The Roles of Social Media and National News Media in Promoting Government Responsiveness on Social incidents: Knowledge Broker Theory Perspective

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Abstract: Social media is considered to play an important role in promoting government responsiveness. However, it is impossible for the government to respond to all issues in the actual situation. Especially when encountering controversial social incidents, the local government usually evades responsibility due to damage to reputation or interests. This paper argues that when a controversial social incident occurs in China, the National News Media and Journalists (NNMJs)will work together with social media to encourage the local government to respond. The knowledge broker theory is used to analyze the functions of NNMJs. Three cases are selected from Sina Weibo, China's largest social media platform for multiple case studies. And 21 participants were interviewed. The results showed that NNMJs and social media played the role of knowledge brokers in social incidents. NNMJs played the functions of awareness, accessibility, engagement, and linkage in developing social incidents. And social media took the motivation part in most situations. Meanwhile, they functioned with the central government, social media, and local government forming a top-down management mechanism and bottom-up supervision mechanism system. And then promoted the local government to respond to the government actively.
Keywords: National News Media and Journalists (Nnmjs), Social Media, Government Responsiveness, Central Government, Knowledge Broker Theory, Supervision

1. INTRODUCTION

Government responsiveness has always been regarded as one of the symbols of social democracy (Andersen et al., 2011; Gao et al., 2018; Hobolt & Klemmemsen, 2005). Academic research on government responsiveness generally focuses on Western social democracy. The biggest motivation for the government responsiveness is to gain power through different parties. In China, though different from Western democratic systems, democracy is also included in the purpose of social management. In recent years, with the development of Information and

Communications Technology (ICT), more communication public channels with the government have been obtained by citizens, such as official government websites, official media websites, and social media. They use these public channels to express their willingness to communicate with the government, and government responsiveness is also carried out on these kinds of channels, which have attracted more and more attention from citizens. Among these public channels, the most accessible to citizens is social media, which has been proven effective in promoting government responsiveness (Gao et al., 2018; Tang et al., 2018). Because social media can amplify problems, it shows that social media is similar to an intermediary role, linking the government and the public and transforming a weak relationship into a strong relationship, thereby strengthening the government responsiveness to public needs (Eom et al., 2018). However, there is also much evidence to prove that certain types of social incidents will be responded to without the participation of social media; that is to say, the government may or may not respond to even similar social incidents (Sobaci & Karkin, 2013). The extent to which social media will play a role in the process of government responsiveness is still under debate. Government responsiveness has been confirmed to be selective by multiple studies, and China is no exception (Su & Meng, 2016). Although the absolute number and proportion of Chinese government responses are increasing, the government responsiveness is selective. So how the social media promote government responsiveness? Are there other factors that also strengthen the social media to get government responsiveness? This article focuses primarily on analyzing the various factors involved with social media to promote government responsiveness and the relationships among the various factors. Apart from the central government, local government and social media, the researchers argue that National New Media and the Journalists (NNMJs) worked in them may play a crucial role.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 The Definition of Government Responsiveness

By definition, government responsiveness has two dimensions. One dimension is the result-oriented dimension. It is believed that government responsiveness must be based on whether the policy of the final decision-maker has changed. The other dimension is the process practice dimension, which holds that the government responsiveness should not use whether the policy changes as the only measure but more focus on whether the

decision-makers respond and the attitude and policy formulation involved in the response. The former is defined as the congruence of collective public attitudes towards political issues with the policy preferences and actions of elected representatives (Hobolt & Klemmemsen, 2005). The latter is defined as the practice of taking into account the (variety) of changing needs, wishes, and claims of citizens and social groups, which is very often expressed through issue saliences (Burstein, 2003). This article on government responsiveness tends to take the dimension of process practice, which means it pays more attention to how the government responds and takes measures. The types of responsiveness can be divided into the type of responsiveness led by the government and by citizens (Huang et al., 2020). Like most researchers, this paper focuses on the latter one. Because the type of discussion led by the government may be more likely to be chosen by government agencies and policy decision-makers or even deliberately avoided, these selectivity and avoidance may be due to the personal preferences of policymakers or the government's avoidance of responsibility (Wang et al., 2022). However, citizen-initiated discussions make it easier to see what kinds of factors play in the process of government responsiveness. Naturally, the primary responsibility for the government responsiveness falls upon various tiers of government, including the central government and local government.

2.2 Local Government, Central Government, and Government Responsiveness

In China, the local government is mainly responsible for the government responsiveness (Huang et al., 2020). Unlike in Western countries, citizens can vote to promote the government responsiveness. Nevertheless, listening to the needs of citizens is also an inherent requirement of every government. In recent years, China has improved the efficiency of e-government, not only for the consideration of functions, such as efficiency and economy, but also to improve the level of service to the public, make information dissemination more transparent and efficient, and achieve good political and social functions (Tang et al., 2018). According to the survey report released by the United States every two years, the Chinese government's EGPI ranking has risen from 78 in 2012 to 43 in 2022 (Nations, 2022a, 2022b). Like other countries developing e-government, citizens expect faster responses than ordinary channels in China. The speed and quality of government responsiveness are essential indicators affecting government service evaluation. The government responsiveness includes that the relevant government departments should use all available

