

Review of Online Government-Public Interaction Research

Yiming Zhao ^{1, a}, Cui Li ^{2, b*}, Xiaoxue Liu ^{1, c}, Qiyu Tian ^{1, d}

¹ Department of Disciplines and Graduate Studies, Institute of Disaster Prevention, Hebei Province, 065201, China;

² School of Economics and Management, Institute of Disaster Prevention, Hebei Province, 065201, China.

^a 21661145@st.cidp.edu.cn, ^{b*} licui@cidp.edu.cn, ^c 22661142@st.cidp.edu.cn,

^d 23661703@st.cidp.edu.cn

Abstract. The channels between the Government and the public have become more open as a result of the rapid development of information technology and the widespread use of the Internet. The ability of the government to respond to public opinion has improved, and public-government interaction has emerged as one of the most significant examples of this ability. This interaction allows the government to better understand public opinion in a timely manner and increase the pertinence of its services in order to increase productivity and management level. The concepts, modes, paths, and influencing factors of online government-public interaction are therefore examined in this paper based on a thorough review of the pertinent literature. The study concludes that the current online government-public interaction faces the following issues and difficulties: the existing research is restricted to a single event scenario and falls short of having a thorough understanding of the system's entirety, dynamics, and evolutionary characteristics. A common explanatory framework that accommodates differences while maintaining the unity of causal logic is therefore urgently needed.

Keywords: Government-public interaction; online government-public interaction; research synthesis.

1. Introduction

The public's desire to engage in politics and voice their opinions has grown in the social media era. The public can now express their interests, expand their political participation, exercise oversight, and acquire political rights thanks to the internet. For this reason, the government has proposed ideas like "simplifying and decentralizing government" and "building a service-oriented government." Government agencies must use emerging technologies to improve interaction with the public in order to achieve these goals, and the growth of the Internet offers a good platform for this. The creation of online mechanisms for government-public interaction can significantly reduce the gap between the two, increase the frequency of such interactions, and encourage government agencies to better serve the needs of the public while also increasing administrative effectiveness. As a result, governments all over the world see online citizen-government interaction as a crucial program for the growth of service-oriented governments.

Government-public interaction is a process in which the two parties exchange information through designated channels, establish responsibilities and dependencies, and ultimately come to an understanding. Traditional channels, such as specialized agencies, reporting mailboxes, symposiums, telephone hotlines, etc. [1], have a high time cost for communication and only allow for one-way information transfer from top to bottom. Network technology prompts the communication from offline to online transformation, breaking the boundaries of interaction in terms of time and space, presenting the qualities of immediacy, transparency, and interactivity, and the network of government and citizen interaction has become more widespread. Early research on online government-public interaction focused on online political participation [2], online democracy [3], and e-democracy [4] as a new form of communication, highlighting the transformative nature of public behavior on traditional political participation. Later, as self-media grew, the research's emphasis shifted to political blogging [5,6], government response [7,8], and online political

questioning, highlighting the multi-party interactions among the government, the general public, and the media elements from a systems perspective. Information asymmetry has recently increased in the network era, increasing the need for research on government-public interaction. As a result, high-level journals both domestically and internationally have published articles calling for in-depth investigation in this area.

2. Overview of Research

Public participation and network democracy are frequently the main topics of international research on the relationship between the government and the public on the Internet. In *A New Theory of Democracy*, published by American scholar Giovanni Sartori in 1993, he noted that "in the network society, individuals, who were originally widely dispersed, will quickly raise their group voices because of their common interest or common concern for a particular matter, and their voices will be heard by the government and politicians." American academic Mark Slouka first discussed "cyber democracy" in his 1995 book *The Big Shock: Cyberspace and the Threat of High Technology to Reality*. The changes brought about by public participation in the network perspective to conventional political participation were expressed by Graeme Browning in his book *E-Democracy: Using the Internet to Reform American Politics* (1996). After that, the terms "online political participation" and "online democracy" were studied in greater detail by British scholars Vivian Lance (2002), Ann Macintosh (2004), and Samuel Huntington (2006). The research background and findings of these academics have offered a solid framework and direction for the growth of online political interaction research in China.

