Furthermore, the study compared several metrics of behavior among user groups in various events^[3] to

find evidence of manipulation, and observed the linkages between ideological slogans used by groups that demonstrate atypical coincidental behavior.

A final goal of this research is that, through the exposure of potential opinion manipulation on social media, users may be able to more readily distinguish atypical coincidental behavior and therefore decrease their chances of being manipulated. Through exposing more context behind user content, this research hopes to decrease the negative impact of atypical coincidental behavior on public opinion.

[1] PTT is the largest local forum in Taiwan.

[2] <https://www.ptt.cc/statistics.html>

[3] This research defines an "event" as the sum total of collected news articles on a topic, combined with all social media reactions to it, on given platforms. For more details about

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Analyze the Public Opinion of Involution: Applying Mixed-methods to Detect the Weibo's Sentimental Divide among Different Age Group

Authors

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Abstract

INTRODUCTION

Involution was introduced as a social concept by American sociologist Clifford Geertz to describe a process of self-circulation and stagnation of development where the same behavior is repeated for a long time and maintained at a certain level without any changes or promotions (Liu & Qiu). When the word is discussed widely by public since the end of 2020, its new connotation, as vigorous as a kind of self-generated concept by social media, has been used as an attribution to competition pressures which may bring personal and social stagnancy (Kang & Jin). This kind of social stagnancy has appeared in many countries. In the United States, research shows four in 10 millennial aged 25-37 have a bachelor's degree or above, but earning less than the previous generation of the same education level. Industrialized East Asian countries like Japan and South Korea, where economic stagnation is compounded by an aging population, have seen some of the worst involution for some time. In 2020, Chinese rethink whether hard work can make life better by talking about "involution". Whether different age group think differently about involution need to be discussed to avoid opinion polarization.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Age is an important factor when considering about involution. Scholars think about social change, life pathways, and individual development as modes of behavioral continuity and change, thus different age group may share different opinion about competition (Yang, et al. 2008; Eber, François & Weill, 2021). Specifically, people in different age group has different situation when facing involution (Ghiocanu, 2016). Whether the attitudes are varied among different age-group needs discussion because opinion gap may bring opinion polarization, however, there are few research about it.

Taking the literature on age gap in competition as a point of departure, one main hypothesis and one research question are the focus of this article.

H1: Youth are more negative than elders when talking about involution in Weibo.

R1: What's the different public opinion among different age group when talking about involution in Weibo?

METHOD

Analyzing social data related to involution collected from October 13, 2020 to September 13 2021, consisting of 21 thousands Weibo posts, we detect the sentimental divide using BERT and STM method.

With neural networks' capacity of learning representation from data, BERT perform excellent in sentence-level sentiment classification. Thus, BERT can be used to classify the sentiments of posts due to its limited max length (140 words). We leveraged the approach BERT to classify the Weibo sentiments of involution in different age group.

Next, we build Structural Topic Model (STM) to discover topics and estimate their relationship to document meta-data. Outputs of the model can be used to conduct hypothesis testing about different opinion among different age group. This mirrors the type of analysis that social scientists perform with content analysis.

RESULTS

We show that youth are more negative than elders.

After content analysis using STM, we see that youth are more likely to feel the pressure of competition, while the elders are more likely to accept the competition game because they believe that it's the rule of life.

DISCUSSION

Since the discussion of involution in Weibo might be the mirror of social mentality, it is of vital importance to detect the the gap among different group to avoid opinion polarization. Our findings support the hypothesis that there are sentimental divide among different age groups towards involution online. Besides, we think that the different situation and life experience between youth and elders lead to age gaps when talking about involution. Specifically, we proposed a new combined computational way for large-scale public opinion detection online.

Submission ID

174

How Did Chinese Netizens Perceive China's COVID-19 Vaccine Aid to Africa? A Large-scale Online Experiment Based on Framing theory

Authors

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Abstract

(Background) Against the backdrop of the enormous global health challenges faced since the COVID-19, China has carried out several acts of medical aid to Africa. This act of south-south medical aid between countries is of great value to the social development of recipient countries and international political public relations. However, beyond the international communication of medical aid, the question of how the Chinese people view China's medical aid to Africa and how they select, exclude, accept, and respond to media's frames have become a matter of urgent clarification and interpretation.

(Content Analysis) After a content analysis of 440 Weibo (a Chinese social media similar to Twitter) comments on the news published by Chinese official media accounts, the researchers found that Chinese state media pay more attention to what China has done when reporting, and the frameworks they choose are mostly mutually beneficial, while netizens are more concerned about how China's aid will affect China and the recipient countries, and they will show some more negative attitudes.

(Experimental Design) To explore the causal relationship between media frames and the netizens' attitudes, the researchers used experimental method to test. The researcher provided the subjects with stimuli materials with different frames, and tested how the news frames influenced people's perceptions of China's vaccine aid to Africa, and the influence of individual people's factors in the process. The stimuli materials that the subjects received were framed in four categories, namely value-free, self-interested, altruistic, and mutual benefit frames, corresponding to the four frames that appear in the Weibo media discourse. The dependent variable of this study examines people's perceptions of China's aid policies at three levels: support for China's aid, friendliness towards recipient countries, and identification with a community of shared future for mankind.

(Data Collection) The study strictly followed the norms and ethics of online experiments, and the researchers distributed questionnaires through the "Wenjuanwang" questionnaire platform from March 18 to March 20, 2021, and a total of 1,390 questionnaires were returned. The participants of this study were the young netizens group, mainly because this

group is the mainstay of online news reading and opinion expression. At the same time, this group is more receptive to the online experimental method, and the quality of the data collected is better and the quantity can meet the needs of the study. After eliminating the unqualified samples, this study finally obtained a valid number of 1017 samples. After a rigorous reliability test, the reliability of all categories in this study met the criteria (>0.8).

(Findings) First, the framing effect of a single self-interest or altruistic frame is more significant than that of mutual benefit frames. The results of the experiment found that either a single self-interest or altruistic frame led to an increase in people's positive perception of the recipient country, while the effect of the mutual benefit frame was not significant.

Second, the individual cognitive frame has a greater impact on the iteration of the individual frame than the news information frame. The covariate of Sino-Kenya (Kenya is the recipient country in the stimuli materials) relationship evaluation with cognitive base model characteristics has a strong explanatory power for the dependent variable, as do other variables such as gender and knowledge of Kenya.

Third, the explicit online opinion does not correspond to the netizens' intrinsic implicit attitudes. The data collected through the experimental method shows that most netizens' attitudes towards China's medical aid to Africa are neutral and positive, while the Weibo comment discourse is more polarized. And the correspondence between the media frames and the netizens' frames found in the two sections is not the same. This is because the Weibo comment frames measured in the third part are selective expressions in cyberspace by some people after receiving relevant news frames, with a certain element of social performance, and are also more likely to form polarized opinions.

(Conclusion) In conclusion, the current state of public opinion on medical aid to Africa in China's online environment does not match China's concept of aid, which emphasizes mutual benefit, and the media discourse does not match the discourse of netizens, and the discourse of netizens does not match the real perception of netizens. Taking the domestic communication of China's medical aid to Africa as a breakthrough, reflecting on the positioning of media mediation and the self-organizing nature of public opinion in the process of South-South cooperation is an important direction to be mapped from practice to theory in the future.

Submission ID

293

Taxonomy, presence and intensity of expressions of Hate in digital environments linked to Spanish professional news media

Authors

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Abstract

The communication seeks to show the preliminary results of a project (funded by Spanish Research and Innovation Ministry) that try to, in first terms, prepare a map of hate expressions promoted by users and digital spaces linked to the media in Spain. The goal is to favour the detection and monitoring of hate expressions from the digital scenarios provided by the media in Spain. To achieve these purposes, the research, firstly, takes data extracted from Twitter and Facebook users and institutional portals linked to the leading media in Spain. Moreover, semiotic-discursive analysis of the contents published by both the analyzed media and their followers will be collected and analyzed during the information collection period (during year 1 of the project). This contents are classified and analyzed with expressions of hatred according to the intensity levels proposed in the project. This results will be the root of an algorithm that will be develop and that serves to monitor, in real-time, expressions of hatred from the institutional settings associated with the media studied in this project.

Submission ID

358

Polarization, disinformation and hate speech from nationalism and independence's parties in Spain: Twitter Case

Authors

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Abstract

The work shows the results obtained from 'Spain's Fund and Form of Political Digital Disinformation project. Analysis, Data Mining and Data Laboratory' (B0036-1920), done with the International University of La Rioja's support between 2019 and 2020. The study aims to determine the level of polarization and promotion of hate content and use through messages published by users associated with political parties, leaders and spokespersons of groups represented in the Congress of Deputies in Spain via Twitter.

Whether or not there is polarization has become an old discussion, which appears in political situations such as those analyzed in this research, where 13,268 tweets published in Spanish analyzed between September 1st, 2019, and February 29th, 2020. Tweets are considered signals sent by political leaders to their public, accelerating polarization through microblogging.

The methodology of this study tries to identify the topics of the messages, establish the approach that dominates their political communication strategy and estimate the level of co-occurrence, concerning disinformation content, according to the two pioneering platforms of Fact-Checking Spain, Founded in 2018: Maldita.es and Newtral.es. Both are well-positioned to carry out fact checks, focusing on Twitter. The work done identifies these topics using machine learning techniques and the Latent Dirichlet Allocation (LDA) algorithm, which facilitated the automatic analysis process of the selected messages.

When determining hate content, we recognize that there is no universally accepted definition to explain the term "hate speech" since it is a term with imprecise profiles, multifaceted, especially in the technological society, where media discourse is developed in a context favourable to interpretation.

Data shows, amongst other things, the communication strategies of the Spanish political groups, in our case focusing our attention on independence and nationalist parties, employ distinct components of populism in their messages, such as speeches close to the people and the confrontation with the opponent, consistently with political ends. A strategy that helps to the deterioration of the quality of the public debate observed, characterized by informative noise directed at its group. An action where the co-occurrence did between disinformation content and hate messages is low.

Submission ID

359

Young voices on hate speech. A research on the characteristics of the hate speech among youngsters

Authors

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Abstract

The technological revolution that began in the late 1960s and the expansion of the Internet since the late 1990s, was a real shock that has not yet stopped. Its impact was so deep that it has eliminated and affected all areas of society. Its impact on the economy, culture or communication is undeniable. We have gone from unilateral communication dominated by the mass media and administrations to a knowledge society where citizens can not only become transmitters of information but also co-creators of new content in a before much more limited. In this internet world, as a space for global relationships where space-time limitations have been diluted (Sacristán, 2013), any person, with access to the resources that allow them to connect to the online world, can offer their opinion, contribute to dialogue and global discussion and build knowledge with their perception and ideas, contributing to modern cultural gestation or "cyberculture". It should be noted that, in this online framework, communication on the Internet and social networks is endowed with a series of particularities, among which we will especially highlight the experience of anonymity and the feeling of disinhibiting virtuality.

The C.O.N.T.A.C.T project (Building Online Network, Monitoring Team and Phone App to Counter Hate Crime Tactics) is a two-year initiative (2015 – 2017) involving ten countries: Cyprus, Greece, UK, Spain, Italy, Poland, Denmark, Lithuania, Romania and Malta, through the synergy between 5 Universities and 7 NGOs. The objectives pursued by this project are to improve, promote and analyze the reporting of hate crime and speech, as well as training and raising awareness about what hate crime is, how to prevent it and how to report it. The most relevant results of the research developed during the project is that young people consider that hate speech is part of communication on the internet and social networks, although it is true that they did not identify it in the street with the same presence, and its reach and impact is considered different from the online world. They understand that their diffusion and diffusion is facilitated more easily by the theoretical anonymity that social networks provide.

Submission ID

360

Approach to the concept and identification of hate in digital media in Spain. A proposal for its classification in Spanish

Authors

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Dr. Dámaso Izquierdo - Navarra University

Abstract

Defining a social phenomenon requires a specific design of the methodology that will be applied. The study of hate in digital media and social networks in Spain is a way to propose an instrument to the research community for the understanding of the intensities of hate in written discourses. The purpose of this dissertation is to expose the way in which researchers obtained the intensities of hate in Twitter and Media. The methodology used was a forum of discussion among researchers with two main objectives: 1) determine the levels of hate messages in Spain; 2) define how hate grows with the interaction in social networks. This classification of hate provides five different intensity levels, labeled from zero to five, being the lowest number that originated from insult and affront, and the highest level the one that represents a physical threat or intimidation to a person or social group. Each level identifies hate in digital media in Spain, and classifies the uses of hate in different matters of Spanish life: social, political, sexual identification, ideological, etc. The results will provide an understanding of the social Spanish context when hate occurs. During the creation of the methodology for this study, the researchers debated the procedure to determine the subtleties of language, semantics, and pragmatic situations about several types of hate in media or social networks like Twitter. On the other hand, the application of the levels of hate by researcher classifiers showed that the instrument of classification works in a simple and friendly way, and allows to know the panorama of hate in Spain.

Submission ID

361

Profiles of News Consumption in a High-Choice Media Environment. Evidence from Romania

Authors

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Abstract

During the last two decades, media and information environments have changed in a fundamental way. Incidental news exposure, news-finds-me perception, higher probability to be exposed only to views similar to their own and get stuck in echo chambers, and higher probability to be exposed to misleading content in the media are just some of the most important challenges within the current, high-choice media landscape. All of them have major ramifications for the information environment as a whole and, particularly, for the way in which they could influence people in becoming informed citizens. Thus, to better understand various public opinions, perceptions, and behaviors, it becomes important to start looking more in-depth into citizens' current news consumption patterns.

Theoretically, this study starts from the idea that today, within the current media environment, people tend to consume cross-media information (Andersen et al., 2021; Dvir-Gvirsman, 2020). In other terms, people's news media diet consists of different media sources and media content (Diehl et al., 2019). Some research studies investigating people's media diets put forward "profiles" showing how people consume media content, in an attempt to find out patterns of news consumption and how they might affect various aspects related to democracy (Castro et al., 2021). Drawing on the research of Castro et al. 2021, that differentiates between different types of news user profiles, such as 'news minimalists', 'social media news users', 'traditionalists', 'online news seekers', and 'hyper news consumers', the present study aims at investigating news media consumption patterns among Romanian people.

By means of a national survey (N=1,000), this study explores the main characteristics of news media consumers in Romania, in an attempt to shed more light on people's media diets (what they actually consume) within the current, high-choice media landscape. Main findings from our study reveal that minimalist news users are the most prevalent category among the investigated sample. Compared with all the other types of news users, minimalist news users are less prone to be accidentally exposed to news stories, but more prone to be stuck in echo chambers, in environments where they encounter information that reflects or reinforces their own views. At the same time, they have the lowest levels of trust

in both mainstream and social media. From a socio-demographic point of view, all types of consumers share more or less the same characteristics (age, gender, education, income). These results offer important insights into the way in which news consumption patterns are associated with certain perceptions and attitudes that might result in letting citizens be less informed or even uninformed. Implications for democracy are further discussed.

