Special Media Memory: A Study on the Construction of City Image by Local Government Self-Media in the Post-Epidemic Era

Shihan Wang[1*], Ruoxiao Li[2], Tiyao Wang[3]
[1]Shenzhen University,Shenzhen 518060,China
[2]Communication University of Zhejiang, Hangzhou 310018,China
[3]Communication University of China,Beijing 100024,China
[*]Corresponding author E-mail: 757852032@qq.com

Abstract: With the advent of the post-epidemic era, local government media are playing an increasingly important role in various aspects, even in the construction of city image. Based on media memory theory, this paper analyzes the current communication strategies of local government media and how they affect the image of cities. This paper uses a questionnaire survey to explore the issue of local government media's influence on city image construction, and shows that all three communication strategies have a positive relationship with the audience's "media memory". At the same time, the perception of city image is positively influenced by its media memory. In the context of the new crown epidemic, this study provides ideas for local governmental media to positively build the local city image.

Keywords: media memory, city image construction, local government media, communication strategy

1 Introduction

In the post- epidemic era, epidemic prevention and control has entered the stage of normalized management, and local governments' personalized and regional epidemic prevention policies have become the basic means of grassroots governance. In this context, local governmental self-publishing media have shown differentiated communication strategies in the release of epidemic news. We observed that the positive epidemic prevention reports generated by the communication behaviors of some local health departments' governmental self-media shaped audiences' media memories of the city and played an important role in the construction of the city's image in the post-epidemic era. In this regard, we are curious: What kind of communication strategies did the local governmental media use to construct the media memory of the audience? How does this media memory construct the image of cities?

2 Literature review

2.1Literature review on the phenomenon of city image construction

The media plays a significant role in the construction of city image, and this phenomenon has led to a multi-perspective study of foreign scholars. Doosti, S., Jalilvand, M. R. , Asadi, A. , KhazaeiPool, J. and MehraniAdl, P. (2016) analyzed the construction of city image from the perspective of e- marketing in general, pointing out that electronic word-of-mouth marketing has a positive and significant impact on the overall image of the city, as well as a significant determinant of the intention to visit the overall city image. Foreign scholars Sadeque, S. , Swapan, M. S. H. , Roy, S.K. and Ashikuzzaman, M. (2022) conducted a general analysis of city image construction from the perspective of brand communication, pointing out that branding can enhance positive actions of residents, increase the retention rate, build a good city image, and have a positive impact on society. Foreign scholars Li, H. , Lien, C.-H. , Wang, S.W., Wang, T. and Dong, W. (2021) analyzed city image construction from the perspective of large- scale events in general, pointing out that large-scale events have an important influence on the image of the host city, and the image of the event is directly transferred to the image of the city.

In contrast, domestic scholars Zhao Hongxun and Yuan Peibo conducted a more detailed study on the construction of China's city image from the semiotic perspective of short videos, which showed that the construction of city image can be guided by various elements such as natural landscape, history and culture, iconic symbols, etc. , to guide users to produce and disseminate short videos related to city image, and play the advantages of short videos in the construction and dissemination of city image. The domestic scholar Dang Jie has conducted a more detailed study on the new path of city image construction in China from the aspect of digital media, and his research shows that the use of digital technology to create virtual cities can enable users to achieve a greater range of experience and participation in the city image. The domestic scholars Li Lina and Zhang Jianyu have conducted a more detailed study on the construction of China's city image from the perspective of brand communication, which shows that creating a brand culture in line with the theme of the city and using various communication means to "bundle" the brand with the city to become an important part of the city, thus becoming a new symbol of the city image in the eyes of the audience. The study shows that creating a brand culture that is relevant to the city's theme and using multiple communication tools to "bundle" the brand with the city becomes an important part of the city and thus becomes a new symbol of the city's image in the eyes of the audience.

In summary, although these studies have studied the construction of city image in terms of semiotics, digital media, and brand communication, they have not studied the construction of city image from the perspective of media memory, nor have they answered the question of what

kind of communication strategies local governmental media have used to construct the media memory of the audience and how this media memory constructs the city image. Therefore, it is necessary to study the influence of governmental media on the construction of city image from the perspective of media memory.

