

Research on the Reversal Phenomenon of Online Public Opinion in the Post-Truth Era

--The "Fat Cat" Public Opinion Case as an Example

Mengqi Zhang

School of Literature, Anhui University of Finance and Economics, Bengbu, Anhui, China

Abstract: "Post-truth" is full of negative effects of the current network public opinion - ignoring the truth, disregarding the facts, dissolving the authority, position first, coupled with the frequent occurrence of global emergencies and hotspot events, the netizens wrapped up in group emotions have to join the public opinion of the network world carnival, this phenomenon also provides an environment for rumors to grow secretly, seriously undermining the harmony and stability of the Internet ecosystem. This phenomenon also provides an environment for network rumors to grow secretly, which seriously undermines the harmony and stability of the Internet ecology. In this paper, we take the "fat cat" incident as the starting point to analyze the impact, evolutionary causes and countermeasures of the popular public opinion events.

Keywords: Post-truth Era; Opinion Reversal; Fat Cat Incident; Media Ethics.

1. Introduction

Driven by the rapid development of self-media and "traffic economy", the network public opinion ecology in the post-truth era gradually shows a trend of "weak facts, strong emotions", i.e., emotions often override facts, making it difficult to judge the authenticity of news. Under the background of this era, the public is not a "one-way person" who simply accepts the reality, nor is it a "rational person" who pursues prudent thinking, but rather, under the double influence of personal consciousness and emotional incitement, it presents a more complex appearance. This phenomenon is further exacerbated by the high activity of social media, which makes "truth give way to emotion to a certain extent". When faced with the truth, the public is more inclined to make judgments based on personal feelings or selective reception, while rational thinking and cognitive decision-making take a back seat. Therefore, in the post-truth era, emotional appeals and established stereotypes are often more important than facts and objectivity. And the governance of online public opinion is an important part of the modernization of the national governance system and governance capacity, and it poses a severe test for the government's comprehensive governance capacity. In order to respond to the needs of the times and create a clean and positive online ecology, it has become an inevitable choice in the post-truth era to explore a collaborative governance path led by the government with the participation of multiple actors.

2. Characteristics of Public Opinion Event Communication in the Post-Truth Era

2.1. Significant Trend Towards "Fragmentation"

The public's demand for information on public opinion events is significant, and this has been widely reported by mainstream media, self-media and other diversified platforms. However, the "fragmented" nature of information

dissemination channels has led to a corresponding "fragmentation" of information content. This "fragmented" mode of dissemination has led the public to be guided by the perspectives and contents of media reports in the sea of information, making it difficult to fully grasp and verify the truth of the incident within a limited period of time. Due to the differences in the degree of rationality of netizens and their different focuses of attention, some netizens may unilaterally believe that "the media is the truth" and make personal preferences and value judgments accordingly. This makes it difficult for the general public to access and manage such information, and to analyze and extract the real situation from it. As a result, in public opinion events, the public tends to focus more on the emotional consumption of the news itself. On the other hand, the rise of social media has broken the monopoly of traditional media on discourse, allowing for a diversity of voices and more details to emerge in the course of events, leading to the phenomenon of "reversal" that often occurs in news reports in the mass media.

2.2. Increased "Fissionability"

The arrival of the Internet era, especially the increasing rise of social media, has changed the way of information dissemination of traditional media, presenting the characteristics of fragmentation of information content, real-time dissemination speed and blip in the scope of dissemination. In the fast-paced modern society, the audience's information needs are easier and faster, but it also causes to a certain extent that the audience is unable to understand the comprehensive information, and it is easy to cause the phenomenon of biased public opinion in hot events. In addition, network public opinion in the post-truth era appears to be more complex and changeable, mainly manifested in the co-existence of diversity and uncontrollability, complexity and uncertainty of police-related public opinion information. In a non-homogeneous public opinion environment, the collision and impact of diversified viewpoints, "the fusion of old and new media, and the confusion of the truth of events" make the dissemination of online public opinion present heterogeneous characteristics.

In this process, facts and emotions, opinions and truths are intertwined, both related and contrasted, forming a conflict and symbiosis unique to the transition period. In the era of social media, under the combined effect of multiple social factors, the dissemination and fermentation of specific information through the Internet may result in the counter-phase symbiosis of the dissemination of police-related online public opinion, or even the distortion of information, which in turn affects the public's cognition and leads to the "fission" dissemination of online public opinion.

