

Social media strategies in public health emergencies-- Take COVID-19 as an example

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Abstract: *With the development of the Internet and the continuous progress of modern communication technology, the dissemination and update of information increasingly rely on social media. In the case of public health emergencies, social media enables rapid and timely dissemination of information, providing a broad platform for the generation, fermentation, dissemination and resolution of hot public opinion events. Social media has many advantages in public health emergencies, but at the same time, there are some disadvantages. Therefore, this paper will discuss how to improve the application of social media in public health emergencies, in order to better deal with public health emergencies.*

Keywords: *social media; public health emergencies; application strategy*

1. Introduction

Public health is the focus of the whole society and even the whole mankind. It is also one of the livelihood topics that people are most concerned about ^[1]. As an event with the widest impact, fastest spread and strongest suddenness in the field of public health, public health emergency is undoubtedly the top priority in the field of public health research. At the end of 2019, China's outbreak of COVID - 19 outbreak, make whole society paralyzed, in this context, weibo, WeChat, trill as representative of social media with their respective advantages, release and update information in time, let the public know new outbreaks of real-time dynamic, correct guidance to the public, popularize knowledge of science and epidemic prevention to the public, thus forming a good coping mechanism. There is no doubt that social media plays an important role in public health emergencies.

2. Advantages of social media in public health emergencies

Compared with traditional media, social media is the nature of the everyone can participate in, have strong openness, high participation, topic diffusion speed, audience can actively participate in, the advantages of setting the agenda, in today to get "information" as a "authoritative information" and "truth" information of the first position ^[2]. Different social media play different roles in public health emergencies. In this paper, three mainstream social platforms, Weibo, wechat and Douyin, are selected to analyze the different advantages of various social media in public health emergencies.

2.1 Weibo -- the official platform and the main voice of social citizens

The low cost and timely interaction of social media highlight its advantages of efficient information dissemination, attracting many official platforms and news media. As one of the emerging social media with rapid development in recent years, Weibo has undoubtedly become the first choice for various official platforms to release information. Red Cross Society, hospitals, local publishing and government departments have entered weibo one after another and registered their accounts to timely release official information for citizens across the country.

During the COVID-19 outbreak, people can quickly obtain the most accurate and authoritative information through official releases and hot searches on Weibo. They can also express their opinions through comments and retweets, and conduct public opinion supervision from the bottom up. Secondly, the openness of weibo platform and the low entry threshold for users make "everyone has a microphone" become a reality. Netizens are both receivers of information and senders of information^[3]. Everyone from professional organizations to ordinary people can write or reprint articles, post pictures,

pass on information, and share what they see and hear with the public on social media. Especially for some influential public figures, stars and bloggers, their words and actions will affect or even dominate netizens' cognition and judgment of the event. Through positive guidance and encouragement, it can adjust social emotions and inspire people's confidence to unite against the epidemic. In addition, hot public topics closely related to the epidemic period, such as the shortage of medical supplies and the difficulty in protecting individual rights under panic, can also be timely solved through a large number of forwarding, comments and likes on Weibo platform.

2.2 Wechat -- the main exchange of epidemic information

Wechat, an instant messaging app launched by Tencent, has 1.165 billion monthly active accounts at home and abroad, according to Tencent's 2021 annual report. Chyxx.com also ranked wechat at the top of its list of top 10 social media brands for 2021. Wechat is the most popular and popular social media platform in China^[4].

During the COVID-19 pandemic, wechat helped neighbors help each other by establishing community help groups. On the one hand, community residents initiate help through group chat and share their own materials at the same time. In the case of lack of materials, they can barter to meet each other's needs. On the other hand, neighbors can have a more accurate understanding of the epidemic situation around the community, remind each other to do a good job of protection, encourage each other and work together to tide over the difficulties. Secondly, there are a large number of wechat public accounts, official and unofficial, which can be shared and reprinted through moments to spread epidemic-related information more quickly among relatives and friends.

Among them, "REAL-TIME COVID-19 Situation" jointly produced and published by DXY Garden and People's Daily has gone viral on Wechat moments. It was the first to use an interactive data map to show the development of the epidemic in China, with real-time broadcast set at the bottom of the map. This form was later used by many media as a "standard". In addition, the page also set up rumors and protection, disease knowledge and other sections, comprehensive integration of epidemic authoritative information. As of June 1, 2020, it has been viewed more than 3.9 billion times. In the form of an H5 (fifth generation Hypertext Markup Language) page, "Remember the Epidemic: 2019-2020 Timeline of COVID-19", produced by the Official account of Southern Metropolis Daily, records and updates the epidemic developments from the first confirmed case to the present, visualizing the epidemic as a major event^[5].

