

In the Digital Era, Online Public Opinion Crisis Management Needs “Dialogue Literacy”

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Abstract: Driven by the emerging network, the digital world has opened the era of dialogue, and information exchange has become one of the important topics in the network era. Taking the “earth pit pickled cabbage” incident of Master Kong in Beijing and the prevention and control of the normalized epidemic situation on the campus of Songjiang University Town in Shanghai as examples, the article introduces the “dichotomy” of facts and values into the crisis situation and explores a new mechanism for crisis communication management in the digital era.

1. Introduction

Introducing the “dichotomy” of facts and values into crisis situations, as the ideological cornerstone and development path of crisis communication management, can explore how people can solve the crisis, rescue difficulties, remedy losses and innovate through the practical level, and through moral and rational negotiation, compassionate care, moral salvation and faith recreation at the social value level when the normal social order is facing danger and destruction, reconstruct the relationship of mutual benefit and social value sharing.

2. Dialogue Path in Crisis Communication

Hu Baijing divided the crisis communication management of an organization into two levels: “fact” and “value” from the epistemological and methodological perspectives. The primary path of the fact level, namely, truth checking and benefit compensation, is mainly aimed at communication and management issues. At the value level, the primary path is to rebuild trust and share meaning, and it is a question of dialogue and collaboration. The primary path is the “first principle” of the model, and the secondary and tertiary paths of the “fact value” model are derived from the primary path. The second level path of the fact level - informing, persuading and transforming, and the second level path of the value level - adapting, leading and rebuilding. The third level path occurs in the second level path, which can lead to the fourth, fifth and even more methods to deal with specific crisis situations.

The “fact-value” model framework is a comprehensive framework based on the relationship types of crisis public relations and crisis rhetoric. It combines the communication relationship theory of crisis public relations with the communication situation theory of crisis rhetoric. The main significance of the “fact-value” model is that, from the perspective of epistemology, fact analysis and value evaluation are the basic prerequisites for people to understand the crisis. From the perspective of methodology, the behavior path of crisis communication management has two fundamental directions - fact orientation and value orientation. This model allows us not to ignore any aspect, explores the crisis facts, and also needs to build a meaningful world with reputation, trust and loyalty for stakeholders.

The development of modern public relations paradigm is from communication to service, and then to openness and balance of both sides. Publicity is one-sided in the relationship between communicators and receivers, and dominant in the relationship between rights and interests. Persuasion theory affirms the two-way nature of information relations, but it is still dominant in

power relations. Lobbyists often need to help the other party accept their own will, not the other way round. Although the paradigm of two-way openness and equality creates a value foundation for public relations, it ignores the power and interests in the process of communicating reality and public relations.

What the crisis spreads is that in the crisis environment, institutions and stakeholders seek value identity through dialogue, look forward to value identity, return to the value society of benefit sharing, and reshape the value society of value sharing. In a word, fact dialogue and value dialogue are not only the ideological cornerstone of crisis communication management, but also its development method, integrating the two into dialogue practice.

3. Relationship between Internet Age and Dialogue

Any new technology that has produced essential changes has its own philosophy, and the philosophy of the network is dialogue. In fact, the “meta logic” of network technology is correct, because it can connect individuals in all corners of the world.

3.1 Bidirectional

Both sides of the dialogue are two-way in terms of information exchange, focusing on message transmission and exchange of views. At the same time, the dialogue also recognized the reasonable element between publicity and persuasion. Generally speaking, publicity is highly effective in promoting citizens’ understanding of certain topics - instantaneous wide coverage. In the case of introducing the “dichotomy” of facts and values, the dialogue pointed out that power, interests, etc. are in fact characterized by diversity, difference and inequality, and paid attention to justice and equality in the value fields of emotion, morality, self-esteem, faith, etc.

3.2 Purpose

Dialogue is both a way and an idea, a means and an end. As a way and means, dialogue is a two-way and fair exchange of truth, coordination of common interests and sharing of social values. As an idea, dialogue means giving up competition, but also means cooperation spirit and identity values. These views all believe that dialogue is a better communication method and common development strategy than confrontation. Similarly, dialogue also aims at self-sufficiency, because the way of dialogue leads to the spirit of community and the good of the masses.

4. Crisis Management of Master Kong’s “Earth Pit Pickled Cabbage”

The earth pit pickle cabbage became famous overnight after the March 15 party in 2022, and the process known as the “Old Altar” is actually the “earthen pit” process. Three days before the event, Master Kong’s stock index was relatively stable, with a slight upward trend. However, the stock price fell sharply the day after the incident, and the market demand for earth pit pickled instant noodles dropped sharply, even triggering domestic pickled food enterprises to issue announcements to clarify.

4.1 The Reality of Master Kong Brand Lags Behind the Public Relations

After the “earth pit pickle cabbage” accident, Master Kong, the top brand of convenient fast food, quickly withdrew the identity of the local leading manufacturer as the supplier of the flag planting vegetable industry, and took a series of emergency public relations measures of silence → removing the relevant goods from the shelves/stopping the advertising → not making a positive response → and publicly apologizing, which led Master Kong to a passive and adverse situation for nearly 0.5 months. At the beginning of the incident, the brand did not grasp the appropriate time to deal with the incident, which also led to the criticism that Master Kong was insincere.

