

Different Social Media Role in Public Agenda Setting Under The Context of COVID-19 Between China and the United Kingdom

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Abstract

How does social media influence public agenda setting, and is the control of the COVID-19 closely related to the cooperation of social media? Understanding the usage of social media on real news to help regulate public agenda setting and policy has been the major concern of a large number of research papers. Because of different national conditions, it causes various circumstances when people use social media. Regarding the outbreak and spread of COVID-19, the situation of controlling the epidemic varies from country to country. China is one of the countries with better COVID-19 control, in which social media has played a great role at that moment. Besides, this study uses quantitative methods and aims at establishing the link between the countries, such as the United Kingdom and China, addressing public agenda setting in social media content. According to the data of relevant annual reports from social media companies, this paper reveals that people in the United Kingdom and China use social media to grab news of COVID-19 during the epidemic, but they depend on social media to varying degrees. In China, people rely more on social media to get news about COVID-19, and it helps them to control the epidemic. In addition, British people do not rely on social media for epidemic news as much as Chinese people do. Thus, this affects whether the governments should cooperate with social media and formulate relevant public agenda setting to control the epidemic through communication. The contribution of the present research involving social media may overturn the traditional way of conveying news and public policies. Social media can be used as a new medium to express and exchange news or people's feelings, thus the governments may use it to help their country to effectively push public agenda setting for their citizens.

Keywords

Social Media, Public Agenda-Setting, COVID-19, United Kingdom, Twitter, Tik Tok Neural Network.

1. Introduction

It has been more than a year since WHO first published to the world that the cause of chaos in almost every country at the time was COVID-19, and each country has been making relevant policies to regulate people's daily activities to help them to prevent and protect themselves. Thus, public agenda setting has started to be set by the governments in some countries that are greatly affected. The coronavirus disease during 2020 to 2021 is the first epidemic in history to use technology and social media on a large scale to guarantee everyone's safety. In order to ensure people's safety, it is necessary to popularize the real nature of this disease on the Internet, such as social media. So, the public is able to have a certain extent of understanding about the situation for people to keep in touch and update their daily information continuously online, which relates to the prevention of COVID-19 at that time. On the other hand, people use different methods to be informed, the options of various countries are different. Some of them

prefer to use television, while a part of the countries would choose to get news from social media. However, with the rapid development of social media, people have been brought into a brand new environment of social media unconsciously. Currently, with the continuous development of information technology, and the diversification trend of social media forms has further appeared. Besides, it has quietly integrated into people's lives, which has a profound impact on human production and lifestyle. Social media has played a vital role in the coverage of the COVID-19, which cannot be replaced by traditional media. Thus, the impact of social media tactics is distinct in different countries, which depends on its usage within each country. Using social media for pushing public agenda setting is an increasingly important area in applied linguistics because the epidemic situation has been controlled differently in every country based on these conditions of the media. The United Kingdom is an example of a country that is not able to control the epidemic well, but the government already has locked down their cities to limit people's activities, while others, such as China, is able to control the epidemic through social media, and the effect is far better than the former. Therefore, it is undeniable that countries using social media can better control the epidemic.

Particularly, China is a great case of controlling COVID-19 through using social media. As for the function of screening, social media contents are always under constant review in China to make people trust the information and news from the country. The relative importance of different levels of it in the United Kingdom and China has been subject to considerable debate. There is a difference that the process of screening these social media is in charge of the applications' companies, since the Chinese governments regulate this industry, and every relevant company needs to follow the national rules. However, Britain is not like China, so it may be one of the reasons that cause the deviation. There are three aspects contributing to the reasons that China is controlling this epidemic better than Britain. The first aspect is the method of expressing news. People in the United Kingdom prefer watching television news to gather new information about COVID-19. However, Chinese people would know news from social media since social applications have developed at top speed in China. Therefore, this causes the second point, people are able to get news in time. Due to the habit of watching television news among British people, there exists the time lag of ongoing situations and the reaction lag of people. The citizens in Britain cannot respond to the news, such as preventive measures, and this would be passive for people. However, there are lots of Chinese organizations and governments that create their official accounts in each social media app for Chinese people. By doing so, people are still able to rely on the news about COVID-19 in social media, since they are authentic as well. Then, people can respond to all emergencies and control their behavior in time with no time lag and reaction lag. The third aspect is the most important difference between the United Kingdom and China, which is the management of information screening. At the beginning of the epidemic, Twitter did not filter out the information that users posted. It confused people with fake and real news. And, lots of information misled people to think the COVID-19 was not a serious problem. Nonetheless, the official accounts in each social media published reliable news and information for people in China, which benefits from the government's information screening. So, it is particularly important to study whether the role of social media is vital in public agenda setting for controlling the epidemic. This may help more countries to deal with COVID-19.

Through social media, the public agenda setting seems to progress faster, and it is more convenient to public agenda setting, which enables people to better understand the reasons for it. As the current study shows, there are some frequently-used social media apps in two countries; especially Tik Tok and Weibo in China, and Twitter in the United Kingdom. These social media apps have played distinct roles in their countries. This indicates a need to understand the various perceptions of the role of social media that exist between the United Kingdom and China during the period of this epidemic. Because of typical Chinese supervision in various social media, which is different from other countries, such as the UK, the usage of

social media would be distinct, and the outcome of epidemic control may also be different under the context of COVID-19. Therefore, studying the role of social media in public agenda setting between these two countries is obviously important during the COVID-19.

2. Theory

The media's primary impact is evident in the agenda-setting process. The primary impact of the media is evident in the agenda setting process [12]. Simply understood, the media determines the main discussion topic of the whole society. For instance, during the pandemic, the whole world is discussing COVID-19 at some point. Therefore, the audience may not recognize it at all if the media do not focus on reporting these things. To be more specific, during the COVID-19 crisis, people's daily life emotions keep rising with the media reports, that is, the media is continuously constructing a media environment by creating agendas. [8]; which affects people's thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. Thus, the public agenda setting is an excellent medium to affect public opinion and accomplish social governance through the media.

People are unconsciously accepting information between social media and the public agenda settings. In other words, social media is a tool for connecting the public agenda settings and the people, and it affects people in an implicit way. There is one probable explanation, which Cheng indicates in his journal, which addresses when the media conveys information to the public's consciousness, people do not realize the relationship between the two traits they had created and were thus more easily persuaded by those messages [2]. And then, social media prompts the government to publish some public agenda settings. Traditional embroidery comes from ancient Chinese culture, so it will be very colorful. Pattern content is more all-encompassing. Typical patterns include dragon pattern, cloud pattern, landscape, flowers and birds, etc. These ancient patterns are not only beautiful in appearance, but also sustain people's feelings. Traditional patterns often have stronger decorative effects and strong artistic viewing power. In the development process of embroidery, the traditional art of our country, we should also have some very characteristic narrative patterns. These patterns are through the combination of patterns, patterns and patterns are interrelated, telling a complete story, so there is obvious coherence between patterns, paving the way for the development of the whole story.

