

True feelings but False meanings: Emotional Performance and Individual Confrontation in the Dissemination of Misinformation

--A Qualitative Analysis of Nvivo Based on Rumor Propagation Behavior

Yaqi Liu

College of Liberal Arts, Journalism and Communication, Ocean University of China, Qingdao, China.

liuyaqi6616@126.com

Abstract. In the process of spreading rumors, emotion is regarded as a social resource that can be mobilized. Existing studies have described the characteristics and influence mechanism of the spread of misinformation based on the text, but this process ignores the important role of emotion in the spread of misinformation. This study uses the grounded theory research method to conduct in-depth interviews with users who have participated in emotional dissemination of misinformation on social media platforms, and explores how user emotions play a role in the dissemination of misinformation combined with the coding results. It is found that emotion sets up a unique alternative application strategy of confrontation and compliance when users deal with misinformation through three forms of driving attention, gaining recognition and achieving goals.

Keywords: Emotion, misinformation, grounded theory, confrontation/adherence.

1. Formulation of the Problem: The Interweaving of Individual Emotions and Digital Rumors

In the Book of the Later Han Dynasty, it is said, "The people made rumors when the poets kept the Southern Chu." In the chaotic times of the Southern Dynasty, political forces of all parties used individual emotions to create rumors in order to forge information chips for themselves to be in the political battlefield for a long time. In the new media environment, the accelerated flow of information makes the rumors spread rapidly, and the complexity of the communication subjects and the weakening of the control make the flow of information more and more difficult to control.[1]

In the process of rumor spreading, emotion is often used as a social resource[2], which is an important motivation for the rapid spread of rumors. Compared with rational judgment, people are more likely to mobilize emotional perceptions in the process of online participation, and may immediately join the ranks of misinformation dissemination. The relationship between emotions and misinformation is complex, and some scholars have quantified that emotional rumors are more likely to influence audiences and promote retweeting behavior than non-emotional rumors from the perspective of rumor spreaders.[3]

However, while the existing studies provide inspiration, there are also shortcomings that need to be filled. First, the research on the spread of misinformation is mainly based on quantitative methods, and the results of quantitative analysis are used to explain the characteristics and potential harm of misinformation spread on online platforms, and to confirm the role played by emotions. However, it is difficult for researchers to measure how users form emotional identification with the content and spread emotions through quantitative methods. Second, most of the existing studies focus on the fragmentary information attributes, user psychology and group motivation in the process of misinformation dissemination, but the internal driving force that ultimately leads to the dissemination behavior is closely related to individual emotions, and individual emotions of anxiety or helplessness are the most powerful and deeper spiritual support for users to join the misinformation dissemination team.

In the context of the global epidemic of COVID-19, it is useful to study the mechanism of emotion in the process of spreading misinformation on social media platforms to help the relevant departments understand the path of misinformation dissemination in public health emergencies and improve the relevant governance measures, which is of practical significance.

On the other hand, traditional misinformation transmission is usually limited to a certain group of people and a specific spatial and temporal scope, so it is the content quality of the text rather than the individual's emotional motivation that is more compelling. In contrast, misinformation in social media platforms has a different quality of communication, in which information is repeatedly written by individual emotions and given personalized meanings in the process of transmission, and individual characteristics and demands are thus manifested in the collective.

How do individual emotions drive users' attention to misinformation? In what ways do emotions mediated by technology trigger users' emotional identification with misinformation? For what purposes do users use emotions to spread misinformation? This paper will use in-depth interviews to gain insight into the specific context and behaviors related to the emotional spread of misinformation on social media platforms, and use rooting theory to code and analyze the interview data combined with my thoughts and discussions, in order to answer the above questions.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Emotion Communication in Cyberspace

Emotion is a generic term for a series of subjective cognitive experiences, which is an organized, profound, and continuously changing mental state. [4]In the era of mobile Internet, the importance of emotional dimension in news production has gradually emerged, and the application of digital platform technology and users' emotional expressions have shown a two-way interaction, and the emotional bias in emotional publics, emotional communities and algorithms has drawn extensive attention from the academic community. [5]The possibility and necessity of reshaping journalistic discourse with emotion as the core concept can be summarized through a careful analysis of three dimensions: practical emotion, public emotion and rational emotion.[6]

In our post-truth era, stories with strong emotions are more likely to be widely disseminated, as evidenced by the technological bias of social media and the group psychology of cyberspace.[7] Emotions and feelings are far more important than facts, and in the online world, people's behavior is often dictated by words rather than facts, and post-truth becomes the result of subjectivization.[8] Compared with rational judgment, people are more likely to mobilize emotional emotions for information perception during online participation, and there is a possibility that they will immediately join the ranks of misinformation dissemination, and this phenomenon becomes a social issue worthy of attention.

