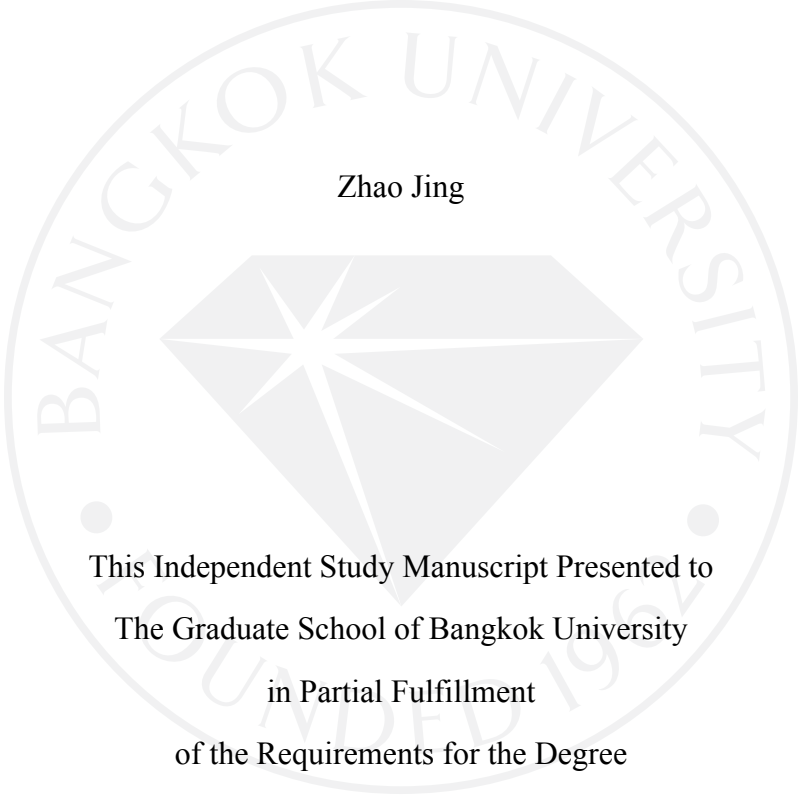


FRAMING THE 2015 TIANJIN EXPLOSIONS CRISIS:  
A CONTENT ANALYSIS OF PEOPLE'S DAILY WECHAT OFFICIAL ACCOUNT



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A CONTENT ANALYSIS OF PEOPLE'S DAILY WECHAT OFFICIAL ACCOUNT

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This Independent Study Manuscript Presented to  
The Graduate School of Bangkok University  
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OF PEOPLE'S DAILY WE CHAT OFFICIAL ACCOUNT

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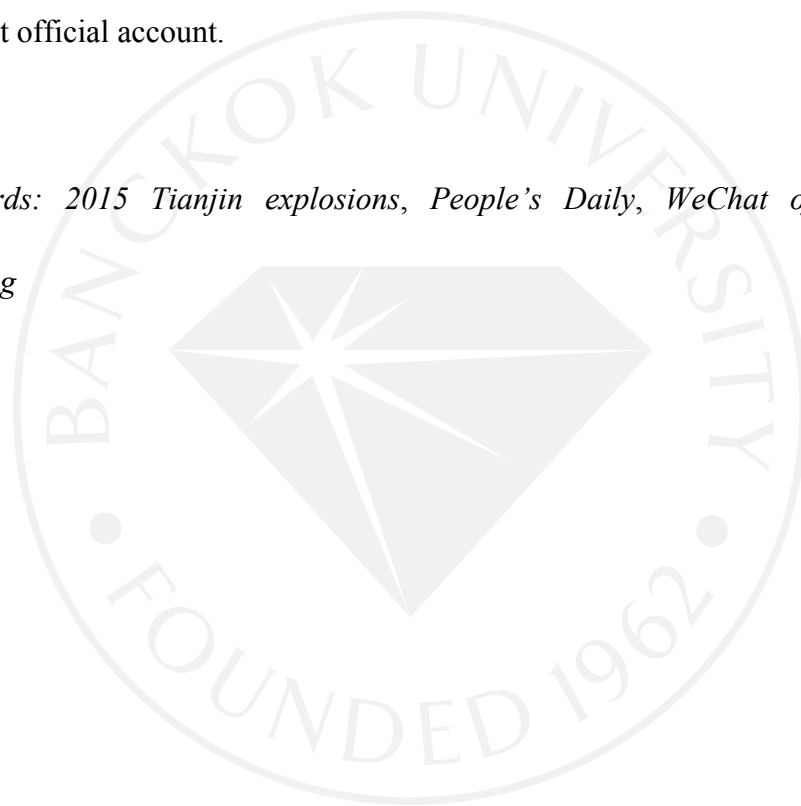
#### ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research is to examine how *People's Daily* WeChat official account framed 2015 Tianjin explosions crisis and analyze any other factors that influence the news framing process in WeChat official accounts. 2015 Tianjin explosions is a very serious crisis and caused hundreds of 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 to portray and disseminate the 2015 Tianjin explosions crisis news. All the analysis was 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 also influence crisis news framing of *People's Daily* WeChat official account.

*Keywords: 2015 Tianjin explosions, People's Daily, WeChat official account, Framing*



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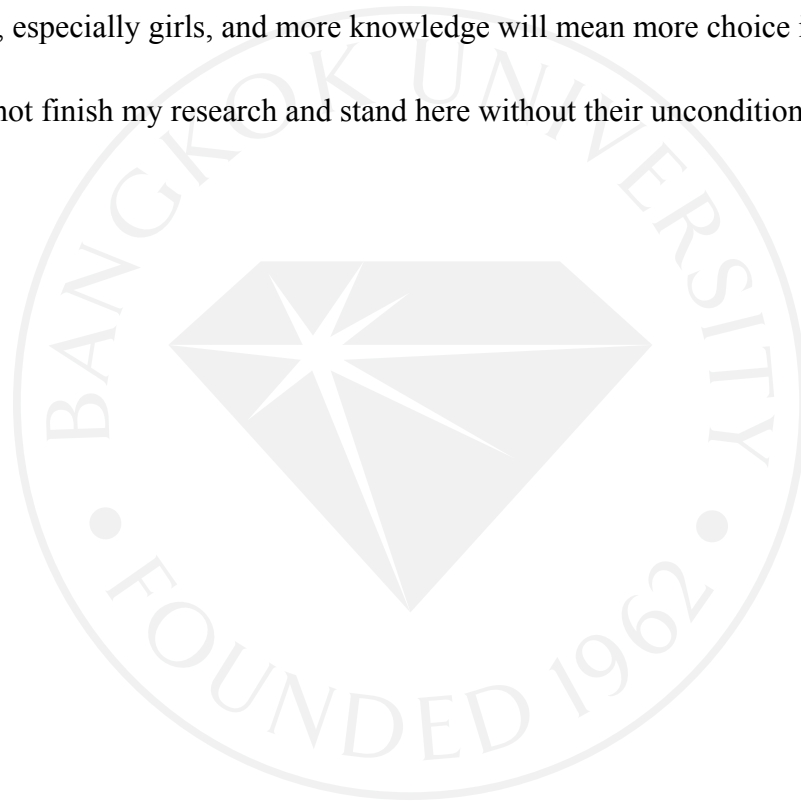
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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### **1.1 Rationale and Problem Statement**

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.

Recent years, with the development and popularity of Internet and digital technology, people know more and more news around the world instantly when it happens by using laptop, tablet computer or smart phone. In China, besides the daily news, people get to any crisis information much faster than before because of the new media, such as news website, Sina Weibo, WeChat and some other social media. Message is transmit faster and wider, so the government is also hard to conceal the truth of crisis after it happen.

The emergence of new media and the public crisis events occur frequently are becoming two distinct characteristics of China in 21<sup>st</sup> century (Hui, 2010). On the one hand, it implies that people can get information from more channels. On the other hand, thus new and complex environment gives more challenges to media in

framing crisis news. It seems people can not live without news and information nowadays. And the media industry will be more competitive because people can get news from various different sources. In other words, if some conventional media want to keep the marketing share and the position in news report, such as newspaper media, they should find a new way to develop or make good cooperation with new media.

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.