(1) Social Media in The United Kingdom: Twitter

There are some apps for people to use social media, and people usually look through videos, check messages, share their daily life, and acquire news from Youtube, Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter (Tankovska, 2021). The mentioned social media applications are the most popular apps in the United Kingdom, and the main apps for getting real news are Facebook and Twitter. According to Figure 1 (in appendix), accepting video apps and apps only for chatting, Facebook accounts for 73% of receiving real news for British citizens, and another app for grabbing current news is Twitter. The percentage is 45% of the statistics in 2019, which is the second [15]. In addition, social media platforms, such as Twitter focus on every politician rather than the political party that they match, broadening the political landscape and allowing for increased personalized speech campaigning [10]. In short, British people accept the news on political issues, and some news is closely linked with people's lives in these two social media.

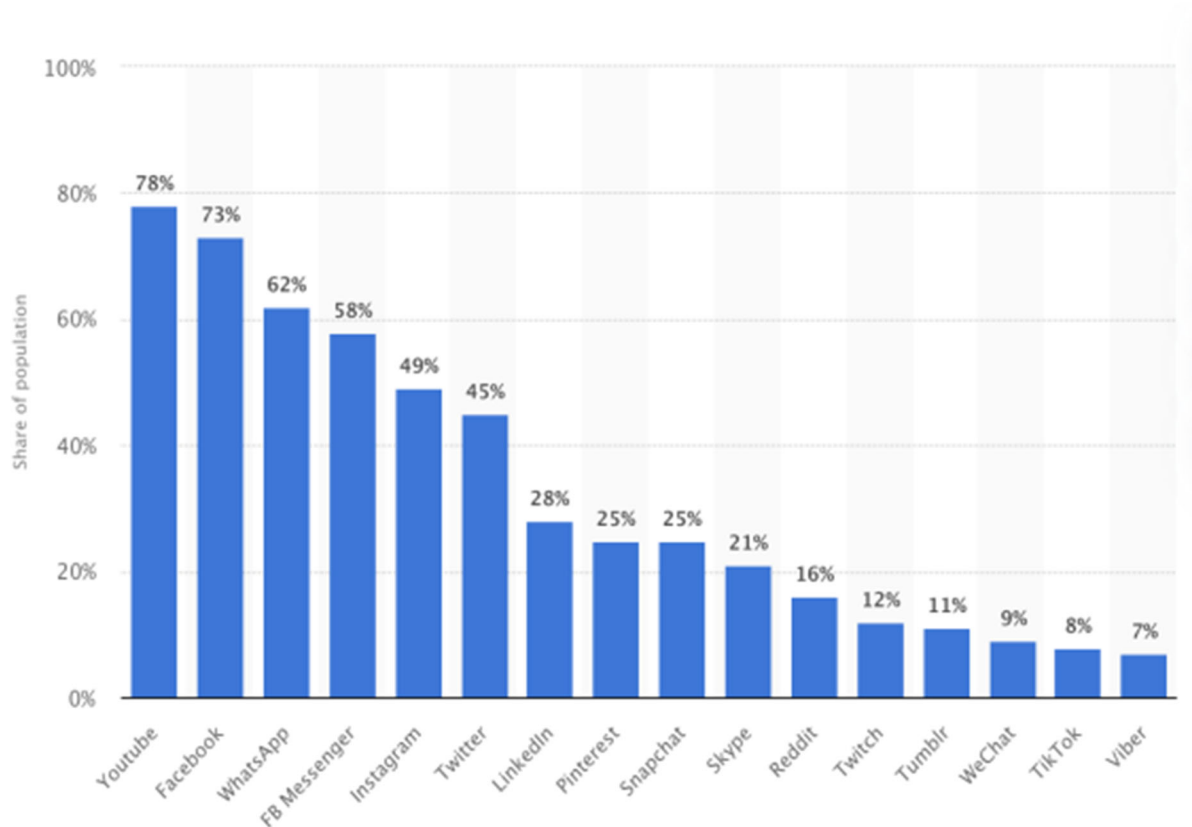


Figure 1. UK: most active social networks 2019 [15]

(2) Examples of Twitter: H1N1 Vaccine

First of all, the news that is published by social media in the United Kingdom does not correctly guide people to recognize the COVID-19 and the epidemic that has been caused by it [14]. This may be one of the most vital factors that European areas, such as Britain, cannot control the epidemic of COVID-19 as China because social media does not lead the citizens to pay attention to the seriousness of the issues at the most critical nodes, and also does not respond with the effective measurements. From the very start, the United Kingdom government attempted to draw up a plan to make the citizens get the vaccine in a short time since the epidemic of COVID-19 has gotten serious. However, the trial did not get a positive reaction from the citizens, and owing to mistrust, the trial failed. Therefore, cooperation between people and the government was not smooth [13].

However, there is evidence to prove that social media, such as Twitter, can affect people's thoughts to assist the government to approach some public policies. An example is Twitter had pushed the British people to get relevant vaccines during Influenza A virus subtype H1N1 (H1N1) in 2009. McNeill pointed out that as individuals play an increasingly powerful role in establishing accepted or desired health behaviors, information interchange via Twitter and other forms of social media makes public health communication more crucial and complicated [11].

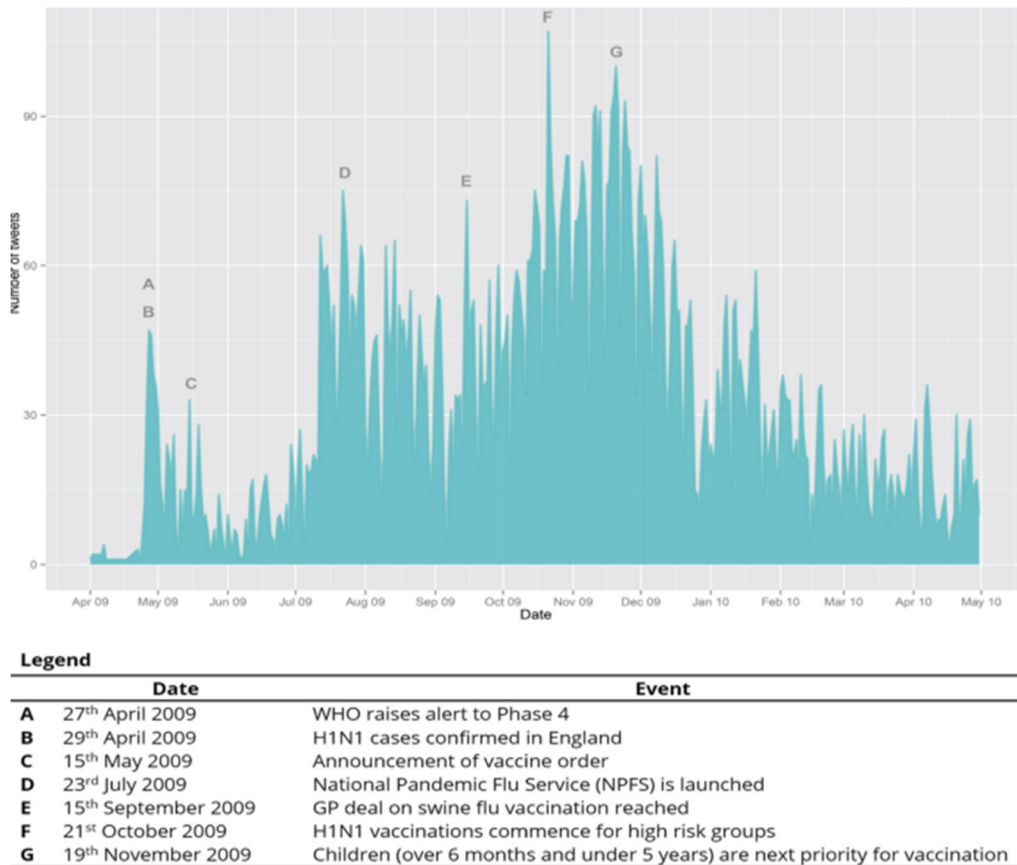


Figure 2. UK Tweets about H1N1 treatment plotted against time. (McNeill et al., 2016)

