

Interactive Ritual on Social Media: The Micro Mechanism of Brand Public Opinion Events

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Abstract

The formation mechanism of enterprise network public opinion events is still unclear. Based on the theory of interactive ceremony, this paper analyzes three local enterprises in China and constructs the mechanism of enterprise network public opinion events. The research finds that, first of all, the framework established based on the interactive ritual theory mainly contains four elements: Shared emotions, focus of attention, task bubble and event-related artifacts, which influence each other and lead to the spread of public opinions. Finally, the communication of public opinion has caused different degrees of positive or negative impact on corporate images. Therefore, corporate managers can better control corporate image from the perspective of communication of public opinion. This paper constructs the general mechanism of enterprise network public opinion event, which has guiding significance for enterprise public opinion event management.

Keywords

Interactive Ritual Theory, Corporate Image, Public Opinion Propagation.

1. Introduction

As the network space is gradually embedded into consumer's daily life, Internet public opinion space is crucial to the brand image of enterprises. Because of the scandal of leaking users' information, Facebook caused a great uproar on the Internet. HaiDilao which is a famous restaurant in China has won a good reputation on the social network platform by its excellent service. These facts fully show that the network space has become a major factor in shaping the corporate image, and the influence of network public opinion on the corporate brand is an important topic.

Reviewing the existing literature, many people have studied this issue from the perspective of public opinion in cyberspace, information communication, and brand marketing, while few have studied interpersonal interaction from a micro perspective. The existing data show that the positive measures taken by enterprises may bring both positive or negative public opinion news, and vice versa. This phenomenon cannot be explained by the existing research, only return to the perspective of interpersonal interaction in cyberspace if we want to solve this problem. This article is based on the interaction ritual theory, and selected the Chinese three representative enterprises of Internet public opinion events as examples including HaiDilao Hotpot, Luckin Coffee, and QuanJude analyzes the brand in the cyberspace public opinion formation process, sets up an explaining mechanism of the brand of public opinion. In the theory, it is an extension of Interactive Ritual Theory it provides theoretical guidance for the enterprise image.

2. Theoretical background

2.1 The evolution of interactive ritual theory

American sociologist Randall Collins further developed the interactive ritual theory based on Owen Goffman. He argues that all human interaction takes place within a context, and that context is therefore at the heart of the explanation of this micro-sociology.^[1] He pointed out that the core mechanism of interactive services is focused on each other and emotional joint, think the ceremony

is a feeling of mutual concern and attention mechanism.^[2] It formed a kind of instantaneous shared between reality, promote the formation of group solidarity and symbol of group membership brings emotional energy to each participant, so that they have the confidence, enthusiasm and the desire to do they think that the morality of things.^[3] However, with the development of the era, the success of the network technology research and development to overcome the obstacle distance. Meanwhile, has carried on further research, many scholars agree that interaction ritual theory also applies to cyberspace. Topic, when people start on Weibo sharing with the comment immediately.^[4] When more and more people pay attention to this matter, the corresponding symbol will be generated, so as long as someone mentions this symbol, people will think of this networking event. Visible, interaction ritual theory is applicable in the network.

2.2 The background of managing companies' image

The evolution of online public opinions on different events of enterprises is complex. And grasping the behavioral characteristics and interactive relationships of netizens during the evolution of public opinions is conducive to the management of public opinions. Most previous studies analyzed its development stage from the perspective of communication, so as to provide a scientific basis for companies to adopt effective public opinion guidance schemes. Under the background of the formation of public opinion, it has posed great challenges to the image management of enterprises.

On February 26, 2016, Wei Zexi went on Zhihu wrote an article that will be Baidu search, and the stock price of Baidu fell dramatically on that day.^[5] The example shows the great effect of network public opinion on the company's management. The existing literature shows that the countermeasures of public opinion governance are very important to restore the corporate image. Because of the widespread negative impact of the Wei Zexi incident, Chinese government regulators quickly to set up a joint investigation team. It redeemed Baidu's corporate image.^[5] However, the existing researches are too macroscopic, more attention should be paid to the impact of public opinion behaviors in cyberspace on enterprises. This paper will start with the study of behavioral science Interactive ritual theory.