2.3. "High-speed" Dissemination Rate

In public opinion events, the characteristic of high-speed dissemination is particularly significant, which highlights the uniqueness and complexity of information dissemination in the context of the information age. Once a public opinion event occurs, relevant information immediately spreads rapidly through Internet platforms with almost no time delay. No matter news websites, social media or various forums, they can push the event information to the users' eyes in a very short time. This immediacy and swiftness has prompted public opinion events to attract widespread attention and discussion within a short period of time, which in turn has a far-reaching impact on the development and outcome of the events. High-speed dissemination is not only reflected in the speed, but also in the wide range of dissemination. As the scope of dissemination continues to expand, the influence of public opinion events gradually increases, and may even trigger chain reactions, further aggravating the complexity and uncertainty of the events. In addition, the high speed of communication provides a platform for real-time interaction and communication among participants of public opinion events. Users can use social media platforms to express their views, comments and shares, and engage in in-depth interactions and discussions with other users, and this interactivity further promotes the wide dissemination and in-depth diffusion of public opinion events.

3. Negative Impact of Public Opinion Events

3.1. Drowning out Multiple Voices and Narrowing Information Reception

The phenomenon of polarization of public opinion has led to a gradual reduction in the space for the exchange of pluralistic viewpoints, and the mutual exclusion of different groups has become more and more pronounced. Under the long-term influence of the group environment, individuals tend to fall into the echo chamber effect, i.e., they tend to block out different views from the outside world and stick to the position of their own group, which in turn causes the one-sidedness and limitation of individual information reception. Taking the current fan circle as an example, the phenomenon of group polarization is particularly prominent. Many fan members tend to accept only positive information about their idols and selectively ignore other non-positive information, which undoubtedly prevents them from forming a comprehensive and objective understanding of their idols.

3.2. Disintegration of Rational Discussion and Group Disorientation

When emotions overtake rationality and become dominant, and a particular viewpoint or attitude tends to be polarized under the driving force of emotions, the rational discussion

within the group will be completely undermined, and then gradually fall into the situation of group disorientation. This situation often gives rise to a series of irrational behaviors, such as cyber violence and malicious rumor mongering, which seriously disrupt the social order. In the case of the student fall incident in Chengdu High School 49, for example, netizens tend to unilaterally blame the school for the incident because of their emotions, and they continue to intensify the polarization of their own views under the impetus of their emotions, engage in cyber-violence against some of the teachers and leaders of the school, and fabricate untrue statements, which have a negative impact on the society.

3.3. Strengthening Group Barriers and Tearing Apart Social Consensus

From the social level, the phenomenon of polarization of public opinion in the Internet can further intensify the antagonisms and conflicts between different groups, thus causing serious damage to social consensus. Specifically, group polarization in the Internet often manifests itself in various forms of extremist tendencies, which makes it difficult for different groups to engage in rational and constructive exchanges. Instead, they each adhere to their extreme views and engage in heated arguments and confrontations on the network. This situation has deepened the gap and differences between groups, forming a solid barrier. The existence of such barriers further exacerbates the tearing of social consensus, making it difficult for society to form unified and stable values.

4. Causes of the Evolution of Public Opinion Events

4.1. Rapid Dissemination and Information Distortion: The New Media Gas Pedal Effect

The "fat cat incident" initially spread on social media at a very fast speed, and the fragmentation and emotional character of the information was remarkable. With the popularity of social media platforms and the optimization of algorithmic recommendation mechanisms, information can reach millions or even hundreds of millions of users in a short time. This speed, while increasing the visibility of the information, also exacerbates the challenge of its authenticity. In the early days of the outbreak, the public was eager to get more information, and the lack of details prompted many people to construct their own narratives based on limited footage, leading to misrepresentation, exaggeration and even distortion of facts. In the process of retweeting and commenting, facts are intertwined with speculations and the truth is gradually blurred. For example, the real name of the fat cat and the minutiae of the incident appeared in multiple versions in different channels. Instead of contributing to the clarification of the truth, this diversity of information created confusion, reflecting the tension between the speed and quality of information dissemination in the new media era. This reflects the "viral" nature of information dissemination in the new media environment, in which speed is prioritized over accuracy, and emotional contagion is stronger than fact-checking.

4.2. Social Media Amplification: Emotions, Empathy and Group Behavior

The amplification effect of social media is reflected in two levels: one is the resonance of emotions, and the other is the trigger of group behavior. The algorithmic mechanism of social media platforms tends to push content that can trigger a high degree of interaction, which has led to the amplification of elements with strong emotional color in the "Fat Cat Incident", such as cyber-violence and gender antagonism. While attracting attention, these contents also intensify the emotional polarization of the public. The public's sympathy for the fat cat's personal suffering, anger at online violence, and debate over gender issues spread rapidly in social networks, creating a collective emotional resonance. This resonance not only deepened the public impression of the incident, but also prompted more people to participate in the discussion, creating a powerful wave of public opinion. However, such collective emotions sometimes deviate from the track of rational discussion and turn into cyber violence, causing secondary damage to the individuals involved in the incident and also affecting the public's objective judgment of the incident. Some netizens, without fully understanding the facts, made moral judgments on the parties involved, further expanding the negative impact of the incident. This "echo chamber" effect of social media has led to the strengthening of similar views and the weakening of dissenting voices, resulting in the polarization of views and the escalation of conflicts.

