

Factors Influencing Public Opinion in Mass Media News Coverage

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Abstract. Mass media play an extremely important role in the development process of democratic countries. Since the widespread dissemination of paper media and public media such as cable television and radio, more and more new media platforms have begun to appear in the daily lives of citizens as technology advances, excluding the traditional model of government-funded or non-profit media reporting news. This article will focus on the evolution of traditional public media news coverage and how they have gradually changed the public perception of public media in response to social events. The essay will then discuss some of the role's media coverage has played in the political sphere and the reasons why the phenomenon of political polarization has arisen. In addition, the article includes a reference to how polarized views in real life are deviated from what one would expect. However, with the emergence of commercial media platforms, media coverage needs to be made more reliable through reasonable regulatory measures, and citizens need to understand that news coverage is always topical and limited, and that they need to rely moderately on online social media to avoid over-reliance on the same environmental circle and thus social disengagement.

Keywords: mass media; social reaction; news coverage.

1. Introduction

Since the explosive development of the information age, the main news reporting media on the social surface no longer rely on a single mainstream official media report and can even be said to be guided by many commercial mass media. And along with the increasingly fierce competition in the way mass media disseminate information, the mass media social masses have diversified their choices of how to receive news and information, and also have very different views on certain news because of the different delivery methods of these choices. At the social level, public opinion in mass media can create considerable value for officials, because these reactions help to improve social institutions and mechanisms, for example, through social media network data can be analyzed to understand theories of the existence of certain social events and the structure of social dynamics and networked social composition through these theories [1].

The emergence of commercial mass media has not only shifted the attention of the new generation from mainstream news media to online streaming media but has also been widely used in the marketing of various commercial products and corporate public relations strategies. This shows that mass media is multi-functional, and whether the information it delivers can leave an impression on the public or even change their opinion about an event depends on the distribution method, delivery rate and the target audience. At the same time, some of the mass media in today's society have been delivering fake news in order to gain readership or to achieve some specific purposes, leading to a great interest of the masses in the face of fake news and then being misled and manipulated to make incorrect judgments. According to the analysis in the study using hybrid algorithmic techniques, it is widely believed that Donald Trump won the presidential election because of the widespread influence of fake news during the election [2].

In the mainstream consciousness of the masses, in the era of information explosion people mostly absorb the main content of the news according to the headlines and summary headlines, so the mass media needs to consider the intended and unintended effects on the content of the news release so that the news release can achieve some desired effects. One of the most typical means is to reinforce previous points through selective exposure [1]. However, with the occurrence of multiple large social events in recent years, such as the aftermath of the COVID pandemic, the extreme growth of social

media has caused people to begin to question the meaning and accuracy behind the burst of repeatedly changing news content; how exactly should the social masses effectively absorb news? Can social media news have an impact on the real opinions of the social masses? The study and exploration of these questions will enable sociologists to further understand the relationship between mass media news coverage and social mass reflection. The main discussion in this article focus on the possible reasons for the changes in the impressions created on citizens in the development of mass media, the possible relationship between the news reporting media and the politics of the authorities and the qualities that need to be preserved in the media news releases, and the impact of the new age media platforms that are constantly emerging with the development of technology on the way young people receive news.

Through literature synthesis and comprehensive analysis, this article will focus on the factors that have influenced consumers (i.e., media audience groups) throughout the history of mass media development in the United States to either choose to further rely on mass media or to reduce their reliance on mass media. Source of literature materials including by searching for the keywords "mass media" and "audience reaction" in the university library resource Sociological Abstracts and Google Scholar, obtaining books from the American communication media industry that analyzed the mass media model that began to develop in the 20th century, and how the history of mass media in the United States is linked to news reporting and politics.

2. Literature Review

At the end of the twentieth century, when professional standards of news reporting and media institutional norms were quite stringent in the United States, the circulation of mainstream media such as newspapers grew substantially but not their competitors, which meant that industry competition among mainstream media was not large but would continue for a considerable period of time[3]. Media outlets that lack competition are not under pressure to capture headline readership because have a fairly regular readership and therefore industry norms will be easier to comply with. Overall public opinion surveys in the U.S., starting with the Gallup survey in 1930, show that the public has only moderate trust in the fairness of the media, and we cannot see through the survey that people's trust in the mainstream media is not always that high.

According to Ladd among many possibilities about people's declining trust in the media, the hostile media phenomenon targets those who have strong opinions and deep involvement in the subject of news coverage itself will be affected by people's prior bias towards news coverage [4]. Another possibility is that a media accustomed to consuming negativity and often playing the role of critic would make citizens resent their own government and the purveyors of news implicated in it [5].