The drivers of emotion transmission are the focus of academic research. At the individual level, there is a phenomenon of imitation and contagion of Internet users' anger. Morality and empathy in human nature, altruism and cooperation in the natural attributes of networkers, technological anxiety and the difficulty of maintaining trust systems in networked societies are important social drivers of emotion transmission. [9]Turning to groups, it was found that the conditions that trigger strong group empathy are situations that provoke group empathy and large-scale physical presence. [10] Group emotions and the emotions of opinion leaders can also directly infect the audience's emotions, resulting in high emotions among Internet users, which can drive the spread of public opinion events and then create a public storm.[11] Focusing on the social level, controversial source events can also stimulate the creation and spread of extreme emotions.[12]

Words can also drive people's emotional behaviors and experiences, facilitating deep emotional integration and even emotional transformation. [13]For example, Fan Minh Hien's research takes WeChat posts with explicit sharing and spreading demands as the subject, and finds that appealing to morality and stimulating readers' moral emotions are the basic discourse strategies of these WeChat posts, and the texts are also characterized by direct and clear expressions[14].

Within the context of the influence of emotional communication, many scholars have focused on the relationship between emotions and social mobilization. According to Guo Xiaolan, emotions are an important resource for social integration, and negative emotions are more likely to trigger social mobilization, especially perceptual mobilization². Emotional resonance and rendering, as an important way of perceptual mobilization, can further facilitate the development of social mobilization.[15] At the same time, in order to find an outlet for the negative emotions accumulated in real life, netizens will use subjective discourse rendering to guide public opinion in a way of "playing up the issue", leading to populist stereotypes.[16]

Some studies have also found that emotional texts will negatively affect the audience's cognition of facts, prevent readers from thinking deeply about the facts themselves, make cognition stay on the surface of emotions,[17] easily cause individual anxiety, distrust and insecurity, and even trigger disharmony and instability at the social level.[18]

2.2 Platform Dissemination Mechanism of Misinformation

Regarding misinformation, the existing studies are more from the view of law. Turning attention to the field of communication, Liu Hailong and Yu Ying summarize two main views on the interpretation of misinformation, one of which is inaccurate information inadvertently disseminated out of accident, negligence and other "honest mistakes", which does not involve the subjective intention of the disseminator; the other is information with wrong or inaccurate semantic content, and the first interpretation is included in its subset.[19] This study takes the first view on the definition of misinformation.

The academic research on misinformation focuses on the dissemination mechanism and the motivation behind it. The complex identity of communicators leads to the pursuit of diverse interests, and the fragmentation of information and filter bubbles contribute to the outbreak of "post-truth" public opinion events in the communication field.[20] From the perspective of social psychology, Liu Zixiong and Wang Zhuying point out that stereotype bias and herd mentality make audiences choose to believe misinformation and help it spread further.[21] And as a kind of social rebellion, trust alienation, which contains two forms of unprincipled trust and compulsive distrust, is prone to rumor identification.[22]

Some scholars examine the production and dissemination process of rumors in a specific spatial and temporal context and a specific carrier for rumors, and base the dissemination mechanism on the "double context" of risk society and transition society and the properties of WeChat as a media platform.[23] As a new media rumor, the new psychological motivation of WeChat rumors comes from the alienated rumor-mongers and rumor spreaders, and its dissemination process is more like a radiated and strong relational dissemination.[24]

2.3 Online dissemination of emotional misinformation

The relationship between emotions and the spread of misinformation is complex. Some scholars have quantified the relationship from the perspective of rumor spreaders and confirmed that compared with non-emotional rumors, emotional rumors are more likely to influence audiences and promote retweeting behavior through emotional infection.[25] Further, once an online event involves sensitive areas, the powerful emotional mobilization of online rumors can even gather individual emotions into collective anger in a short period of time, forming collective boundaries and online protest discourse.

However, the existing studies are limited in that they mostly describe the characteristics and influence mechanisms of the misinformation dissemination process from the information text, which ignores the important role played by individual emotions in the misinformation diffusion and dissemination process.

Qualitative research can provide contextualized knowledge to understand this issue, and this paper finds that users are emotionally influenced to spontaneously develop distinctive and confrontational action strategies in the process of misinformation dissemination. Technologically empowered users are ambitious in their attempts to disrupt the stable and entrenched order of media discourse guided

by the mainstream media and to gain a stronger voice for themselves by creating a stratified and open media environment. At the same time, due to the emotional burnout caused by information overload, the ubiquitous connections in bit space overwhelm users, and their compression and dismantling of the information pool is the gap for misinformation to take advantage of, as well as a symptom of their intentional confrontation with digital media.

What are the emotional motivations associated with users' concern for misinformation? What is the role of technologically mediated emotions in the process of users' emotional identification with misinformation, and what is the relationship between their subsequent active diffusion behavior? In this paper, we will analyze specific cases and situations of misinformation dissemination in detail, and try to answer these questions by combining with grounded theory.

3. Research Design and Content

This study mainly adopts the qualitative research method of grounded theory, which intends to sort out the mechanism of the role of emotion in the process of users' spreading misinformation. The basic specification of grounded theory is to obtain various kinds of information through interviews and participant observation, break up the original information and assign concepts to it, summarize the categories and further core categories according to the logical relationship between concepts, and finally form a theory by establishing the relationship between core categories. In this study, a total of 12 college students active in various social media platforms participated in semi-structured interviews with an average length of about 60 minutes, resulting in more than 70,000 words of original interview data.