technologies and means to respond to questions related to the interests and needs of citizens as soon as possible. Citizens also hope to get answers to questions related to their needs and interests from relevant government departments as soon as possible (Li & Shang, 2020). At the same time, the central government formulated a series of policies and regulations to encourage and stimulate local governments to respond. Because the central government can evaluate the performance of the local government, it can directly affect the interests of the local government and form a top-down supervision and management system. However, in practice, local governments in China may respond negatively to issues of public concern because they are afraid of losing their reputation and genuine interests (Meng & Su, 2021). Especially when local governments face social crisis incidents, they are theoretically and institutionally required to release and respond to all information about the incident, but in practice, government departments tend to respond more reluctantly, superficially, and with delayed information or dissemination of information. Hence the information they provide is limited, not complete information (Gao et al., 2018). However, citizen's public discussion could promote the government responsiveness. And Internet technology has enhanced the breadth and frequency of citizens' public participation (Eom et al., 2018; Li & Liu, 2009; Su & Meng, 2016). Public discussion can indeed facilitate government responsiveness. The more topics discussed by the public on the Internet, the faster the government can respond, which shows that the government will indeed pay attention to the demands and needs of citizens on the Internet. Similarly, the breadth and enthusiasm of citizens' Internet discussions can bring pressure on relevant government departments and promote the speed and efficiency of handling related social incidents (Huang, 2021). Furthermore, in Chinese political culture, harmony and stability are the management principles that have been pursued. The government does not encourage citizens to participate in the discussion of social incidents. Even the discussion of certain incidents on the Internet is relatively vigilant. Therefore, in the face of public opinion formed by citizen discussions on the Internet, government departments are also constantly exploring the rules to ease the public's mood more effectively and maintain social harmony and stability. It was found that dredging public sentiment is more effective than suppressing it (Huang et al., 2020). Government responsiveness can strengthen citizens' trust in the government and ease citizens' dissatisfaction. This further integrates the belief that the government can handle the social incidents well in the traditional Chinese political ecology and gives the public a sense of justice

and a satisfactory answer (Huang, 2021). However, it does not mean that the government's policy formulation will make policy revisions following citizens' discussions. Meantime, the government responsiveness is also selective (Wang et al., 2022). Not all citizens' appeals and needs can trigger government responsiveness. Therefore, in terms of institutional regulations or actual operations, the Chinese central government encourages governments at all levels to respond to questions from citizens promptly. However, top-down management and supervision sometimes makes it difficult to match the actual situation of the incident. At the same time, top-down management and supervision requires layer-by-layer investigations (Meng & Su, 2021). It is not easy to supervise social incidents one by one. To make up for the lack of supervision loopholes, news media supervision and public supervision form the bottom-up supervision and have become two reasonable means. Meanwhile, public supervision is usually achieved through social media, which facilitate citizens directly communicate with the news media and local government on social media, thus promoting government responsiveness.

2.3 Social Media and Government Responsiveness

The promotion of social media to government responsiveness and information disclosure has been demonstrated (Bekkers et al., 2013; Gao et al., 2018; Huang, 2021). Social media can promote ineffective government and improve service efficiency. It is also conducive to the public's timely access to the information that should be informed. At the same time, the public can also get relevant information about government management and work. As mentioned above, in China, the local government is mainly responsible for the government responsiveness, but the local government will weigh the interests and reputation of the local government in the process of deciding the response. The promotion of Chinese government officials is more affected by three factors: political loyalty, economic performance, and public opinion in the jurisdiction. The weight of public opinion in the jurisdiction is gradually increasing (Chen et al., 2017). Therefore, in China, public opinion will impact the government responsiveness, and the proportion is gradually increasing. Before the widespread use of the Internet, Chinese citizens could communicate with the government through formal channels and express their wishes and demands, such as by writing reports. However, this method requires limited resources, and not all citizens can respond to their demands and needs through formal channels. In the process of the government responding to the requests of citizens, it needs to pass through many

different levels of layers. Hence, the probability of the government responding to citizens is relatively small, and the efficiency is relatively low (Fang & Hong, 2020). However, the wide application of Internet technology, especially social media, have broadened the channels for citizens to express their wishes and needs. The speed and efficiency with which the government responds to citizens have also been greatly improved (Wang & Driscoll, 2019). In March 2023, the China Internet Network Information Center (CNNIC) released the 51st Statistical Report on Internet Development in China, which shows that by December 2022, the number of Chinese netizens has reached 1.067 billion, and the Internet penetration rate has reached 75.6% from 25.5% in 2009. The total number of mobile network terminal connections reached 3.528 billion households from 338 million in 2009. Mobile Internet access is still the main driving force for the growth of Internet users (cnnic, 2023). On one hand, at the public participation level. The popularity of the Internet and mobile networks means that citizens have easier access to social media. After the emergence of social media, it is convenient for the public to access the information that citizens should know from information platforms different from traditional channels. Social media is undoubtedly weakening information control by traditional information acquisition channels. Furthermore, when it comes to a particular incident, social media users have become companions rather than simple disseminators or receivers of information; they share information and even discuss government issues together. Whether the coping strategy is appropriate, whether the response of some relevant departments or relevant officials is appropriate, their status is equal. At the same time, social media is also conducive to collecting group discussion results and feedback information on a particular matter. In order to make a comprehensive measurement and evaluation of the incident. And on the other hand, at the supervision level. The Citizens can also conduct more convenient citizen participation and participate in topic discussions through social media. The pressure formed by social media will prompt both the central government and local government to respond more quickly and efficiently, especially when there are disputes. When an incident has a relatively significant social impact, social media pressure will prompt the government to respond to public doubts quickly (Zhang et al., 2020) and disclose the comprehensive investigation information of the relevant incident as soon as possible. This kind of social media pressure on governments is also prevalent in some countries in Asia and the West. Because the online platform provides a channel for citizens to communicate with the upper-level government where they are located to

