

How to Improve the Government Credibility Under the Condition of New Media

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Government credibility is an invisible social order, and citizens consciously abide by the behavior and value norms advocated by government's public services based on the trust in the government. Under the condition of Internet communication, citizen's evaluation for the government is no exception, which also affects citizen's conscious behavior. At present, the complexity and diversity of Internet information dissemination requires the government to adopt diversified countermeasures to guide citizens, so as to reduce and avoid the negative effects of Internet communication; in this case, the shaping of government image is becoming more and more important. Based on the previous research, this paper defines the operational definition of the criterion for the degree of government credibility shaping, and holds that on the one hand, the differences and changes in the media will have an impact on the image of the government and the shaping of the government's credibility.

Keywords: government credibility, public power, government services, media involution

With the rapid development of new media, it is of high efficiency, superior effect and profound influence to deal with mass incidents by the use of new media technology, which can effectively shape the image of local governments, promote the credibility and expand the influence.

Previous Research

Research Background and Its Significance

Internet has become one of the important means of social development in the context of new media. The new media living style that Chinese people are experiencing has become a universal phenomenon, and is closely linked with the new media, ranging from material purchase to information acquisition, from understanding government planning to participating in the activities held by government, as well as from supervision of civil servants behavior to citizens' willingness expression. In this context, the new media environment affects government behavior to a great extent. As early as 2016, it has become a basic policy for local governments to respond to citizens' appeals by taking advantage of new media and improving the presence rate of government response to public opinions. In 2018, governments at all levels began to build new media platform for emergencies release and public opinion response. Meanwhile, the speed of response, response means and citizens' satisfaction have gradually become key indicators for local government evaluation and assessment. It can be seen that in the area of public governance to respond emergencies, new media has occupied an important position.

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Literature Review

The study of government credibility in the west started from an earlier time and was comparatively comprehensive.

According to the paradigm of “principle-agent” of social contract theorists, the government, as an agent, must keep its promises and perform its public functions in order to win the trust of the public. In recent years, foreign researches mainly focus on the influencing factors of government credibility and its promotion strategies. Chanley found that political scandals and public attitudes toward the economy and crime could greatly influence public trust in government. Therefore, avoiding scandals, skillfully handling economic problems and lowering public attention to crimes are conducive to restoring government credibility (Chanley, Rudolph, & Rahn, 2000). Welch’s research shows that citizens’ satisfaction with e-government is positively correlated with citizens’ trust in government. Three elements of “government service, transparency and interactivity” directly affect citizens’ satisfaction with e-government, and meanwhile they are also important factors affecting government credibility (Welch, Hinnant, & Moon, 2004). Van de Walle studied the relationship between public service performance and government credibility in 2003. And he believed that government performance had a significant impact on government credibility, and in turn the current level of government credibility may also affect people’s views on government performance (Van de Walle & Bouckaert, 2003). Kim explored the factors influencing government credibility in Japan and South Korea, and believed that in order to enhance public trust in government in democratic society, the following points should be paid attention to: encouraging stakeholders to boost economic development, government transparency and citizen participation in creative ways; promoting the vision and objectives of enhancing government credibility to internal and external stakeholders; monitoring government performance in economic development, transparency and citizen participation (Kim, 2010).

Domestic scholars generally believe that China’s emphasis on the study of government credibility began with the SARS incident in 2003. With the advent of the new media era, the outbreak of public crisis events has become more frequent, which poses a severe challenge to the credibility of the government. Wang (2012) proposed three dimensions of government credibility: breadth, intensity and satisfaction. They are interdependent and interact with each other, and their balanced development is the key to the improvement of government credibility. Shi and Lan conducted a validity analysis on the factors influencing government credibility in the environment of online public opinion from four aspects: public opinions development heat, the response speed of the subjects involved, the strength of media acceptance and the attention of online people (Shi & Lan, 2015). Wu analyzed the factors influencing the credibility of local governments in China, and the factors of the government itself include the bureaucratism of grassroots cadres, the instability of public policies implementation, the imperfect interest expression mechanism and rights relief channels, corruption and administrative violations, and the openness and transparency of government information (Wu, Gao, & He, 2015). Wang and Ma discussed the reconstruction path of local government credibility from the perspective of multiple collaborative governance, such as reforming the one-way government control mode and cultivating multiple governance subjects; broadening channels of political participation and improving citizen governance mechanism; strengthening the cooperation and interaction between citizen governance and local government governance, and improving the effectiveness of diversified collaborative governance (Wang & Ma, 2013). Zhang and Li put forward countermeasures and suggestions for the promotion of government credibility from

