

Analysis of Network Public Opinion Guidance Strategies of Various Communication Subjects in Natural Crisis Events: Take Chongqing Bush fire Incident as the Example

Xiaoqian Yuan

School of Journalism and Communication, Hunan University, Changsha, Hunan, 410082, China

Xiaoqian@hnu.edu.cn

Abstract

With the rapid development of media technology, the online public opinion about the Chongqing Bush Fire has continued to ferment with the changing situation of the event and even influenced the development of the event to a certain extent. This paper takes central media, Chongqing local media and we media as the research objects, and compares and analyzes the different strategies and characteristics of every communication subject for the guidance of online public opinion, hoping to provide useful reference for media practitioners in the future guidance of online public opinion, in order to play a positive role of social media in the process of information and social communication.

Keywords

Natural Crisis Events; Chongqing Bush Fire; Network Public Opinion Guidance; Communication Subjects.

1. Introduction

1.1. Research Background

In recent years, natural disaster events have been frequent. According to the report "2020: The Year of Non-Corona virus Disasters" released by the Centre for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters in April 2021, there were 389 natural disaster events of some impact happening worldwide in 2020, resulting in 15,080 deaths, 98.4 million people affected, and economic losses conservatively estimated at \$171.3 billion. [1] At the same time, with the continuous development of society, the nature of natural crisis events becomes more complex: a crisis event in its initial, middle and final stages will be accompanied by public discussions of different degrees and contents, and these discussions and opinions will be transformed into public opinion to some extent, and the powerful public opinion can even have a non-negligible influence on the direction of the event.

The sudden bush fire in Chongqing is not only a natural disaster with great destructive power, but also a social event with great influence. From the spread of panic in a short period of time to the rapid transformation of public opinion into positive propaganda for the courage and enthusiasm of Chongqing people in disaster relief, every communication subject had its own characteristics and strategies for guiding public opinion, which also had different impacts in this public opinion event.

1.2. Literature Review

Before this research, there have been some studies on the government's guidance of public opinion on natural disasters and a few on the guidance of new media on online public opinion in natural disasters, but there is no one focusing on every communication subject, that is, a parallel research structure in which every communication media is analyzed and compared

equally. Through this analysis, we collected news reports from various subjects to discover more neglected influences of different communication subjects on public opinion, which can help us learn from their public opinion guidance strategies, and provide useful references for monitoring public opinion in crisis events thereafter.

2. Method

2.1. The Chosen Communication Subject and Specific Contents

Based on the characters of different communication subjects, this study intends to classify the research subjects into three types: The Central Media, The Local Media of Chongqing and We Media. From every communication subject one specific media was selected as the representative.

The Central Media: CCTV net (www.cctv.com)

The Local Media of Chongqing: Chongqing Daily (www.cqrb.cn)

We Media: Sina Weibo (Since the quantity of the content released by we media is too large to make exact statistics manually, the top 100 pieces of them with the highest respective hotness were selected as the analysis text)

To ensure the equality and accuracy of the study, a more balanced sample size ($30 \leq \text{sample size} \leq 100$) was selected for each media, and the top 100 most popular articles were selected for analysis after the total number of samples > 100 (we media) through precise search.

Specific Contents: Emotional Tendency, Coverage Object, Coverage Topic, Coverage Format

2.2. Research Focus and Specific Hypotheses

The purpose of this study is to investigate what are the similarities and differences in the strategies for guiding online public opinion embodied by each communication subject through the relevant process of communication, and thus analyze their influence on online public opinion in the natural crisis event.

The investigator predicts that the above three types of communication subjects all have their own distinctive communication characteristics in this event, and have different responsibilities for the guidance of public opinion, and will adopt different guidance strategies. For example, mainstream media may be more prudent in their reporting and more positive in their emotional tendency, while we media are more rapid and relatively rough in their information processing. The different characteristics of different communication subjects also play different roles in the guidance of online public opinion of the event.

