

The Causes and Solutions of We Media Chaos

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Abstract: Recently, with the development of the Internet and technology, most we-media platforms such as Weibo, Facebook, Tik Tok and so on, have also achieved rapid development and become the main channels for citizens to enjoy entertainment, socialize and obtain information. However, while We Media offers convenience for people as a useful tool, there are also increasing problems such as the decline of information authenticity, the increase of vulgar and meaningless information, plagiarism and “draft washing” chaos as well as extreme cyber-violence under the emotional transmission of information. These problems don’t only affect the healthy environment of “We Media” but they also generate a negative impact on the moral values of We Media users. Based on these phenomenon and problems, the research aims to analyze the main several characteristics of the We Media chaos and further discuss the causes of the We Media chaos by combining “internal” information transformation mechanism and “external” impacts. Finally, it further explores and analyzes the norms and governance of “We Media” chaos from three perspectives: we-media users, We Media platforms as well as government supervision.

Keywords: information authenticity, emotional transmission, information transmission, supervision, self-discipline consciousness

1. Introduction

In 2003, Shayne Bowman published the research report named “We Media” with Chris Willis in the media center of American Press Association. The research report defined We Media as “A pathway to start to understand how ordinary people can provide and share their own facts and news, when mass are digitally enhanced and connected to the global knowledge system [1].”

“We Media”, also known as “citizen media” or “personal media”, is a disseminator of popular, widespread, automated and private information. It is a generic term of new media that transmits normative and non-normative information to the mass or the specific individual by means of modernization, informatization and electronization. In the era of “We Media”, the information people obtained mainly comes from the communication activities by mass [2]. The spreading of information by We Media is more convenient and faster. Based on such characteristics and advantages of transmission, We Media has gradually become a very significant part of citizen media. Some short video platforms such as TikTok, Auto Quicker, Bilibili and some other communication platforms such as Weibo and WeChat don’t only provide basic the exchange and transmission of information services, but also gradually become an effective way to be related to

live-streaming e-commerce and product placement [3]. A kind of new business model affected by We Media has impacted people's inherent marketing concepts and consumption ideas. Community, crossover and platform have become derivatives of the development of We Media. We Media has become a keyword to get profits with the basis of "cash the flow".

Although the rapid development of We Media brings numerous benefits and values in different perspectives such as socializing, entertainment as well as business, there are a lot of challenges and chaos emerging in the We Media environment. Due to the fast and convenient dissemination of information, a wide variety of information is shown and posted on the network which is difficult for people to distinguish whether it is true or false. It is easier to express views and make a discussion on We Media than on traditional media. In addition, the user identities are virtual and anonymous which can't be confirmed easily. It seems that We Media networks use a "protective umbrella" to cover the internet users. In addition, We Media environment is distinct with the real society so that the corresponding social norms and moral norms in real society can not be implemented. In addition, tons of opportunities brought by We Media make We Media companies and platforms focus on chasing profits and clouts crazily. The chaos of We Media has become very common and even affects people's daily life. The chaos of We Media urgently needs to be solved and managed.

However, what are the main causes of the We Media chaos? What are the underlying internal mechanisms and variations of these causes? How to manage and change these We Media chaos in an effective way? The exploration and discussion of these issues have far-reaching and profound influence and considerable bearing on how to set up a healthy and positive We Media environment for We Media users and how to strengthen the users' experience in utilizing We Media, and even affect the moral values and ethics of We Media users.

2. The Decline of Information Authenticity

Michael Patrick Lynch, a famous American philosophy professor claimed, "The Internet is a battlefield of truth which is bloody and chaotic. In fact, it is harder for people to know what the truth is than before [4]." In order to chase entertainment clout and get more attention, lots of We Media platforms and accounts utilize some misleading topics and expressions to spread unreal and inaccurate information. Sometimes, some We Media platforms only tend to pursue the economic profits rather than information authenticity [5]. Some We Media platforms and account even exaggerate and distort some information, which undermines the credibility of information seriously. For example, in the suicide incident of Xinyu Hu in 2023, tons of We Media accounts alleged "Xinyu was killed and dismembered by his chemistry teacher of his high school.", which caused a lot of comments and discussions. Finally, the information turned out to be false by the public security organization.

