

Characteristics and Operational Mechanisms of Public Opinion Guidance in the New Media Environment: Postprint

Authors: Tian Tianyu

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Abstract

In recent years, new media has rapidly developed with robust technological support, permeating and encompassing various facets of social life. In particular, it has become a significant catalyst in the formation and evolution of public opinion, exhibiting distinctive characteristics in public opinion guidance that differ from traditional approaches. Therefore, when undertaking public opinion guidance operations, it is essential to keep pace with the times, enhance adaptability to the new media environment, improve public opinion guidance strategies, and thereby construct a harmonious and stable social public opinion environment that showcases the advantageous role of new media. This paper will focus on investigating the features and operational strategies of public opinion guidance within the new media environment.

Full Text

Characteristics and Operational Strategies of Public Opinion Guidance in the New Media Environment

Abstract: In recent years, new media has rapidly developed with strong technological support, penetrating various aspects of social life and becoming a crucial driver in the formation and evolution of public opinion. This has endowed public opinion guidance with distinct characteristics that differ from the past. Consequently, operational strategies for guiding public opinion must keep pace with the times, enhance adaptability to the new media environment, improve guidance tactics, and thereby foster a harmonious and stable social opinion climate that demonstrates the advantageous role of new media. This paper focuses on examining the features and operational strategies of public opinion guidance in the new media environment.

Keywords: new media communication; diversification of public opinion; subject of public opinion; public opinion guidance

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Public opinion represents a form of general consciousness that has accompanied human society since its inception, reflecting the authentic voices deep within people's hearts. It constitutes a vital and undeniable social force in both ancient and modern times, exerting profound influence on human society—an influence that is constrained by communication channels and environmental contexts.

2.1 Achieving Diversification of Public Opinion

Through public opinion, we can perceive various dimensions of society. In traditional contexts, public opinion occupied a dominant position, establishing a fixed pattern of social opinion that rendered guidance efforts characterized by one-way, linear transmission. Accordingly, social managers typically employed blocking or evasive approaches when confronting public sentiment issues to control dissemination and address undesirable opinions, thereby fulfilling the government's role in media administration. The contemporary landscape has undergone dramatic transformation, emphasizing media management of public opinion. Particularly in the new media environment, traditional mass media no longer serves as the sole channel for opinion dissemination. Faced with an emerging multitude of voices, relevant authorities must fundamentally transform their management philosophy and adjust their methodologies. Recognizing that coercive opinion control may trigger backlash, they must establish novel response frameworks, shifting from opinion management to opinion guidance while actively promoting diversified advancement in guidance methods to propel the continued development of the new media era.

1. Characteristics Distinguishing New Media Communication from the Traditional Media Era

New media is a form of media based on digital network technology and mobile communication technology, utilizing networks, wireless communication channels, and various terminal devices to provide information services to the general public. Compared with traditional media, this new communication paradigm exhibits marked differences and novel features:

First, **interactivity**. The rapid development of new media has revolutionized information transmission, with two-way, interactive non-linear communication representing its most prominent characteristic. Unlike the one-way linear transmission of traditional media, new media communication possesses the advantages of bidirectionality and non-linearity, focusing greater attention on audience autonomy and effective feedback. This better satisfies public demands

for media openness, significantly improving information transmission speed and effectiveness.

Second, **openness**. New media communication features notable openness with low entry barriers, where information sources may be ordinary citizens. Consequently, the general audience can directly participate in the information dissemination process, enjoying greater rights to know and to speak, and receiving the latest information in real time. However, precisely because of this characteristic, public opinion has become unprecedentedly active, requiring more robust guidance efforts; otherwise, it may introduce hidden dangers or significant risks to social stability and the opinion ecology.

Third, **self-dissemination**. In the new media environment, subjective creativity has been effectively demonstrated, promoting the development of mass self-dissemination. This has elevated grassroots transmission to a prominent position, deepening interaction between media and civilians and ushering in the era of self-media.

2.2 The Public as the Subject of Public Opinion

Under the traditional media paradigm, the dissemination of public opinion content required prior processing through mainstream media channels, with information filtered before being transmitted to the masses. However, in the new media environment, previous patterns of opinion and information transmission have fundamentally changed—anyone can become both a creator and recipient of public opinion, expressing emotions and voicing opinions directly within the discourse. This has enhanced the openness of public expression. Consequently, public opinion has become an emotional proxy, susceptible to various irrational factors. Yet we must also recognize that without rational guidance methods as necessary support, many extreme or erroneous ideas may spread widely and ultimately become majority opinions, jeopardizing social stability and harmony. The traditional method of measuring public opinion and assessing popular will relied on quantitative analysis; if we continue using numerical predominance as the evaluation criterion in the new media environment, pseudo-public opinion may easily emerge, undermining the effectiveness of opinion development.

