

Analysis of Media Expression in "Fat Cat Incident"

Jiacheng Ni*

Faculty of Information Science and Engineering, Ocean University of China, Qingdao, 266000, China

*jn2036@hw.ac.uk

ABSTRACT

This study aims to deeply explore the media expression of the "fat cat incident" that has aroused wide concern in Chinese society in recent years. Through the analysis of mainstream media and social media coverage, this study reveals the angles, strategies and changes in public sentiment of media coverage. The research methods include text analysis and social network analysis, and the results show how the media selectively report and express events, and how these phenomena affect social opinion and public psychology.

KEYWORDS

"Fat Cat Incident"; Media Expression Analysis; Social Responsibility of Media.

1. RESEARCH INTRODUCTION

With the rapid development of information technology, network society has become an important platform for people to obtain information and exchange views. However, the phenomenon of media expression of hot Internet events has become increasingly complex and challenging due to its characteristics of rapid dissemination, high public participation and far-reaching influence. Based on the concern of this phenomenon, this study attempts to deeply explore the characteristics of media expression of hot Internet events and their impact on society, so as to enrich the understanding of information transmission under the new media environment, and provide theoretical enlightenment for the social responsibility and role positioning of media.

2. RESEARCH BACKGROUND

2.1. Problem Origin

The "fat cat incident" is a public opinion event that has aroused wide concern in Chinese society in 2024. A 21-year-old male in Hunan Province (game id name "fat cat") jumped into the river at Chongqing Bridge after his "girlfriend" drained his savings of 510,000 yuan. Relatives said that the boy was suspected of being PUA (mind control), he worked ten hours a day, and finally jumped into the river. Before jumping into the river, he also transferred the last 66,000 yuan to his "girlfriend" and noted "voluntary gift." After the incident was exposed and triggered a hot debate on the Internet, many loving people went to the Yangtze River Bridge to send food and flowers to pay tribute, and the public opinion field continued to discuss the emotional disputes and economic disputes between the two sides. According to monitoring, at present, the topic of the "fat cat incident" on Sina Weibo has reached 1.22 billion views and 7.071 million interactions. An in-depth analysis of the influence of media reporting methods in the "fat cat incident" can reveal the status quo and changes of

information dissemination in contemporary Chinese society. This will help us to improve our understanding of the information control and communication mechanism in the contemporary Chinese media environment, explore how the media react to the system and effect of events, and help us to understand the psychological state of social groups and social dynamic changes.

2.2. Research Method

In order to ensure the reliability of the study, text analysis and social network analysis were adopted in this study to systematically collect and analyze the reports of mainstream media and social media during the “fat cat incident”, including text content, images, videos and other multimedia information. And mainly collected the fat cat incident within a week of the media news reports. Through content analysis, this paper discusses different media's reporting angles, expression ways, information selection and presentation forms, and understands media's preferences and influencing factors in event reporting. At the same time, the information dissemination network on social media is analyzed, key nodes and influential users are revealed, and the critical path and core content of public opinion formation are identified. Text mining and image analysis tools are used to automate the processing and analysis of the collected data, extract keywords, themes, emotional polarity and other information, and quantify the bias of media reports and public mood changes.

3. THEORETICAL BASIS AND RELATED APPLICATIONS

3.1. Theoretical Basis of Media Expression Theory

Agenda-setting theory: Originally proposed by McCombs and Shaw, it emphasizes the critical role that the media plays in the public agenda, that is, how the media influences the public's perception of important issues by choosing which events to cover and how to cover them. In the "fat cat incident", the media's different interpretation and presentation of the incident are actually setting the public's attention to this tragic event, thus affecting the focus of Internet public opinion.

Frame theory: Proposed by Gerbner et al., it focuses on how the media guide the public's understanding and judgment of events by constructing the frame of a story. In the "fat cat incident", the media presented the public with multiple perspectives through different narrative strategies, such as the discussion of emotional relationships and consumption concepts, which affected their cognition of the nature and impact of the incident, thus forming different interpretations and emotional responses in the public opinion field.

Post-truth era: In the context of information explosion, emotions, personal feelings and intuitive impressions may surpass facts and become the main factors affecting people's judgment. In the case of the "fat cat incident", the discussion on social media is often driven by strong emotions and ignores fact checking and rational analysis. The media is responsible for the authenticity of the information while pursuing traffic and eyeballs, preventing emotional discussions from leading the public towards bias[1].

Understanding these theories is essential for an in-depth analysis of media representations in the "fat cat incident". They not only reveal how the media can influence the public through agenda-setting and framing, but also remind us that in the post-truth era, the media must bear the heavy responsibility of guiding the public's rational judgment and pursuit of truth. This will provide theoretical enlightenment for the construction of a healthy network public opinion environment and the role positioning of media in information dissemination.