As the researcher mentioned above, public crisis events happened frequently in

today. The 2015 Tianjin explosions are two massive explosions in the port of Tianjin, northern China on August 12<sup>th</sup> this year, have killed more than a hundred people, left hundreds more injured and devastated large areas of the city (BBC News, 2015). When the crisis happened, people feel shocked and eager to know the information of the crisis. This is 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?

## **1.2 Objectives of Study**

In the background of combination between conventional media and new media, newspaper media face the huge opportunities and challenges to release news. According to the previous studies, the researcher has found that many newspaper media take advantage of new media such as Sina weibo or official websites to share news successfully. In particular, new media play an indispensable role in crisis reports which connect government and citizen. Compared with those new media which the researcher mentioned above, WeChat official account is a very new platform to conventional media, so many media did not know how to use this channel efficiently. As a famous newspaper with extensive social influence in China, *People's Daily* 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 what internal and external factors may influence the crisis news report in WeChat official account.

### **1.3 Scope of Study**

WeChat, or Weixin as it is known in China, is Tencent's flagship mobile messaging product. It is undoubtedly the most powerful mobile app in China today and is fast becoming one of the world most powerful social media too (Lim, 2014). Since it was promoted in January 2011, the users of WeChat arrives 800 million and it is undoubtedly to become the dominant application of social media in China (Zhao, 2014). The official accounts as a good platform to media release the news, which is very convenient to send and receive message or information to the users. And it is completely free to register a WeChat official account. Thus, this kind of news is low cost and high efficiency.

In this study, the researcher chose one Chinese official newspaper media *People's Daily* and its WeChat official account to research how it uses new media to frame crisis news. *People's Daily* WeChat official account is very typical because this newspaper is not only an influential conventional newspaper media in China, but also the very first media who use WeChat official account platform to promote itself.

Just in only two years after having an official account, *People's Daily* becomes the outstanding WeChat official account among all media. According to the Newrank website, since August 2014, *People's Daily* WeChat official account always is the top one of newspaper media official accounts (Qi & Hu, 2015). So other newspaper media can learn more experience from *People's Daily*.

In order to reach the objectives, the researcher selected 2015 Tianjin explosions crisis as a case to analyze. This is a very recent and huge crisis happened in Tianjin, China and get much attention from the whole country, even the world. Many media report this news through conventional media and new media. *People's Daily* WeChat official account also release much information and news about this crisis. In this study, the content of the news were chosen from the day after the crisis happened to one week later (From August 13 to 20, 2015). The researcher would like to sort all the news and find the characteristics of each one to see how *People's Daily* WeChat official account frame this crisis.

#### **1.4 Research Question**

How did *People's Daily* frame 2015 Tianjin explosions crisis through WeChat official account admin platform?

#### **1.5 Significance of the Study**

Media plays a very important role in people's daily life for a long time.

Although the world people live in now is full of different kinds of information sources, the news reports still has some purpose and get much limitation to reach the audiences, especially the crisis news. After the 2003 SARS crisis, the Chinese government set a series laws and regulations to manage and supervise the news release of crisis (Hui, 2010). Meanwhile, it has some regulations for new media in framing crisis news. As we all known, new media has its own characters and it is very hard to control the spread of news and information from that media.

As a product in new media era, WeChat is the most popular social media in China now. And by the end of July 2014, the total number of WeChat official accounts is 580 million (Wu, Liu, & Tang, 2015). As one member of them, *People's Daily* official account impacted our life more or less, and it gives a good example of conventional newspaper media combine with new media.

And the crisis news framing and management are still very important to a country. Because only a stable society can the country develops great and fast. Through analyze on how *People's Daily* WeChat official account have frame 2015 Tianjin explosions crisis, the researcher can conclude the characteristics of this kind of news and give some suggestions to build a better official accounts in the future. Therefore, the media can know how to report and manage crisis news in the new media. And the government can find a better way to manage crisis and serve people.

## **1.6 Definition of Terms**

1. Content Analysis: Content analysis is a method for summarizing any form of content by counting various aspects of the content (List, 2012).

2. *People's Daily*: *People's Daily* is the first major daily newspaper in China and an official newspaper of the Chinese Communist Party. It was named one of the world's top ten newspapers by UNESCO in 1992 (*People's Daily*, n.d.).

3. WeChat: WeChat, or Weixin as it is known in China, is Tencent's flagship mobile messaging product (Lim, 2014). It's a free messaging and calling app that allows you to easily connect with family and friends across countries. And it's the all-in-one communications app for free text, voice and video calls, moments, photo sharing, and games (iTunes Preview, n.d.).

4. WeChat Official Account: It is a cooperation and promotion service launched for celebrities, government, media and enterprises. Official accounts can promote their brands to WeChat users through WeChat channel, thus reducing propagation cost, raising brand popularity, and building up more influential brand images (WeChat Official Account Admin Platform, n.d.).

5. *People's Daily* Official Account: As one of the most influential newspaper in China, *People's Daily* established its official account WeChat platform in April 2013 (Luo, 2015). The brief introduction of this official account is participation, communication and record times. *People's Daily* devotes itself to spread news to and share good essays with the audiences through WeChat official account. It sends news

to subscribers about four times everyday and about one to four reports at once (Luo, 2015).

6. 2015 Tianjin Explosions: Two massive explosions in the port of Tianjin, northern China on August 12nd, 2015, have killed more than a hundred people, left hundreds more injured and devastated large areas of the city (BBC News, 2015). The causes of the explosions were the burn of some inflammable and explosive chemicals in the warehouse of Tianjin port.

7. A frame refers a central idea which was organized through the way of selection, emphasis, exclusion and elaboration to supply a context and report the issue (Reese, Gandy, & Grant, 2001). Different media always have different frames to report news with some purpose.

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

When the 2015 Tianjin explosions crisis happened, because of the high speed of news and information transmission in today, people in China even people around the world all got this news no more than one day later. Many people, especially the people who live near the site of explosions were seriously concerned about the crisis. And a lot of media both from inside and outside China reported this crisis. This damaging crisis brought huge loss and casualties of Tianjin, but didn't arouse big panic of people and the whole country. The country and government did the rescue work as soon as possible and people united together. In this crisis, the report from media, in particular the new media such as *People's Daily* WeChat official account play an important role. The report of crisis in this time can not isolate from previous similar experience and news reports. In this chapter, the researcher will make an overview of framing theory on media report, and how conventional media and new media have frame such crisis before.

#### **2.1 Media and Crisis News Report**

##### **2.1.1 Relations between Media and Crisis**

Rosenthal, Boin and Comfort (2001) mentioned in their book that "Crises are characteristic features of our society. No continent or country in the world is free

from hazards and risks, disasters and calamities, conflict and turmoil, revolt and revolutions, riots and terrorism” (p. 5). People may face different crises in different time, now the crisis of environment, health and security is more outstanding. Those crises put forward more challenges to government and media about crisis management.

In modern times, media always play an important role in crisis management. The world well-known American newspaper publisher and journalist Joseph Pulitzer once said, “If a nation can be compared to a large vessel at sea, then the journalists are its watch-keepers who timely report the treacherous shoals and hidden dangers to ensure the safe journey of the vessel.” As long as a big event or crisis happened in a country, people get the information and news from media mostly. As Graber (1980) asserts, “During crises, the public becomes almost totally dependent on the media for news that may be vital for survival and for important messages from public and private authorities. They look to the media for information, explanations, and interpretations” (as cited in Li, 2007). In most people’s eyes, the news from different media is the information source of events and crisis and they tend to believe what the media reported. Because most of them not at the scene of the event. In a very long past years, government often takes charge of the media and controls what the media report. The objective report will lead people to face the crisis in a right way and trust the government. On the contrary, the unfounded report will cause the country to go into a state of terror and lose confidence on government.

Graber (1980) said there are three stages of media coverage of a crisis. During the first stage, media should tell people what happened and help coordinate the relief work. In the second stage media need focus on repair damage. At last stage, media should emphasis on a long-term perspective of the crisis (as cited in Li, 2007). It is not hard to see that media in a very significant position of crisis news.