2.1. Emotional Transmission of Information (Even Extreme Cyber-violence)

In the Post-truth era, Oxford University defines "post-truth" is that people paying more attention to emotional catharsis than final truth when they focus on one event, online information spreading is characterized and affected by emotion [6]. The truth of events is replaced by emotional catharsis and untenable conjecture by We Media users [7]. This kind of trend will even morph into cyber-violence. When internet users encounter some unfair and uncomfortable incidents in their real world, and they can not change the status quo. They will have a sense of frustration and resentment. At that time, We Media can be regarded as their outlet of emotion and weapon to slur others. Internet users often post "resentful criticisms" on Internet news and hot events. They choose to neglect and ignore some truth and facts, which causes the extreme cyber-violence [7].

2.2. Vulgar and Meaningless Content Increasing

With the development of the entertainment market, people seek for visual and mental stimulation with a higher level of entertainment [8]. In order to attract internet users and get more rate of audiences, some We Media platforms post some boring and vulgar contents without any pedagogical meaning and knowledge. Take small video platforms for example, some video bloggers try to please the public with claptrap. These contents are wasting internet users' time and even distort their values and personal taste.

2.3. Plagiarism and “Draft Washing” Phenomenon

Draft washing is the phenomenon in which people tamper and revise others' original contents making them different, however, the valuable and main parts are still plagiaristic and the same [9].

With the rapid development of “We Media”, plagiarism and “draft washing” chaos emerge endlessly. We Media operators always choose to post and spread two articles with different topics at the same time. By this means, it is difficult for detection systems to find this kind of plagiarism phenomenon [10]. When Internet users browse information and articles in the We Media, there are plenty of different articles with the same contents and topics. This phenomenon wastes We Media users' time and make a bad effect on users' experience. In addition, most We Media companies and platforms can not realize the chaos and negative effects of this phenomenon. They choose to put profits and attention first. And some of them even encourage this kind of phenomenon and add fuel to the fire. For example, Shanghai Xinchu Network-Technology Company developed a draft washing software named “Your Special We Media Assistant” and was charged by Tencent.

3. The Decline of Information Authenticity

3.1. The Reverse of Internal Information Transmission

In the past, it is more common that people are received information unilaterally by radio, TV and newspaper. But now, the conventional transmission relationship is changed. We Media alters the position of audiences from receiver to active acquirer and producer. People take more initiative to get and produce information [11]. Negroponte suggests that information is pulled and created by audiences instead of pushing to them [12]. Under this kind of trend, internet users are empowered more to spread and produce information. For example, internet users can create their own social media accounts, post videos, pictures and words, as well as spread them to others.

In addition, We Media has a lower threshold of transmission than traditional media such as TV, radio as well as newspapers. The information and news spread by traditional media are supervised and checked by media organization strictly before this information are shown to the public. On the contrary, the information in the We Media is collected and created from the communities and spread by journalism, publishers, editors and advertiser [11].

The reverse of information transmission causes an increasing number of information and decreasing degree of information accuracy.

3.2. Unhealthy We Media Online Environment

There is a new lifestyle and moral values in the We Media environment compared with the real world. At the same time, corresponding policies and rules are hysteretic and lacking so tons of bad behaviour online exist [13]. Nowadays, the government has not set up laws regarding We Media online behaviors and crimes. There are many block areas of laws. In addition, the information and relationship via We Media have owned anonymity. Internet users have the chance to spread

information through fake and anonymous identities. They are less strict with expressing opinions and spreading information in the online environment. Under this situation, legality review and supervision are difficult and time-consuming, which also provides an open door to cyber-violence and the spreading of rumors. Some internet users are affected by incorrect values world views and values, so they spread rumors about politics, society as well as government recklessly and deliberately [14]. What is worse, some influential We Media companies and platforms with a large number of followers haven't set a good example to spread real and meaningful information. On the contrary, they choose to use their influence to get more clout and profits by helping rumors and vulgar information spread in the We Media. Among them, there are vicious competitions and negative effects in the We Media. They don't take notice of transmitting real information to mass and make efforts for the positive We Media environment.

4. Improvement

4.1. Cultivate the “Self-discipline Consciousness” of We Media Users and Organizers

In today's We Media environment, both individuals (single We Media user) and We Media organizations (We Media companies and platforms) are lack of the sense of social responsibility and network morale.

In terms of individual, We Media users, they should have the ability to distinguish and judge the authenticity of information. Never believe and spread easily and causally some information that is not proved by official departments. When We Media users enjoy the speed and convenience of information transmission, they should also set up their sense of social responsibility [15]. In addition, We Media users should take responsibilities for their words online instead of slandering others to vent own emotions.