2.3 Interaction ritual theory apply in companies' management

2.3.1. The ceremony of the network consensus and its consequences

The core mechanism of the interactive ritual theory is a high degree of mutual attention, which is an interactive state between subjects.^[6] Along with the interaction of body language, the emotional interaction between subjects and participants is triggered to form a high degree of emotional commonality, thus forming a connection with cognitive symbols. Based on this mechanism, this paper establishes an interpretation framework of public opinion events in enterprises. It is worth noting that the actual presence of a group is one of the prerequisites for the occurrence of interactive rituals. It is easier for the body to sense other people's emotional states, interact with gestures and emotions, and identify Shared focus points. However, as the network gets rid of the geographical restrictions, people's gathering also gets rid of the objective restrictions of the real environment. People can gather freely according to their own interests, ideas and values, thus objectively dividing the boundary between groups and rituals. Access becomes random and flexible.^[7]

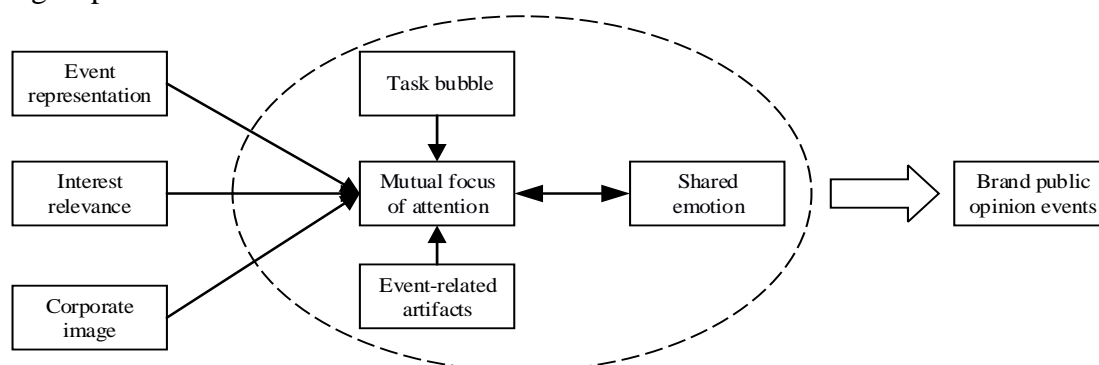


Figure 1. Concept model

The online public opinion event itself is the focus of people's attention. For example, Luckin Coffee hopes to establish a coffee system against Starbucks in China, and has obtained a large amount of investment and listed in the United States. Luckin has the money to get lots of people to drink good, cheap coffee with crazy subsidies. Luckin, however, is losing money and making phone calls. The company's financial fraud amounted to 2.1 billion yuan, which was dubbed the "light of domestic goods" absurd title. The Luckin coffee scam itself was the focus of attention, with comments on the site forming two common emotions. The positive emotions were mostly pride and glory, saying Luckin had beaten Starbucks, but the negative ones included anger and criticism, accusing them of financial fraud. At the same time, when more and more people participate in the discussion of the focus of the event, it will arouse the common emotions of all people, and the common emotions will further promote people's attention to the focus of the event. It can be seen that the two influence each other and complement each other.

In addition to paying attention to and sharing emotions, field refers to the virtual space and barrier separating public opinion participants from ordinary netizens. People in the region are speakers related to public opinion, while ordinary Internet users are people outside the region. The physical elements in Task Bubble, such as a photo or a sound recording, also play a role in promoting the spread of public opinion, so that more people will pay more attention to an event of public opinion. For example, Haidilao hotpot is well known to the public for its excellent service, and videos of Haidilao employees celebrating customers' birthdays have been widely circulated on the Internet, which makes people pay more attention to Haidilao hotpot. Therefore, under the joint action of these four factors, the network public opinion event is generated.

