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Digital media: Renewing the way people perceive and understand the world

The development of digital media relies on the advancement of the Internet and information technology, which not only improves the efficiency of message dissemination, but also accurately helps users to filter the information content that better meets their needs through algorithms. As a social animal, the development of digital media also meets the needs of more people to communicate with each other. Face-to-face information exchange is no longer necessary, and people can communicate with others in any place where they can connect to the Internet. In the age of the Internet, a large number of "celebrities" with great influence on the Internet have been born, and personal opinion "leaders" independent of the media, newspapers, etc. have been formed.

1. Informational digital media have lowered the cost of information dissemination and broadened the ways of information dissemination, so that everyone can be a "journalist".

After the industrial revolution, all kinds of real-time messages were delivered through newspapers, and people learnt about society by buying newspapers; then radio and television appeared, and more devices enriched people's access to information and news channels, and journalism flourished. However, it is undeniable that both newspapers, radio channels and TV stations rely on companies with economic power to build platforms as the direct disseminators of information, and people are more passive recipients of information. Therefore, people's access to information is more subject to the constraints of the information provider, and access to and control of information requires extremely high monetary costs.

Entering the Internet era, a huge change is the sharing of online information platforms. Through various websites and apps, people can learn about the different views of different people on the same event, and everyone can be a publisher of information. Admittedly, the construction of various websites still relies on large companies and enterprises, but the monetary cost that people need to pay for obtaining and publishing information has plummeted¹, everyone can be a reporter, and people's opinions are no longer drowned out by the reports of the big media, and the people's spontaneous awareness has been able to counteract the one-sided reporting of events by part of the media. In the information age, the voices of ordinary people are more easily heard and seen.

As a result of algorithmic settings, or for the purpose of controlling public opinion, many Internet companies set up blocking words, or restrict browsing and searching; or for commercial purposes, through the optimisation of algorithms, they provide individuals with preferences to stimulate consumption and change of mind. To a certain extent, Internet companies still hold the control and initiative of information retrieval, predicting individual behaviours by grasping people's search

¹ Enrico Coiera, Information Economics and the Internet, Journal of the American Medical Informatics Association, Volume 7, Issue 3, May 2000, Pages 215 – 221, <https://doi.org/10.1136/jamia.2000.0070215>

preferences and providing targeted "misinformation measures", while the general public's access to information is still subject to the constraints imposed by large corporations and is extremely susceptible to interference. This is also the problem that digital media has to solve, the boundary between providing better services and violating people's "right to privacy".

2. Informational digital media make it extremely easy to build consensus in groups, and also extremely easy to stir up emotions and create false group memories.

As discussed in class, a non-existent "horror film" or "concept" is created out of thin air and has a large and convinced following, and this huge attention can be further translated into clicks, traffic, advertisements, and money, Revenue. Sometimes there is a phenomenon on the Internet that when discussing an old TV series, netizens will elaborate a "plot" that never appeared in the TV series, and they are convinced that the plot has been "censored" and disappeared from the TV series, and when similar posts are posted on the Internet, there will be a large number of people who are convinced. When similar posts are posted on the Internet, there will be a large number of netizens agreeing that "yes, he is right, when I watched it as a child, it was also there, but it was censored". But is this really true? A reporter interviewed the director of the TV series, and the director said that it was not filmed, and the plot just does not exist².

This phenomenon is not only because of the "*Mandela Effect*"³, a kind of group memory. Also lies in the sharing of information platforms at the moment, the information explosion does not mean that we get the probability of each type of information is the same, but in order to better meet the needs of us are forced to be in the "information cocoon", more likely to be in the network platform "around that is the world! The world is all around us". More people with similar ideas or more susceptible to the influence of others to brush to the above post, they will unconsciously through the imagination to add details, the richness of the details to further strengthen the credibility, thus forming more people's "false memories".

Therefore, in the Internet era, there is a saying that is not quite appropriate but has some truth in it, "Rumour mongering has no cost". At the beginning, it may just be a joke or a sarcastic remark, but as tens of thousands of people see it, and everyone has a different understanding of it, people with the same understanding under the information cocoon are more prone to see each other's remarks and thus collective emotions are heightened. Emotions run high and rumour mongering occurs.

Digital media is a double-edged sword, as the voices of the underprivileged can be amplified through the internet to be heard by more people, but false information can also be seen by more people. However, it is good that the information can be seen, and if it can be seen, there is a chance to speak out.

² Prasad D, Bainbridge W A. The Visual Mandela Effect: Evidence for specific shared false memories in popular iconography[J]. *Journal of Vision*, 2021, 21(9): 2121-2121.

³ Prasad, D., & Bainbridge, W. A. (2022). The Visual Mandela Effect as Evidence for Shared and Specific False Memories Across People. *Psychological Science*, 33(12), 1971-1988. <https://doi.org/10.1177/09567976221108944>

3. The Internet era has given birth to a large number of online more appealing "net celebrities", they have a wide fan base, and many people are happy to imitate the net celebrity's personality, language, dress, etc., self media practitioners have also become a new profession, anyone can become a net celebrity⁴.