### **2.1.2 Former Studies on Media Framing of Crisis**

Media coverage has been a profound influence on people's life more or less for a long time. Through the report, people get to know some big event or recent news around the world. When the media do some report, they framed the information inevitably. A lively definition of frame is that "frames are organizing principles that are socially shared and persistent over time, that work symbolically to meaningfully structure the social world" (Reese, Gandy, & Grant, 2001, p. 11). The researcher found some former studies on media framing.

In the relative peaceful age, economy is one of the issues that the whole world concerned about. More and more crises are caused by economical problems and get people's attention, because they are related to everyone's daily life even the relationship between two countries. The Subprime housing loan crisis is one of the economical issues that get notice from media and scholars.

Supadhiloke (2012) studied how two Thai newspapers framed the Sino-US-Thai relations in the post-global economic crisis and he stated, "While the



world community has been interconnected through widespread news and social media and become a global village, daily newspapers have remained a powerful force in the public opinion formation process on important issues.” As we can see, the frame of media even can impact on the relationship among those countries. Nowadays, most people in the world don’t like conflict any more, so the value of peace and harmony are the main factors of framing in this case. He concluded that both the two newspapers, *Bangkok Post* and *The Nation*, in this study focused on China’s peaceful rise and its harmony frame has dominated the scene in changing the situation of global economic crisis (Supadhiloke, 2012).

Besides the economic issues, terrorism is another big issue which got people’s attentions nowadays. From the 9-11 attack to the ISIS terroristic attack in many countries today, those events made people angry but feel afraid of terrorism. The mainstream of terrorism report is accusing them of brutal crimes and call on people to fight them. In fact, the report of terrorism also have been framed by media and most of them are one-sided framed by the perspectives of government, political groups, journalists and the public (Norris, Kern, & Just, 2003).

Bannavong (2005) studied framing of news on terrorism in Southeast Asian newspaper and mentioned the role of media in terrorist crisis both present pro-terrorist or anti-terrorist. The media accustomed to frame the news by using some credible sources and the previous news they familiar with. While in Southeast Asia, the media prefer to frame the messages of terrorism in a peace-building and

anti-terrorist value. And the news in those area also influence people the thinking of terrorism.

## **2.2 News Report and Information Sharing on New Media**

### **2.2.1 Brief Introduction of New Media in China**

Now people are living in a world where full of information, the source of message is various and the speed of message spreading is fast. People often hear one word “new media” nowadays and this thing makes much influence in people’s life. Actually, new media is a relative concept which compare with conventional media such as newspaper, television and radio. In fact, the definition of new media changes everyday because of the high speed development of network technology, and it will continue to change day by day.

Internet as one part of new media is becoming so popular for many of us that it sometimes seems people are entering an e-world, where everything is going electronic and on-line (Straubhaar & LaRose, 2002). It seems people can get information easier and more convenient than before. Base on the data collection of CNNIC (2015), at the end of 2014 China had 649 million Internet users, with an increase of 31.17 million and the Internet penetration rate arrived at 47.9%, increase 2.1% year on year. It was twenty years passed from China accessed to Internet in 1994 to 2014 and Internet brought big changes to Chinese society and people’s life style. It was not only changed the channels of getting information and the reading

habits of people, but also promoted the reformation of media in China (Sun, 2014).

From the daily life of people and the friends around us, we can see many people, especially the young generation in China, can hardly live without Internet or which we called new media today. At present, many kinds of social media give people more chance to get information. And people are becoming more and more accustomed to get information beside hands, such as from smart phone and laptop. At the end of 2014, the mobile Internet users reached 557 million in China, growth 56.72 million over the same period. And the mobile Internet users percentage was 85.8% of the total netizen population, compared with the percentage of 81% in 2013 (CNNIC, 2015). This growth rate would not be stop at least in recent few years because of the flourish of new media.

### **2.2.2 The Birth and Development of WeChat Official Account**

Social media is one of the most important new media which affect the life of people nowadays. In China, WeChat is a very successful example of social media.

And it not only the social media which the users can chat with their friends, but also offer a platform for news sharing and message sending. In order to meet the demand from more and more users, WeChat has been devoting research new functions. From August 2012, WeChat promote a new platform named WeChat official accounts.

There are three kinds of WeChat official accounts in total, subscription accounts, service accounts and enterprise accounts (China Channel, 2015). The premise of

obtaining information from the official accounts is the users of WeChat subscribe the official accounts which they are interested in. Take the subscription accounts as the example: these kind of official accounts are often used much like a daily news feed, as they can push four or five times new update everyday to their subscribers. This could be a single article or multiple articles bundled together into one larger news update (China Channel, 2015). The users could receive and read the news from subscription accounts folder in their timeline. The more subscription accounts the users subscribe, the more news and information they will get. Meanwhile, if the subscribers think one piece of news which they read is interesting and helpful, they can share the link on their moments which is the private platform to share information with friends. Thus, more users will notice the news and will subscribe the official account to get more other news if they are interested in that.

### **2.2.3 News Report and Information Sharing on WeChat Official Account**

People can not deny the vital role of media in the society. In the new period where our information comes from Internet and digital world, media do not reduce the functions of crisis management. People seem more rely on media, and the relationship between government and media seems much closer when crisis happen. In such situation, if one conventional media doesn't want to be eliminated in the fast changing world, it should be follow the trend and use new channels to keep their position. According to some researches, many conventional media use WeChat

official account successfully, in particular in some news coverage and useful information sharing.

The news from WeChat official account usually combine content and pictures, but the limitation of it is the users only can see the title of one news because of the folder format of news. Thus, this problem let the title becoming more important when the media release news. The title which looks more interesting or special will catch the eyes of readers and then they will open the news. The welcomed reports which got more than 100 thousand reading times from readers are have some common characters. Besides the content, the titles of them are short but clear, describe the main idea of the news and look attractive and interesting (Wang, 2015).

*CCTV News* as a national media which release the news of current affairs to people for a long time, also build its WeChat official account and seems very success. In its official account, *CCTV News* takes full advantage of news reporting. All the news and reports are very timely and full of positive energy. It has a very creative column which named “evening reading”, the television presenters from CCTV share their reading experience and book reviews through the voice function in WeChat official account with subscribers. So this kind of interactive way of information sharing makes the relations closely between *CCTV News* official account and subscribers (Luo, 2015).

WeChat official accounts also play an important role in crisis news report. During 2013 Lushan earthquake, *CCTV News* WeChat official account released

seven groups of news according to the current situation and helped people to find lost relatives. And in 2014 the sinking of Sewol crisis, it used the functions of content, photos and small video format in official account platform to disseminate the news to subscribers on time and properly (Pan & Weng, 2014). Another very famous newspaper media *Southern Weekly* also has WeChat official account. During the days of huge earthquake in Nepal 2015, *Southern Weekly* official account focus on the report of the crisis and let subscribers know the fresh news of the event (Luo, 2015).

Those newspapers' WeChat official accounts have the characteristics both of new media and their paper version when they frame and report news or crisis event. Therefore, the news and messages can be transmitted much wider and more efficient.

### **2.3 Framing Theory and Its Previous Researches**

Framing theory was first put forth by Erving Goffman, under his book title of *Frame Analysis*. Goffman (1974) used "frame analysis" to offer a systematic account of how people use expectations to make sense of daily life situations. The basic concept of framing theory is that the media focus on different certain events and then put them within a field of meaning (Mass Communication Theory, 2014). It means in media perspective, they always like portray the messages or events which they wanted to let audiences know. Goffman once used "frame" to explain the role of media in advertising message dissemination. In his book *Gender Advise*ments he

mentioned media through the sex appeal of women to attract the attention of men which was called “hyperritualized representations” (Baran & Davis, 2013). It was a successful example of using the opposite sex message to attract consumers and made a good promotion on products selling. Such kind of cue may inspire other companies to use media present the most attractive and useful aspects of the products.

Let us go back to the news industry. After Erving Goffman presented the framing theory, it gained much acceptance and interests from other scholars. They extended the idea of Goffman’s and created a conceptual framework. The key points that researchers should consideration of is one the social and political context when framing happened, another is the long-term consequences to society and politics from media framing (Baran & Davis, 2013).