2.3 New Media Guiding Public Opinion

In any form of social management, disharmonious factors or conflicts inevitably arise. Particularly against the backdrop of rapid social development and reform, such contradictions and imbalances are unavoidable, generating numerous social issues. In fact, these problems represent an inevitable aspect of historical development, and traditional media management could typically coordinate them effectively. Through mutual adjustment among media, social management departments, and the general populace, contradictions could be significantly alleviated and equilibrium maintained. However, in the new media environment, the real-time transmission capability of the internet means that many social is-

sues trigger ripple effects, with netizens from different regions participating and similar problems being drawn in, sparking large-scale popular will. If any aspect of these issues is handled inappropriately, they become focal points of public opinion. In this context, we must leverage the positive role of new media in opinion guidance, transform traditional perspectives and singular management models, better expose social problems, and enable the populace to adapt to the new media era as qualified participants in opinion guidance.

3.1 Empowering the Public with Discourse Power and Leveraging New Media Advantages

The rapid development of new media has endowed public opinion guidance with new characteristics. Against this backdrop, we can no longer continue employing previous operational methods. Instead, we must grasp the communication features of new media, accommodate contemporary demands for novelty and difference, provide a more open environment for full expression, and approach the positive value of new media with tolerance. In the new media context, we must empower the public with greater discourse power through modern technological support while demonstrating respect for them. This will better harness the public's positive role in social affairs management and facilitate self-actualization. Many viewpoints prove remarkably insightful compared with mainstream media, possessing strong news value, while some information provided by citizens constitutes even more objective and accurate data, demonstrating the importance of empowering public discourse. Traditional media communication always championed information dissemination by elites; under new media principles, this concept has been completely overturned. Although a single voice cannot serve as valid evidence, the synthesis and optimization of information and opinions from the majority produce a powerful "floodlight effect" that ultimately reveals the truth.

3.2 Enhancing Supervision and Improving Emergency Mechanisms

With social development and evolution, the frequency of crisis events has gradually increased, and incidents affecting the vital interests of the masses have garnered widespread societal attention. If people cannot obtain sufficient information through media channels, numerous rumors will emerge, adversely affecting proper event management. Faced with much negative information circulating online, we cannot consider deletion as a solution. Instead, we must investigate the sources and truth behind this information, understand the underlying problems, propose targeted responses, and demonstrate high concern for people's livelihoods. Relevant departments must actively improve emergency mechanisms, establishing emergency management plans to enable full and effective communication with the public immediately when opinion crises occur. Simultaneously, they must coordinate with integrated media and superior organizations to release objective and accurate official information. Specifically,

this requires active online responses alongside appropriate offline event handling, and may even involve inviting netizens to participate in event investigations to enhance credibility, safeguard public interests, control the opinion guidance landscape, and increase transparency in event management.

3.3 Strengthening Mass Media Responsibility and Enhancing Credibility

Traditional mass media commanded high credibility among audiences due to its strong influence in terms of openness and broad reach. During the rapid development of new media, much audience attention has been diverted, giving rise to many instances of sensationalism aimed at capturing public interest. Regardless of media format, when facing popular online issues, media must remain calm and reflective, and must not desperately excavate so-called “hot topics” to cater to the public merely to boost ratings or exposure. Such excavated content, unable to become positive cultural focal points, will gradually disappear over time. Some new media platforms broadcast excessive vulgar and socially harmful content, wasting media resources while failing to promote social stability and harmony. In response, relevant departments must scientifically supervise and manage mass media, enhance media responsibility consciousness, comprehensively curb blind sensationalism, and promote socialist core values.

Public opinion guidance is a matter of profound significance and far-reaching impact—on one hand closely related to national policies and social stability, and on the other directly connected to the vital interests and actual needs of the broad populace. Effective opinion guidance helps maintain social stability and safeguard public interests. Against the backdrop of rapidly developing and maturing new media technologies, we must elevate the requirements for opinion guidance, adapt to the new media environment, and optimize the opinion climate. To ensure effective opinion guidance, we must carefully analyze its novel characteristics in the new media environment and actively propose optimized operational methods to properly manage opinion incidents.

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(Author’ s affiliation: University of Sheffield)

Note: Figure translations are in progress. See original paper for figures.

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