

Research on Governance Strategy of Internet Rumors

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ABSTRACT

The rise of the information age has brought about the widespread use of network information, which while convenient, has also led to the dissemination of uncertain public opinion information resulting in the frequent spread of online rumors. The handling of public affairs has been significantly impacted by the quick involvement of netizens in spreading rumors due to limited information sources, leading to widespread online violence. This study delves into the rapid spread, global reach, and discreet communication methods associated with network rumors, as well as the underlying causes like varying ethical standards among netizens, lack of government oversight, and profit-driven motives of online media. Recommendations include government-led proactive measures to enhance network communication oversight, promoting public moral and legal awareness, encouraging media to fulfill social responsibilities, and strategies involving public engagement to combat the issue effectively.

KEYWORDS

network public opinion; public crisis; cause analysis; response measures

Rumor, as defined in the 'Modern Chinese Dictionary,' refers to unsubstantiated news. Scholar Hu Yu posits that gossip entails unverified elaborations or interpretations of events relevant to the public, disseminated through public or private channels. Rumors commonly incorporate nihilistic and exaggerated elements. The rise of the information age and Internet technology expansion have introduced new avenues for spreading rumors. These falsehoods, propagated by individuals or groups for specific motives, leverage embellished or fabricated details to circulate through online platforms. Such rumors often touch upon the critical concerns of many internet users, emphasizing group communication and intense emotional responses. Equally, the proliferation of online rumors hinges on the digital literacy of users. Effective strategies to promptly counteract and suppress online rumors, alongside enhancing the digital literacy of users, are imperative.

1 The characteristics of the spread of network rumor

Network rumor can often quickly form a consensus in public opinion, which is different from the general traditional gossip. Internet gossip spread by the network media has its own characteristics:

First, the rapid proliferation of internet rumors is characterized by the swift dissemination of information across time and space. Unlike traditional rumors, network rumors benefit from their fast propagation speed, which accelerates their spread. While traditional media requires multiple stages for information dissemination, such as printing and distribution, online platforms have streamlined this process significantly. With just a computer and internet connection, individuals can swiftly share, comment, and forward information, contributing to the rapid dissemination of online rumors.

In situations like public emergencies, online rumors can garner millions of views before authorities have the opportunity to monitor public opinion effectively.

Second, the network now boasts nearly global reach, thanks to the rapid advancements in Internet communication technology since the early 20th century. This progress has significantly enhanced communication convenience and fostered the realization of a true 'global village.' Information in the online realm can swiftly disseminate through simple copying and pasting, enabling individuals to simultaneously share identical content with Internet users worldwide. Consequently, this phenomenon transcends the geographical and temporal constraints typically associated with traditional rumors, resulting in a broader reach and heightened complexity in user awareness.

Last, the way of network rumor transmission is more hidden. Network media and traditional media are completely different in the way of communication. The way of network media communication is more covert and more likely to produce malicious rumors. Through the exchange of information on the Internet, there are often many websites and chat software with anonymous function. In the virtual environment, it is difficult to carry out effective and feasible supervision of complex speech. Driven by desire and luck, some people ignore the bottom line of morality and law, violate the red line and commit illegal and criminal acts.

2 Causes of network rumors

Similarly, under the supervision of the network and society, the causes of network rumors are more worthy of our attention and analysis.

First, the moral character and cultural backgrounds of Internet users vary significantly, illustrated by the 584 million monthly active Weibo users. Diverse cultural and social experiences lead to differing perspectives on various matters. For instance, the elderly prioritize health and longevity, potentially spreading health-related misinformation; young and middle-aged women focus on body management, which can lead to the proliferation of rumors surrounding weight loss techniques; and young and middle-aged men are interested in investment and financial management, making them susceptible to purported expert advice scams. Lacking professional expertise, netizens may make errors in judgment. When confronted with online rumors, individuals of varying ages, genders, and professional backgrounds exhibit distinct responses, often influenced by their cultural and moral values. Some can regulate their speech and refrain from further engagement, while others may succumb to the anonymity of the internet, allowing their darker impulses to dictate their actions, resulting in excessive or inappropriate online behavior.

Second, government regulation is currently lacking in addressing the proliferation of internet rumors. The government's response to online misinformation tends to be reactive rather than proactive, resulting in a rapid spread of rumors. Urgent notices are often issued hastily in response to unverified rumors, sometimes appearing careless. Additionally, there is a deficiency in a comprehensive and systematic mechanism for managing online public opinion. The government primarily relies on the network information office to monitor public sentiment online, without a well-defined emergency plan or effective platform oversight. This lack of supervision results in a low threshold for disseminating mixed information. Moreover, the government's enforcement actions are limited, often resorting to criticism and education for general online opinion issues. More severe cases only result in short-term detention, failing to establish a deterrent effect and potentially fueling criminal behavior.

