Public Discussions on Climate Crisis in the "New Media of Government": Trends, Dilemmas, and Pathways

-- Taking the Extraordinary Rainstorm"7-20" Events in Zhengzhou, Henan Province as an Example

Shuyuan Wang

Department of Political Science and Administrative Sciences, Sichuan Agricultural University, Chengdu, Sichuan,611130, China

2845422545@qq.com

Abstract. In the ever-changing era of all-media development, the new government media has accelerated its development and played an irreplaceable role in promoting the openness of government affairs and guiding online public opinion. However, as a product of the integration of government agencies and new media, new government media has encountered difficulties and challenges in specific communication practices. This paper analyses the dilemmas encountered by new government media in climate crisis communication and proposes solutions regarding role positioning, content improvement, and increasing public participation in climate crisis public issue discussions.

Keywords: New media; New media in government; Climate crisis; Burdensome rainfall event in Henan.

1. Introduction

From 08:00 on 20 July to 06:00 on 21 July 2021, Henan was hit by a rare extreme rainstorm. This extreme heavy precipitation event occurred against the backdrop of global warming,Global warming has exacerbated the instability of the climate system, which is the root cause of the frequent and increasing intensity of extreme weather and climate events. The media and the media (including mainstream media, new media, and self-published media) have made more people aware of this event and have contributed to public discussion of the climate crisis, taking a proactive stance in the public discourse.

2. Data sources

Table 1. Data integration

Research Institutions	Project name	Research time	Research Subjects	Scope of the research	Research Methodology	Sample size (person)
China Climate Communication Project Centre	2012 Chinese Public Climate Awareness Data	July-August 2012	Adults	Mainland China Urban and rural	Sample research method	4169
	Research Report on Public Perceptions of Climate Change and Climate Communication in China 2017	August - October 2017	Residents aged 18-70	All of China (except for Hong Kong, Macau, and Taiwan))	Sample research method	4025

A search of resources revealed three data on Chinese public awareness of climate change in recent years: the Chinese Public Climate Awareness Survey data, the Chinese Public Climate Change

Communication Awareness Status Report 2017, and the 2017 Chinese Public Climate Awareness Data Segmentation Study. After collating the data from the survey, we found that the 2017 China Public Climate Awareness Data Segmentation Study aims to compare and study Chinese urban and rural residents' perceptions of climate pairs. However, as this paper focuses on the perceptions of the Chinese public on climate change pairs, only the first two data are analyzed and analyzed. All survey data can be downloaded from the China Climate Communication Centre website. The survey organizations, project names, and research practices are listed in Table 1, and the same organizations used a sampling method to represent the Chinese public better.

3. Perspectives on public opinion on climate change published on new media platforms

3.1 New Media Perspectives: Public Perceptions of Climate Change in China

The results of the 2012 survey on the Chinese public's knowledge of climate by the China Climate Communication Project Centre (see Table 2) This shows that the overall awareness of climate change has decreased over time, which means the public is less concerned about climate change.

Table 2. Percentage of public knowledge of the climate in China, 2012

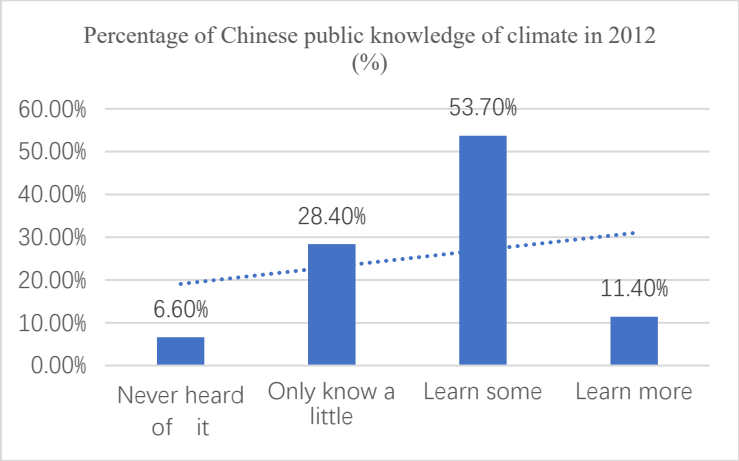
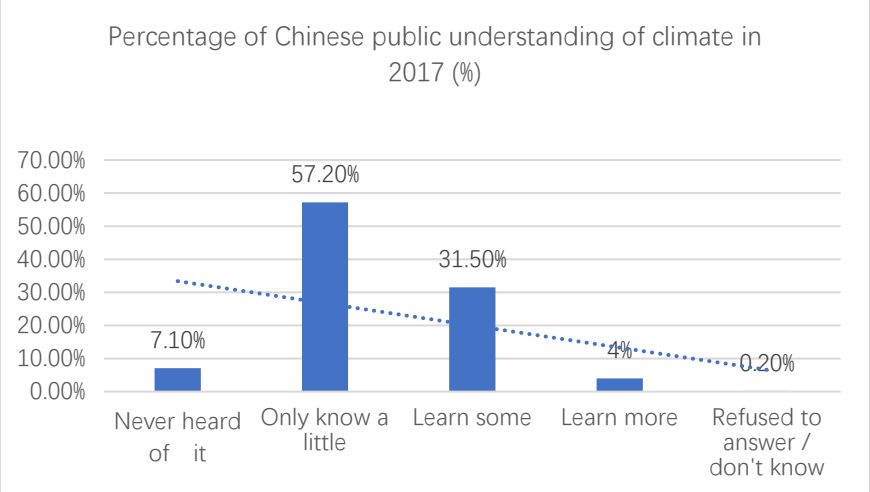