Gaye Tuchman and Todd Gitlin are two sociologists who applied framing theory in journalism researches. Gaye Tuchman, he did some researches of regular news production and the limitation of some specific event report. He found that when media report the event, they often frame the event in a routine way in order to let people accept a certain perspective of seeing the social world (Tuchman, 1978). For Gitlin (1980) focused on news coverage of politically radical groups in late 1960s and pointed out that the news report in that days belittled activities and ignored the ideas of the groups. Thus news made the radical groups hardly get their goals.

Actually, media always play an irreplaceable role. As audiences, we

undoubtedly want to know more about one event from different media or channels. A notion of journalism is that the news should have been objective. While framing theory implies that the role of journalism is provide a forum to let different opinions be presented and be debated (Baran & Davis, 2013). In fact, in most of time, the rights of how to frame news are dominated by few elites in society. Through some researches, scholars found that people can reach an agreement with media about the structure of news framing and guided by the media if they consistent receive the similar messages (Ryan, Carragee, & Meinhofer, 2001; Valkenburg, Semetko, & De Vreese, 1999). This influence of media can be both positive and negative, because it depends on the event or situation. If all media in a country frame a crisis be a similar way and be positive, it may reduce the panic of people and let people unite together. While if media emphasis on the radicalness of the leader in social movement, it will intrigue more conflict in society.

This chapter presented the overview of previous literature and existing research on media framing crisis, new media in China and the application of framing theory. We can conclude that the media always frame crisis in their characteristic ways and influence on people more or less. And the way of framing depend on both internal and external factors. *People's Daily* WeChat official account, as one of the influential new media, also has its own features in crisis news framing.



## 2.4 Theoretical Framework

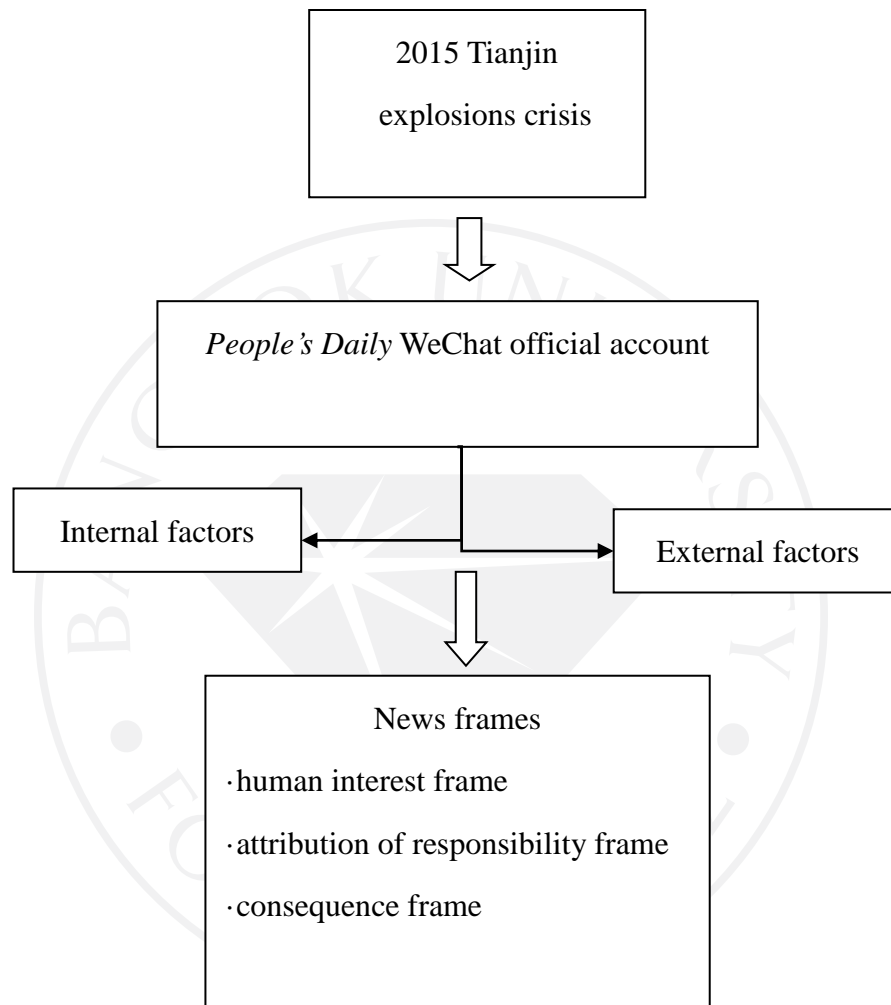


Figure 2.1: Theoretical Framework

## CHAPTER 3

### METHODOLOGY

This chapter provides the methodology which this study used to collect and analysis related data of *People's Daily* WeChat official account framed the news about 2015 Tianjin explosions crisis. The instruments and method of research process will also be described.

#### **3.1 Research Design**

A series of huge 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).

During the 2015 Tianjin explosions crisis, many media reported this news and the information spread throughout very fast, those include both conventional media and new media. *People's Daily*, as the official newspaper of the Communist Party and one of the most influential daily newspapers in China, also used WeChat official account platform to report this crisis. In this study, the researcher will choose the news report and information which *People's Daily* WeChat official account reported during August 13 to August 20 to do content analysis.

Content analysis was used to analysis the crisis reports which were selected

from *People's Daily* WeChat official account. Holsti (1969) gave a definition of content analysis as, “any technique for making inferences by objectively and systematically identifying specified characteristics of messages” (p. 14). From amount of information and after make some categories of them, scholars can often summarize the features of the contents so that it can offer some evidences to researches. Especially in media field, content analysis usually is applied to different news analysis because the number of reports is very large. Husemann and Fischer (2015) once used content analysis to analysis the press coverage during the H1N1 influenza pandemic in Germany and found that media awareness is strongly related to the actual situation during pandemic period. Another example of content analysis was used in media coverage is that some scholars studied the way of media report on the great east Japan earthquake and the objectivity and emotionality seeking of the media coverage (Uchida, et al., 2015). So the researcher also chose content analysis to study how *People's Daily* WeChat official account framed the crisis news and the factors of influence on the news reports.

### **3.2 Content Selection**

In order to do the content analysis, the researcher selected *People's Daily* WeChat official account as the media platform. Because of this media can on behalf of the authoritative media of reporting 2015 Tianjin explosions crisis in China. During the deadly explosions crisis in Tianjin and the rescue days, *People's Daily*

used the WeChat official account admin platform to release news and information of this crisis to the subscribers. From the second day of the explosions to August 20, *People's Daily* official account release 28 pieces of related news about the crisis. The researcher collected all 28 pieces news and did analysis on them.

### **3.3 Research Instrument**

For the instrument of this study, the researcher used smart phone, because WeChat is a very popular social media application in smart phone. Smart phone and social media are the super fashionable in today and they are can be the persuasive representatives of new media. Since official account is a function of WeChat and people who would like receive the news from official account need to subscribe it, the researcher already subscribed *People's Daily* WeChat official account. Therefore, after the crisis, the news and information from *People's Daily* would be sent to the researcher's WeChat folder every day in that period. All the reports which related to the Tianjin explosions were be selected and be read in detail. And the researcher categorized all news and did content analysis on them to find how those news reports were be framed.

### **3.4 Data Collection Procedure**

In the process of data collection, the researcher looked through all the news reports which *People's Daily* WeChat official account sent to the subscribers during

Tianjin explosions crisis. In fact, *People's Daily* pushes information and news reports through WeChat official account about four or five times a day. And it usually includes one to four pieces of news or articles every time. The researcher found the news reports which mentioned or related to the explosions crisis just appeared only eight days, from the day after explosions to 20<sup>th</sup> August. In order to choose all the related reports and articles, the researcher read all the news reports and articles' title and content one by one, to select the valid and related crisis news to analysis. The table below shows the number of news reports which is valid for this research.

Table 3.1: Numbers of News Reports on *People's Daily* WeChat Official Account during 2015 Tianjin Explosions Crisis

Date	Number of Reports	Percentage (%)
2015.8.13	4	14.3%
2015.8.14	4	14.3%
2015.8.15	6	21.4%
2015.8.16	4	14.3%
2015.8.17	4	14.3%
2015.8.18	3	10.7%
2015.8.19	2	7.1%

(Continued)

Table 3.1(Continued): Numbers of News Reports on *People's Daily* WeChat Official Account during 2015 Tianjin Explosions Crisis

Date	Number of Reports	Percentage (%)
2015.8.20	1	3.6%
2015.8.13-2015.8.20 (8days)	28	100%

### 3.5 Data Coding

For the first time to code all the 28 news reports content, the researcher used paragraph in each news report as the coding unit. Many frames are very evident in the news reports and each report could have more than one kind of frame. In total, the samples of 28 news reports have 126 news frames appearing in paragraphs of *People's Daily* WeChat official account.