Keywords: high-choice media environment, news consumption patterns, news profiles

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393

FAKE NEWS IN POST-TRUTH POLITICS: AN ANALYSIS OF 2019 PARLIAMENTARY ELECTION IN INDIA

Authors

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Abstract

Political activities are central to the life of modern democratic societies and communication technology in present time acts as bloodstream for sustenance of political process especially in electoral politics. With the ubiquity of smartphones and internet, the information flow got revolutionized everywhere. However, with each passing day, the quality of information gets compromised due to fake news and fake information over internet especially social media. Fake news alternatively termed as false news and information disorder has been posing serious challenges to the quality of information flowing in physical as well as virtual sphere, consequently affecting the public opinion and voting choice which largely concerns the politics, policies and life of people in a country like India. Fake news in post-truth era refers to the spreading of lies on internet which appeal to the emotion rather than factuality and logic. The undermining of fact and logic forms political echo-chambers in post-truth politics where debate is framed largely by appeal to emotion and factual rebuttals are ignored and expert opinion and analysis are least preferred choice for the netizens. This paper attempts to explore the fake news pattern and frequency in 2019

Indian parliamentary election in new media sphere under the agenda setting theoretical context by analyzing fact-checked fake news incidents on International Fact-Checking Network (IFCN) certified websites in India. The results indicate the high frequency curve during campaigning period and sentimental narratives profoundly propagated via social media feeds to possibly affect the voting behavior of electorate. Thus, suggest policy intervention including transparency, press freedom, limited regulation and extensive information literacy campaigns at the earliest to curtail the effects of fake news in future elections.

KEYWORDS: Fake News, Information Disorder, Post-Truth, Indian Elections, Echo-Chambers, IFCN network.

Submission ID

429

User Perception and Experience of Algorithms are Embodied: An Exploratory Study Based on Grounded Theory

Authors

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Abstract

Algorithms are profoundly opaque and function as “black boxes” (Christin, 2020; Mols, 2017; Rasquale, 2015), causing a kind of “technological unconscious” (Accoto, 2018). Some scholars try to figure out whether users are aware of algorithms by using questionnaires (Eslami et al., 2015; Rader and Gray, 2015), but their results varied widely. Thus, other scholars have turned their attentions to how users encounter and experience algorithms by considering their media practices in daily life (Alvarado & Waern, 2018; Bucher, 2016). In general, the existing research lacks a clear theoretical model of how users perceive and experience algorithms. Besides, we know relatively little about users outside the U.S. and algorithmic systems other than social media and news feeds (Hargittai et al., 2020; Swart, 2021). Given this, the study focuses on short video users in China. We are devoted to figuring out factors that would have an impact on user perception and experience of algorithms in daily media practice through the lens of grounded theory.

Based on the classical three-stage analysis method of grounded theory, this paper adopted semi-structured, in-depth interviews to collect original data in the first stage. We

recruited 20 Douyin (a representative short video platform) users by snowball sampling. Participants, aged from 16 to 47, were equally split in terms of gender (male/female) and employed in a variety of occupations. Interviews explored the interviewee's overall Douyin use, contents presented by the platform and users' thoughts and actions towards the platform. In the second stage, the interview data were input into the data analysis software Nvivo 11 and coded through open coding, axial coding, and selective coding. We abstracted 70 initial concepts, 10 sub-categories and 3 main categories from the data. In the third stage, through constant comparing and integrating, we refined the core explanatory category of "users' embodied cognition of algorithms" to describe users' awareness, perception and experience of algorithms, and obtained the factor model that affects users' embodied cognition of algorithms.

We find that, epistemologically, users' perception and experience of algorithms are embodied, which means they are determined by the experience of the body in its physical environment. Three core factors that would affect users' embodied cognition of algorithms are information stimulation (visible and underlying attributes of algorithms), personal factors (sense, affection, expectation, algorithm literacy, agency, personality traits), and environment (use situation, algorithmic application ecology). This theoretical model provides important clues towards understanding the complex interactions between humans and algorithms. First, even if users have no knowledge of algorithmic techniques, they can realize underlying attributes of algorithms, such as personalization and the tendency of algorithms to deliver the right content at the right time. Second, in addition to affecting information and ideas, algorithms also have a profound impact on users' senses and affection. For instance, algorithmic recommendations tend to inhibit sensory engagement and encourage users to pursue happiness maximization. The tactile aspect is particularly noteworthy, since users' finger movements are simplified as sliding when they interact with algorithms. Third, the environment and context would influence the meaning and means of the use of algorithms.

Submission ID

510

Information Transfer and Emotional Compensation in Internet-Mediated Communication

Authors

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Abstract

Background: New media permeate social life, and media and information reshape society. *Mediation* is a relationship that organizes human activity (Livingstone, 2009). Changes in media technology have directly influenced human physical presence patterns, allowing social cues such as verbal content, facial emotions, and voice tone to be portrayed in a more three-dimensional manner in face-to-face contact. However, the physical space and emotional expressions become fragmented in internet-mediated communication. The original norms of interaction and cultural conventions are broken, which can easily lead to context collapse, i.e., social media self-presentation lacks a specific context due to technological limitations (Marwick & Boyd, 2011). Therefore, it is not easy to maintain the synchronization and integrity of information and emotions in internet-mediated communication.

Research Questions: This study is based on a review of mediated communication and focuses on whether emotions can be adequately expressed while conveying information in internet-mediated communication? How do people compensate for and even mitigate the misinterpretation of emotions caused by media technology? How do people inject sociality into internet-mediated communication? In turn, the study considers the relationship between technological logic and humanistic rationality in the Internet environment from the social construction of technology.

Research Methods: This study uses grounded theory as a theoretical basis to conduct qualitative research. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews with 20 online and offline interviewees. And then, constructing three-level coding conceptualized the information. The interview time ranged from 30 to 60 minutes. Interviewees were selected to ensure that they had been exposed to social media such as WeChat for more than five years, the principle of differential sampling in terms of age and occupation. The questions include social software usage habits, a form of communication (text, picture, voice, video), the content of communication, and emotional state during communication.

Findings: Our finding indicates that (1) the absence of social cues is an objective flaw in internet-mediated communication. The transmission of available information and the delivery of emotional signals cannot be fully aligned. The incomplete expression increases the uncertainty of the communication. (2) People will use their initiative to compensate for this deficiency. They can do this in three ways: developing creative visual symbols, delineating the tool's boundaries, and self-regulating their comfort level.

Theoretical Ponderation: The medium contains messages shaped by the mutuality between human beings and technology affordance from the social construction of technology. Technology exists to overcome human finitude, but it also introduces new finitude. Just as mediated communication initially reduces the spatial distance between communicators. Nevertheless, the lack of a unified cultural context can pull the empathic distance between them apart. The rapid development of mediated technology provides a social tool

for interpersonal interaction and enriches a social resource. Technology and human beings are moving forward in a contradictory movement, searching for an ideal way of reconciliation.

Submission ID

522

The role of mainstream media in SE Europe in the spread of COVID-19 dis/misinformation on Facebook

Authors

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Dr. Iva Nenadic - University of Zagreb

Abstract

In the past years disinformation has been one of the major areas of concern (Kreiss, 2021) and a problem that policymakers, in particular in European Union, have been trying to tackle with various means (Nenadić, 2019). Disinformation is commonly understood as verifiably false or misleading information that is created, presented and disseminated for certain gains or to intentionally deceive the public and may cause public harm. It is intertwined with misinformation, which spreads without a direct malicious intent, but which effects can still be harmful (European Commission, 2021). In order to adequately respond to the problem of dis/misinformation it is crucial to understand how it spreads and by whom. While policies are increasingly focusing on online platforms and their role in amplifying dis/misinformation, they rarely, if at all, address the role of mainstream media. At the same time, scholarly works increasingly warn that mainstream media play a significant role in the spread of inaccurate and misleading information online (Tsfati et al., 2020; Allen et al., 2020; Benkler et al., 2020). The causes for this may be analysed in relation to: (i) the prominence given to the mainstream media in the environment of online platforms through their algorithmic content curation and ranking, and (ii) the media and journalism practice. Dis/misinformation can get into the mainstream media because of the lack of verification, hyper partisan editorial policies, or click-bait strategies, but even when the media cover such stories in order to debunk them, parts of the audience can still retain the wrong information due to their selective exposure and cognitive biases, studies suggest. Furthermore,

the journalistic routine of giving voice to various sides of the story – for impartiality – has often been wrongly applied resulting in false balance: giving equal platform to opposing views despite different levels in expertise and evidentiary support (Imundo & Rapp, 2021). In this paper we explore the role of mainstream media in South-East Europe (Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Northern Macedonia) in the diffusion of dis/mis-information related to COVID-19 on Facebook. The research was conducted by employing computational methods for collecting and analyzing data from CrowdTangle (Facebook) in the two-year period (January 1, 2020 - December 31, 2021). The main findings show that the overall discussion around COVID-19 was largely driven or supported by linking to external sources: 79% (N=762,570) of all posts contained a link. One third of posts with highest interaction (share, comment, like) contained links to the mainstream media. The key purveyors of disinformation used mainstream media to confirm their theories. Such argumentation by purveyors of disinformation achieved wider diffusion than when alternative and other sources were included. In the overall communication about COVID-19 on Facebook, the mainstream media were part of the clusters with disinformation sources and were separate from the clusters of government and other authoritative sources or fact-checking sites. This suggest that the media in this region are rather part of the problem than of the solution, which should also be considered in designing policies to combat disinformation.

Submission ID

542

Surpassing the boundary: A Field Study of a Public Opinion Monitoring and Analysis Organization in China from the Perspective of New Institutionalism

Authors

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Abstract

With the rapid development of communication technology, public opinion monitoring and analysis organizations are established to meet the paramount need for public opinion governance. Today, public opinion governance plays an irreplaceable role in the

modernization of China's national governance system and capacity. Obtaining public opinion information through third-party agencies for prediction and decision-making has become an important method in the daily operation of the Chinese government.

As a public opinion analyst, the researcher conducted a 6-month field study using participatory observation in a government-outsourced public opinion analysis agency "I Think Tank" (January 2020-June 2020), participate in the whole process of topic selection discussion, public opinion report writing, government temporary crisis response, and docking with government department staff. The researcher paid special attention to analyzing the evolution of the role of public opinion analysis agencies in news production.

Based on the theoretical framework of neo-institutionalism, the researcher found that: Public opinion monitoring and analysis organizations are surpassing the boundary, becoming the "gate-keeper" between media and governments. Public opinion analysis agencies filter news events and audience responses and submit them to the government. To a large extent, they have already surpassed the roles of social observation and public opinion supervision that traditional news media should have played. Such organizations, stemmed from politics and economy, are partially similar to the regulatory, normative and cognitive elements of traditional news media. What's more, their pursuit of profits is prior to that of news professionalism.

In this paper, the researcher also found that such "surpassing the boundary" is an innovation due to the national governance system, and has played a huge role in public opinion governance and communications in China. Yet, there is also the risk of creating pseudo-environment for the government. This requires the collective endeavor of scholars and practitioners to establish a norm with constraints on multiple entities and boundaries of authorities.

Key words public opinion, neo-institutionalism, news production

Submission ID

643

Communication Mechanisms and Prediction of Internet Rumors under the Background of Micro-spread

Authors

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Ms. Qingxuan Wang - School of Media and Communication, Shanghai Jiao Tong University

Abstract

With the progress of the times and the development of science and technology, the global Internet industry has developed rapidly in recent years. At the same time, social media is more and more related to people's work and life, which brings convenience to people's social life, but there are also some disadvantages, such as the generation and spread of Internet rumors. This paper explores and analyzes the characteristics of rumor spread under the background of micro-spread to identify the source of rumor information and minimize the harm of rumor. In this paper, based on the characteristics of rumor propagation in reality, the node state transformation rules are set, the infectious disease propagation model is referred to, and the "susceptible and temporarily immune" state is added to build a new rumor propagation model. Based on the model, the empirical analysis is carried out, and the cluster search algorithm is used to optimize the model. On the basis of theoretical modeling, typical rumor reversal cases are selected for analysis and verification. The test shows that the new model can accurately describe the rumor spread in reality, and provide guidance for rumor development trend and key node prediction. This study detects and alerts Internet rumors, and puts forward corresponding strategies to reduce the harm caused by Internet rumors.

Submission ID

647

How chatbots vs. human-agents affects anticipated communication quality

Authors

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Abstract

Chatbot is one of the AI technologies that has been widely applied in CMC to enhance service efficiency and consumer experience (Araujo, 2018). Due to the instant response and high efficiency of chatbots, chatbots are being introduced across all industries to

communicate with their customers online, and replace the human-agents (Dale, 2016). However, despite the advantage of high efficiency and performance, the actual effects are still far from satisfactory. Chatbots may reduce communication quality during the service process thus affecting users' attention bias and affective preferences, which in turn may lead to a negative impact on the companies (Prentice & Nguyen, 2021).

Besides, the present research on chatbots is relatively recent and limited in scope, holding controversial opinions on users' adoption and acceptance of the chatbots, and lacking research on the possible service outcome during service process (Chaves & Gerosa, 2021; Pelau et al., 2021). Given communication is a general issue that occurs prevalently and communication quality is one of the significant outcomes which can directly impact users' affect and attitude (Ashfaq et al., 2020; Chung et al., 2020), how to improve users' anticipated communication quality in CMC has received lots of attention from managers and academia. It is necessary to explore the effect and underneath mechanism of the chatbots on users' anticipated communication quality.

This research seeks to fill this gap by investigating the impact of chatbots on users' anticipated communication quality from self-focus perspective. Specifically, through the previously unexamined perspective of multiple resource theory, this study examines the potentially detrimental impact of chatbots on users' anticipated communication quality. Besides, this study tries to seek the underneath mechanism and boundary effect of users' anticipated communication quality change due to the different agents. Overall, two experimental studies uncover that users' anticipated communication quality towards chatbots is compatible lower than human-agents due to the serial mediating role of self-focused attention and perceived empathy. Moreover, moderation analysis find multiple-choice as a practical communication strategy for chatbots to enhance users' anticipated communication quality through its impact on self-focused attention, compared to open-ended strategy.

This study aims to contribute to the literature in several ways. First, this study enriches the human-chatbot interaction (HCI) literature on demonstrating the underneath mechanism of chatbots in reducing users' anticipated communication quality. Through examining the users' self-focused attention and serial perceived empathy, this study finds a serial mechanism in HCI. Second, this study makes contributions to the literature on bridging communication literature by applying self-focused attention and perceived empathy as the mechanism of the antecedent variables of anticipated communication quality. Finally, this study also contributes to communication literature through introducing communication strategy as a moderator. By examining the communication strategy (multiple-choice vs. open-ended), this study further explores the boundary of the chatbots impact on users' anticipated communication quality.