Table 3. Percentage of public awareness of climate in China, 2017



3.2 New media orientation and factors influencing public climate perception in China

In China,two main factors affect the public's perception of the climate crisis : the lack of government propaganda (new government media) and the over-opinionisation of the media (including traditional media, new media, and self-published media). In the case of the "7-20" heavy rainstorm

in Zhengzhou, Henan Province, there were problems with the new government media and the media. Firstly, the new governmental media reported on the problems and needed more professional new media opinion managers; they needed responses to general questions; they could not collect public opinion and the ability to operate and publicize new media. All these problems lead to the public needing to understand the truth and can even lead to a significant public opinion crisis, causing the public to lose trust in the government. Secondly, the problems presented by the media in reporting the incident are mainly over-opinionisation, tampering with the truth for the sake of traffic flow or even disinformation, and the pursuit of speed at the expense of objectivity and impartiality, which can lead to the public's misperception of the truth of the incident.

4. New government media advocacy and climate policy

4.1 Current status of China's new media communication climate policy for government affairs

The new government media is a compound that integrates government agencies and new media. It creates a platform for publishing information, serving the public, explaining policies, showing results, and interacting with them, mainly utilizing social media and self-publishing platforms, and has a strong influence and credibility because of its official background.

From a practical point of view, the new media of government mainly relies on the Internet as the basis and then differentiates the information platform of e-government, which mainly revolves around customers as the core, starting from their actual needs and providing personalized services according to different people, so that the functional advantages of the new media platform of government are essentially brought into play.

According to the 50th edition of CNNIC's Statistical Report on the Development of China's Internet, as of June 2022, the average weekly online time of Chinese Internet users had reached 29.5 hours, the usage rate of short video users was 91.5%, and the user scale reached 962 million.

In the context of new media, short videos, which "take only 15 seconds to get on a hot search", have become the most popular and widespread way to pass the time and leisure.However, it seems that the promotion of climate policy in the new media does not fit this new trend. For example, fewer than 20 media outlets promote climate policy on the ShakeOut platform, and the highest number of likes is only 417,000, with no videos having more than a million likes.

Table 4 shows the basic information of mainstream ShakeYin accounts promoting climate policy. Among the political new media platforms, CCTV News, for example, has 150 million ShakeYin followers, and as of February 2023, there were more than 7,361 entries, which is a significant figure. However, there is only one video on climate policy, and it only gets short-term traffic but does not promote the policy. At the same time, the proportion of videos with less than 10,000 likes is high, while there are fewer original works, and many of them are directly transported to news reports or reproduced government propaganda films, and so forth. In terms of the results presented, the number of followers has not been converted into publicity, and the public's interest and enthusiasm in climate issues have not been aroused. The current climate policy advocacy work needs to include new media dynamics and is less effective than possible.

However, on closer inspection, its promotion of climate policy has only one short video and has yet to convert its high-traffic promotional videos into long-term results successfully. From the results presented, the number of followers does not translate into publicity effects and fails to arouse public interest and enthusiasm in engaging with climate issues. Overall, the current stage of climate policy advocacy lacks the vitality of new media, and the publicity effect could be better.

Table 4. Basic information on new government media accounts promoting climate policy Jitterbug.

