**How can mainstream media improve their ability to guide public opinion in the era of media convergence?**

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Core Tip: With the rapid development of new online media, the online public opinion environment has become very complex. In the era of media convergence, to enhance the mainstream media's ability to guide public opinion, it is necessary to strengthen the construction of network communication capabilities, public opinion correction methods, public opinion response strategies, and communication art thinking. Media regulatory authorities need to provide mainstream media with space to guide public opinion.

【Abstract】With the rapid development of new online media, the online public opinion environment has become very complex. In the era of media convergence, to enhance the mainstream media's ability to guide public opinion, it is necessary to strengthen the construction of network communication capabilities, public opinion correction methods, public opinion response strategies, and communication art thinking. Media regulatory authorities need to provide mainstream media with space to guide public opinion.

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As new media products such as Weibo, WeChat, various APPs, and high-definition video recording are deeply embedded in "cheap and high-quality" smartphones and other smart mobile devices, people of all ages in my country, from teenagers to middle-aged and elderly people, have been deeply involved in "digital life". The new network media that integrates various media elements such as text, pictures, sounds, images, digital technology, and various media forms such as newspapers, magazines, radio, and film and television are profoundly changing the overall way of communication, expression, emotion, and even life of the contemporary Chinese people, and at the same time deeply changing the overall organization, operation, and value of contemporary Chinese society.

Five basic characteristics of public opinion in the current era of media convergence

In terms of the structure of public opinion, the phenomenon of "two public opinion fields" is prominent. In the current public opinion events of considerable size, the content and value of mainstream public opinion guidance issued by the government and mainstream media ("mainstream/dominant public opinion field") are prone to divergence from the views, information believed in, and attitudes expressed by ordinary people ("network/civilian public opinion field"). Even under certain conditions, some extreme phenomena may occur: the more the government and mainstream media guide in a "positive" direction, the more ordinary people interpret it in a "negative" way in a confrontational manner. The two public opinion fields, "mainstream/dominant public opinion field" and "network/civilian public opinion field", show a certain oppositional structure.

In terms of the generation of public opinion, the phenomenon of "mainstream media follows up after the Internet explodes" is prominent. More than a decade ago, when new Internet media was just emerging, Internet public opinion was generated following the reports of traditional mainstream media. However, nowadays, this situation is often in an "inverted" state, that is, a considerable number of social hot spots of public opinion are first actively exploded by the new Internet media space, and then the traditional mainstream media passively follow up on the hot spots of public opinion and undertake the work of expanding reports, commenting on opinions, and correcting rumors. At the same time, if traditional mainstream media only "follow up" public opinion, it is often difficult to produce a strong "guiding" effect of public opinion, which has also exacerbated the strong rise of the "Internet/civilian public opinion field" to some extent.

In terms of public opinion interpretation, the phenomenon of "binary opposition" public opinion interpretation is prominent. Due to the frequent occurrence of social contradictions during the transition period and the long-term influence of the labeling public opinion inertia of new media, when interpreting public opinion hot spots, the public often naturally tends to interpret them in a "binary opposition" way. For example, they subconsciously divide people and things in public opinion events into two groups, strong-weak, urban-rural, poor-rich, officials-civilians, labor-capital, doctors-patients, etc. This "binary opposition" interpretation method often leads to serious adverse consequences of public opinion deviating from the truth. More importantly, many online media (such as WeChat public accounts, Weibo accounts, etc.) often tend to deliberately highlight these "opposites" when presenting events, and even deliberately emphasize that the contradictions in the events are irreconcilable, which greatly affects the public's interpretation and re-transmission of public opinion.

In terms of the consequences of public opinion, the phenomenon of moving towards "post-truth" is prominent. "Post-truth" has been a hot concept in the communication and public opinion circles at home and abroad in the past two years. It refers to the fact that when facing online public opinion, the public often does not seek to know what the "truth" is, but only uses these public opinion events to vent their emotions. Accordingly, as long as the emotions of individuals and groups of the public are vented, the true and objective truth of the event becomes less important, and even the truth ends up being ignored. The current attitude of the public towards public opinion events mainly presents three emotions: anger, pity, exaggeration, ridicule, and irony.

In terms of the laws of public opinion, the phenomenon of "rapid change of public opinion" is prominent. The basic law of the current development of public opinion is that it appears quickly, progresses quickly, and ends quickly. Especially in cyberspace, even the most serious public opinion events have a general public opinion life cycle of only about 10 days; the life cycle of general public opinion events that are hyped is only 3-5 days. After that, old events will soon be covered up by new events. In the era of new media on the Internet, the speed of public attention shifting has obviously accelerated, and it is difficult to continue to focus on a certain event for a long time. The rate at which public opinion events are forgotten is very fast.