### 3.6 Data Analysis

After collected the whole 28 news reports from *People's Daily* WeChat official account about 2015 Tianjin explosions crisis, the researcher use the data to do content analysis. For the first time, the researcher looked through the headlines, leads and photographs of the 28 news reports to see the aspects that are emphasized in the reports. 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. At last, for the purpose of examining the reliability for the overall distribution of frames, the researcher will select three to five reports of 28 news reports and do double coding by Holsti.

### **3.7 Intercoder Reliability Test**

In order to test the reliability of the findings and data analysis about the 28 news reports from *People's Daily* WeChat official account, the researcher selected five news reports in random from all 28 news reports and used Holsti's method to test the intercoder reliability. The result of intercoder reliability was .877, using formula  $C. R. (\text{coefficient of reliability}) = 2M / (N1+N2)$ .

## CHAPTER 4

### FINDINGS AND DATA ANALYSIS

The researcher applied content analysis to analyze the news reports from *People's Daily* WeChat official account of the 2015 Tianjin explosions crisis. In this chapter, the researcher will present detailed analysis and findings through the collected data to answer the research questions of *People's Daily* framed 2015 Tianjin explosions crisis through WeChat official account admin platform. And the factors which influenced the news report also will be discussed. The findings were divided into four parts:

4.1 The overall analysis of news reports from *People's Daily* WeChat official account about 2015 Tianjin explosions crisis.

4.2 The structure and three different frames of the 28 news reports by *People's Daily* WeChat official account.

4.3 Other factors that may influence the crisis news report in *People's Daily* WeChat official account.

4.4 The comparison and conclusion of three frames and other influential factors.

#### **4.1 The Overall Analysis of News Reports from *People's Daily* WeChat Official Account about 2015 Tianjin Explosions Crisis**



Table 4.1: A series reports from *People's Daily* WeChat official account about 2015

## Tianjin explosions crisis:

Date/Time	Title	Format	Source
2015.8.13/06:28	The latest information gathering: The explosions in Tianjin port last night caused more than 400 injuries and deaths	text with photos news; headlines	comprehensive news from other media
2015.8.13/13:29	The latest news! The information gathering after 14 hours of Tianjin port explosions crisis: 44 people dead including 12 firefighters	text with photos news; headlines	<i>People's Daily</i>
2015.8.13/20:02	Today, salute to the firefighters	text with photos news; headlines	comprehensive news from other media
2015.8.13/20:02	The truth of CNN correspondent was interrupted in a live report	text with photos news; not the headlines	<i>Global Times</i>

(Continued)

Table 4.1(Continued): A series reports from *People's Daily* WeChat official account  
about 2015 Tianjin explosions crisis:

Date/Time	Title	Format	Source
2015.8.14/07:50	Now, the four facts of Tianjin port explosions can be identified	text with photos news; headlines	<i>People's Daily</i>
2015.8.14/07:50	The identities of six sacrificial firefighters are clarified: One of the firefighters just married 12 days	text with photos news; not the headlines	comprehensive news from other media
2015.8.14/12:55	The latest information gathering of Tianjin explosions crisis: Those eleven rumors are fake	text with photos news; headlines	comprehensive news from other media
2015.8.14/19:23	Fraud case: A man posted a message of his father died in explosions and cheated donations from over 3700 people on the Internet	text with photos news; not the headlines	<i>People's Daily</i>

(Continued)

Table 4.1(Continued): A series reports from *People's Daily* WeChat official account  
about 2015 Tianjin explosions crisis:

Date/Time	Title	Format	Source
2015.8.15/07:23	Five questions of Tianjin explosions crisis	text with photos news; headlines	<i>People's Daily</i>
2015.8.15/07:23	Those Weibo and WeChat accounts spread rumors when the firefighters taking the risk of sacrifice	text with photos news; not the headlines	comprehensive news from other media
2015.8.15/13:51	Today, please remember these 13 young faces	text with photos news; headlines	comprehensive news from other media
2015.8.15/13:51	After the explosions, their Weibo have been never update	text with photos news; not the headlines	<i>Global Times</i>
2015.8.15/19:46	I was in the scene of explosions, I have something to say	text with photos news; headlines	individual

(Continued)

Table 4.1(Continued): A series reports from *People's Daily* WeChat official account  
about 2015 Tianjin explosions crisis:

Date/Time	Title	Format	Source
2015.8.15/19:46	The latest information gathering	text with photos news; not the headlines	comprehensive news from other media
2015.8.16/07:39	The latest information gathering of Tianjin explosions crisis: The chemical sodium cyanide was found	text with photos news; headlines	<i>People's Daily</i>
2015.8.16/13:24	The 5 <sup>th</sup> day after Tianjin explosions: The number of death increase to 112 and 27 rumors appeared	text with photos news; headlines	comprehensive news from other media

(Continued)

Table 4.1(Continued): A series reports from *People's Daily* WeChat official account  
about 2015 Tianjin explosions crisis:

Date/Time	Title	Format	Source
2015.8.16/19:31	The prime minister was coming! The treatment scheme was settled and the Supreme Peoples Procuratorate took part in investigation	text with photos news; headlines	comprehensive news from other media
2015.8.16/19:31	The identities of sacrificial firefighters are clarified	text with photos news; not the headlines	<i>People's Daily</i>
2015.8.17/07:20	The first day of the prime minister came to the scene: Where did he go? Whom did he visit and what did he say?	text with photos news; headlines	<i>People's Daily</i>
2015.8.17/07:20	Don't forget: They are also the heroes	text with photos news; not the headlines	comprehensive news from other media

(Continued)

Table 4.1(Continued): A series reports from *People's Daily* WeChat official account  
about 2015 Tianjin explosions crisis:

Date/Time	Title	Format	Source
2015.8.17/12:47	The latest information gathering of Tianjin explosions crisis: Confirming there are 700 tons of cyanide in the scene	text with photos news; headlines	<i>People's Daily</i>
2015.8.17/19:55	Both rescue word and causal investigation are in the process: The central government will not shield any related officials.	text with photos news; headlines	<i>People's Daily</i>
2015.8.18/07:44	The seventh day after Tianjin explosions: Don't forget these faces	text with photos news; headlines	<i>People's Daily</i>

(Continued)

Table 4.1(Continued): A series reports from *People's Daily* WeChat official account  
about 2015 Tianjin explosions crisis:

Date/Time	Title	Format	Source
2015.8.18/13:02	The latest information gathering of Tianjin explosions crisis: 10 leaders of Ruihai Company were be controlled by police	text with photos news; headlines	comprehensive news from other media
2015.8.18/19:39	The identified facts of Tianjin explosions crisis	text with photos news; headlines	<i>People's Daily</i>
2015.8.19/07:09	Yang Dongliang, the official who investigated the Tianjin explosions crisis was inspected	text with photos news; headlines	<i>People's Daily</i>
2015.8.19/13:00	The latest information gathering of Tianjin explosions crisis: Nerve gas was found at the scene	text with photos news; headlines	comprehensive news from other media

(Continued)

Table 4.1(Continued): A series reports from *People's Daily* WeChat official account about 2015 Tianjin explosions crisis:

Date/Time	Title	Format	Source
2015.8.20/20:13	The latest information gathering of Tianjin explosions crisis: President Xi commanded the responsibility of the explosions crisis should be investigated thoroughly.	text with photos news; headlines	comprehensive news from other media

From the table above the researcher concluded that, after the Tianjin explosions occurred, there are total 28 news reports *People's Daily* WeChat official account posted during August 13 to 20, 2015. On August 15, the number of news report is maximum, which were 6. And the number was decrease after August 17. The related news lasted only eight days after the crisis.

All the news reports are text with one or several photos which were taken from the scene. Not like the traditional media such as newspaper, which focus more on information transmission, WeChat official account as a new media which pays more attention to give people instant news and make good combination of text and images.