Current status of Shake Shack operations in government new media (partial) as of February 2023						
Serial number	Name	Number of fans	The theme of the work	Number of likes	Number of comments	Official certification
1	CCTV News	1,500,000	"Xi Jinping announces new initiatives to tackle climate change."	471,000	164 articles	CCTV News official shakeout number
2	Ministry of Ecology and Environment	1,019,000	Oppose any trade and technology barriers in the name of the climate crisis.	1177	57 articles	Ministry of Ecology and Environment official shakeout number
3	China Securities Journal	4,264,000	China completes the world's largest carbon market	315	5 articles	China Securities Journal Official Shakeout Number
4	Rowhead Video	4,100,000	Does China need UK incentives to meet its climate commitments?	420	4 articles	Official account of the Defence Times video section
5	Beijing Daily News	9,939,000	Biden signs several climate policies and delivers a speech.	136	0 articles	Beijing Daily News
6	China News Network	2,5325,000	Xie Zhenhua: 20th National Congress makes clear plans for China's future climate action and global governance	607	22 articles	Official account of China News Network

4.2 Shortcomings of new government media in reporting the climate crisis

(1) Lack of research and analysis of public climate awareness

The poor public opinion management skills of those responsible for communication through new media platforms have not developed the ability to think systematically and differently about managing crises, and they have not accurately grasped the new path of public opinion management of online climate crises in the new government media environment, which can make it challenging to carry out propaganda work in the new government media in response to a sudden climate crisis.

(2) Climate crisis awareness in the context of new government media is still immature

When the climate crisis happened, the core issues of the climate crisis were ignored or passively responded to, and even some new government media outlets, as usual, based their thinking on government documents and made up nonsense, producing reports and commentaries on the climate crisis that lacked depth and substance.

(3) New government media cannot collect public opinion in response to sudden climate crisis events

The imperfection of its system nowadays leads to the new government media often being caught in the whirlpool of public opinion.

5. Responses and future pathways for public participation in climate issues in the era of new media for government affairs

On 27 December 2018, the General Office of the State Council issued the Opinions on Promoting the Healthy and Orderly Development of New Media for Government Affairs. The document indicates the need to continuously promote the online government's ability to perform its duties and make every effort to build an online government that is convenient and beneficial to the people.In light of this, the new government media, which plays a vital role in communicating the events of the climate crisis and encouraging public participation in climate issues, has to focus on the following aspects.

5.1 Focus on the comprehensive quality of the new political media

(1) Establish a professional new media team. Relevant government departments adjust their internal structure and cultivate a professional new media operation team for government affairs so that the new media for government affairs can become a powerful platform for public discussion.

(2) Improve public awareness of climate crisis emergency response. Emergency management, fire and rescue departments, and local governments should, in their daily work, actively promote the general knowledge of climate crises through two micro and many other media platforms to enhance the public's credibility towards the government and to enable the public to form a level of awareness about China's ability to respond to climate crisis emergency rescue.

(3) Promote collaboration and communication between the climate research sector and new media platforms. Promote linkage mechanisms and do their best to disseminate knowledge about the climate crisis. Promote the classification and integration of platform accounts, and clean up redundant accounts to promote synergy of publicity.

5.2 Efficient planning of communication content at the climate content level

The new government media aims to provide "one-stop" services, so it is necessary to build a vertical and horizontal linkage of the new government media communication system.

(1) Establish a series of short climate-related videos to provide timely updates on the relevant knowledge needed on global climate issues following global climate change trends. Specifically, this includes the hazards of the global climate crisis, climate-related laws and regulations, and national policies to form a well-organized, diverse, and easily understood series of works on climate issues comprehensively.

(2) Expand the form of dissemination of climate content. On the path of spreading climate knowledge in the new government media, it is necessary to understand and analyze public discourse habits and speaking methods.

(3) Establish a psychological assessment mechanism for the public in the new government media and conduct regular research on the public's perception of climate change. To a certain extent, this will create a controlled awareness of the climate crisis and tension in society, help guide the public, and deepen their understanding of the climate crisis by capitalizing on their herd mentality and fearful demands.

5.3 Rational use of new media communication platforms to enhance public participation

In network development, with the idea of system integration and integrated development thinking, communication and cooperation between different government affairs new media platforms should be strengthened to effectively integrate resources, production elements, and communication media resources to promote the pioneering development of new government affairs media platforms.

(1)The new government media is also designed to interact more with the public by incorporating online thinking into creating new government media communications such as WeChat and short video platforms.

(2) Rational use of big data to accurately carry out stratified propaganda targeting critical groups of people and targeting audiences according to their age, gender, occupation, education level, and other differentiated situations.

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