the perspective of online public opinion, including the establishment of online public opinion response mechanism under the background of information disclosure, the improvement of government responsibility mechanism under the perspective of online public opinion, and the expansion of channels for public participation under the concept of service-oriented government (Zhang & Li, 2015). Wang discussed the routes to improve government credibility in public emergencies from the perspective of information dissemination, including strengthening information disclosure by administration according to law, releasing emergency action plans and establishing information interaction mechanisms, inviting third-party organizations to participate in event handling, and enhancing the public's professional knowledge and critical thinking ability (Wang, 2015).

So, it can be seen that there is a lack of research on the political effect of the government using new media on social governance in the existing studies.

In the current global anti-epidemic environment, new media has made important contributions to China's anti-epidemic response due to its timeliness, efficiency and versatility compared with traditional media. As early as a dozen years ago, western countries used various media to carry out information dissemination and public opinion propaganda as combat deployment. Without public opinion war, the Soviet Union would not have been so quickly disintegrated and Iraq would not have been so vulnerable. At present, all kinds of media as the carrier of information transmission are profoundly affecting the whole country and even the world.

Theoretical Basis and Methodology of the Research

Theoretical Basis of the Research. From the theoretical point of view, it is undoubted that the new public service theory provides the appropriate theoretical paradigm and research tools for shaping and improving the local government credibility. It advocates that the local governments should revert to its service functions and the government service satisfaction evaluation standard lies in the people instead of in the government. Moreover, service ultimate value is to realize the public interests and shape government credibility, and in turn government credibility builds a bridge for public response to government services. In practice, the new public service theory provides a new direction for the practice of government, for it claims e-government means to improve the efficiency of government services, but at the same time, government officials, as the operational representative of public power, should take the initiative to pursue the public interest, emphasize fairness and responsibility, cherish the spirit of citizenship, encourage citizens participation, and value cultivation of civic consciousness. Civic consciousness is the very collective consciousness of the public credibility, and it is a higher requirement for the government public administration.

In contemporary society, the development of new media provides an opportunity for more direct, faster and more frequent communication between the government and the public. Governments also come to realize the opportunities and challenges of governance brought by new media platform, and begin to actively use its power. At this time, new media government affairs come into being and it can play a positive role in strengthening democratic governance, shaping transparent government, promoting citizens' interest expression and political participation, and optimizing government services. Therefore, it can be seen theoretically and practically that the core of new media government affairs and new public service theory is consistent.

Research Methods. This thesis adopts the literature analysis method to investigate the information release characteristics and interactive coping strategies of government new media. Based on sorting out related research literature both at home and abroad, the thesis finds out that the existing research lacks of the research

into how government employs new media to cope with political effect of social events in network public opinion, and still is ploratory in reply to governments' quick and accurate response, and thus enhance the enhance the government credibility for this purpose.

In addition, this thesis, from the practical point of view, also adopts the case analysis method. After network public opinion arises, all media carry the expectation of government agencies to respond to public trust. There is no clear answer to how the government uses the new media to control the network public opinion dissemination, and how the government credibility is improved. The thesis systematically examines how the government makes use of new media to affect the public trust in government in the process of network dissemination, and probes into the issue to further discuss how to improve government credibility in this process.

Research Process

Hypothesis

On the basis of sorting out the influence of credibility shaping by domestic and foreign scholars, the emergence of new media and the influence the new media environment produces create opportunities for shaping credibility of contemporary local governments.

