

Analysis of the Development Characteristics of Social Thoughts in the New Era

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Abstract: In the new era, the development of various social thoughts under the environment of the internet and self-media has shown new characteristics. By analyzing the characteristics of the dissemination and development of social thoughts, this study aims to strengthen the judgment of ideological public opinion and enhance the ability to handle ideological issues.

Keywords: Social Thoughts; Dissemination; New Characteristics.

1. Introduction

Since the reform and opening-up, under the backdrop of economic globalization, the ideological domain in China has faced increasingly severe challenges. In the new era, the world is undergoing unprecedented changes, with profound transformations in both international and domestic environments, making the ideological struggle still complex and arduous. Various social thoughts continue to surge undercurrents. In the new era, especially with the rapid development of the internet, the development of social thoughts in terms of communication subjects, content, discourse, strategies, and methods has exhibited new characteristics.

2. Communication Subjects: Decentralization

In the traditional environment, the dissemination range of social thoughts was relatively small. The communication subjects were intellectuals who typically propagated certain social thoughts through writing books, hosting forums, or publishing articles in newspapers, with the subjects being in a dominant position while the audience (objects) remained passive, under the control of the subjects: "You speak, I listen." Entering the new era, under the new media environment, the subjects of social thoughts have expanded to the entire society. People gradually began to focus on social issues and express their views. With the spread of education and the diversification of media, the mass base of social thoughts has continuously expanded. The discourse radiation has extended from intellectual discourse to public discourse, making the audience and communication channels of social thoughts broader and more diverse. The status and mutual relationship between the subjects and objects of social thought dissemination have changed. The objects are no longer entirely passive; they can transform into the subjects of social thought dissemination. In the anonymous environment of new media, the individual consciousness of expression among objects has awakened. They consciously and actively express their opinions and insights, interacting within groups or between subjects and objects, transforming from a one-way flow to a two-way interactive mode. The change and shift in the relationship between subjects and objects have led to the decentralization of communication

subjects. In the internet era, the clear demarcation between communication subjects and objects has been eliminated, and "everyone is both a communicator and a recipient." The subjects of social thought dissemination have been generalized, with professional and non-professional identities coexisting. The new media environment features various dissemination methods, with the interactive nature of these methods allowing the public to discuss, exchange, like, and forward certain issues. Social thoughts are particularly propagated when they are associated with mobilizing, beneficial, or emotionally charged topics, realizing the exchange between objects and transforming objects into subjects. These professional and non-professional communication subjects compress, cut, and reorganize irrational, illogical, and discontinuous information.

3. Communication Content: Social Thoughts Emphasize Political Appeals, with Content More Popularized, Realistic, and Complex

3.1. More Apparent Political Appeals

In the past, although various social thoughts had diverse content, they mostly focused on academic research with the intention of pursuing truth and reality. Only in specific environments and circumstances would they present ideological hotspots. In recent years, social thoughts have moved beyond the confines of academic disputes, seeking false spokespersons with obvious political appeals aimed at undermining the recognition of mainstream ideology in China.

3.2. More Popularized Content

To achieve broader dissemination and deeper impact, social thoughts attach themselves to events related to the real interests of the masses or social hotspot events when spreading their ideas, theories, and concepts. This highlights the popularization, democratization, realism, and interest-driven nature of the content. Although the dissemination subjects are decentralized, the main subjects remain intellectuals. To disguise their real political agenda, they generally do not directly discuss social thoughts but instead pose as "spokespersons" for the public interest, akin to "wolves in sheep's clothing." They hypocritically focus on the daily lives and hotspot events of the masses. By abandoning

the previously profound and obscure modes, they combine abstract ideas with social contradictions, use hotspot events to dilute the abstract and obscure theories, and spread their values through antagonistic and exaggerated emotional expressions, subtly infusing the core theories of social thoughts into objective events.

3.3. More Realistic and Complex Content

Currently, the content of social thought dissemination is more realistic and not confined to a single theoretical framework. The scope has expanded to multiple fields, occupying public opinion positions in various areas. The comprehensive theoretical systems have transformed into relevant social hotspots, encompassing life's difficulties and real social issues, starting from the minutiae of daily life and permeating various negative social thoughts and values.

