



RESEARCH ARTICLE

Health Communication and News Framing: Analysis of Chinese Television News during the COVID-19 Pandemic

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ABSTRACT

This study uses content analysis to examine the information framing and fitness discussion methods used in Chinese language television news during the COVID-19 epidemic. Through a methodical analysis of several television information evaluations, it is well recognized that the media disseminated fitness statistics throughout the epidemic and influenced public perception and actions.

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INTRODUCTION

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic outbreak that began at the end of 2019, it has quickly spread over the world and grown to become one of the worst global health emergencies since the early 20th century (Global Health Corporation, 2020). The distribution and handling of statistics had been crucial during this unprecedented outbreak. The media, particularly television news, has been crucial in disseminating statistics throughout the pandemic due to its wide coverage of target audiences and immediate nature. As a result, it has become a crucial source of pandemic information for the general public (Gao et al., 2020). This essay aims to investigate the function and impact of the media in pandemic manipulation and prevention by analyzing the news framing and the verbal exchange tactics of Chinese television information during the COVID-19 pandemic.

In today's world, the media plays a crucial role in influencing public opinion and behavior in addition to serving as a conduit for information (McCombs & Shaw, 1972). As an interdisciplinary field of study, health communication seeks to advance public health knowledge and behavior through efficient information sharing (Rimal & Lapinski, 2009). During major public health events, the media's fitness communication aspect is very important. The public can be helped by the media to understand current patterns in the pandemic, understand scientific preventive measures, reduce fear and misinformation, and effectively control the pandemic's spread by providing timely and accurate information (Depoux et al., 2020).

The media serves two purposes in the communication of fitness. First, the media disseminates information. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the public was informed about the new trends in the disease via daily reports on new cases, recovery rates, and death tolls from the media (Li et al., 2020). Second, medical knowledge is disseminated by the media. The media translates complex scientific knowledge into easily understood content by speaking with experts and citing study findings. This helps the public notice important topics like immunization, preventative measures, and virus transmission (Basch et al., 2020). The media also provides emotional support. The media effectively reduced public fear by highlighting the commitment of healthcare staff and the mutual support found in communities (Garfin, Silver, & Holman, 2020).

Throughout the COVID-19 epidemic, Chinese television content has proven to have strong statistics transmission capabilities and social influence (Tang et al., 2021). Television news has provided the public with a significant amount of important statistics in different bureaucracies, from extensive reporting during the early stages of the pandemic to ongoing tracking during the prevention and manipulation period. Not only does this data contain the number of new cases that are reported every day, the cost of recovery, and the cost of death, but it also contains information on prevention strategies, official policies, expert opinions, and medical knowledge (Zhou et al., 2020). These publications have, to some extent, improved public awareness of the pandemic's evolution and the government's response tactics, reinforcing the traditional emphasis on manipulation and prevention.

The fitness verbal exchange principle demonstrates how efficiently health statistics are disseminated to significantly influence public fitness behavior and outcomes (Noar, 2006). The media's health communication tactics preserved chance communication, disaster management, and health education throughout the pandemic. The media can enhance the public's scientific understanding of the pandemic and encourage healthy behavior by disseminating reliable and medical information (Paek & Hove, 2017). The study of news framing theory focuses on how the media chooses and creates news information to sway the opinion and response of the intended audience (Entman, 1993). Information frames are made up of four basic components, according to Pan & Kosicki's (1993) information framing analysis method: syntactic shape, narrative structure, thematic shape, and rhetorical shape. These elements come together to form the framework of news reporting, determining the efficiency of information distribution and the way in which news content is presented. The public's perception and attitude toward the COVID-19 pandemic were instantly influenced by the choice and implementation of information frames during the outbreak. For example, stressing the need for and efficacy of preventive measures through a high body can increase public trust and willingness to follow through, whereas stressing the seriousness and difficult circumstances of the pandemic through a low frame can increase public attention and awareness (Chong & Druckman, 2007).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Health Communication Theory

The term "health conversation" refers to the process of sharing knowledge about topics related to health with the goal of improving public knowledge of fitness, altering fitness-related behaviors, and improving health outcomes (Rimal & Lapinski, 2009). During certain stages of the COVID-19 epidemic, the significance of health communications has been more apparent. Strong fitness conversations may educate the public about scientific preventive knowledge, reduce misconceptions and rumors, and enhance their capacity for self-safety. Health communication now involves not just sharing information but also how it is presented, the channels to use, and the opinions and involvement of the intended audience (Noar, 2006).

