

Original Paper

Strategic Optimization of Public Opinion Management in Universities under Change of Network Public Opinion Ecosystem

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Abstract

The current breakthroughs in Internet big data and AI technologies have accelerated the fission-like dissemination of public opinion on the Internet, providing both opportunities and challenges for university governance. Universities should adapt to the new situation of the ecological change of public opinion with subject, object, carrier and environment as the elements, and optimize the public opinion management mechanism of universities from five levels: building a management system of network public opinion, strengthening the guidance mode of public opinion, promoting the operation of campus new media matrix, paying attention to the education of students' network media literacy, and focusing on the construction of open internal and external communication platform, purifying the network space, maintaining the image of universities, and creating a Double First-class construction of universities and necessary ecology.

Keywords

universities, online public opinion, public opinion ecological change, public opinion guidance, education for students' network media literacy

1. Introduction

Online public opinion formed by the fusion of university public opinion and new Internet media has impacted the existing management mode and crisis response ability of universities with its immediacy, interactivity, grassroots and mass dissemination of information. Especially in recent years, the incidents of “teacher misbehavior” and “academic misconduct” have triggered the criticism of all the people on teacher ethics and university management. Under the Internet environment, the weak crisis awareness and immature coping mechanism of negative public opinion response of universities affect the image of

universities and the healthy development of higher education. Optimizing the university network public opinion management mechanism, responding to netizens concerns in a timely manner, satisfying students' reasonable demands and safeguarding the image of the university is an important responsibility of university managers and a necessary ecological environment for the construction of double first-class universities. On April 19, 2016, Xi Jinping, general secretary of the university, established a new view of network public opinion in his speech at the forum on cybersecurity and information work, pointing out that "for the The general netizens, to be more tolerant and patient, to absorb constructive opinions in time, to help with difficulties in time, to promote the uninformed in time, to clarify ambiguous understanding in time, to resolve grievances and complaints in time, to guide and correct misconceptions in time" (Xi, 2016). This is the most important value pointing and methodological reliance for understanding and doing a good job of university network public opinion under the new situation.

2. Changes in University Online Public Opinion and Public Opinion Ecology

2.1 Research Trends in University Online Public Opinion

University network public opinion refers to the sum of attitudes, opinions and emotions expressed by college students on hot news of concern or issues closely related to their interests through the Internet. The research on university network public opinion has become a hotspot after the 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China. A journal search by keywords reveals that the research direction focuses on the education and guidance of university students' public opinion, the characteristics of dissemination, detection and early warning of university public opinion, and governance strategies. In recent years, with the continuous breakthrough of big data and AI technology, some scholars began to pay attention to the integration and development of university public opinion governance and new media, big data and AI technology.

2.2 Exploration of Changes in the Public Opinion Ecosystem

In the micro-age under the Internet environment, technological forces such as digitalization, networking and mobileization are developing vigorously, and changes in the methods of news collection, information dissemination, rumor spreading, public opinion fermentation and media communication have brought about tremendous changes in the public opinion ecosystem. According to the theory of information ecology, the ecology of online public opinion refers to the complex ecological environment that influences the generation, development and change of online public opinion, and is a dynamic space formed by the interaction and influence of various online public opinions and their elements. It is a dynamic space containing all kinds of online public opinion and its elements interacting and influencing each other (Li, Lan, Zhang, & Xia, 2017). The four main elements of the ecosystem factors of university online public opinion are subject, object, carrier and environment. This paper analyzes the change of public opinion ecosystem from the perspective of public opinion ecosystem factors. (1) Subjects change, and public opinion subjects tend to be younger. Since 2018, the