3.2. Related Applications of Media Expression Theory

The research on media expression of the “fat cat incident” not only focuses on the reported content of the incident itself, but also explores the role and strategy of the media in the transmission process of the incident, and how these expressions affect the public's cognition and emotion. Earlier studies often focused on issue-setting theory, emphasizing how the media can direct public attention and focus of discussion by choosing what and how to report it. In the "fat cat incident", the media's reporting strategy obviously affected the trend of Internet public opinion. From the attention to the tragedy itself to the in-depth discussion on the relationship between the parties, social values and legal issues, every reporting decision of the media was constructing and reshaping the public agenda of the incident.

Framing theory has played a key role in understanding the media representation of the fat cat incident. By setting different frames, such as the moral teaching of "love yourself first" or the discussion of gender roles, the media leads the public to understand events from different perspectives. The selection and construction of these frames not only affect the public's interpretation of events, but also shape the emotional responses of online public opinion to a certain extent, such as sympathy, anger or reflection. Through the carefully designed story structure, the media makes the event go beyond its own tragedy and become the carrier of social issues.

The communication concept of the post-truth era is vividly reflected in the discussion of the "fat cat incident". On social media, emotionally driven discussions often transcend the facts themselves, sparking heated discussions about online moral trials and gender antagonism. In this process, the media should not only meet the needs of the public for emotional resonance, but also grasp the accuracy of the facts and balance the entertainment and education of information. The twist of events, such as the intervention of police reports, makes the media's responsibility between pursuing the truth and avoiding misleading the public more important.

The focus on derivative topics, such as the retrospective event of "the collective empty-bag incident of merchants", also reflects the media's ability to expand related issues in the dissemination of events and its responsibility to deeply track social phenomena. Reports on these derivative topics not only enrich the public's access to information, but also show the challenges and opportunities of the media in dealing with multiple issues in the information age.

4. EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS OF MEDIA EXPRESSION

4.1. Frequency and Trend of Event Reports

At the beginning of the fermentation of the "fat cat incident", major media platforms captured this hot spot at almost the same time, and the frequency of reports rose rapidly. According to statistics, within 24 hours after the incident occurred, the number of reports from various media channels such as Weibo, news clients, news websites and newspapers reached a peak, forming the initial focus of public opinion. Since then, the frequency of coverage has gradually leveled off, but it still remains at a relatively high level, showing the media's continued attention to the event.

In terms of reporting trends, in the initial stage, the media mainly reported the cause of the incident and the information of the parties, and the headlines mostly attracted attention with words such as "shock" and "tragedy". With the further development of the incident, the media began to pay attention to the response of the parties, the network moral trial and the discussion at the legal level, and the content of the report turned to a more in-depth and diversified topic setting. In the event reversal stage, after the police reported the truth, the media's focus turned to the discussion of the manipulation of public opinion, network ethics and media responsibility behind the event. Although the frequency of the reports decreased, the quality and depth of the reports significantly improved.

It is worth noting that social media played a role in the coverage of the incident. Netizens' forwarding, comments and secondary creation make the influence of the event spread rapidly, forming a self-spreading effect. However, this process of rapid dissemination is also accompanied by information distortion and misdirection, such as some netizens' subjective assumptions and emotional catharsis. In reporting, the media should not only deal with the challenge of rapid dissemination, but also check the accuracy of information to ensure the fairness of the report.

The media's selectivity in reporting is also noteworthy. Some media tend to use emotional narration, emphasizing the teaching of "love yourself first" to arouse public sympathy. Some media focus on the social issues behind the event, such as reflection on consumption concepts and discussion of gender relations, in order to guide deeper social thinking. Such diversified reporting strategies not only meet the different needs of the public for information, but also shape the public's cognitive framework for events to a certain extent.

The reporting frequency and trend of the "fat cat incident" reflect the media's strategy adjustment in response to hot events, the dynamic change of issue setting and the complexity of interaction with the public. This empirical analysis provides a quantitative basis for understanding the role of media in hot events, and also provides an empirical case for exploring the balance between the pursuit of traffic and the adherence to social responsibility of media.

4.2. Diversity of Media Views and Positions

In the media expression of the "fat cat incident", the diversity of views and positions is particularly prominent. The interpretation of events by major media platforms shows a tendency of diversification, which is not only reflected in the breadth of reporting content, but also in the depth analysis of the nature and impact of events. On the one hand, this diversity reflects the innovation and flexibility of the media in the setting of issues, and on the other hand, it shows their independent thinking and judgment in the face of complex social issues[2].