It is possible that only one of the above characteristics will appear in the same public opinion event, but in most cases, multiple characteristics will exist simultaneously in the same public opinion event, which makes the current public opinion environment and public opinion rules very complicated.

Five suggestions for improving mainstream media's ability to guide public opinion

In the era of media convergence, due to the rapid growth of new media, the development of traditional mainstream media has encountered difficulties. In the face of the above-mentioned new, complex and changing public opinion characteristics, mainstream media need to shoulder the heavy responsibility of media, society and national development, so it is particularly important to enhance the mainstream media's ability to guide public opinion.

In terms of channels, it is necessary to strengthen the network communication capabilities of mainstream media. After public opinion events occur, the most direct and effective way for mainstream media to lead public opinion is to "voice on the Internet." Therefore, it is necessary to focus on strengthening the construction of WeChat public accounts, Weibo accounts, and self-run media integration products of mainstream media. On the one hand, on weekdays, the above-mentioned network communication channels need to accumulate as many users as possible who subscribe, follow, and download, so that once public opinion appears, more people can pay attention to the voice of the media; on the other hand, when an incident occurs, these mainstream media's network channels need to use various methods to make their voices shared and spread by the largest number of people as possible, forming a "screen-sweeping" trend on Weibo, Moments, WeChat groups, etc., so as to achieve positive guidance of network public opinion.

In terms of function, it is necessary to strengthen the construction of mainstream media's public opinion correction methods. In addition to using online communication channels, mainstream media currently need to use traditional media forms such as television, newspapers, radio, and magazines to correct public opinion. They need to change their thinking and focus on the following three methods: First, conduct in-depth, comprehensive, and expanded coverage of public opinion events to correct the fragmentation and sporadic nature of online information; second, conduct in-depth comments on public opinion events, and use sincere and positive views to correct the negative orientation of online public opinion; third, verify information on public opinion events, and strive to be objective and fair, and correct the spread of rumors and unfair information in online public opinion. In this process, mainstream media need to spread fair, objective, and profound views as much as possible, while at the same time avoiding creating conflicts between mainstream media and online public opinion, and avoiding the emergence of "slots" that may be refuted and consumed by online public opinion.

In terms of timing, it is necessary to strengthen the construction of mainstream media's public opinion response strategy. Mainstream media need to seriously study the laws of communication and improve their ability to choose the "appropriate" communication time. Specifically, depending on the event, mainstream media either disseminate information and guide public opinion as soon as possible, emphasizing "speed"; or find the right time to attack, emphasizing "cleverness". At the same time, in the subsequent different time nodes, combined with "clever" communication, track the public opinion trends at each communication stage, and continuously and actively guide the direction of agenda setting, so as to continuously consolidate the communication effect.

In terms of content, the mainstream media must improve their communication art thinking. The so-called communication art refers to the methods, strategies and wisdom to improve the communication effect. On the surface, public opinion guidance is a kind of "hard news communication" of mainstream media, but if "hard news" and "hard communication" are integrated with soft art and wisdom, it can often achieve a qualitative leap in communication effect. Mainstream media should strive to improve the "closeness" of public opinion guidance, be more down-to-earth, get rid of the propaganda atmosphere, and truly regard the people as the subject of "dialogue", so that information packaging and dissemination are more in line with the psychological acceptance mechanism of the people. For example, pay attention to providing rich and credible information, conduct fair and objective interpretation, lead positive and beneficial thinking, return to common sense, and move towards intimacy.

In terms of mechanism, media regulatory authorities need to provide mainstream media with space to guide public opinion. In the new communication environment, it is recommended that regulatory authorities supervise and serve mainstream media with a more relaxed attitude, more open policies, and more inclusive rules. First, in terms of improving the timeliness of communication, media regulatory authorities urgently need to increase the speed of information review, especially in the process of guiding public opinion in major public opinion events, to avoid the loss of communication opportunities due to layers of checks. Second, in terms of improving communication transparency, media regulatory authorities need to increase the leniency of content review to avoid the weak effect of public opinion guidance due to overly conservative and limited content. In short, government media regulatory services need to gradually move towards a kind of "consciousness", need to more clearly recognize the changes in the social role of mainstream media in the era of integrated media, and be brave to innovate.

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【References】

①Hu Zhifeng and Liu Jun: “How do traditional mainstream media amplify mainstream voices in the era of media convergence”, Northern Media Research, No. 2, 2017.