

Analyzing the "University Students' Special Forces Traveling Style" with the Principles of Public Opinion Science

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Abstract: Based on the researches of current trends in social media, and TikTok, this representative social media app, we discovered that "University students' special forces traveling style" which sprung up on TikTok has been widely imitated. The background causes, development and impact of this online public opinion was analyzed in the context of relevant principles and applications of public opinion. This paper first outlines the reasons for using the ShakeMe platform as the subject and background of the study, and then analyzes the various positive and negative public opinions involved in the "college students' special forces"-style tourism incident through the interpretation of the incident. Finally, the paper offers suggestions for guiding public opinion and forming public awareness of similar events in the future.

Keywords: Internet Public Opinion; Tiktok; "College Specialists"; Public Opinion Ecology; Public Opinion Guidance

1. Introduction

1.1. Background and reasons for Tiktok as a research subject

In today's society, Tiktok, a short-video social media platform, has gained a large number of users globally and has had a significant impact on public opinion around the world. Therefore, it is of high practical significance to choose Tiktok as the research object.

First of all, with the popularization of smartphones and mobile Internet, according to statistics, as of 2021, Tiktok already has more than 1 billion monthly active users. This means that Tiktok has a great global reach, and the content it distributes can quickly reach audiences in different countries, age groups, and cultural backgrounds. Secondly, the content of short videos on the Tiktok platform closely matches the current social hotspots, covering a wide range of fields, such as politics, economy, culture, science and technology, education and so on. Short video content in these areas has spread rapidly on the Tiktok platform, largely directing the focus of public attention. Therefore, it is of high theoretical value to study how Tiktok influences public opinion through content production and topic setting. In addition, in the field of communication, there are many theories that can be used to analyze Tiktok's public opinion leading strategy. For example, the theory of "information entropy" put forward by Claude Elwood Shannon points out that the more complex the information, the higher its entropy value, and the worse the communication effect. The short video content on the Tiktok platform stands out among many forms of new media communication precisely because of its concise and easy-to-understand characteristics. In addition, the interpersonal communication network model and opinion leader explanations are also applicable to the study of the Tiktok platform. On Tiktok, some influential opinion leaders or institutional accounts guide social opinions by posting short videos, while ordinary users further expand the impact of these opinions in secondary dissemination. The above communication theories provide theoretical support for the study of Tiktok's public opinion leading strategy.

In social media platforms such as Tiktok, the rapid spread and proliferation of information does not simply benefit people. The collision of different cultures and worldviews, and the ever-increasing acceleration of the production and transmission of information, is not enough to create more communication; "it may even magnify misunderstandings and increase disputes." According to Dominique Woolton, no one produces and disseminates a message without wanting to communicate it, without wanting to share it, to attract it, to persuade it^[1]. However, communication activities are much

more complex than the transmission of information and at a time when everything can be disseminated and circulated, when "the search for communication effects is painstakingly pursued", people are forced to face the challenge of "accepting or rejecting information" and the challenge of "the presence and autonomy of the other". According to the basic equation of information science $I+K(S)=K(S+S)$ by the scholar Brookes, the result of the transformation of information into knowledge is affected by the carrier, the process of transformation, the method and the efficiency of transformation^[2]. It can be interpreted that after information is transformed into knowledge, the information is meaningfully linked to the application of the information in action, and the resulting knowledge involves a wider range of information content than that of the original information. This explains why "communication activities are much more complex than message delivery". Under the rapid development of media technology and governmental and economic conditions, the ideology of the audience has changed considerably from the previous one, and the positive interpretation of the messages conveyed by the media has resulted in various outcomes. Since then, communication activities have been energized by technology, and difficult questions have arisen. In today's social context of impatience, the pursuit of exposure and the right to speak, the increase in the amount of information does not equal to the enhancement of the effectiveness of communication, and technological advances do not equal to the ability to better communicate; technological advances can multiply the information, but they cannot completely solve the problem of communication. Overstimulation, information and news, which fundamentally alters the structure and functioning of our attention, and our perceptions thus become scattered and fragmented^[3]. This leads to the deformity of people's higher judgment with the ever-increasing amount of information available. In many cases, less information is more, and the negativity of discarding and forgetting is what can lead to productivity here. More information and more of it alone cannot bring light into the darkness. The more information that is released, the more cluttered and haunted the world becomes. From a certain tipping point, information will no longer inform us, but only deform things; communication will no longer lead to communication, but simply to superimposing (Min, 2012). In summary, the public's perception, attitude and behavior are all affected by some form of communication of information, thus comparing and contrasting the presentation of social media's opinion leadership.