As we all known, nowadays people's life are full of different kinds of news and



information. And they are not willing to read every piece of news very carefully. In most of time, people would like to scan the title and images. If they are interested in one article by reading the title, they may read it in detail, especially in WeChat official accounts. For all users of WeChat, there are 79.3% users who subscribe official account, which means the news from official accounts are very important to their daily lives. And 42% WeChat users read five or more than five news reports from different official accounts and most users subscribe six to fifteen official accounts (iResearch Consulting Group, 2015). Therefore, in order to get subscribers' attention, *People's Daily* WeChat official account and many other official accounts emphasize on the combination of text and images.

As the researcher mentioned before, *People's Daily* WeChat official account usually sends news and information to the subscribers four or five times a day and one or four news reports each time. From the table, the researcher counted there are 20 news reports which are headline news of all 28 news reports. It reflected that the Tianjin explosions crisis is the focus news during those days. No matter the crisis information gathering or the number of injuries or death, those news which related the crisis caught people's much attention. Meanwhile, most news reports are headlines also reflected *People's Daily* caring about the crisis. From those data we may conclude that *People's Daily* WeChat official account knows what kind of news really important to people and it has very sensitive observation ability of current news. When Tianjin explosions crisis happened, it is no wonder people care about

the damage situation and eager to know the latest information of the crisis. In that time, put the news as headline is a right choice.

As the sources of all 28 news reports, the researcher found there are 12 news reports which are original news from *People's Daily* and the rest 16 news reports came from other news media and edited by *People's Daily*. Among the sixteen news reports, two of them came from *Global Times*, one of them from individual reporter and thirteen of them are combination of several other media' reports. It shows over half news reports are not the original news from *People's Daily*. Because only one media may not be able to cover the crisis comprehensively, *People's Daily* also needs to collect information from other convictive news media and build its own editorial style to disseminate news to people.

From the titles of all 28 news reports, the researcher found there are 9 news reports which are latest news gathering of the explosions crisis and 4 news reports are mentioned firefighters directly. The rest of them are focus on the causes, consequences and other aspects of the Tianjin explosions crisis. The researcher will continue to analysis how *People's Daily* WeChat official account framed 2015 Tianjin explosions crisis in detail in the next part.

#### **4.2 The Structure and Different Frames of the 28 News Reports by *People's Daily* WeChat Official Account**

In past study, some scholars did some researches of news framing and listed

some dominant frames which often used by media. For example, Neuman, Just, & Crigler (1992) discussed that conflict, economic consequences, human impact and morality are dominant types of frames which used in U.S. news coverage. And in the after research, five predominant news frames were identified in national newspapers and television news stories which are attribution of responsibility, conflict, economic, human interest, and morality (Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000). In this study, 2015 Tianjin explosions crisis is a large crisis happened in China. And *People's Daily* WeChat official account is one of the famous new media. Therefore, the news reports from this new media may have its specific frames. In the 28 news reports of *People's Daily* WeChat official account during the explosions crisis, there are three major frames which were used: human interest, attribution of responsibility and consequence.

Table 4.2: Summary of Major Frames and Sub-frames

Major Frames	Sub-frames
4.2.1. Human Interest Frame	(1) emotional report: sadness, anger, admiration, encouragement  (2) non-emotional report: cause, effect, remedy, information

(Continued)

Table 4.2(Continued): Summary of Major Frames and Sub-frames

Major Frames	Sub-frames
4.2.2. Attribution of Responsibility Frame	(1) the explosion cause responsibility (2) the remedial responsibility
4.2.3. Consequence Frame	(1) casualty figure (2) building destruction (3) environmental impact (4) secondary explosion and fire

#### **4.2.1 Human Interest Frame**

Human interest frame is the way that from individual stories or emotional angle to present an event, issue or problem. This kind of frame is very personality and dramatical which make news more emotional (Dreijere, 2013). In crisis situation, the frame often stimulates the psychological pulse of people and it will lead them have a more negative attitude toward the crisis (Padin, 2005).

In *People's Daily* WeChat official account, the 28 news reports about 2015 Tianjin explosions crisis focus much about human interest in news framing. According to read the content of the news reports, all 28 news reports have at least one item of human interest frame. The researcher found that there are two main types of human interest frame in the reports which are emotional frame and non-emotional frame. For the emotional frame of human interest, which means the content of report

expressed some obvious emotion of the authors or editors, such as sadness, anger, admiration and encouragement about the crisis. While for the non-emotional frame of human interest, the content emphasis more on narrative to tell people the cause, effect, remedy and information of the crisis after it happened.

It is noteworthy that most news reports in *People's Daily* WeChat official account not just focus on one perspective and there are several subtitles in one report. Besides the news of basic latest information about the crisis, *People's Daily* also reported some other related news which people concerned about. Therefore, the researcher find *People's Daily* framed more than one human interest in one report and one report can have both emotional and non-emotional human interest frame.

Table 4.3: Distribution of Human Interest Frame Occurrence

Numbers of Frame Occurrence (per news report)	Numbers of News Report	Total Numbers of Frames Frequency
one	2	2
two	7	14
three	8	24
four	8	32
five	3	15
Total:	28	87

From table 4.3 we can see that, the researcher found that there are total 87 items which refer to human interest in all 28 news reports. It showed that one news report have one to five different human interest frames about Tianjin explosions crisis. The news reports with three and four items of human interest frame are majority, which are 16 news reports and 56 items of total 28 news reports and 87 items. And there are 2 news reports which have only one item of human interest frame because those two reports just focused on one angle of the crisis and mentioned one human interest in very detail. The detail of human interest frame we can see more clearly in table 4.4 as follows:

Table 4.4: Distribution of Human Interest Frame in Detail

Frame Occurrence	Emotional				Non-emotional			
	sad-ness	anger	admiration	encouragement	cause	effect	remedy	information
one							1	1
two	1	2	1	1	1		2	6
three	2		2	1	3	6	3	7
four	2		1	5	5	7	5	7
five	1		2	3	1	3	2	3

(Continued)

Table 4.4(Continued): Distribution of Human Interest Frame in Detail

Frame Occurrence	Emotional				Non-emotional			
	sad-ness	anger	admiration	encouragement	cause	effect	remedy	information
	6	2	6	10	10	16	13	24
			Emotional in total <b>24</b>				Non-emotional in total <b>63</b>	
<b>Total:</b>							<b>87</b>	

As the researcher mentioned before, all the 28 news reports about 2015 Tianjin explosions crisis in *People's Daily* WeChat official account of human interest frame can be divided into emotional and non-emotional. And both of those two kinds of human interest frames have four main categories respectively. While from table 4.4 we can conclude that non-emotional human interest frame (63) is much more than emotional human interest frame (24).

In emotional human interest frame, nearly half items from the news reports reflected encouragement emotion. Those news reports emphasize on disseminating positive energy to people to encourage them, such as the message of how many

people were rescued from the explosions crisis, what the government and firefighters did to remedy crisis or clarification of no environmental pollution after the explosions. Other half items of emotional human interest news are focus on describing sadness, admiration and anger. It's worth noting that the news reports of anger feeling criticized the illegal acts of some opportunists when the whole societies devoting themselves in explosions relief work.

While in non-emotional human interest frame, the researcher calculated from all 28 news reports and found total 10 frames are cause of explosions news, 16 frames are effect of explosions news, 13 frames mentioned remedy news after the explosions and 24 frames mentioned information news of the explosions crisis. The purpose of non-emotional human interest is giving the facts and truth of explosions to people. And those kinds of news should be objective and immediately. The latest information and the effects of the crisis may be the most important things to people, so most of the news reports focused on those issues.

At the beginning of this part, the researcher once mentioned the human interest frame is very personality and may stimulates negative attitude of people towards the crisis. However, in this case, after reading all 28 news reports and their details of human interest contents, the researcher, as a reader, did not have negative feeling towards the crisis. On the contrary, what the researcher felt about the news reports is the positive energy and the sadness feeling to the people who injured and dead in this crisis. It is no wonder that all 28 news reports from *People's Daily* WeChat official



account are full of positivity. As the researcher mentioned before, *People's Daily* is a national daily newspaper and the news agency which is directly governed under the central committee of the communist party of China (*People's Daily*, n.d.). When any crisis happen, the news from media, especially the government-controlled media like *People's Daily*, should be play an important role of letting people remain calm and help the government manage the crisis in a right way. Only reporting crisis truly and disseminating message immediately through the influential media, can the government manage the crisis well and give people encouragement.