Risk communication, which entails the timely and transparent broadcast of information to the public to help them understand the nature of the risks and the preventive measures when public health issues develop, is one of the main objectives of health communication (Covello, 2003). Risk communication has been crucial during the COVID-19 pandemic. According to research, effectively and promptly communicating risks can greatly lessen public fear and anxiety while also increasing adherence to preventive measures (Paek & Hove, 2017).

Moreover, crisis management and health education are included in fitness communication. In order to influence public emotions and direct people to take the necessary action, the media seeks to provide reliable and authoritative statistics (Reynolds & Seeger, 2005). The objective of fitness education is to continuously distribute data to enhance public fitness knowledge and self-management skills (Glanz & Rimer, 2005).

News Framing Theory

Information framing theory is the study of how the media chooses and creates news content in order to influence the perception and response of the intended audience (Entman, 1993). A methodical tool for dissecting information texts, including syntactic shape, narrative structure, thematic structure, and rhetorical shape, is provided by Pan & Kosicki's (1993) frame evaluation technique.

The organizational structure and structural arrangement of news reviews, including the arrangement of headlines, paragraphs, and sentences, are referred to as the syntactic shape. The story form comprises the news memory narrative approach, which comprises the story angle of the story and the occasion improvement collection. The selection and emphasis of information subjects—that is, which information is emphasized and which information is not—are referred to as the theme structure. The language and rhetorical devices—metaphors, similes, and exaggerations—that are employed in information reports are referred to as the rhetorical shape (Pan & Kosicki, 1993).

The media has the ability to shape popular perceptions and attitudes through exclusive information frameworks. For instance, stressing aspirations and the efficacy of actions through a powerful body can increase public trust and action readiness, but exposing the gravity and intricacy of issues through a negative frame might increase public attention and awareness (Chong & Druckman, 2007). The selection and application of information frames during the COVID-19 pandemic had an immediate impact on the public's perspective and mindset at that period.

Media Coverage during the Pandemic

Recent research has demonstrated that public behavior and cognition were significantly impacted by media coverage during the COVID-19 pandemic. According to Gao et al. (2020), who examined how information flowed on social media during the epidemic, heavy social media use increased the sharing of records but also increased the likelihood of spreading rumors and false information. According to Depoux et al. (2020), social media fear spread even faster than the virus did, creating difficult circumstances for dealing with public health records.

Tang et al. (2021) examined the reporting tactics used by China's mainstream media during the early stages of the pandemic in traditional media, and they discovered that the media was successful in influencing public opinion and behavior by strategically disseminating information across a variety of platforms and media types. Zhou et al. (2020) examined the content of Chinese television during the pandemic and found that in their analyses, the media placed a strong emphasis on the popularization of scientific knowledge and the distribution of reliable information, which boosted the public's confidence in scientific literacy and epidemic prevention.

Furthermore, good levels of emotional enchantment were also confirmed by media coverage during the pandemic. According to Garfin, Silver, and Holman (2020), the media helped to defuse public anxiety by promoting positive messages about the resilience of clinical teams and network mutual

aid. This emotive appeal encouraged social brotherly love and mutual aid in addition to amplifying the news' charm.

Overall, the combination of information framing and fitness communication during the COVID-19 pandemic has performed an important social function in media coverage. The public was assisted by the media in comprehending the dynamics of the pandemic and preventive measures through the dissemination of accurate and timely data. The media increased public confidence and protection awareness by popularizing medical knowledge and emotional appeal. These studies offer important sources of information about the role and tactics of the media in the dissemination of pandemic records.

Content Analysis

This study uses content analysis to methodically examine a number of reports from the main "cognizance document" Chinese television news program during the COVID-19 outbreak. A research method called content evaluation combines quantitative and qualitative techniques to organize and categorize information content in a methodical way, demonstrating trends and advancements in information reporting. Using a specially created coding sheet, we classified and statistically examined the news material in this examination in order to assess the usefulness of news frames and fitness conversation techniques.

We trained the coders and carried out a pre-coding test to ensure the accuracy and uniformity of the work. The results of the pre-coding test validated appropriate coding consistency and excellent dependability for several of the coders. In addition, we evaluated information using SPSS software, which included cross-analysis and descriptive data. While cross-evaluation is being employed to investigate the connections between exceptional news frames and health verbal exchange techniques, descriptive statistics have been utilized to display the frequency and percentage of each indicator.