Based on the data from Chew and Eysenbach in figure 2 according to the appendix, the report shows that the peaks were in late April/early May, mid-June, mid-July, and late-October/early. And, November is the busiest month in which the number of tweets was the largest, with a peak of over 105. In terms of activity spikes, these are broadly consistent with the data . The reason may be that the vaccine had been marketed in the UK since October 14th, which led to more discussions on treatment. Second, it maps British Twitter data to the critical stage of epidemic development and the management of health authorities. In addition, McNeill and his team indicated that analysis the situation of the pandemic of H1N1 from 2009 to 2010 has detected in specifics the advertisement of H1N1-related suggestion in Britain by Twitter whereby figuring out how the App had access to discourage or stimulate the citizens to do H1N1 vaccination at that time. This may be used to make a number of points. Initially, Twitter was primarily used todisseminate news. This may serve the purpose of boosting broad knowledge of the pandemic as well as the virus's and treatment's risks. Twitter may push some stories as being of great interest and significance to the broader audience, similar to how the media frequently sets the agenda by promoting specific subjects [11]. When the government considers launching a public vaccination program, the leaders of the Health Bureau and relevant authorities can provide carefully customized information about appropriate vaccination or antiviral medicine use.

(3) Social Media In China: Tik Tok

During the COVID-19 in 2020, the popular science short videos had more advantages in spreading emergency events (Hao, 2020). Micro-video as one of the social media apps has become one of the fastest-growing and most effective modes in the Chinese government. This tool provides a new way to build relationships between the government and the citizens. It helps the government to send information interestingly and effectively (Zhu et al., 2021). Thus, it improves transparency, effectiveness, and satisfaction. Meanwhile, some platforms, for

instance, Sina Weibo, Kwai, and Tik Tok, published short videos to help people to know the process of treatment and real news. After the outbreak of COVID-19, short video platforms represented by Tik Tok and Kwai took active actions in fighting the epidemic. Kwai has set up a "Pneumonia Prevention and Control" column to timely deliver accurate information of the epidemic situation to hundreds of millions of users. The Tik Tok platform has launched an 'Anti-pneumonia' column, which focuses on real-time tracking of the epidemic situation, popularization of personal protection knowledge, and information collection of outpatient clinics around the country (Hao, 2020). When the COVID-19 pandemic happened, the government in China made great efforts to limit the spread of the virus. The short video of the government was able to directly show these works to the public. So, it improves the public's trust and satisfaction (Zhu et al., 2021).

There are not only ordinary users on Tik Tok but also a large number of official government accounts active in entertainment (Zhu et al., 2019). Public opinion in emergencies often has a broken window theory. If not handled properly, it would lead to derivative information and secondary public opinion, which may bring serious consequences to social supervision, institutional authority, ethics, government image, and information security (Zhu et al., 2021). In the fight against the COVID-19 epidemic, on short video platforms such as Kwai and Tik Tok, people are able to see the information about the epidemic situation and scientific anti-epidemic measures released by official media, such as the National Health Commission of the People's Republic of China, People's Daily, China, and China Science communication (Zhu et al., 2021).

(4) Social Media in China: Weibo

China has the world's largest Internet population. China's Internet user base had grown to 618 million by the end of 2013 [4]. The percentage of people who use the Internet has increased from 4.6 percent in 2002 to 45.8% in 2013. The Internet not only gives unparalleled access to a broad variety of information for Chinese "netizens," but also enables a public platform for netizens to jointly communicate and amplify their views on public issues [21]. The Chinese government has taken significant attempts to restrict internet materials, fearing that free speech paired with the free movement of information might undermine its political legitimacy and control over the society [10].

In addition, Weibo plays an important role in Chinese social media when it has been created. Jiang's research investigates the agenda-setting strength of China's most popular social media platform, Weibo, and the inverted agenda-setting phenomena of Chinese Weibo. It provides evidence of how certain hot subjects on Weibo have influenced, while others have not, the agenda of state-controlled media China Central Television (CCTV) in China using case studies, which serves as a starting point for discussion and future study. It claims that Weibo, a Chinese social media site, provides a forum for public engagement and allows Chinese citizens to voice their ideas [10].

Since China has published the movie *Dying to Survive* in 2018, it has raised heated debate on the price of medicine in China. People have had a heated discussion and thinking on Weibo, and it triggered a hot discussion in Chinese society and continued to be intensely discussed and debated for a while. Then, such a situation has caught the Chinese governments' attention resulting in releasing some relevant regulations. The Premier in China and whose name is Li Keqiang gave instructions on the heated discussion caused by the movie *Dying to Survive* and asked the relevant departments to speed up the implementation of relevant measures such as price reduction and supply guarantee of anticancer drugs [16].

Weibo has set a precedent for the impact of regulating medicine in China. In response to Prime Li's call, On January 21st, the results of the second batch of centralized drug procurement organized by the state were released, and 32 varieties were successfully purchased, with the average price dropping by 53%. Many drugs selected in this election are commonly used by

ordinary people, involving diabetes, high blood pressure, cold, and fever, which will absolutely benefit more patients [6].

In short, whether in British or China, social media has played significant roles in agenda setting that is closely related to the citizens. As Britain published an announcement on Twitter to simulate people to get vaccines during the H1N1 situation of H1N1, and China conveyed news about COVID-19. and the price of medicine through Tik Tok and Weibo.

3. Hypothesis

Chinese governmental structure is different from other democratic societies, and there is strict censorship from the propaganda department of the ruling party in China's media system [10]. This means that there are specific regulations for every app, and the surveillance is very careful in regard to auditing details in each content, such as the videos and posts. Furthermore, every content is supervised by auditors, and the contents that can be seen by the citizens are allowed by the country. It is opposite to the United Kingdom. The UK has the absolute right of freedom of speech, such as BBC, the famous news company. In contrast, Chinese hosts cannot present their own opinions in news programs, such as national news programs.

On the other hand, Twitter does not delete wrong information about COVID-19 in time, and it makes most people doubt this epidemic has been happening. As a result, British people post some unwarranted conjecture about it. Indeed, the UK missed a great chance to control the spread of the COVID-19 at that moment [14]. However, China is able to control the epidemic's spread by social media in China, for example, Tik Tok and Weibo.

