News Participation in Social Media: The Impact of Value Elements on User News sharing Behavior

Mengyuan Pan

Zhengzhou University, Zhengzhou, China

2429135727@qq.com

Abstract. In the era of mobile Internet, social media has increasingly become an important channel for users' news participation, and news sharing has also become an important part of users' news participation. In social media, ordinary users play the role of secondary gatekeepers in the process of sharing news, and are influenced by certain value elements. This article is based on Schlard's theory of news value, selecting 15 WeChat users as research subjects. Through in-depth interviews, we understand the news value elements perceived by users and explore how their judgments of news value elements guide them to forward news. Research has found that users' news sharing behavior is guided by value factors such as situational applicability, public connectivity, and normative pressure.

Keywords: News sharing, News participation, Social media, News value.

1   Introduction

With the development of mobile Internet, social interaction and information consumption in people's daily life are constantly extending from offline to online. In the information consumption content of users, news and social functions are gradually showing a trend of cross integration in the process of people's offline and online lives. As the largest social media platform in China with the highest user penetration rate, news consumption and sharing on WeChat platform are very active. News users subscribe to and forward the content they are interested in through the WeChat official account, while viewing the news information forwarded by their WeChat friends, which leads to the synchronization of news production, dissemination and consumption. In the process of news dissemination, every user can share the news link they see in their social circle, and each user may become the audience for others to share the link. [1]The convenience of using WeChat mobile devices has made the news consumption model that was originally based on social media more common, becoming the main news consumption channel for many people. The gatekeeper of the channel is the friend in the WeChat address book. [2]So what are the factors that guide ordinary users to choose which news links to forward when they become disseminators and gatekeepers of news? As "news

value" serves as a guiding principle for professional journalists, is there any value element that is favored by ordinary users and has become a universal standard? This is exactly the question that this article attempts to explore.

2   Literature Review

There is no clear definition in academia regarding the news participation behavior of users on social media, but there is considerable research in this area. Peng Huaxin et al. (2023) explained the socialization shift of news participation from a philosophical perspective.[3] Hamidreza et al. (2020) found that social media content formats, such as photos or videos, have a significant impact on different types of user engagement behavior. [4]Oh J et al. (2018) identified the continuity of user engagement in interactive media, including initial click and read, followed by information evaluation and absorption, and ultimately information sharing or digital outreach, covering a range of behaviors such as reading, liking, forwarding, and commenting. [5]On this basis, Yang Guang (2023) conducted a more in-depth analysis of user news participation behavior. She pointed out that different user engagement behaviors imply different levels of openness and have different requirements for users. Reading news content is a relatively private behavior, but liking or commenting can be directly seen by other online users, while sharing represents the most public participation.[6]

Research on news sharing mainly focuses on two aspects. Firstly, it investigates the motivation of users to engage in news sharing behavior during news participation. For example, Chen Wanting (2023) and others explored the psychological motivation of people's willingness to share fake news from the perspective of audience psychology, using social fake news as materials, through two experiments. [7]Li Jingjing (2023) explores the mechanism of online news forwarding based on WeChat platform from a psychological perspective. The second is to study the influencing factors of news sharing. [8]Zhong Lishan (2020) analyzed the influencing factors of news sharing behavior among WeChat Moments users born in the 1990s from the perspective of rational behavior theory. [9]Yang Yuru (2020) analyzed the phenomenon of online carnival in Weibo news forwarding, aiming to study the psychological communication mechanism of carnival audiences. [10]He Yi (2023), from the perspective of flow experience, explored the influencing factors of the willingness of WeChat friends to forward news of COVID-19. [11]Liao Shengqing (2021) and others viewed forwarding behavior as a way of interpersonal communication from the perspective of self presentation theory, and studied the impact of relationship strength on WeChat users' willingness to forward news.[12] Although scholars have studied the influencing factors of news sharing from different perspectives, there is a lack of analysis from the perspective of news value elements, which also lays the foundation for the research in this article.