Submission ID

652

How to raise public understandings of public health events? : A study of Governmental Weibos of Beijing Health Commission in 2022 Beijing pandemic

Authors

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Abstract

During the COVID-19 era, the application of digital platforms has become an institutionalised way for the public sectors to deliver the COVID-19 related crisis information from the early stage to the post-pandemic era. When the pandemic first emerged in China at the end of 2019, it disrupted medical systems and challenged the response mechanism to public health events, while confusion was caused by inconsistent and incorrect online information (Zheng et al., 2021). A common mission for both governmental departments with various functionalities and the public was protecting and saving people's lives. One key point in responding to the COVID-19 is how the public understands the pandemic to become a resilient participant, determined by what types of crisis information are released by the public sectors.

Sina Weibo (henceforth, Weibo) is one of the preeminent social media platforms in China, used in crisis communication in China since it launched in 2009. With over 500 million users, Weibo has continued to assume a critical role in crisis communication in the COVID-19 by building a communicative dynamic between the public sectors and the public regarding connections, dialogue, and information dissemination, raising the public's understanding in facing the pandemic (Huang et al., 2021; Chen & Xu, 2021). Importantly, as a part of crisis communication, what types of information can promote better public understandings to adapt to occasional outbreaks in the post-pandemic era?

By analysing posts related to the 2022 Beijing Pandemic collected from 26 governmental accounts under the management of the Beijing Health Commission during the 2022 Beijing pandemic (15 January – 15 February 2022), we intend to present the post themes, the narratives, and the components of posts (i.e. image, video, long article, text) from 26 governmental accounts to explore how different public sectors are raising public

understanding of the COVID-19 by constructing different themes, narratives, and using richer components.

We set up the 2022 Beijing pandemic as the studied period specifically since (1) Beijing is the capital of China with a socio-geographical characteristic importantly, thus triggering a high level of interest among the Chinese in the post-pandemic era; (2) the 2022 Beijing pandemic has happened coincidence with the XXIV Olympic Winter Games, which leads the government to strengthen the controls and monitors on the Pandemic. We selected accounts managed by the departments of the Beijing Health Commission according to the national ranking of the top 100 outstanding governmental accounts of the Health Commission on Weibo (Ranking rules are set by Weibo). The sampled 26 governmental accounts have their host institutions in Beijing.

This study contributes new insights for researchers, public sectors, and departments responsible for public health events in the post-pandemic era by providing empirical findings of how the public sectors promote public understanding on Weibo by the constructed narrative of their posts. Moreover, we propose suggestions for the above stakeholders to develop the strategy in delivering the COVID-19 related crisis information on the digital platforms to inspire a better communicative dynamic between the public sectors and the public.

Submission ID

712

Platformizing Low Carbon Life : Defining Online Pro-environmental Behaviors in Ant Forest

Authors

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Abstract

Introduction

Online platforms are playing increasingly important roles in environmental communication campaigns (Warren et al., 2015), which have been studied extensively in recent decades. However, much of the literature has focused on radical environmental movements such as online mobilization, while failing to explore the influence of daily pro-environmental behaviors (PEBs) (Stern, 2000; Jans,2020).

Launched by Alipay in 2016, *Ant Forest* is a carbon mobile application aiming at raising people's ecological awareness and promoting their PEBs. As a green-behavior platform

that has attracted more than 300 million users globally, *Ant Forest* sets a good example for other online environmental practices. Its users can reduce personal carbon emissions, acquire so-called "Energy", and grow virtual trees through walking, mobile payment, and other online PEBs in their daily life. In addition, users can also get the "energy" of their friends by interacting in the *Ant Forest* to "Planting Trees Together".

Literature Review

There have been many discussions on offline PEBs(Wang et al,2021), but there is a lack of attention to online PEBs research. Existing studies have classified PEBs from multiple perspectives, Stern (2000) classified environmental behaviors into PEBs in the public sphere and private sphere. Psychologists focus on behaviors that significantly influence environmental quality. For example, changing purchasing behavior usually reduces environmental impact far more than recycling usable products (Wang et al,2021; Gardner & Stern, 2002:36-58). Many elaborate environmental impact assessment tools have been developed by environmental scientists based on life-cycle analysis or input-output analysis (Kok, Benders, & Moll, 2006; Skovhøj,2021).

Internet platforms such as Alipay and WeChat are becoming more and more important in people's daily life(Chew & Wang, 2021). Still, few people pay attention to the impact of these platforms on people's daily environmental protection behavior(Daryantoa & Song,2021). This paper attempts to take *Ant Forest* as an example to find the relationship and difference between offline environmental protection behavior and online behavior. Based on this background, we try to cluster users' online PEBs in *Ant Forest*, find the relationship and difference between online and offline PEBs, finally, figure out the potential of different types of online PEBs.

Result and Discussion

The researchers interviewed *Ant forest* users in the Weibo chat group established by the Weibo official account of *Ant Forest* and carry out a questionnaire survey on *Ant forest* users through the professional questionnaire service of "Wenjuanxin. com". Through two rounds of semi-structured interviews ($N = 25$) and a questionnaire survey ($N = 398$). Combined with interview materials and factor analysis of questionnaire data, we identified three types of users' intentions of online PEBs in *Ant Forest*: (a) intentions of game-oriented online PEBs, which are concerned with the game function (gamification) of *Ant Forest*, (b) intentions of socializing online PEBs, which are concerned with the socialization function of *Ant forest*, and (c) intentions of results-oriented online PEBs, which just take *Ant Forest* as a convenient approach for environmental protection during fragmented free time.

In addition, we also investigate how different intentions of online PEBs will influence respondents' use of *Ant Forest* and their willingness to participate in offline PEBs. In particular, intentions of socializing online PEBs were positively related to users' willingness to try

a lower carbon lifestyle ($B=0.497$, $p<0.001$), while game-oriented online PEBs intentions were positively associated with respondents' use frequency of *Ant Forest* ($B=0.478$, $p<0.001$). The intentions of game-oriented/results-oriented online PEBs had a significant influence on motivating users to plant virtual trees in *Ant Forest* ($B=0.396$, $p<0.001$).

Through semi-structured interviews, we found that results-oriented online PEBs and game-oriented online PEBs correspond to offline PEBs in the public sphere and offline PEBs in the private sphere respectively. While socializing online PEBs can be regarded as a new type of PEBs based on social behavior in *Ant Forest*, this kind of online PEBs shows greater potential in mobilizing users to change to a lower-carbon lifestyle than the first two. Previous studies generally recognize the importance of gamification in the *Ant Forest* case, but how this gamification transforms users' daily lifestyle into users' carbon accounts is unanswered.

Ant Forest has designed a game mechanism of "Planting Trees Together". When "Planting Trees" becomes a shared task, users' willingness to participate in *Ant Forest* games will increase their frequency of practicing low-carbon life (offline PEBs) in daily life. In this way, they can get more "Energy" in the ant forest, contributing to the "Energy Account" established with friends. In other words, although they did not open the *Ant Forest*, they have participated in the interaction with other users through increasing their frequency of practicing low carbon life.

Submission ID

714

Who Shape the Narrative of COVID-19 's Outbreak? A Study of Social Bots, the Public, and the Media Network Agenda Setting

Authors

Dr. Bei Zhao - School of Arts and Communication, Beijing Normal University.

Prof. Hongzhong Zhang - School of Journalism and Communication, Beijing Normal University.

Abstract

Purpose-Social bots interact with human users in social media and influence public opinion by creating disinformation and weaving "stories". The COVID-19 epidemic broke out in Wuhan, China at the beginning of 2020. How do people talk about the outbreak in China,

and who shaped COVID-19 's early narrative? This study analyzes the network agendas of social bots, the public and the media to explore whose agenda sets the narrative at the beginning of the COVID-19 's outbreak.

Data/Methods-This study uses the Python TweetScraper library to gather data, using coronavirus, pneumonia, corna, wuhan, china, as the keywords to obtain all tweets, re-tweets, and replies from January 26, 2020, to February 1, 2020. We finally get 205,625 English tweets after removing duplicate and unrelated tweets, including 99,811 unique users. Social bots detection results show that the number of social bots is 15,929, accounting for 16.70%. In addition, we collected the authentication information of the accounts and found 1,291 media accounts. The rest are public accounts.

This study first uses content analysis methods to code social bots, public, and media agendas. The encoding framework contains 22 topics, and each tweet is identified by topic with the help of computer-assisted content analysis methods. Second, the researchers used network analysis methods to analyze the relationship among social bots, the public, and the media agendas. We construct the matrix by using topics as points and two topics appearing simultaneously as edges. Finally, UCINET was used for centrality analysis and QAP correlation analysis, and Gephi was used for network visualization.

Findings-First, the study finds that social bots are more concerned with the source of the virus, while the public highlights case information and the media gives more attention to government actions. Second, social bots have the highest network density of 0.745, followed by the public at 0.632, and finally the media at 0.558. It indicates that social bots have a tighter network structure in the discussion of the COVID-19, with a high degree of homogeneity. Third, the result of the QAP correlation analysis shows that there is an interactive relationship among social bots, the public, and the media. The correlation coefficient between social bots and the public, social bots and media, media and the public are 0.747, 0.619, 0.695, respectively. There is a higher correlation between social bots and the public agenda. We also find that the identity of the agenda setter shifts at different stages of the issue.

Research implications/limitations-This study comparatively analyzes the relationship among social bots, the public, and the media using network agenda setting as a theoretical framework, and further expands the research field of this theory. In addition, based on the analysis of the early narrative about COVID-19, we find the periodic changes in the influence of social bots on public opinion. The limitations of the study are the short period of data acquisition and the accuracy of the theme coding needs further improvement.

Keywords-social bots, network agenda setting, social media, covid-19

Submission ID

722

When the hunter plays the hunted : Females' negotiations with conventional sexual scripts on dating apps

Authors

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Abstract

This study explores how heterosexual female users of dating apps in China utilize media affordances to negotiate with conventional sexual scripts. Sexual scripts are the behavior patterns that provide a set of rules for people's sexual practices, shaping people's attitudes towards and performance of sexualities. Most sexual scripts are highly gender-unequal. Males are supposed to be sexual initiators, whereas females should be sexually submissive. This divide seems to persist in many societies including China. Even in an online dating context where media affordances offer females various measures to exert their agencies. Existing studies on dating/hook-up apps focus on heterosexual female users' passive role and the risk they face in online dating. Thus, this study asks the following questions: **If heterosexual females aim to take a more active role in online dating, how do they achieve that through strategically utilizing media affordances? How do they rewrite sexual scripts in a digitally mediated dating context?**

For this study, I conducted 20 in-depth interviews with Chinese heterosexual females. Findings address participants' empowerment by dating apps, as well as their rewriting scripts directly or indirectly. Specifically, I examine how affordances of dating apps allow my participants to play an active role during different stages of dating app use. First, female users select dating platforms by comparing app designs and males users' average social capital on different apps. Second, when performing impression management in user profiles, they tend to post different styles of images and enjoy role-playing; they display detailed lists of "interest or hate", which are supposed to help filter out unsuitable matches. Third, during private conversations online, they are good at discovering topics from males users' profiles. For them, switching the medium is a proper choice to improve intimacy. They also send emojis or other particular memes to create a romantic atmosphere for sexual expression. Despite being empowered, they still face many challenges in the digitally mediated dating context, such as when male users' understandings of sex and intimacy

significantly differ from theirs. One of the results is that many participants take dating apps as a “love game” (恋爱局) where they develop different patterns of interaction for seeking romantic partners or friends with benefits.

All the findings provide more detail of the complex entanglement between traditional sexual norms and females agencies. Overall, this paper offers a more nuanced perspective on gender, identity, and equality in the digital dating context.

Keywords

Affordances, Female agency, Online dating, Sexual scripts

Submission ID

745

Expectation-Evaluation Gap: How Public Perceptions of Media Influence Reaction to Fake News in Hong Kong

Authors

Prof. Zhongshi Guo - Hong Kong Baptist University

Dr. Angela Wang - Hong Kong Baptist University

Abstract

This study advances a research model that conceptually connects media use, preference for own media, the gap between public normative perception of journalism and evaluation of journalists' actual performance, and reaction to fake news. Although journalism studies have generally acknowledged the existence of this discrepancy (Baker, 2001; Willnat, Weaver, & Wilhoit, 2019), scholarly attention is primarily paid to its effect on journalists' role perceptions at the message production end (for evidence, see the body of academic work on media sociology, e.g., Lewis, 2010; Schudson, 2011) rather than on audience perceptions at the reception end.

Guided by the **epistemic-deontic theory of expectations** and **self-bias theory of superiority complex**, our main argument is that the expectation-evaluation gap affects rational, emotional and behavioral responses to fake news. While the epistemic component of expectations relies on patterns and rules individuals have inferred from personal experiences and the deontic attribute of expectations points to aspirations of normative and rather

utopic ideals of how things ought to be (Miceli and Castelfranchi, 2002). This gap particularly exists among the media audience due to the dilemma of the cultural legitimacy of journalism as an institution and the profit-oriented nature of journalism as a product (Tong, 2018). In addition, in the field of communication studies, selective exposure as the mechanism of influence in the age-cherished two-step flow theory affords supremacy to “my choice” over other social forces, treating an individual’s belief and value systems as an a priori determinant of media consumption (Katz & Lazarsfeld, 2017[1955]).

Contextualized in Hong Kong during the public health crisis Covid-19 period, we conducted a random sample survey of 1221 local residents in 2020. Results of analyses supported all hypotheses: 1) a striking expectation-evaluation gap exists; 2) “my media” bias mediates the relationship between media use and the expectation-evaluation gap; 3) and the gap significantly predicts reactions to fake news. Theoretical implications of the model were discussed. Implications of the study are at least in threefolds. First, we extend the discussion of the ongoing normative-practical gap in journalism to the audience level. Second, we connect classic media effects theories into the study of the gap. Third, we contribute to knowledge about how HK society responds to the mediated reality (fake news inclusive) during a public health crisis.

Submission ID

748

How the media frame opinion polls: a case study in Russia

Authors

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Abstract

The majority of research that deals with polling results in the media addresses the question of polling as the framing mechanism of the media message (Iyengar, Kinder 1987; Valkenburg, Semetko, de Vreese, 1999; Chong, Druckman, 2007, Spence 2010 etc.). My study, however, turns to the underresearched issue of how the media frame polling results, turning the more traditional media studies approach on its head). The broader audience finds out about the results of opinion polls not from reports of polling companies, but from messages about them in the media (Howard, 2003, Herbst 2009, 2010). Drawing on a sample of 600 texts from Russian media published in 2010-2011 and 2018-2019, this

paper uses frame analysis to examine how contemporary Russian media frame the results of opinion polls about Russia's domestic agenda and what topics of the polls draw more attention of the media. By frame analysis we follow the narrow definition suggested by Scheufele and Iyengar (2014), switching on the second stage of the research to the broader approach by de Vreese (2007). My analysis reveals that there are three types of frames used by the media to present the survey results: as a news event; as a news trigger; and as a way to provide support for a particular argument in the media article. There are six major topics of the polls that are covered in the media, such as local conflict situation; life satisfaction and the problems of the population; pre-election ratings or ratings of political actors between campaigning; polls about values; trust to different social institutions; occasional polls. Depending on the standards of the published articles, these topics and frames are combined differently with different reaction to the polls.