Table 1. Profile of Interviewees

NO.	Gender	Age	Commonly used platforms
A1	Female	23	Douban
A2	male	20	Weibo
A3	male	21	Zhihu
A4	female	20	bilibili
A5	female	20	WeChat
A6	Male	21	Zhihu
A7	Female	19	Weibo
A8	Female	20	bilibili
A9	Female	20	Weibo
A10	Male	20	WeChat
A11	Female	18	Xiaohongshu
A12	Female	21	Weibo

In this study, the original utterances provided by the respondents were coded one by one, and the concepts were named in three ways: creating their own names that reflect the meaning represented by the data, using concepts that already existed with rigorous expressions, and extracting them from the discourses provided by the respondents. After labeling and conceptualizing the content of the collected data and eliminating the initial concepts with low repetition frequency, a concept cluster consisting of 51 initial concepts was obtained.

Table 2. Open Coding (Example)

Initial Concept	Text of the interview
C1 Familiarity with the idol	"I have been a fan of his since I was a kid, I can't figure out how anyone could slander him for sexual assault, I read that report when it was first sent out."
C4 Expression of love	"The Internet is crazy about Yang Mi divorce because of cheating Feng, I'm especially afraid that these have not affected his mood, he happened to be on vacation at that time after filming, would have been in a good mood."
C14 Student media	"The closure policy of the school during the epidemic has been the official public number to send, we have no channel to react even if we have grievances. Now this society public number said has negotiated with the school on our behalf, so I will be more concerned about it."
C16 Seeking evidence from many sides	"On the matter of the eight children's mother in Feng County, CCTV news seems to send the final results of the investigation, but many bloggers on my list still support that Xiaohuamei is Li Ying, and dumped some evidence, I still want to continue to pay attention to this matter."
C17 Convinced of one side	"When Bao Yuming's case reversed and reversed again, I felt like I was going schizophrenic while browsing Zhihu. Later burst out of Tsinghua school sister by the school brother sexual harassment, I firmly on the side of the school sister, because it was too disturbing."
C19 recognizing fatigue	"Now only look at the surging, even if it reported fake news I also recognize. It's really tiring to use that little time every day to analyze which media is right and which media is catching wind."
C22 Friends tell	"The reason why I believe in the news of school closure is because my friend told me personally. I closed my circle of friends a long time ago, the news lagged behind others, and only after a day did I know that the matter had been debunked."
C25 source compression	"I don't like to look at my circle of friends, microblogging also uninstalled almost a year, only occasionally browse the bilibili. I often brush to a few up owners have been posting Ms. Guo's second creation video, so I thought she had not been blocked."
C31 Group revelry	"That day everyone crazy rumor school south of the septic tank exploded, but also rushed on the microblogging hot search, and later those related to the septic tank explosion stems when we chat have been used."
C32 Phenomenal recording	"In fact, we all know that he is just joking in the lyrics, we pass four hundred cold (bilibili owner) is "0" just happen to record the "0/1" terrier recently again up."
C39 Position expression	"The internet just started to rumor that Fang Fang's diary is going to be published overseas, but it's not sure if it's authorized by her. I felt that the netizens were obsessed and anxious, and wondered if it was too early to scold her."
C44 Social status	"In the heat of the day and two days of additional training, the group is very tumultuous, I think I as a group secretary at this time to stand out to stabilize the class mood, so before waiting for the teacher to find the class committee meeting I sent out that notice in a group."

This is followed by axial coding, in which the logical relationships between concepts are analyzed and initial categories are established based on open coding. We further discover and understand the connections between the initial categories, sort them into more condensed categories, and explain

them precisely. Finally, we complete the selective coding, in which the initial categories are organized into core categories with a higher degree of generalization, thus forming core coding groups.

Table 3. Results of Selective Coding

Core Genera	Corresponding category	Specific definition of the class
A1 Emotionally driven	B1 Fan mentality	Emotional concern for the idols involved
	B2 Confrontation with authority	Rebellion against mainstream media narratives
	B3 Self-protection	Attitudinal tendency to avoid harm
	B4 Involvement of interests	Personal interests involved
A2 Emotional recognition	B5 Resistance to connection	Active weakening of online interpersonal connections
	B6 Emotional burnout	A derivative of information burnout
	B7 Opinion leaders	Opinion leaders' discursive identification
	B8 Full media means	Expressions influence information judgment
	B9 Cathartic stress	Emotional stress takes advantage of the opportunity to vent
A3 Emotional use	B10 Collective memory	Online construction of collective memory
	B11 Social currency	Achieving a higher value status
	B12 Communication dialogue	Building bridges to connect individuals

Based on the above coding results, this study constructs a mechanism model for the role of user emotions in the process of misinformation dissemination. Emotions play a significant role in the process of user awareness, trust and spreading misinformation, and weaves a complete chain of misinformation spreading on social media platforms in the form of driving user attention, gaining user approval and achieving user goals.

