

# *The Role of New Media in the Public Cognition: Take the Weibo Platform as an Example*

Xiaoxi Zong<sup>1,a,\*</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Department of International Education College, Shanghai Jian Qiao University, Shanghai, China  
a. 19890723@hhu.edu.cn

\*corresponding author

**Abstract:** With the rapid development of new media, especially the rise of Weibo platforms, its influence on public cognition has become more and more significant. Taking the Weibo platform as an example, this paper deeply discusses the role of new media in public cognition. First of all, by introducing the basic characteristics and functions of the Weibo platform, it also expounds its unique advantages in information transmission. Secondly, the paper analyzes the satisfaction degree of the Weibo platform's demand for obtaining knowledge and information, including information diversity, convenience, and interactivity. However, there are also some problems with the role of new media in public cognition, such as rumor dissemination, information overload, and information distortion. This paper presents solutions and suggestions for these problems. The government and relevant departments should strengthen information monitoring and screening, and reduce the spread of rumors by providing reliable information sources. New media platforms need to take effective measures to improve the credibility of information, such as establishing clear norms and mechanisms for news publication and strengthening the verification of news authenticity. It is also crucial for Weibo platforms to provide valuable and influential content. Platforms should encourage the production and dissemination of quality content while reducing the interference of spam and low-quality content. Finally, improving the public's media literacy is also the key. Through education and training, strengthen the public's ability to judge and distinguish between media information, in order to better cope with information overload and information distortion.

**Keywords:** new media, weibo platform, public awareness

## **1. Introduction**

With the rapid development and popularity of new media, especially the rise of social media platforms, people are increasingly relying on these platforms to obtain information, express opinions, and interact with others. However, the problems of information overload and excessive false information will follow, among which Weibo, as one of the largest social media platforms in China, plays a crucial role in public cognition [1]. Therefore, it is of great practical significance to study the role of new media in public cognition, especially taking microblog platforms as an example.

Exploring the role of new media in public perception can better understand and deal with the problems of information overload and false information. Understanding the impact of microblog platforms on the public can not only help improve the public's ability to distinguish information and

cultivate healthy media literacy [2] but also guide the platform to strengthen the supervision of content, so as to safeguard the public's right to know and the audience's rights and interests.

This study will use the method of literature review and content analysis, deeply analyze the characteristics and importance of microblog platforms by combing relevant studies and theories, and then explore the role of new media in public cognition. Through the content analysis, the bad speech and speech orientation on Weibo will be analyzed in detail, including the research of speech theme, emotional tendency, and information accuracy [3].

This study aims to fully understand the role of new media in public cognition, and take the microblogging platform as an example to deeply analyze its negative effects, so as to attract public attention to bad speech and speech orientation [4]. Through the research results, corresponding countermeasures and suggestions will be put forward to promote the positive role of new media in public cognition and safeguard public rights and interests and social stability.

## **2. Background**

### **2.1. Definition and Development of New Media**

New media refers to a form of media that uses emerging technologies and platforms such as the Internet, mobile network, and social media, as well as multimedia information content and services based on these technologies and platforms to realize the functions of information transmission, ideological transmission, and social interaction [5]. Compared with traditional media, new media has the characteristics of fast communication speed, wide communication range, and strong interaction.

The development of new media has benefited from the rapid development of Internet technology [6]. The popularity of the Internet makes the transmission cost of information greatly reduced, and the acquisition and sharing of information becomes more convenient. The rise of new media not only presents a new feature in the form of content and the mode of communication but also brings great impact and change to traditional media.

### **2.2. Relationship Between Weibo Platform and Public Cognition**

#### **2.2.1. Target User**

Weibo platform is a social media platform with ordinary users as the main body. The group of Weibo users is huge, including people of all ages, careers, and interests. These users post short texts, pictures, and videos through Weibo, and are also the recipients of the information [7].

The user composition of the Weibo platform has exerted an important influence on public cognition [8]. Different users have different backgrounds, views, and information needs, and the information they publish on the platform also presents the characteristics of diversity. The public interacts with these users through behaviors such as following, forwarding, and commenting, thus influencing and being affected.

#### **2.2.2. Public Influence**

As a place for information dissemination, the Weibo platform not only has an influence among the users who release information but also has a certain influence on the public.

The Weibo platform has expanded the scope of public influence. Through the information dissemination mechanism of Weibo, the information released by users can spread quickly and affect more public [9]. When a message is widely forwarded and commented on the platform, its influence increases significantly, attracting wide public attention and discussion. This public influence, in turn, will have a greater impact on the dissemination of information on Weibo platforms.

The public's behavior and feedback on the Weibo platform will also affect the cognition and behavior of other users [10]. When the public expresses their opinions and comments, other users may be inspired or affected. This interaction and influence relationship promotes communication and cognitive construction among the public [11].