These people tend to gain widespread attention by amplifying a certain point in their personality or things, and thus some bloggers who gain traffic from their personalities or life videos are often questioned, "Are they really this kind of personality?" And in order to get attention, more people will "template to imitate" the famous "celebrities", in the IG and Tic Tok will often appear in a certain period of time a certain filter will edit the way to become a template of the option, everyone can shoot on the fly⁵! Everyone can shoot a "Netflix clip" of their own, a dozen seconds of video through the templated editing by countless people to click, comment. This raises another question: do people still have the ability or patience to pay attention to a certain event for a long time in the era of short videos?

The fragmentation of reading brings about the fragmentation of attention, and people who have been addicted to the Internet for a long time find it difficult to concentrate on something "delayed gratification", such as reading a famous book or studying every day. The fast pace of digital media has heightened the excitement and people are becoming more mentally inclined towards "present gratification", e.g. if I like a sound effect, I can watch dozens of videos with the same sound effect in a short period of time. As a result, there are also more people sharing how to go about quitting short videos online⁶.

In addition, in the business world all clicks and attention can be replaced with traffic, and many online bloggers insert adverts into their videos or live broadcast to sell their goods at a specific time. Undeniably, live selling is indeed conducive to promoting consumption, people in the favourite blogger channel to buy goods, in the hot and tight goods through the rush to buy a novel "sense of achievement"⁷. However, due to the large number of live broadcast selling need to squat, bloggers in order to attract more people to buy items in the signing of the contract will not allow vendors to give other sellers more favourable prices than their own, a large number of offline physical economy has been squeezed. Perhaps in the beginning consumers can indeed buy more favourable goods, but when a blogger to form a "relative monopoly" of the sales pattern, the offline entity economy is forced to bankruptcy, other bloggers do not have enough fans to constitute competition, the big bloggers have the right to decide the pricing, and consumers can

⁴ AbidinCrystal. "Mapping Internet Celebrity on TikTok: Exploring Attention Economies and Visibility Labours" *Cultural Science Journal* 12, no.1 (2020): 77-103. <https://doi.org/10.5334/csci.140>

⁵ Chris Zhu, Lawrence Hoc Nang Fong, Huicai Gao & Christy Ying Ni Liu (2023) When TikTok meets celebrity: an investigation of how celebrity attachment influences visit intention, *Current Issues in Tourism*, 26:17, 2762-2776, DOI: 10.1080/13683500.2022.2097058

⁶ Marshall Van Alstyne, Erik Brynjolfsson, "Could the Internet Balkanize Science?" *Science* 274, 1479-1480(1996). DOI:10.1126/science.274.5292.1479

⁷ Sari D M F P, Yulianti N M D R. Celebrity endorsement, electronic word of mouth and trust brand on buying habits: Georgios women fashion online shop products in Instagram[J]. *International journal of social sciences and humanities*, 2019, 3(1): 82-90.

only become forced to bear the burden.

4. In extreme cases, the role of digital media in disseminating information, consolidating information and easing people's anxieties is becoming more and more significant.

The lockdown caused by COVID-19 reduced people's access to information face-to-face. In the panic and tension of the epidemic, people were forced to isolate themselves in their homes and were eager to get more useful information to understand their current situation, as well as to watch other people's lives in order to alleviate their own anxieties. Due to the limited recording space, there were a lot of home shows during this period, and many people gained a lot of attention just by sitting in their houses and sharing interesting things, or just sleeping live. digital media reduced people's fear of the crisis to a certain extent, and even though they were forced to be in isolation, they were still able to learn about other people and share their own lives⁸.

In addition, the development of digital media has helped people to consolidate information quickly in the face of natural disasters. In my hometown, on 20 July 2021, we were hit by a heavy rainstorm. As an inland city that doesn't experience frequent rains, we were hit by an unprecedented short period of heavy precipitation that flooded countless underground car parks, tunnels, and metro stations, leaving countless people missing, and a large number of people who couldn't find a place to live because of the flooded roads. During this period, thanks to the internet, people spontaneously initiated online sharing of data files, where those who could provide accommodation, food, and medical supplies published their coordinates and arrival methods; those who needed to provide help posted instant information in another form. These instant messages are quickly matched in the private sector, and the private rescue teams are active in self-help, and when the crisis situation is resolved, the relevant information is deleted in order to prevent misleading others. In addition, social media homepage celebrities and internet celebrities actively retweeted the numerous flood cleanliness and hygiene guidelines issued by the hospital. These were pushed to the front page of the affected people in time through social media, which greatly protected the lives of the people.

Thus, digital media has greatly helped more people to obtain the hope of survival, and the integration of information has improved the allocation efficiency of all kinds of resources. This role is increasingly evident in extreme disasters.

Digital media has changed the way people communicate and exchange information, and has given rise to a new profession, the "self-media practitioner", and people are making better use of this new platform to communicate information and solve problems.

⁸ AbidinCrystal. "Mapping Internet Celebrity on TikTok: Exploring Attention Economies and Visibility Labours" *Cultural Science Journal* 12, no.1 (2020): 77-103. <https://doi.org/10.5334/csci.140>