Submission ID

756

Rumor Detection and Correction Strategies under Chinese Social Media Context in the Covid-19 Era: A Multi-Modes Method

Authors

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Abstract

The Covid-19 pandemic is an unprecedented disease for it is not only a highly infective and variant pneumonia but also spreads related rumors globally (info-demic; mis-/dis-information) with the help of the Internet technologies and digital platforms. As rumors have long been living with humans since there is communication, scholarships were devoted to seeing it as a supplement in information processing mentally (Allport & Postman, 1947) or as a part of the social function (Shibutani, 1966). Yet in the era of platformization, we should re-learning and re-thinking the role of digitalized rumors especially in the post-trump and post-covid times.

Rumors are disseminated virally and elucidate giant injury to both public information systems and administrative power, and even bring harm to economic and social entities (Wang & Laufer, 2019), if not dealt with proper strategies. As rumors are empowered by social media, they can instantly transmit macro-database with an interpersonal network as their basic communicative logic (Tai & Sun 2007). Besides, most of the studies related to digitalized rumors are conducted on Twitter and other English-based social platforms. Chinese social platforms and Chinese efforts and experiences in combating the rumors are neglected.

Theories and models that are created and tested with social media datasets to trace rumor detection and correction actions could be roughly distributed into two paths: socio-structural and computational efforts. Socio-structural ways of investigating social media rumors could be understood as a way where scholars pay attention to the role that social media as a mediator plays in the beginning, process, and ending of the circulation of a rumor. It is treated as a linguistical-behavioral phenomenon. Whereas computational methods see it as an math question, where if the whole dataset is gathered, there would be an inherent model or law to predict how it would happen.

Therefore, rumor detection and correction in the context of Chinese social media could create a connection between the behavioral and cultural market under a technological framework. We should investigate this issue base on former scholarships, which suggested seeing how rumor and rumor correction contexts are communicated from Ontological (What is a rumor and how to define it?), Epistemological (What are the values that we could gain from rumor detection and correction context?), and Methodological (How could we gather the data and analyze it?) perspectives, and use multi-modes method to combine the advantages of both computational and classical analysis.

This paper wants to make use of computational methods to gather and deal with a whole dataset of rumor and rumor correction content between Jan. 2020 to Mar. 2020, which is a representative period for the first shock of the info-demic that appeared in cyberspace in China. All the data are user-generated on the Chinese social media platform Sina-Weibo. By doing this, we want to see how rumors, especially under the Covid-19 pandemic era are created, disseminated, detected, and eliminated both from the audiences' side and the administrators' side. With the help of Tool kits in Python, we could 1) do topic modeling with LDA to see what are the most common situations where rumors are nurtured. 2) Then we use Snow-NLP to see the sentiments of the rumors on the Weibo platform and decide whether rumor dissemination is related to the passion of the content. With the help of Gephi 3) we adopt Semantic Network Analysis to see the connection between different discursive communities. And finally, 4) we want to make text analysis to generate rumor detection and correction strategies under China's context.

Submission ID

834

The construction of corruption scandals in the (social) media in the age of polarization

Authors

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Abstract

Political polarization is on the rise across the world (Kubin & Sikorski, 2021; Gidron et al., 2019). A relevant number of studies conclude that content on social media (particularly Twitter) and traditional media is becoming increasingly polarized (Kubin & Sikorski, 2021:194; Garimella, 2018). In the first place, this work aims to study the dynamics of these phenomena on Twitter related to one of the most relevant global problems concerning institutions of a great variety of countries: corruption scandals. Empirical evidence also demonstrates that the attention paid to corruption scandals by public opinion and the media online and offline does not always determine election results. Although, according to the polls, public opinion expresses its concern about corruption scandals, a considerable part of voters tend to forget, if not forgive, the dishonest behavior of politicians when they cast their vote at the polls. In addition, some parties tend to decide not to pay attention to the issue when they elect their candidates. Due to this lack of correspondence between 'what is said and what is done, our research assesses, as a second objective, to make distinctions between ideological polarization (the divergence of political opinions) and affective polarization (that addresses the extent to which people like their allies and dislike their opponents (Kubin & Sikorski, 2021:188; Iyengar et al., 2012). Affective polarization can arise through the expression of sentiments and emotions rather than rational arguments in Twitter discussions and it will serve in this study as an additional instrument to observe the different types of impacts of corruption scandals on public opinion. We study the attention paid on Twitter to three national corruption cases affecting each one to three different political parties in Spain and the scandal of the former King Juan Carlos I (exHead of the State). Finally, the use of frames, interactions between actors involved, and parties' strategies to respond to accusations are analyzed. A critical discourse analysis of 8762 tweets was carried out during the election campaign of the region of Castille and Leon (between

January 8th and 16th, 2022) corresponding to the dates of presentation of different candidates by the parties and their official election. Around 20 per cent of the tweets concerned the ERES' case -affecting the Socialist Party-; 72 per cent the Gurtel's, case about the Popular Party; and 8% the Neurona's scandal, affecting Unidas Podemos). The results were compared with the content analysis of media coverage in the two main quality newspapers representing two ideological positions, *El País* and *El Mundo*. The case of the former King Juan Carlos I was studied for a year both on Twitter and in the quality press. Conclusions show a high polarization of debates on Twitter and in the news. Both Twitter users and the media tend to overestimate the corruption of others and underestimate the abuses of those consistent with their beliefs. Parties followed different strategies to respond to accusations. This work is part of the national-funded research project PID2019-105285GB-I00 (Ministry of Sciences, Innovation, and Universities).

Submission ID

899

Alt-tech Social Networking Service: Conceptualizing the Affordances of GETTR

Authors

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Abstract

This study will explore the affordances of an emerging social networking service, GETTR, which is considered to be an alternative to Twitter and other Big Tech sites. Trump and his allies denounced Twitter for suppressing “free speech” (Yu, 2021). After being removed from Twitter, in an objection to policing social media, far-right groups and Trump supporters have turned to alternative platforms that operate with limited policing such as GETTR, Gab, and Parler (Bomey, 2020).

GETTR is an American alt-tech social media platform and micro-blogging site claiming that users can “Speak freely, associate freely!”. A description of GETTR on the app store calls it a “non-biased social network for people all over the world”, a platform “founded on the principles of free speech, independent thought and rejecting political censorship and ‘cancel culture’”. Nonetheless, GETTR is already home for deliberately racist content. The users on GETTR heatedly discuss politics, and focus especially on subjects related to Trump (Paudel et al., 2021). This platform has become popular amongst users who were banned from mainstream social media platforms for infringing their terms of service.

The growing number of alt-tech social networking services is generating a “right-wing echo chamber” (Gilbert, 2020), providing opportunities for far-right extremists to share their radical ideas, while increasing the spectre of further political polarization which affects the social media landscape. Therefore, it is essential to explore the affordances of these new platforms and examine how these affordances facilitate the political participation of users. The affordances of social networks shape the ways in which users perform their sociality on these platforms.

My research will first conceptualize the affordances of GETTR and compare the affordances of this platform with the technological affordances of Twitter. Furthermore, by using the case study of the COVID-19 “infodemic”, my study will identify the most prevalent affordances of this platform used to partake in the anti-COVID-19 pandemic discourse and spread and amplify COVID-19 misinformation and conspiracy theories. Through qualitative analysis of posts that contain the hashtags #covid19, #covid, #chinesevirus, #wuhan, #pandemic, #immunity, and #covidhoax, this study will explore the activities of extremist groups, anti-COVID-19 activists, and conspiracy theorists on this platform. Furthermore, it will analyse content from the most active accounts on GETTR to understand how these users contributed to the infodemic during the pandemic. The results of this study will enhance our understanding of the affordances of new social networking sites, while elucidating the behaviour of anti-COVID-19 groups on GETTR.

Submission ID

1044

Kinship from Liquid Unity: Identity Politics and Collective Sentiment in Comments on Epidemiological Investigations

Authors

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Ms. JIAYUE MA - Renmin University of China

Abstract

Epidemic prevention and control make an epidemiological investigation of the infected necessary, which means that the life trajectories of the infected in the recent period have to be disclosed to the public, and it also gives cyberbullying an opportunity (Yang, 2021). Existing studies have found that in the face of sudden public crises, blaming is a common

social psychology of related people (Crawford, 1994). During the epidemic, it is also accompanied by suspicion, discrimination and violent deportation of immigrants (Lowen, 2020), which changes with the flow of identity. That is, people will react differently to the same thing based on different positions, such as race, gender, class, etc., constituting identity politics (Fung, 2002).

Most of the existing studies on identity politics are rooted in the Western political context and are deeply influenced by neoliberalism. In the context of the pandemic, identity politics research often adopts a postcolonial perspective (Dionne & Turkmen, 2020, Kwok, 2020). For China, among the traditional factors of identity politics, the influence of gender and socioeconomic status is still more obvious. In addition, the issue of regional identity has come with the modernization process of Chinese society. Although it has eased in recent years, in some crisis situations, it is still considered out of habitual thinking as an attribution framework. Therefore, we adopted territorial dimension (Guibernau, 2010) in our study on the identity politics of China's epidemiological survey, to explore the relationship between identity and citizens' collective emotions.

Method

Firstly, we retrieved comments under @CCTVNews from Weibo (N = 3374), which serves as an official release channel during the COVID-19 period. The time range was designated from December 1, 2020, to January 15, 2022, during which the epidemic was largely contained but with intermittent localized outbreaks, exposing people to health risks. Then we analyzed the sentiment of comments by applying both quantitative content analysis and computerized textual analysis. The comments were categorized in 3 dimensions, (1) gender (1 = male, 2 = female), (2) social comparison (1 = upward, 2 = downward), and (3) place (1 = mentioned, 0 = no-mentioned particularly). The TextMind was used as a substitute for LIWC to identify Chinese texts' word types and sentiment socio-psychologically. Finally, each variable was examined within independent t-test analysis.

Results

We found that for gender elements, comments mentioning females (M = 0.020, SD = 0.037) had significantly ($t = -2.449$, $p = 0.015$) more negative emotion than comments mentioning male (M = 0.011, SD = 0.021). Besides, significant differences of 'sad' words ($t = -2.646$, $p = 0.009$) existed across comments containing upward social comparison and downward social comparison. Comments containing downward social comparison (M = 0.007, SD = 0.030) used more 'sad' words than that containing upward social comparison (M = 0.0001, SD = 0.001). It is noteworthy that other negative emotion indexes like 'anger' words showed no significant difference.

The results also showed significant variation in positive emotions ($t = -5.307$, $p = 0.000$), 'health' words ($t = 6.440$, $p = 0.000$), and 'assent' words ($t = 2.487$, $p = 0.013$) across the

comments mentioned place or not. Compared to comments without mentioning place particularly, comments addressing specific place names exhibited more positive emotions ($M = 0.077$, $SD = 0.131$). However, the possibility of its use of 'health' ($M = 0.010$, $SD = 0.031$) or 'assent' ($M = 0.058$, $SD = 0.072$) words decreased.

Discussion

First, our findings echo previous researches on the difficult situation of women in public issues (Berkhout & Richardson, 2020) and the compassion aroused by downward social comparisons (Choi, Lee & Lee, 2014). Second, the findings demonstrate the connectivity of regional belonging. During epidemic, expressions such as "Come on our big Wuhan" not only reflect high awareness of family-country unity rooted in Confucian culture and patriotism education, but also reflect Chinese's continuous self-construction of regional identity in the risk society with surging uncertainty and post-modernization wave. Geographical attributes link to territorial admiration as well as doubt and discontent for local governing. Each time the epidemiological survey releases, it serves as a minor emergency and transcendental moment of the imagined community, allowing people to rebuild the kinship from a liquid unity. Expression of sentiments of love even transcends the original health framework.

Submission ID

1128

Continuing Assessments between Potential Romantic Partners in WeChat Conversations

Authors

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Abstract

Assessment being a significant social practice in daily life, is very common in everyday conversations. Since appropriate assessments between family members can contribute largely to the well-being of the whole family (Goodwin & Cekaite, 2018), it can be sufficiently inferred that assessments are also essential for romantic relationship building and

development. Nevertheless, currently there's barely no related work paying special attention to the assessment activity between romantic lovers.

Considering the prevalence of Internet use in daily communication and the fact that many people are seeking for potential suitors online (Finkel et al., 2012), this study aims to investigate the assessments between promising lovers in their computer-mediated conversations.

Previous studies of assessment mainly selected offline situations as the case for research (Pillet-Shore, 2012; Maynard, 1991). By virtue of the simulation essence of the virtual space, assessments occurring online should be basically the same as those in real life. However, multimodal components such as figure position, facial expression, pronunciation and intonation have been found to carry abundant and important meanings in assessment practice (Fasulo & Monzoni, 2009; Golato, 2005). Whereas in computer-mediated conversations, these are all filtered out. So it is questionable how potential lovers may utilize new communicative strategies to make up for it and facilitate mate assessments.

This study adopts conversation analysis as the approach to investigate the situated assessing practices within online romantic talk. As a methodology to study interactions, conversation analysis has the advantage to examine the interactional actions in naturally occurring context (Hutchby & Wooffitt, 1998). To obtain authentic chatting contents, we looked through a popular Chinese online forum "Douban" and collected 123 posts that contain screenshots of WeChat (a dominant instant messaging app in China) conversations between potential lovers shared by one party voluntarily. After transcribing the data, we firstly examined the semantic and syntax formulation of each typed utterance for its speech design (Leech, 1983). Then we paid special notice to the turn taking and sequential organization, analyzing how the interlocutors negotiate and co-participate in the conversation within the computer-mediated environment.

Key systems of assessments repeatedly verified in offline interactions are found applicable to our materials written mainly in text and transmitted over the network, such as assessments' prospective value of predicting assessors' subsequent actions (Fasulo & Monzoni, 2009), the establishment of orientation to the assessable before assessment (Oktarini, 2020), etc. But meanwhile, potential romantic partners also invent exclusive communicative strategies for the WeChat conversations, for example, using a left bracket to initiate self-repair of their prior assessments.

Most importantly, we found a novel phenomenon that people tend to give continuing assessments for their promising lovers following a fully complete preceding assessment, with different practices in nuanced conversational contexts. We found that the use of continuing assessments is essentially related to relationship management. On the one hand, when the potential lovers aim to maintain or proceed their relationships, continuing assessments are used to prevent a structurally integrated conversation from falling into a closure, since

regularly an assessment denotes the finish point of a story (Goodwin & Goodwin, 1987). By contrast, when the estimator intends to close the semi-romantic association, continuing assessments are frequently applied to either put an end to the dialogue, or save the recipient's face as a politeness strategy.