However, the new media environment is also a “double-edged sword”, which will in turn have a negative impact on shaping and promoting local government credibility. Therefore, in the new media environment, the promotion of local government credibility is faced with great challenges.

Opportunities for promotion of local government credibility created by the “newness” of new media.

The “newness” of new media lies in the updated communication means (tools), the latest communication content, the innovated communication mode with underestimated influence.

Compared with traditional media, the updated communication means (tools) primarily come out of digital ports, such as computers, mobile terminal, etc., with vast amounts of the latest image-text, graphic, short video, H5 and pure text and so on. The innovated transmission mode include online and offline ways, with push, elevator advertising as offline ways and all major portal sites, BBS, blog, WeChat, Weibo, QQ, etc. as main efficient online communication ways, which largely relies on third-party media alliances.

The new media influence has already penetrated into every aspect of the life. After we-media blossoms everywhere, the amount of information increases dramatically. Its convenience also makes the public's demand for and contact with information more and more, and even makes the public produce dependence. These terminal new media communication tools, vividly called human “organs”, have become indispensable. The new media can spread and disclose the facts at an extremely fast speed, compared with the traditional media, with which the news is only reported every day. For new media, what happened, no matter how important or trivial, can be found on the Internet and spread quickly in the next second, thus “taking care of” the fragmented time management needs of modern people. Moreover, new media has higher social recognition: Compared with the relationship between traditional media and ordinary people, new media is obviously more “close to people”. Everyone can carry out learning, social and business activities through new media and enterprises can carry out publicity and promotion activities through new media to relieve employment pressure. So, the permeability and influence of the new media is so huge that local government in public service and public governance can use means of new media to publicize and penetrate positive energy and real information, such as government

information release, Internet users interaction, network governance, and even move to manage the negative opinions and adjust strategies to control the direction of public opinion.

After understanding the new media's information bearing capacity characteristics of large capacity, more content, fast transmission, time saving, the government may combine its convenience and contemporary people's lifestyle to make big data analysis and strengthen the top-level design, so that the government affairs can be pushed open, administration can be pushed transparent, and smart government may be created. Consequently, the government's past image of being non-rigorous, non-responsive, non-pragmatic and people-unfriendly can be reversed, and thus the influence of the government can be expanded and the credibility of the government promoted.

The negative influence of new media environment on the shaping of government credibility. New media is a double-edged sword. While creating opportunities, it also causes some negative impacts, which makes local government credibility shaping and promotion also confront unprecedented challenges.

Firstly, due to the change of media environment, the difference and alternation of new and old media are more likely to cause a crisis of government credibility.

Before releasing information, traditional media could be going to screen information, strictly inspect the source of information, and ensure its authenticity. However, due to the development of information technology and society, as well as its own openness and the above differences, the new media may have uncontrollable deflection and uncontrollable diffusion of public opinion.

Especially on many social platforms, irresponsible "opinion leaders" and numerous online rumors are ubiquitous, which increases the risk of damaging the government's credibility. In addition, the increasingly intense involution among the media will lead to the media reporters not rigorous but merely eye-catching in the capture and screening of news information, and mislead the public by using the characteristics of low mass resolution and information asymmetry, which may lead to the crisis of mass incidents. Moreover, the privacy of the Internet makes people downplay the moral constraints of reality, and internet users can discuss about something relatively freely. People have different mentality in the virtual situation, so a small thing may often be turned into a public discussion of events, and intensified, which may result in the loss of control of the thing itself and the appropriate public opinion direction, so that it may cause people to question the government credibility.

Secondly, lack of laws and regulations in cyberspace.

In the process of information collection, screening and publication by traditional media, relevant laws will be strictly restricted to maintain the accuracy of information and the image of the government. However, with the advent of the Internet era, new media have mushroomed, and China's legislation on cyberspace is obviously slower than the current momentum of new media development. Most countries in the world have issued relatively improved laws and regulations on network information according to their own actual conditions, while China's legislation on network media is still in its infancy. Although China has subsequently formulated hundreds of laws, administrative regulations and rules related to the Internet, it is still relatively weak in terms of constraint and adaptability to the Internet.