increase the chances of the government responding, some citizens will also establish contact with the upper-level government or even the central government to urge the local government to respond. Therefore, expressing opinions and appeals online has become the right that citizens can consciously exercise. At the same time, citizens have also realized in many social incidents that the government attaches great importance to the public opinion formed on the Internet, further strengthening citizens' use of the Internet—the probability of the platform to express opinions and demand appeals. Of course, the more people participate in Internet discussions, and the more significant the impact of related incidents and the faster the response speed will be (Li & Shang, 2020; Su & Meng, 2016). In addition, social media can also enhance the effectiveness of the central government's supervision of local governments. Gao et al. pointed out that the response of Chinese local government has a lot to do with the pressure from the central government because when social incidents happen, predominantly adverse social incidents, local governments always find ways to avoid them passively, thus trying to escape from interest loss (Gao et al., 2018). But the central government tries to encourage local governments to respond to incidents in the jurisdiction as soon as possible. Hence, government information disclosure (including responses) is a game between the central and local governments. However, more is needed to have the two elements of central government pressure and social media influence to expand the influence of an incident on social media. Social media has much information every day, and the popularity of incident discussions is thus very uncertain. They are even accused of being a breeding ground for disinformation (Mahalingham et al., 2023). In addition, because the government's public relations capabilities are also constantly improving, social media is not a public welfare organization and many social media platforms are also competing with government management, legal provisions, and business owners. For example, on China's social media Weibo, social incidents that rush to the top of the search which called 'shang re sou' (上热搜) may become highly discussed social incidents, but it is also possible to reduce the hot level through government or corporate public relations. Hence, there come to the Research Question 1: What role does social media play in facilitating government responsiveness? Since massive information on social media, how can more and more public discussion be focused on some social incidents to get government responsiveness? And how can the central government pay attention to particular social incident discussed on social

media? This paper argues that national news media will also play a key role in the process of government responsiveness in China. Incidents that are highly discussed on social media need to be reported by National News Media and Journalists with traditional influence. The influence of National News Media and Journalists will further strengthen the influence of the central government and public discussions on the local government, thus causing the local government to response (Wang et al., 2018). Studies have shown that the expression of appeals tending to collectivism is more likely to cause government responsiveness than the expression of appeals inclined to individualism. At the same time, expressing proper and legal appeals is easier to obtain government responsiveness than pure emotional expression (Li & Liu, 2009; Sutherns & Olivier, 2022). Because of professionalism, National News media and Journalists can present comprehensive information on incidents more quickly, making it easy for citizens to form systematic opinions in social media discussions, further strengthening the possibility of the government responsiveness.

2.4 National News Media and Journalists (NNMJs) and Government Responsiveness

There is a strong relationship between news media reports and government responsiveness. It showed that the more news media reports, the more significant news media coverage and circulation, and the greater the possibility of government responsiveness (Parida et al., 2022). In addition to these elements, the citizens' knowledge is also an essential factor leading to the government's responsiveness. The higher the education level of citizens, the more effective and targeted they can participate in public affairs discussions, and the easier it is for the government to respond (Zhang et al., 2020). Furthermore, government responsiveness is not only related to elections. Targeted and systematic discussion results in citizen participation being more likely to obtain government responsiveness, while trivial, disorganized, or completely self-talking citizens' participation is not easy to get a government response (Ai et al., 2022; Su & Meng, 2016). Therefore, the National news media and Journalists can make up for the chaotic and disordered information provided by social media, thereby providing more orderly, comprehensive and systematic viewpoint information, and promoting the government responsiveness.

Why National News Media and Journalists (NNMJs)?