### **2.2.3. Mode of Information Dissemination**

The way of information dissemination on the Weibo platform is quite different from that of traditional media. Traditional media usually adopt the mode of one-way communication, that is, the media conveys information to the public, and the public is the passive receiver of information. And the Weibo platform has more two-way communication characteristics.

Weibo platforms publish information in the form of short texts, pictures, and videos. This fragmented and brief-expression is closer to the public's reading habits and needs. The public can get more relevant information by following the users or topics they are interested in, and can selectively retweet, comment, and like operations.

The information dissemination of the Weibo platform is highly real-time. Users can release the information and update the dynamics in real time to realize the real-time transmission of information. This real-time nature makes Weibo become an important channel for the public to understand and participate in news events.

## **3. The Influence of New Media Social Platforms on Public Cognition**

### **3.1. Communication Theory**

On the new media social platform, there are some communication theories that can be used to explain and analyze the process of information dissemination and its impact on public cognition.

#### **3.1.1. Theory of Disease Transmission**

The disease transmission theory is an explanatory model for the prevalence of infectious diseases [12]. On new media social platforms, this theory is used to explain the process of information dissemination. According to this theory, information is transmitted in social networks by means of interpersonal communication, similar to the process of viral infection [13]. Specifically, on the Weibo platform, users send information to their fans through followers, forwarding, and comments and fans can further spread it to their followers, and so on. This kind of interpersonal communication mode is very fast, which makes information transmission widely spread in a short time.

#### **3.1.2. Two-step Process Model**

The two-step process model is the theory of information dissemination in social psychology. According to this model, there are usually two steps in the dissemination of information: the first step is to transmit the information from the media to the "insider" of the social network, and the second step is for the "insider" to transmit the information to others [14]. On the Weibo platform, this model also applies. In the dissemination of information, some "insiders" refer to the users with a high influence, and their forwarding and comment behavior can quickly attract the attention and participation of other users. Other users are obtaining and disseminating information under the guidance of these "insiders"[6].

### **3.1.3. Application on Weibo Platform**

These communication theories have a wide range of application scenarios on Weibo platforms. Disease transmission theory can be used to explain the process by which information spreads rapidly among users, as well as the extent and speed of information transmission [15]. A two-step process model can help to understand the influence of user influence and behavior on the cognition and behavior of other users.

## **3.2. Influence on Public Perception**

As a new media social platform, the Weibo platform has exerted a profound impact on public cognition. The following are some specific effects of the Weibo platform on public awareness.

### **3.2.1. Acceleration of Information Transmission Speed**

With its real-time performance and high-speed characteristics, the Weibo platform has greatly accelerated the speed of information transmission. Through the Weibo platform, the public can get the latest news, events, and views for the first time. Compared with traditional media, Weibo platforms can realize the rapid dissemination and wide dissemination of information, making the public's cognition of social events more timely and comprehensive [16].

### **3.2.2. Increase of Information Content**

The massive users and information flow on the Weibo platform enable the public to obtain more information. The public is no longer limited to the limited information provided by traditional media but can obtain more accurate and diversified information by paying attention to interested users and topics [17]. This increase in information helps the public broaden their cognitive horizons and capture more comprehensive and diverse views.

### **3.2.3. Challenges of Information Credibility**

Most of the information on the Weibo platform is released by ordinary users. Since there is no strict audit and professional editing, the credibility of the information has great challenges. False information, rumor spread and other problems also occur from time to time [18]. This challenge of information credibility has an impact on the public's cognition, and the public needs to screen and judge in the massive information to improve the ability of information discrimination.

### **3.2.4. Changes in Influence**

On the Weibo platform, users' influence is no longer limited to the recognition given by traditional media or authoritative organizations. By actively participating in interactions and accumulating influence, ordinary users can also play an important role in influencing public perception. This change in influence makes more views and opinions spread, and public cognition more diversified and diversified.

## **4. The Role of New Media on Public Cognition**

### **4.1. Potential Problems and Risks**

Although new media, especially Weibo platforms, have had a positive impact on public perception, there are also some potential problems and risks.

#### 4.1.1. Spread of Rumors

Information on the Weibo platform spreads fast, but it is also prone to the problem of rumor dissemination [19]. False information, false remarks, and rumors can often spread on the platform at a fast speed and have a negative impact on the public. These rumors will mislead public awareness, affect the public's judgment and decision-making on the event, and may even cause social panic and bad behavior.

On Weibo platforms, the transmission of information is often transmitted many times by different users, which may lead to information distortion. When users forward and comment on the information, they will often add their own interpretation and evaluation according to their personal wishes and positions, so as to change the original meaning of the information [20]. Such information distortion may distort facts and views in the process of dissemination and mislead the public perception of it.