Therefore, this study explores that the different national systems in Britain and China have caused people to use social media differently, and the news programs on Chinese social media may be more reliable and credible for citizens. Also, it predicts that people in the United Kingdom and China depend differently on methods of getting news. In Britain, people may rely more on traditional ways, such as reading newspapers and watching television for getting news, but Chinese people may prefer using social media through apps to get news. The reason that the extent of controlling COVID-19 under these two countries is different may relate to the way people fetch news. Furthermore, social media has posed different influences on the advancement of the public agenda setting and public policy in the two countries.

4. Methodology

(1) Research Approach

This study discovers how social media affects and combines the people and governmental legislations to regulate some news rules for helping their people in the United Kingdom and China. First of all, based on some research data that refers to social media apps, the current study uses the corporate annual reports that are from each social media's company. For example, these reports are from *Weibo 2020 User Development Report*. These reports have a high level of facticity for people to use. Besides, the operating enterprise copies the annual report to the industrial and commercial authorities through the market main body credit information publicity system, and publicizes it to the public, subject to the supervision of social owners and users. For example, this study uses the annual reports of Twitter, Tik Tok, and Weibo in 2020, and all these data is from their company with great details. Additionally, it is easy to figure out the popularity of users and topics. And then, the discussion of hot topics and the official attention to these topics. On the other hand, it uses articles of some relevant researchers who compare the status quo of various social media, including download volume, competitiveness of similar social media apps, and user volume, such as some analysis articles from *Business of Apps*.

In addition, this research would use secondary sources from scholar websites and focuses on figuring out in which environment can social media better link public events with the agenda setting in the United Kingdom and China under the context of COVID-19. Also, the study shows that social media has different impacts on public agenda setting and public policy within these two countries to a certain degree. There are tons of advantages to using secondary sources, such as increasing the authenticity and professionalism of the research and ensuring the authenticity of references. There is also a quick understanding of the causes and consequences of academic research.

To do so, the research collects some data during the epidemic that begins from 2019 to now, in order to find out the relationships among people, social media, and public agenda setting. To this end, this paper conducts three sets of analysis of how social media influences people and public agenda setting in these two countries.

- Analysis of people's preference of using different mediums to browse public events in the United Kingdom and China
- Collecting data of people's awareness to COVID-19 on social media
- Investigating the standard of information screening and how social media contents are audited

(2) Research Design

The author is able to conduct quantitative research with desirable results, but it is not feasible. Accessing the secondary sources from main reliable literature websites is the majority way for researchers and scholars to obtain meaningful source and data, which is more practical. The number of people who study similar topics with this study has increased rapidly, and many researchers are doing large amounts of exploration on the topic. Thus, the data and resources are more reachable and more helpful to the current study. Besides, according to the speciality of its hypothesis in this study, it needs to select objective measurements and test hypotheses. Then, these may impact means, extreme value, median, and investigation of relationship in this research.

This study uses six charts for the United Kingdom and five charts for supporting China, and these data are related to the topic. In addition, the study has found the way that British people like to acquire news, and to observe how many percent of people prefer using television and social media; which are able to compare to China. After this, it is possible to come to a conclusion in the end. Some charts would randomly choose approximately 1000 people who are over 16 years old to test and collect the results. For Britain, the study finds the data of people who use social media apps, such as Twitter, and it observes the activity of users getting news on Twitter. For example, the comments, posts, which is compared to other social media platforms. As for data in China, this research finds the usage of media in China. Most data are derived from the annual reports of relevant social media companies and professional reviewers or researchers. Therefore, these data are of great reference value, and the conclusions of this study are finally quite reliable and credible.

5. Data and Analysis

(1) Data of The United Kingdom

The bar chart compares usage of different main platforms for news depletion in the United Kingdom, and this survey is created in 2020. This paper uses four areas in Britain as examples, such as England (75%), Scotland (75%), Wales (75%), and Northern Ireland (68%). As shown in figure 3, comparing these various methods of receiving news, it seems that television is the most popular way to grab news in these four areas in the United Kingdom. There is no one area that uses other ways to see daily news, and television is always the best choice and ranked first

in this survey. Besides, the way of any internet has become the second choice for British people. Next, British people watch the news through social media as well. However, the proportion of social media is obviously lower than television in these four areas of the UK. The usage of social media in each area is approximately 29% less than that of television, which is a relatively distinct downward trend. Compared with Newspapers (printed), getting news from social media seems to have no advantages because the data is not as significant as televisions. Except for Northern Ireland, the number of people who read newspapers is fewer. On the other hand, the paper media, such as magazines (printed) gradually lose its competitiveness in the UK. Therefore, it is not difficult to observe that these four areas typically prefer to use television for getting news, and social media is accepted by the citizens with a slight advantage.

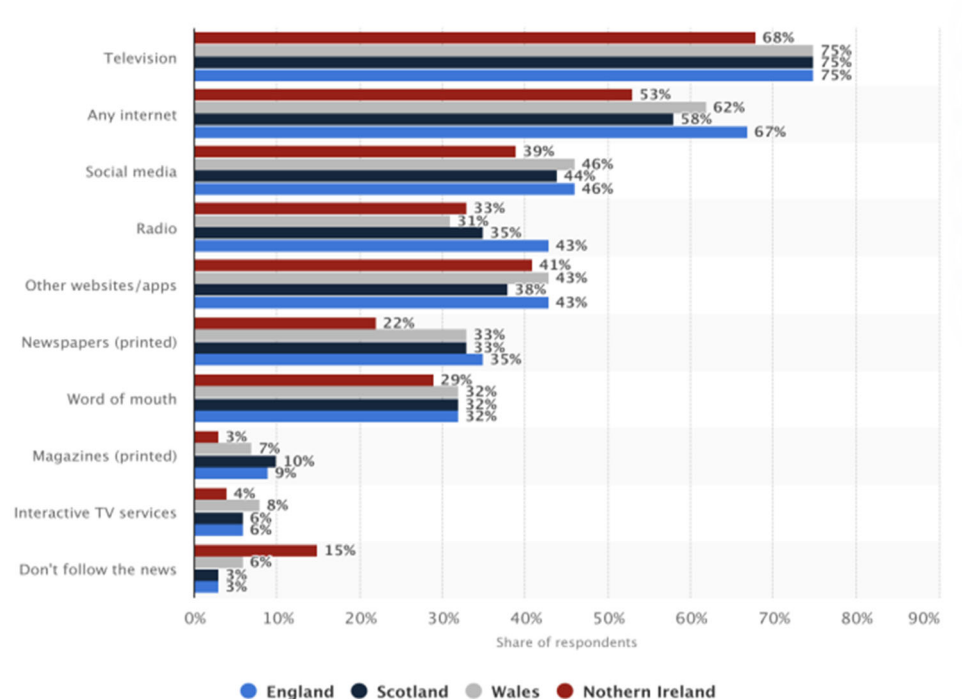


Figure 3. Main platforms used for news consumption in the United Kingdom in 2020, by nation [19]