“post-00s” have entered university campuses on a large scale, and the “post-90s” and “post-00s” have become the main body of the current domestic university students, and this new force lacks social Experience, experience is still shallow, active thinking, creativity, worldview and values have been initially formed, and have a strong sense of social responsibility. They have a strong curiosity and enthusiasm for expressing themselves on real issues, with strong emotional colors in online speech and little rational thinking. They lack a certain degree of rational thinking in the face of inflammatory comments on the Internet. As “Internet aborigines”, they are mostly concerned with leisure and social life, with a high degree of participation and limited theoretical depth. (2) Object change. As the ecological object of public opinion, information on Internet public opinion is the language, words and symbols exchanged and transmitted among college students in the virtual society of the Internet. The hotspots of concern to college students are national, family and world affairs. There are gossip and tabloid news, as well as the ecology of the earth and cutting-edge technology. The content is fragmented, ranging from text and pictures to video and audio. Spam, harmful information, and misinformation are all over the place. (3) Change of carriers. The carrier is the data platform for expressing opinions. The development of self-media has provided a powerful independent platform for individuals to express their opinions, which gives them more space and autonomy to set their own issues. The platform for university students to express their opinions online has migrated from the traditional offline + online mode to online + mobile, and QQ group, WeChat, Zhihu, Weibo, Shakespeare, live broadcast and other new platforms are the popular expression media among university students. (4) Environmental change. The ecological environment of public opinion mainly includes cyberspace, supporting technologies, application tools, communication platforms, institutions and regulations, network ethics, network basic environment and so on (Li, Lan, Zhang, & Xia, 2017). In the era of Web 2.0, the ecological environment of public opinion faces problems such as loss of value, lack of institutions, alienation of information technology, imbalance of discourse power in the online public opinion arena, asymmetric information content, poor online and offline communication and so on.

3. The Need to Improve the Ability of Internet Public Opinion Management in Universities in the New Era

Under the change of public opinion ecology, the evolution of online public opinion in universities shows a multi-level fission pattern. As the focal point and heat source of social public opinion, university public opinion represents the advanced power of social network public opinion, and as the handling of public opinion is related to the harmony and stability of universities and the process of democratic governance, universities have the responsibility and obligation to adapt to the changing trend of public opinion ecology, think about the way to optimize public opinion management and lead social public opinion to develop in a positive, rational and objective direction.

The orderly management of public opinion on the Internet in universities is a necessary condition for

the stability of universities. Various internal contradictions within universities can be eased and resolved, and the teaching, research, study and life of universities can maintain a benign operation, all of which are attributable to the widely recognized code of conduct of universities. General Secretary Xi Jinping emphasized in the 19th Party Congress report that “firmly grasping the leadership of ideological work”, Public opinion is an important way to express consciousness, and as an important position for ideological struggle, the construction of a positive and healthy public opinion environment plays a pivotal role in the stability and healthy and harmonious development of colleges and universities. Reasonable guidance and timely response to Internet public opinion, real-time monitoring of campus public opinion, analysis and judgment of the ideological trends of college students, prior prevention of potential campus Internet public opinion, guidance of campus contradictions and scientific disposal, make public opinion develop in a direction conducive to building a harmonious campus and maintaining campus stability.

Guide positive Internet public opinion and master the right to speak in ideological and political education. University network public opinion is a barometer of students' ideological trends, and theme websites, Shakespeare, QQ, WeChat, Weibo, B-station, etc. have become the main place for university students to communicate with each other, obtain information and express their feelings, and will inevitably become the new hand and platform for ideological and political education of university students. The traditional ideological and political educators in the network of public opinion guidance more indoctrination, didactic, lack of equal dialogue, while tough or cold treatment also damaged the right to express the demands of college students, weakening the influence of ideological and political education. Universities should accurately extract educational elements from online public opinion, be good at tapping the educational functions of emerging online platforms, stimulate the linkage effect of family, school and society in the open network, and provide information sources and realistic bases for ideological and political education in universities.

Online political questioning responds to students' concerns in a timely manner, forcing universities to innovate democratic governance models. In the management of Internet public opinion in universities in the new era, it is necessary to adhere to the “student-oriented” principle and strengthen information disclosure. For colleges and universities, it is necessary to change public opinion management from traditional “checking”, “sealing” and “blocking” to “checking” and “blocking”. We will “ease” and “solve” the problems, open channels for the expression of students' interests and demands, establish communication and feedback mechanisms, and implement students' legitimate needs and rights into policy formulation and management measures. The university administrators should interact with the students in various network platforms in a way that is pleasing to them, and realize effective dialogue between the administrators and the administrated through the form of consultation and democracy. University administrators should insist on active, timely, comprehensive and authoritative information disclosure, and take the initiative to release authoritative information in time to prompt students to have preconceived consciousness, and authoritative information as information reference to guide students to

make rational judgment. They should keep the information comprehensive and reliable, establish equal relationship of trust with students, form a positive public opinion guide, and avoid misleading students with one-sided information and wrong information.