In the new media environment, "fragmentation" and "fast-food culture" are significant characteristics of social thought dissemination. Most people obtain information through platforms like Weibo, WeChat, and forums, which may not be complete but rather fragmented. Dissemination subjects select, process, and spread partial, fragmented information from systematic and complex events. However, dissemination does not stop at one instance; it continues multiple times, with each dissemination subject adding individual experiences, thoughts, and values. Through numerous non-systematic disseminations, the initial content becomes fragmented or unrecognizable. Due to content fragmentation, differences in the disseminators' perceptions and understandings, and audience diversity, the dissemination content of social thoughts becomes increasingly complex.

4. Communication Discourse: Simplified, Everyday, and Entertaining

At the level of popular dissemination, social thoughts take individual daily life as a breakthrough point, shedding their abstract and serious exterior to appear in a familiar, mundane, and daily context. Social thoughts are subtly integrated into fragmented daily life, fast-food culture, and spectacle-based entertainment life. They utilize simplified, everyday, and entertaining language forms that match the cultural literacy and cognitive structures of the general public, attempting to make the core ideas of social thoughts accepted by society at large.

4.1. Simplification of Communication Discourse

With the accelerating pace of social life, popularized, plain, and simplified cultural products have flourished, greatly satisfying people's spiritual needs. This fast-food lifestyle constitutes another facet of people's spiritual life. Influenced by popularized, fragmented fast-food culture, people are keen on passively receiving various fragmented information from short videos. They cannot comprehensively and truthfully understand the facts, only staying at the level of "heard about it" or "probably is." Long-term exposure to such a state and context weakens critical thinking abilities, easily causing blind conformity and lack of discernment between right and wrong, good and evil, beauty and ugliness. These so-called pieces of information can control their thoughts, making them believe that everything conveyed by this fragmented, fast-food culture is correct and true. Over time, they lose their

ability to think independently and judge, with no resistance. Therefore, when erroneous social thoughts appear in the form of fast-food art and culture, they inevitably deeply affect the public's consciousness, strongly impacting their values and ideals, successfully achieving ideological infiltration.

4.2. Everyday and Popularized Communication Discourse

Discourse is a bridge for transmitting information and communication. The communication discourse of social thoughts has shifted from the abstract, esoteric academic, and political language to a more everyday language for better dissemination. To cater to modern fragmented lifestyles, social thoughts use personalized, emotional, and diverse everyday discourse in the online space to irrationally, illogically, and non-systematically express views on daily interests, entertainment consumption, and other perspectives. This subtly embeds social thoughts into fragmented daily life. The everyday nature of social thought communication discourse is mainly reflected in:

1) Catering to Everyday Emotional Cognition: The communication discourse is placed in an entertainment whirlpool, using images and material forms to integrate Western values, lifestyles, and traditional holidays into public entertainment and social interactions, subtly exporting Western values and ideologies.

2) Catering to Fragmented Thinking in Everyday Concepts: This makes the audience passively, unthinkingly, indiscriminately, and unselectively accept information, turning people into simple containers. In the new media environment, the current "expression of erroneous thoughts shows a trend of everyday life." Social thoughts are embedded in various convenient, light, and useless information. Surrounded by this information, people's thoughts and thinking become passive and dull, reducing their judgment and learning abilities, making them believe that the received information is true and right, completely losing the ability to resist erroneous thoughts and social trends.

4.3. Entertaining Communication Discourse

The discourse of social thought dissemination integrates visual information symbols, which provide a broader development space and a more concealed "hiding place" for social thoughts due to their widespread and penetrating nature. This makes their influence on the public more "arrogant and hypocritical." In the new media environment, the emergence of visual media such as the internet, mobile phones, and digital television has replaced the serious, abstract, and contemplative narrative characteristics with relaxed, lively, and emotional visual images presented in entertainment life. The concrete presentation of social thoughts far surpasses the conceptual transmission and textual output of written language, causing a visual impact that can lead to emotional resonance and deep-seated cognitive changes, thereby exerting a strong influence on the public's values.

Under the impact of fragmented visual information, the public's "pure intuition" is immersed in a visual carnival, with cognitive thinking lingering at the "intuitive and emotional" level. This often obscures the historical and practical activities of the subject when dealing with the objective material world, preventing thought from reaching a rational level based on practice, science, and specifics. Consequently, this leads to a form of intuitive idealism that preempts the objective world, generating, constructing, or even nullifying

it in a self-generated way, forming a fragmented, superficial, intuitive, and disordered thinking pattern.

People's perception and pursuit of ideals and beliefs are shattered into scattered, centerless value fragments by the impact of visual pleasure. Some negative social thoughts' image shaping has almost reached the level of mixing the false with the true, confusing the public.