Thirdly, shorter crisis public relations response time of local government.

The information management of local governments determines the speed of response to emergencies, and the working mode of information management staffs and their sense of sensitivity to public events determine

the way of dealing with public opinions. When responding to emergencies, traditional media only encircles, chases, blocks, intercepts, and deletes, but does not prevent and guide them at the source and in the process. But now, due to the characteristics of Internet information dissemination, the crisis response time of local governments is largely shortened, and crisis events occur more frequently. If local governments do not have time to respond nor respond in a timely manner, the crisis will spread quickly on the Internet, and even intensify until it is out of control.

Operational Process of the Concept of Government Credibility Promotion

Government credibility. Government credibility refers to the public's trust in the main body of the government, that is, whether the government can obtain from social members the recognition of the general code of conduct stipulated by the government—this general acts include the specific administrative actions and abstract administrative actions of the government.

Government credibility promotion. The government credibility promotion means that the public recognizes the specific and abstract administrative actions of the government, and on this basis, the public is more satisfied with the services provided by the government and the effect of government public governance.

Operation of the concept of government credibility promotion. This thesis argues that the government credibility promotion can be judged and evaluated from four aspects: first, whether the government is responsible, namely the responsible government standard; second, whether administrative policy is implemented based on citizen standard, that is, citizen standard; the third, whether the government is administrative transparency, that is, government affairs transparency standards; the fourth, whether the administration is implemented according to law, namely the rule of law standards. Credibility as the appeal and influence of public power is the most basic requirement of local government infrastructure, and moreover it is the source of legitimacy of local government and the core of the social credit system. Therefore, in the process of providing public services and governance, the first for the local governments is to establish their own credit system, shape its own credibility and win public support.

Therefore, in order to promote the credibility of the government, this thesis believes that the promotion strategy should be discussed around the above four criteria, which is the value of this research.

The Promotion Strategies of Government Credibility

1. Establish and strengthen the image of a “responsible government”.

I. New media platforms should be used to establish a government response mechanism, strengthen interaction with internet users, and establish the image of a “responsible government”.

It is necessary to strengthen the information release ability and be prepared to interpret and respond to issues related to public's livelihood. Relevant departments should make detailed study of the policies beforehand and make sure that they have a clear understanding of the subject before they can explain clearly to the people. Then, expand information distribution channels. Make full use of we-media to achieve multi-channel and all-round communication and interaction, and make better information release and communication through third-party platforms, such as Tiktok and Bilibili, instead of being limited to official networks and hotlines; the next, set up a special information department and appoint a special person responsible for the system, which can speed up and facilitate the release of relevant information, make faster linkage mechanism, and make more rapid response. For example, Nanjing, capital of Jiangsu province, opened

a special online channel, sent specialists to listen to the voice of the people and the interests of the people, made timely release of administrative affairs of the local government, and replied and answered the questions and problems brought forward by internet users in 24 hours non-stop. In February 2010, Guangdong province kept up with the development of information technology and required police departments at all levels to open micro blogs and release information in a timely manner. According to statistics, these microblogs released nearly 10,000 messages in March, and the total number of netizens' comments exceeded 30,000. Police departments in other places followed suit, with the Hebei provincial government opening Weibo accounts and Beijing opening "Safe Beijing". Another example goes: in May 2021, a large number of citizens complained about COVID-19 vaccination in Chengdu. The Chengdu Municipal People's Government immediately issued instructions to relevant departments and required to strengthen media publicity and guidance of information disclosure to maintain social rationality and stability through the advantages of media communication. Furthermore, strengthen online booking and management, and implement the responsibility system. So, it can be seen that the government response mechanism established through the new media platform improves the communication efficiency between the government and the public, which helps to make the public feel a responsible government.

II. Make use of the new media environment to develop and promote more social employment and strengthen the image of a "responsible government".