1.2. Background of the incident

A day to hit eight attractions, only three hours of sleep, netizens have joked that this is a kind of "special forces type of travel". Then how to see college students special forces type of tourism? Although all the way storming, but ate Zibo's barbecue, see the peonies in Luoyang, watch the flag-raising in Beijing Tiananmen Square, daily walk 10,000 steps and how? Regarding this kind of travel, there are different voices in the court of public opinion, in addition to admiration there are also people who questioned that this is a show of walking around. However, behind the Special Forces style of traveling is a person who carries pressure and is full of heartache and good desire for life.

In fact, it's not hard to understand the logic behind this choice when you bring in the perspective of "College Student Special Forces". Our college careers were almost perfectly covered by the epidemic, either in our dorm rooms swiping short videos or roaming the campus. Now that the epidemic is getting better, we always have to go away. Traveling is nothing more than a process of stepping out of one's comfort zone and heading into an unknown territory to explore and discover, as well as a process of reading thousands of books and traveling thousands of miles. And the process can be long and leisurely or short and exhausting. Today's young people, in the high-stress academic atmosphere and in the high-intensity work environment, in the face of never enough rest time and money, in order to relax and self-regulation can only briefly escape from reality, even if the body is in a state of extreme fatigue, it is better than to stay in place.

At the same time, this phenomenon provides us with a new way of life and inspires us to encourage students to feel free to experience the world and get close to nature without affecting the teaching schedule, which is more in line with the real meaning of university education.

2. Overview of the principles of public opinion

2.1. Theoretical frameworks related to opinion science

Opinion leadership refers to influencing the public's perceptions, attitudes and behaviors by disseminating, interpreting and evaluating information so that they form specific views and opinions. In public opinion studies, opinion leadership is closely related to the American sociologist Paul Lazarsfeld's

"two-level communication theory" and the Germany communication scholar E·Noelle-Neumann's "the spiral of silence" and other theories. These theories emphasize the role of opinion leaders in the process of information dissemination and the influence of public opinion on individual speech and behavior.

Social media platforms such as Tiktok play a key role in opinion leadership by developing and implementing a range of strategies and tools. These strategies and tools include content production and topic setting, comment interaction and opinion guidance, and the impact of social media algorithms on opinion guidance.

2.1.1. Content Production and Topic Setting

Content production refers to social media accounts that direct public attention and discussion to specific topics by posting information with specific values and viewpoints. Topic setting, on the other hand, refers to shaping the public agenda and influencing the public's focus of attention by selectively emphasizing certain topics while ignoring others. This process echoes Maxwell McCombs and Donald Shaw's theory of "agenda-setting," which suggests that by emphasizing certain issues, the media shape public perceptions and priorities.

2.1.2. Commentary Interaction and Opinion Leadership

Comment interaction means that social media accounts influence the formation and spread of public opinion through interactive communication with users. The comment section is a place for the public to express their views, exchange information and dispute opinions, and comment interaction can help social media accounts understand the public's viewpoints and attitudes, and then adjust the content of their releases to guide public opinion. In addition, the remarks of opinion leaders in the comment section are often highly influential and can have a modeling effect on other users and guide the direction of public opinion.

2.1.3. The Impact of Social Media Algorithms on Opinion Leadership

Social media algorithms are computational methods that recommend content to users based on their behavioral data such as likes, comments and shares. These algorithms recommend relevant content to users based on their interests and behavior. In the process of opinion guidance, social media algorithms can amplify the spreading effect of certain ideas and information, further influencing the formation and development of public opinion.