In China, the National news media and Journalists' role in promoting government responsiveness is related to public opinion supervision which

is literally named 'Yu Lun Jian Du'(舆论监督). The so-called public opinion supervision, that is, the public opinion supervision formed by the news media through the supervision function. Public opinion supervision is the public opinion formed by the sum of the beliefs, opinions, and attitudes of the general public through the mass media to express their opinions to criticize or support the phenomena that appear in society, reveal the problems in reality, and promote their solutions. It is a form of supervising the work and daily activities of government agencies and staff. Public opinion supervision is recognized by the Chinese government and has been repeatedly mentioned in the Chinese government work report. The Chinese government attaches great importance to the role of public opinion supervision. In the highest-level meetings of the Chinese government, the 16th, 17th, and 18th National Congresses of the Communist Party of China, it was mentioned that the role of public opinion supervision should be strengthened, and it should be combined with democratic supervision, combined with other supervisory forces. Form a joint force of supervision. Before the development of the Internet, the power of public opinion supervision mainly relied on national news media, such as newspapers, magazines, radio, and television. When these types of media implement public opinion supervision, it relies on credibility because traditional media has professional organizations, and the journalists working in them have received professional training and use facts as the basis for disseminating information. Through interviews with multiple relevant sources, the purpose of describing with facts is finally achieved (Zhang et al., 2020). Nevertheless, local news media of China is under the local government's jurisdiction. Therefore, it is relatively difficult to achieve public opinion supervision of local government. And the role of public opinion supervision is often played by the national news media and Journalists which are more professional and powerful. The national news media has the right and ability to report on incidents happening across the country and can mobilize professional resources to report on a particular social incident, thereby playing the role of public opinion supervision. As a result, many of the national news media were once called by some Chinese people 'Qingtian'. Qingtian refers to the incarnation of justice and fairness and is the title of ancient officials who restore the truth. It is used to praise the national news media for being able to dig out the truth based on facts. After the development of the Internet, especially social media, citizens can play the function of public opinion supervision more conveniently on social media. But professionalism of journalists in the

national news media still win the trust of the public. Actually, after the rise of social media, national news media and social media play their roles through interaction, promoting heated discussions on social media to attract the government's attention and get government responsiveness. Some national news media regard social media as a new communication platform and register accounts on social media to have a new communication position of national news media on social media. Some regard social media as a new form of communication, and want to explore the new way of news reports dissemination. National news media and social media have become so intertwined that it is difficult to separate the two clearly. However, when it comes to discuss particular social incident, the professional help of National news media is needed to provide the basis and source of information for public discussion on social media, thereby accelerating the generation of organized and logical opinions and improving the speed and probability of government responsiveness. How do national news media and social media intertwine to facilitate government responses? Researchers believe that the role played by National news media and social media can be explained by the theory of journalists' broker theory. National News Media and Journalists (NNMJs) and Knowledge Broker Theory: In social network theory, brokers are conceptualized as a function of the structural positions of participants in the network. Brokers can connect different participants for information circulation and replacement (Fleerackers et al., 2022). However, with the development of the theory, more researchers have focused on the function of brokers as agents, not just their position in the social network structure. The role of brokers thus varies according to their different broker roles in different information and knowledge-based activities. It can speed up or stop the flow and exchange of information. Facilitate connectivity and collaboration among stakeholders related to information and support participants in translating knowledge into action (Bornbaum et al., 2015). Broker theory can work on social media to promote government responsiveness and turn a weakened relationship into a strengthened relationship, thereby highlighting the importance of a particular participant (Eom et al., 2018). Journalists in the news media can act as knowledge brokers in translating scientific research into knowledge and information for the general public (Broer & Pröschel, 2022). There are five functions of journalists as knowledge brokers: awareness, accessibility, engagement, linkage, and mobilization (Gesualdo et al., 2020; Yanovitzky & Weber, 2019). The function of awareness means that journalists can make the

audience aware of the existence of relevant issues through professional investigations. By investigating various sources of relevant incidents, reporters can confirm and present the existence of relevant issues through professional results. Accessibility means that journalists can approach various news sources through professional interviews and investigations, try to restore various details and original appearances of relevant incidents. Meanwhile, they play the role of information or knowledge hub, and present complex issues in a more professional way which make results that are much easier for readers to understand. Engagement refers to the possibility that journalists' reports increase understanding and critical reflection by new audiences on the basis of existing information. The function of Linkage means that journalists effectively link three different social roles: bridging (linking actors or issues that have not yet been linked); linking (turning a weakened or marginalized actor into a prominent one); bonding (strengthening or weakening the existing connection of actors or issues). Mobilization refers to the journalist' ability to mobilize audiences on the basis of knowledge or information (Gesualdo et al., 2020). Although knowledge broker theory is primarily used in research-based reporting. However, disseminating scientific and technological knowledge to the public is the same way as other types of news reports to the public for journalists. Because when reporting complex incidents, journalists will always involve complex legal, medical, economic, and other kind of professional items or questions, which need some research-based reports and play a role similar to knowledge brokers in the process of dissemination. Therefore, this paper believes that the function of knowledge brokers is also applicable to other types of news reports, and can be used in journalists' reports on some social incidents. Journalists of National News media have always played the role of gatekeepers, but they not only determine the flow and exchange of information but also translate and transform information or knowledge. After screening and filtering information or knowledge, and further transforming it into information acceptable to the public, it transforms knowledge and information into the field of public affairs or policy formulation.

Here come to the others Research Questions:

Research Question 2: What role do the National news media and journalists (NNMJs) play in facilitating government responsiveness?

Research Question 3: How do social media and National News Media and journalists (NNMJs) work with the central government to facilitate government responsiveness?