Data Collection

The sample selected for this study is the "Focus Report" program on Chinese television news, covering reports on the COVID-19 pandemic. This program is considered an ideal material for analyzing health communication strategies and news frames due to its high influence and wide audience. To ensure the representativeness and coverage of the sample, this study selected programs from the period when Chinese television media started reporting on COVID-19 until the decisive achievements were made in the battles to defend Wuhan and Hubei. This period selection is based on the descriptions in the white paper "Fighting COVID-19: China in Action" released by the State Council Information Office of China.

Early stage of the outbreak (December 27, 2019-January 19, 2020): A case of pneumonia of unknown cause was detected in Wuhan, Hubei Province, and China reported the outbreak immediately and took action.

Initial containment of the outbreak (20 January 2020 -20 February 2020): New confirmed cases increased rapidly across the country, and key measures were taken to stop the spread of the virus.

Decline in local cases (February 21, 2020 - March 17, 2020): The national epidemic situation is stable, and the number of new cases is down to single digits.

Decisive results (March 18, 2020-April 28, 2020): The transmission of the local epidemic in the country, mainly in Wuhan, was basically blocked, and decisive results were achieved.

Coding Sheet Includes

Basic characteristics of the news (e.g., clear guidance, main facts, background information, and conclusions)

Event description (e.g., main characters, event content, location, reasons, and process)

Emotions and opinions (e.g., emotional appeal, exaggeration, expert opinions, and data support)

Health communication content (e.g., protective measures, pandemic updates, government measures, and social impact)

Authoritativeness and support content (e.g., authoritative information, expert explanations, dissemination of health knowledge, and psychological support content)

Feedback (e.g., positive, negative, and neutral feedback)

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Content Analysis Results

The content analysis of the "Focus Report" program reveals that health communication content primarily focused on the following aspects:

Content Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Health Protection Measures	37	86
Latest Pandemic Updates	37	86
Government Measures	37	86
Social Impact	42	98

Most news reports provided detailed descriptions of health protection measures, the latest pandemic updates, government measures, and social impact, conveying important information to the public and enhancing the effectiveness of pandemic prevention and control. For example, 86% of news reports (37/43) provided detailed descriptions of preventive measures such as wearing masks and maintaining social distancing, emphasizing the importance of personal protection and helping to improve public self-protection awareness and reduce the risk of virus transmission. An equal proportion of reports provided timely updates on daily new cases, recovery numbers, and death tolls, ensuring the public had access to the latest information to understand the development trend of the pandemic. Additionally, the media provided detailed explanations of government measures and policies for pandemic prevention and control, enhancing public confidence in government work, which also accounted for 86% (37/43). Regarding social impact, 98% of news reports (42/43) discussed the impact of the pandemic on various aspects such as the economy, education, and daily life, guiding the public to pay attention to the broad impact and response measures brought by the pandemic. These comprehensive and detailed reports played an important role during the pandemic, helping the public to comprehensively understand and respond to the pandemic.

News Frame Analysis

The analysis results show significant characteristics of different news frames in the reports:

News Frame	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Emotional Appeal	43	100
Expert Opinion	22	51

Many news reports used emotional language and narratives to enhance their impact. For example, by reporting on the dedication of medical staff and community mutual assistance, the media conveyed positive messages, enhancing public resonance and confidence. The statistical results show that 100% of the news reports (43/43) used emotional appeals. This reporting method was particularly important during the pandemic, helping to alleviate public anxiety and enhance social cohesion. Additionally, citing expert opinions and data support was an important means of increasing the authority and credibility of the reports. During the COVID-19 pandemic, expert opinions played a key role in news reports. By citing the views of medical and public health experts, the media provided scientific prevention knowledge and suggestions to the public. The statistical results show that 51% of the news reports (22/43) cited expert opinions, further enhancing the authority and credibility of the reports.