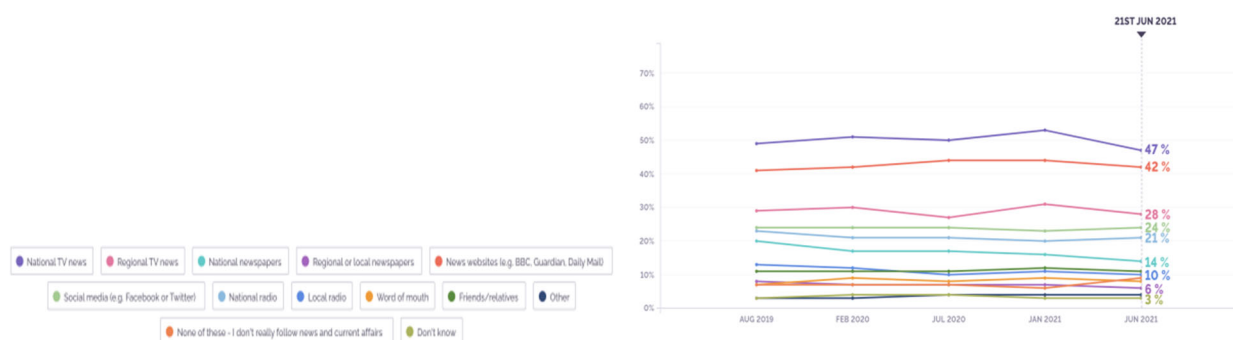


Figure 4. How Brits get their news [22]

This data is from YouGov, which was established in London, the United Kingdom in 2000. It has been recognized as a pioneer in the field of online market research. Based on this set of numbers, the paper seeks to use these data to find the changing trend of British people's methods of

obtaining news and current affairs in recent years, especially from 2020 to 2021. It is important to get information in 2020 because the numbers help the paper to analyze how some factors of communications impact the epidemic (COVID-19) in the United Kingdom. Similarly, the situation of people watching the news does not have big differences in this line chart. The top three are National TV news (47%), News websites (42%), and Regional TV news (28%), which are all by television. Although the line of social media, which includes Facebook and Twitter, has slightly risen to 24% from 23% in 2021, there is no more stable option in the line chart than getting news from television and news websites, such as BBC. The result apparently showcases that British people prefer to use more traditional ways to grab news, which are television and local broadcasting companies, for instance, BBC. People in the United Kingdom have a moderate attitude towards social media, and they do not particularly like it. However, social media is the second choice besides television, and that may indicate social media as a crucial tool for people as well.

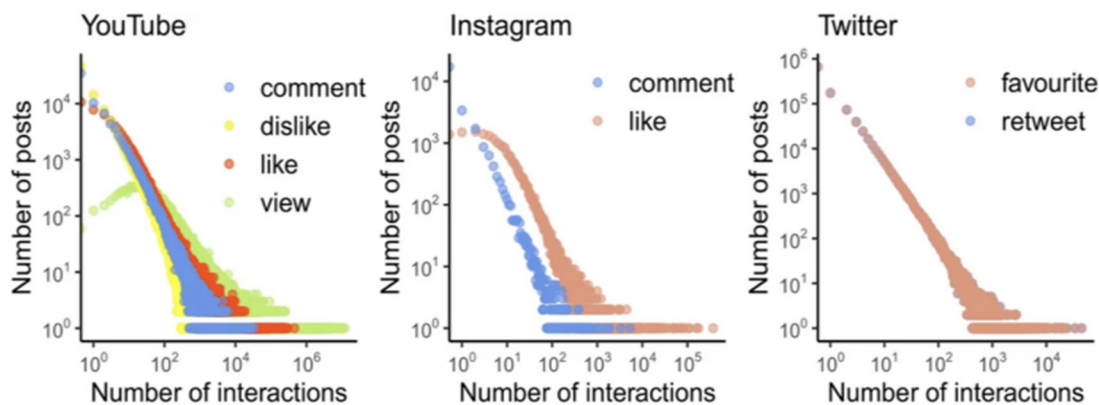


Figure 5. The COVID-19 social media infodemic [3]

The paper selects YouTube, Instagram, and Twitter, and these are mainstream platforms in the United Kingdom. Although there are differences among platforms, it observes that they all show quite a similar user activity distribution, which is characterized by a long tail. This means that users have similar behaviors in reaction dynamics and content consumption. In fact, the user's interaction with

Platform	Posts	Comments	Users	Period
Gab	6,252	4,364	2,629	01/01-14/02
Reddit	10,084	300,751	89,456	01/01-14/02
YouTube	111,709	7,051,595	3,199,525	01/01-14/02
Instagram	26,576	109,011	52,339	01/01-14/02
Twitter	1,187,482	-	390,866	27/01-14/02
Total	1,342,103	7,465,721	3,734,815	

Figure 6. Information breakdown of the number of posts, comments and clients for all stages. [3].

To characterize the interaction between users and COVID-19 on five platforms, we calculated the cumulative number of new posts every day (Figure 6). For all platforms, we found that the

behavior changed around January 20th, that is, the day when the World Health Organization (WHO) released the first situation report on COVID-19 (Organization, 2020). The biggest increase in the number of posts is January 21st of Gab, January 24th of Reddit, January 30th of Twitter, January 31st of YouTube, and February 5th of Instagram. Thus, according to the chart, British people would seek on Twitter and find relevant posts to know the news.