Danish scholar Schrader tentatively proposed the concept of "value" perceived by users towards news media. In 2015, Schrader expanded the theory of value from four dimensions to seven dimensions. These seven dimensions are: time consumption, pub-

lic connection, normative pressure, possibility of participation, price, technological at-traction, and situational applicability. [13]Schrader's research on the value of news from the perspective of the audience is very inspiring for the research in this article.[14]

Based on the research of scholars on the theory of news value and considering prac-tical factors, this paper will define the elements of news value from the following three dimensions: situational applicability, public connection, and normative pressure. As shown in the table 1 below:

Table 1. Theoretic Framework

analytical dimensions	The connotation
Situational applicability	News participation (referred to as news sharing in this article) must be applicable to the time of sharing. It includes two dimensions: duration and context.
Public connection	Public connectivity refers to any news content that can help you maintain relationships with others or a larger social network.
Normative pressure	Normative pressure refers to group pressure, which refers to the pressure that individuals feel from others when taking a specific behavior, that is, being influenced by the normative expec-tations of others.

3   Research Methods

This paper adopts the research method of in-depth interviews. The initial interviewees will be obtained from the researcher's own WeChat friends, and the snowball sampling method in non random sampling will be used, which means that the interviewees will be asked to recommend their personal "friend circle news sharing active users". A total of 15 people will be interviewed through sampling. Table 1 presents the basic infor-mation of all respondents, with an age range of 16 to 60 years old and diverse occupa-tions, to examine the understanding of social media news sharing among different age and occupational groups.

Table 2. Basic Information of Respondents

Number	Gender	Age	Occupational	Interview Method	News sharing Quantity (Year)
1	Male	16	Student	Face to face interview	6
2	Female	23	Postgraduate	Face to face interview	25
3	Male	26	Director	WeChat voice	98
4	Male	29	Private Enterprise Employee	WeChat Video	53
5	Male	32	Veterans	Face to face interview	13
6	Male	37	Journalist	WeChat voice	60
7	Female	38	University Teachers	WeChat voice	33
8	Male	40	Civil Servants	Face to face interview	23
9	Male	41	State owned Enterprise Employees	Face to face interview	20
10	Female	46	Primary School Teacher	WeChat voice	16
11	Male	49	Freelancers	WeChat voice	10
12	Female	50	Freelancers	Face to face interview	7
13	Male	52	Doctors	Face to face interview	12
14	Female	55	High School Teachers	Face to face interview	15
15	Male	60	self-employed individuals	Face to face interview	13

The interview in this study attempts to explore the cognitive status of ordinary WeChat users towards news value elements when sharing news from the perspective of news users. All interviews were completed by the author of this article from December 2023 to February 2024, with a duration ranging from 40 to 50 minutes. All interviews were recorded and transcribed with the consent of the interviewees, and encoded and analyzed using Nvivo software.

4   Analysis and Findings

4.1   Situational Applicability Based on "Temporal Specificity"

Situational applicability is an important dimension that affects the audience's news sharing behavior. Schrader's theory of value divides the time dimension into two aspects: time consumption and context. This is all from the perspective of news users, reflecting their subjective behavior and cognition, and has strong personalization.

Regarding the question of whether time consumption will affect users' news sharing behavior, respondents believe that "news" text itself should not have too much time consumption. When asked whether the time required to read a news article will affect reading time, some respondents believe that:

"Yes, because I have seen too much fragmented information and often browse short videos. When I read long news articles, I lack patience." (Interviewee LWJ, male, private enterprise employee).

Another viewpoint is that time consumption is related to the content and type of news, and for serious and in-depth hard news, long time consumption is acceptable.

"I usually prefer long news, such as in-depth reports from the New Beijing News, China Youth Daily, and Southern Weekend... When I see some fresh and sharp viewpoints, I also share them on my social media." (Interviewee NY, female, student).

Among the 15 interviewees who conducted in-depth interviews, two dimensions of news length and difficulty were used to measure the time consumption of news reading. The conclusion is that the majority of respondents believe that time consumption does not affect the reading and sharing of news. Based on the conclusion of in-depth interviews, this article believes that time consumption is not a factor that affects news sharing, and therefore does not include time consumption as an influencing factor in situational applicability.

Situation refers to a special time point where news sharing on Moments occurs. The reason why context needs to be considered is because it is a very common phenomenon on social media. Through the analysis of the text, this article first screened news links related to the context dimension and found a total of 19, including two situational themes: "Henan University Celebration" and "Zhengzhou's First Snow". Under the same contextual theme, there exists dense sharing of the same or similar content. This situational aspect is a representation of social network connections, and news sharing at situational time points is a way of constructing self-identity. For example, a interviewee said, "It feels like putting a label on it. For example, if I'm from Henu, when I'm browsing this social circle, there's a feeling that I'm proud to be from Henu." (Interviewee NY, female, student).

