

Research on the Characteristics, Problems and Governance Strategies of Social Media Communication

ShuaiDu , JingZhang

Liaoning Institute of Science and Technology, Benxi, Liaoning, China

Abstract: This paper conducts an in-depth analysis of the communication characteristics of social media, pointing out that social media exhibits the features of decentralization, lightweight content, and algorithm-social synergy-driven mechanism in terms of communication subjects, content, and mechanisms. Theoretically, it adapts to and expands classic communication theories such as the Gatekeeper Theory and the Agenda-Setting Theory. The study reveals that social media information communication faces problems like false information and information overload, and then puts forward targeted strategies from aspects such as the optimization of platform technology and management, and the improvement of users' media literacy. The aim is to provide theoretical and practical references for building a healthy social media communication ecology and promoting social media to play a more positive role in information dissemination.

Keywords: Social Media; Information Communication; Communication Theories; Governance Strategies

1. Introduction

Against the backdrop of accelerated global digitalization, social media, as a key digital medium, has seen continuous growth in user coverage and social penetration. According to the Global Internet Development Report in the first quarter of 2024 and the concurrent data from CNNIC (China Internet Network Information Center), the number of global social media users has exceeded 4.9 billion, accounting for 61% of the world's total population, with more than half of the global population integrated into digital social networks. In China, the number of social media users has reached 1.08 billion, with a population penetration rate of 76%, significantly higher than the global average,

highlighting China's leading position in this field.

Most of the current classic communication theories were developed in the era dominated by traditional media, based on the assumptions of centralized communicators, one-way information flow, and passive audience reception. However, the decentralized, highly interactive, and algorithm-driven characteristics of social media are fundamentally different from the communication logic of traditional media. This leads to insufficient adaptability of classic theories when explaining social media communication phenomena. For example, in the Gatekeeper Theory, the role of gatekeepers has shifted to algorithms and platforms; in the Agenda-Setting Theory, the power of agenda-setting has been partially transferred to users and algorithms. Based on social media practice, this study examines and revises classic theories, supplements their application boundaries and adaptation conditions in social media scenarios, which can provide empirical references for the iteration of communication theories in the digital age and lay a basic analytical framework for subsequent research.

2. Current Situation and Characteristics of Social Media Information Communication

2.1 Communication Subjects: From Centralization to Decentralization

In the communication pattern dominated by traditional media, information dissemination was characterized by centralization. Professional media institutions such as newspapers and television stations monopolized the right to produce and distribute information by virtue of exclusive channels, qualifications, and resources. The public were only passive recipients, forming a one-way structure dominated by institutions and with passive public participation. The professionalism and authority of institutions

were the core guarantees of information credibility.

Entering the era of social media, communication subjects have shifted from centralized monopoly to decentralized diffusion, showing the characteristics of diversification, dispersion, and universal participation. On the one hand, official and professional subjects such as governments, enterprises and public institutions, and traditional media release information through official accounts, using social media as a channel for information disclosure and communication. On the other hand, ordinary users can register accounts and publish content without professional qualifications, participate in secondary communication through functions such as reposting and commenting, and even attract attention with original content, forming a pattern where everyone can communicate. Driven by these two types of subjects, the communication subjects of social media present a non-centralized, multi-node network distribution, reshaping the power structure of traditional information communication.

2.2 Communication Content: From Seriousness to Lightweight

The communication content of traditional media is centered on seriousness and professionalism. Whether it is in-depth reports in newspapers, TV news programs, or academic articles in journals, they all focus on the integrity, logic, and professionalism of the content, often presented in the form of long texts and structured formats. The production and dissemination of such content revolve around the depth and authority of information, adapting to linear reading/watching scenarios.

In contrast, to adapt to fragmented reading scenarios such as users' commuting and leisure time, the communication content of social media shows a significant lightweight feature. In terms of form, short videos of 15-60 seconds account for more than 60%, which quickly convey information through short duration and strong visual impact. For images and texts, most adopt "clickbait" titles, emojis, or short paragraphs to attract attention and lower the threshold for understanding. In terms of content positioning, creation tends to be practical, emotional, and entertaining. This lightweight feature is the key foundation for the rapid spread of social media information.