2.2 Literature review on the phenomenon of media memory

After the theory of media memory was proposed by American scholar Carolyn Cage in 2005, scholars at home and abroad have paid much attention to it and made a lot of research results.

The foreign scholar Fauteux Brian in the field of media memory has supplemented the theory by studying the phenomenon of focusing on residual media forms, and the restoration of old materials by contemporary art, which has a subtle but substantial impact of the past media memory on the present, shaping our view of the world today. Foreign scholars Henie Little, Ebbrecht Hartmann Tobias add to this theory in the field of social media by studying the phenomenon of users in a newly constructed response space with media memory, which can evoke users' engagement and enhance their social media participation initiatives. Foreign scholars Motti Neiger, in the field of digital media by studying the relationship between media memory and collective memory, complemented the theory by suggesting that the attributes in media memory provide different perspectives for the mediation of collective memory and that media play a role in building cultural memory and shared memories in the digital age.

Domestic scholars Wang Weiming and Mi Yalu, on the other hand, combine the actual phenomenon of China's anti-American aid spirit with media memory theory and propose that after constructing a new way of media memory, they have successfully shaped the group image of the heroic volunteer army and actively promoted the perpetuation of the anti-American aid spirit in contemporary times. Domestic scholar Yang Ling, on the other hand, combines the actual phenomenon of China's return to the millennium with media memory theory, and proposes that in the process of nostalgic media practice, the active use of current technology to preserve, reproduce or reconstruct the media aesthetics of the past is an important part of nostalgic cultural practice. Domestic scholars Sun Yijia, Yu Yuanyuan, and Shasha, on the other hand, combined the actual phenomenon of cultural heritage protection in China with media memory theory and propose that media memory can guard the cultural heritage of the Grand Canal by portraying individual memory, firmly building collective memory, and converging social memory.

However, these studies do not study the phenomenon of local political media constructing city image in the post- epidemic era from the perspective of media memory, and therefore do not answer the questions about through what kind of communication strategies local political media construct the media memory of audiences and how this media memory constructs city image.

3 Research Methodology

This paper uses the research method of questionnaire survey in an attempt to answer the above questions.

3.1Hypothesis building

Based on the above questions, the corresponding hypotheses are proposed here.

H1:The more timely the epidemic prevention information is released by local governmental self-media, the deeper the audience's media memory of the region.

H2:The more the number of epidemic prevention workers reported by local governmental self-media, the deeper the audience's media memory of the area.

H3:The more interactive the local governmental self-media is with the audience, the deeper the audience's media memory of the region.

H4:The deeper the audience's media memory of an area during an epidemic, the easier it is to improve the city image of that area.

To prove the hypothesis, this study used a questionnaire method to sample the overall population and create a questionnaire.

3.2Sampling method

In this study, the sampling method of judgmental sampling was adopted, and the questionnaire was widely distributed, and the respondents subjectively chose whether to fill it out or not.

After a sufficient number of questionnaires were collected, valid questionnaires were screened for data analysis based on the audience's responses to specific questions to ensure that the confidence interval was above 90% and the sampling error was below 5%.

This survey completed the process of data collection, collation and analysis on October 10, 2022.

The survey was mainly based on closed-ended questions, with the following main contents: (1) Basic information confirmation: including age, gender, and education level. (2) The descending statement part of the independent variable "local governmental self-media communication strategy". (3) The descending statements of the dependent variable 1 "audience's media memory". (4) The descending statements of the dependent variable 2 "city image". This questionnaire contains 10 questions, including 5 single-choice questions and 5 matrix questions. It was distributed online through WeChat friends circle, WeChat group and QQ space.

4 Findings and Discussion Points

This study investigates the communication strategy of local government media, the

audiences' media memories, and the construction of the image of the city by the government media through a questionnaire survey, and tries to answer the question of what kind of tension relationship exists between the three. The study found that the communication strategies of local governmental media in terms of timely information release, large number of prevention workers' reports, and high interactivity mentioned positively influenced the formation of audience's media memory, and the positive media memory of the audience effectively enhanced the audience's city image about the relevant city.