Based on the above analysis, this article believes that "time consumption" is not a factor that affects respondents' judgment of news value. "Situation" is an important dimension of news value, which expands the time dimension of news from timeliness to the pursuit of specificity. The context reflects the time, place, and specific context required for the use of news, emphasizing the particularity of time, that is, the special significance that a news item has for the current "me" at that time.

4.2   Public Connections Based on "Daily Value"

News is a window for ordinary users to understand the world, and the public connectivity of news is reflected in any news content that can help you maintain relationships with others or a larger social network. In in-depth interviews, the interviewee's perception of the value of a news item's content dimension is obtained by asking "What kind of content do you prefer to share in your social circle" and "What content do you prefer to see in your social circle?". The interview found that respondents are more concerned about the way and degree of connection between individuals and their social networks, and prefer to be able to connect through social platforms and the world around them in daily life. Based on interviews, daily value is reflected in two aspects: first, closeness to one's own life; The second is the practicality and fun of the content itself. As the interviewee said, "sharing news related to one's own life is because these contents are helpful for one's own and those of relatives and friends around me. Sometimes I also forward news that I am interested in to my social circle..." (Interviewee LY, female, teacher).

Proximity initially mainly refers to the distance in geographical space, and people are always more interested in what happens around them. In the era of traditional media, proximity can often only be achieved by shortening the geographical distance between news events and audiences. In the era of the internet, audiences can actively search for content that is psychologically similar to themselves by searching for news from around the world, personalized subscriptions, and other means. Some scholars have also pointed out that proximity includes spatial and psychological aspects and is upgraded to "customization".[15]

With the support of network technology, "proximity" extends from a simple geographical concept to a psychological concept. The audience pays more attention to what happens around them and pays attention to the daily news happening in their social circle. Through interviews, it can be found that most WeChat users share news content based on their own real life, which is the dissemination of information about changes in their surroundings. In social media, proximity is closely related to interpersonal communication. The news needs and interpersonal communication of users are bound together, and news receiving behavior is directly influenced by the interpersonal relationships in their social circle.

4.3   Based on Active and Passive Group Norms

The normative pressure defined in Schlard's theory of value comes from group norms. If a certain media enjoys a reputation within a group, or if a news article is widely

spread, then based on this normative pressure, individual audiences may also participate in the use of such news. Normative pressure includes both active and passive.

The proactive normative pressure of users manifests as conformity. In social circles, "conformity" is manifested as sharing high proximity news based on interpersonal relationships in social circles. WeChat Moments not only influence people's communication and interaction methods, but also form different relationship circles centered around oneself in the virtual field.[16] Because everyone's circle of friends is further subdivided into small circles, which may have important common friends. In this situation, it is easy to generate sharing behavior due to conformity. For example, when asked what kind of news the interviewee ZWT (male, state-owned enterprise employee) tends to share, he replied, "The first way is to open his social circle and find that many colleagues share it. I also share it, indicating that I am just like everyone else."

The manifestation of passive normative pressure on users is "helping transfer". As an instant messaging software, WeChat's most basic function is to transmit information. In order to achieve further dissemination, some disseminators may request the help of their contact list friends to forward, abbreviated as "help sharing". Winning attention and sharing and spreading messages to friends in virtual communities can enhance emotional and interactive relationships between friends in real life, which is a way to maintain interpersonal relationships. Out of the 15 interviewees interviewed by the researchers, 10 all believed that this is a low-cost way of maintaining interpersonal relationships, which can promote social interaction with just a casual move and is a very cost-effective behavior. For example, the interviewee PXL (male, veteran) said, "If the relationship is good, if he asks me to transfer, I will transfer. It's not difficult to transfer, and I won't lose face in front of friends.". Other respondents also stated that they will first consider the content dimension of the links they are asked to forward, and if the content is acceptable to themselves, they will "help forward" it. sharing in social media, if it does not affect one's self-image, is a behavior that promotes the increase of cultural capital.

5   conclusion

In the era of social media, news sharing is an important phenomenon between news production and news reception. The traditional role of gatekeeper was monopolized by professional journalists, but now when news content is released, ordinary users become the second gatekeeper after becoming professional journalists, and they share valuable content through social platforms. Whether news sharing behavior can occur is an important criterion for measuring the value of a piece of news by the audience. Meanwhile, the news sharing behavior of users can be explained by the theory of news value, which means that their news sharing behavior is guided by value elements such as situational applicability, public connectivity, and normative pressure, but situational time consumption factors have not affected their news sharing.