By analyzing the naturalistic WeChat dialogues, this study adds ecological validity in understanding the assessment activities within computer-mediated environment and builds on the work of exploring romantic relationship in the digital era.

Submission ID

1137

The Cry of Democracy or the Horn of Hatred? the Role of Social Media in 2021 South African Unrest: from the Perspective of Interaction Ritual Chains

Authors

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Ms. Jia yin Wang - School of Journalism and Communication, Peking University

Abstract

During 2021 South African unrest in July, as“ the last straw for democracy”, social media has become the stage for many online collective actions. The unrest's transformation from peaceful protests to violent looting that left hundreds of dead shows how social media's "bottom-cry" has morphed into a "clarion call for hate" amid a lack of national communication skills. The bandages woven by slogans of national unity and the anti-apartheid movement can no longer cover the scars of South Africa.

Therefore, with the help of the theoretical framework of interactive ritual chains and the specific political and historical context of South Africa in the period of social transformation, this paper hopes to respond to the following questions: How did social media complete emotional mobilization in different discourse constructions during 2021 South Africa unrest? Can social media platforms as Internet infrastructure bridge the "vacuum" between the government and the public? Beyond the manipulative and xenophobic populism of western offshore politics in previous studies, what other perspectives can be used to understand the role of social media in emerging countries?

The article looks at representative online collective actions during the unrest. We place the unrest in the context of South Africa's media ecology and political ecology in the post-democratic global power matrix and explore how social media has shaped racial and group identity by evoking underlying justice and emotional display in different discourse constructions through textual analysis. By analyzing the division of discourse itself and media camp, this paper will further analyze the imbalance of social structure in post-colonial South Africa and find new possibilities for enhancing national self-determination and national coordination capacity through social media platforms.

This paper argues that, on the surface, social media lowers the threshold of participation in democratic politics, but it enhances internal group cohesion by using the logic of racial and class discourse, virtually excludes participation of various identities, thus aggravating the existing rift of collective identity, which is not conducive to pluralistic dialogue in the process of integration of multi-ethnic countries. In other words, except for race and wealth, people lack the knowledge and value criteria for communication, which is a typical manifestation of the weakening of information coordination ability in post-colonial countries since the 1990s. Secondly, the mobilization logic on social media is more likely to be bound by the imperial discourse system under the guidance of liberalism in group discussions, thus covering up the actual visible problems of class, structure, and distribution and pointing to the general and vague demands for democracy. Therefore, to achieve effective communication with the public, the South African government in transition needs stronger national coordination capacity and self-determination capacity in the field of information control.

The innovation of this paper lies in that, on the one hand, emotional mobilization analysis of interactive ritual chain is applied to discourse research. This paper is not limited to explaining the instrumental role of social media in social action but also tries to explain the dual political and cultural meanings generated by its multiple discourse construction. On the other hand, previous studies on social media and social movements mostly focused on the micro-level such as technology and strategy, ignoring the macro-social structure and the initiative of the people at the bottom. In the analysis, this paper combines the special democratization process and Internet development background in South Africa and integrates political and economic perspectives to understand the role of social platforms in social movements, thus providing more explanatory power and practical value for the development of technological politics in post-colonial countries.

Submission ID

1161

The discursive construction of the "virtual commute" during the COVID-19 pandemic

Authors

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Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic has transformed work for a significant portion of the workforce. Digital meeting platforms implemented new features and functionality in order to accommodate the changing needs of workers and employers during periods of remote work. These new features reflect particular views of work, wellbeing, and work-life balance, signalling shifts in perception and attitudes towards habits and discipline. This paper addresses the question: how do remote work platforms respond to or, concomitantly, shape these shifts, in discourse and in technology implementation?

This paper analyses the discursive construction of the notion of "virtual commute", as proposed by digital platforms such as Microsoft's Teams (in collaboration with Headspace, a company specializing in meditation and mindfulness applications). The virtual commute experience is presented by Microsoft as a way to facilitate a transition from work to home during remote work, by taking stock of the finished workday and planning the following day before a "wellness period" of guided meditation. This set of features was presented in 2020 as a response to the perceived need to regulate employee habits during the pandemic, namely by promoting wellbeing and self-awareness and reintroducing boundaries between personal and work times, while also quantifying engagement and activity on the platforms.

The virtual commute metaphor differs significantly from the typical views on commuting. Regular commuting is defined by a "boundary time" (a period of transition between two activities or states) of displacement between work and home during personal time. In contrast, the virtual commute shifts the meaning of commuting by designating a regulated period comprised of work tasks and mindfulness activities. This paper argues that the virtual commute, while presented as a "transitional period," can instead be understood as an emerging metaphor in the context of the chronopolitics of telecommuting, wherein affect and productivity are reshaped and quantified to respond to the needs of remote work. This corresponds to a new structuring of private life and work (Rose 1999), signalling a chronopolitics (Sharma 2017) where time management and self-tracking are rapidly integrated into remote work alongside neoliberal notions of wellbeing and work-life balance (Docherty 2021; Rosa 2010; Wajcman 2019a, 2019b).

This study was conducted by way of a discourse analysis (Chiapello and Fairclough 2002; Fairclough 2012; Van Dijk 2005) of textual and visual materials published between 2020 and 2022 by companies producing remote work platforms. This paper focuses on Microsoft, and the Teams application in particular, analysing promotional materials focusing on time-management options. This analysis draws from the works of Hartmut Rosa, Wajcman and Sharma on acceleration and time under capitalism, as well as from the works of Lakoff and Johnson (1980) and Ricoeur (1975) on the emergence and uses of metaphors.

This study contributes to debates on the social construction of notions of work-life balance by showing how these notions are deployed in discourse and enacted or codified in digital platforms. Specifically, this paper addresses the construction of the “virtual commute” by analysing its rhetorical deployment in relation to notions of wellbeing, self-realization, and work productivity.

Submission ID

1281

The State in Emergency: Chinese Media Discourses and The Constructed Concept of The State in The Spread of COVID-19 Pandemic

Authors

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Abstract

Introduction

At the end of 2019, COVID-19 broke out in Hubei, China, and has become a global pandemic. The government, as the main exercise of national administrative power, has been involved in the pandemic prevention and treatment in multiple fields. However, infectious disease is not only a medical problem, but also requires the intervention of social science. The occurrence and prevalence of infectious disease are usually affected by economic, political, social and cultural factors (Janes, Corbett, Jones, & Trostle, 2012). In addition to the anti-epidemic administrative measures, how to mobilize the society for the participation in the governance process has become an essential work, in which the government and

mainstream media play important roles. In the context of “in emergency”, they reconstruct the consciousness of the State's protagonist and the community to awaken the participation enthusiasm of citizens. The media plays a necessary role, because it is not only the main tool for individuals to understand social changes, but also changes the logic of social organizations' actions in practice(Zhang, 2010). The effectiveness of communication between the state and society becomes relevant in national crisis mobilization

Therefore, this research intends to explore, in the context of pandemic spreading and prevalence, how the Chinese government and mainstream media reconstruct the citizens' concept of the state to awake their national awareness identity of the “state-nation” community, then the citizens would cooperate with the state with its measures to achieve effective control of the pandemic.

Methods

This research is based on reports about the COVID-19 between January 21st to April 30th on People's Daily, the most authoritative and influential paper in mainland China, . Due to the nature of the Party newspaper, it has the strongest representation of the country's official discourse, and it assumes an important role in expressing the country's attitude and position. Therefore, by searching for reports from the People's Daily Online-People's Daily Graphic Database (1946-2020) related to the pandemic within the time period, and exclude texts that are not directly related or only mentioned as background, we obtained a total of 216 valid texts.

This study uses critical discourse analysis to analyze the text of the pandemic reports. As language symbols, news reports are structured structures, which interact with other social fields, so as to realize the real construction function of the real world. Critical discourse analysis is dedicated to "explaining the constructive role of discourse on social identity, social relations, and knowledge and belief systems". Compared with non-critical discourse analysis, this paradigm liberates discourse from the text and examines the ideology and power relations in the dimension of social practice. Scholars focus on news texts and the construction of group identity, Chinese and Western news discourses' ideological struggle and others.

Based on the research theme and theoretical context of media discourse and the construction of national concepts, the research questions of this study focus on: In the media reports related to the pandemic, what image and how is the country expressed? At the same time, how is the identity of the state and society realized through discursive practice? Finally, in an emergency situation, how does the country achieve its goal of social mobilization by constructing a national concept?

Possibly findings

- National presentation: the image of the State being expressed
- State Mobilization: The Construction of the Identity of State and Society

Submission ID

1296

Are social media users in China both ideologically and affectively polarized? An analysis of Sina Weibo's tweets and comments on the Myanmar 2021 Protests

Authors

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Mr. Suheng Fu - The London School of Economics and Political Science

Abstract

This research project investigates whether and how social media users in China are ideologically and affectively polarized when they are discussing a non-Chinese political event online. While there has been an increasing number of studies focusing on the polarization of online social media users' opinion alignment (Baldassarri & Gelman, 2008) or attitude divergence towards a social and political issue (Abramowitz & Saunders, 2008) in the last two decades, few of them concern about the cases in a non-democratic setting like China. Research on both ideological polarization and affective polarization, which are clearly distinguished by Iyengar et al. (2012), in the social media in China is particularly rare.

To fill the gap, we have sampled and conducted a content analysis on 6,033 pieces of comments under 191 most retweeted and commented tweets on the Myanmar 2021 Protests against the country's 2020 election fraud from Sina Weibo, one of China's largest social media platforms. We chose to look at the social media discussion on the Myanmar Protests but not a domestic political event in China as the latter is usually heavily censored while the former was not. In our analysis, ideological stances of Sina Weibo's social media users toward the Myanmar protests and the harshness of the language they used were examined and compared.

Our results show that the public opinion on Weibo related to the 2021 Myanmar protests is both ideologically and affectively polarized. Specifically, comments/retweets under the tweets by the pro-authoritarian government users are more likely to have a negative view

towards the 2021 Myanmar protests and tend to delegitimize it, while those by the liberalist users are more likely to interpret the issue in a more supportive and positive way. Furthermore, the negative views on the protests are more likely to be affectively polarized with more posts using very harsh and insulting words. The result also implies that Chinese netizens are more likely to engage voices consistent with their political stances, confirming hypotheses like the information cocoons.

With these results, this paper: (1) complements the studies on discourses and opinions on social networking sites in China; (2) foregrounds a critical perspective regarding political polarization of online public opinion in China; and (3) empirically contributes to the debate on the current trend of ideological polarization and affective polarization in the world

Submission ID

1343

Framing Responsibility Attribution for QAnon in National Magazine Coverage

Authors

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Abstract

This study examines how mainstream magazines cover attributions of responsibility for the conspiracy theory and movement, QAnon. QAnon coalesced out of several conspiracy theories in 2017 and has since increased in popularity, particularly on social media, resulting in negative real-world consequences. I applied framing theory to qualitatively analyze a sample of 72 articles about QAnon from nationally circulated magazines (Foreign Affairs ($n=1$), Mother Jones ($n=20$), National Review ($n=17$), Newsweek ($n=1$), Rolling Stone ($n=7$), The Atlantic ($n=2$), The New Republic ($n=6$), The New Yorker ($n=6$), Vanity Fair ($n=2$), Variety ($n=8$), Vogue ($n=1$), and Wired ($n=1$)). These were published between October 17, 2017, when the anonymous “Q” first posted on the message board 4chan and January 20, 2021, when President Joe Biden was inaugurated. This timeframe allowed for coverage of key events including the rise of QAnon, the COVID-19 pandemic, the 2020 presidential election, and the violence at the Capitol on January 6, 2021.

I used qualitative content analysis to deconstruct emergent frames into their frame functions and identified the framing function of responsibility attribution for QAnon where appropriate. Identified responsibility attributions were then thematically organized into six groups. The themes were 1) systematic conditions (the result of underlying systematic societal problems), 2) psychological and social factors (the result of psychological processes and the desire to belong to a group), 3) Personal and moral failings (the result of stupid, crazy, and/or malicious individuals), 4) Break down in information hierarchy (the result of social media that bypass traditional information gatekeepers and institutions), 5) Infodemic (the result of an alien disinformation virus that can act on people against their will), and 6) Ideological competitors (the result of bad faith actors seeking ideological gain, with some liberal publications attributing responsibility to conservatives and vice versa). Findings indicate themes of responsibility attribution largely served to defend the legitimacy of traditional intuitions. The articles presented QAnon as an aberration within otherwise reasonable social, political, and media structures. The articles were not intended to reach QAnon believers, but an already aligned audience who may be receptive to the frame, thus reinforcing the legitimacy of the normal way of doing things. The only exception was the systematic conditions theme.

The findings of this research provide a contribution to the media framing literature by highlighting both a blame of social media and individuals for QAnon and a lack of institutional or systemic self-reflection. This may foster a cycle of distrust for individuals who trust information from social media over traditional media institutions and in turn may perceive this responsibility attribution as a bias against social media and confirmatory of their distrust in institutions. Furthermore, the results largely find an unsympathetic assessment of axiomatic irredeemably QAnon supporters, further alienating believers who already feel ignored or victimized. Overall, QAnon is not treated as a social issue with shared public responsibility, but something to be sequestered behind impermeable walls of exclusion from the public sphere.

Submission ID

1413

Updating Stuart Hall's Encoding/Decoding Model in the Digital Era

Authors

Mr. Dongwook Song - Simon Fraser University

Abstract

This paper upgrades Stuart Hall's encoding/decoding model of communication by proposing a new model based on digital platforms rather than on television. Since Hall presented his model in 1973, the media environment has rapidly and considerably transformed. Recent years have witnessed the continued growth of digital platforms such as giant over-the-top (OTT) media services, social networking sites, and search engines. Audiences can receive messages on their interactive devices—such as tablets, laptops, desktop computers, and smartphones—anytime, anywhere, and they participate in digital platforms both indirectly and directly. The emergence and dominance of the digital platform necessitates an update to Hall's encoding/decoding model that considers this new media landscape.

I illustrate the three core insights of Hall's model in the context of recent literature, then highlight the reinforcement of agency of digital media users by proposing new categories of coding: "participatory decoding," which describes how users actively engage with selecting content from the given options on a platform, and "user encoding," which implies that users directly create and spread messages and other content on digital platforms.

Next, I shed light on the influential role of artificial intelligence (AI) in the distribution of messages by providing a new concept, "lincoding" (link + coding). Lincoding plays a matchmaker, connecting messages to users who are likely to decode the preferred code embedded in the message in a particular way. Specifically, AI reproduces a specific code by linking the encoded message to users who are likely to decode the message as the producer intended, as well as by using data to link specific users to other users who share similar codes.

To update Hall's model, there is also a need to go beyond Hall's concept of oppositional decoding, as more active media practice strategies have become possible on digital platforms. I add three types of media practice strategies: appropriation of existing media platforms, installation of alternative media platforms, and restriction of detrimental media platforms. When users appropriate existing media platforms, they disseminate their own content that is critical of the dominant social or political forces. The second strategy involves creating new spaces for communication, and the last strategy restricts use when the dominance of the existing problematic digital platforms becomes too powerful.