In comparison to Western studies, Chinese research on government-public interaction lags behind somewhat. The interaction between the government and the public based on the Internet platform is mostly classified by domestic scholars as online democratic participation, online political participation, or e-governance. Since 2002, when forums, blogs, and other tools were developed, scholars have been concentrating on the effect of the Internet on political participation; in 2006, political blogs spearheaded a boom in public online political participation [5]. Domestic research first started at the end of the 20th century. Online government-public interaction has gradually grown since General Secretary Hu Jintao spoke to the public there in 2008, stressing that the Internet is "an important channel for doing things, making decisions, understanding public opinion, and gathering people's wisdom." The core, according to academics, is interaction, which encompasses both the sociological interaction between the government and the public as well as the management sense of the process of information transfer and exchange between the government and the public around topics of mutual interest [9]. Additionally, interaction denotes a particular result that is attained through interaction, which in the context of online government-public interaction can be interpreted as a favorable state of development more conducive to the reciprocal communication, role, and dependence of the government and the public [10]; Other academics hold that online government-public interaction is a two-way process that takes place between the government and the public based on the dissemination of information about the government through media like the Internet, which should cover the three elements of the government, the public, and the media [11]. In light of this, this study views online government-public interaction as a process in which the government transcends the confines of conventional public policy and decision-making and engages in more frequent and in-depth information transfer and communication with the public via the Internet and other mediums, covering the two levels of public participation and government response. Public actions by individuals are dispersed in cyberspace due to the "waterfall effect," forming a unified public opinion against the government, and government behavior is facilitated by "one-to-many" and "many-to-many" information dissemination and communication.

3. Main Contents of the Research

3.1 Single Behavioral Perspective

Public opinion expression and government response are the two main components of online government-public interaction [12]. From a behavioral perspective, some academics have investigated the behavior of the two different subjects. The attention of academics is on the factors that influence how people express their opinions online. The ability to implement network technology, the concept of political participation, and the hard institutional norms (channel system, process system, disciplinary system) all have an impact on it as a whole. At the individual level, online expression of public opinion focuses on "online criticism" and "free-riding" modes, as well as the exploration of the psychological mechanisms behind them. Empirical studies have shown that participants' ability and perceived usefulness are the explanatory variables for netizens' choices of different modes of expression. The three components of government response research are response speed, response differentiation, and response expression. Response time is found to be inversely related to complexity of the environment [13], but not significantly related to the extent of democratization of the government [14]; The main determinants of response level differentiation are the socioeconomic status of citizens and the institutional environment, and there are no appreciable differences in the degree of selective response between different interaction channels (traditional channel, Internet channel) [15]. Discourse response and behavioral response predominate in response expression, and these are more effective than institutional response [16].

3.2 System Perspective

The study of online government-public interaction is focused on interaction modes, such as symbiosis view, information view, power view, time view, and other perspectives, under the system perspective. According to the symbiosis perspective, online government-public interaction is a symbiotic system formed by the public and the government, and the behavioral matrices of both sides determine the overall characteristics of the system, as shown in **Fig. 1**. These behavioral matrices include the mandarin duck mode (government-led - high interaction between the government and the public), the queen bee mode (government-initiated - public opinion partially participates), and the cuckoo mode (public opinion first - passive response of the government), and the ostrich mode (participation of the netizens - no response from the government) [17]; According to the information perspective, the nature of online government-public interaction is a type of information processing system, and the manner in which information is processed affects the interaction effect, which can be divided into management-type interaction, negotiation-type interaction, and participation-type interaction [18]; The dynamics view proposes three different approaches: official media-driven, government-driven, and third-party-authorized-driven [19]; it views the difference in power sources as the key to influencing the evolution of the system of government-public interaction. On the other hand, the temporal perspective contends that online interactions between the government and its citizens ought to change over the course of events, including their latent, explosive, and mitigating phases [20].

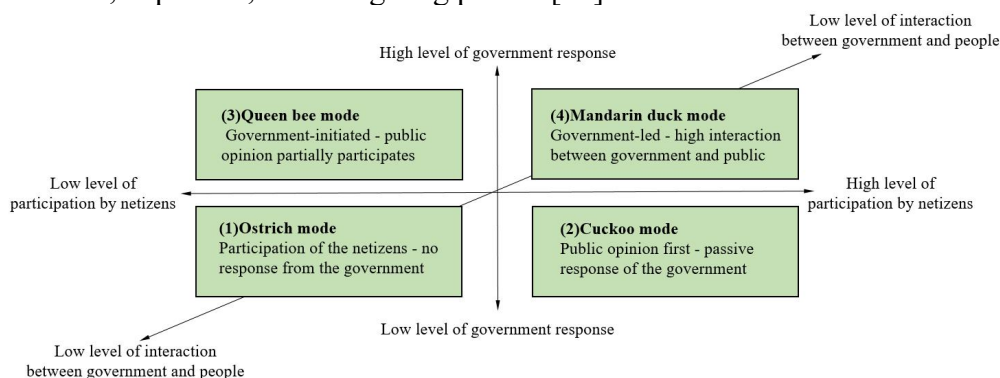


Fig. 1 A model of online government-public interaction from the perspective of symbiosis