In the case of Tiktok, for example, when a user watches, likes and comments on a video, Tiktok's recommendation algorithm pushes similar content to that user. In this way, content with similar viewpoints and values is rapidly disseminated among users, thus guiding the formation and development of public opinion. However, such algorithms can also lead to an information cocoon effect, whereby users are only exposed to information that is similar to their own views, thus exacerbating social division and polarization.

From an opinion science perspective, we can see that social media accounts play an important role in guiding public opinion through content production and topic setting, comment interaction, and the use of social media algorithms. These strategies and tactics not only influence public perceptions, attitudes and behaviors, but also have a profound impact on the formation and development of public opinion. However, there are certain negative effects in the process of public opinion guidance, such as the phenomenon of information cocooning, and these issues deserve further attention and research.

2.2. Public opinion analysis based on the principles of public opinion science

It is important to focus on the study of how public opinion arises and develops in society, and to pay attention to the sources of information, the means of dissemination and the media of communication. The reason why "special forces-style tourism for university students" has attracted widespread attention is closely related to the choice of communication channels and media. The reason why "special forces-style tourism for university students" has attracted widespread attention is closely related to the choice of communication channels and media. In modern society, the popularization of the Internet and social media has made the dissemination of information more rapid. In this case, many college students showed their travel experiences through social media platforms such as Tiktok, which triggered the attention and discussion of other netizens. At the same time, the mainstream media's coverage of the phenomenon has further expanded the impact of the event. In the process of information dissemination, the sense of identity and empathy of the audience group is also a key factor in the formation of public opinion. As the claim emerged around the May Day holiday, time and a variety of objective factors combined to advance

this travel pattern. Many college students and young people believe that this type of travel can enrich their life experience, and at the same time, the media has led them to join the queue. The origin is that the ability to create and guide topics, the recommendation algorithm for users and the traffic distribution of Tiktok-type social software prompted a large number of audiences to join in a short period of time, thus promoting the formation of public opinion to a certain extent.

From the point of view of public opinion ecology, in the public opinion ecology of "college students traveling in the style of special forces", positive and negative public opinion influence and check and balance each other. On the one hand, positive public opinion believes that this kind of travel helps college students to expand their horizons and exercise their will, and at the same time reflects the independence of young people and their spirit of challenge that does not succumb to reality. On the other hand, negative public opinion focuses on the potential safety hazards, manifestation of cultural literacy and uncivilized phenomena that may be associated with this type of tourism. In addition, the public opinion ecology includes the participation of multiple stakeholders, such as tourism companies, local governments and universities. These stakeholders play a more or less contributing role in the process of public opinion dissemination.

2.3. A Case Study of Tiktok's Practice in Opinion Leadership

There are many environmentally themed accounts on Tiktok, which guide more people to pay attention to environmental issues by posting short videos about environmental protection knowledge, household waste classification, resource conservation, and so on. When these videos receive a large number of likes, comments and shares, the recommendation algorithm of the Tiktok platform will recommend this content more often to other users. This kind of public opinion guidance gradually creates a public consensus on environmental protection issues, prompting more people to participate in environmental protection actions.

In addition, during the new coronavirus outbreak, in Chinese mainland, for example, the official Tiktok account of the National Health and Health Commission: "Healthy China" has released many short videos on epidemic prevention and control, proper wearing of masks, and maintaining personal hygiene, disseminating authoritative and scientific information on epidemic prevention and control, guiding the public to establish correct concepts of epidemic prevention, and helping people to effectively deal with epidemics. Of course, in addition to official accounts, there are many professional doctors, public health experts and volunteers who post similar content on Tiktok. These accounts have made concerted efforts to popularize knowledge of epidemic prevention, guide the public to respond correctly to the epidemic, and make positive contributions to controlling the spread of the epidemic. Short videos on epidemic prevention and control, wearing masks correctly, and maintaining personal hygiene have been released. These videos spread scientific knowledge about epidemic prevention, guided the public to establish correct concepts of epidemic prevention, and played a positive role in controlling the spread of the epidemic. Meanwhile, the Tiktok platform has also stepped up its crackdown on false information in the background, reducing the spread of panic.