2.3. The Whole Procedure of the Research

The investigator searched for "Chongqing bush fires" on each media's official website or client, counted the overall number of samples, and categorized each sample by type, counted the frequency, and further conducted secondary or multi-level coding if it could be further condensed. Based on the coding results, the communication characteristics of each communication subject were compared and analyzed, and their respective public opinion guidance strategies were extracted and summarized. Finally, all the statistics obtained were organized into a table for comparative analysis of the content.

3. Results and Discussions

The investigator will present the findings of the four specific elements in turn through table formats.

3.1. Emotional Tendency

Table 1 shows the emotional tendency of each communication subjects' coverage in the event.

Table 1. Categories of Emotional Tendencies of Online Opinion Guidance in Chongqing Bush Fire

Emotional Tendency	Keywords	Sample Statements
Active and Positive Publicity	Praise, Encouragement	Righteousness rushed to Chongqing; "The motorcycle riding wares made a big difference; they were sending fire extinguishers to the mountains."
	Mutual Help	The spontaneous rescue and relief spirit of Chongqing people in the extreme hot and dry weather has touched the hearts of people all over the country, especially in Chengdu, which is the twin core of Chengdu and Chongqing main city metropolitan area as the development of the twin city economic circle in the Chengdu-Chongqing area, and is closely linked.
	Unity Commitment	Everyone was trying to do what they could, and it showed me the power of unity.
	Enthusiasm, Cheerfulness	More than 300 Yunnan forest firefighters evacuated from Chongqing after successfully completing the task of fighting the mountain fires.
	Selflessness, Dedication, Volunteerism	"Jinyun Mountain is on fire, as Chongqing people, how can we stand by and do nothing? Moreover, the mountain road is difficult to walk, and now it is the time to need motorcycles, we must go to the scene." This sentence sums up the voice of all motorcycle riders.
Objective Presentation of the Situation	Mountain Fire Status (fire started, location, extinguished, casualties)	By all rescue forces to fight, Beibei District and Bishan District border fire open fire all extinguished.
	Rescue Difficulty, Personnel	Chongqing put more than 1,700 people in the city and district rescue forces, the Ministry of National Emergency Management dispatched Gansu, Yunnan forest fire and other rushed to the scene to support the dispatch of excavators, fire trucks, sprinklers, etc. more than 70 (frame), pumps and other equipment more than 160 units, 71 helicopter sorties, sprinkling 1110 tons of water.
	Site Conditions, Reporter on Site	Reporters directly reported the rescue site of the mountain fire in Beibei, Chongqing on the scene.
	Power Protection Fire Protection Line	Since August, affected by the sunny and hot weather in Chongqing, the transmission line channel forest fire prevention situation is severe, in order to build a solid security barrier against mountain fires, to protect the safe and stable operation of the power grid, the State Grid Chongqing Electric Power Company carried out a government-enterprise collaboration, local linkage, prevention of mountain fires, power supply activities.
	Spontaneous Combustion, Factors	"Forest spontaneous combustion due to extreme hot weather is an important factor in the recent frequent hill fires in Chongqing."

Table 2 presents the frequency of use of each emotional tendency on the basis of Table 1.

Table 2. Application Frequency Statistics of Each Communication Subject to Guide Emotional Tendency Strategy

Emotional Tendency	Keywords	The Central Media	The Local Media of Chongqing	We Media
	Praise, Encouragement	6	14	20

Active and Positive Publicity	Mutual Help	2	9	25
	Unity, Commitment	9	8	12
	Enthusiasm, Cheerfulness	6	12	8
	Selflessness, Dedication, Volunteerism	7	9	13
Total		30	52	78
Objective Presentation of the Situation	Mountain Fire Status (fire started, location, extinguished, casualties)	20	18	11
	Rescue Difficulty, Personnel	4	5	3
	Site Conditions Reporter on Site	5	10	3
	Power Protection Fire Protection Line	3	6	0
	Spontaneous Combustion, Factors	2	9	5
Total		34	48	22

Based on the above statistics we can conclude the followings:

3.1.1. The Mainstream Media in the Report Held a More Objective Attitude, Both to Mobilize Positive Emotions and Timely Presentation of Facts.