4. Research Discussion

4.1 Emotion-driven: the original causes of rumor spreading

In the process of the effectiveness of communication on human cognition, attitude and behavior, the initial probing of the tentacles of misinformation, i.e., the attention of social media users to specific events, usually arises from the stimulation or incitement of emotions. The development of Internet technology provides the possibility of massive information storage and instant diffusion, and the tidal wave of information is indistinguishable from real and fake, and the flow of events becomes more and more treacherous, which provokes users' multi-state emotional changes and attracts their attention to focus on them and follow and pay attention to them continuously, thus emotions become a very important premise for misinformation to reach users.

4.1.1 Fan perspective: the care and love for idols

Celebrities are both the object of fans' emotional projection and an effective way to obtain emotional solace and compensation.[26] The all-round concern attached to idols by fans based on their imaginary close friends' perspective is an inescapable reason for users' exposure to misinformation. For college students, the intuitive effects of the act of following idols, including the filling of large blocks of empty time and online companionship, make interaction with idols an inseparable part of their daily lives. The ephemeral chase and popularity boost all revolve around the same body, fans are passionate and loyal to all kinds of mass media and social media platforms, following almost all of the idol's travels, life trajectory and digital traces. The digital technology has compressed the physical distance to an infinite extent, the unreachable idol now seems to be close at

hand, and the cyber illusion of being within reach has led fans to rightfully claim the identity of their idol's closest friend at hand.

I've been a fan of his since I was a kid, so I don't understand how anyone could slander him for sexual assault, and I read the article as soon as it came out. (Interviewee A1)

The Internet is crazy about Yang Mi divorce because of having an affair with Li Yifeng, I'm especially afraid that these have not affected his mood, he finished shooting at that time just in the vacation, would have been in a good mood. (Interviewee A9)

This phenomenon can be interpreted by "quasi-social interaction," which is often used to describe an imagined social relationship and interaction between us and media figures who are distant and unresponsive to our communication or interests.[27] With the development of new media technology and related applications, imaginary interactions are slowly spreading to real and tangible interpersonal interactions, and the social authenticity in "quasi-social interactions" is constantly extended and getting warmer and heavier. The private accounts of celebrities on social platforms have been created against the background of the booming technology of online platforms, benefiting from the convenience of using social functions of platforms such as likes and replies, and the idols' responses to fans' text expressions and true feelings bring each other closer, and the identity of friends is confirmed and strengthened in the interaction between you and me. Just as it is difficult for users to ignore real friends in difficult situations, based on long-term attachment and emotions cultivated through online interactions, the first time to pay attention to and follow up on fake news involving idols becomes an almost instinctive emotional response of fans, and fans' concerns arising from anxiety and anxiety are synchronized with the surfacing of misinformation.

4.1.2 Rebel psychology: from confrontational interpretation to confrontational concern

Unlike their elders, college students interviewed said that they hardly believe in the information released by mainstream media and authoritative media. On the contrary, the space radiated by their news radar is very broad, and their limited attention is equally thrown at the self-publishers active in their small circles at the same time, who often observe and voice out from their parallel perspectives and reciprocal positions.

The school's closure policy during the epidemic was always sent by the official public number, so we had no channel to react even if we had grievances. Now this club public number says it has negotiated with the school on our behalf, so I will pay more attention to it. (Interviewee A10)

On the matter of the eight children's mother in Feng County, CCTV news seems to send the final results of the investigation, but many bloggers on my list still support that Xiaohuamei is Li Ying, and dumped some evidence, I still want to continue to pay attention to this matter. (Interviewee A7)

This phenomenon can be seen as a retracing of the "oppositional decoding" shown by the college students in the process of misinformation dissemination. Among the three modes of audience decoding proposed by Hall, those who adopt an antagonistic stance often come from the lower strata of society, confrontationally decoding the communicator's code due to the conflict between their social situation and the ideology propagated by the media text, which is similar to the coping strategies adopted by college students during the transition period of identity transformation. For Hall, discourse is politics and ideology, and the transmission of discourse is thus full of power struggles[28]; for college students, the struggle at the level of discourse interpretation is displaced to the process of information reception in advance, and who to contact and who to believe plays a role as an important means to manifest their rebellious mood and rebellious spirit.

Just as the main factor limiting the way audiences decode is the class they belong to, the reason why college students make the choice to pay more attention to the voices of self media is closely related to their position in the social structure. According to the existing framework of Foucault's "knowledge is power", college students, as a special group with rich knowledge but temporarily lacking social capital and discourse power, often face the embarrassing situation of losing their voices in the process of promoting major social events. Standing in front of the self-published news in the circle parallel to their perspective and the mainstream media discourse, which symbolizes authority

and power, it becomes a tacit and unanimous strategy for them to express more concern about the former.

However, it is undeniable that due to the lack of strict industry institutional norms and the restraint of responsibility consciousness, the content of the information released by some emerging media platforms is prone to the phenomenon of "flopping", and the laxity of factual controls makes it an important source of overflowing misinformation[29]. Thus, the constant proximity to the sources of self-media is an intuitive indication of the rebelliousness of the college students, but it also increases the chance of exposing themselves to misinformation in the process of this emotional proximity.