Finally, I propose a new model schema based on a synthesis of the data. As seen in Figure 1, I present a developed model named 'Datafication/Lincoding/Encoding/Decoding/Practicing model' (DLEDP model). Instead of the audience decoding and the producer encoding, a comprehensive understanding of datafication, lincoding, encoding, decoding, and practicing is needed. In addition, I emphasize the need to develop Hall's concept of the oppositional code.

Submission ID

1478

‘Anti-Algorithm Discipline’: Reciprocal Compensation, Bonus Migration and Community Support in Platform Labor -- A Case Study of the Mobility-on-Demand (MoD) Platform ‘Huolala’

Authors

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Abstract

The existing literature on on-demand platforms primarily concentrates on ‘algorithmic management’ (Lee et al., 2015; Rosenblat & Stark, 2016; Sun, 2019; Chen & Sun, 2020), which reveals the omnipresent control and structural risks that algorithms bring to platform workers. Although it shows humanistic care, the dilemma thus drawn is that, a plethora of studies from this conceptual perspective have formed a relatively obvious path dependence and theoretical presupposition. In this regard, this research will suspend the theoretical perspective of ‘algorithmic management’, so as to observe and explain the vivid practice of platform workers as far as possible. Based on the case study of Huolala, China’s vehicle-hailing giant, this research introduces some additional reflection into the dominant storyline by bringing three strategic mechanisms, namely, reciprocal compensation, bonus migration and community support. Such findings not only challenge the existing argument that platforms fence off social relations (Gandini, 2019), but also highlight that workers are never passive participants in platform labor, they can make use of alternative connectives (restart and maintain relationships in offline freight labor chain, adjust platform entry and exit strategies flexibly and build new solidarities, etc.) to push for better working conditions.

The practice of ‘anti-algorithm discipline’ formed by these three mechanisms actually points to a platform ecology that has not been fully paid attention to before. The ‘platform ecology’ here refers to the site of constant contestation, cooperation and resistance between the different interests of social actors involved in the platform labor process. I argue that ‘anti-algorithm discipline’ should not be regarded as the supposed complement or absolute opposite of the ‘algorithmic management’ perspective, but embedded in and in turn reshapes ‘platform ecology’ of platform labor. This can not only complicate our understanding of work afforded by digital platforms, but also enables a richer theorization of the experiences of platform-generated work in political economy context.

Submission ID

1496

Beyond control and convenience: Public opinions of facial recognition technology in China

Authors

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Abstract

Facial recognition technology (FRT) is now being extensively implemented and routinely used across various aspects of social realms in China. Its ubiquity is claimed to address issues like public security, automated registration, identity verification, and even emotion detection. Compared to other countries, FRT in China seemed to prompt less controversy or opposition, and instead received higher public acceptance with notions of convenience and security (e.g. Kostka et al., 2021). Chinese government indeed has a long legacy of deploying technologies to “modernizing governance structure and capacity” (Peng, 2021), FRT could thus be seen as a logical extension of this techno-political regulation and control. This ‘tradition’ has raised criticism about the “surveillance state”, which was argued to normalize the process of being identified, correlated and discriminated without civil knowledge and consent (e.g. Schneier, 2020).

However, we cannot dismiss the fact that citizens are not simply passive entities subjected to the digital “panopticon” without awareness or action. Previous studies also failed to fully explain how people evaluate their experience with this new technology. Combining online data mined from ‘12345’ Citizen Complaint Hotline and in-depth interviews of 12 local residents in Hangzhou, this study therefore examines the users’ perspectives, which have been significantly overlooked in examinations of state or business surveillance in the Chinese context (Chong, 2019). In particular, it explores what kinds of problems emerge when ordinary people actually use FRT at different scenarios, and how their complaints to the authorities may inform regulatory thinking in the future.

We used Instaloader (2020) to collect 241 extant public complaints registered on municipal public service website featuring FRT from the period between 1 November 2020 and 30 June 2021. As a direct bridge between the government and the public, ‘12345’ hotline is a key channel for citizens to report their problems and make suggestions to the work of the government. Thematic analysis was then adopted to identify five key themes suggesting a

complexity of public concerns: the ‘digital divide’ problem among the vulnerable group, the safety worries regarding privacy, data protection and physical health, the technical defects that hinder user experience, the questioning over the purpose of FRT adoption (i.e. whether it facilitates governmental regulation or improves public service), and the incompatibility between new technology and localized context (e.g. causing redundancy in daily routine). Our findings trouble the dichotomy between control and convenience, and show that collective goals of digital inclusiveness, ‘tech for social good’ and good governance speak louder than self-interests. Finally, this article argues that the user-side dynamics corresponds to the pre-existing political-economic considerations for safety, stability and innovation, and is a product of user dependency that is motivated to optimize the new technology and its related digital systems, rather than challenge its legitimacy.

Submission ID

1550

How I met my content: an empirical study on public perceptions of recommendation algorithms driving individual content repertoire using Weibo user datasets

Authors

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Abstract

Rise of smartphone usages in China have driven Web 2.0 to explosion in the past ten years, most notably “platform economy” or “transaction platforms” to take leverage of popularized matchmaking model. In the context of media content delivery platforms are collecting user datasets to their own avail, primarily recommendation systems. Based on duality of media theory, recommendation systems on the platform have been driven by user “enact[ing] preferences” and media “[motivating] to attract audiences and [monitoring] their behavior” (Webster, 2011).

Since 2016, short form video contents or instant video contents have gone viral at the frontier of video streaming domains. Bytedance, for example, has risen as an exemplary case to facilitate transactions purely through algorithms. Other online platforms, not traditionally powered by algorithm engines, have sought to adopt similar mechanisms to

distribute content. These platforms quickly scaled to grow into trillion-dollar machines that distribute media content.

As time has progressed, despite large-scale comprehensive collection of user data by platforms, recommendation results churned out by algorithms have yielded different user experience. Lack of transparency has led to public speculations surrounding recommendation mechanisms and design specifications of algorithm-powered infrastructure on content delivery platforms. Some questions mangled operations to manipulate algorithms for platforms' favor and argues that algorithms detoured their intended content repertoire, or in professional terms "algorithm auditing and bias" (Eslami, 2017). Others have attempted to fight back by "tricking" platforms and algorithms and disguising what content they really seek.

Regardless, debates on how algorithms have altered content production and distribution have sustained. To put the governance footing, on January 4th 2022, four Chinese governing agencies have announced a joint regulatory framework to improve recommendation algorithms by giving out options to temporarily or permanently turn off algorithm services.

Utilizing crawled datasets of pooled public comments on Weibo from June 2020 to December 2021, this study will conduct content analysis of user datasets to examine meta categories of public opinions on "algorithm guidance". Each sampled comment explicitly referencing key word "recommendation algorithm" is labelled and grouped together in each meta category. Search word is designed in a way such that sampled Weibo authors possess certain awareness of algorithms effective in content production and distribution.

The goal of this paper is to broaden our understanding of how recommendation algorithm systems guide user pathways to platform content consumption. This study will also seek to showcase how understanding on uses of algorithm systems has been shaped in the eyes of public opinions and self-disclosure from users. More importantly, the study will circle back to the core question that addresses whether recommendation algorithms have realistically caused user behavior changes in building and molding their content repertoire.

Submission ID

1642

The Reinforcement of Opinion Polarization on the Smart Media Platform: Analyzing the News and Comments about Sino-US Relations on Toutiao

Authors

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Abstract

Since the Information flow on smart media platforms is strongly driven by algorithms, there is widespread concern about the danger of opinion polarization. However, we argue that, in addition to the algorithms, news and user-generated content/interactions (e.g., comments, likes) also play an essential role in the social reinforcement of collective opinion. In light of the cascading network activation model (Entman & Usher, 2018), we propose a multiple reinforcement mechanism to explain the opinion polarization on smart media platforms. To test our hypotheses, we collect a dataset containing 269 news articles about Sino-US relations and 56,793 user comments on Toutiao (the largest smart media platform of news in China). We employ content analysis to get the training set (N = 6,794 comments) and use machine learning models to predict the polarization degree of 50,000 user comments. The findings suggest that: First, there is an obvious polarization of opinion polarization in both news and user comments about Sino-US relations. Toutiao users tend to support China while condemning the United States. Second, the Taiwan issue has the strongest degree of polarization, while the science and technology issue has the weakest degree of polarization. Third, the opinion polarization of the user comments is positively related to that of the news. Further, the news of stronger opinion polarization have more user comments, and the comments of stronger opinion polarization have more likes. We have also discussed our contributions based on the reinforcement learning theory and norm learning theory.

Keywords: Opinion Polarization; Smart Media; Social reinforcement; Sino-US relations; News consumption

Submission ID

1671

Mediated Memory, Material Practice, and Affection Interpellation: A Study of Telephone Nostalgia

Authors

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Abstract

Media technology is not only the vehicle of information but also the material which contains the inscription of memory and affection. With the rapid industrialization of telephone production, they are being used and abandoned at an increasingly accelerated pace, while at the meantime, driving people to share their memories, affection, and stories of their outdated telephones for nostalgia, which has sparked heated online discussions and old-fashioned resurgence in recent years. Taking 'telephone nostalgia' as an example, this paper aims to discuss four questions: 1) What kinds of memories do people store and reminisce about their telephones? 2) What's the role of telephones in making up people's memories and affections contributing to their tech-nostalgia? 3) As a collective phenomenon, how does telephone nostalgia arise people's sentimental longing and cultural recalling? 4) What are its relations with the evolvement of society, economy, and especially ideology?

This paper applies an approach of textual analysis to find out the implicit associations between people and their old-fashioned telephones. From December 10th, 2021 to February 5, 2022, I have collected 376 pieces of nostalgia narratives from four influential Chinese social media, including Zhihu (a Chinese Q&A website), Douban (a Chinese social website based on music, film, and book), Weibo (a Chinese microblogging website), and Baidu Tieba (a Chinese online forum), by manually searching with 'telephone' and 'nostalgia', 'memory', 'feelings', 'collection', 'the first' and other keywords. Those online tech-nostalgia narratives have illustrated people's sentimental longings for their outdated telephones with different memories. In the meantime, this paper has also interviewed 10 people who are now intentionally collecting outdated telephones to examine their motivation of technological nostalgia and resurgence exercise. All informants are sampled and contacted through the Zhihu platform, and the research materials are coded in *Nvivo12*.

After sorting out nodes and cases from the materials, this paper has extracted three theoretical concepts – 'mediated memory', 'material practice', and 'affection interpellation' for the explanation of telephone nostalgia. Firstly, it suggests that people store and reminisce three kinds of memories about their telephones, including the era-characterized technical functions, the personal stories concerning economic and cultural practices, and the interpersonal affections which are perpetually imprinted in their telephone using memories. The first kind of memory is the material interface and trigger of people's telephone nostalgia. Secondly, telephone nostalgia is the representation of each user's mediated heritage

related to his/her economic conditions and social status, and the personal identity intertwined with these heritage acts as the clue of telephone nostalgia. Thirdly, in accordance with Habermas's insight that technology is ideology, the telephone has been the mediator between authorities and the common people, on the one hand, involving the latter's body and affection into the former's maintenance of the social structure, on the other hand, creating various materialized contexts and opportunities for the latter to resist against the dominant structures through tech-nostalgia discourses and resurgence practices. Lastly, along with the increase of people's dependence on the telephone – the indispensable actor of people's daily life, the telephone nostalgia can be operated as a collective ideology, promoting the interpellation of individuals via their mediated memories and technology affection, so as to strengthen people's identities and material supports for the society, economy, and dominant ideology.

Submission ID

1719

Preliminary notes on incidental and serendipitous online news consumption

Authors

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Prof. Pieter Ballon - Vrije Universiteit Brussel

Abstract

The news industry has witnessed a dramatic shift towards digitalization and personalization. The Reuters Institute Digital News Report 2021 found that 73% of respondents' main way of consuming news was online, among which 26% came across news mostly via social media, 25% via search engines and 25% directly through specific news sites. These percentages are even higher among the age group under 35 with 81% of respondents consuming news online. Thus, a large, and ever-increasing group of news consumers rely on recommendation systems, cookies, search engines, and algorithms to overcome an overwhelming amount of available information.

Yet, personalized news sources and content may lead to self-reinforcement and reduced diversity, which in turn increases the chance of partial information blindness or filter

bubbles. Not being confronted with alternative information that users may be exposed to but otherwise not actively seek, or in other words, not experiencing incidental or serendipitous news exposure could lead to polarized clusters that are the primary drivers of content diffusion, especially misinformation and conspiracy theories, online radicalization, and growing inequality (Reviglio, 2017).

However, there is growing empirical evidence showing that filter bubbles might not exist in practice in peoples' news consumption (Haim, Graefe & Brosius, 2018). Although, incidental or serendipitous news consumption might provide an explanation for this, the role of user serendipity in online news consumption is still unclear (Van Damme et al., 2020). While prior literature argues that incidental news exposure (INE) is a synonym of serendipity (e.g., Yadamsuren & Heinström) the two research streams developed somewhat in parallel highlighting the need of conceptual clarification and integration.

The goal of this paper is twofold. First, we develop a conceptual framework that synthesizes current literature on user serendipity including its antecedents, process and outcomes. Second, we compare INE with our general serendipity framework providing guidelines on the extent to which current serendipity research is applicable to online news consumption as well as highlighting major knowledge gaps. In addition, we lay out several research directions to expand our knowledge on serendipity in this field.

To this end, we conducted a multi-step systematic literature review relying on an extensive set of keywords (e.g., serendipity", "serendipitous encounter", "information encountering", "opportunistic discovery", "incidental information acquisition", "incidental news exposure) and following a rigorous coding procedure. Our final dataset consists of 96 peer-reviewed articles. Preliminary findings indicate that the serendipitous process consists of noticing, exploring, and connecting resources (e.g., things, people, information), that leads to an unexpected, relevant, and valuable outcome and is followed by an action taken by the user, and is influenced by environmental-related, individual, resource-related, and activity-related factors. When applying the serendipity framework to INE, a closer inspection of the literature reveals major differences between a serendipitous information retrieval process and INE such as user engagement and outcomes. We argue that INE becomes serendipitous when users notice, explore and connect information in new ways that leads to an unexpected, relevant, and valuable outcome, which in turn leads to knowledge gain and follow-up action.

Submission ID

1781

Study on the Effect of Media Sentiment Setting under Public Health Emergency

Authors

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Abstract

Media communication may not be successful in influencing how people think and say, but it has enough function and effect in influencing how people think and say with what emotion. It clearly focuses on "sentiment setting" and takes it as one of the important ways of public opinion regulation and communication effect research. The effect of "sentiment setting" requires paying attention to the emotional diffusion effect and characteristics in the media public opinion, and this emotional state will then affect the whole communication chain and the overall ecological characteristics of public opinion. Under the epidemic, this paper proposed the research questions for the effect of media coverage on public sentiment and What are the factors that affect the emotional deviation in the process of information dissemination? It is assumed that there was a correlation between media content and emotion in public health issues.