Some media tend to interpret events from the perspective of emotional relationships and individual behavior, emphasizing the personal value of "love yourself first" to remind the public to keep rational when emotionally invested. For example, some articles take the tragedy of "losing oneself" as a reference, deeply analyze the psychological state of the parties in the emotional entanglement, and advocate the importance of maintaining self-independence in the love relationship. Such reporting strategies try to guide the public to treat emotions rationally and avoid repeating mistakes.

Other media discuss consumption concepts, gender roles and the phenomenon of online moral judgment from the perspective of social issues and ethics. They point out that the "fat cat incident" is not an isolated incident, but reflects the prevalence of consumerism in contemporary society, the complexity of the relationship between personal emotions and money, and the limitations of moral judgment in cyberspace. By providing a broader social background, these reports help the public understand the social issues reflected in the incident, and guide the public to reflect deeply on the concept of consumption, gender equality and network ethics.

The legal angle is also an important dimension for media to interpret the "fat cat incident". Through in-depth analysis, many legal experts and media have explored the possible gift and loan relationship in the incident, and whether there is legal doubt about fraud[3]. These reports provide legal analysis, fill the gap in the public's legal knowledge, warn the society to pay attention to legal issues, and strengthen the authority and normative role of law.

The media also paid attention to the derivative topics of the incident, such as the "collective empty package incident of merchants" and the people related to it, as well as the discussion of the management responsibility of the network platform. Through these reports, the media not only expanded the public's vision of information, but also exposed and criticized issues such as integrity

and supervision in cyberspace to a certain extent, reflecting the media's pursuit of social justice and transparency.

It is important to note that the media are not completely independent in their reporting process, and their influence and interaction with each other also have an impact on the diversity of viewpoints. For example, some media may be guided by mainstream views or inspired by in-depth reporting by other media to adjust their reporting strategies. This interaction further enriches the diversity of media expression, enabling the public to obtain information from different angles and levels and form a more comprehensive understanding[4].

In the we-media era of "everyone has a microphone", the Internet space, because of its stealth, openness and interaction, makes the dissemination of information have the characteristics of rapidly attracting widespread attention, often accompanied by the phenomenon of confusing audiovisual interference. In this noisy network public opinion field, if public opinion supervision is to play a positive role in social governance, mainstream media must firmly grasp the right to speak, actively guide public opinion, and ensure the formation of a public opinion atmosphere of "evil does not overpower good"[5].

The diversity of views and positions in the media expression of the "fat cat incident" not only reflects the innovation of the media in the issue setting, but also reveals the media's ability to dig deeply into social issues. This diversity not only meets the public's diversified demand for information, but also affects the public's perception and understanding of events to a certain extent, providing rich materials for the discussion of social issues. However, it also presents a new challenge to the media's responsibility to find the right balance between the diversity of views and the accuracy and impartiality of information in order to guide a healthy public opinion environment.

5. RESULTS AND CONCLUSION

Through the case of the "fat cat incident", this study reveals the complexity and diversity of media expression in Internet hot events, provides an empirical basis for understanding the role of media in information transmission, and poses new challenges to the social responsibility of media, especially in the context of new media. The diversity and independence of the media in the "fat cat incident" reflects its innovation and flexibility in the setting of issues. We not only understand the key role of media in agenda-setting and framing, but also see the need for media to strike a balance between the pursuit of traffic and social responsibility[1].

Therefore, the media should be aware of its agenda-setting power and use this influence carefully to promote rational public thinking on important issues. Through the discussion of these issues, we can build a more healthy and rational network public opinion environment, and provide theoretical guidance for the role positioning and behavior norms of media in information dissemination. In dealing with event-derived topics, the media demonstrated their ability to track social phenomena and expand issues, which not only enriched the public's access to information, but also reflected the media's commitment to social responsibility. Future research could explore how media balance public needs and social values in agenda-setting, and how media expression adapts to and influences public behavior and attitudes in different socio-cultural contexts.

REFERENCES

- [1] Wu, X. (2023) Analysis of the Causes and Countermeasures of out-of-focus Public Opinion in Public Emergencies under New Media Environment. *News World.*, 5: 33-36.
- [2] Man, X. (2024) Research on Public Emotion in Social Media Discourse Space: A Case Study of the Panda Ya Ya Incident in the United States on Weibo Platform. *Art Science and Technology.*, 9: 148-150.
- [3] Jian, C., Yang, Z. (2023) The legal regulation of network violence in public opinion. *MEDIA.*, 9: 94-96.

- [4] Jiang, X., Wang, J. (2024) Research on social media public opinion reversal phenomenon. *News Wave.*, 7: 10-12.
- [5] Sun, L. (2024) Public opinion supervision: The "reversal key" for negative image to play a positive effect. *Journalist's cradle.*, 12: 135-137.