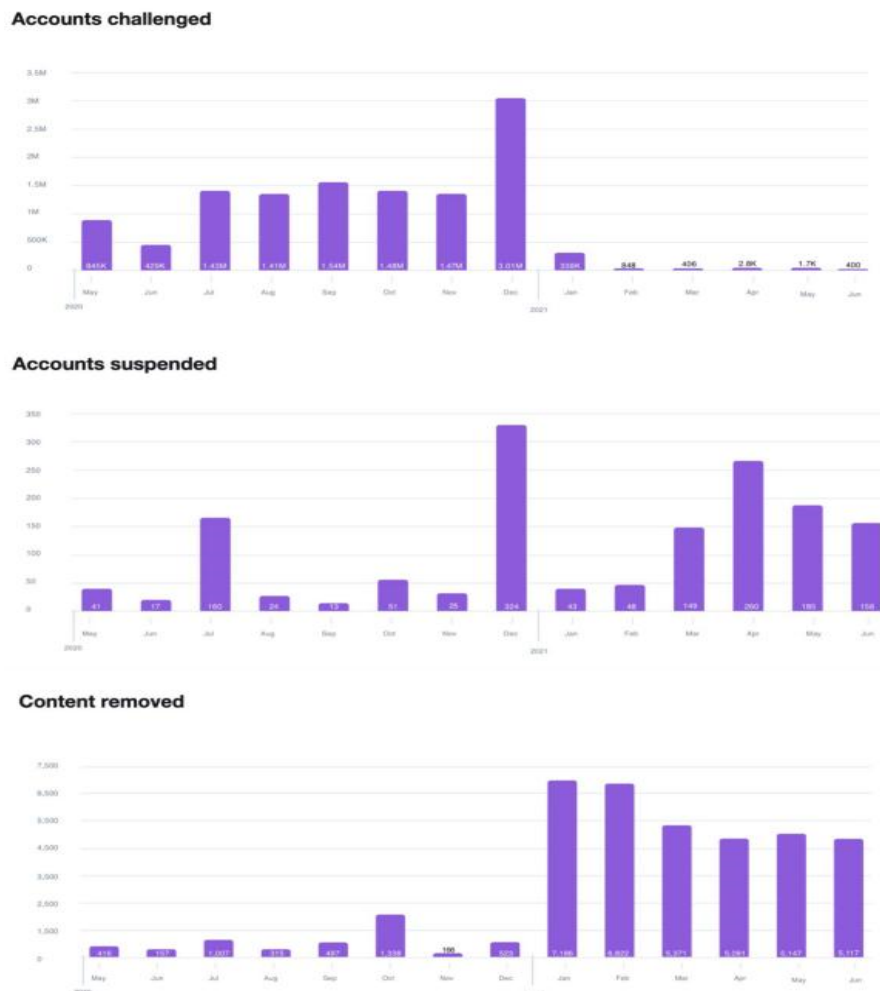


Figure 7. Changing of Twitter Account in 2020 and 2021 [17]

In the United Kingdom, Twitter is able to stand for one of the most popular social media [15]. This is the reason that this paper chooses figure 9 which focuses on news of COVID-19 that has been published on Twitter. As mentioned earlier (Figure 8), the first post was published by WHO on January 5th, and data just shows it begins from May, 2020 in this bar chart that Twitter publishes to the public. Compared with the months before 2020, the number of Account Challenges shows that there were a lot of people who doubt the authenticity of COVID-19 News. But Twitter did not control these accounts that continue posting suspicious news from May to December in 2020. This can be one of the reasons that Britain has not controlled the epidemic in time. In addition, because these issues did not attract the attention of Twitter at that time, it may cause the audit department and the backstage of Twitter to not delete and manage the contents of the disease (COVID-19) in time for their users. There are 1.54 million posts that is the highest number of postings about COVID-19 on Twitter, but Twitter only deleted 497 posts compared to September in 2020. After 2020, the tweets about COVID-19 had dropped dramatically to 338k in January 2021. It is evident to discover the backstage of Twitter has

expurgated most tweets, and rest of them may be the correct official news and reports. These are the tweets that can be spread to help the people who follow the real news.

Country	Information requests		Compliance rate		Accounts specified		Preservation	
	↕ Routine	↕ Emergency	↕ Routine	↕ Emergency	↕ Routine	↕ Emergency	↕ Accounts	↕ Requests
 Worldwide	12,109	2,452	32.4 %	18.2 %	48,576	3,008	9,473	3,980
 United States	2,421	822	72 %	22 %	30,127	953	4,035	1,791
 Japan	1,993	421	31 %	15 %	2,370	463	72	68
 South Korea	278	401	25 %	26 %	1,903	457	74	51
 France	1,781	221	61 %	15 %	2,341	329	5	3
 India	3,463	152	1 %	1 %	7,508	254	3,877	1,585
 United Kingdom	375	95	36 %	25 %	545	102	81	55
 Germany	457	64	22 %	13 %	615	74	16	15

Figure 8. Information Request of Twitter From National Government in 2020 [18]

The graph indicates Twitter can serve as a tool to help national governments to publish some policies and public agenda settings. It can be seen that the United States has the largest demand for information requests that rely on tweets for helping, and the number is 2,421. On the contrary, the number of information requests from the United Kingdom government is not high even though compared with Germany, with 82 requests less. Additionally, the number of information requests in France far exceeds that of the United Kingdom, which is 1,781. This indicates that British people do not use Twitter as much as French people.

In the case of Twitter in Britain, to explain the phenomenon of figure 7 happens because Twitter has realized that they do have national influence for warning the citizens to protect themselves. Whereas, the news and public agenda settings released by Twitter are not as influential as television for British people. Great changes have taken place in the world since the epidemic was first declared as a public health emergency. Since then, public health experts, medical experts, scientists, and researchers have been educating and telling people how to keep safe, and Twitter has been committed to strengthening and enhancing this important public dialogue. With the development of global vaccination and pandemic entering a new stage, Twitter is committed to ensuring that rules and law enforcement match the changing nature of the content people see on Twitter [18].

Similarly, with the distribution of the COVID-19 vaccine at different speeds and scales around the world, people continue to turn to Twitter to discuss what is happening and find the latest authoritative public health information. Therefore, the background will continue to give priority to deleting or annotating potentially harmful and misleading information to ensure that users can easily find reliable information at this critical stage [17].

Based on the results of figure 3 and figure 4, the data of figure 8 substantiates that people in the United Kingdom do use social media, such as Twitter to know the real news. However, they are not particularly keen on knowing news from social media, and they prefer to take traditional methods - via televisions - for getting news, although it is convenient to see news on mobile devices or laptops.

(2) Data of China

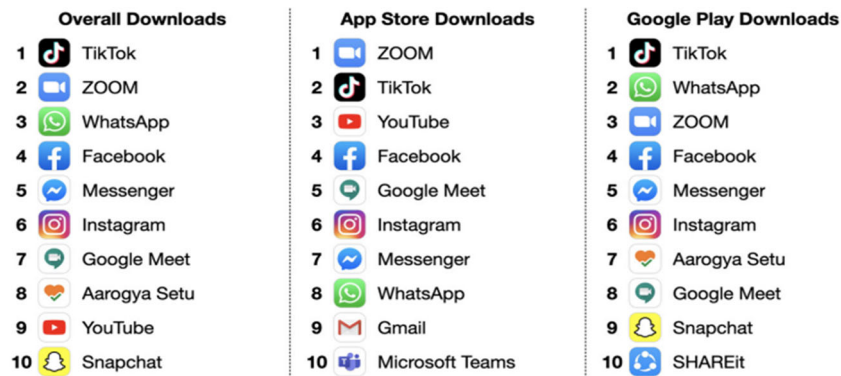


Figure 9. Top Apps Worldwide by Downloads (Non-Game) in 2020 [1]

As for data in China, according to statistics from the Apple Store, the figure 9, Tik Tok makes a sudden leap and over some apps that are used to the most popular on the download list of Apple Store or Android, such as WhatsApp, Instagram, and Facebook. Besides, the data from the official statistics shows there are over 600 million viewers of Tik Tok in China daily [1]. On the other hand, as this paper analyzes, Tik Tok in China has become the hottest social media for sharing people's lives (Hao, 2020). Additionally, it is the most effective social media that cooperates with official accounts which are from national organizations. Therefore, Tik Tok in China is an effective tool for publishing some public agenda setting and policies, and spreading real news as fast as possible to the users. The reason for the large number of users in Tik Tok, the stable growth and rapid spread of users is that the proportion of users is large enough in China so far.