4. Optimization Strategy of the Mechanism for Managing Internet Public Opinion in Universities

4.1 Building a Systematic and Comprehensive Online Public Opinion Management System and Optimizing the Ecological Environment of University Public Opinion

Universities should actively build a systematic mechanism for managing Internet public opinion, promote the construction of the legal system, improve the construction of basic projects and the construction of public opinion information management mechanisms in the university Internet public opinion management system, and optimize the ecological environment of campus public opinion from the top-level design so as to achieve comprehensive and efficient supervision.

4.1.1 Actively Promote the Construction of Legal System for Online Public Opinion Management System in Universities

Legal construction of university network public opinion management system is the basis for strengthening the supervision of university network public opinion. Rigorous and perfect laws and regulations are the guarantee for online public opinion management and the scientific basis for regulating and managing online public opinion. Relevant government departments can actively issue relevant laws and regulations, continuously enrich and develop relevant legal research in the practice of network public opinion management, establish a sound legal mechanism, provide a comprehensive legal basis for the management of network public opinion in universities, and crack down on the creation of false public opinion and rumor-spreading behavior. At the same time, each university should also introduce and promulgate a series of codes of conduct based on its own situation, and implement them into the daily network behavior of teachers and students. Strict training and standardized management of network public opinion management personnel, implementation of accountability, standardized, detailed and specific management of network public opinion, not only to escort the management of universities themselves, but also to make the management of university network public opinion in the framework of the legal system and orderly development.

4.1.2 Actively Promote the Construction of Basic Projects of the Network Public Opinion Management System in Universities

The basic project of public opinion management includes work leading mechanism, management personnel team and public opinion management technology. Perfect basic engineering of public opinion management is the foundation for the healthy operation of the network public opinion management system in universities.

In the era of information and mobile Internet, the youthfulness of the subjects of public opinion, the diversification of objects and the functionalization of carriers require the leading mechanism of public opinion management and the team of management talents to follow the development of the times and

resonate with the development of network information technology. The network public opinion management in the new era integrates informatization, technology, theorization, diversification, sensitivity and comprehensiveness, requiring public opinion managers and decision makers to have higher media literacy. Universities need to set up a professional online public opinion management team and actively build a well-defined and well-ordered leadership team and management team. Professional ideological and political education teachers, student work cadres and student cadres and “opinion leaders” are groups at the forefront of ideological and public opinion, and they should be trained to become positive energy pushers and core subjects. The technical construction of public opinion management must also be closely related to team construction, and universities need to take information technology as support and provide professional training to managers in accordance with the realistic features of “technicalization” and “informatization” of public opinion on the Internet, so as to master relevant techniques of public opinion management. Improve the technology of using new media and new platforms, conduct unified training and study in monitoring and judging public opinion, keep abreast of the information characteristics of public opinion on the Internet to constantly update professional technology, and conduct professional technology examination on a regular basis in order to build a technically proficient management team.

4.1.3 Actively Promote the Construction of Public Opinion Information Management Mechanism of the University Network Public Opinion Management System

The construction of public opinion information management mechanism of university network public opinion management system should follow the mode of grid management, analyze and judge public opinion information comprehensively and systematically, collect and feed back public opinion information timely and rapidly, closely monitor and supervise public opinion information, quickly and decisively react to public opinion information in emergency and positively check and guide public opinion information.

As it is an overall and coherent process for public opinion information to go from existence to detonation and subsequent fermentation, a public opinion information management mechanism must be established on the basis of public opinion fermentation, and a series of perfect public opinion guidance mechanisms must be established from the analysis and judgment of information to its collection and feedback, as well as subsequent supervision and management and stress response. In terms of information analysis and judgment, it is necessary to establish the sensitivity to public opinion information and realize accurate analysis and judgment; in terms of information collection and feedback, it is necessary to ensure the accuracy and comprehensiveness of the monitoring system, monitor the sensitive information of public opinion on the network in full and in real time, monitor and collect the sensitive information in a wide range and at multiple levels, and provide timely feedback of the sensitive information to save intermediate time and leave sufficient time for emergency response; in terms of information supervision and management and emergency response In terms of mechanism, corresponding emergency procedures must be set up in advance according to different types of public

opinion cases, and emergency treatment must be carried out in an orderly manner according to the procedures after the outbreak of public opinion, so as to achieve rapid and positive response and minimize the influence of public opinion; in terms of guidance and management of public opinion information, universities need to expand the influence and credibility of their platforms to guide the direction of public opinion in a timely manner and enhance the public's trust in them so as to minimize the impact of public opinion; in terms of guidance and management of public opinion information, universities need to expand the influence and credibility of their platforms to guide the direction of public opinion in a timely manner and enhance the public's trust in them. Establish a comprehensive public opinion management system.