The Central media and local media in Chongqing, as members of China's mainstream media, have taken up the responsibility of positive propaganda in their coverage, reporting a lot of positive deeds in the bush fire incident in Chongqing. From the bravery of the firefighters, to the motorcycle convoy that volunteered to help, to the Chongqing citizens who actively contributed to the logistical support of the front-line personnel... Mainstream media focused on "good personalities and good deeds", magnifying the beauty and kindness of humanity, close-up shots of these people and things were like a strong injection into the hearts of the public, greatly enhancing the confidence and fighting spirit of the disaster, but also to promoted more citizens to actively participate in the rescue, to provide support and protection for the disaster relief.

What is worth mentioning is that the mainstream media, while mobilizing positive emotions and playing their own professional characteristics, upheld the principle of objectivity in news reporting, tracking the burning situation of the mountain fires and rescue personnel arrangements in real time, providing the public with timely information feedback, which was conducive to calming the public's emotions and alleviating the spread of anxiety caused by mass infection. In addition, the mainstream media also actively understood the causes of the fires and other objective factors, and putted forward relevant suggestions to reduce the risk of similar incidents occurring in the future.

3.1.2. We Media Gave Full Play to the Advantages of Emotional Communication, a Large Number of Release of Individual Real Feelings, to Provide Emotional Comfort and Support for the Public.

In this era of "everyone has a microphone", the decentralized and diversified characteristics of we media make the content published by them cover a wider area and have a richer and more unique perspective. The emotional content creation of we media is rooted in life, telling their own emotional experience and understanding of similar people, from which the audience gains emotional recognition and emotional relief, which is a kind of spiritual solace and companionship. [2]

We media is largely free from the programmed and formalized content distribution of mainstream media, and the content is presented more freely, authentically and quickly. The unadorned content is a more "down-to-earth" discourse system, which allows the public to experience the communicator's emotional outpouring more personally. In the case of the

Chongqing bush fires, the respective media publishers vividly showed the public the heroic stories and mutual support in the fires with their immersive records or commentaries, which touched a large number of netizens who were always watching the development through the screen, and set off a wave of enthusiasm of "Chongqing Rises" on the Internet, guiding public opinion in the direction of positive disaster fighting on a large scale.

3.2. Coverage Object

Table 3 presents the frequency of occurrence of each coverage subject in the reports of each communication subject

Table 3. Statistics on the Frequency of Coverage Objects by Each Communication Subject

Coverage Object	Identity	The Central Media	The Local Media of Chongqing	We Media
Firefighters and other professionals	Medical staff	15	11	12
	Public Security Police	15	12	7
	Firefighters	27	18	21
Total		57	41	40
Social Forces	Motorcycle fleet	17	29	13
	Enterprise	6	6	3
	Citizens	8	21	17
	Artists	1	3	5
	Stars / Fans	0	0	22
Total		32	59	60

Based on the above statistics we can conclude the followings:

3.2.1. Local Media Focused Heavily on the Current State of Local Social Forces to Make up for the Absence of Central Media.

Local media usually have a high authority within the perception of the audience in the region, especially the mainstream media in the region. [3] Therefore, local media play an important role in guiding public opinion in natural crisis events. In the Chongqing bush-fire, local media in Chongqing, represented by Chongqing Daily, started from "Chongqing people", recorded and reported a large number of local social forces into the rescue, and let "Chongqing people tell Chongqing stories". These reports fully demonstrated the "heroic spirit" of Chongqing people and the blood, will and solidarity shared by the Chinese people in the face of disasters.

The local media took the initiative to carry the banner of mainstream public opinion and sang the main theme, and the relevant art works created by some local poets and songwriters were also disseminated through the local media, enriching the content and form of positive energy reports and guiding the development of online public opinion in a positive direction.

3.2.2. We Media Cleverly Uses the Influence of Star-Type Key Opinion Leaders to Inject Positive Power into the Public Opinion Field

In the era of we media, the "transmission-reception relationship" has been greatly transformed, and everyone can have the dual identity of information disseminator and information receiver. In this context, we media is silently influencing the value judgment and orientation of netizens. As a major part of the we media platform, celebrities, with their huge fan base and influence, have also become an important player in influencing online public opinion.

