

The analysis of the credibility and authenticity of China participatory journalism — based on the example of Sina Weibo

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Abstract: With the development of society and the advancement of science and technology, various forms of new media have emerged. The emergence of these new media has also brought about the diversified development of the journalism industry. Because of this, news sources and channels in today's society are very wide. Whether the credibility and authenticity of the news obtained by the audience is reliable has become one of the issues worth exploring in the industry. The focus of this article is based on the questions raised above. Therefore, this article takes Sina Weibo as an example to conduct a simple analysis of the credibility and authenticity of participatory news in China.

1. Introduction

The development of China's journalism industry now has a very complete system. After entering the millennium, especially with the continuous development of science and technology and the Internet, China's journalism is changing with each passing day, which also pushes China's journalism into another new environment, that is, participatory journalism. Compared with Western media, Chinese media are unique. The relationship between the Chinese media and the audience also presents a characteristic of Chinese characteristics, especially when the rise of Internet participatory journalism. Gillmor defines that a citizen or group of citizens actively collects,^[1] reports, analyzes, and disseminates news and information in order to provide independent, credible, accurate, extensive, and tailored `of people's rule and people's enjoyment. But Rosen believes that network technology has opened up a new world for the development of participatory news. Because the audience's choice of news sources and channels has become more extensive. Moreover, they are more and more confident, and the credibility of news sources and channels is worth pondering, which has also lost their awe of traditional news media. It is not difficult to see from the above two points that although participatory journalism has been developed for many years, the debate still exists.

2. Analysis

This article is based on the analysis and research of the article named "Participatory journalism

in the Chinese context: Understanding journalism as a process in China 's participatory culture".^[3] In this article, Wang proposed that participatory journalism in the Chinese context is divided into three modes, namely, the incompatible model, the negotiatory model and the unconventional model. This article makes a relevant analysis based on the incompatible model in the above three models.

Wang defined that the unconventional model means that there will be irregular interaction between the media and the audience, and the audience agenda precedes the media agenda. The importance of decision issues and attributes lies in the audience rather than the media. But the media can still provide other media agendas to satisfy their interests. Therefore, it is not difficult to see from this that such a participatory journalism conference model has different audiences and media agendas, and different problems. The final results and impacts are even more different. Due to the above-mentioned factors, the people who receive the information have information with different channels, different themes and different contents. Scholars Bowman and Willis first defined Internet we-media: "We Media is a way for the general public to provide and share their experiences and news that they have seen, heard, and gradually enhanced through digital technology."^[4] And interconnected with the global knowledge system. Gilmore further clarified the concept of we-media.^[5] The mass media initially controlled by media organizations has gradually transformed into "mass media", that is, everyone has the opportunity to participate become a "media practitioner." It is not difficult to see that if every audience is involved in the news dissemination, that is to say, everyone can become a receiver and publisher of information on the Internet. Therefore, this kind of Internet participatory journalism may also bring a lot of rumours and false news to people. These rumours and false news are so realistic that most audiences cannot know whether the received information is true and reliable. The spread of this online information is very fast. Once rumours and false news spread among many people, it is likely to cause irreparable and huge losses to people.

In China, Sina Weibo is one of the most popular social media in China and one of the most representative social media. As of June 2015, Weibo had 212 million monthly active users.^[6] Therefore, Sina Weibo is definitely a very important social platform for Chinese people to become a participatory "media man" in China and is more likely to be the source of Internet rumours. Concerning the credibility of participatory journalism on Sina Weibo, more official media are now stationed on Sina Weibo, which has solved the problem of news credibility to some extent. However, as far as the audience is added to participatory journalism, it is divided into three types of "rumours maker", namely, out of context and the clickbait. The following will analyze these two concepts with examples.

Sina Weibo has a function called Top Search List. On this list, you can see real-time top search events and the number of users who follow and participate in forwarding and commenting on this event. Often there will be a lot of audience participatory journalism on this list, and many celebrities are participating in such comments and reposting. People may comment and repost without knowing the truth, and there may be rumours and fake news mentioned in the article.

In the era of information explosion, social media platforms such as Sina Weibo have become one of the main channels in participatory journalism, China. However, with the participation of more and more celebrities and ordinary users, credibility and authenticity have become the focus of attention. Especially in the popular search function, the audience's experience of participatory journalism becomes more complicated, which may lead to the spread of rumors and fake news. This paper will take Sina Weibo as an example to analyze the credibility and authenticity of participatory journalism in China, and discuss the reasons why people may comment and forward without knowing the truth, and illustrate with examples.