4.3. Cyber-Memory and the Absence of the Right to Digital Oblivion

The traces left in cyberspace by the "fat cat incident" demonstrate another aspect of new media - the permanence of online memory. Once information is posted on the web, even if it is deleted by the original author, it may continue to exist because of snapshots, retweets, archives, etc. Search engines, social media history, and references to various articles all make it possible for the web memory to continue. Snapshots from search engines, social media history, and quotes from various articles make this incident a long-lasting and verifiable case, with a lasting impact on the fat cat herself, her family, Ms. Tan, and all the parties involved. This state of "immortality" means that past actions or statements can become a lasting burden for those involved in the incident. In the case of the Fat Cat Incident, even after the incident had subsided, discussions, pictures and videos of the fat cat were still easily searchable, with long-lasting consequences for Ms. Tan. This has led to a discussion on the right to be forgotten in the digital age, i.e. whether individuals have the right to have outdated or inaccurate online information relating to them removed in order to protect their privacy and reputation.

4.4. Information Cocooning and Circle Dissemination

In the process of spreading the "Fat Cat Incident", the phenomenon of information cocoon is also very significant. Different communities and interest circles filtered and interpreted information according to their own preferences, forming their own information silos. For example, some gaming communities may pay more attention to the industry background and professional plight of fat cats as substitute trainers, while women's rights communities may focus on the gender power dynamics embodied in the incident. This kind

of circled communication leads to fragmentation of information and lack of effective communication between different circles, making it difficult to form a comprehensive consensus and further exacerbating social division and misunderstanding. The information cocoon not only limits the cognitive framework of individuals, but also affects in-depth exploration of public issues and the search for solutions.

4.5. Media Responsibility and Reshaping the Role of the Public

In the "Fat Cat Incident", the intervention of big Vs, official media and the public's reaction have jointly reshaped the media's responsibility and public role. On the one hand, big Vs guided the direction of discussion through their personal influence, some calling for rational analysis, while others may exaggerate facts or sensationalize for the sake of traffic, reflecting the double-edged sword effect of individual influence in the new media era. On the other hand, the timely intervention of official media, through authoritative releases and in-depth reports, has played a role in clarifying information and guiding public opinion, reflecting the new role of traditional media in the new media environment. The public is no longer just a receiver of information, but a key force in actively participating in the dissemination of information and the formation of public opinion, and this change in role requires the public to improve their media literacy, learn to think critically, and become responsible communicators.

5. Countermeasures and Recommendations for Handling Public Opinion Incidents

5.1. Changing the Role of Public Opinion Response with a People-Centered Approach

In hotspot public opinion incidents, if the subject and the authorities involved in the incident display an arrogant and impolite attitude, prevaricating and perfunctory, prevaricating and covering up, it is very easy for the public to doubt whether they have forgotten the core value of "people-centeredness". Such an attitude may lead the public to doubt the fairness and transparency of the incident and worry that the incident will not be effectively resolved, thus spreading negative sentiments in the public opinion and increasing the risk of the incident developing in a negative direction. On the contrary, if the subject involved and the authorities can respect public opinion, express their positions sincerely, assume responsibility, and actively establish a positive communication and feedback mechanism with the public to effectively channel public opinion, then the public will not easily resort to overreaching behaviors or unreasonable actions. In this way, public opinion can be handled quickly and smoothly, and further escalation and expansion of the situation can be avoided.

5.2. Audience Self-Auditing Awareness and Strengthening Media Literacy

In the current era of high information flow, social media has become a key channel for the public to obtain information and exchange opinions. At the same time, social media also builds a unique media ecosystem in which every member of society, including ordinary users and influential opinion

leaders, plays a crucial role. Against this backdrop, we must firmly establish a sense of self-censorship. This is not only an expression of moral self-discipline, but also a concrete manifestation of social responsibility. Before posting any information, we should think carefully to ensure that the information we convey is true and reliable, and that it does not have a negative impact on others. Through self-censorship, we aim to ensure that our words and actions are in line with social ethics and prevent the spread of false information or misleading others. In addition, we should consciously comply with the rules of social media platforms. When receiving information, we should cultivate a skeptical cognitive mind and be good at verifying the source of information from different angles and multiple channels. No information should be taken lightly, but should be verified through as many channels as possible. This prudent attitude is crucial to ensure the authenticity and reliability of information. In the face of hotspot events, it is all the more important to remain calm and rational. Hot events are often accompanied by complex emotions and controversies, and at this time, it is especially important to give ourselves some time for calm thinking and judgment. We should cultivate the ability to judge, criticize and reflect on our own, and avoid blindly following the trend or being swayed by others. Only in this way can we keep a clear head and make wise choices in the age of information explosion.