The openness, freedom and interactivity of new media environment diminish the cost of information dissemination by traditional media, especially with the development of e-commerce industry, logistics industry, network service and promotion industry. These emerging Internet industries are gradually becoming an indispensable part of economic development. No matter in traditional or emerging industries, they can choose a variety of media to express themselves, such as Wechat official account, Weibo, Xiaohongshu, etc. Through these accounts, they can publish copywriting, quickly attract users' attention, increase the number of fans, and increase the number of readers, etc, in an attempt to realize the transformation of the final results. So, the advent of new media era creates a lot of jobs, and increases employment opportunities and in society, which effectively solves the problems of labor force distribution, alleviates the pressure the government and the masses, promotes the public trust in the government's solution of the people's livelihood, and to a certain extent, promotes the government credibility.

2. Implement people-centered administrative management.

I. Respect the legitimate rights of the public, practice the spirit of "serving the people", and improve the efficiency of government "online office".

It is the difference between old and new media and the crisis of government credibility caused by media environment change that makes network political participation a good entry point. Through the Internet, citizens can keep abreast of the policies, and obtain relevant information without delay and in this way open up channels for citizens to express their interest and interact with each other. Under the new situation, China should establish and improve the official means of universal politics participation and multimedia expression channels to realize the democracy of virtual network. Simultaneously, by employment of big data, the government can make extensive reference to netizens' opinions and promote public policies to meet the interests of the vast majority of citizens to a greater extent, which on one hand, can help local governments to recognize the deficiency of existing public policies more quickly and comprehensively and for this matter

make rapid response. On the other hand, local governments integrate opinions on multiple social platforms so that they will have a more comprehensive understanding of the civil discourse system, thus expanding people's mentality of ownership and participation, and bridging the gap between new and old media to some extent.

Local official website construction should not only keep up with the pace of time, but also walk ahead of time, to build a "smart online government" and establish a friendly image. In dealing with public crisis, local government can take measures, like bringing in market competition mechanism, information technology and management talents, valuing the innovative cultivation of information talents, and emphasizing craftsmanship. In addition, when constructing and maintaining official BBS, the governments should make it friendly, convenient and beneficial from design and response, so as to make it respond accurately, friendly, quickly and effectively, promoting the transparency and efficiency of government affairs online and offline.

II. Establish and improve the public's Internet political participation, open government affairs, and protect citizens' right to know.

The openness and transparency of government affairs will actively guide public participation and promote the interaction, which is not only conducive to the transformation of local government functions, but also helps the image building of service-oriented government. Besides the new media itself is of highly interactivity. If the government can grasp the newly-emerging information channel well, it can grasp the mechanism of social governance in the new era, and get twice the result with half the effort. At present, the local government's announcement system, official affairs publicity and other policy requirements can prevent the new media from involution and spreading from the root, and prevent the uncontrollable deflection and diffusion of public opinion. The more transparent the government affairs are, the more accurately the public can understand the information. This can effectively prevent the public from misunderstanding the government and misreading current events due to low discrimination and information asymmetry, thus reduce the incidence of mass incident crises, and effectively protect the citizens' right to know.

3. Develop new media government affairs and build a fair, open, just, transparent and efficient government with the help of new media platform.

New media government affairs (e-government) have become an important channel for the Party and the government to connect with, serve and unite the masses in the Internet era. It is of great significance, for it is an important means of accelerating the transformation of government functions and building a service-oriented government; an important fortress of guiding online public opinions and building a clear cyberspace; as well as an important route of exploring social governance new model and enhancing the capacity. For one thing, the local government consequently needs to bring in market competition and supervision mechanism in information talent management; for another, the government must adhere to the principle of "being effortful and practical", expand government services to towns, provide humanize, automatic, practical self-service equipment, develop beneficial-to-people mobile phone apps, and invest money, education and energy for the efficient operation of new media government affairs.