2.3 Communication Mechanism: Dual-Driven by Algorithm and Social Fission

The information communication mechanism of social media has broken through the one-way push and unified distribution mode of traditional media, forming a core mechanism of dual synergy between algorithm-driven personalized distribution and social fission-based viral diffusion. These two mechanisms empower each other to promote the efficient dissemination of information.

On the one hand, algorithm-driven distribution serves as a precise distribution engine for information communication. Platforms construct refined user portraits through multi-dimensional information such as user registration information, usage behavior data, and social relationship data, clarifying users' interest preferences and information needs. Then, with the help of recommendation algorithms, they screen and match massive amounts of content, and accurately push information that fits the user portraits to personal information streams, realizing personalized content distribution tailored to individual users. This not only improves the efficiency for users to obtain interested information but also ensures that high-quality content reaches potential target audiences, laying the foundation for further information dissemination.

On the other hand, social fission acts as a viral diffusion engine for information communication. Relying on various social relationship scenarios, when users encounter interested information, they can repost and share it to their own social networks, making the information move from the individual's field of vision to the field of vision of their friend groups. If the friends who receive the information repost it again, the information will be transmitted to their social networks, forming a chain diffusion effect. This model takes users' social relationships as a link and enhances the acceptance and credibility of information by virtue of the social attribute of trust among acquaintances. It can often realize the rapid and large-scale spread of information, and some highly topical content can even break through circles and become a nationwide hot topic in a short time.

The precise distribution driven by algorithms provides a prerequisite for social fission to

reach potential communicators with high-quality content, while the viral diffusion of social fission provides feedback on user interaction data for algorithm recommendations. The two form a closed loop and jointly constitute the core driving force of social media information communication.

3. Problems Existing in Social Media Information Communication

3.1 Low Cost and Great Harm of False Information Dissemination

The core feature of low-threshold publishing on social media provides convenience for the breeding and spread of false information, forming a complete negative chain of production, dissemination, and impact. In the publishing link, social media has relatively low qualification review thresholds for user registration and content release. Ordinary users can independently create and publish text, images, videos, and other content without professional information verification. The production and release of false information have almost no technical barriers or cost constraints, so various types of false information—especially those in the fields of health and social hot topics—can quickly enter the communication field.

According to the Network Rumor Governance Report in the first quarter of 2024 released by China Internet Joint Rumor Refutation Platform, 85% of the health-related rumors handled in this quarter were first published on social media platforms. Most of such false information adopts emotional titles and pseudo-scientific expressions, which accurately cater to the anxiety of ordinary users about health risks and their limitations in information discrimination, significantly increasing users' willingness to click and repost, and accelerating the spread of false information. For example, a rumor about a certain fruit lowering blood sugar, through false propaganda of "natural blood sugar reduction" and "no side effects", misled more than 500,000 middle-aged and elderly users. Some users, due to blind trust, stopped using formal blood sugar-lowering drugs and instead consumed a large amount of this fruit, eventually leading to blood sugar imbalance and health risks. This highlights the characteristics of social media false

information, such as fast spread speed, accurate targeting of affected groups, and serious harmful consequences.

3.2 Information Overload Leading to Choice Difficulty

With the universalization of social media content production and the continuous recommendation of platform algorithms, the total amount of information faced by users has grown exponentially, resulting in information overload, which further triggers two problems: choice difficulty and information fatigue.

From the perspective of information supply, relying on massive user creation and non-stop algorithm recommendations, a single user is exposed to more than 300 pieces of information covering multiple fields every day. However, third-party data shows that more than 70% of this information is duplicate content, low-value content, or advertisements, and the proportion of effective information is extremely low. From the perspective of user reception, information overload makes users fall into choice difficulty. They need to spend a lot of time screening but still find it difficult to quickly locate effective information, leading to a decline in acquisition efficiency. At the same time, long-term high-intensity information reception can cause users to experience information fatigue, manifested as decreased attention, weakened willingness to screen, and even resistance due to exposure to low-value information. Eventually, a supply-demand imbalance is formed where platforms have excessive information supply while users have insufficient effective acquisition, deviating from the core functional positioning of social media as an efficient information transmission tool.