Content Type	Tik Tok users	Instagram	Facebook
Funny Videos	48%	42%	36%
Personal News/Updates	47%	43%	40%
Memes	39%	34%	29%
Coronavirus News	28%	26%	25%
Influencer posts	24%	16%	13%
Brand Posts	21%	14%	11%
Non-coronavirus News	21%	21%	19%
Brand/Product Recommendations	21%	15%	12%

Figure 10. Percentage of users sharing content types on Tik Tok VS. other platforms [9]

During 2020 when suffering from the epidemic (COVID-19), the data from figure 10 is able to help to see the active degree of each social media user, for example users in Tik Tok, Instagram, and Facebook. Then, it can be seen that there is a column dedicated to the COVID-19 situation. Whether what content types that users publish, the number of posts that Tik Tok users always publish is more than that of Instagram and Facebook. The percentage of content type about coronavirus news in Tik Tok is 28%, and the percentage in Instagram and Facebook are 26% and 25%. In addition to these social media for personal use, such as making funny videos and private updates, coronavirus news is released the most in China. It is easy to figure out that

people in China trust in and rely on social media to get news when COVID-19 spreaded in China during 2019 to now.

Rank	Account	Fans	Total fans	Llikes	Total Vedio
1	People's Daily	131 million	131 million	6.844 billion	3,018
2	CCTV-NEWS	123 million	123 million	4.818 billion	5,226
3	Chen He	67.467 million	71.926 million	661 million	554
4	Andy Lau	59.626 million	59.723 million	209 million	30
5	Dushe Movie	59.051 million	59.097 million	1.135 billion	578

Figure 11. The Rank of Tik Tok Accounts in China



[5]

Figure 12. The Rank of 2020 Official Accounts in Different Industries in Weibo [5]

Two official accounts that stand for the government in China are People's Daily and CCTV-NEWS in Tik Tok. In third place is Chen He, and he is a Chinese star with a famous variety show that stays close to the people. Obviously, the number of total fans on the top three has a clear gap, and the total fans of People's Daily and CCTV-NEWS are more than Chen He, which is more than twice. As two authoritative national official accounts, there is also a big gap in the number of Likes they have received to compare with the rest of accounts in this list. People's Daily gets 6.844 billion likes, and CCTV-NEWS gets 4.818 billion likes so far. It indicates that people pay close attention to the news and recognize news contents that these two official accounts publish for them. After all, there are approximately 130 million users watching videos about news, so the news would naturally spread to other people during the period of COVID-19 and remind them to get ready for protection in China.

On the other hand, five high proportions of Chinese governments enter and create accounts on Weibo, which are Public Security, Committee of the Communist Youth League (CCYL Committee), External Publicity, Primary-level Organization, and Party Committee.

In order to survive in the challenging digital age, the news media in China are keen to cooperate with social media [20]. Any governments in China would register accounts on social media and operate it in a planned method. Therefore, users are able to read news in various ways. As a country with a large scale of social media users, people would certainly be more inclined to use

social media to get news. That is why total play volume of epidemic prevention and control videos is 42.3 billion times. Additionally, the reading volume of CCTV-NEWS and People's Daily are even huge. CCTV-NEWS has been read 10.23 billion times, and People's Daily has been read 2.47 billion times. Moreover, the number of interactions by users has exceeded 6.68 billion times in the whole year, and the total amount of videos played has exceeded 400 billion times [5].

Thus, social media in China can be highly trusted because the percentage of the official accounts are very high, which has a strict backstage screening routine to manage contents that people post on websites and meanwhile keep the news authentic.

Wold/Sentiment	Instances in 2020, million
Doubt	2.2
Giving up	7.61
Too difficult	14.91
Persistence	69.13
Believe	130
Encouragement	1800

Figure 13. Coronavirus sentiment expressed on Douyin (Tik Tok) [9]

Combined with the previous table (Figure 11), figure 13 shows people's positive emotions more in China. Because of millions of users, which is a huge group, the emotions of people would convey easily; and, it is able to influence other people. There are almost 2000 million posts to express people's positive emotions. However, there are approximately 25 million contents to publish negative feelings in the Tik Tok during the epidemic.

Over all, people in China prefer to use social media to chase and follow the real news, and it is accountable for social media to communicate among the public, the national governments, and then to push legislation for making relevant regulations, policies, and announcements for people when some public events happen. This process updates the relationship between the people and news from old to new.

6. Key Findings

This part aims at analyzing the whole information that this study mentions before, including related previous research that the study used, comparing with the results of the news in social media between the United Kingdom and China. So, it is able to completely find out how social media impacts public agenda setting in these two countries.

(1) Analysis of people's preference of using different mediums to browse public events in the United Kingdom and China

First of all, timely delivery of news is very helpful to the development of the public agenda setting in COVID-19 at that time. The United Kingdom and China have chosen different news transmission ways, so the results of making public agenda setting for epidemic situations are distinct. China is able to control the epidemic better and faster than the UK, thus, the outcomes have evident discrepancy. Instead of using social media, such as Twitter to read news, British people prefer to use television to get news. Based on figure 3 and figure 4, the number of people who use television to get news is far above the number of people who use social media. Even

the second option for British people is using social media, the consequences are still quite distinct, which is beyond calculation in this study. In addition, people do employ some news apps to read except watching television at home, but these are not social media. As we know, the method of TV news has delayed the timeliness of the information to a certain extent. The news is broadcasted according to time, and there is a certain time every day to regularly broadcast the progress of the epidemic. Even if breaking news shows at rest of the time, there is no guarantee that most people see the news in time. Because it is unlikely for the audience to be at their house and not guarantee that they would watch TV and see relevant news at that time, news of the COVID-19 is delayed in Britain during the epidemic. On the contrary, to observe the data of China, the proportion of using social media for getting news is mainly a method, for instance, through Tik Tok and Weibo in China. With the rapid improvement and development of digital networks in China, Chinese people are more suitable to spend more time on social media. Another reason is that social media is in the charge of the national governments. Besides, there are reliable official governmental departments and news organizations that have built their accounts in each app for every user in China according to figure 11 and figure 12.

Especially in figure 11, the accounts of People's Daily and CCTV-NEWS are on top 2 in the list. People's Daily is one of the top ten newspapers in the world. The large-scale online information publishing platform built by People's Daily is also one of the largest Chinese and multilingual news websites on the Internet [5]. As for CCTV-NEWS, it is a global, multilingual, and multi-terminal three-dimensional news information sharing platform in China, which is the most authoritative media in China [5]. Therefore, their official accounts on Tik Tok and Weibo are effective to help public agenda setting during the situation of huge public events with authenticity. Recently, according to a survey on digital research, the number of social media users in China has reached 1.04 billion as of January 2020, with a penetration rate of 72 percent, which is much greater than the global rate of 49 percent [9]. Thus, Chinese people can get real news in these apps, and the trend of getting news with social media becomes more and more obvious and the number of people would be larger in the future. The success of the accounts of People's Daily and CCTV-NEWS has an inevitable relationship with the country's supervision. Meanwhile, they also has plans to create what they would publish. Through the combination of pictures, music, and words, they have built their own image characteristics on the platform of Tik Tok. By actively presenting, constructing, and shaping, the media can better facilitate the sharing of meaningful information. Thus, these official governmental accounts made a contribution to the epidemic-control.