4.2 Emotional identification: the adhesion resistance of online information

Users' trust in the sources and the information they deliver is influenced by both rational judgment and emotional response. With the change of Internet technology development, objective and rational value judgment becomes a scarce resource in the noisy network space, and the exchange of emotional identification for trust in content becomes a key step before the large-scale radiation of misinformation.

4.2.1 Confirmation bias: as a regulator of emotional burnout

In the era of information explosion, massive information relies on the availability of various social media platforms for fixation, replication, extension and retrieval, and penetrates into all aspects of users' lives with the help of weak or strong interpersonal networks. Entertainment gossip, social news, employment information, a lot of information that is not needed by the user, which brings the trouble of information overload. In the pool of information after active screening, the only truth and opinions are still entangled and intertwined, so who to believe and who to give up becomes a key choice for users to enjoy the benefits of information.

The product of information overload includes but is not limited to information burnout, but presents the possibility of inducing a deeper level of emotional burnout in the new media environment, especially in the context of the proliferation of misinformation, where various sources are fighting with each other and the opinions of all parties are in conflict, and the truth is hidden but hard to reach, and the distance between the user and the user is far away. With the changing moods of public opinion, the emotional state of restlessness follows and is constantly emphasized and amplified with the rewriting of the discourse, even causing disturbance to the normal order of life of users.

When the case of Bao Yuming was reversed and reversed again, I felt like I was going schizophrenic while browsing Zhihu. Later, when it was revealed that a Tsinghua student had been sexually harassed by her younger brother, I stood firmly on her side because it was too disturbing. (Interviewee A6)

Now I only read surging, even if it reports fake news I also recognize. It's really tiring to spend the little time I have on my phone every day racking my brain to analyze which media is right and which media is catch at shadow. (Interviewee A5)

In this context, in the face of misinformation, confirmation bias is not only increasingly effective in forming attitudes, but also a means to counteract anxiety and to re-patch and refocus one's attention. Confirmation bias means that people prefer to confirm rather than disprove, and when seeking to confirm an uncertain idea, they tend to acquiesce to its truth and look for evidence to support it.[30] In the context of information overload, this process is more of a conscious search for information and corroboration by users.

According to this theory, when the truth is confusing, once a media's reporting position coincides with their established perceptions, they usually choose to stand firmly on the same side of the media, forming an imaginary emotional alliance. With the rapid changes in media technology and the confusion of the truth, the possibility of consistency, coherence and stability of emotions is more attractive to users in a situation of both information and emotional burnout than the infinite approach to the truth. Since they are unable to expel the phantom of misinformation hovering in the media field, users defend their right to stabilize their emotions and protect themselves from negative emotions

such as anxiety by choosing a more efficient and convenient way to believe in information that is consistent with their existing perceptions.

4.2.2 Disconnection: a brave attempt to drive away social fatigue

The Internet's inclusive and expansive structure offers the possibility of weaving a wider network of social relationships. However, at the same time, the ubiquitous social connections also create great social pressure on individuals, and being in a network of relationships, especially a strong network of relationships, people have a strong sense of performance, and this performance is naturally subject to the scrutiny of others,[31] which seems to come from the "self". The initial novelty of performance interaction in cyberspace gradually shifts to the pressure of revealing the hidden main self under the scrutiny of all parties. The metaphor of the times in the American series "Black Mirror" gradually becomes a reality. Although the individual is only a small node in a huge social network, he cannot escape the mobile assignment and evaluation of the self by the other.

The reason I believed the news that the school was going to be closed was because it was told to me by my friend himself. I had closed my circle of friends a long time ago, so I was a day behind the others and only learned that the rumor had been debunked. (Interviewee A12)

I don't like to look at my circle of friends, Weibo also uninstalled almost a year, only occasionally visit the bilibili. I often brush to a few uploaders have been posting Ms. Guo's second creation video, so I thought she had not been blocked. (Interviewee A4)

In order to escape the ubiquitous tension and anxiety caused by heavy relationship burdens and social pressures, users have begun to reflect on this phenomenon and actively try coping strategies to counteract the ubiquitous interpersonal connections and scrutinized evaluations in cyberspace with "anti-connectivity". By setting microblogs to be visible only to friends and turning off the circle of friends, the online social circle has been consciously compressed by users.

The dynamic adjustment of the volume of the online social circle has brought users a double loosening of their physical and psychological ties, and they are no longer in a state of constant vigilance and tension. However, it is undeniable that the compression of social space also means the compression of information sources, and the cognition and bias of event facts are also limited to the narrow scope of acquaintances' circle, which makes misinformation enter and emerge frequently, and the probability of users connecting with the truth decreases.

From this perspective, it is more likely that users' identification with misinformation comes from their unconditional trust in the filtered news of their micro social circles, rather than as a byproduct of being forced to narrow their social scope and sources under the pressure of over-connected interpersonal relationships in Internet society, a sacrifice made for the brave attempt to counter-connect.