The third aspect to consider is the profitability of network media. In today's information age, traditional paper and television media outlets, known for their credibility, have been eclipsed by self-

media and public accounts. These newer forms of media, often managed by individuals or companies, prioritize generating traffic and financial gains over ensuring the accuracy of news. Consequently, the authenticity and factual understanding of news are weakened, leading the public to be easily swayed by misinformation. For instance, when faced with a potentially false message, individuals often fail to fact-check the information through multiple sources or consider the repercussions of spreading rumors. Instead, they quickly disseminate the information, sometimes embellishing it to captivate online audiences, thereby perpetuating misinformation. Moreover, there are instances where official media outlets irresponsibly propagate unverified internet rumors, leveraging attention-grabbing headlines to amplify the dissemination of misinformation.

3 The management strategies for network rumor

There are many causes of network rumors, and the eradication of network rumors requires the joint efforts of many parties.

Firstly, the government should be proactive in addressing online rumors by governing for the people, implementing effective measures, and leading public opinion guidance. It is crucial for the government to promptly disclose the truth and act as a trustworthy source of information to prevent the spread of rumors. Failure to address rumors in a timely manner can lead to misinformation spreading among the public. Therefore, the government must take the initiative to clarify facts and disseminate the truth to prevent the emergence of online rumors. Additionally, enhancing laws and regulations to regulate online communication and manage online platforms is essential in combating the spread of rumors. By implementing effective governance strategies and monitoring online public opinion, the government can ensure the responsible dissemination of online information.

Secondly, continuous enhancement of monitoring online communications is essential. In the digital age, the Internet has become a pivotal aspect of daily life due to its rapid and effective means of interaction. Nevertheless, the unique nature of the Internet facilitates the swift dissemination of rumors. To combat the adverse effects of online misinformation, stringent oversight of online content distribution is imperative. Initially, it is crucial to intensify scrutiny of diverse media outlets. In the pursuit of financial gain and competitive advantage, numerous media platforms have strayed from ethical journalism practices, resorting to sensationalism, exaggerated reporting, and even fabrication of news to captivate audiences. This deviation compromises the integrity and credibility of journalism. Additionally, efforts to curb the proliferation of rumors online must be reinforced. In the contemporary era of information abundance through various digital channels, people are exposed to a plethora of content on a daily basis. This inundation often leads to a susceptibility to misleading or inaccurate information, fostering a culture of uncritical acceptance. Authorities must prioritize addressing the detrimental repercussions of online rumors by implementing effective strategies to mitigate associated risks and safeguard against misinformation.

The third priority is to enhance the public's ideological and moral cultivation along with their understanding of laws and regulations. The development of moral values and legal awareness serves as a crucial measure for elevating a nation's level of civilization. This can be achieved by fostering public ideological and moral growth, boosting citizens' understanding of laws, and effectively minimizing the spread of online misinformation. To begin with, it is essential to implement initiatives for civic quality education. This involves offering complimentary educational programs through online platforms, community courses, and other channels to elevate the overall moral, physical, and intellectual standards of a nation's populace. Citizen quality is not only a key reflection of a country's overall prowess but also a significant factor in global competitiveness and

the cornerstone of economic and societal progress. Additionally, efforts should be made to increase legal awareness among all members of society. Despite China's significant economic advancements post-reform, there remains a disparity in cultural knowledge among various age groups, particularly with the middle-aged and elderly who may have lower educational backgrounds. The general legal awareness among citizens is relatively deficient, with a rudimentary, one-sided, and fragmented understanding of legal matters. By providing legal education seminars and workshops, enhancing citizens' legal acumen can play a vital role in combatting the dissemination of false information online. Furthermore, it is crucial to reinforce the public's commitment to social responsibility. The prevalent lack of social accountability and a diminished sense of community ownership are prevailing issues in today's society. In the face of a growing deficiency in public social responsibility, this absence of accountability can lead to a loss of self-regulation and expedite the proliferation of online rumors.

Fourthly, media has a critical role in society and should actively embrace their social responsibility. It is essential for media professionals to uphold a strong ethical foundation, define their aspirations as part of the media industry, and understand the significance of accurate information dissemination. Prioritizing facts over sensationalism, avoiding the distortion of truth for the sake of clicks or attention, and refraining from spreading false narratives are all crucial aspects of responsible media practice. Local media outlets, in particular, must enhance their accountability by verifying information through diverse sources, fulfilling their duty to society, and confronting online misinformation fearlessly. When it comes to individuals within the media who propagate false information, strict measures such as demotions and fines should be enforced to maintain integrity across all platforms.

The fifth point emphasizes the importance of collective involvement in maintaining a clean online environment. It stresses that achieving a positive online space requires the collaborative efforts of everyone, particularly internet users, to develop a sense of responsibility. Given the overwhelming amount of information available, individuals should actively utilize information sources, engage in critical thinking, verify information authenticity, reevaluate content, and confirm accuracy before sharing or acting upon it. It is advised that people leverage online resources to enhance their knowledge, engage in continuous learning, refrain from making extreme statements, approach situations with a rational mindset, stay vigilant against misinformation, and manage emotions appropriately.

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