4.2 Adopting a Scientific Approach to Guiding Public Opinion on the Internet to Achieve Efficient Regulation

While building a comprehensive, multi-level, multi-directional and multi-angle public opinion monitoring system, universities must also update their public opinion guidance methods and adopt a scientific approach to managing online public opinion, so as to achieve accurate public opinion monitoring and scientific public opinion guidance, and thus implement efficient supervision.

4.2.1 Full Implementation of Precision in Monitoring Public Opinion

The university public opinion response department should establish a perfect online public opinion monitoring and early warning mechanism, increase investment, set up a special online public opinion monitoring center, purchase an automated public opinion monitoring system, and set up a professional team to monitor public opinion. Real-time testing of sensitive words set up and tracking of social events of high concern should be carried out. It regularly gauges the social dynamics of students and provides scientific judgment on the direction of public opinion monitoring and students' state of mind. To improve the accuracy of public opinion monitoring requires maintaining a high degree of sensitivity. Based on the help of computer technology and manual analysis, it evaluates and identifies the online public opinion of specific events and groups and provides timely information feedback. Thresholds for public opinion alerts are set, and once the thresholds are reached, the computer system will automatically alert public opinion.

4.2.2 Comprehensive Guidance on the Scientific Setting of Issues

During the development of university online public opinion events, online media and student netizens tend to selectively filter relevant information and pay tendential attention to specific aspects of the events based on their own interests, or dig deeper into the hidden facts of the events based on their own perceptions. Combining imagination and personal logical understanding to form perceptions of hot events. In recent years, a small number of self-media have made arbitrary, one-sided and even distorted reports on the details of sudden public opinion events on the Internet in order to gain attention and earn traffic, misleading the public into a correct understanding of Internet events. University public opinion departments can set agendas at different stages of public opinion development to guide students to look at online public opinion events rationally, objectively and positively. Issues can be discussed and public

opinions can be guided in a systematic way according to the development of public opinion. The influence and appeal of online opinion leaders can be used to guide students to think rationally, strengthen mainstream public opinion and avoid a “spiral of silence”. Whether the public accepts the response and can think in a rational and calm direction is the yardstick to measure the effect of issue setting. The best combination of timing, technique and method is the essential element of a smart topic.

4.2.3 Comprehensively Promote the Matrix of Campus New Media Operations

The Matrix, originally meaning the womb, the control center of the Matrix, the place where life is nurtured, mathematically refers to the vertical and horizontal arrangement of two-dimensional data table, life is usually understood as the spatial dimension of the combination of “points and lines” to form a three-dimensional shape. The matrix of new media operation, as the name suggests, is the simultaneous operation and maintenance of multiple new media platforms around a central target, which is different from the traditional paper media and the official website of the new media platform clusters, mainly by pushing information dissemination to cell phones, tablets and other mobile intelligent terminals (Qin & Xiong, 2019). New media platforms on college campuses are active and interact frequently, and in the face of online public opinion, official media disclose the truth and announce solutions in a timely manner, and other media platforms in the matrix keep pace to achieve a multi-format, three-dimensional, multi-layered communication matrix to amplify positive public opinion. It will occupy a high position that can effectively control the situation of public opinion as soon as possible to achieve good prevention, control and supervision of Internet public opinion.

4.3 Establishing a Mechanism to Respond to Negative Public Opinion and Speeding up the Fading or Elimination of Public Opinion Crises

Internet public opinion is a double-edged sword for colleges and universities. The spread of negative Internet public opinion is extremely harmful, not only bringing the public opinion crisis in universities, but also more likely to induce mass incidents. It is important to improve the rapid response mechanism, release authoritative information in a timely manner, respond to social concerns in a targeted manner, seize the initiative and ensure the first set of tune. The first is to ensure the speed and precision of response. The guideline for emergency news release is from the traditional media era “golden 24-hour rule” to the microblogging era “golden 4-hour rule”, and then to the WeChat era “golden 1-hour rule”. The first thing to do is to take the initiative”. When negative public opinion occurs, quickly organize institutions to conduct public opinion research, formulate a unified voice, pre-empt and win the initiative. Second, the attitude is sincere and good image management. The details of the response to the negative public opinion reflect the attitude of the main respondent, who should always maintain an attitude of respecting the facts and restoring the truth, as well as paying attention to non-verbal communication skills, such as dress, grooming, sitting and standing, speed and tone of voice, and pattern background, which may become factors that change the trend of public opinion. Third, the content of the response should focus on the combination of reasoning and law. The response should be based on facts and the law, with a humanistic concern, and avoid falsehoods, catchphrases and