4. Governance Strategies for Social Media Information Communication

4.1 Platforms: Strengthening Dual Responsibilities of Technology and Management

As the core carrier of social media information communication, platforms need to assume the main responsibilities of "technical prevention and control" and "management supervision". Through technological optimization and system improvement, they should build a systematic information governance system to

reduce the risk of bad information dissemination from the source.

4.1.1 Upgrading Algorithms to Optimize Information Recommendation

Platforms need to break through the algorithm logic that prioritizes traffic and shift to a technical orientation that values both quality and traffic. By upgrading algorithm models, they can achieve precise regulation of information dissemination. On the one hand, increase the weight of authoritative information: embed the evaluation dimension of information source credibility into the recommendation algorithm, and assign higher recommendation priority to content released by government official accounts, mainstream media accounts, certified expert accounts, etc. This ensures that high-quality information such as policy interpretations, scientific popularization, and authoritative news can first enter users' information streams, forming a communication mechanism where authoritative information reaches users first. On the other hand, set false information identification labels: rely on natural language processing technology, image recognition technology, and big data analysis models to conduct automated screening of content. Especially for high-frequency false information types such as health claims without authoritative sources and risk warnings lacking empirical basis, automatically mark prompt labels such as "information source to be verified" and "please refer with caution". Through technical means, it can warn users of information risks and reduce the misleading nature of false information.

4.1.2 Enhancing Content Quality Control with Hierarchical Review

Platforms need to establish a hierarchical and classified review mechanism, implementing differentiated review strategies for content with different communication popularity and risk levels to improve management efficiency and control accuracy. For ordinary daily content, basic review can be carried out relying on technical screening. For hot topic content (e.g., content on the hot search list or with a topic discussion volume exceeding 100,000) and high-circulation content (e.g., content with reposts exceeding 50,000 or likes exceeding 200,000), a dual review process of technical screening plus manual secondary review should be initiated. First, algorithms identify sensitive information and false statements in

the content, and then professional review teams conduct manual review on the authenticity, legality, and orientation of the content. Only after confirming that high-impact content has no obvious risks can it be allowed to continue spreading. At the same time, platforms should establish a review responsibility traceability mechanism, clarify the job responsibilities of reviewers and the standards for accountability for mistakes, to prevent perfunctory reviews and reduce the spread probability of false information and bad information from the management level.

4.2 Users: Improving Media Literacy and Awareness of Rational Participation

4.2.1 Popularizing Information Discrimination Ability through Multiple Channels

It is necessary to build a media literacy education system with the collaboration of the government, platforms, schools, and society. Through multi-scenario and multi-form educational activities, users' information discrimination ability can be improved. In the educational scenario, integrate media literacy education into the information technology courses of primary and secondary schools and the general education courses of colleges and universities, systematically explaining practical knowledge such as information source verification methods, scientific basis judgment standards, and typical characteristics of false information. In the platform scenario, regularly push fragmented information discrimination skills through forms such as homepage pop-ups, public service advertisements, and short video columns, integrating education into users' daily usage scenarios to achieve subtle improvement of literacy. In the social scenario, rely on activities such as community promotion and popular science lectures to carry out special education for groups vulnerable to false information (such as the middle-aged and elderly, and teenagers), accurately making up for the media literacy shortcomings of different groups.

4.2.2 Promoting Rational Participation through Positive Advocacy

It is necessary to standardize users' social media usage behavior through platform guidance and social advocacy, creating a communication atmosphere of rationality, civilization, and responsibility. On the one hand, advocate rational interaction: platforms

can clarify behavioral guidelines such as prohibiting cyberbullying and rejecting malicious comments through user agreements and community conventions, and take disciplinary measures such as traffic restriction, account suspension, and account ban against bad behaviors such as personal attacks, rumor-mongering, and inciting confrontation. At the same time, through mechanisms such as pinning high-quality comments and rewarding rational views, encourage users to publish objective and rational opinions, guiding the interaction atmosphere towards a positive and healthy direction. On the other hand, encourage participation in governance: platforms need to optimize the false information reporting channel, simplify the reporting process (e.g., setting up a one-click reporting function with classified filling options), and establish a reporting feedback mechanism to timely inform reporters of the handling results. At the same time, platforms can launch user participation mechanisms such as rumor-refutation volunteers and information verifiers, inviting users with professional knowledge to participate in the identification of false information, forming a collaborative governance pattern led by platforms and participated by users, and making everyone's participation in governance a consensus and conscious behavior of social media users.