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

This study adopts the multiple-case study of qualitative research, and the method used to collect data is the interview method combined with second material analysis. The researchers are studying multiple cases to understand the differences and the similarities between the cases (Conde, 2021; Gustafsson, 2017). Based on the research question, in order to explore roles of social media, national news media and journalists in facilitating the government responsiveness, the researchers believe that multiple case studies are more suitable for this study than single case. The interview method explores what the roles of social media and National News Media and Journalists (NNMJs) play in the process of government responsiveness(RQ1 and RQ2), while the second sources material framework analysis mainly describes how social media, NNMJs, and the central government play roles in the process of government responsiveness (RQ3).

3.2 Case Selection

This study selected Sina Weibo, one of the largest social media in China, which was established in 2009 and changed the name to Weibo in March 2014 as the research object. China held the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China and proposed to strengthen the guidance of online public opinion in 2017. Since 2018, governments at all levels in China have paid more and more attention to the guidance of online public opinion. Therefore, this study selected three cases with the highest discussion during 2018-2024. According to the annual reports released by Weibo and the People's Public Opinion Research Office, the incident with the highest number of postings was selected among the social incidents involving local government responsiveness. Moreover, the three cases are *Xi'an 'Crying Rights' Incident in 2019, 'The Student Who Fell to His Death in Chengdu 49th Middle School' in 2021,*and *'Bei Ji Nian Yu' Incident in 2023*.

3.3 Data Collection

In order to explore the Research Question 1 and 2, this article adopts the method of in-depth interviews. The interviewees are all staffs who have an educational background in journalism and are still engaged in the journalism industry or journalism-related occupations in other industries. According to this standard, this study recruited 25 participants willing to

be interviewed, and 23 finally participated. The number of participants is enough for this study according to the required numbers of participants of qualitative interview (Guest et al., 2006). Among them are 11 people in the first group (refer to Table 1) and 12 in the second group (refer to Table 2). The interview process was conducted via WeChat.

Table 1: Participants Work in News Media List

Journalists	Outlet	Outlet Description	Employment Status (Staff or Freelance)	Years in Journalism
J1	Gong Ren Daily News	News media	Freelance	5
J2	Cable News Network	News media	Freelance	6
J3	Foshan Daily News	News media	Staff	4
J4	Shandong TV	News media	Staff	3
J5	Lin Fen Daily News	News media	Staff	7
J6	Tencent News	Social media news channel	Staff	2
J7	Henan Broadcasting System	News media	Staff	15
J8	Lvliang Broadcasting system	News media	Staff	5
J9	QingDao Broadcasting Cultural Channel	News media	Staff	10
J10	Yingxiang Internet	News media	Freelance	3
J11	Chinese Business	News media	Staff	4

Table 2: (a) Participants Work in Various Industry Related to News Media

Participants	Occupation	Industry	Employment Status (Staff or Part-time)	Years
P1	University Pubic Relation Department	Education	Staff	15
P2	Zhongda Pubic Relation Department	Marketing	Staff	12
P3	Jiarun Public Relation Department	Marketing	Staff	9

Table 2: (b) Participants Work in Various Industry Related to News Media

Participants	Occupation	Industry	Employment Status (Staff or Part-time)	Years
P4	Jiahuan Public Relation Department	Internet Technology	Staff	13
P5	Zhonggong Educational Company	Education	Part-time	11
P6	Yangguang Organization	Non-profit Organization	Part-time	10
P7	Haier Company	Marketing	Staff	6
P8	Snow Culture Company	Education	Staff	5
P9	Linghui Communication Company	Advertising	Part-time	3
P10	Shangwang Internet Technology Company	Internet Technology	Staff	5
P11	Jincheng Culture Company	Advertising	Staff	5
P12	Idol Communication Company	Marketing	Part-time	6

But how they operate specifically still needs to be analyzed in combination with actual cases.