4.1Local government media's communication strategy constructs audience media memory actively

By observing the accounts of local governmental media such as Shenzhen Health Commission and Shanghai Publishing, we summarized three main communication strategies of such governmental media during the epidemic - timely release of epidemic prevention information, extensive coverage of epidemic prevention workers, and increased interactivity. These communication strategies are closely related to the media nature of local government media, the characteristics of the post- epidemic era, and the needs of the audience of these media, and therefore play a more prominent role. Based on this, we designed the questionnaire around these three strategies, tested the audience's perception and media memory of these three strategies, and further explored the correlation between them through data analysis.

Finally, we collected a total of 475 questionnaires, and through the analysis and statistics of the data, we found that 325 respondents had followed local government media, and the frequency of contact with information released by local government media was mostly 2-7 times per week, accounting for 47.1% of the total number of respondents. Next, the analysis of the descriptive questions shows that more respondents agree that the information released by local government media is timely, and the mean value of respondents' description of this variable is 4.0. The mean values of the descriptive statements "local government media have a large number of epidemic prevention workers" and "local government media often interact with users" are 3.9 and 3.4, respectively, based on which we conclude that the timeliness of information is the most prominent feature of local government media. We conclude that timely information is one of the most prominent features of local government media.

The Pearson correlation analysis showed that the timeliness of local government media, the number of epidemic prevention workers' reports, and the degree of interaction with users was significantly and positively correlated with the dependent variable "media memory" ($r=0.551$, $P=0.000$; $r=0.475$, $P=0.000$). 0.475, $P=0.000$; $r=0.513$, $P=0.000$), suggesting that the more timely the dissemination of epidemic prevention information, the greater the number of reports on epidemic prevention workers, and the stronger the interaction with users, the more effective the media memory of the city is in constructing the audience. Thus, our research hypotheses H1, H2, and H3 are supported.

The results of the above data analysis show that, among the three communication strategies

we observed, the role of "timely information dissemination" in the post-epidemic era is the most prominent strategy. At the same time, all three communication strategies showed positive correlations with audiences' "media memory". It can be seen that the more timely local government media release information, the greater the number of epidemic prevention workers' reports, and the stronger the interactivity, the more effectively they can construct audiences' positive media memory. Based on this, we further analyzed the relationship between audiences' media memory and their impressions of the city, and tried to explore the role of local government media in constructing the image of the city, which was also reflected in the questionnaire design.

4.2Positive media memory enhances city image

In order to effectively test the audiences' multidimensional perception of city image, we divided the city image into five dimensions: economic level, popularity, humanistic quality, convenience of living, and cultural atmosphere, and outlined the audience's perception of a city through their satisfaction with these five dimensions.

Meanwhile, in order to test the change of audience's perception of city image and further investigate the correlation between this change and the change of audience's media memory, we asked the audience about their perceptions of city image before and after following local government media in the questionnaire design, and compared this in the data analysis process. We defined respondents' perception of city image before following local governmental media as "city image 1" and after following local governmental media as "city image 2", and calculated the difference between the two to find the variable "city image enhancement". The same Pearson correlation analysis was used to find that media memory and city image enhancement showed a significant positive correlation ($r=0.109$, $p=0.05$), which shows that the deeper the audience's media memory of a city, the more likely they are to have a deeper impression of the city, thus our research hypothesis H4 was also supported.

Based on the results of the above data analysis, we conclude that the audience's perception of the city image will be positively changed by its media memory. According to the previous conclusion, the media memory is constructed by the communication activities of the media under the domination of certain communication strategies. It can be logically deduced that the communication strategy of local government media can further positively construct the city image by influencing the audience's media memory, and there is a logical chain of mutual influence among the three variables in this study.