5.3. Establishment of a Sound Public Opinion Management Team by the Platform to Monitor in Real Time

To ensure that public opinion on social media platforms is properly managed, a specialized public opinion management team is set up and the duties and workflow of each member are clearly defined. This ensures that once a public opinion incident occurs, it can be responded to quickly and handled effectively. Regular internal communication meetings are held to deepen employees' understanding and awareness of public opinion crises, raise crisis awareness, and enhance their ability to respond calmly at critical moments in order to avoid emotional responses. Meanwhile, a sound information release mechanism is established to ensure timely and accurate communication of information. To control the direction of public opinion. Strengthen public opinion management, actively establish contact with the media, and endeavor to build a solid cooperative relationship in order to quickly obtain media support when needed and jointly respond to public opinion crises. In addition, make full use of various public opinion monitoring tools to monitor and analyze public opinion on social media platforms in real time in order to detect the spreading trend of negative public opinion in a timely manner. To further improve the efficiency of public opinion response, an early warning mechanism for public opinion monitoring is established, and monitoring indicators and thresholds are set. Once an abnormal situation is detected, the early warning mechanism will be activated immediately to notify the relevant responsible personnel to deal with the situation promptly. Once a negative public opinion is detected, a response is made quickly to clearly state the position and attitude in order to dispel public doubts. During the response process, we ensure that the content is concise and clear to avoid ambiguity or triggering more controversy. We also conduct regular analysis of social media public opinion to assess the effectiveness of the response strategy and continuously optimize the public opinion

response strategy to ensure the continuous optimization and improvement of public opinion management.

5.4. Timely and Accurate Release of Authoritative Information to Maintain the Credibility of the Government

In this era of information explosion, once a hot public opinion event breaks out, it is like a boulder thrown into a lake, stirring up ripples. When dealing with public opinion incidents, in-depth and detailed investigation is especially crucial. This is not only to respect the incident itself, but also to respect the public's right to know. By comprehensively collecting and analyzing relevant information, the responsible body can more accurately grasp the ins and outs of the incident, and provide strong support for subsequent disposal. At the same time, the timely release of accurate and authoritative information is also an important means of eliminating public doubts and calming disputes. With information and data that are independent and neutral, professional and scientific, revealing to the public the truth, background, measures taken, and attitudes and stances of the incident is also the key to enhancing the effectiveness of public opinion response. Such an approach can not only effectively eliminate public speculations and doubts, but also curb the spread and fermentation of undesirable public opinions. By presenting the truth objectively and fairly, the responsible body can win the public's trust and support, and further enhance the credibility and social acceptance of the party government.

5.5. Specialized Media Adhere to Journalistic Professionalism

With the rise of new media and the rapid development of technology, the awareness of citizen journalism has gradually come to the fore. However, as citizen journalism continues to evolve, some drawbacks have begun to emerge, mainly in the form of increased emotional outpouring and decreased rational discussion in the public sphere. Against this background, the role of professional media has become particularly important, and their objective and truthful interpretation and systematic and comprehensive reporting have become indispensable forces in the era of clamor. In the post-truth era, professional media's adherence to journalistic professionalism plays a crucial role in guiding public opinion and searching for the "truth". In hot events, online opinion leaders have an important influence on the direction of public opinion. In the field of public opinion, they hold the pulse of public opinion to a certain extent. Therefore, rash personality attacks, polarized remarks, and simple judgments of emotional supremacy are very likely to incite irrational emotions among netizens. Especially opinion leaders who have many followers, the negative impact of their comments is even more significant. Therefore, in the post-truth era, online opinion leaders should avoid quoting out of context, control their negative emotions, and assume their due social responsibility by commenting and retweeting with rationality and attitude.