3.4 Data Analysis

According to the collected interview data, the researchers used Atlas.ti to code the data automatically. Two coders carried out the coding process. According to the results of the automatic coding, the keywords of role for social media and National news media and Journalists in the government responsiveness process was obtained. And the Cohen's efficient of the two coders is 0.875.   The vocabulary keywords can be seen in the figure 1 and 2.
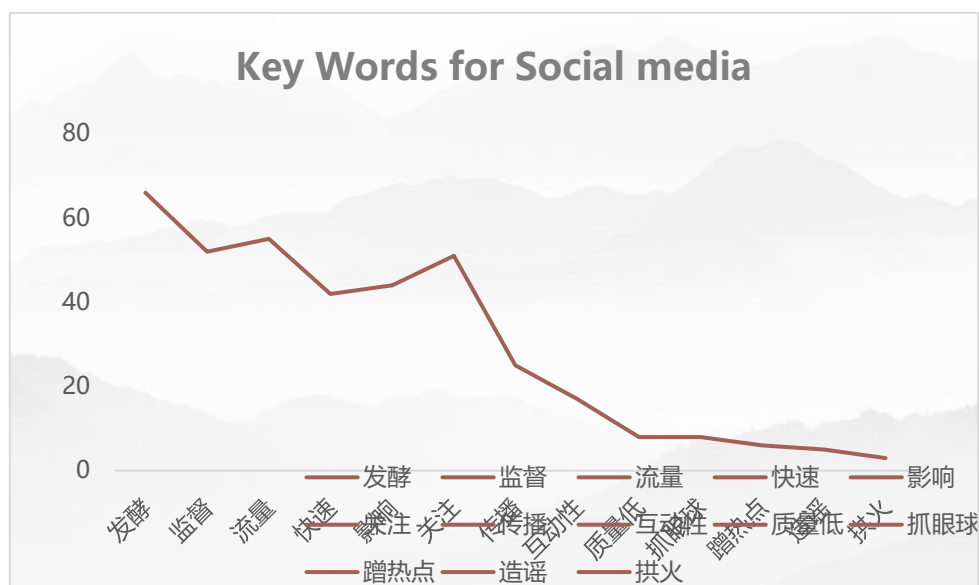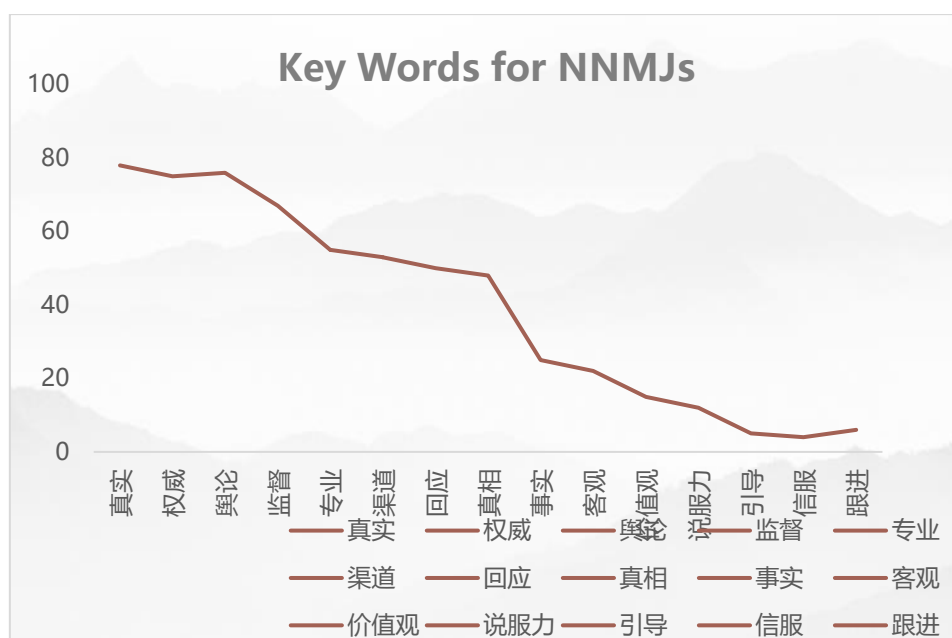
Figure 1: Key Words for Social Media

Figure 2: Key words for NNMJs

According to Figures 1 and 2, it is determined that social media play the functions of fajiao (发酵), Liuliang (流量), and Jiandu (监督), which means the functions of information aggregation, network flow and supervision. While the functions of national media and journalists mainly are Zhenshi (真实), Quanwei (权威), Yulun (舆论), Jiandu (监督), Zhuanye (专业),which means truth, authority, public opinion, supervision and professionalism. Most interviewees agreed that social media played a significant role in promoting government responsiveness, such as one

journalist said:

A-1:"The news media do play a very crucial role in some incidents of public opinion. Because of the power of public opinion, many local governments are afraid of the fermentation of public opinion, for a little fermentation may lead to the unearthing of some uncontrollable information, and may even tarnish the image of the local government, and so, once there is the slightest sign that public opinion has become overheated, the local government will generally respond quickly in order to eliminate some of the bad effects."But they also acknowledge that social media has a lot of mixed problems, such as one interviewee said:

B-3:"The power of social media is so great that sometimes it can have a very powerful effect on the advancement of some incidents, but it is a double-edged sword, and sometimes some voices in social media are muffled and emotional messages dominate the discussion, a situation that is not a positive factor for the discovery of the truth."The interviewees believed that the news media, especially the big ones, were reliable in reporting, such as two interviewees said:

A-7:"Although some traditional media are not as good as social media in terms of traffic, the influence and guiding force of traditional media is not comparable to social media, especially some central level or national influential media, because they have professional journalists, have a well-trained system of selecting and releasing information, so the reliability of the information they release is very high, and they have a good reputation among the audience. The information they publish is very reliable and has a good foundation in the audience."

B-8:"The survival of the traditional media is also a major problem. In recent years, the credibility of the various traditional media has also been subject to some challenges and threats, in particular, some traditional media may make a fuss about some fake news incidents in order to pre-empt the release of news.

With such regulation, the credibility and influence of traditional media are still too strong than social media." According to the key words in Figure 1, Figure 2, the interviews content with the interviewees, and the five functions of knowledge brokers, Table 3 was formulated to describe the relationships among social media, NNMJ and central government to get local government responsiveness in a certain incident. The development of public social incidents on the Internet into three stages: initiation, development, and fading. Hence, there will be three phases for cases to analyze.