thunderbolts in the response. Fourthly, a multi-pronged approach is needed to form a synergy of response. There are three common ways to respond. The media platform on campus will first make a statement, and the response matrix will be formed through reprinting on WeChat and Weibo; the traditional media or online platform will interview and report on the main respondent and then widely spread on the network or traditional media; and the official media will make an authoritative announcement. Universities should cleverly apply response channels according to the development trend of public opinion crisis to improve the response effect.

4.4 Emphasizing in-depth Media Literacy Education for Students and Strengthening the Ideological Guidance of Public Opinion Makers

College students are important subjects in the ecological environment of public opinion, and colleges and universities should respect the subjectivity of students in the educational activities of moral education, actively cultivate students' creativity, dynamism, dominance and other subjective consciousness, and forge positive, healthy and positive energy of online expression. The discourse expression of university students on the Internet platform is the external manifestation of their ideological and political quality and personal qualities, thus in the process of managing the main body of public opinion dissemination in universities, the elements of ideological and political education should be injected while improving students' media literacy. The socialist core values of college students should be firmly established through ideological guidance to create a clean and upright cyberspace.

Media literacy is a basic ability that individuals should have in the new media environment in the Internet era, including the ability to acquire media information, judge information independently, create media information and disseminate media information (Tao, 2017). Universities can adopt the teaching mode of classroom learning and supplemented by online propaganda, and actively offer media literacy courses and related lectures to enhance students' knowledge of media literacy, give a detailed introduction of media information dissemination channels, laws of dissemination, operation of media organizations, and the position of students in media information dissemination.

Universities need to actively integrate media literacy education with other related disciplines, and run media literacy learning awareness through the whole process and all-round in higher education, so that the improvement of media literacy becomes the due meaning of the improvement of personal comprehensive literacy of university students. The universities need to actively integrate media literacy education with other related disciplines, and to spread the awareness of media literacy throughout the whole process and all-round of higher education, so that the upgrading of media literacy can become a proper and comprehensive improvement of personal qualities. Quality-oriented thought guidance, while taking students' interests as the guide, ensure that media quality education suits the reality of students' public opinion participation, strengthen the management of online public opinion from the main body, ensure that students have rational critical thinking ability in public opinion participation and can actively guide the objectivity of online public opinion development, so as to cultivate students' value

identity.

4.5 Emphasizing the Construction of Internal and External Communication Platforms and the Smooth Expression of Public Opinion

Universities should pay attention to the communication and management of public opinion on emergencies, which should be extended to the active construction of the daily information exchange platform, to maintain healthy communication within the university, to achieve appropriate openness of information, to express public opinion as smoothly as possible, to manage public opinion on the Internet, to enhance the cohesion of their own public opinion and to prevent the accidental fermentation of undesirable Internet public opinion.

On the one hand, inwardly, colleges and universities should build a multifaceted communication platform, realize the synchronization and smooth flow of multiple demand channels, provide students with suitable channels of expression, broaden the channels for students to express their opinions or suggestions, pay close attention to the dynamics of students' online public opinion, actively resolve students' reasonable demands, coordinate internal contradictions, humbly accept students' views, effectively prevent the occurrence of public opinion crises, and prevent the occurrence of public opinion crises through self-censorship. Media platforms establish a stable and orderly online public opinion environment on their own.

On the other hand, universities should improve the channels and platforms for connecting public opinion information on the Internet with the outside world, make full use of the convenience of the new media environment, build university WeChat public number and micro-blog accounts, actively enhance the influence of their own Internet platforms, strengthen the interaction and content construction of university Internet platforms, so as to develop a resource guarantee system for dealing with emergencies, and be able to report the progress of events in a timely manner, so that they can be able to be the first to respond to emergencies. In order to avoid the phenomenon of "information vacuum" and to effectively guide public opinion information, responses are issued through authoritative channels in a timely manner.

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