Therefore, this is the first difference between the United Kingdom and China, which manifests that controlling the COVID-19 and pushing public agenda setting through social media is more effective.

(2) Collecting data of people's attention to COVID-19 on social media

Secondly, it is important to combine the relevant governmental organizations and the citizens for making the public agenda setting, and there should be a relationship to link among them. An effective two-way transmission helps the public agenda setting of the epidemic. Twitter in Britain does not seem to play a vital role, where a lot of people are misled by wrong tweets (Figure 7), and the resulting emotions are more questioning. A large amount of false news conceals a little true information, which only plays a slight role in the public agenda setting of controlling the epidemic. This research believes that Tik Tok and Weibo in China make a great example of being bridges between the people and the countries. Public agenda setting is one of the important social functions and effects of social media communications. Through empirical research, it has been shown that there is a strong correlation between public perception and public comprehension. Furthermore, the public's awareness of big concerns in public affairs and media reporting is mirrored in the people's consciousness as a major event. These two social media apps typically conform to the rule as well based on figure 13, the medium helps

people to express their emotions and deliver public policy or push public agenda setting from the governments. What's more, there are official media to display confirmed news in various social apps. On the other hand, it is easy to follow real-time response to public events, the process of some cases, and feelings from the public for the governments. Therefore, this is a positive two-way transmission for China.

(3) Investigating the standard of information screening and how social media contents are audited

The deviation between published information and news implies how strong a country's media is. It cannot regulate public agenda policy to people from the governments with the mass environment of social media. The successful case of epidemic-control in China is closely related to communication between people and the governments, and there is a positive impact of social media on news dissemination under the supervision of the country. According to figure 7 about usage of Twitter during the epidemic in 2020, Twitter could not ensure the authenticity of the news posted on it. And, the backstage has not even reviewed these tweets and taken measures against some accounts that posted false news to mislead the users in 2020. This was the worst period in British history, and the COVID-19 lost control. Thus, it indicates that information has been regulated to varying degrees between the UK and China when people use the Internet and social media. As for China, the users on the Internet are able to get real news under its supervision, and the backstage deals with some information that misleads people in time. It is not similar to the UK, Twitter has just started pushing policies and will take action in the beginning of 2021.

7. Conclusion

As for the United Kingdom, television may not transmit news or public agenda setting in time for people because of the limitation of traditional media's time-efficient, and the supervision of social media is weak. Based on the analysis, people in the United Kingdom prefer to use television to get news and follow the public agenda setting with a high percentage. Additionally, they have used Twitter as well, but the results of controlling the epidemic are not as obvious as in China. Britain has not been able to control the COVID-19 well until now, one of the reasons is that Twitter did not guide the people in an effective way, and the unscreened tweets misguided people's thoughts. Throughout the epidemic, as a result, anti-science, political disinformation, and conspiracies have been widespread. This is the situation in the United Kingdom. Lack of supervision in social media on Twitter in the UK may be the reason that people would choose to watch television during the pandemic. Therefore, there are two sides to receive the news about the COVID-19 from television. Primarily, it can be guaranteed that the news is real for British people, but this method lacks the speed and effectiveness of the public agenda setting. In addition, Britain has missed an excellent chance to alert its citizens to pay attention to prevention during the epidemic. In other words, the UK could have had a completely opposite consequence and a better result than it is now. The effect of fighting and rectifying the epidemic in the United Kingdom may be different in a positive way if they make good use of the mass media to cooperate with the citizens and public agenda setting in the country.

As mentioned in a good way, in comparison to traditional media, the essence of social media is everyone's involvement, thus it has the benefits of openness, high participation, quick subject dissemination, and the audience may actively and fairly participate in opinion contribution and even determine the public agenda. And with the surveillance of social media in China, social media has become the first place for the public to obtain first-hand information, authoritative information, and information truth without any dispute in current media. Since China has used social media, such as Tik Tok and Weibo in the epidemic, real-time news on relevant government measures and the condition of the epidemic through the spread of the public by

social media in China, with a high rate of arrival and influence. As the official media in China, People's Daily and CCTV-NEWS create their official accounts on Tik Tok and Weibo standing for Chinese governments, which impacts greatly on public agenda setting in China. Owing to the regulation of public agenda setting by the governments, it is able to make a fast transmission. On the contrary, social media makes it possible for the people to fully express the efficiency and fairness of some management organizations, forming a considerable potential of public opinions. Thus, people are able to supervise the government as well, which is the positive effect that social media brings in China.

Overall, social media has played a distinct role between the United Kingdom and China during the period of the COVID in 2020 and 2021. Its influence on China is even greater because Chinese people use social media more frequently according to substantial data. Moreover, almost every social media has accounts registered by the official governments and media that shows on television, and there is news that people trust in and rely on. In addition, China has stricter supervision over social media, so news on social media is as serious and rigorous as the news broadcast on TV based on different political systems. As for Britain, British people do not rely on social media to watch the news and follow the public agenda setting as Chinese people do. Therefore, social media has different influences in the United Kingdom and China, and it hopes that the good side of social media is able to help other countries in need to control the epidemic.

8. Limitations and Directions for Further Research

This paper studies the effect of social media on the public agenda setting and reflects that social media helps the governments push the public agenda setting to the people, especially during the period of a big public event, for example, COVID-19.

There are several weaknesses of this study. First, the data in this paper is not enough to observe because some of them are from annual reports of each social apps' company. The scale of data is huge even though there is a technique that helps people to recognize and has already divided them into each category. However, it is still a difficult process to select them to learn. Second, it requires a long time to collate data based on the first weakness. Also, it is not easy to find data on the Internet for researchers to spend time on recognizing the authenticity of these data. Third, this method concentrates more on secondary sources, in which the data analysis is not comprehensive to some extent. In addition, the time cost of research is relatively high because data should be collected through direct observations and interviews. Since the data selection is based on the personal observation of researchers and the research objects are a specific group, it is difficult for the consequences to be generalized to a wider range of occasions. Besides, the objectivity of the results would be limited. Lastly, the study refers to different countries, and the background and tradition are certainly distinct. So, it is hard to judge where the boundary exists between the expression of the United Kingdom and China is to their people, such as different political systems. It limits the supervision of the conditions of each social media, after all, the backstages of each social media in China are watched by the Chinese governments.

Finally, the number of social media that can be targeted between the United Kingdom and China is not sufficient. Therefore, the results may have deviations. Overall, it is important to see the positive impacts of the role of social media in public agenda setting and use them to help other countries that need epidemic control.

As for future experiments and research, researchers may try to incorporate another way to observe the outcome, such as, making a survey to investigate multiple factors to get information. Additionally, it may be insightful to compare several public large-scale events, such as COVID-19 between the United Kingdom and China, and then to compare the dependence of people in

ways to transfer the news on some variables, for example, Twitter, Tik Tok, and Television. It is possible to observe what factors impact and guide public agenda setting.

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