2.3.2. Factors influencing the focus of attention

There are many factors influencing network public opinion, including three aspects in general. We pay attention to the typicality of public opinion events in some typical cases, such as interest correlation of Internet users, and the impression contrast of a corporate image, which are the most prominent.

First of all, from the event itself, the public opinion event is representative. This means that similar events can be seen everywhere in our lives, to attract widespread attention. If the incident is special, people will probably just gossip about it and quickly forget. For example, because of the takeaway packaging problem, McDonald's spilled a drink while unpacking a drink and scalded the star (who was pregnant), which aroused wide attention and discussion. It indicating that the takeaway packaging safety problem is very common in the real life. Another example is the financial fraud of Luckin coffee, which is quite common in China's A-stock market. There are also a lot of old restaurants like QuanJude, such as GouBuli in Tianjin, they cheat the consumers which is not a short-term problem. Therefore, a seemingly single public opinion event reflects many practical problems and social phenomena. Thus arousing the resonance of everyone, so it will become a focus of attention.

Secondly, from the perspective of internet users, the occurrence of internet public opinion events is a typical event of public opinion, and it is related to the benefits of internet users so that more and more internet users pay attention to the network events and gradually increase the degree of attention. For example, many netizens are concerned about the financial fraud of Luckin coffee, not the essence of the fraud that the company will do anything even bad behaviors to gain profits, but consider that Luckin coffee has gone bankrupt and its coupons have not been used up yet. Many netizens immediately used the discounts in their accounts after the financial fraud happened to Luckin coffee.

Correlation, in the end, the representativeness of public opinion and the interests of Internet users will only affect users attention to events, but positive or negative influence of public opinions can only from the perspective of the corporate image factors if the enterprise has always been a positive image to appear in people's hearts, the negative impact of network public opinion is often not so absolute, these firms are more likely to win the recognition of netizens and forgive. For example, in the case of Haidilao price rise, netizens were temporarily dissatisfied with the growth, but Haidilao quickly apologized and lowered the price. Meanwhile, Haidilao has always been known for its excellent

service, so people have a favorable impression of it. On the contrary, if an enterprise itself is not liked by everyone, then if it does something wrong, public opinions tend to produce a one-sided form. For example, QuanJude canceled the service fee and lowered the price of its dishes, which was a positive action that netizens did not appreciate. Because Quanjude has been squeezing tourists from other places and its dishes were not tasty, many people did not have a good first impression of it.

3. Conclusion

This essay focuses on public opinion events in cyberspace. Through the theory of interactive rituals and three case studies, it finds that the ritual contents of public opinion in cyberspace include: firstly, the interest correlation between netizens and the public opinion events. Secondly, the universality of public opinion events. At last, the influence of the company's previous corporate image on public opinions. This essay demonstrates through examples that the interactive ritual theory is applicable in cyberspace, and sometimes positive actions and measures may not necessarily bring positive public opinion and positive influence on enterprises.

The contribution of this research is as follows, firstly, it expands the boundary of the theory of interactive ritual. As a theory of human interaction online which is rarely used to analyze the interpersonal interaction in cyberspace. This time I use it to study and analyze the influence of corporate public opinion on its image in cyberspace. While, it puts forward the evolution path of enterprise network public opinion. Previous studies usually start from the macro point of views, such as network governance. While, this essay starts from the micro point of view, and fills the gap in the research of network public opinion from the micro perspective of interpersonal interaction. Also, from the perspective of practical significance, it makes the company managers aware of the role of corporate image in the space and provides guidance helps for corporate image management and public opinion event response.

At the same time, this paper also has many deficiencies. For example, it only focuses on the impact of corporate network public opinion on its image in the Context of China. The benefits of establishing this theoretical model in the international context remain to be studied, follow-up studies can be conducted on the comparison of public opinion communication between domestic and foreign enterprises and cross-scenario studies.

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