Sina Weibo's popular search function is a tool that leads users to pay attention to topics, and it shows the current social hotspots, events and topics. Users can get all kinds of information

according to popular search, including news, entertainment, sports and other fields. However, the content of popular search is mainly generated by users, which brings challenges to credibility and authenticity. The popular search function has attracted a lot of users' participation on Sina Weibo, especially celebrities and online celebrity. They express their views through comments, likes and forwards, and spread the information to more people. This participatory journalism model makes it easier for users to obtain information, and at the same time, it also strengthens the interaction between users. However, due to the speed and universality of information dissemination, people may comment and forward it without verification. This may lead to the spread of false information, rumors and fake news, which seriously damages the credibility and authenticity.

The credibility and authenticity of China participatory journalism are facing multiple challenges:

Lack of professional news censorship: Information release in Weibo mainly depends on users, and lack of professional news editing and censorship easily leads to inaccurate or inaccurate information.

B opinion bias: comments and forwarding on Weibo are often influenced by personal opinions and emotions, which may lead to one-sidedness and misleading information

C rumors and false news: criminals may spread false information to achieve specific goals. These rumors and fake news often spread quickly on social media, causing a lot of attention. **D. Media effect:** The participation of celebrities and online celebrity may trigger media effect, leading to wider information diffusion.

However, their comments and opinions may not be professional and objective. Take the pneumonia epidemic in Wuhan in 2020 as an example. At the beginning of the outbreak, a lot of information about the source of the virus, the spread of the epidemic and the vaccine spread rapidly on Sina Weibo. Some users posted false information without knowing the truth, such as inaccurate statements about the origin and transmission route of the virus and misleading comments about the safety of vaccines. These false information caused widespread panic and confusion, which had a negative impact on the anti-epidemic work. In order to improve the credibility and authenticity of participatory journalism in China, the following are some possible solutions and suggestions: **Improve media literacy:** users need to cultivate media literacy, learn to distinguish between true and false information, understand the reliability of information sources, and not blindly believe or spread unconfirmed information. **Strengthen information auditing:** Social media platforms strengthen information auditing, set up professional editing teams, and audit the deletion of false information to ensure that users get accurate information. **Professional advice guide:** celebrities and online celebrities should consider professionalism and objectivity, and don't release irresponsible information casually.

Public education: The government and the media can carry out public education activities to improve the public's awareness of the credibility and authenticity of news and educate people on how to use social media platforms correctly. In China's participatory journalism era, it is very important to ensure credibility and authenticity. By improving media literacy, strengthening information review, guiding professional opinions and carrying out public education, we can better cope with the challenge of false information on social media and improve the quality and credibility of information dissemination. Only in this way can social media platforms better provide reliable news and information to the public.

3. Out of context

Taking the meaning out of context, as the name implies, disregarding the content of the entire article or conversation, taking the meaning of a paragraph or sentence in isolation, the guidance is not consistent with the original intention. When many people participate in news events on Weibo,

they often get out of the context of the news event, and only grab a certain point and make a rash comment and repost it. Once the amount of reposting is too large, the power of erroneous revelation becomes apparent, turning it into fake news with audience participation and spread among a large number of Weibo users. Burkhardt also confirmed this,^[7] fake news only needs a short time to subvert the manipulation of information and public opinion. It can be spread through many social channels, and the Internet can be one of them, where it can be quickly spread through users and social media platforms. It can be seen that a piece of fake news is spread by Internet users in the form of one pass ten and ten past hundred. It can be seen how fast he spreads and how wide his influence is. Originally a piece of news, Weibo users jumped out of their own news context to look at this news, they have lost the authenticity of the news. Since the news after the participation of Weibo users has been re-circulated, the original news event has been covered up and replaced by this fake news. More likely, in the next spread, other users will also tamper with it to another meaning. In this way, the original news has been devastated and completely unrecognizable after being participated by Weibo users. Take a piece of Weibo news about government policies as an example. The original text of the news may be: "The government plans to increase education funds to improve education conditions." However, some users may take part of it out of context and publish the following content: "The government plans to increase education funds." This out-of-context news may lead to extensive discussion, but it does not provide complete information, which may lead to people's misunderstanding of government policies.

For example, a piece of news suddenly appeared on Weibo on January 28, 2019. The original content was a preliminary study by medical experts showing that Shuanghuanglian can inhibit a novel coronavirus and is undergoing clinical trials. However, when Weibo users participated in the news, it completely changed its flavour. Some of these users interpreted the original "inhibiting viruses" as "preventing viruses", and some of them interpreted it as "curing viruses." In this way, the original news with scientific significance and scientific research results became another explanation. Users jumped out of the context of the news itself. The first is preliminary research by scientists, and the second is ongoing clinical trials. In other words, whether this drug has a specific effect or not has no final result. The news that this user participated in was as high as 2.22 billion, and 556,000 people commented and reposted it. Due to the out-of-the-box participation journalism of the users, a wave of waves was instantly triggered on Weibo. When Chinese people in the pandemic saw the out-of-the-box participation journalism, they all ran to the pharmacy to snap up the drug Shuanghuanglian. This way of participating in the news out of context has completely covered up the original news facts.

