

# The Impact of Communication Mode of Public Policy Towards the Public Cognition

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**Abstract.** In the current period, with the popularization of the Internet, more and more official media and individual media appear, and their reports and interpretations of policies have different impacts on people. This paper analyses three existing communication modes' (the traditional communication mode, the internet communication mode as well as the combination of traditional and internet communication) characteristics to find out their positive and negative effects on public policy. This paper found out that these communication modes can help people approach the policy easily and understand certain policies deeply. But these communication modes can lead to some negative effects on public policy, such as the nondeterminacy of a message spread, the loss of part of people's opinion who does not use the internet, some official website updates slowly compared with new media, and the lack of supervision of media. This paper puts forward some feasible suggestions for the government and media platforms.

**Keywords:** communication mode; public policy; public cognition.

## 1. Introduction

With the process of the internet, technology and media convergence, traditional media is using the internet to expand influence and there is a variety of personal or organizational media emerged, so people have more channels to know public policy. It is extremely expanding the channels of people's access to information, but the coverage of the event will be gradually comprehensive along with the media report [1]. During this process, each channel will choose the part of the message based on its position and audience. Sometimes it will lead to misunderstanding and limitation. The audience's contact with media is limited, which makes it worse. By using the document analysis and observation, the author wants to know how this media or internet media platform influences the public's judgment towards public policy, and the communication mode of this media used. It will be meaningful for government to use the multi-channel of media to spread public policy and help the public to be more understanding of it. As the part of media platform, it will be meaningful to spread public policy more effectively. To the audience, knowing the difference between media platforms about public policy punishment and getting accurate information will be a great thing.

## 2. Three Communication Modes

### 2.1 Traditional Communication Mode

Before the appearance of radio and television, the newspaper was the most convenient way for people to get policy information. After the appearance of the radio, it increased the way for people to get information. Until the appearance of television, there were abundant forms of releasing information. TV, newspaper and broadcast are the three traditional communications modes, and it has the largest quantity of audiences for government to spread public policy [2]. But in this type of mode, there is a typical feature that people will only receive the message. It is difficult for people to respond and propose suggestions to the government and other organizations. Also, there are only several official accounts that have access to spread. Central and local media are one of the most authoritative channels to spread public policy, especially those news channels that take most of the responsibility for message spread.

## 2.2 Internet Communication Mode

The government issued the policy notice through its own website, so it is the most authoritative channel to publish public policy. Meanwhile, there are other media platforms like Weibo, WeChat, and even TikTok on the internet. Some official media use their official accounts on WeChat to spread the message, and some individuals do the same thing on their own accounts. However, the problem is that individual media, unlike professional media organizations, do not have professional ways of interviewing, writing, photographing, and processing information. Nevertheless, as opinion leaders, their suggestions play an important role in influencing the public.

## 2.3 Traditional and Internet Communication Modes

Instead of the opposite position, the two types of communication are the tendency of convergence, the combination of TV media and network media. Most TV and broadcast media use the internet to form their own news media as a kind of supplement. There is a channel called CCTV News. They use TikTok to form a channel called The Host Talk about Simulcasting and make a comment. As soon as they started, there are tons of fans who liked and subscribed, and they also use other media platforms to expand their influence. In that kind of mode, the media use different media platforms and target the audience characteristics of different platforms to improve their influence and make most of the public know the policy.

## 3. Positive Influence on Public Cognition towards Public Policy

### 3.1 Helping People Approach the Policy Easily

Years ago, people used to reach the policy through traditional communication mode TV, newspaper and broadcast. The time and way of obtaining information are fixed. For example, the time of news broadcast TV is 7 PM, and the distribution of newspapers usually requires a purchase at a newsstand. The coverage of mobile phones and the internet make it possible. It is huge progress for the people to reach the policy and expand the channel of a message spread. People can get information about the policy at any time and anywhere, and even get information about any part of the policy they are interested in. According to the TikTok account subscribers of The Host Talk about Simulcasting, there are 35.353 million subscribers followed. Ministry of Foreign Affairs' account on Weibo have got 8.016 million subscribers. There are also a large number of official accounts set up by the government and various official departments on various media platforms, which means that the public can access policy information through a wide range of channels no matter when and where people only need a device that can be connected to the Internet.