Research has found that although the perceived news value of users can be explained from multiple dimensions, they all inherently point to the social transformation of news values. In a social context, news consumption has social characteristics, and people's

demand for news consumption is increasingly biased towards social needs, which also affects the transformation of news value towards socialization. News is an important foundation for contemporary social interaction .[17] The conversational communication landscape constructed by social media allows news information to be disseminated in daily life through user comments and shares. Users interact through likes, comments, shares, and other means, and also complete the connection between the audience's individual identity and social identity, as well as between the audience and the audience. This discovery to some extent enriches the previous research perspective on news sharing in social media circles, providing new ideas for understanding news participation in social media, and also a localization attempt on the theory of news value.

References

1. Liao Shengqing, Shu Jinhan. The Impact of Title Validity on News Sharing on New Media Platforms [J]. Modern Communication (Journal of Communication University of China), 2023,45 (03): 133-142. DOI: 10.19997/j.cnki. xdcb.2023.03.020.
2. Zhang Xinyi. Research on WeChat News Sharing Behavior from the Perspective of Social Cognitive Theory and Online Social Capital Integration [D]. Nanjing University, 2018.
3. Peng Huaxin and Li Haimin "Philosophical Interpretation of News": Rational Rhetoric and Knowledge Communication of "News Participation" in the Internet Age [J]. Journal of Jiangxi Normal University (Philosophy and Social Sciences Edition), 2023,56 (06): 103-112.
4. Shahbaznezhad H, Dolan R, Rashidirad M. The Role of Social Media Content Format and Platform in Users' Engagement Behavior[J].Journal of Interactive Marketing, 2021, 53. DOI:10.1016/j.intmar.2020.05.001.
5. Oh J, Bellur S, Sundar S S. Clicking, Assessing, Immersing, and Sharing An Empirical Model of User Engagement with Interactive Media[J].SAGE Publications, 2018 (5). DOI: 10.1177/0093650215600493.
6. Yang Guang, She Jialing. News Encounters in Social Media: The Impact of Platform Heuristic Clues on User News Participation [J]. News and Communication Research, 2023,30 (03): 108-125+128.
7. Chen Wanting, He Qinghua. The impact of incorrect value perception on the willingness to share fake news on social media: a study on the psychological motivation of audience selection and information sharing [J]. Journalist, 2023, (02): 60-70. DOI: 10.16057/j.cnki.31-1171/g2.2023.02.006.
8. Li Jingjing. Forwarding of Online News: The Role of Individual Characteristics and Social Relationship Characteristics [D]. Yunnan Normal University, 2023. DOI: 10.27459/d. cnki. gyrfc.2023.000353.
9. Zhong Lishan. Research on the influencing factors of news sharing behavior among "post-90s" WeChat Moments users based on rational behavior theory [D]. Zhengzhou University, 2020. DOI: 10.27466/d. cnki. gzzdu. 2020. 001965.
10. Yang Yuru. Research on Online Carnival Phenomenon in Social Media News Forwarding [D]. Bohai University, 2020. DOI: 10.27190/d.cnki. gjzsc.2020.000110.
11. He Yi. Research on the influencing factors of college students' willingness to forward news of COVID-19 in WeChat friend circle from the perspective of flow experience [D]. Guangxi University, 2023. DOI: 10.27034/d.cnki.ggxiu.2023.001237.

12. Liao Shengqing, Li Mengqi. Research on Relationship Strength, Self presentation Motivation, and User Forwarding Intention in Social Media: A Case Study of News Forwarding on WeChat [J]. Modern Communication (Journal of Communication University of China), 2021-43 (06): 149-15.
13. Sun Jiayu, Chen Tangfa. Understanding the two logics of news value: commodity dominance and service dominance. International News, 2022, 44 (02): 6-19. DOI: 10. 13495/ j. cnki. cjjc. 2022.02.004.
14. Kim Christian Schrøder. (2011). Audiences are inherently cross-media: audience studies and the cross-media challenge.
15. Li Qin, The Positioning and Construction of News Value in the Third Media Era [J]. Contemporary Communication, 2015, (04): 41-44+48.
16. Zhang Xuebiao, Ou Jian. Interpreting WeChat's interpersonal communication from the perspective of relationship space construction. News and Writing, 2014, (08): 35-37.
17. Wang Chenyao. News users: a group that urgently needs to be re understood. Nanjing Social Sciences, 2016 (01): 115-121. DOI: 10.15937/j.cnki. issn1001-8263.2016.01.017.