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## Ethical Analysis of News Communication in the We-Media Era: Postprint

**Authors:** Mao Xiaofei

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### Abstract

With the rapid development of information technology and Internet technology, numerous self-media platforms such as Weibo and WeChat have flourished. Characterized by the convenience and democratization of information dissemination, self-media has become a primary channel for people to obtain news information, heralding the arrival of the self-media era. While the emergence of self-media has enriched people's lives and enhanced the speed and convenience of information acquisition, the dissemination of news information through self-media also entails journalistic ethical issues such as fake news, the proliferation of vulgar content, and media trial phenomena. Investigating the ethical issues in news communication during the self-media era, identifying the causes of ethical anomie in journalism, and proposing pathways for ethical construction in news communication within this context hold significant practical importance.

### Full Text

#### Abstract

With the rapid development of information technology and internet technology, numerous we-media platforms such as Weibo and WeChat have emerged. Characterized by convenient and democratized information dissemination, we-media has become the primary channel through which people obtain news information, ushering in the we-media era. While we-media has enriched people's lives and enhanced the speed and convenience of information access, it has also given rise to ethical issues in news communication, including false news, vulgar information flooding, media trial phenomena, and other concerns. Exploring these ethical problems, identifying the causes of ethical anomie, and proposing pathways for ethical construction in we-media era news communication hold significant practical importance.

**Keywords:** we-media; news communication; ethics; anomie

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**Author:** Mao Xiaofei

## Introduction

The development and popularization of internet and information technology have made we-media platforms such as Weibo and WeChat the mainstream media of our time. In this era, everyone has a voice and serves as both disseminator and audience of information, significantly enhancing the freedom of news communication and exerting considerable impact on traditional news media. News communication in the we-media age has become simple and fast, with increasingly diverse types of information dissemination. Individuals can publish substantial information through a single WeChat public account, often firsthand accounts of personal experiences, which highlights the importance of timeliness in we-media news communication.

## 1. Manifestations of Ethical Anomie in We-Media Era News Communication

Ethical anomie in we-media news communication seriously confuses public perception, misguides value orientations, disrupts daily life, and undermines healthy online discourse environments. The author has identified four primary manifestations: false news and rumor-mongering, vulgar information flooding, media trial phenomena, and unrestrained human flesh searches.

### 1.1 False News and Rumor-Mongering

The convenience of publishing and disseminating news information in the we-media era enables anyone to release news, making false information easily produced and rapidly spread through Weibo, WeChat, and other platforms via forwarding, commenting, and sharing, thereby creating hot topics that confuse audiences and disrupt lives. For instance, WeChat Moments frequently contains information related to scientific knowledge and health issues that can seriously mislead the public.

### 1.2 Vulgar Information Flooding

Certain we-media outlets, driven by economic interests, cater to audiences with lowbrow tastes and vulgar aesthetics, disregarding media responsibilities and professional ethics by publishing low-quality news content involving violence, fraud, and especially privacy violations of celebrities through stalking and secret

photography to generate high click rates and attention. Such vulgar news dissemination severely transgresses ethical boundaries, violates fundamental journalistic morality, corrupts social values, and impedes the spread of positive social energy.

### **1.3 Media Trial Phenomena**

Media trial phenomena occur when news media create a public opinion environment that supersedes normal judicial procedures, delivering unjust verdicts on reporting subjects and thereby affecting judicial fairness. In the we-media era, the low threshold for information publication allows any netizen to express opinions on events, leading to excessive amplification and packaging of certain details. This presents the public with vague or one-sided reports, creates pressure on judicial proceedings, and interferes with normal trials—essentially using the intense public opinion environment fostered by we-media to disrupt independent judicial judgment.

### **1.4 Unrestrained Human Flesh Searches**

Human flesh searches emerged alongside network development and popularization, leveraging collective power to obtain information beyond individual search capabilities while emphasizing interaction among netizens. With the advent of the we-media era, such searches have migrated to Weibo, WeChat, and other platforms, characterized by instrumentality, efficiency, participation, diversity, and broad reach. Although they can solve many problems through network power, they easily involve personal privacy, raising numerous ethical issues. Human flesh searches involve numerous netizens forwarding and sharing extensive private information, representing a clear manifestation of ethical anomie.

## **2. Analysis of Causes of Ethical Anomie in We-Media Era News Communication**

Causes of ethical anomie in we-media news communication are multifaceted, stemming from both external environments and inherent we-media defects. Analyzing these causes provides an effective pathway for ethical construction.

### **2.1 Excessive Pursuit of Economic Interests**

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### **2.2 Weakening of the Gatekeeper Role**

The “gatekeeper” in news communication refers to journalists, editors, and planners who filter and select news information from their professional standpoint, directly determining news content. The we-media era has broken the monopoly of traditional news dissemination, allowing everyone to publish information.

This democratization has gradually weakened the gatekeeper function, enabling anyone to release statements and spread news through we-media platforms.

### **2.3 Inherent Ethical Defects of We-Media**

While we-media has promoted democratized information dissemination and social development, its inherent characteristics harbor ethical risks. First, we-media information is fragmented—often consisting of snippets lacking complete news elements, which prevents comprehensive factual presentation and allows malicious actors to exploit ambiguities through exaggeration. Second, different platforms have distinct publication and acquisition characteristics. On Weibo, information acquisition requires following accounts based on personal preferences, creating information silos. WeChat Moments, conversely, forms a closed discourse space among acquaintances with high trust levels, where false information can easily ferment into rumors.

## **3. Strategies for Ethical Construction in We-Media Era News Communication**

Addressing ethical anomie requires examining its manifestations and causes to develop strategies that restore healthy online discourse environments.

### **3.1 Government's Leading Role in Establishing Ethical Norms**

Government holds absolute authority in curbing false news and rumors. First, it must play a leading role by increasing transparency of authoritative information, leveraging we-media platforms to contain rumor dissemination, and guiding public opinion to maintain a harmonious and stable online environment. Second, government should establish we-media news communication ethical norms that serve public information needs, advocate for self-sustaining dissemination standards, and contribute to the social ethical framework.

### **3.2 Enhancing Public Media Literacy and Promoting Media Convergence**

The we-media era has dismantled traditional news communication mechanisms, making everyone both disseminator and audience. To fundamentally address ethical anomie, we must improve public media literacy through strengthened training, enabling everyone to become a news communication “gatekeeper.” Additionally, while we-media dominates, its development requires integration with traditional media. Only through mutual supplementation can they jointly construct a healthy public opinion environment and prevent ethical anomie.

### **3.3 Building and Perfecting Constraint Mechanisms to Enhance We-Media Credibility**

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## 4. Conclusion

The ethical anomie issues in we-media era news communication are undeniable, manifesting as false information proliferation, vulgar content saturation, media trial phenomena, and unrestrained human flesh searches. These problems primarily stem from excessive profit pursuit, weakening gatekeeper functions, and inherent ethical defects of we-media. Therefore, we must leverage government leadership to establish ethical norms, enhance public media literacy, promote media convergence and industry self-discipline, and build robust constraint mechanisms to enhance we-media credibility. Through these measures, we can foster a harmonious and healthy online public opinion and news communication environment.

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(Author's Affiliation: School of Culture and Media, Huanghuai University)

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

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