Table 3: Functions of Different Factors During the Government Responsive Process

Factors' Functions	Phase 1 Initiation
Social Media: • Information channel: Information aggregation posts about social incidents	
NNMJs: • Picking topic: Choose the topic from social media	
	Phase 2 Development
Social Media: • Information channel: More Information aggregation •Engagement: more details about social incidents are discussed	
NNMJs: • Picking topic: Choose the topic from social media •Awareness: uncover relevant evidence •Accessibility: knowledge hubs. fact-checking and spotting misinformation, •Linkage function: • bridging (connecting actors or issues that are not yet connected) •Linking (connecting weakened actors or issues to more prominent ones) •Bonding (strengthening or weakening existing connections among actors or Issues)	
Central Government: •Top-down management	
	Phase 3 fading
Social Media: • Engagement: more details about social incidents are discussed •Supervision: Supervision directly and indirectly Direct: @relevant institution Indirect: reputation lost	
NNMJs: • Engagement use sense-making devices such as framing, storytelling, metaphors, and analogies to facilitate news consumers' comprehension •Motivation : public debate to justify and legitimize certain solutions over others •Supervision: Directly by report and interview Indirectly by reputation lost	
Central Government: • Top-down management: Directly by interests and reputation lost	
Local Government: • Responsiveness	

4. RESULTS

4.1 Xi'an 'Crying Rights' Incident in 2019

April 11, 2019, a video about a female car owner sitting on the bonnet of the vehicle crying rights on the Weibo hot search, Xi'an, a female car owner can not accept the 4S shop to give free replacement of the engine programme, so sitting on the bonnet of the vehicle crying rights. The video was forwarded by a number of video media, including a phrase called '660,000 yuan to buy Mercedes-Benz oil leakage before driving,' the reading volume reached 33.87 million. This belongs to the first stage of the incident, social media in this stage plays the role of information

aggregation, acting as a channel for information collection. Starting on 13 April, national news media such as China News, China Youth Daily and China Central Television began to report on the incident, and more information about the incident became clear: the incident was indeed related to a 4S shop in Xi'an that sells cars called 'Li Zhi Xing', and the woman had been driving her car since 27 March. After picking up the car, found that there are problems with the vehicle, and the 4S shop for negotiation and processing unsuccessful, on April 9 has been to the Shaanxi Provincial Market Supervision Administration 12315 Command Centre, Xi'an City, 12345 hotline for telephone complaints, Xi'an City High-tech Zone Market Supervision Department received a referral from the higher level, and immediately arranged to deal with it. Because of the attention of a number of media and social media in the public opinion influence is relatively large, April 14 morning, Xi'an city official government microblogging @ Xi'an release message response that the market supervision department has been 'Lee Star' case investigation, obliged to return the car as soon as possible to refund the vehicle and the vehicle involved in the sealing according to the law. This stage is the second phase of the development of the incident, in which social media plays the role of Information channel, accumulating more information, and also plays the role of Engagement function, discussing more details of the incident through social networking, while national media plays the role of Awareness and Accessibility: by interviewing the people involved in the incident, they are able to provide information about the incident. Accessibility: Through interviews with the female car owner involved in the incident, the 4S shop, and the government department Xi'an Market Supervision and Administration, the authenticity of the incident and many of its details were confirmed to the audience. At the same time, the analysis of the interviews highlights the main subject of the incident, i.e. the 4S shop, and the difficulties of ordinary consumers in defending their rights, thus fulfilling the function of Linkage function. After the news media further confirmed the authenticity of the incident, another round of discussion was aroused, and the topic of the owner's difficulty in defending her rights triggered a social media discussion, and even in other cities in China, there were also a number of incidents of the female owner's rights defence, and at that stage, social media continued to play the engagement function, and more relevant details were exposed. The NNMJs played an engagement role by interviewing experts, lawyers, and government officials to discuss ways to princident such incidents. On 27 May, the Market

Supervision and Administration Department of the Hi-tech Zone of Xi case city informed the results of the incident: Xi'an Lizhixing Automobile Co., Ltd. was in violation of the law, and was punished with a total of one million yuan in fines according to the law. Social media and NNMJs played a monitoring function throughout the incident, while the higher level of government played a top-down management function through administrative management systems such as administrative transfer.

4.2 'The Student Who Fell to His Death in Chengdu 49th Middle School' in 2021

On 10 May 2021, a netizen on Weibo named @Life is like a Bubble posted that her son, Lin Weiqi, who was a sophomore at Chengdu 49th Middle School, received a notification from the school at around 5 p.m. on 9 May that her son had fallen to his death. And while she wanted to ask for details and check the CCTV, the school did not have any positive answer. The incident quickly hit the microblogging hotspots, with social media acting as a platform for information gathering at this stage, such as the phrase 'the mother of a high school student who died in a fall at Chengdu 49 Middle School speaks out', which reached 200 million readers and 80,000 comments. Some information about Chengdu No. 49 Middle School and the student was spread on Weibo, but it was not known whether it was true or not. From May 10, there are NNMJs related reports, with the May 11 Chengdu Chenghua education issued a briefing released on microblogging, said that after the public security organs of the scene investigation, deduced that Lin Weiqi fell to his death was not subject to external intervention, belonging to the personal problems of the light life. However, because there is no mention of the surveillance video of the incident and no response to the family's questions, some media, such as @CCTV News, believe that the briefing should be added more facts. @SouthernDaily also thought the briefing should have released more physical evidence to avoid triggering more questions. On 13 May, a police officer involved in the investigation of the incident was interviewed by CCTV and released and interpreted the CCTV footage. After the programme was broadcast, questions about the police and Chengdu 49 Middle School gradually declined. In the process, social media continued to act as a platform for information gathering and engagement, analysing and interpreting information that could be used, but was difficult to distinguish from the truth. NNMJs, on the other hand, play the role of Awareness and Accessibility, confirming through interviews with multiple