Feedback and Interaction

The news contained both positive feedback and negative and neutral feedback, showcasing the reactions and attitudes of different groups toward the pandemic:

Feedback Type	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Positive Feedback	41	95
Negative Feedback	6	14
Neutral Feedback	2	5

Most news reports contained positive feedback, showcasing the achievements of pandemic prevention and control and the positive responses from various sectors of society. For example, 95% of the news reports (41/43) showcased the results of prevention and control efforts under the joint efforts of the government and the public. However, a few news reports contained negative feedback, reflecting the challenges and difficulties brought by the pandemic, with 14% of the news reports (6/43) showcasing the negative impact of the pandemic on certain groups and industries. Additionally, a few news reports contained neutral feedback, providing objective and neutral information, with 5% of the news reports (2/43) showcasing certain objective facts and data about the pandemic. By combining positive, negative, and neutral feedback, news reports provided comprehensive information during the pandemic, helping the public to fully understand all aspects of the pandemic.

Interpretation and Discussion of Results

Through content analysis of the "Focus Report" program, we found that health communication content occupied an important position in news reports. Descriptive statistics show that most news reports (86%) provided detailed descriptions of health protection measures, such as wearing masks and maintaining social distancing. These reports not only conveyed correct prevention knowledge to the public but also emphasized the importance of personal protection, helping the public to improve self-protection awareness and reduce the risk of virus transmission. An equal proportion of reports (86%) provided timely updates on the pandemic dynamics, ensuring that the public could access the latest information, understand the development trend of the pandemic, and enhance their confidence in pandemic prevention and control. Additionally, 98% of the news reports discussed the impact of the pandemic on various aspects of society, including the economy, education, and daily life. These reports guided the public to pay attention to the broad impact and response measures brought by the pandemic.

Regarding health protection measures, most news reports provided detailed descriptions of scientific preventive measures, emphasizing the importance of personal protection. This finding indicates that the media effectively disseminated health protection knowledge during the pandemic, enhancing public self-protection awareness and protection capabilities. Additionally, the timely update of pandemic dynamics also occupied an important position in news reports, ensuring that the public could obtain the latest information on the pandemic, understand the development trend of the pandemic, and enhance their confidence in pandemic prevention and control.

Regarding social impact, news reports fully showcased the broad impact of the pandemic on various aspects of society. These reports not only covered aspects such as the economy, education, and daily life but also guided the public to pay attention to the profound impact and response measures of the pandemic on society. Through these reports, the public could comprehensively understand the multidimensional impact of the pandemic on society, thereby better coping with and adapting to the changes brought by the pandemic.

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News reports contained both positive feedback and negative and neutral feedback, showcasing the reactions and attitudes of different groups toward the pandemic. Most news reports contained positive feedback, showcasing the achievements of pandemic prevention and control and the positive responses from various sectors of society. However, a few news reports contained negative feedback, reflecting the challenges and difficulties brought by the pandemic. Additionally, a few news reports contained neutral feedback, providing objective and neutral information. By combining positive, negative, and neutral feedback, news reports provided comprehensive information during the pandemic, helping the public to fully understand all aspects of the pandemic.

CONCLUSION

Through content analysis of the "recognition document" application, we discovered that the framing of material on Chinese television and fitness discussion approaches were crucial during the COVID-19 pandemic. Health-related verbal interchange content was centered on government actions, social impact, health safety precautions, and the most recent pandemic information. By giving accurate descriptions of those contents, the media increased public awareness of prevention and self-defense skills, ensured that the public was aware of current pandemic statistics, clarified government preventive measures, and showed interest in the pandemic's wide-ranging effects on society.

Emotional appeals, expert review citations, and information framing all significantly increased the impact and legitimacy of information reviews. Every news review employed sentimental language and storytelling to deliver positive messages about the commitment of medical staff and network support, easing public anxiety and fostering social harmony. Furthermore, the media provided the public with medical and reliable preventive knowledge and advice by referencing professional viewpoints and factual assistance, which increased the reviews' trustworthiness.

Information reports featured a range of neutral, positive, and negative comments and interactions that demonstrated how different groups were responding to the pandemic. While some information reports considered the difficult situations and problems brought about by the pandemic and provided objective and unbiased statistics, the majority of information reviews highlighted the successes of pandemic prevention and manipulation as well as the positive responses from numerous sectors of society. These comprehensive comments improved societal confidence and assisted in pandemic prevention and control by enabling the people to fully comprehend all aspects of the pandemic.

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, Chinese television information served a crucial social function by skillfully combining health communication and information framing. The media assisted the general population in comprehending the dynamics of the pandemic and preventive measures by promptly and accurately distributing information. The media increased public trust and awareness of safety by popularizing medical knowledge and making emotional appeals. The findings of the research offer valuable resources for future health conversation practices as well as crucial references for understanding the function and methods of the media in spreading pandemic information.

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