### 3.2 Helping People Understand Certain Policy Deeply

With the development of social media platforms, personal accounts surged. In the face of the huge potential audience, the major media position themselves to attract a fixed audience. In the official media, there are channels for people's livelihood policy, military policy, and foreign policy channels. In the emerging social media platforms, many individual media accounts have made the more detailed division, making analysis, judgment, and comments on policies in a certain field. They use all these methods to explain and make more people understand a certain policy. In the WeChat platform official media, official policies are interpreted. For example, Shijiazhuang published articles on the interpretation of enrollment policies. On platforms like TikTok, Weibo, WeChat, Bilibili individual bloggers also interpret the policy.

## **4. Negative Influence on Public Cognition towards Public Policy**

### **4.1 The Nondeterminacy about Message Spread**

Most nondeterminacy usually happens in personal accounts, but this does not mean that spreads false information, is because everyone was different in education experience, habits, living environment, hobbies, etc [3]. The cognitive of the account holder is limited. As an unprofessional practitioner, their policy information processing ability is limited in the face of policy information. The interception of information is not comprehensive. They will join their personal subjective judgment, and they usually choose some of the parts to spread. But a policy should be wholly presented in front of the audience, and it is should be objective without personal subjective. The truth is people will be influenced by their opinion and eventually become their cognition [1]. For example, in the case of quarantine and epidemic prevention policy during the epidemic, some individual media ignored the restrictions on the population and affected areas in the policy and only mentioned the quarantine measures, which would lead to a one-sided perception of the public receiving the information.

### **4.2 The Loss of Part of People's Opinion Who Does Not Use the Internet**

Although the process of internet and technology is huge, according to CNNIC's 49th report of China's internet statistics of development status, as of December 2021 the Internet penetration rate is 73%, and the number of netizens has reached 10.32 billion, which means there are a hundred million citizens still use the traditional communication mode to know the public policy. They can't use the internet to make a response to policy [4]. In the early real estate policies, farmers were encouraged to live in buildings. Farmers did not really need to live in buildings, which would greatly reduce the quality of production. However, some farmers did not use the Internet and could not convey their real demands through the Internet [5]. Older people have the same problem. At a young age, they seldom use smart devices and they didn't have the hobby of using the Internet. With the rise of age, they didn't have the ability to learn, so policy information via the Internet become difficult. So in some cases, only through the Internet to publish the policy can also cause the loss of this part of the feedback.

### **4.3 Some Official Website Updates Slowly Compared with New Media**

The government website is the most authoritative channel to publish the policy and has obvious advantages in disseminating information [6]. The problem is that most websites of government update slowly compare with social media updates. In that case, people tend to use other channels to find the messages. It is increasing the uncertainty of the message, eventually, leading to misunderstanding of policy. Take the portal website of the Shijiazhuang Municipal People's Government as an example, the same policy notice "Notice on Adjusting Risk Areas for COVID-19" was published on WeChat at 20:41 on November 3, and on the portal at 8:55 on November 4. But the time in question in the announcement was 19:00 on November 3.

### **4.4 The Lack of Supervision of Media**

In traditional communication mode, the government and its own departments take responsibility for the messages, with the proliferation of other media. It is hard to supervise the media for original regulators. In that case, the accuracy of the information can only be guaranteed by the reporter, editor, or accounts owners. The flow can bring economic benefits. Economic benefits drive these people to get more flow and get the latest information, but the news authenticity and timeliness are equally important. The process of verifying the authenticity can lead to sacrificing part of timeliness. John Sudworth, a BBC correspondent in Beijing, compiled a story titled "Inside China's Detention Camps: A Look at models' Selfies", which based on videos of drug traffickers and several text messages, concluded that "the Chinese government is holding a large number of Uighurs in detention camps and torturing them". The client, Malden Abba, was arrested and sentenced to prison for drug trafficking. It is a normal procedure according to Chinese laws to report back to his place of origin

after his release. John Sudworth, however, interpreted it as a malicious interpretation that Abba was "forcibly sent to a detention camp", with additional "illegal goods" such as "separation of children and children from Xinjiang", "forced sterilization of Uighur women" and "China detaining millions of Uighurs and ethnic minorities in detention camps". The whole story is full of ideological bias, using unverified "surrender notice" and text messages of Abba, and his exiled uncle, fake scholars Adrian Zenz and James A. Millward, and other anti-China elements' extreme views, and wanton criticism and smear of China's ethnic and religious policies.