5 Summary and Reflection

5.1Local government media attach importance to discourse and show good image with their advantages

Through the study was found that the communication strategies of local governmental media of timely information release, extensive coverage of epidemic prevention workers and strong interactivity had a positive impact on the formation of audience's media memory, and the positive media memory of the audience further enhanced the audience's image construction of the relevant city. For example, in early 2022, when the epidemic was serious in Shenzhen, an expectant mother had left a message for help under the official account of Shenzhen Health Care Commission, which replied with four words: "Send me your (phone) number". On the one hand, it built a friendly image for Shenzhen to pay attention to people's welfare; on the other hand, it also gave other local government media ideas for image building. In the post- epidemic era, local government media are assuming an increasingly important role in society. While releasing timely information on epidemic prevention, local government media should also pay attention to the improvement of communication strategies and enhance the interaction with users. It matters to pay attention to the importance of local government media discourse to the construction of city image in order to better present its city image.

5.2Homogenization of subjects in local government media and weakening of communication effects by micro content

There are still limitations and homogenization in the selection and innovation of subjects in local government media in epidemic reporting. In the epidemic coverage, local governmental media have reported on many individual subjects such as the deeds of advanced epidemic prevention personnel and the stories of citizens fighting against the epidemic. For example, the Propaganda Department of Panzhou City of the Communist Party of China (CPC) regularly publicizes the column of "Advanced People" through the public number of "Civilized Panzhou". To a certain extent, this has built up the social cohesion of the city, constructing a positive and united media memory to the audience and further shaping a harmonious and progressive image of the city. Nevertheless, in the practice of disseminating the deeds of advanced figures, the local government media, under the limitation of their expertise, generally have a tendency to homogenize the image of figures, which causes aesthetic fatigue to the audience's media memory and weakens the influence of the propaganda content. At the same time, concentrated coverage of individual events requires audiences to form media memories in a specific spatial and temporal context, which is not conducive to audiences' overall perception of the city's image, making it difficult to form a comprehensive construction of the city's image in terms of spiritual civilization, ecological style and economic development, and weakening the positive role of local government media in establishing the city's image in the context of the epidemic.

5.3Media Memory Construction Strategies for Local Government Media

Based on the current situation of local government media communication, we summarize some strategic paths that can be adopted for future local government media communication.

First, highlight the individual storytelling and gather the audience's emotional energy. The media plays not only the role of information publisher, but also the responsibility of connecting individual relationships to a certain extent. Human nature is social, and interacting and communicating with others is the need of individual socialization and survival. Therefore, individual stories are often the most resonant among media content types, forming potentially strong emotional relationships with audiences. This view can be supported by the findings of this study related to the high number of reports by local governmental media on epidemic prevention personnel. The media's presentation of individual stories can provide a focus for the audience's attention, so that the audience can develop a sense of emotional identification and reverence for the main character of the event by watching the related reports, and bring together the group identity and cohesion of the audience through the geographical relationship between the subject of the event and the audience of local government media.

Second, to strengthen the construction of urban visual system and provide multi- dimensional targets for urban memory. According to the research results, most of the current communication strategies of local government media tend to emphasize on emotional memory, but neglect the construction of audiences' visual memory. The concept of "news aggregation" proposed by Bennett and Lawrence points out that important images of news events, people and buildings are often introduced into subsequent news stories, which have a strong impact on the audience's media memory. Therefore, local government media can strengthen the presentation of images or visual images of the city when formulating communication strategies, integrate city memories into visual memories, and mobilize audiences' psychological emotions through visual memories, so as to finally achieve the purpose of enhancing audiences' perception of city images.

6 Conclusion

With the limitations of insufficient sample size and respondents' low understanding of governmental media, this study still has certain shortcomings. In future studies, researchers in the field of city image construction may need to pay more attention to the audience's use of local governmental media and include the communication of local governmental media itself into the discussion in order to more comprehensively study the media memory and city image construction functions of governmental media.

With the advent of the post- epidemic era, local governments' epidemic prevention work has become an important factor in city image evaluation. As an important gatekeeper of city image construction, local governmental media should pay attention to their communication strategies for epidemic prevention information, and improve the timeliness of coverage, the prominence of coverage targets and the interactivity of user relations, so that audiences can form positive media memories and construct a good city image.

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