5. Communication Strategies: More Concealed

In the new era, with the development of the internet and the rise of new media technologies, social thoughts employ more concealed communication strategies, presenting new characteristics in their dissemination approaches.

5.1. Covert Nature

The strategy of social thought dissemination is covert, utilizing the virtual nature of online spaces to conceal its true intentions in a non-unified context. It employs hidden, fragmented methods to propagate its real aims. By leveraging information technology, symbols such as text, images, sounds, and videos are cut and pasted to create the content, presenting to the audience a seemingly complete, true, and objective picture. "The truth is like a mirror shattered into countless pieces, and everyone believes the small fragment they see is the complete truth." However, this is akin to the parable of the blind men and the elephant; what one sees may not be the truth or the whole truth, but a form of apparent truth and an illusion of content. "As a man-made truth, social construction is changeable: If we don't like it, we can always unite to change or eliminate these social constructs." Based on its own interests, social thoughts use fragmented narratives to conceal the limitations, disconnections, and meaning dissolutions of the information, using habitual techniques of compression, cutting, and recombination to interfere with the construction of socialist ideology and to question the deepening of socialist reforms.

5.2. Targeted Approach

In the new media era, social thoughts rely on big data to adopt targeted communication strategies, making their dissemination more efficient. As information publishers, social thoughts utilize big data platforms, such as search engines, to perform precise analysis of their audience. By classifying the audience based on their identity, preferences, characteristics, and other information, they can target different groups. Social thoughts can then disseminate their information in a targeted and long-term manner, achieving "precision delivery." This targeted dissemination makes the spread of social thoughts more effective, achieving accurate and efficient communication.

6. Communication Methods: Seeking More Depth and Breadth

In the new era, to seize the communication ground and continuously increase the depth of dissemination, social thoughts inevitably seek more communication methods.

6.1. Dissemination Under the Guise of Academia

"Every social thought has its own social environment and psychological basis, containing specific beliefs, traditions,

thoughts, and theories, often supported by a set of concepts and value systems." The essence and core of social thought dissemination are its ideological theories. To make the dissemination of social thoughts appear "legitimate," "reasonable," and "timely," social thoughts utilize academic seminars, reports, forums, and exchanges to seize theoretical dissemination heights. They use these channels and seemingly logical arguments to express their theoretical claims, thoughts, and values. By publishing academic papers, writing academic books, and utilizing the logical nature of articles, they extensively discuss their ideological theories. They also use academic forums, online courses, and webinars to widely disseminate their ideas, disrupting public perception and influencing people's value judgments and choices.

6.2. Dissemination Via the Internet

With the advent of the internet and the information age, social thoughts have shifted from traditional dissemination modes relying on books and journals to online dissemination to expand their influence. The internet has become a new territory and battleground for the dissemination of social thoughts. Utilizing the internet's decentralization, immediacy, shareability, and virtual characteristics, social thoughts have made the online space their primary dissemination ground, thoroughly reconstructing the dissemination landscape. Social thoughts have moved from a "single combat" mode to a complex mode of "interwoven" interactions. During dissemination and diffusion, multiple social thoughts collide, merge, and interact, making diverse social thoughts more complex. Social thoughts have broken through spatial and temporal boundaries, moving from bounded to unbounded dissemination.

American futurist Alvin Toffler once predicted, "The world has left behind the era of control by violence and money. In the future, the political Rubik's Cube of the world will be controlled by those who possess information power. They will use their control over the internet and information release to achieve what violence and money cannot conquer... Whoever controls information and the internet will control the entire world." The internet has become the main battleground for ideological struggle and the dissemination of social thoughts. Social thoughts rapidly generate, ferment, and spread across the internet and multimedia platforms, achieving unprecedented depth and breadth in dissemination.

6.3. Reorganization of Dissemination Chains

In the context of all-media, whether from the perspective of dissemination paths or content, social thought dissemination occurs through multiple chains, showing a state of reorganization of dissemination chains. The dissemination paths include both unidirectional and multidirectional interactions, top-down and bottom-up flows, and vertical and horizontal transmissions, resulting in a complex interweaving of interactions. Similarly, the dissemination content continuously intermixes, merges, and integrates with other information elements during the dissemination and evolution process, achieving reconstruction. Social thoughts are constantly influenced and disrupted by other social thoughts during dissemination, leading to collisions, fusions, confrontations, and differentiation in interactions, ultimately resulting in changes different from their original forms.

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