4.2 Hypothetical Dialogue Strategy of Master Kong Brand

In the digital era, the speed of network information publicity, combined with the continuous

improvement of consumers' quality of life and awareness of rights protection, the product quality problems that were often ignored by customers in the past may now become the "fuse" of public relations crisis as enterprises lose customer trust.

In response to this incident, if dialogue is brought into crisis management, the correct way for Master Kong is to seize the first issue, win the right to speak, do not argue or oppose within the range of reasonable and acceptable accusations, and make public apology with due sincerity to win understanding and resolve major conflicts.

If Master Kong wants to rebuild consumer confidence, it can take offline invitation and online live broadcast to invite people to participate in the whole production process of "earth pit pickled cabbage" in the future, so that consumers can experience the product quality and safety. On the basis of the public's affirmation of the product, it can strive for more time to transfer to their own users. The price reflects the value. When the brand value recovers, the market share of the enterprise will also be improved.

5. Crisis Management of Normalized Epidemic Prevention and Control in Shanghai Campus

Taking the new wave of epidemic in Shanghai in March 2022 as an example, Shanghai conducted grid management. The closed management mode is a new school management method. Because the problems and contradictions hidden in the normalization management of the epidemic venting in colleges and universities are far more prominent than they have already been, the guidance of school network public opinion is bound to become a key concern of colleges and universities in the future.

5.1 Public Opinion Characteristics under the Prevention and Control of Normalized Epidemic Situation in Colleges and Universities

5.1.1 Freedom of Expression

With the development of modern computer technology, the degree of freedom of human information transmission has gradually increased, and the boundary between the sender and receiver of information has become more blurred. According to the social exchange theory, individuals can participate in a certain group and abide by the rules of the group in order to achieve material interaction with other people in the group, or to achieve group value and obtain more benefits that they can't obtain alone. It can be said that with the help of the Internet development, online communities are more vulnerable to the influence of group behavior and group mentality, resulting in assimilation resonance, variation resonance behavior, and thus expanding the risk of form deformation and even extremism.

5.1.2 Diversity and Hierarchy of Expression Content

After the outbreak of the epidemic, everyone reported different needs, including learning difficulties involving interference in learning time, working difficulties involving employment difficulties, and survival difficulties involving the takeout industry. Some problems in society are far faster than campus.

5.1.3 Diversity and Relevance of Expression Subject

The so-called "snowflake" in the Internet society does not only refer to the party groups, but more of them are actually the existence of non-stakeholders behind the event. It is precisely because of the simultaneous "power" between stakeholders and non-stakeholders that has led to the complexity of today's Internet information pattern in China.

5.2 Dialogue Strategy under Online Public Opinion

Since in this information age, we see a mixture of good news and bad news, it is particularly important to keep a clear mind and collect precious pearls in this world of mud and sand. Dialogue is the key to how to use the correct information for yourself and how to screen information differently.

5.2.1 Keep a Clear Mind and Distinguish between True and False Public Opinion

As recipients of information, we need to maintain a clear mind and reasonably distinguish the correctness and authority of information sources. People must understand that the reason why each message can be noticed means that it is definitely not an isolated news phenomenon, but a complex and diverse contradiction structure. It is simple and easy to speak on the Internet. As spectators, we should understand that before the torrent of discussion, we should not blindly and foolishly comment on the ignorant and comprehensive speech, but should rationally think, analyze and make correct judgments.

5.2.2 Strengthen Information Research and Judgment to Cool Public Opinion

Today, with the growing prosperity of information networks, “information seeking people” has gradually replaced “people seeking information”, and various “headlines” and “bullet boxes” are everywhere. Although the way of information dissemination is becoming more and more covert, and the ability to integrate information content is also becoming stronger, as the main communicator at the source of information, it is still necessary to make accurate judgments, carefully carry out “pre-tracing” and “post-earthquake repair”, and really deal with some emerging, tendentious, and mass phenomena. Therefore, as a news publisher, the information content provided must be positive and conform to the mainstream thinking, rather than the rumor making news of “following the crowd” and “talking in general”, which makes social groups have a “broken window effect”.

5.2.3 Standardize Information Management and Reduce Public Opinion

Finally, for a third-party platform or regulator, information guidance is very important. They must first get down and get in good posture. When unreasonable social public opinion signals are generated, they must be highly sensitive, quickly collect and judge information, so that social public opinion can be blocked or avoided. Because, all social public opinion is by no means groundless, it has a corresponding formation process and development cycle. Only through the collection of information can we reflect the concerns of the masses more effectively and reasonably, so as to actively lead the direction of public opinion.

6. Conclusion

In a word, communicators and receivers use information to communicate, whether single to many or many to many. In this process, people’s social subject status has been consolidated, and people’s talent, courage and virtue to solve problems have also been developed and displayed. In fact, whether from the perspective of a specific crisis or the overall crisis experienced by the entire human civilization, the so-called digital information dissemination is calling for people’s initiative and community concept through collective dialogue. In this process, due to the error and inappropriateness of many network information, some groups will think that some authoritative organizations are “shaping images” and “silencing scandals”. Over time, the proper information dissemination has become a distorted propaganda that magnifies the positive and covers the negative. Therefore, it is believed that whether the information publisher or the information receiver, they should have the courage to talk openly and equally to themselves and stakeholders, rather than fear and avoid. Whether it is a network society or a real society, we need to safeguard the rights and dignity of stakeholders with reason and justice, and also ensure the subjectivity and legitimacy of entrepreneurs themselves to improve the credibility of the country and the government.

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