It can be seen that when users on Sina Weibo begin to participate in participatory journalism, the problem of out of context is undoubted. After all, Internet users are not professional journalists. They do not understand the value orientation of news, nor what consequences news will have on readers, nor do they understand the public opinion that news has caused in society. It is often based on its own interests or concerns so that the final result is a piece of fake news that loses the original content.

4. Clickbait

Clickbait is known as the "Title Party" in China, and its meaning refers to the intentional use of more exaggerated and sensational article titles on the Internet to attract netizens to click to view articles or posts. The title party, as a more easily noticeable method, has now been extended to newspapers and magazines in China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan. These people often use some sensational words or words that are not in line with the facts, to deceive web users to click, thereby increasing the number of clicks. The headline party persuaded the internet users to click by using

such headlines by inciting the curiosity of internet users. Crookes confirmed that due to the fierce competition of Internet social media to attract the attention of online users, some websites promise that the title party can manipulate users by using sensational content. In this way,^[8] the more clicks, the greater the number of views, which will greatly increase advertising revenue and increase website revenue. Once it has an effective clickbait, it also means that there are more reposts and comments on social media, thereby attracting more new visitors to the site. It is not difficult to see that the title party may exist to gain some benefits, or it may be just to gain the attention of network users. There are also many title parties active on Sina Weibo. On the surface, these title parties are harmless. But when they use these seemingly earth-shattering headlines to summarize untrue news, the person who receives the news is the victim. The operation principle of the Weibo Hot Search List is that as long as more people follow a certain event, this message will appear on the Hot Search List. And Weibo users have no right to choose the events on the list, they can only be manipulated, and they are forced to obtain these rumours or fake news.

On May 21, 2020, China's National People's Congress and the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference were held in Beijing. On May 26, a large amount of reprinted news suddenly appeared on Weibo. The title of the article was "Recommended to return to the country due to the epidemic to enrol in vocational colleges." Instantly blasted the pan on Weibo, and this article was also reprinted in large numbers in Chinese study abroad circles. This is the clickbait of a typical audience participatory journalism. This news is really about a proposal at the meeting of the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference Minjing Ni. The proposal contains three solutions, but it is not aimed at those international students who have temporarily returned due to the pandemic, but to those who need to return to China to complete their studies. Difficult international students. The original intention is to find a way for them, and it has nothing to do with most international students, nor does it mean to discriminate against international students. First of all, the Weibo user who initiated this title, he did not see the entire content of the entire proposal to conclude, and with the title of this Bo eyeball, even his article was reprinted on Weibo or even WeChat. Secondly, the original title of the committee's proposal was "Properly Solve the Problem of Transferring International Students from Overseas Universities". The title of the title party completely contradicts the original meaning of the title, and it is misread partially, and there is no mention of the motion mentioned by the original member in the article. The entire content is replaced by the entire title. It is recommended that students returning to the country due to the epidemic should enrol in higher vocational colleges. This completely distorts the meaning of the original news. Using the headlines of such bloggers' eyes, this news has become fake news and overshadows the original content.^[9]

Elliott also confirmed this, and the "sensational headline" implies that this news report is revealing exclusive news that others have not reported. Tandoc et al also further proved that fake news masks authenticity and reliability because it attempts to present some form of credibility like real news. It is not difficult to see that the title party tried to achieve their desired purpose through the sensational title, and it was indeed a group of Weibo users who suffered.^[10-11]

The existence of fake news and headline party is a challenge in the digital age, which threatens authenticity and reliability. In the face of this problem, I think the following points are crucial: Media literacy education: the public needs to improve media literacy and learn to distinguish false news from the tricks of the title party. Responsibility of news organizations: News organizations should emphasize moral and professional ethics, provide true and reliable reports, and stay away from the practice of the title party. Supervision of social media platforms: Social media platforms should strengthen the supervision of false information and take measures to reduce the existence of the title party. Feedback from the public: If false information or title party phenomenon is found, the public should actively report it and promote social media platforms to take action. To sum up,

fake news and headline party pose a serious threat to the authenticity and reliability of news. Solving this problem requires the joint efforts of the media, the public and social media platforms to ensure that news dissemination is no longer influenced by false information and headline parties, so that the public can obtain real and objective information. Only in this way can we maintain the health and fairness of the information society.

5. Conclusions

In this paper, through the analysis of the two cases above, the participatory journalism on Weibo has a certain degree of use of these two methods to create rumors and fake news that are inconsistent with the original news, and these two methods are mutual Intertwined. They used the speed of network technology to cover up the existence of the original news in an instant and spread it wildly. Therefore, the existence of participatory journalism is what drives the journalism industry to continue to move forward and poses a huge challenge to the journalism industry. All this requires an in-depth study.

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