When it comes to We Media organizations, they have more influence than individual We Media users. At the same time, they are charged with heavier societal responsibilities. They should not only take notice of the profits from the increasing patterns. On the contrary, they are supposed to take social responsibilities, promote positive energies as well as treat information strictly. Also, they should reflect deeply and alter their seeking goals transforming from pursuing profits by rumors and meaningful contents to spreading reliable information and news. They should improve their journalism qualities and keep an objective and rational attitude under the development of We Media.

4.2. Raise the Threshold to Entry and Improve the Supervision Mechanism

It can not be denied that everyone has opinions and is entitled to express them via We Media platforms freely, but “freedom” is not equivalent to laissez-faire and irresponsible expression which will cause the negative effects on society and government. In order to diminish and avoid this kind of “irresponsible expression”, it is essential to raise the expressing threshold.

First of all, We Media platforms and companies should strictly review and check the information on user registration and authentication. Especially, the registration and authentication of science or education accounts should be taken more notice, such as the review and collection of corresponding certificates and identification, which can prevent some so-called and unreliable “experts”, “scholars” as well as “professors” from misleading internet users and spreading false information. In addition, We Media platforms should adopt the “learning + online examination” review mechanism method for We Media users. The content of learning should include media literacy education, Internet service management regulations as well as platform usage rules and so on [16]. For example, the We Media platform, Bilibili, if users want to become full members, they need to complete one hundred multiple-choice questions to inspect moral quality and knowledge reserve. Users who get a total score of more than 60 can become full members.

In addition, We Media platforms should still pay attention to the following supervision and reviews. Take short video platforms as an example, platforms should regularly conduct quality education training and evaluation for registered We Media users. Assess whether they have the qualifications and moral qualities to produce, create as well as spread information via the We Media platforms. Moreover, it is necessary for platforms to promote the right values, the right morals to their users and encourage them to be curious and strict with information spreading. The videos, articles as well as photos that internet users posted and spread on the We Media should be checked rigorously in time, which can prevent the vulgar, boring and meaningless false information from further spreading and discussing by more audiences.

4.3. Establish and Refine Corresponding Laws and Regulations

Establishing laws and regulations is one of the most efficient methods to improve We Media chaos because laws have a very strong binding force. Although there have been some parts of regulations to solve and control, We Media chaos such as Administrative Provisions on Internet Electronic Bulletin Service, relative laws and policies are still not systematic and comprehensive with lack of some fields. Some of the laws and regulations are vague, unclear as well as not enough. Therefore, there are still tons of We Media companies and operators making use of this kind of lack to earn profits and spread information indiscriminately. In terms of victims in We Media chaos, such as victims of cyber violence, it is often difficult for them to hold perpetrators accountable due to the lack of laws, resulting in extreme physical and mental pressure.

The relative competent department should further strengthen the construction of the legal system, and promptly revise and improve the existing law regulations. Also, they are suggested to strengthen the cooperation and communication with relevant departments, actively promote the higher level of laws and regulations as well as constantly improve the laws and regulations system about false and negative information management. The government is supposed to aim to provide legal guarantees for creating a healthy network environment [13].

In addition, the government should take the responsibility to increase the publicity and promotion so that they can create the positive basis of law for citizens to safeguard rights and interests and restrain the chaos. At the same time, the government is obligated to execute the enforcement power legitimately and be a gatekeeper. Formulate the relative system of rewards and penalties.

5. Conclusion

From traditional media to We Media, the internal mechanism of information transmission has changed. People tend to produce and create information rather than accept information unilaterally. People can spread information more easily with fewer restrictions via We Media. In this case, the anonymity of We Media identities, the lack of netizens' sense of responsibility, overemphasizing the pursuit of profit, and the lack of a corresponding regulatory system have led to the emergence and spread of We Media chaos. In order to improve and solve the We Media phenomenon, We Media users, We Media platforms as well as government departments should cooperate with each other. As the users of We Media, people should improve their sense of morality and positive values. People should also take responsibilities for what they say on the internet and don't believe or spread rumors. In terms of the "We Media" platforms, they are supposed to raise the threshold of users, and supervise users seriously. When it comes to the government, the corresponding laws and regulations should be set and perfected as the gatekeeper of the law in the We Media environment.

The current research has not classified We Media users as different groups such as by age, occupation, knowledge level and other factors to discuss the different influences of We Media

chaos on them. Future research should discuss in more detail and explore more detailed methods to improve and solve We Media chaos for different groups.

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