Star-type key opinion leaders are a group of people who can exert personal influence on others and have a "symbiotic relationship" with their fans. Their special role as public figures and cultural symbolic meanings makes them relatively stable influences in the cyberspace. As consumers of emotional economy, fans are more inclined to symbolic identification with

celebrities, and their interactions with stars are accomplished through fantasies of real and objective self-construction and value-seeking, thus achieving emotional acquisition and value identification, and their virtues inspire positive social mobilization.[4]

In this bush fire incident, stars such as singer Xiao Zhan, actor Bai Yufan, and host Xie Na had posted relevant microblogs to cheer for the fire rescue, and even personally arrived at the scene to join the volunteer team. Their words and actions have become an important medium for relaying information and meaning on social media platforms, and might directly influence the attitudes and actions of their followers. For example, many fans took the initiative to support their idols' positive actions by forwarding reports about cheering for disaster relief, posting related topics on Weibo, shooting videos about helping, and even collecting supplies offline to donate to disaster areas. These initiatives and actions have created a very good public opinion trend on the Internet.

3.3. Coverage Topic

Table 4 shows the coverage topics used by each communication entity

Table 4. Categories of Coverage Topics of Online Opinion Guidance in Chongqing Bush Fire

Coverage Topic	Keywords	Sample Statements
Fire Rescue	Bush Fire Fighting	Recently, bush fires occurred in many places in Sichuan and Chongqing, the local emergency plan was quickly launched, and many forces actively participated in the fight.
	Volunteer Support	Recently, the news of the bush fire rescue in Chongqing has been touching hearts, and many people are taking the initiative to sign up for rescue volunteers. But most people are not clear, a volunteer involved in the bush fire rescue what exactly to experience?
Crowd Appreciation	Crowd Appreciation	Early in the morning of August 27, Wan Wan carried a basket of freshly cooked eggs to the intersection and looked on. The eggs in the basket were so full that they were bubbling, and many of the eggshells had red letters written on them - "Tribute to the heroes of the fire" and "Tribute to the forest guards".
Other Objective Situation Presentation and Analysis	Bush Fire and Casualties in a Certain Area	Mountain fire broke out in Fuling, Chongqing.
	Bush Fire Inspection for Safety	Drone inspection to monitor bush fires to ensure the safety of power transmission lines.

Table 5 counts the frequency of each coverage topic on the basis of Table 4

Table 5. Statistics on the Frequency of Topics Covered by Each Communication Subject

Coverage Topic	Keywords	The Central Media	The Local Media of Chongqing	We Media
Fire Rescue	Bush Fire Fighting	7	14	18
	Volunteer Support	8	23	29
Total		33	37	47
Crowd Appreciation	Crowd Appreciation	3	35	31
Total		26	35	31
Other Objective Situation Presentation and Analysis	Bush Fire and Casualties in a Certain Area	14	23	15
	Bush Fire Inspection for Safety	1	15	7
Total		28	38	22

Based on the above statistics we can conclude the followings:

3.3.1. Mainstream Media on the Whole Report More Comprehensive Topics, through the Objective Facts and Positive Events Reported to Eliminate Public Doubts, Exerted Subtle Influence on Public Attitudes.

In the 1970s, American communication scholars McCombs and Shaw found through empirical research that the mass media's journalistic and informational activities can give various "issues" varying degrees of prominence and influence people's judgments about the "events" and importance of the world around them. Mainstream media timely publicized the disaster and selectively report events such as volunteer support and people's appreciation for the rescue, using the high-speed communication of the Internet to "set the agenda" and guided the public to pay attention to relevant information. In the digital era, audiences' reading habits have become "fragmented" and the scattered time and fragmented information make it easy for audiences to subjectively assemble pieces of information and fuse their own imagination before understanding the full picture of the event, eventually forming a wrong perception.

The agenda-setting news can firstly put the audience into the relevant topic in terms of timeliness, occupy the initiative of public opinion, dispel the audience's doubts and minimize the rumors caused by information errors. At the same time, it is complemented by an appropriate amount of positive event reports to impress the public and build their confidence in disaster relief through a number of real, vivid and real-life stories.