4.3 Emotional exploitation: the reshaping of the value of misinformation

The abundance of information has greatly filled the minds of users, while the ensuing misinformation has stimulated people's nerves with its elusive and fickle appearance, causing more and more problems for the ideal efficient reception and utilization of information. In this process, users, whether as participants or observers, actively act to transform immediate emotions into eternal memories and values for future use by participating in the narrative. In the quest to maximize the utility of emotions, users' conscious use of emotions results in the unconscious dissemination of misinformation.

4.3.1 Collective memory: the construction of online rituals

Taking the strong rebellious and curiosity mentality of young people as a premise, misinformation is easy to infiltrate into the information environment of college students with exaggerated expressions and pompous faces that contradict the social norm and life experience, provoking stimulating emotions and stress reactions to spread in the group. Standing in front of the complicated misinformation, college students are not the "targets" who fall to the ground, they know how to efficiently use the exhilaration rapidly transmitted from themselves to others in the process of

spreading misinformation to construct a collective orgy. This kind of collective activity, shared by members of a particular group, shapes group identity through meaningful cultural symbols, and also sustains and connects society.

The septic tank in the south section of the school exploded that day and made it to the top of Weibo. Later those memes related to the septic tank explosion have been used when we chat. (Interviewee A2).

In fact, we all know that he is just joking in the lyrics, we pass four hundred cold (Bilibili up owner) is "0" just happen to record the "0/1" terrier recently again fire up. (Interviewee A8)

As a modern form of large-scale collective activity, the festival is able to create the highest level of consensus memory and identity among social groups.[32] By making full use of the banter and revelry that spreads with the spread of misinformation, college students build a prosperous and first-look online celebration, emotions destined to fade with time are consumed in a timely manner, and collective memories are written together in the celebration.

Along with the rapid development of network communication technology, collective rituals are reproduced in the face of online celebrations, and the collective memory formed under such conditions presents a unique communication temperament. The Internet has changed the mechanism of collective memory transmission and construction by breaking through the boundaries of space and time, compressing time to nothing and expanding space of the world. [33] Misinformation spread in all directions on social media platforms is more infectious and can attract more attention in an instant because of its instantaneous nature. The collective memory is naturally inscribed in this network, shaping the "we" that unites and shares meaning.

4.3.2 Social motivation: the ideal self in the eyes of the other

With the change of communication mode, the return of individuals as subjects to the public sphere has become a revolution after the formation of social discourse hegemony by mass media.[34] However, as mentioned above, due to the lack of both industry regulations and professional journalism, the proliferation of spin news concocted by self-media has become a striking social phenomenon in cyberspace. The truth in the reversal news is unpredictable, and the reports that are followed up in the first time to compete for traffic often become a disaster area where misinformation is gathered. But the real time follow up is not only the indistinguishable self media discourse, but also the simultaneous commenting and forwarding behavior of users.

The Internet has just started to rumor that Fang Fang's diary is going to be published overseas, but I am not sure if it is authorized by her. At that time, I felt that the netizens were obsessed and anxious, and I wondered if it was too early to scold her. (Interviewee A1)

I felt that I had to stand up and stabilize the class as the group secretary, so I sent out the notice before the teacher called a meeting with the class members. (Interviewee A10)

Users' emotions fluctuate with the repeated reversals of the news, and their confusion and urgency to get the truth are amplified as the situation advances layer by layer in the core of the arena of opinions. As a kind of bystander, a group of users enters the game at this moment and selects sources that are not yet known to a few people to further spread the news, which contributes to the evolution of the news into a complex situation.

The hidden motive behind users' positive information diffusion behavior is social currency circulation, taking advantage of the psychological background that other members of the community are at a loss and confused because they are in a blurred area where reality meets reality. The Internet persona of "everyone is drunk and I am awake" is expected to appear in the public opinion field with a calm and wise image. As an attempt of self-labeling, they shape their ideal self in the eyes of others by selectively spreading information and taking a unique stance.

5. Conclusion: Affect-Driven Activists

The above study shows that negative emotions such as uneasiness and anxiety pervade the entire process of spreading misinformation on social platforms. Users' long-standing digital media

confrontation strategy is an important reason why misinformation reaches users and succeeds in gaining trust, while users' submissive use of group emotions that spread and ferment rapidly along the Internet technology architecture contributes to the wider reach of misinformation. By coding and analyzing the interview materials, I sorted out the action strategies that users alternate between confrontation and compliance in the process of misinformation dissemination influenced by emotions.

In the initial dissemination stage when misinformation reaches users, the user group shows the media contact characteristic of devoting more attention to the self-media. With the increasing popularity of social media platforms, although the influence of mainstream media has been diluted with the emergence and rise of self-media platforms, its authoritative orientation based on historical accumulation and power has never been dissipated, and it still holds a powerful discourse power that is almost definitive. Empowered by the technology, the college students try to challenge the stable and solidified media discourse order and build up a new circle and open media environment in cyberspace, in order to create more possibilities for individuals to voice and speak on this basis. The university students who are dissatisfied with the existing communication pattern provide support for them by paying more attention to the self-media platforms, but the lack of industry regulation and restraint mechanism of the self-media platforms increases the possibility of their stepping into the environment of misinformation.