The research method of this paper mainly used natural language processing for machine learning. The data set searches 585,003 related reports and 1,095,000 emotional polarity values on twitter from January 30, 2020 to January 30, 2021 for the same specific keywords. Firstly, the public data set with emotional tags was manually labeled and malicious evaluation was used for text labeling. Then the text was represented based on TF-IDF, and then the naive Bayesian classifier was trained based on the labeled data set. Finally, the classifier was used to judge the text tendency and calculate the sentiment score.

The study found that there is a significant very weak correlation between the content emotion of media reports and the audience emotion of social media, which is in line with our hypothesis. However, although there is a significant positive correlation and the correlation coefficient is relatively small, it shows that the public emotion of social media and the deviation of international public opinion related to China are the result of the comprehensive action of many factors. As well as the information dissemination, from the disseminator to the media and then to the audience, the emotion is obviously decreasing.

In the case of public health emergencies, the effective dissemination of emotions has an important impact on the media environment and social climate. "Sentiment setting" is not only a necessary extension of the effect theory such as agenda setting, but also an important horizon turn in the study of communication effect. Meanwhile, The information

dissemination related epidemic has a wider study based on this paper. As is a global public emergency for COVID-19. It is important to study the information dissemination of public emergencies, both for academic research and for social governance. This study will also help strengthen China's international communication capacity and improve China's national shape in the international community.

Submission ID

1832

“Together for a Shared Future”: Synergistic Effect of Agenda-setting and Opinion-gathering by Chinese Social Media for Beijing 2022 Winter Olympic Games

Authors

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Abstract

Since September 17, 2021, when the slogan of Beijing 2022 Winter Olympic Games and Winter Paralympic Games was officially released, *"Together for a shared future"* has become a global public issue. As of February 8, 2022, a total of 7849 original microblogs were released with the tag of *#Together for a shared future#* in Weibo.com, with 1512000 discussions and 540 million readings. This study will focus on the question how do people discuss many related issues via Chinese social media in the timeline of more than four months focusing on the theme.

Based on the literature review, this study constructs a theoretical framework for the continuous agenda-setting, deviating and iterating of multiple sub topics under the highly inclusive theme, with the participation of government, official institutions, media and the public, thus forming a complex and diverse media communication system. After massive data mining and text analysis, this study found that the evolution of the whole related topic can be roughly divided into three stages: the first stage is the preheating of the Olympic topic, which mainly discusses the singing of the Olympic theme song by stars and athletes; The second stage is the opening ceremony of the Olympic Games, which mainly discusses the creativity of the ceremony and the participation and contribution of various parties in the preparation of the Olympic Games; The third stage is after the opening, which mainly

discusses related issues about athletes to participate in the Olympic Games and share people's opinions or feelings about their performance.

The first stage lasted more than 130 days, and the typical agenda-setting form is that stars sing songs to trigger fans to support the Olympic Games. For example, William Chan's fans contributed the largest number of reading and forwarding microblogs; The second stage lasted about one day, but it reached the peak of the number of discussions on this theme. The typical agenda-setting was the carnival of interpretation and discussion of the opening ceremony by netizens. For example, Zhang Yimou, the director of the Olympic Opening Ceremony was the most mentioned person in the discussion and evaluation of the meaning of many details in the ceremony; During the third stage, people really discussed the competition and interaction of athletes from various countries, as well as related events. For example, Gu Ailing Eileen's performance and American athlete Tessa released a video praising the volunteers triggered a lot of discussion by Chinese netizens. Government, official institutions, media, celebrities and the public play different roles and exert various functions in these three stages eventually.

Due to the great inclusiveness of this tagged topic, the effect of its agenda-setting is not only about the Olympic Games and the spirit of sports itself, but also about China's concept of international communication and global governance, that is, the basic idea of a hallmark of China's vision for the whole world named in Chinese as "*Renlei Mingyun Gongtongti*" (*A Community of Shared Future for Mankind*). Therefore, the media agenda and public policy agenda formed under the tag are all-round, mainly reflected in their aggregated systematic synergy. The slogan of "*Together for the future*" coincides with the practice of adding "together" to the Olympic motto officially adopted by the *138th plenary session of the International Olympic Committee*, which makes the internal consistency between China's vision and the Olympic concept. The study on the topics of the Olympic Games will help us understand the communication impact of agenda-setting for the long-term and large-scale in the era of neo-globalisation.

Submission ID

1938

LEVERAGING DIGITAL PLATFORMS FOR PUBLIC SERVICE MESSAGE DELIVERY: TO WHAT EFFECT?

Authors

Mr. Paul Badasu - Ghana

Abstract

Digital platforms are making it easy for public service information dissemination to the intended audiences across nations. Information shared through the digital platforms can be accessed without any difficulty by the users. Targeting the public service information to the intended audiences are also possible through geo-location tools. This way, the information is reaching the people who must see it. The digital platforms also provide a cheaper way of communicating to large audiences as opposed to the traditional communication modes such as radio, television and newspapers. Added to this, information shared on digital platforms remain so long as it is not pulled down by the publisher or sender of the information.

The many advantages of the digital platforms have made many communication practitioners adopt it as their preferred communication mode in recent times. However, there are setbacks that are often overlooked. This calls for research to uncover the associated problems of communication through digital platforms.

In view of the above, this study was initiated to examine digital platform message credibility in the eyes of the recipients; to what extent do the public believe or accept communication received through digital platforms in the wake of the many negative issues; fake news and impersonation among other fraudulent acts in the cyber world that have resulted in the mistrust of communication through the internet? The central theme of this research study is to look closely at the relationships between the perceived credibility of the public service communication received and the trust imposed on the communication by the intended recipients of the message. This is necessitated on the backdrop of the inactions exhibited by the public in Ghana when **scientific public service** communication was offered through digital platforms during the COVID-19 pandemic lock-down announcements and education campaigns.

The quantitative content analysis and qualitative case study are adopted for this study. The population of the study includes a section of the public who are users of digital platforms and have received public service communication in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, interviews and observations of the digital platforms used for the public service communication during the pandemic.

The findings of this study greatly contribute to the body of knowledge in three fronts; that is, research, practice and policy. For research, the study contributes to the limited research

available on the perceived credibility of communication through digital platforms which results in an action or inaction on the part of the recipients. For practice, this study brings to light deficiencies in communicating **scientific information** on digital platforms during the COVID-19 pandemic. For policy, this study contributes to policy formulation by public service communicators. It will help communicators understand how well or otherwise their public service communication was received through digital platforms during the pandemic.

Submission ID

2079

Eating digitally: The mediatization of digital technologies on daily dining practice

Authors

Dr. Stephanie Na Liu - Sichuan University

Abstract

In no previous eras like the present has food become so publicly visible and globally pervasive in our everyday life. Digital communication technologies have fundamentally mediatized, platformized, and dataficated people's everyday dining practice, which has inevitably but invisibly transformed the ways we understand about our intimate encounters with food, as well as the ways we interact with others through food. This paper examines how have digital technologies mediatized people's daily dining practice, with what social and cultural consequences?

The concept of digital food is employed to distinguish food mediated by digital technologies from food in general. By using methods of semi-structured interview (n = 30) and participatory observation for more than two years on the most popular food review app in China – Dazhong Dianping, this study examines the detailed ways that digital technologies mediatize people's dining practice from four dimensions: the technological, social, spatial, and emotional dimensions.

First, on the technological dimension, the underlying logic of digital food is dominated by dataflow and location service, which respectively determine the visibility and accessibility of digital food. On the one hand, digital media's dataflow is in a black box, and capitals

manipulate the public visibility and popularity of food. On the other hand, the location service prioritizes the rational manipulation of food by dataficing the accessibility of food.

Second, on the social dimension, digital food has formed up three kinds of sociality: the para-sociality, the strangers' sociality, and the reciprocal sociality. The para-sociality mostly happens between popular food bloggers and ordinary people, with the latter frequently following the formers' recommendations about what and where to eat. The strangers' sociality is a unique character of digital food. Many people tend not to connect with acquaintances on digital food media, since they value the anonymity of their personal life practice. Lastly, the reciprocal sociality concentrates on negative restaurant reviews. People mentioned that they wrote negative reviews partly in order to remind others, and they also intentionally checked others' negative reviews.

Third, on the spatial dimension, digital food demonstrates strong potentials of spatial practice by extending and transforming the physical and the imaginative spaces of food. Some distant but popular food attracts people to extend their daily range of activity and to explore unknown places. In addition, dining in exotic style of restaurants expand people's sense of imaginative spaces. As such, food becomes a type of interface for people to conduct various spatial practices.

Lastly, on the emotional dimension, unlimited presence and promotion of food can unconsciously create a sense of urgency of consumption, which in effect appropriates food to capitalism at large. In addition, our feelings and emotions towards food have been mediated via strangers' food reviews.

To conclude, digital food has become a new type of institution of everyday life practice, demonstrating distinguished dining processes, habits, norms, and rituals. Commercial digital platforms and their invisible capitalist control have fundamentally constructed the meaning, visibility, accessibility, knowledge, and public emotions about food. Digital food is not merely cultural, but more political and practical.

Submission ID

2238

When Right-wing Populism Becomes Distorted Public Health Communication: Tracing the Roots of Jair Bolsonaro's Epidemiological Denialism

Authors

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Mr. Joao Ozawa - University of Texas at Austin

Dr. Joe Straubhaar - University of Texas at Austin

Dr. Samuel Woolley - University of Texas at Austin

Abstract

This paper draws out thematic continuities between *right-wing populism as a communicative framework* and *epidemiological denialism*, defined during the COVID-19 pandemic as the systemic attempt to radically downplay the severity of the outbreak in order to minimize the public response (Aronnoff, 2020). Building on a comparative analysis of the central tropes of Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro's 2018 campaign and his public response to the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020-2021, we argue that Bolsonaro's political communication during the 2018 election and the 2020-2021 pandemic employs two key elements of right-wing populist ideology as it is theorized by Cas Mudde (2007), Michael Lind (2020), and others: *anti-elitism*, or the belief that the political establishment is inherently and irredeemably disconnected from the concerns of the common citizenry; and *anti-pluralism*, defined as the blaming of political, economic, or public health problems on scapegoat populations, particularly political or ethnic minorities.

Developing a concise but rigorous thematic analysis of Bolsonaro's own communication (through televised speeches and social media posts) combined with coverage of his 2018 campaign and his front-facing response to the pandemic by Brazilian news outlets, we will address how central anti-elitist and anti-pluralist strategies of the campaign were directly translated into his reaction to the COVID pandemic. These include the attempted discreditation of governmental bodies as hopelessly corrupt; the villainization of progressive activists as inflating the severity of economic and epidemiological crises to destroy national patrimony, particularly through the feminization of Brazilian men; and the foisting of blame for crises on foreigners and foreign governments (particularly China in the context of the COVID outbreak). Our ultimate goal is to provide an in-depth national case study of how communication bolstering epidemiological denialism is developed and propagated--an increasingly vital conversation as both right-wing populism and health misinformation continue to proliferate.

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Submission ID

2246

The Network Agenda Setting on Domestic Violence on China's Social Media: A Case Study of the Weibo Posts about Lhamo Incident

Authors

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Ms. Lili Huo - Communication University of China

Abstract

On September 14, 2020, the violence towards a Tibetan woman with over 720,000 followers on Douyin, the Chinese version of TikTok, by her ex-husband Tang inspired outrage on the social media in China (Lhamo Incident, hereinafter). That day Tang broke into Lhamo's house, doused her with gasoline, and lit her with a lighter. On September 30, Lhamo died in the hospital due to the severe injuries (more than 90% of her body severely burned). While the tragedy took place, Lhamo was livestreaming from her kitchen with over 400 followers watching, though the screen went dark, the scream resulting from violence was heard. There have been great amount of reporting and discussions on the social media since the local government of Jinchuan county released official information about Lhamo Incident on its Wechat public account "Safe Wei Jinchuan" on Sep. 17, 2020.

Based on network agenda setting (NAS), this thesis explores the characteristics of agenda setting of media and the public concerning Lhamo Incident on China's social media Weibo. Agenda setting theory, proposed by McCombs and Shaw in 1972 and been studied worldwide since then, states that the salience of objects and attributes can be transferred from the news media to the public. Lei Guo and Maxwell McCombs (2011) furthered the agenda setting theory into NAS. According to Guo, NAS is the application of network analysis to this research area could help to provide "a more detailed and richer understanding of the media and public agenda by mapping out the network relationships among various elements emphasized in the news coverage and other communication channels and retained by the public" (2012). Ever since, NAS has been discussed and applied by a long list of scholars to explore the agenda setting in the era of internet (e.g., Kim& Min 2015, Vargo &Guo 2017, Wang, Li, et al 2020).

Against this backdrop, this study attempts to explore how the agenda of the media and that of the public on Weibo about Lhamo Incident connected with and influenced each other to set the agenda about domestic violence on China's social media. The methodology includes content analysis and social network analysis of the 780 media posts and 2001 netizens' posts via python search with the key words "Lhamo" and "Internet celebrity Lhamo" posted from September 14th to October 7th, 2020, the major timeline of the Lhamo Incident. The content analysis helps dig out the topics and construct 13 coding units so as to construct an attribute network matrix of the agenda. In the social network analysis, we used UCINET analysis software to analyze the degree centrality, cohesive subgroups, and visualized network structure of both the media's agenda and the public's agenda, as well as their relationship.

Results show that the media agenda and public agenda on social media are related to a certain extent, and the time for the agenda setting on social media is greatly shortened. And the mutual influence between the media agenda and public agenda is mainly reflected in the flow of the core attribute groups, i.e., "Tang's photos and videos", "Negative Attitude Towards Tang", "Lhamo's Personal Situation". This shows that visual images are more likely to arouse the public's attention to and public opinion on domestic violence. What's more, the attribute "Negative Attitude Towards Tang" plays the role of connecting the attribute "Tang's photos and videos" and "Lhamo's Personal Situation". At last, it is argued that "gender conflict" is an important dimension of the network agenda setting about domestic violence, which on one hand analyzes the violence Lhamo suffered from her ex-husband and on the other hand provides further topics about gender such as gender roles, gender relations, love and marriage, etc.

Submission ID

2310

Endless Expansion and Fluid Freedom: Power Interaction between Video Platform Bilibili and Participatory Cultural Producers in the Process of Platform Transformation

Authors

Ms. Fengyuan Yang - Beijing University of Posts and Telecommunications

Ms. Miao Huang - Beijing University of Posts and Telecommunications

Abstract

In the process of platformization, there are four mainstream platforms construct and occupy the Chinese long video streaming market. Significantly, as one of these platforms, Bilibili is inherently different from others, since it has transformed from a niche ACG community to a comprehensive PUGC video platform through multiple transformations over the past 12 years, while continuing to serve as the main field of Chinese Internet culture, youth subculture and participatory culture. In recent years, fan culture, as an important part of youth subculture, has conspicuously shown its vitality in Chinese cyberspace. Fan-made video, an increasingly popular cultural production and a common object in fan culture studies, has also been integrated in the platform ecosystem.