5. Conclusions and Prospects

Based on the actual context of social media development in 2024 and using classic communication theories as the analytical framework, this study systematically explores the current situation, characteristics, theoretical adaptability, and practical problems of social media information communication through literature research, case analysis, and logical deduction. The core conclusions are as follows: First, social media has built a completely different communication model from traditional media, presenting a three-dimensional reconstruction of decentralized subjects, lightweight content, and algorithm-based mechanisms. The communication subjects consist of official subjects and ordinary users, forming multiple nodes; the content is mainly in lightweight forms such as short videos, and its efficiency is improved through practical, emotional, and entertaining adaptation; the communication mechanism

relies on the dual synergy of algorithm-driven personalized distribution and social fission-based viral diffusion, reshaping the information communication system. Second, while improving communication efficiency and expanding the channels for public expression, social media faces challenges such as the proliferation of false information and information overload. Governance needs to rely on a tripartite collaborative framework of platforms, users, and supervision authorities. Platforms assume the responsibilities of technological optimization and management standardization; users improve their media literacy and awareness of rational participation; supervision authorities improve laws, regulations, and industry standards. Third, classic communication theories need to be adjusted adaptively in social media scenarios. The traditional Gatekeeper Theory has evolved into a multi-dimensional gatekeeping system, and the secondary agenda-setting effect in the Agenda-Setting Theory has been strengthened, providing practical materials for the improvement of the communication theory system in the digital age.

With the continuous iteration of digital technology, social media information communication will face new opportunities and challenges. Future research can explore the innovation of communication forms brought about by technological changes: Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) technology lowers the threshold of content production but may lead to the proliferation of deepfake content; the metaverse builds an immersive communication scenario relying on virtual reality technology, breaking the flat interaction mode but may exacerbate information cocoons and public opinion polarization, putting forward higher requirements for information governance and public opinion guidance.

Based on this, future research can focus on two key areas: First, research on the communication governance mechanism of AI-generated content, analyzing its communication laws and risk characteristics, exploring traceability authentication, review mechanisms, and institutional norms, and providing systematic solutions. Second, research on the public opinion guidance mechanism of metaverse social interaction, combining the communication characteristics of the metaverse, exploring the laws of public

opinion generation and diffusion in virtual social scenarios, and designing an adaptive public opinion monitoring index system and guidance strategies. Future research needs to keep up with the frontier of technology, explore new problems and new laws from a forward-looking perspective, provide targeted theoretical support and practical guidance for the optimization of the social media communication ecology, and promote it to better serve the public interest and the public's information needs.

Acknowledgments

This paper is supported by 2026 College Student Innovation and Entrepreneurship Project of Liaoning Institute of Science and Technology - "Time and Space Game (Script Killing + Cross-border Integration)", Project No. 202611430067.

References

- [1] Chang Sai. Characteristics, Problems and Prospects of Algorithm Communication on Social Media Platforms [J]. All-Media Exploration, 2024(10): 123-125.
- [2] Yan Yuchen. Abuse of Private Power on Social Platforms and Its Governance [J]. Journal of Public Management and Policy, 2023, 12(4): 142-153.
- [3] Xu Xiaodong, Kuang Yan. The Formation and Risk Governance of Algorithmic Power [J]. Journal of Zhengzhou University (Philosophy and Social Sciences Edition), 2022, 55(3): 18-24.
- [4] Zhou Wen, Han Wenlong. Re-examining the Development of Platform Economy: New Challenges of Monopoly and Digital Tax [J]. Social Sciences in China, 2021(3): 103-118.
- [5] Wang Jing. From Human Bias to Algorithmic Bias: Can Bias Be Eliminated [J]. Exploration and Free Views, 2021(3): 32-34.
- [6] Zuo Yilu. Fake News: What Is It? Why Does It Exist? How to Deal with It? [J]. Peking University Law Journal, 2021, 33(2): 544-559.