With regard to the different impacts of different frames of crisis and negative news coverage, in an analysis based on the content of crisis news coverage in 2006, the media used five news frames to summarize the crisis according to its type, including human interest, attribution of responsibility, conflict, ethics, and economics [6]. These frames were chosen in relation to the type of crisis to be addressed, and when the news media attributed responsibility for the crisis to the institution, they were more likely to tell people about the economic impact of the crisis and that the organization itself was exempt from any responsibility for the crisis. This also allows the institution to portray itself as a victim.

3. Relationships Analysis

Public social journalism has a role as a voice for the public in addition to reporting on public social events. The conditions and ways in which mass media platforms operate and compete and the existence of connections between citizens of different age groups are the focus of the article. Therefore, the subject matter in the following section will analyze the relationship between mass media and the phenomenon of political polarization, the different ways in which media are used

among different audience groups and how the new age media can ensure reliability and determine the news content that will keep the attention of the audience when publishing news.

3.1 Mass media and political polarization

In the 21st century, the public's interest in politics and the political leanings they want to express are influenced not only by the dominant party in the region in which they live, but also by what people hear and see in the news media and on social media. This has led to a growing perception among the American public that political parties in the United States are increasingly fractured and antagonistic, meaning that the values and interests of people from different parties are becoming less compatible. A common assumption among social research scholars is that, without taking fake news into account, the perceived hostility of different political parties on online social media is quite polarized, even to the point of exacerbating extreme attitudes toward certain parties among the audience for a given media story. In real life, however, the polarization and antagonism among people of different parties is not as severe as one might think. According to a research survey made by Levendusky in 2015, people's perceptions of political events are generally more extreme than they actually are, regardless of political party, but the perceived extremism is particularly severe for opposing parties [7]. The expectations of citizens with different living conditions about their future lives will be attached to each party's platform values, and citizens will envision possible future benefits based on the political performance of the parties in the past [8].

Social media are extremely convenient and widely used in the image of online political expression, and in countries and regions with different political backgrounds, social networks are first and foremost restricted by the regulatory mechanisms that exist, and therefore have been studied and discussed by sociologists in different political and cultural contexts. In a study of the political use of social network users in China, it was shown that users may block their opposing views or remain silent to maintain their social network environment, while network users with explicit political orientation do create a more radical discussion environment on online social media [9]. This element of the study of course builds first on the anonymity and openness of social networking media. When people try to use media to find people who share their views, they increase the frequency of media use and eventually form a self-centered social network.

The phenomenon and discussion of group polarization, whether in American forums or otherwise, cannot be separated from the role of the media. The formation of group polarization is a continuous and developmental process, as subjective opinions may be expressed in error or filtered to change the original intent of the discussion in the specific areas constructed by the widespread use of social media. Whether the "spiral of silence" that often occurs in online expression has an impact on the polarization of media and politics should also be discussed. Due to the existence of the "spiral of silence" mechanism, it is possible that individual users of social media are blocked from receiving the views that they should receive and are also blocked by the same "silence" of other online media users [9]. As a result, some of the information presented to the public by online media is filtered and subjective, creating a subjective perception of continued polarization of the political community's views among media users.

3.2 Differences in types of mass media usage

With the significant increase in the frequency of social media use, in addition to the social side of news coverage, the knowledge and information that citizens gain through media coverage can have an impact on the future direction of their lives, especially in terms of the different outcomes that result from differences in how and how often media are used. Studies have shown that what young people are exposed to and share on social media is the most important for their development, and in particular, the involvement of these media has led to differences in the development of well-being and personality between adolescents and young adults as a result of differences in media use [10].

As mentioned earlier, a significant portion of the information that social media users access online is presented after being filtered through various mechanisms can be specific content that the news

publisher (i.e., the source) wants to present to a particular group. Compared to the 20th century, the freedom of news media publishers in the 21st century has been greatly enhanced. As news publishers are no longer required to obtain specific approval and are subject to institutional guidelines, social media platforms are becoming increasingly diverse, and the different audiences for information posted on different platforms may lead to increased reliance on social media by specific groups. According to research surveys, younger groups spend a particularly prominent amount of time on social media, up to nine hours per day on average [11]. Even according to the latest research, this value has increased in turn. When young people become increasingly dependent on social media leading to social isolation, it can also be a catalyst for radicalized ideologies along with other radicalizing factors, while the Internet itself, although not an influential factor leading to individual radicalization, he still continues to attract radicalized media users to specific groups [12].