2.3 Douyin -- the main gathering place for immersive transmission of epidemic information

The rapid development of the Internet has changed the form of information that people receive. Long and deep reading is gradually replaced by fragmented and entertaining reading. Short video, micro video, funny jokes into the public eye, more and more market, become one of the main ways for people to receive information. As a leader in short video creation in recent years, Douyin plays a unique role in public health emergencies.

First, douyin content is short and intuitive. For bloggers with different number of fans, there is a time limit of 15 seconds, 60 seconds or even 5 minutes, which reduces the user's choice cost and low cost of watching, and enables users to obtain more information in a short time. Second, Tiktok has a wide audience. The screen is simple and easy to understand, so that people of different ages can understand what the video wants to convey, to achieve a good communication effect; Thirdly, douyin content has a strong sense of presence. Douyin short video features, music, camera manipulation and special effects that can fully arouse the audiovisual sense of the public. The scene scenes, inspiring background music and the content under the epidemic theme are more likely to trigger the emotional connection of group resonance^[6]. During the epidemic, people have been in a state of tension, with various emotions of tension, irritability, depression and worry coming one after another. In this state, people have no mood and energy to listen to "patient explanations" and "various truths", but short videos with pleasant pictures, jokes and sound and video will be popular. In the transmission of information can also adjust people's negative emotions; Finally, Douyin can effectively solve the problem of uneven information distribution caused by the "digital divide". Trill user coverage, not only in the fast-growing popular in big cities, small cities in three or four lines, but also become the dominant form of residents entertainment, and access to information, so that it can effectively reduce information disequilibrium between city, can make the provincial cities of the nation's citizens equal frequency for outbreak related information.

3. Disadvantages of social media in health emergencies

3.1 Non-authoritative information is easy to breed rumors

Although many official platforms have established their official accounts on new social media in order to adapt to the Internet era, official platforms are only a small part of the huge number of social media users, and most of them are ordinary people. The media enforces people with the right to know and freedom of speech, which causes people to speak freely about what they see, hear and think. What they publish is often just their own speculations or gossip, rich in content but mixed in eye, whose authenticity needs to be verified, so there will be a lot of rumors. In addition, with the rapid spread of information in the Internet era, rumors are no longer spread one by one, but transmitted to all users in real time through social media platforms^[7]. At the critical moment when people across the country joined hands to fight the epidemic, rumors had a great impact on people, confusing the public and the public, interfering with people's correct judgment, and resulting in serious consequences. For example, in the early days of the COVID-19 outbreak, the rumor that Shuanghuanglian oral liquid could prevent infection was spread by mainstream social media, which immediately triggered a rush of people's blind buying. Shuanghuanglian Oral liquid in many pharmacies was sold out, but it was proved to be a rumor.

3.2 Event risks are unreasonably amplified

Public health emergency is a social crisis with high risk and uncertainty. As the most significant public health emergency in recent years, COVID-19 is full of dangers. In the initial stage of the outbreak, mainstream social media not only meet the needs of people to quickly grasp information, but also easily cause the emergence and amplification of secondary effects of event risk. In Internet platforms, netizens' topics usually focus on the negative impact of the event. Some marketing accounts make use of netizens' curiosity, release some eye-catching false pictures and short videos, create novel false information, sensationalize the public, and deliberately arouse people's panic, anger, surprise and other emotions. COVID - 19 outbreak itself has wide influence, harm degree is high, after the microblogging forwarding, public articles, WeChat circle of friends, a short video, such as entertainment medium presented originally event risk would be irrational amplification of false information, not only can cause the public to disease risk of error, can cause users to distrust of the government, bring down the government's credibility. To some extent, mainstream social media is a facilitator of event risk amplification.

3.3 It is difficult to control the direction of public opinion

Due to the openness and anonymity of social platforms, a large amount of unverified information is flooded in social media. The outbreak of COVID-19 is characterized by instability and variability, which makes it difficult to predict and prevent in advance. Therefore, speculation and discussion will inevitably arise after the event. In this case, people are in a state of high tension, panic, and lack of rational judgment on the event. Their opinions and attitudes are less relevant to the facts of the epidemic itself and more based on emotional catharsis. Most netizens, without knowing the full picture, express their dissatisfaction and concern by Posting some extreme remarks on mainstream social platforms without thinking. Outbreak of real-time dynamic lack of correct guidance and the true story, network anonymity and speech contained hidden bad information makes the truth of the official cover up in many false statements, the mainstream social media platform by the netizens and media of false statements and the direction of public opinion is difficult to control, deflect the negative direction, produce unpredictable serious consequences.