3.3.2. We Media Reports Were More Microscopic in Coverage Topics and had Certain Personal Emotional Tendencies, Enhancing the "Empathy" With the Public.

Different from the macro narrative of the mainstream media, a large number of we media accounts directly attacked the disaster from the first perspective, without carefully edited videos or detailed descriptions, and the very lifelike scenes and genuine text comments became the bridge of "exchanging true feelings for true emotions". As a member of the public, the publisher of self-published information indirectly influences the direction of public opinion in the process of interaction and discussion with other members of society.

Since the information released by self-published media is small and microscopic, it does not have obvious "guiding" and strong "stance", so it is not easy to provoke the public's resistance to some sensitive topics. Instead, the public will be unconsciously attracted by the content they are interested in, and then subjectively agree with the value orientation conveyed by the message, realizing "transmission-reception empathy".

3.4. Coverage Format

Table 6 counts the frequency of different coverage format used in the coverage of each communication subject

Table 6. Statistics on the Frequency of Coverage Format by Each Communication Subject

Coverage Format	The Central Media	The Local Media of Chongqing	We Media
Texts Only	24	17	2
Pictures Only	3	7	10
Videos Only	9	13	37
Texts + Pictures	39	31	21
Texts + Videos	1	22	28
Texts + Pictures + Videos	13	10	2

Based on the above statistics we can conclude the followings:

3.4.1. The Central Media "Shoulder the Crossbeam of Pure Text News", and Strove to Report the Real, Profound Events.

In today's era of media convergence, the media are delivering information in more diverse ways. In a world where fragmented reading is all the rage, central media are still sticking to "text-only news" to demonstrate its value. We must admit that pictures and videos are more in line with modern reading habits and can capture the audience's attention during the short attention span. However, we must also admit that "text news" is more accurate and can be discursive when it has sufficient time to deliver its message. The writers overcome the disadvantages of superficial, general and superficial dynamic and comprehensive reports, and reach out to the inner essence hidden behind the phenomenon, relying on the penetrating power of rational thinking to explore the deeper information.

Sudden natural crisis events are events that may seriously endanger the social environment, and because of their strong destructive power and wide coverage, they will attract widespread attention in the society. According to the 49th Statistical Report on the Development of Internet in China released by China Internet Network Information Center (CNNIC), thanks to the continuous promotion of the aging-friendly transformation of Internet applications, the demand for Internet connection, Internet access and Internet use among the elderly has been further stimulated. [5] The Internet is no longer just for young people. The number of middle-aged and elderly Internet users has increased significantly, and they have gradually started to use the Internet to express their demands. Unlike young people, they are more receptive and accustomed to text news, and the detailed and accurate description of text news is more in line with the information needs of this group, and some news commentaries even add the value judgment of commentators, which is more ideological and an excellent tool to guide public opinion.

3.4.2. The Local Media Adhered to the Righteousness and Innovation, Strengthened the Content Production, Enriched and Diversified Forms of Reporting.

The needs of today's audiences vary greatly, and the web makes up for the inability of paper media to deliver sound and continuous animation, and can cover any form of information. The media cannot rely on only one form of reporting to achieve all-round communication, so a multiform, multi-level, multi-content "combination" report is more likely to reap better feedback.

Local media in Chongqing released a large number of combined graphic and text reports and integrated graphic and video information in the mountain fire incident, combining the characteristics of different communication platforms and placing the corresponding reports on different channels, for example, video news strongly seized the hot short video platforms such as Kuaishou, Tik Tok, etc., the graphic combination is suitable for the platform characteristics of micro-blog, and the integrated graphic and video reports are mainly released in WeChat public accounts to form a full-coverage, differentiated matrix type dissemination.

At the same time, some local media in Chongqing not only captured relevant on-site pictures or videos as news materials, but also used existing materials to complete the production of relevant posters and short videos. For example, Chongqing Daily launched a visually striking group poster "Chongqing Rises, We Are Not Afraid". After it was launched on its WeChat public account, the number of views exceeded 100,000 in less than 5 hours, and the dissemination volume of the whole platform was over 3 million. [6] Under the group poster, netizens left messages "all together" and the sound of "rise up" was touching. The content products planned by local media have the power to strike the hearts of the people, which is complemented by the powerful communication and interactivity of the online platform, making the online public opinion positive and gathering a strong momentum to overcome the disaster.