6. Conclusion

In the current arena of public opinion, the truth is customarily placed behind emotions. The "fat cat" incident reveals the essence of the "post-truth era": in this information overload environment, people tend to react based on

emotional resonance rather than factual judgment. The story woven by the fat cat sister quickly captured the hearts of the public with its drama and strong emotional color. "Opinion walks in front of the facts, emotion occupies the high and low of reason," the trend of public opinion has long been the norm of the network, "fat cat" is not the first news reversal event, and will not be the last, "fat cat" incident, Tan Tan, the first time in the world, the first time in the world. "In the event, Tan Mou in the" fat cat "sister deliberately guided by a large-scale network violence. The rapid fermentation of public opinion has not only caused harm to ordinary individuals, but also brought about a bad social impact. Extreme and radical remarks mixed with gender antagonism, false information filled the entire public opinion field, constantly expanding and intensifying social conflicts. As a typical online public opinion incident, the "Fat Cat Incident" has not only triggered widespread public concern and discussion, but also exposed some problems in the current information dissemination. From the perspectives of gender issues, the power of emotions in the post-truth era, and the self-media rubbing heat, the "Fat Cat Incident" has provided us with profound reflections and insights. As long as the background of the post-truth era remains unchanged, there will always be another "fat cat" incident. Therefore, if similar incidents occur in the future, the public may wish to "let the bullets fly for a while", remain calm, wait for the truth to emerge, and return the reporting space to authoritative organizations and professional media. Always keep in mind that in the court of public opinion, there is no winner after the gun goes off.

References

- [1] Yang Yaqi. Research on the Dilemma of Network Education Public Opinion Governance and Response Strategies in the Post-Truth Era[J]. Journalism Research Guide, 2024, 15 (10): 95-98.
- [2] Li Huidi. Innovation of international news fact-checking path in post-truth era--Taking "Pengpei Mingcha" as an example[J]. News Outpost, 2024, (10):48-50.
- [3] Yang Qiaoli. On the study of "reverse news" in the post-truth era[J]. City Party Newspaper Research,2024, (05):63-66.
- [4] LI Hai, WANG Lili. Characteristics, Causes and Countermeasures of Hot Public Opinion in Post-Truth Era[J]. All Media Exploration,2024, (04):75-76.
- [5] Feng Ruxin. Analysis of hotspot and sensitive public opinion disposal strategy in post-truth era--Taking the blood donation incident in Ali, Tibet as an example[J]. All Media Exploration, 2024,(04):106-107.
- [6] CHU JINZHE, ZHOU DAN, XU LEI. Generation, performance and correction of public opinion on short video hot events in the post-truth era[J]. New Oriental,2024, (02):37-43.
- [7] LIU Xiaoyan, ZHANG Lele. A study of social media emotional polarization in the post-truth era[J/OL]. Young Reporter,1-5[2024-06-17].
- [8] Ma Shaojun. The Performance and Guidance Strategies of Online Public Opinion Violence in the Post-Truth Era--Taking Liu Xuezhou Incident as an Example[J]. News Communication, 2024, (06):37-39.
- [9] Feng Yueji. Community Truth: Rethinking the Symbolic Ethics of News Values in the Post-Truth Era[J]. Journal of Global Media,2024,11(01):148-162.
- [10] Zhou Zhiran. Generation and Response Analysis of Irrational Public Opinion on the Internet in the "Post-Truth Era"--Taking Liu Xuezhou's Family Search Incident as an Example[J]. News Communication, 2024, (05):45-47.
- [11] Li Hong. Research on the impact of post-truth era on news authenticity and countermeasures[J]. Sound Screen World, 2024, (04):41-43.
- [12] Zhao Yang. "Dilemma and Response of Online Public Opinion Guidance in the Post-Truth Era[J]. Journal of Shaoyang College (Social Science Edition),2023,22(06):32-37.
- [13] Li Dairong. The flux of news value in the post-truth era--Taking the Hu Xinyu incident as an example[J]. All Media Exploration,2023,(11):44-46.
- [14] Luan Yimei. Collaborative governance of online rumors in the post-truth era[J]. Audiovisual world,2023,(06):129.
- [15] CHEN Yijie, PENG Xiaobing. Collaborative governance of online public opinion on public emergencies in the post-truth era--Taking the rescue of mountain fire in Chongqing as an example[J]. Leadership Science Forum,2023,(08):100-104.
- [16] Wang Youjia. Questioning about "post-truth" in the network era: nature, dilemma and governance strategy[J]. Thought Theory Front,2023,2(02):115-122.
- [17] ZHUO Lanhua, ZHENG Haimei. Alienation attribution and deciphering tendency of audience communication behavior in the post-truth era: A study on the phenomenon from "network spectators" to "over-interpretation"[J]. Hunan Social Science, 2023, (01):152-160.
- [18] Gao Feifan. Causes and governance strategies of the reverse news phenomenon in the post-truth era[J]. Western Radio and Television,2022,43(24):78-80.