4. Promote the process of democracy and rule of law, and strengthen the implementation of specific administrative acts.

I. New media propels China's process of democracy and rule of law.

The construction of the new media platform and the maintenance of the network environment also need to

improve the network rule. Countries around the world have different approaches to the establishment and improvement of public participation in policy making through the new media. For example, the United States legislated for computer systems as early as 1977. At that time, the America network rule of law construction has been sound. The implementation of the law at the level of multi-head and management system, in which the Internet has been divided into different departments to supervise, and the network management system and institutions have been set up based on the different situation in America. In China, how to manage the computer network plate, how to integrate the Internet, and how to carry out information feedback and supervise—in these areas, Chinese government also needs to make more efforts to study and refine, including improving and perfecting the government information, disclosure system, administrative procedure system, accountability system, etc. To some extent, the completion and exchange speed of the new media promote the speed and height of China's democratization process, and also promote the formation of the ruling society.

II. Intensify supervision and administer in accordance with the law.

All government actions should be subject to and able to withstand scrutiny. Due to the lag of information and the limitation of the target audience, traditional media may greatly hinder government information dissemination and public supervision, which definitely breeds many abuses and misunderstandings.

The contradictions between governments and the public often lead to a variety of social incidents, resulting in bad influence. And new media's development may resolve this contradiction, because its convenience and its dissemination breadth and depth may quickly set up a bridge of communication between the public and governments, forcing governments to develop flatteningly, which also helps bring the supervision of new media and the means of governance into the statutory scope and limit its influence to what is manageable.

On the other hand, new media can assist in the restoration of the event truth by virtue of high technology and efficient communication and other diverse characteristics, and form a strong public opinion supervision environment for the local government's behavior, which is more conducive to promoting the sequencing and standardization of the local government's administrative behavior. Only by implementing administration by law can the government get the trust of the public to enhance the credibility of the government.

III. Strengthen the construction of Internet ethics, and realize the self-discipline of internet users.

The concealment of the network society leads to less moral constraints, and the imperfection of the legal system makes the network morality depend on user's own behavior standards. The interactivity and freedom of the network also results in a complicated network environment. Therefore, the lack of network morality is not conducive to the promotion of government credibility to a certain extent. But this does not mean that the Internet is beyond the law. Local governments can deal with the existing Internet problems through the following two ways: One is to take some measures to limit the users' improper behavior and promote the network moral sound, such as restraining individual behavior and sticking to citizens' moral by Juvenile model and real-name registration law to restrain individual behavior, stick to citizen morals; the other is to purify cyberspace, strengthen moral education among internet users, and guide them to participate in online interaction in a standardized manner, such as introducing the related network activities, including summoning, guiding, and advocating, as well as spreading laws and regulations by holding lectures, seminars and other ways. These positive assistances can effectively improve the quality of Internet users, and meanwhile provide a clean network environment for the society, increase the government control efficiency and improve the

credibility of the government.

IV. Improve the quality of citizens, strengthen their understanding of democracy and the rule of law, so that the spirit of the rule of law spreads widely.

Since the implementation of the education poverty alleviation plan, China has made great efforts to improve the quality of its citizens and significantly enhanced the modernization of education. By the end of 2019, the completion rate of compulsory education in China had reached 94.8 percent. But at present, the quality of education in our society is not that high with the average quality still relatively low compared with developed countries. The citizen's herd mentality is terribly serious, so the public is exceptionally easy to be misled by those with ulterior motives. Therefore, it is imperative to advocate quality education. Only by improving the ability to distinguish wrong information and analysis ability can the public's cognition and tolerance of the government be improved fundamentally.

The credibility of the government is the accumulation of trust between the government and the public. The maintainers should not only include the government, but also the citizens themselves. As a result, the collective awareness of democracy and the rule of law by the citizens can effectively maintain the credibility of the government and make the public not blindly follow it.

Research Conclusions

The media environment has changed with time. New media forms have influenced the public's seeing and hearing, and the ways people understanding and obtaining information have become more and more diversified. Through the Internet, the public can timely and effectively understand the work of the government, exercise their civil rights, express their interest demands, and supervise the implementation of the government's public power. The impact and challenge brought by the new media environment to the shaping and promotion of government credibility are obvious. In this case, the governments should adjust in time, maintain the image, have a correct understanding of the impact of the development of new media on administration, and make general reforms. Moreover, the government should adhere to citizens-centered political construction and reform, improve the government service functions in the field of network, and actively face the challenges of the network era, so as to constantly promote their credibility.

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