3.3 Influencing Factors

The core of this field's research is the factors influencing online public-government interaction, and only by identifying these factors can we encourage effective interaction between government organizations and the general public. Citizens' factors, governmental factors, and interaction pathways make up the three main categories of influencing factors at the moment. First, citizen factors. Citizens' income, literacy level, perceived social fairness, perceived social harmony [21], perceived government trust [22], and political attitudes [23,24] all influence the outcome of their interactions with the government; Second, government factors. Government transparency [25], government website response positivity, and government website user experience [26,27] are positively correlated with public trust; Finally, the interaction channel factor. In the social media era, government-public interaction channels include government portals, government microblogs, and public media [28], and the differences in interaction channels have a significant impact on the quality and effectiveness of interaction. According to the study, the public has the highest level of trust in the government portal platform for information, whereas in the conventional setting, the government microblogging platform offers greater freedom and transparency, allows for a quicker response to the real public opinion, and has a better interactive effect than the government portal. In addition, the role of government microblogging in debunking online rumors has been confirmed in numerous ways [29]. Public social media have shown a strong ability to reshape the ecological relationship between the government and the people as political expression among the populace has grown. Empirical studies have shown that there is a triple risk of forcing policy decisions, policy alienation, and policy responses in the public opinion triggered by public social media, which results in a shift in the logic of online government-public interaction from "control and propaganda" to "negotiation and interaction" [30].

3.4 Consequential Variables

Research on the effects of online interactions between the government and the public covers both micro and macro levels. The micro level emphasizes how online public-government interaction affects both the process and results of policymaking. First, the impact on how policies are created. The range of issues, the time frame, the level of openness, and the quantity and frequency of interactions between the public and the government during the policy implementation stage all have a significant impact on the content of policy formulation and the timing of its release [31,32]. Also influencing the policy administrative approval cycle are the focal event's attention, the dissemination vehicle, the cost of interaction, and its own energy [33,34]. The second is the impact on the results of policymaking. The topics of public demands and the topical organization of interactions between the public and the government are closely related to the efficiency of public services, the impact of online political questioning, and the satisfaction with policies [35]. Studies at the macro level emphasize the impact of public-government interaction on political governance. High-quality online government-public interaction has been shown in numerous studies to improve government governance transparency, foster civic awareness, and be a key factor in raising the level of public trust in the government [36].

4. Summary

Reviewing the previous research, the following areas require further development: First, there is not a lot of attention paid to online government-public interaction in specific contexts, and the few studies that do exist tend to concentrate on a single event scenario, lacking a systematic and comprehensive understanding of online government-public interaction in different types of events. This limits the generalizability of the research conclusions and weakens the normative and guiding values. Second, some research perspectives overly emphasize government responses or citizen participation, treating online government-public interaction as a one-way output process with static inputs and failing to adequately acknowledge its systematic and interactive nature; Secondly, in

terms of research perspectives, some studies focus too much on the government's response or people's participation in a single subject perspective, treating online government-citizen interaction as a unidirectional output process with static inputs, and insufficiently recognizing its systemic and interactive nature. Despite the fact that some studies have developed research frameworks based on symbiosis, information, dynamics, and time from a system perspective, they neglected the multi-subject and complex ecosystem attributes of the networked government-citizen interaction system and failed to adequately identify the interaction system and its key components from an ecosystem symbiosis perspective, leading to an inadequate understanding of the wholeness, dynamics, and evolutionary processes. There are also notable differences in the status of government-citizen interactions on relatively closed cyberspace and social network platforms, and existing studies frequently concentrate on government-citizen interactions on official government e-government platforms. A framework that combines differentiation and the unity of causal logic is therefore urgently needed to explain the commonality of online interactions between the government and its citizens.

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