

Framing the 2015 Tianjin Explosions Crisis:
A Content Analysis of *People's Daily* WeChat Official Account



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Abstract



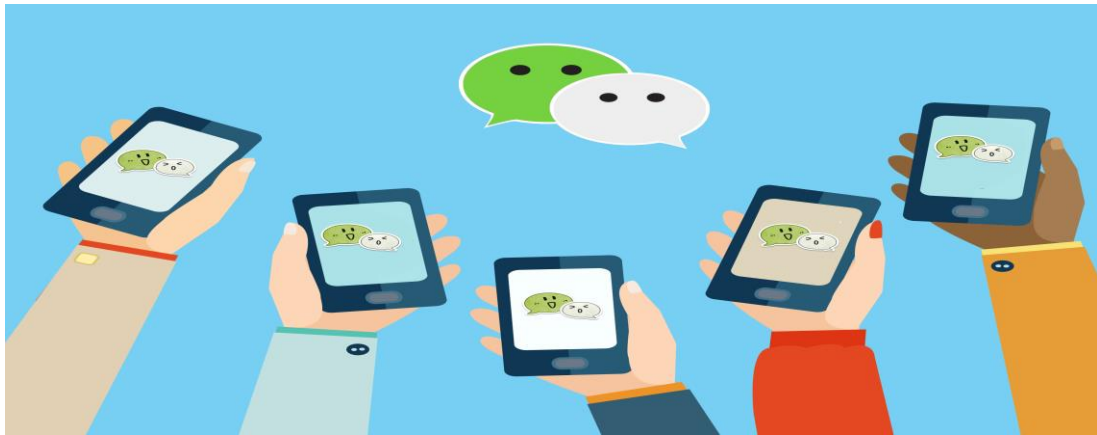
The purpose of this research is to examine how *People's Daily* WeChat official account frame 2015 Tianjin explosions crisis and analyze other factors which influence the news framing process in WeChat official accounts. 2015 Tianjin explosions is a very serious crisis and caused hundreds people dead and injured. The news reports from new media such as WeChat official account, plays a significant role in news dissemination and rescue work. 28 news reports were selected from *People's Daily* WeChat official account during the crisis period to do content analysis.

The study has established three main frames: human interest, attribution of responsibility and consequence in those 28 news reports. Each news report was looked as a coding unit to research which frames were used in portraying and disseminating the 2015 Tianjin explosions crisis news. All the analysis will be concluded that which frame is applied most frequently and other factors may influence the news framing process in WeChat official account as well. The findings revealed that the three main frames and their sub-frames were applied in the news reports and the human interest frame was used most frequently. Some other internal factors such as the features of WeChat official account platform and external factors such as policies or regulations for Internet news are also influence crisis news framing on *People's Daily* WeChat official account.

Background

Media always plays an important role in people's life, no matter in the days of conventional media or in the days of new media. People can get useful information and know something about what happened around the world through the media report. Especially when some unexpected crises happened, media news would get much attention from the public. In most of time, reliable source of information can make people calm down, even can do some helpful in rescue work after the crisis.

The rise of new media leads people's life into a very different and amazing world. Some scholars said, new media is a 21st century catchall term used to define all that is related to the internet and the interplay between technology, images and sound (Socha & Eber-Schmid, 2014). And the common examples of new media include websites such as online newspapers, blogs, social media and so on. New media is changing people's life style and reading habit now because it provides the possibility of increasing the speed of communication and more opportunities for interactive communication.



Since Tencent Company offered WeChat official account as a new platform to release information and news, many newspaper media use this channel to disseminate information and adapt the new media environment. It provides more instant and fresh news for people. And as a new channel, from the perspective of how to report efficient news and how to compete with other channels, especially in crisis news report, it comes up with some problem and challenge to media.



Problem Statement/ Statement Significance

Public crisis events happened frequently in today. Two massive explosions at a chemical storage facility in Tianjin on August 12 this year was one of China's most serious environmental disasters in recent years. It caused 173 dead and was looked as China's worst industrial disaster in years. And 797 others have been injured (Theguardian, 2015). When the crisis happened, people feel shocked and eager to know the information of the crisis. This will

also come up with a challenge to media who use WeChat official accounts to spread news:
how to frame the news to disseminate the message to people?

Objective / Aim



People's Daily, as the official newspaper of the Communist Party and one of the most influential daily newspapers in China, also has its WeChat official account and created a distinctive WeChat public platform to release news. Thus, the researcher would like to study on the latest big crisis of 2015 Tianjin explosions in China to reach the objectives as follows:

1. To analyze how did the *People's Daily* WeChat official account frame the 2015 Tianjin explosions crisis, and
2. To find out any other factors may influence the crisis news report in WeChat official account.



Methodology

Content analysis was used to analyze the crisis reports which were selected from *People's Daily* WeChat official account. From the second day of the explosions to August 20, *People's Daily* official account release 28 pieces of related news about the crisis. For the first time to code all the 28 news reports content, the researcher used paragraph in each news report as the coding unit. In total, the samples of 28 news reports have 126 news frames appearing in title, subtitle, lead and paragraph in *People's Daily* WeChat official account. And after the second time reading, the content of those 28 news reports were divided into three main frames to deep analysis. Those three frames are human interest, attribution of responsibility and consequence and each news report has more than one frame. Besides the main frames, the researcher would find some other factors that will affect the frames of crisis news on WeChat official account from the 28 news reports. In order to test the reliability of the findings, the researcher used Holsti's method to do intercoder reliability test at last.

Conclusion and Significance

Table: Distribution of Three Main Frames

Media Name	Frame			Total Items
<i>People's Daily</i> WeChat official account	Human Interest	Attribution of Responsibility	Consequence	
	87 (69%)	18 (14.3%)	21 (16.7%)	126 (100%)

According to the data analysis, the researcher found that there are total 126 items which used different frames. Among the three main frames and their sub-frames, human interest frame was used most frequently in *People's Daily* WeChat official account about 2015 Tianjin explosions crisis news. The number of human interest frame items is 87 of total 126 items, followed by attribution of responsibility frame which is 18 and consequence frame which is 21. It is not hard to see that the *People's Daily* WeChat official account prefer to use human interest frame to portray and report crisis news. As mentioned earlier, human interest frame is more personality and dramatical from emotional perspectives. And the crisis news is closely bound up with people's life. It can be seen from the distribution of the three frames, *People's Daily* WeChat official account care more about on people's thinking and emotion. The internal factors, such as the characteristics of WeChat official account and the news value are the internal factors which can affect the crisis news report in *People's Daily* WeChat official account. Meanwhile, there are some external factors which can influence the crisis news

report in this platform as well, such as the Internet era environment and the needs from people in this era, and the policies and regulations our country promulgated for Internet news.

The sources of the 28 news reports in *People's Daily* WeChat official account about 2015 Tianjin explosions crisis suggested that the news resources are diversity nowadays. And the new media, such as *People's Daily* WeChat official account need to pay much more attention to the authenticity of information and the real needs from subscribers and readers. On account of the high speed of news release on the Internet and the reading habits of people have changed nowadays, *People's Daily* WeChat official account and other official accounts should keep in mind that the column and title design, news value, news release timing, and interaction with audiences are all important elements which should be consideration.

Besides, it can not ignore that new media, like *People's Daily* WeChat official account has somewhat influence on crisis management of the government. Due to the information dissemination in time and crisis management in a proper way, people felt confidence and got encouragement from the action of the government. It will help the rescue work after the crisis.

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