The above two examples reveal how social media accounts in Tiktok can direct the public's attention to important social issues and codes of conduct by posting short video content with positive value. This opinion-guiding effect will, to a certain extent, influence public perceptions, attitudes and behaviors.

3. Conclusions

3.1. Origin of the incident and the process of dissemination

The "Special Forces Tourism" originated from a group of college students who love to travel, and in this short period of one to two days, they will arrange the journey in a rich and orderly manner, as much as possible to visit places of interest, taste the food and so on. These college students recorded the bits and pieces of their journey on a short video platform, which triggered widespread attention and discussion. With media coverage and retweeting by netizens, this event quickly gained a high number of hits and comments on the Internet, creating a wave of online public opinion. In this process, multiple stakeholders are involved, such as participants, media platforms and public opinion dissemination, tourism industry and local governments. For the participants, the act can be a reflection of the young people's self-challenge and growth, but also a way to raise awareness of the reverence and protection of the natural environment.

3.2. Public Opinion Leadership and Public Awareness Formation

There are several reasons why this type of tourism, "special forces for college students", has attracted widespread attention and discussion: firstly, it meets the needs of modern people. With the accelerated pace of society, people's work and life pressure is getting bigger and bigger, "special forces" type of tourism just to meet the needs of modern people's short-term leisure, attracted widespread attention and imitation. Second is media publicity. The media plays an important role in guiding public opinion - news, features, and travel tips reporting on the one-day round-trip destination mode of travel provide a channel to publicize this mode of travel, further generating public interest and discussion.

In terms of public awareness formation, the promotion and popularization of this type of tourism can have a positive impact in several ways: First, it promotes the development of tourism. This mode of tourism can bring new opportunities for the development of the tourism industry, especially for those areas that are strategically located and have a concentration of attractions, which will help attract more tourists and increase tourism revenue. At the same time, it can promote a healthy lifestyle with the help of people's follow-the-wind mentality. Such a way of traveling can help people find leisure time in their stressful work and life, which can help relieve stress and promote physical and mental health.

3.3. Suggestions for Public Opinion Guidance and Public Awareness Formation for Similar Incidents in the Future

First, pay attention to the needs of the people. In guiding public opinion, attention should be paid to the needs and concerns of the people and the social value and significance associated with events should be explored. For events such as the "college students' special forces" type of tourism, we can focus on its role in relieving the stress of modern life and enhancing environmental awareness.

Secondly, ensure the accuracy of information. Information disseminated should be truthful and objective, ensuring that sources are reliable and avoiding the dissemination of inaccurate or exaggerated information. The media should focus on fact-checking when reporting to prevent misleading the public.

At the same time, it should also publicize and promote through multiple channels, including traditional media, new media and social media. This can be done through news reports, special reports, travel tips, microblogging, wechatting and many other ways, so that more people can understand and participate in the relevant events, especially those that have a positive significance to the society. This in turn leads to active discussions and encourages the public to participate in the discussions and express their views and opinions. In the process of guiding public opinion, attention should be paid to guiding the public to discuss from multiple perspectives and avoiding the dissemination of one-sided or extreme views. What cannot be ignored is that public opinion guidance should be combined with policies, and in the process of public opinion guidance and public awareness formation, attention can be paid to policy orientation, combining government policies with people's needs. For example, when promoting special forces tourism methods, attention can be paid to whether the government has relevant policy support, such as environmental protection policy and tourism development policy. Education departments and universities should guide students to view tourism activities correctly, emphasizing that the real meaning of tourism is to understand and experience the cultures of different regions, not just to visit and take pictures. Attention should also be paid to public education. Attention should be paid to the role of public education in the process of guiding public opinion and the formation of public awareness. In the process of guiding public opinion, and forming public awareness, focusing on the level of public awareness is important. It can be done by popularizing relevant knowledge through various channels and keeping up with and following up on the development of the topics like the "one-day round-trip traveling style". During the development of events, it is necessary to keep abreast of the latest developments and adjust the public opinion guidance strategy according to the situation in order to ensure the healthy development of public opinion.

From the participant's point of view, college students should grasp the balance between study and leisure, and reasonably arrange the travel itinerary to make full use of the weekend and holiday time, but also to ensure normal study and life.

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