## 5. The Consequences of Negative Influences

The negative effects should be considered. There are four types of negatives proposed. In the first part, the message will lead to nondeterminacy, which leads to misinformation for the audience. This will affect the audience's wrong judgment of a certain policy, and eventually lead to negative emotions and even more serious consequences. The loss of part of people's opinion who does not use the internet, the consequences could be serious. If the voice and feedback of the lowest level of the public are lost, the policy will not improve the efficiency of government governance, resulting in a waste of resources. For the public, it will not only fail to improve the index of a happy life but even aggravate the burden of life. Some official websites are slowly compared with new media. The impact will include time-sensitive policies, such as changes to COVID-19 risk zones, that may affect some people. However, it is mainly related to policies related to people's livelihood. Information asymmetry between government websites and other media platforms will lead to policy uncertainty and increase public anxiety. In the part of the lack of supervision of media, it is the most dangerous thing. Media platforms have a huge propagation speed and a wide range of audiences. Once the information is sent out, a large number of people will receive it. If it is wrong, unverified, and false information, it will lead to huge public opinion, reduce the credibility of the government, and increase the sense of distrust of the masses [7].

## 6. Suggestion

### 6.1 The Innovation of Policy Communication Content

To the government, the innovation of policy communication content should be based on humanization and the supervision of public policy communication should be done well at the same time, the authenticity and effectiveness of a policy message should be matched equally. The policy message itself has strong seriousness and authority, and the text contained in the content is the most important form of expression. However, with the progress of ages, and based on uses and gratification theory, audiences have certain preferences for the content of policies and are full of curiosity about new things. Some traditional and serious content is no longer attractive, and the communication effect is gradually reduced. To further innovate the contents and methods of public policy communication and enhance the ultimate implementation of the policy, the government should first start with the content and strive to innovate. Government departments can explain the content in detail, try to adopt civilian-friendly and civilian interpretation methods, and transform the language into the common language of the public, supplemented by vivid pictures or videos. Innovating the content of policy communication from the perspective of the audience can shorten the distance from the public. In addition, some departments will strengthen the supervision of dissemination, stop, and crack down on false policy information, review the process of information dissemination, and resolutely punish websites or platforms that maliciously convey false policies [8].

## 6.2 Combination of the Two Modes

For traditional media, it is important to combine the traditional communication mode and the internet communication mode. It is helpful to expand the channels for the people to reach the public policy. The official website is also a supplement to TV and an alternative to broadcast. However, in the process of operation, the audience characteristics of different platforms should be considered, and different targeted forms can be adopted according to the audience characteristics. For example, the strategy of The Host Talk about Simulcasting in TikTok is more in line with the characteristics of young people's access to policy information.

## 6.3 Application of New Media Technology

For the new media platform, in addition, government departments should strengthen the application of new media technology, improve the interaction between the government and the people, make full use of Weibo, official accounts, and other platforms to strengthen communication with the people, and pay attention to feedback [9]. One model cannot summarize the relationship between elements, so it is necessary to attach importance to the research of the three elements of government, media, and the public [10]. Government leaders should be fully aware that policy dissemination under the background of the Internet is mainly based on consultation and interaction. Government clients and websites should listen to the public's opinions carefully to achieve interaction and communication. Those platforms that are slow to update and close the comment section should be corrected in time to ensure the timeliness and efficiency of public policy feedback. Similarly, the government can use new media platforms to integrate resources and integrate official policy information released in different fields, which is also to avoid the problem of poor information and unequal information under multiple information channels.

## 7. Conclusion

It is sure that the process of the internet and technology has a huge impact on media and people's cognition towards policy. Official media and individual media adopt different modes of communication to report relevant information about policies through different strategies and the positive and negative exists. As for media, it is vital to transform attitudes towards traditional channels and new types of channels. The coming of the information society and the full development of the media will provide a more comprehensive communication channel and a more mature supervision mechanism for the quality improvement of public policies. In this paper, there are certain limitations. The discussion of public perception is simply divided into positive and negative. In the future, the study can increase the influence of different communication modes on public perception of public policy and increase survey samples and statistical data, to discuss more possible possibilities. According to the current research, although there are differences in the update speed between government portal websites and media platforms, there is a trend of convergence. That is, media platforms integrate the information of various government departments and promote the integration of policies. It provides ideas for future research.

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