sources in the incident that the incident did occur, and gradually verifying the details involved in the incident, as well as playing the function of Supervision and Linkage function, through the aggregation and analysis of a large amount of information, directing the main players in the incident to the the informing party, i.e. the police who dealt with the case, as well as the school. In the third stage, some media invited some psychologists to interpret the incident, and also played the function of commenting, hoping that the police and the school authorities, in handling similar incidents, need to directly face the audience's questions, rather than just following the process of issuing a simple briefing in response to public opinion. At this stage, the media gave full play to the functions of Motivation and Engagement, and even released some topic surveys to collect netizens' opinions and views.

4.3 'Bei Ji Nian Yu' Incident in 2023

In March 2023, a netizen named @ '*Bei Ji Nian Yu*' posted a message on the Internet, saying that her family had a large amount of savings, reaching nine figures, and that she could mix with whichever country she wanted to, claiming that her grandfather had been the director of the Shenzhen Municipal Bureau of Transportation. The netizen's remarks detonated public opinion. Later, netizens found out that her grandfather was probably a retiree surnamed Zhong. At that stage, social media played the function of an information aggregation platform, pointing the information provided by the netizen to a specific person through various means of collection. On 24 March 2023, the Shenzhen Municipal Bureau of Transportation issued a briefing on the situation, stating that it had paid attention to the incident and would follow up with an investigation and would keep the situation informed. On 10 September, a netizen published another reply letter from the Shenzhen Municipal Bureau of Transport, stating that the information about retiree Zhong did not fall within the scope of publicly available government information that could be requested, and public opinion erupted again. Subsequently, some news media claimed to have contacted the Shenzhen Municipal Bureau of Transport, but did not receive a valid reply. Some media outlets, such as the NNMJ, launched an online survey based on the incident, and more than 90% of netizens believed that the results of the survey should be made public. On 10 October, the Shenzhen Municipal Supervisory Commission once again issued a circular stating that Zhong had been expelled from the party and that the proceeds of his disciplinary and illegal activities had been

seized. In this incident, NNMJs mainly played the functions of ACCESSIBILITY and AWARENESS, making netizens convinced that the incident did happen and the reply of Shenzhen Municipal Bureau of Transportation (SZMT) was true, and played its function of PUBLIC OPINION SUPERVISION by continuously pursuing the investigation results of the incident and the truth that the public should be informed. After the Shenzhen Municipal Bureau of Transportation issued an announcement that the specific details of the investigation were not within the scope of its duties to publish, the media contacted lawyers to analyse the reasonableness and legality of the act, pointing the question to the scope and means of public power being supervised, and arguing that it should be more transparent and fair. The function of Linkage was played.However, more details of the incident were not further explored. In the whole incident, social media has been playing the role of information aggregation platform, supervision and Engagement and more details of the incident have been unearthed through mutual information sharing among netizens.

5. DISCUSSION FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

In the three selected cases, Weibo, as a social media, has indeed played the role of information aggregation and dissemination. Social media can indeed use advantages to promote government responsiveness. This is consistent with the findings of previous research supported the social media could make significant influence in the process of government responsiveness (Gao et al., 2018). However, this study found that social media does not necessarily promote the government responsiveness in any incidents, and perhaps there are more important factor that play a role together with social media in the process of promoting the response, such as NNMJs, which can make a certain contributor with social media to get government responsiveness. The analysis of the three cases and interviews also proves that NNMJs and social media do play relatively significant roles and broker role with five functions such as awareness, accessibility, engagement, linkage, and motivation. Among the five functions, this study points out that in countries with proper networks situation such as China, social media and news media are very closely connected. At the same time, some functions such as the role of motivation is more strongly expressed on social media, which is different from the previous research just issued the functions of broker for Journalists (Gesualdo et al., 2020). However,

the research site selected for this study is China, so more research is needed to explore whether the role played by the news media and journalists can also be applied to incidents in other countries. The selected cases are only three, although they are representative, but more cases and quantitative studies are needed to explore the validity and feasibility of its findings.

6. Conclusion

Therefore, this paper argues that in China, local governments are mainly responsible for government responsiveness, while the central government is mainly responsible for formulating policies that encourage and promote local government responsiveness and supervising local governments to promote responsiveness. Central government surveillance often cooperates with social media and national news media surveillance. Thus, a top-down supervision system of the central government over local governments and a bottom-up supervision system of citizens and social media have been formed. Under pressure from the central government, the national news media, and social media, local governments decide how to respond after comprehensively weighing their interests and reputation gains or losses.

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