3.4.3. Every Communication Subject Grasped the Development Trend of Reporting, and Constantly Enriched the Form of Information Products.

Whether it was the central media or local media in Chongqing, or we media, more pictures and videos had been added to the content to enhance the attractiveness of pure text information. Pictures and videos fully mobilized the receiver's visual and auditory senses, enriched the reading experience, and harvested stronger emotional feedback with more visually impactful information, thus achieving the effect of improving the quality and effectiveness of publicity. Compared with simple words, pictures and videos present more vivid and realistic images to the public - burning mountain fires, reckless firefighters, brave and fearless volunteers -- These cruel yet warm frames and clips had precisely the power to move people's hearts. Countless messages brought tears to people's eyes, and every word spoke of the public's support and resilience in fighting the disaster.

4. Conclusion

Each communication subject has its own strategy for guiding online public opinion in the natural crisis of Chongqing bush fire: the central media always represented the development direction of advanced culture, so it maintained a more positive, objective and serious attitude and style in the whole process of guiding online public opinion. They focused on positive emotional propaganda, and the objects and topics of their reports were more macro. However, it also actively adapted to the integrated media communication environment and enriches information product forms; The local media in Chongqing had a more urgent responsibility to mobilize local residents for disaster relief actions, and its reports were rapid and focused on people and events that were more grounded and microscopic, with more local characteristics in the text; We media had fast information dissemination and prominent UGC features, but the information processing was relatively rough, attaching importance to the disaster situation directly, and mostly releasing reports in the form of pictures and videos which had strong sensory impact.

Social responsibility theory emphasizes that mass media should assume certain responsibilities and obligations to society and the public. In China, a socialist country, our media are under the leadership of The Communist Party of China and are more responsible for guiding public opinion. Therefore, each communication subject is always operating in the same general direction although they adopt different guiding strategies. They adhere to the social responsibility of the media, actively guide online public opinion, present facts, and concentrate their efforts to contribute to the guidance of public opinion.

This study is still deficient in universality. From each communication subject there has only one specific case was chosen for analysis, and the sample size collected is insufficient due to the limited power of individuals, so there may be exceptions. The Chongqing Bush Fire is also only a more typical case study of sudden natural disasters, with a high degree of social commentary and influence, but it cannot represent all natural disasters. It is only hoped that this study will hopefully help various media practitioners to better grasp the characteristics and social responsibilities of the media in which they work, to take a multi-pronged approach to continuously improve the mechanism for handling online public opinion, to better monitor and guide public opinion, and to more rationally and effectively disseminate information in different natural crisis events that may occur in the future. To promote the role of social media in the process of information communication and social communication, and to promote the positive development of society.

References

- [1] Wu Daming. (2021) Global Natural Disasters and the Basic Situation of Disasters in 2020. *Labour Protection*, 11:41-43.
- [2] Jin Danyang. (2020) Emotion Presentation and Communication in We-Media - Taking WeChat Public Website as an Example. *Jilin University*, 8:16.
- [3] Liu Jiamei. (2021) Local Media's Public Opinion Guidance on Rumor Spreading in Public Emergencies. *Voice & Screen World*, 4:30-31.
- [4] Yang Hongyan. (2017) A Paradigm of Chinese Communication Studies in a Western Perspective - Review of Celebrity: A Cultural Studies Perspective. *Media*, 13:90-91.
- [5] Jiang Linlin. The 49th Statistical Report on the Development of China's Internet Released The Size of China's Elderly Internet Users Reached 119 Million. *China Senior News*, 2022-3-3-(1).
- [6] Lei Taiyong, Li Yuanyuan, Xia Jing. (2022) Empowering News Reporting with a Louder Mainstream Voice - Chongqing Daily's Reporting Practice against Continuous High Temperatures and Mountain Fires. *The Press*, 19:70-73.
- [7] Guo Qingguang. (2011) *Communication Studies Tutorial*. China Renmin University Press, Beijing.