This paper focuses on the relationship between Bilibili which continuously pursues mainstreaming and “uploaders” who created fan-made videos for certain celebrity. This relationship can be examined as a specific example of relations and flows of power between digital platform and cultural producers.

In terms of research methods, this paper adopts the concept of three key variables proposed by Nieborg D.B, Poell T, and Duffy B.E—platform evolution, cultural industry segments, and stages of production—to develop the framework. Taking a historical and interactive perspective to analyse materials and data collected from 1-year participant observation and semi-structured interviews, this paper explores specific practice of cultural production of fan-made video and the evolving power relationship between commercial interest-oriented, expanding digital platforms and emotional satisfaction-oriented, participating cultural producers in different stages of platform evolution.

The paper presents a conclusion that the digital platform Bilibili and fan-made video producers went through three processes of mutual selection, mutual dependence, and mutual construction, developed a relationship of dynamic but uneven symbiosis. During these

processes of power interaction, Bilibili has completed the goal of platform extension and transformation, fan-made video producers have obtained the satisfaction of emotional expression and cultural participation. Meanwhile, they have to face the problems and challenges brought about by their mutual dependence.

It is worth noting that although the video industry is more platform-dependent, especially in the phase of distribution, than other cultural industries (such as news or music). But fans, as poachers and nomadic readers, exchange their almost non-profit cultural production for emotional demands. They can not only deconstruct and poach in texts, but also among platforms. Through multi-platform distribution and "platform migration", fan-made video producers can effectively use various features of different platforms to meet their diverse needs. Although platforms have more initiative and are likely to change policy support after taking advantage of complementors' contribution, fan-made video producers are always good at flexibly creating their own meaning and cultural space during the ever unstable "nomadism", among texts and platforms.

Submission ID

2327

Europeanisation and media trust in the post-pandemic age of neo-globalization

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Abstract

The recent socio-political ruptures (e.g. Brexit), public health crisis (e.g. the Covid-19 pandemics), environmental crisis (e.g. as evinced by the COP26 meeting held in Glasgow between Oct-Nov 2021), have inaugurated a new post-pandemic era of neo-globalization. This challenging context impacts on the long-standing process of European integration, Europeanisation and the ongoing formation and sustainment of a European identity. Europe's investment in science and technological innovation to solve some of these issues (e.g. the development of climate engineering to 'fix' climate) serves as a grid to interpret Europe in action (Cassata and Lorenzini (2019) and ultimately promotes a process of

Europeanisation that capitalizes on the integration of transnational research collaboration efforts and the pursuit of scientific research excellence as its core value. However, as with all cultures, this European culture of scientific excellence relies on counter-stories, constitutive outsides, and contested areas, for example challenges related to the integration of peripheral countries, but even more so, to the representation of European citizens in policy as passive rather than as knowledge producers (Chakraborty & Giuffredi 2019). In other words, while technological and financial innovation advances neo-globalization process at the supra-EU level, its citizens are excluded as key stakeholders.

In this paper we set out to explore some of the implications, particularly related to Europeanisation and media communications, of this striking contradiction. Firstly, we will outline how, whilst European globalization thrives, Europeans increasingly shield themselves beneath domestic identities, either national or regional (Catalan independentism, or Brexit) (Castells 2002: 236) and Euroscepticism as a form of distrust in EU institutions thrives across European media, this issue being exacerbated by the weakness of a common European Public Sphere.

We will then argue that the process of European integration would require its citizens' trust rather than distrust. That is because trust has significant behavioral consequences (Strömbäck et al 2020), e.g. media trust was found to associate with compliance with all the recommended behaviors in pandemic influenza H1N1 2009 (Prati et al., 2011).

Therefore, in order to understand the role of trust in Europeanisation and Europeanity in the context of neo-globalisation and covid-19 pandemics, we will outline the different facets of trust that have characterised European media communication in recent times. By focusing on data from the standard Eurobarometer report on Public opinion in the European Union (Eurobarometer 2021), we will investigate how trust in media in general as well as trust in the information coming from different types of news media, both online and offline, can link to trust in European political institutions.

Through both this collation of the theoretical dimensions of Europeanisation (culture, science and technology, EU political Institutions, European Public Sphere, media industries) and of data on media trust, we will finally outline areas for intervention in media and communication strategies that directly impact and support efforts directed at fostering Europeanisation and Europeanity in the future.

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Submission ID

2400

From Boundary Collapsed to Boundary Restored: Theorizing Context Restoration on Social Media

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Abstract

It has been a decade since the proposition of “context collapse,” which describes the fact that social media flattens multiple audiences into one context (Marwick & boyd, 2011). A

growing body of research has shed light on context collapse and extends its notion in different aspects. For instance, context collapse can be split into context collusions (i.e., occurred intentionally) and context collisions (i.e., occurred accidentally) by the social actor's intentionality (Davis & Jurgenson, 2014). In addition, the notion of time collapse is introduced to understand the context collapse at the temporal dimension (Brandtzaeg & Lüders, 2018). However, the technological affordances on social media are becoming increasingly sufficient and convenient, so individuals can tailor their posts for the "imagined audiences." This study thus aims to examine how individuals restore contexts in the era of social media.

Supporting the dramaturgical theory (Goffman, 1959), existing literature has indicated that human beings are multi-faceted, so individuals have the desire to perform certain social roles in accord with the given context by adopting various boundary management strategies (Brandtzæg et al., 2011; Papacharissi, 2010; Petronio & Child, 2020). Considering the motivations and the capabilities they have, we argue that individuals are actively—rather than passively—restoring boundaries to construct social contexts for presenting their identities appropriately on social media. In particular, context restoration is conceptualized as the activities that individuals conduct to set the boundaries of a given context on social media. Context restoration describes how individuals adopt self-presentation strategies as well as privacy management strategies to match their posts with the imagined audiences.

To systematically comprehend context restoration, we in-depth interviewed 38 social media users in China from November 2021 to February 2022. The results suggest that restoring a specific context online is quite different from offline. On social media, individuals determine their posts firstly, based on which, they select the potential audiences and construct a context for what they are going to post. In short, individuals construct a context for their potential posts, rather than tailoring the content for the context. This study also unveiled the desire for building a fixed privacy space and the complexity of restoring contexts in public space. In general, these findings provide empirical evidence for understanding the concept of contextual restoration and contribute to the literature about impression management in computer-mediated communication.

Submission ID

2410

The effect of cognitive styles on fake news belief

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Abstract

The spread of fake news continues to be a threat to society, negatively affecting democratic institutions. Recent studies have observed the relationship between belief and different cognitive styles of processing information. Reflective thinking seems to be one of the characteristics that best favors the distinction between fake news and journalistic news (Bago et al., 2020; Bronstein et al., 2019; Pennycook & Rand, 2020), while intuitive thinking is more vulnerable to disinformation in general, namely “bullshits” or conspiracy theories (Barron et al., 2018; Stanley et al., 2020; Swami et al., 2014). While most of the literature focuses on the American political and social context, our study expands the scope of analysis to countries seldom studied, like Portugal, through a survey that evaluates the psychological profile of a convenience sample (N=712), revealing how the different cognitive styles influence the belief and dissemination of fake news.

Participants started by assessing credibility and by expressing their willingness to share 10 political fake news and 10 political news, on a 5-point scale. In the same questionnaire, participants were subjected to three tests: (1) Overclaiming Questionnaire, (2) Bullshit Exposure, and (3) Cognitive Reflection Test (Pennycook & Rand, 2019).

The results revealed that political news were more credible and more prone to be shared than political fake news, which seems to be a positive indicator. However, the level of receptivity to “bullshits” was, on average, higher than belief in fake news and equivalent to belief in news.

These results suggest that online disinformation, if taking formats other than the news format, might become more credible and misleading. Furthermore, receptivity to “bullshit” is positively correlated with belief and willingness to share fake news, without any association with journalistic news. Our results also reinforce the argument that analytical thinking can, in general, combat the consumption and dissemination of fake news and that subjects with intuitive thinking reveal a greater propensity to accept and spread fake news. No significant correlations were found between the ability to fake knowledge (overclaiming) and belief in fake news, contrary to what happened in other studies (Pennycook & Rand, 2019). Our results show that the way subjects process information seems to exert an

important influence on the belief and spread of fake news and should be considered when combating disinformation, planning media literacy actions or regulatory measures.

Submission ID

2437

Conspiracy Theories on Digital Platforms and their effects: The Case of Malala Yousafzai

Authors

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Abstract

It is commonly believed among general people, academics and journalists that people are now living in an 'age of conspiracy theories' (Oliver & Wood, 2014) and common citizens advocate and endorse the conspiracy theories at large range (Sunstein & Vermeule, 2009). It is argued that digital media might encourage the dissemination of conspiracies (Southwell, Thorson, & Sheble, 2018), but some studies have suggested otherwise (Uscinski, Atkinson, & DeWitt, 2018; Klein, Clutton, & Polito, 2018). In this study we want to investigate the effects of conspiracy theories which are getting popular with the help of digital media and determine if people are believing in these theories or not. For this purpose, we have taken the case of Malala Yousafzai. She is the world youngest and the only peace noble prize winner from Pakistan. Many different conspiracy theories are thriving about her getting shot by Taliban and her alleged connection with the CIA.

We used an experimental survey design with a sample of 485 respondents among which 173 got a positive video about Malala as stimulus, 158 were shown negative video about her and 154 were from control group with no video stimulus. Negative group got video stimulus that carried conspiracies regarding Malala Yousafzai, while positive group received stimulus with positive and motivational content about her. All three groups were presented with a survey containing positive and negative statements regarding Malala Yousafzai.

Based on previous literature we hypothesized that people who watched video containing conspiracy theories on digital media platforms would believe more on conspiracies than others. Our experimental survey confirmed the hypothesis as people who watched video containing conspiracies regarding Malala, expressed more negative feelings towards her. Another significant finding, however, was the absence of positive feelings for Malala in all three groups. It further reinforced our hypotheses that Pakistani users of digital media platforms are influenced by conspiracies prevalent on these platforms and watching any positive stimulus did not affect their already held negative views about Malala.

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2459

Framing the anti-vax movement in Romania in 24-hours news coverage television sites

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Abstract

Social media – through the aid of misinformation - breathed new life into several forms of extremism. In that sense, anti-vaxxers recognized its potential to drive social change

during the Covid-19 pandemic. In Romania, the Covid-19 vaccine hesitancy and the distrust of authorities has left immunization rates in the second lowest position in the European Union[1]. The anti-vaccination movement gained social authority through the voices of notorious political actors and through intense mediatization (Yanchenko, 2021, p.277). In Romania, the opposition party Alliance for the Union of Romanians (AUR) promoted anti-vaccination protests even at the Parliament and is currently ranked second in voting polls[2]. Thus, the manner through which the anti-vax discourse is framed by the media has an influence on the Romanian collective vaccine perception.

Our research proposes to analyze how 24-hours news coverage Romanian television sites framed the anti-vaccination movement. As framing highlights the relevance and importance of social issues by setting the public agenda (Scheufele, 1999, p.103), we consider relevant to explore the media frames that could influence the vaccination refusal in Romania.

Frames can be identified not only by the written text of journalists, but also by the way journalists choose their sources and their quotes, as they build their frames starting from the frames of the actors whom they quote. Journalism is, thus, “the result of a process of collective sense-making within the newsroom and a negotiation of meaning between journalists and sources” (Brüggemann, 2014, p.65). Thereby, the framing analysis of the television sites allows, in fact, a more in-depth analysis of the general perception of the civil but also political actors on the anti-vaccination in the country.

The analysis employs the conceptual framing model proposed by the researcher Robert Entman (1993, p. 52), based on four functions/components of frames, that define problems, diagnose causes, make moral judgments and suggest remedies. The aimed research questions are: How do journalists from these Romanian TV channels frame the anti-vaccination movement in the news? What kind of frames do they build?

The research method we apply is the content analysis, as the analysis categories we propose are: political beliefs; religious beliefs; conspiracy theories. Our corpus consists of 80 news items relating to the anti-vaccination movement published on the websites of 24-hours news channels *Digi 24*, *Antena 3*, *România TV* and *Realitatea Plus*, between January 2021 and January 2022.

Our research shows that the journalists of these television channels predominantly construct three frames: the frame of “anti-vax movement as a religious choice”, the frame of “anti-vax movement as a political issue”, the frame of “blaming anti-vax believers”.

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2498

Differences in strategic social media use among communication scholars in Germany and the US

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Abstract

According to Bourdieu (1992) agents can invest strategically into different forms of capital in order to gain reputation within their field. Bourdieu describes three basic capitals: social (networks), cultural (knowledge) and economical (finances), which can be used to obtain symbolic capital (recognition by others). In the field of science symbolic capital is traditionally displayed in the form of citations, invitations to give talks as well as titles and prizes.

Nowadays scholars can actively try to increase their symbolic capital in the digital realm as well, for example, by being active on social media. By tending to their social media presence and posting content on a regular basis, they become more visible to others, which is the basis for symbolic capital, but can also share their publications and knowledge (increase cultural capital) and get in contact with scholars and different publics (social capital). The digital world thus serves to increase and enhance formerly offline gained capital. Strategies to increase one's capital online using social media are among others influenced by the national and cultural context an agent is embedded in (Allgaier, Dunwoody, Brossard, Lo & Peters, 2013). In a comparative study of Taiwanese, American and German natural scientists, engineers and life scientists, German scholars were the least likely to be found in online social networks and study results generally show, that German scholars are in comparison to US-based scholars rather reluctant users of social media in a work-related context (Lo 2016). The aim of this paper is to identify the role of these cultural differences by comparing the strategic usage of social media to increase individual capital among communication scholars in German-speaking countries with those of US-based scholars.

For this research 32 qualitative media biographical interviews with communication scholars (16 in Germany and 16 in the US) from different status groups were conducted. They were asked how their communication had changed since they first started studying and what communication strategies, they found most useful for career advancement in the field of communication science. The interviews were analyzed with the qualitative content analysis by Mayring (2010).

The results of the study show that social media usage in a work-related context was a lot more relevant for the US-based scholars as their usage was more integrated into their everyday life. Especially increasing social capital by communicating with other scholars, for example via Twitter, was highly important. They also used social media intensively to communicate with students. This might stem from the fact that student's tuition plays a more important role for financing and thus the sustainment of the scholarly system in the US than in Germany. Thus, not just the symbolic capital gained from social exchange with other scholars is important, as it is mostly the case among German scholars, but also that derived from students, whose judgement plays a much bigger role in the attribution of symbolic capital than in Germany.

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