4. Improve the application strategy of social media in public health emergencies

4.1 Timely release of clarifying information to dispel rumors

When a major public health emergency occurs, the impact of rumors and public opinions is greater than usual, so information review is more important in this period. [8] Strengthening the review of information and reducing misleading rumors are also essential in the process of fighting the epidemic. Before the release of information, the platform can strengthen the screening of sensitive information through identity authentication. When sensitive or bad words are involved, netizens need to verify their

identity. In this way, netizens can be afraid of making sensitive remarks and thus reduce the release of rumor information. Secondly, when rumors occur, in order to avoid rampant spread of rumors, administrators of mainstream social media should immediately delete the posts, warn the users, and point out the reasons for deleting posts and the relevant regulations violated. Finally, after the occurrence of rumors, the government should dare to "engage in confrontation" and "show its sword". In the face of negative and false news spread by social media, the government should immediately refute rumors and correct them. Understand the truth, timely release clarification information, set up a special team to investigate a wide range of areas, to show the public the determination of the government, minimize the negative effects brought by rumors.

4.2 Strengthening information supervision to prevent risks from expanding

When a major public health emergency occurs, the media will be the most important channel for the public to express their views and express their emotions. In the cyberspace of massive information, it is difficult for people to effectively distinguish between true and false information. Mainstream social media should strengthen the supervision of information and supervise the content posted by users. At present, many social media have their own supervision mechanism. Take Weibo for example, there are community rules in the weibo community management center. Including the microblogging community convention "weibo complaint operating rules" "weibo business code of conduct" weibo personal rights complaint handling the microblogging community entertainment information management of the microblogging credit rules "weibo video upload note" "microblogging service agreement" and so on, a clear lists various irregularities and treatment method^[9].

At the same time, when an event occurs, the mainstream media can set the event as a discussion topic through the forum. Among the numerous netizens who participate in the discussion, the arguments with positive value to explain and deal with the issue published by commentators and authorities are highlighted in eye-catching font colors and placed in the prominent position of the forum. In addition, netizens with good writing, wide knowledge and positive thoughts can give positive guidance to the event, thus strengthening the mainstream speech direction of the event and preventing the event risk from being unreasonably amplified.

4.3 Actively controlling the direction of public opinion

The government should firmly grasp the correct direction of public opinion, sing the main melody, strengthen the positive energy, and expand and strengthen the mainstream public opinion. To guide online public opinion in the new era is not to suppress the different voices of netizens on social media. It is not possible to control the spread of information only by deleting comments, deleting posts and banning words, nor is it possible to punish the online water army only by compulsory punishment. Except for a few malicious marketing accounts on the Internet, most of them are ordinary people who do not know the truth or lose their minds because of anger. The so-called ignorance is not guilty. The government should not blindly suppress ordinary people, but should focus on the event itself, clearly guide the direction, gather strength, and create a clean and positive public opinion environment.

On issues concerning major rights and wrongs and political principles, we must increase our initiative and enthusiasm, keep to the general direction, and sing the song of mainstream public opinion and thinking. On the Internet users' concerns, listen carefully, answer questions, soothe emotions; During the COVID-19 outbreak, Internet users need information from authorities such as governments and experts, which can provide reassurance^[10]. Therefore, mainstream media should make good use of their own social media platforms to play the role of "ballast stone" through first-hand information and authoritative information, respond positively and occupy the main position of online publicity, so that netizens can receive information from mainstream platforms anytime and anywhere, and fill the network with more positive information.

5. Conclusion

To sum up, social media is a key channel for the country, the government and the people to transmit information and communicate when a major public health emergency occurs. Social media is not just a bystander, but an important participant in the fight against the epidemic. By consciously filtering, checking, verifying and mining information, social media can form as accurate, objective, comprehensive and targeted news as possible, and become the reporter of the epidemic situation, the

popularization of scientific knowledge, the propagandists of epidemic prevention and control, and the mobilization of public participation. COVID-19, as the most significant public health emergency in recent years, concerns the safety of all aspects of the public. If information is not handled and reported in a timely manner, it is extremely likely to trigger social panic and cause great harm. Therefore, we should know how to use modern ways and technologies to deal with sudden public health events, meet the needs of the masses to understand the real situation, and finally achieve good public relations effects of sudden public health events, and maintain social stability and development.

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