The path of confrontation is perpetuated in a loop of misinformation that evokes a catch at shadow. In the mobile space constructed by bit digital, users either actively or passively flock to Internet platforms through a dizzying array of interfaces, working and surviving as tightly connected nodes in the digital society. The ubiquitous connections weave online social relationships into an impermeable web, and the powerful lure of technology forces users to accept the omnipresent scrutiny and yield some of their freedom to move in and out of cyberspace to the platforms. This "disengagement" is not only in social media, but also refers to a broader fragmentation of the interfaces and nodes that support digital existence. "Disengagement".[35]Information overload causes emotional burnout, and over-connectedness causes social avoidance. As a cure for information exhaustion and social anxiety, users' dismantling of information pools and compression of social circles is a conscious confrontation with digital media. Misinformation is made visible in the ever-narrowing range of sources, and the identification assigned to it by users is an unavoidable price to pay for the anti-connection attempts made in the era of digital survival.

In the final stage of information diffusion, users' attitudinal tendencies and behavioral strategies revert to reliance on digital media and attempt to efficiently utilize and amplify the possibilities offered by technology. Many studies have directed the analysis of the availability of digital technology to the study of online public opinion and group behavior because of its special effects on human cognition, attitudes, emotions, and even behavior due to certain natural characteristics, and emotions are often considered as a very important cognitive linkage point.[36] In the interviews, users showed a tendency to actively proliferate misinformation in order to join the co-construction of collective memory, and the collective disorientation and disorderly orgy in the process of repeated rewriting of truth is a crucial precondition for triggering this behavior.

The use of collective banter to build online celebrations to remember the scene of loud celebrations is just one of the ways in which users exploit group emotions. At a time when the group is caught up in the myth of the untruth, there are also some users who are determined to process and spread the "confirmatory" news that is still known to a few, in exchange for the enhancement of personal value and status in the eyes of others.

Due to the limitation of this space, two other important perspectives in this study were not explored in depth. First, through in-depth interviews, the study finds that women tend to actively participate in the process of spreading emotional misinformation, but the social reasons behind this phenomenon are not investigated in depth; second, in the context of the emergence of various social platforms with different functional preferences, users' perceived clarity and trust in misinformation fluctuates up and down with the switching of platforms, and this phenomenon also deserves further study. This phenomenon also deserves further study.

References

- [1] Chen Hong and Shen Shen Yi, "An Exploration of the System of the Crown Prince's Educational Officials in the Jin Dynasty", *JOURNAL OF EAST CHINA NORMAL UNIVERSITY (PHILOSOPHY AND SOCIAL SCIENCES)*, No. 3, 2011.
- [2] Guo Xiaolan, "The Emotions, Prejudices and "the Miracle of Aggregation" in the Public Opinion: from the Concept of the "Post-truth" ", *Journal of International Communication*, No. 1, 2019.
- [3] Lai Shengqiang and Tang Xuemei, "On the Impact of Emotional Information on Online Rumor Spread" *Journal of Intelligence*, Vol. 1, No. 1, 2016.
- [4] Wang Xiao, Li Wenzhong, and Du Jiangang: "The Advance Research of Emotional Contagion Theory," *ADVANCES IN PSYCHOLOGICAL SCIENCE*, Vol. 8, 2010.
- [5] Lu Ye and Lai Chuyang: "Creating New Public Communities: The Emotional Dimension of News Production in the Mobile Internet Era", *China Publishing*, Vol. 10, 2021.
- [6] Chang Jiang and Tian Hao: "Intervention and Construction: The "Emotional Turn" and the Innovation of Digital Journalism Discourse", *China Publishing*, Vol. 10, No. 2021.
- [7] Li Lingling, "Rebuilding the publicness of media: the communication crisis in the post-truth era", *Contemporary Communication*, No. 2, 2018.
- [8] Zou Shipeng: "The Populist Phenomenon and Its Governance in the Post-Truth World", *Exploration and Controversy*, No. 4, 2017.
- [9] Zou Yu and Wei Youyi, "Altruism, Cooperation and Risk Society: Analysis of Emotional Communication of Microblog Hot Events," *Modern Communication (Journal of Communication University of China)*, No. 8, 2018.
- [10] Zhao, J.: "On the communication of empathy", *Modern Communication (Journal of Communication University of China)*, No. 6, 2021.
- [11] ang Xuemei and Lai Shengqiang, "The Influence of Emotional Information on the Spread of Public Opinion Events," *Journal of Intelligence*, Vol. 12, 2018.
- [12] Huang He and Kang Ning: "Characteristics and generation mechanism of group polarization in the mobile Internet environment: content analysis based on mobile media texts and netizens' comments on the Jiang Ge case", *International Journalism*, Vol. 2, No. 2, 2019.
- [13] Sui Yan and Li Yan, "On the Role of the Internet Language in the Social Communication of Individual Emotions ", *Journal of International Communication*, Vol. 1, 2020.
- [14] Fan Mingxian, "Moral Calling and Emotional Stimulation: Analysis of the Discourse Strategy of Moral Bundled Retweeting of Calling WeChat Posts," *Journalism University*, Vol. 8, 2019.
- [15] Du Zhongfeng and Guo Ziyu: "The Inner Logic of Emotional Choice and Social Mobilization in Microblog Public Opinion: A Case Analysis Based on the "Shandong Yuhuan Case"", *Modern Communication (Journal of Communication University of China)*, Vol. 8, 2019.
- [16] Chen Long: ""Borrowing from the Issue": A Model of Generating Online Public Opinion Discourse with Chinese Characteristics", *Journalism and Communication Research*, Vol. 12, 2019.
- [17] Yu Guoming, Qian Himeven, Chen Yao, Xiu Lichao, and Yang Ya: "The Mechanism of "Post-Truth": The Communication Effect of Emotional Texts——A study based on electroencephalography", *Journal of Xi'an Jiaotong University (Social Sciences)*, No. 4, 2019.
- [18] Chen, Long: "Control and Prevention of Public Opinion Entropy: An Epistemological Methodology on Network Governance", *Journal of Journalism and Communication Research*, Vol. 8, 2018.
- [19] Liu Hailong and Yu Ying: " Bridging Concepts: the Politics of Concepts and Conceptual Reconstruction of Yaoyan, Rumor, Disinformation, Misinformation and Fake News" *Journalism*, Vol. 12, 2021.
- [20] Song Kai and Yuan Huanqing, "Emotional Communication of Netizens in Post-Truth Perspective," *Modern Communication (Journal of Communication University of China)*, Vol. 8, 2019.
- [21] Sun Wei and Li Mengying: "Visibility": Social Media and the Public Sphere: The Case of Zhanhaite's "Foreign High School Entrance Examination" as an Example", *Journal of Northwest Normal University (Social Science Edition)* No. 2, 2014.