There are a variety of measures that capture the efficiency of the use of different media types. The measures included in this case are: understanding, awareness, attitude, recall, and credibility of the received message. For example, the target audience must be aware of the message, understand it, and retain it accordingly. This means that they can remember the message when trying to convey the news content. The traditional public side of society possesses the process of receiving, understanding, judging whether it is credible or not, and digesting and disseminating it when receiving information. As mentioned in the previous analysis, politicians need to construct idealized targets for the public when seeking public support, and the mainstream media they use are often disturbed by the information published by independent media. Therefore, they always tend to use any means available to organize the media as a trusted independent news source, and this means includes publicly attacking the credibility of uncontrolled news outlets [4]. Those who have attended at least some colleges are more likely to use social media than those with a high school diploma or less, implying that the less educated group will rely more on social media and judge the credibility of news sources relatively less [13]. Longer exposure to the same media platforms is more likely to fix the group's information-receiving patterns and thus lose the possibility of actively seeking the reliability of information sources.

3.3 Qualities of the new era media

The burgeoning growth of news media platforms has forced media organizations to ensure that news content is both topical and timely in order to be competitive in the marketplace and ahead of the industry. In addition to the public media, which are funded by government agencies, commercial media are limited by cost factors such as sponsorship and cost control, but the content of interest to the public is often not equal to the content that sponsors want to present. Therefore, in order to attract a larger audience, media outlets need to balance the topics that audiences like with the content that advertisers want to provide, and the only way to resolve this conflict is to keep the news content as accurate and credible as possible. There are many criteria and values to be measured by news publishers in the guidelines of news distribution. In the new media era, in addition to traditional news values such as attractiveness, entertainment value and importance, several new "commercial news criteria" have been proposed [14]. These include the uniqueness, preparedness and public relevance of the content. If all these elements can be achieved, new media values will undoubtedly become one of the most important factors influencing the public's choice of media, and will largely increase the social influence of the media itself.

One of the questions worth pondering is: will the public be attracted to traditional newspapers and free online media short videos in the face of relatively inexpensive prices, or to paid channels or print products with higher per capita consumption requirements? Clearly, regardless of the content, the higher priced consumer product or service will have a smaller audience than the free platforms. This may create price discrimination between communication products and news media in economic terms. According to Baker's analysis, news and factual content can be sold and broadcast quickly, and subsequently included in a weekly magazine or integrated into a book for permanent record [15]. Therefore whether news content has a potentially large audience and the level of consumption it may

bring becomes a question that media content has to think about. According to predictions, even for the most popular media products, there will be periods of audience burnout and an expectation of more diverse content presentation. In addition to this, the freedom of the press is crucial in the functioning of a democratic society. The press can be used by the popular government to lead the masses in obtaining objective facts, and it can likewise be used by the public to report on popular information and difficulties. This is a two-way channel of communication, but the question of whether the press, the intermediary, can really play this important role well is always a matter of reflection. If possible, is it necessary for the government to intervene to maintain the current environment of social opinion? There are many possible theories for the use of media in a democratic society, including the "pluralistic elitist equilibrium" mentioned by Baker and the aforementioned liberalism. Is the essence of American democratic society controlled by elitist groups (that is, groups or individuals in society with a certain amount of influence who can make decisions in the management of society), or does it rely on group decision making in pluralism (that is, the ideal system in which no one is above anyone). Whether or not a balance can be struck between the two becomes the key to whether or not mass media can be used by management while keeping public discourse in the hands of citizens. However, the question of how to choose and reconcile the contradictions between these theories is still a question that needs to be addressed by the news media and democratic governments in the future.

4. Conclusion

The impact of media coverage on the public in the new era is a diverse, multidimensional and socially relevant issue to be analyzed. Although the public's access to news coverage has evolved from a single public news outlet to a diverse range of social media platforms, the impact of news coverage on the public's daily life is only increasing. From national events to daily social activities, news coverage can be reported on public platforms. In addition to attracting more people with similar political views to different political groups, the media can also enhance the polarization of political groups by publishing targeted content through its own media channels. The increasing reliance of young people on social media among the mass media users has also led to a prolonged disconnection from social reality, social isolation, and the formation of a single source of information, exacerbating the extremes of news coverage. While maintaining the diversity and competitiveness of the media, the reliability and objectivity of the news media and the full freedom of reporting in a democratic society will need to be balanced with the use of theories and methods that are in line with the current situation in society. The ever-changing and evolving model of news coverage will always need to cater to popular preferences to gain popular support. Over-emphasis on topicality and uniqueness may gain some audience growth for a short period of time, but it does not ensure that audience feedback will always be positive, especially when it comes to political propaganda content. When the media audience consumes more than 8 hours a day on the media platform, mass media coverage can be targeted to specific audience groups through data analysis to release more content that the audience wants to know to enhance the audience's group identity, but also need to pay attention to the freedom of democracy advocated by media news is based on objective facts, so as to avoid mass media coverage too. It is also important to note that the democratic freedom of the media press is based on objective facts, thus avoiding the possibility of too subjective mass media reporting.

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