#### **4.2.2. Attribution of Responsibility Frame**

The definition of attribution of responsibility frame is “a way of attributing responsibility for a cause or solution to either the government or to an individual or group” (Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000, p. 96). Usually, news media can frame the question of responsibility, letting the audience to think about major causes of and solutions to social problems (Iyengar, 1991). So, it is very important to analysis how this kind of frame was used in news report of 2015 Tianjin explosions crisis. As one of the very serious crises in Chinese history, the responsibility of explosions causes and solutions are vital issues which people concern much about.

From the previous research, it was found that the attribution of responsibility frame was most often applied to report news in serious newspapers (Semetko and Valkenburg, 2000). *People's Daily*, as a national newspaper media with huge

influence on people's lives, can not avoid reporting the news including the attribution of responsibility frame in Tianjin explosions crisis.

After reading all the 28 news reports, the researcher found out that the attribution of responsibility frame can be divided into two main parts in those news reports, one is the explosions cause responsibility and the other is the remedial responsibility. When a crisis happened, especially the huge destructive explosions, people must eager to know what caused the explosions and who should be responsible for this explosions crisis. Therefore, the explosions cause responsibility frame is very important in news report. While in remedy work, it is usually must has a leading part that can call for and lead all related departments to manage the crisis. As one of the national media, *People's Daily* can not report the news without describing the attribution of remedial responsibility. Based on analysis, in all 28 news reports, there are 16 news reports used attribution of responsibility frame to frame 18 items. In this kind of frame, most of news reports which used the attribution of responsibility frame are indirectly implied who should undertake the responsibility for causes of explosions or remedy work. The researcher will analyze the two kinds of responsibility frames as follows:

For explosions cause responsibility frame, the key point is absolutely who should be responsible for the 2015 Tianjin explosions crisis. In the first few days of the news, *People's Daily* WeChat official account liked other conventional media and new media, focus on reporting of basic information of the explosions. It was also

mentioned the explosions cause responsibility in some indirect ways. For example, the news which was titled “*Now, the four facts of Tianjin port explosions can be identified*” on 14<sup>th</sup> August morning, mentioned the explosive warehouse stored some dangerous chemical but what were they will be investigated. And another news report named “*I was in the scene of explosions, I have something to say*” on 15<sup>th</sup> August from an individual news source, said that person was in the scene before the explosions and found the containers which stored chemical products touched very hot, and in the evening the explosions were occurred. Although such information from those two news reports did not point out who should be blamed about the explosions, the readers would think the company which managed the warehouses should be responsible for the explosions after reading the news reports. After few days of the explosions happened, the news reports from *People’s Daily* WeChat official account began to direct discuss the explosions crisis responsibility. However, until the last news report about 2015 Tianjin explosions crisis, the responsible part for the explosions still not clear. From all 28 news reports, we can see this new media tend to attribute the responsibility to internal part, the Ruihai Company itself. The news report named “*The 5<sup>th</sup> day after Tianjin explosions: The number of death increase to 112 and 27 rumors appeared*” on 16<sup>th</sup> August clarified that the explosions was not a terrorist attack event from ethnic separatists and the Ruihai Company, the owner of explosions warehouses, has no relationship with Sinochem Group, one of the stated-owned enterprises. And another news report from 19<sup>th</sup> August talked much

more about the related companies and leaders in Tianjin explosions may existed some irregular operation in business. Thus, people will think the responsibility of explosions cause should be attributed to the company obviously. What the pity is the *People's Daily* WeChat official account did not report the final information of the explosions crisis responsibility any more.

For remedial responsibility frame, most news reports focus on the government responsibility. Even *People's Daily* WeChat official account as a new media, the news from this platform still comes from its original media, the *People's Daily* newspaper. As one national newspaper, *People's Daily* certainly should play an important role in crisis management. Not very long time after the explosions happened, the president and prime minister of Chinese government gave orders that the very first thing is to rescue people and find out the cause of explosions. Many news information from 28 news reports mentioned the central government arranged experts groups to investigate the explosions, the local government took charge of the rebuilding work, and many firefighters, doctors, journalists and volunteers came to the scene to do the remedial work. All those messages presented that the government managed the crisis well and people should have confidence in the government. In particular, the news reports from 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> August, emphasis on describing the prime minister went to the explosions scene and directed rescue operations. The prime minister pointed out clearly that the central government would try the best to investigate the crisis. The government makes it clear that will be responsible for the

remedial and rescued work. Thus, it will give a good impression to people that the government can manage this explosions crisis very well.

Table 4.5: Distribution of Attribution of Responsibility Frame

Attribution of Responsibility Frame	Numbers of Frames Frequency
explosions cause responsibility	11
remedial responsibility	7
Total:	18

#### 4.2.3 Consequence Frame

When any crisis happened, it must lead some consequences. In global news frame, economic consequence is one of the common news frames which many news reports have been used. Graber (1993) once mentioned that the economic consequences are often considerable in news frame. This frame reports an event, problem, or issue according to the consequences which will have economically on an individual, groups, organizations, or countries (An & Gower, 2009). Especially in some global economic crisis news reports, the economic consequence frame was used frequently. For example, Supadhiloke (2012) did a research about framing the Sino-US-Thai relations in the post-global economic crisis and found *Bangkok Post* and *the Nation* apply the economic consequence frame to define economic problems, diagnose the causes and offer remedial treatments for the crisis, even use this frame

to predict possible effects.

In this study, the researcher also found many news reports about 2015 Tianjin explosions crisis used consequence frame to report, but those news not just focus on the economic consequence. Because this explosions crisis was an emergency and disaster which was involved with many areas, the consequence of the explosions crisis would have a big range as well. Through the analysis of total 28 news reports from *People's Daily* WeChat official account, the researcher concluded four main consequence frames, which are casualty figure, building destruction, environmental impact and secondary explosion and fire in all news reports. The 2015 Tianjin explosions crisis caused a lot of consequence, but all 28 news reports which the researcher collected from *People's Daily* WeChat official account did not use economic consequence frame. Even all those four main consequence frames which the researcher mentioned above will cause economic loss, the news reports did not talk about it directly. Here below is the table of consequence frame distribution in all 28 news reports.

Table 4.6: Distribution of Consequence Frame

Consequence frame	Numbers of Frames Frequency
casualty figure	15
building destruction	1

(Continued)

Table 4.6(Continued): Distribution of Consequence Frame

Consequence frame	Numbers of Frames Frequency
environmental impact	2
secondary explosion and fire	3
Total:	21

From the table we can see that there are 21 items of consequence frame in all news reports. Actually 21 items of consequence frame do not mean there are 21 news reports used consequence frames, because some of them have more than one kind of consequence frame. Such as the news report which was titled “*Now, the four facts of Tianjin port explosions can be identified*” from August 14, 2015 has two consequence frames in one news report. It described the casualty figure and also mentioned the environmental impact of harmful air pollution after the explosion crisis. Based on the analysis from the researcher, there are total 17 news reports used consequence frame among all 28 news reports from *People’s Daily* WeChat official account, which means there are about 61% of news reports have at least one consequence frame.

In all four main consequence frames, the largest number of consequence frame is casualty figure, which arrived 15. From all those news reports, *People’s Daily* focused on the information of injures and deaths. At very beginning few days after the explosions crisis, the casualty figure constantly updated every day. It showed the

country and the media did not cover up the truth of 2015 Tianjin explosions crisis.

They wanted to let people know the latest situation of the explosions and did not feel scare. The truth usually can decrease scare and uncertainty feeling from people.

Besides the casualty figure frame, the news reports from *People's Daily* WeChat official account also used another three consequence frames. The news reported named "*After the explosions, their Weibo have been never update*" from August 15<sup>th</sup>, used building destruction frame to report one building of Tianjin port police station was destroyed after the explosions crisis and the official Weibo of that police station have never updated. This is not only reported the building destruction consequence, but also contained the people injures and the economic loss in that police station.