During the epidemic, some bad remarks and rumors on the Weibo platform had a negative impact on the public, leading to panic and loss of judgment. These real examples can be more convincing to support the role of new media in public cognition.

Some speech orientation makes users lose their judgment is also a key example. During the outbreak, some Weibo users made biased and emotional comments about the origin, route of transmission, and prevention and control measures. These remarks often have strong emotions and personal views and lack an objective and impartial attitude. This speech guidance will affect the public's judgment ability, make it difficult for them to distinguish between facts and false information, and have a negative impact on the public's decision-making and behavior.

In addition to the examples during the epidemic, the role of microblog platforms in other fields can also be observed. For example, when social events occur, microblog platforms have become an important channel for the public to obtain the latest information and express their views. In some major events, microblog users have formed a huge information network by means of instant publishing, forwarding, and commenting, which accelerates the speed and scope of information dissemination. This is of great significance for the public to understand the truth of the event, assess the importance of the event and form a consensus.

However, it should be pointed out that bad speech and speech orientation are only a part of the problems existing in the microblogging platform, and they cannot erase its positive role in public cognition. In dealing with these problems, rumors can be reduced by strengthening information monitoring and screening; new media platforms should improve the credibility of information and strengthen supervision in the content audit. At the same time, the public also needs to improve their media literacy and cultivate the ability to distinguish between the authenticity of information, so as to better deal with information overload and information distortion.

To sum up, there are indeed examples of bad speech and speech orientation on Weibo during the epidemic period, which indicates that the role of new media in public cognition is dual. Although there are some negative effects, new media can still play a positive role by strengthening the monitoring of information, improving the credibility of information and improving the public's own media literacy, meeting the public's demand for information to obtain knowledge and information, and promoting the formation of public awareness and the conclusion of consensus.

#### 4.1.2. Information Overload

A large amount of information has emerged on the Weibo platform, bringing the phenomenon of information overload to the public. When the public face a large amount of information, it is often difficult to distinguish between true and false, effective and ineffective information, which hinders the effective dissemination and acceptance of information. Information overload may reduce the

public's reading interest and comprehension ability, and have a negative impact on the public's cognition.

## **4.2. Suggestions for Media Communication**

In order to improve the impact of Weibo platforms on public awareness, the following are some suggestions for media communication:

### **4.2.1. Strengthen Information Monitoring and Screening**

In view of the problem of rumor dissemination and information overload, the media and platforms should strengthen information monitoring and screening. Related platforms will intensify the investigation and punishment of false information and rumors, and regularly clean up the low-quality or repeated information on the platform [21]. In addition, the platform side can also provide users with more valuable and quality information through recommendation algorithms and other technical means, and reduce the problem of information overload.

### **4.2.2. Effective Screening of Information**

Media and users should work together to improve the credibility of the information. The media should strengthen fact verification and reduce the dissemination of false information [22]. At the same time, when forwarding and commenting, users should also make a reasonable judgment and review of the information, and not blindly trust or spread the unconfirmed information. The platform side can set up the authentication mechanism and user interaction restrictions to improve the credibility of users' information release and dissemination.

In order to avoid the excessive spread of rumors and low-quality information, the media should actively provide valuable content. This includes news reports, professional interpretation, authoritative views, etc., which can provide accurate, comprehensive, and in-depth information for the public. The media can increase the coverage and reference to professionals, scholars, and authoritative institutions to improve the quality and credibility of information.

In addition to the supervision of the media, the public should also improve their own media literacy. The public should have the ability of critical thinking and the ability of information discrimination, and learn to distinguish and screen the authenticity, value, and credibility of information [23]. Critical thinking ability can help the public to examine the motivation and position behind the information and understand it more comprehensively and objectively.

## **5. Conclusion**

This paper mainly discusses the role of new media on public cognition and puts forward some suggestions on the possible problems and risks of the Weibo platform. The following conclusions can be drawn from the analysis:

New media, especially Weibo platforms, have had a positive impact on public cognition. It accelerates the speed of information dissemination, enabling the public to access the news and information around the world faster, and meeting the needs of the public to obtain knowledge and information. At the same time, the new media has rich and diverse forms, allowing the public to obtain and understand information through text, pictures, videos, and other ways, which improves the effect and quality of information dissemination.

New media also brings some potential problems and risks. One of the main problems is rumor spreading, information overload, and information distortion. False information, false remarks, and rumors can often spread on Weibo platforms at a fast speed and have a negative impact on the public.

In addition, a large amount of information has emerged on the Weibo platform, bringing the phenomenon of information overload to the public, making it difficult for the public to distinguish between true and false, effective and invalid information. In the process of transmission, multiple dissemination may lead to the distortion of information, distorting the facts and views.

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