- [22] Liu Zixiong and Wang Zhuying, "The Trusted Fake News: An Exploration of the Audience Acceptance Psychology of Disinformation", *Modern Communication (Journal of Communication University of China)*, No. 7, 2011.
- [23] uan Yan: "A Study on the Phenomenon of Trust Alienation in Social Network in Post-truth Era ", *Social Sciences in Nanjing*, No. 7, 2017.
- [24] Zhang Zhi'an and Shuang Kairong, "The Propagation Mechanism and Influencing Factors of WeChat Rumors - An Examination Based on Multiple Perspectives of Netizens, Media and Society", *Journalism and Writing*, No. 3, 2016.
- [25] Cai Liyuan and Zhang Jinhai, "The Butterfly Effect:The Propagation Mechanism of WeChat Rumors," *Contemporary Communication*, Vol. 6, 2015.
- [26] Lai Shengqiang and Tang Xuemei, " On the Impact of Emotional Information on Online Rumor Spread," *Journal of Intelligence*, Vol. 1, 2016.
- [27] Cai Ti, " Star Worship and Fans Effect in the Mass Communication" *Journal of Social Sciences*, Hunan Normal University, Vol. 1, No. 1, 2011.
- [28] Horton D,Richard WohlR., "Mass communication and para-social interaction:Observations on intimacy at a distance ," *Psychiatry*, vol.19,no.3,1956,pp.215-229.
- [29] Jin Huimin, "The Power of Resistance Never Comes from the Discourse Level - A Critique of Hall's Coding/Decoding Model," *Studies in Literary Theory*, Vol. 2, 2010.
- [30] Zhang Aijun and Wang Shouhang, " Self-Salvation in the Post-Truth Era: The Return of the Truth and the Reshaping of the Mainstream Media's Discourse Power", *Henan Social Science*, No. 6, 2021.
- [31] Wason P C. , "On the failure to eliminate hypotheses in a conceptual task, " *Quarterly journal of experimental psychology*, vol.12, no.3,1960,pp.129-140.
- [32] Peng, Lan, "Connections and Anti-Connections:The Swing of the Internet Law," *International Journalism*, Vol. 2, 2019.
- [33] Yali Xue: " Ceremony: Collective Memory and Social Identity ", *JOURNAL OF CHINA AGRICULTURAL UNIVERSITY(SOCIAL SCIENCES EDITION)*, Vol. 2, 2010
- [34] Hu Baijing, "The Internet and the Construction of Collective Memory," *Social Science of Chinese Universities*, Vol. 3, 2014.
- [35] Sun Wei and Li Mengying, "Visibility": Social Media and the Public Sphere: The Case of Zhanhait's "Foreign High School Entrance Examination" as an Example", *Northwest Journal of Northwest Normal University (Social Science Edition)*, No. 2, 2014.
- [36] Ziyi Li and Deqiang Ji, "Digital Labor's "Strike"? --A study of digital counter-connectivity as a strategy to accelerate social "slowdown"", *Journalism*, No. 11, 2021.
- [37] Chang Jiang, "The Internet, Technological Availability and the Emotional Public," *Young Journalists*, Vol. 25, 2019.