And two news reports used environmental impact frame. The environmental impact frames mainly described the air and water pollution which may caused by Tianjin explosions crisis. Those news reports which used environmental impact frame emphasized on the measurement of air and water near the explosions spot and gave the results of measurement to people. From the news reports we can see that there are no obvious environmental impact from the explosions and the air and water index all in the safe ranges. In order to avoid the pollution, the government also takes some active action to prevent the damage impact.

The last consequence frame is secondary explosion and fire frame. There were three news reports applied this frame. Because there were lots of chemical products in the warehouses in Tianjin port and it led to many chain reactions after the main



explosions, many small explosions and secondary fire happened after that. People can not see the danger of this consequence, even the firefighters may in a very dangerous situation and will injure or dead in rescue work. Those three news reports which used consequence of secondary explosion and fire frame mentioned several small explosions and fire near the main explosions spot and would remain people to be careful.

#### **4.3 Other Factors that Influence the Crisis News Report in *People's Daily***

##### **WeChat Official Account**

From all above types of news frames we can see that for different purpose, media can disseminate one event or one piece of news from different angles by framing it. There are many factors both from internal and external will influence the news report of one media. In this part, the researcher would like to talk about the factors that may influence the crisis news report in *People's Daily* WeChat official account from 2015 Tianjin explosions crisis case.

##### **4.3.1 Internal Factors**

First of all, the internal factors should be divided into several parts. The media, *People's Daily* itself, has its own characteristics which can affect the news of crisis. As the researcher mentioned before, *People's Daily* is one of the conventional media and the national daily newspaper. Different from other local newspapers and other

types of national newspapers, *People's Daily*, as the representative newspaper of Chinese communist party has the very important role in promoting the national mainstream ideology to people. And many news and information from *People's Daily* were forward by some other local newspapers or magazines (Guo, 2015). Most of time, people think the news from *People's Daily* is more credible and persuasive because it represent the communist party more or less. From such reason, the news report from *People's Daily* should be positive and encouragement for most of time. From all 28 news reports in *People's Daily* WeChat official account we also can see many news reports described the hardworking of firefighters and the positive actions from the government, all those are the way to build a good reputation of the communist party in people's mind. Especially like the crisis news, positive news reports and positive energy is very needed to comfort people and make them feel confidence when crisis happened.

Another internal factor which can influence the crisis news report is the features of WeChat official account. In recent five years, the Internet and new technology have been changed people's lives at an unbelievable speed. Once, people were accustomed to getting news from conventional media, such as newspapers and televisions, now, people's life full of the news and information which from Internet everyday. Compared with conventional media, WeChat official account has its own advantages. This platform for information sharing did not exist for a long time. As the researcher discussed before, the very popular social media WeChat which from

Tencent Company was just promoted in January 2011, the users of WeChat arrives 800 million and it is undoubtedly to become the dominant application of social media in China (Zhao, 2014). Tencent Company promoted WeChat official account platform in August 2012, and by the end of July 2014, there are 580 million active WeChat official accounts online. (Wu, Liu, and Tang, 2015).

The premise of getting news from WeChat official account is you should be the user of WeChat and you need to subscribe the official account. Although *People's Daily* created its WeChat official account in April 2013, it becomes to the top and outstanding official account very fast. From August 2014, WeChat official account has been the No.1 newspaper media official account for a long time. In the first half year of 2015, the number of image and content news pageviews in *People's Daily* official account arrived at 26.8 billion, and the number of daily news pageviews went to 1.62 million (Qi & Hu, 2015). *People's Daily* WeChat official account got such great achievement in a short time can not ignore the contribution of the previous reputation of *People's Daily* newspaper. It should also be noticed that there are millions of active WeChat official accounts now and more and more news official accounts will be created. Meanwhile, the news reports from WeChat official account are relative privacy, and the official accounts send news to subscribers several times per day. The subscribers can select the news which they are interested in to read and share it to their friends in friends' circle. If *People's Daily* WeChat official account wants to keep the position in official accounts platforms, it should

frame news according to the conditions of subscribers, such as the number of the subscribers, the age groups of the subscribers, and the reading habits of the subscribers and so on. Only get to know the efficient ways of news dissemination in WeChat official account platform, can *People's Daily* WeChat official account develop in a better road.

There is still an important internal factor which can affect the crisis news report in *People's Daily* WeChat official account, the news value. In other words, the value of the news can influence how the media frame it in some extent. In most people's mind, they don't want to see any crisis news from the media, but the crisis may happen everyday in anywhere around the world. In terms of *People's Daily* WeChat official account, the crisis from inside China may get much more attention than the outside crisis, the crisis in national level may get much more attention than the local crisis. Based on different kinds of crises, different impact of the crises, or different places of the crises happened, *People's Daily* WeChat official account will frame the news in different ways. Those crises which impact people's daily lives more will also get more attention and different depth of perspectives to frame.

#### **4.3.2 External Factors**

After discussed the internal factors which will influence the crisis news report in *People's Daily* WeChat official account, this part the researcher would like to mention about the external factors.

The first and vital factor should be the Internet era environment and the needs of people in this era. Nowadays, the Internet changes the way of news dissemination very much, it improved the possibility of public participation in news event, changed the gatekeeper of the news from few monopolies to much more media, updated the news and information very fast, and let the news dissemination more interactive (Wu & Dai, 2006). Those changes will also influence the crisis news report in *People's Daily* WeChat official account. And with the development of the Internet, the needs of people changed as well. Take WeChat official account as an example, now, 42% WeChat users read five or more than five news reports from different official accounts everyday and most users subscriber six to fifteen official accounts (iResearch Consulting Group, 2015). It means people can not read every news report very carefully and even ignore some news they did not interested in. For crisis news, the most important things people may concern about are the consequence or impact of the crisis, and what they can do to protect themselves or avoid encountering it again. Such needs of people could affect the crisis news frame on WeChat official account.

The last but not least factors are the policies and regulations which the country promulgated for Internet news. The Internet let the news release more convenient but also brings some challenges to media. People can get news and information from more channels but can not figure out which is the true information and which is the fake news. From some 2015 Tianjin explosions news reports in *People's Daily*

WeChat official account, we can see that few speculators took use of Internet to defraudation and spread fake news. Those people will be punished at the end according to the laws and regulations. Actually, the Chinese government set a series laws and regulations to manage and supervise the news release of crisis after 2003 SARS crisis. While the real implementation of the regulation and laws are not very well due to lacking of comprehensive management and supervision (Hui, 2010). The government and media should be cooperate in crisis news release on the Internet and in information era, which means the related regulations or policies are the indispensable factors in crisis news framing. When release the crisis news or information, *People's Daily* WeChat official account also must follow the regulations and laws of crisis news release.

#### **4.4 The Comparison and Conclusion of Three Frames and Other Influential Factors**

From all analysis above we can see that in all 28 news reports from *People's Daily* WeChat official account about 2015 Tianjin explosions crisis, there are three main news frames. However, some frames were applied much more than others and different frames have different proportion in news reports. Here below is the table of distribution of three frames:

Table 4.7: Distribution of Three Main Frames

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

Each news report is a coding unit in this research and more than one frame in every news story after the researcher analyzed all 28 news reports. 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.

Different proportion of frames can not ignore the internal and external factors as well. The internal factors, especially the characteristics of *People's Daily* newspaper media and the features of WeChat official account play a crucial role in crisis news framing. As mentioned before, *People's Daily* as a national influential newspaper concern about people's feeling and has the task of represent the spirit of the country. And WeChat official account as a new media platform, focus on communicating with the users and subscribers. Thus, *People's Daily* WeChat official account tends to use human interest frame more to report crisis news. Meanwhile, the external factors such as people's reading habit also influence the frequency of human interest frame using. And the policies and regulations give the legal guarantee to crisis news on new media.



## CHAPTER 5

### DISCUSSION

This chapter is the last part of this study and will focus on describing the discussion and conclusion of the research. The researcher will conclude the features of news dissemination in *Peoples' Daily* WeChat official account and in WeChat official account platform. Besides, the researcher will describe the impact of social media, such as WeChat official account, on crisis management. In addition, the limitation of this research and some recommendations for news dissemination in social media and for further study will be discussed as well.

#### **5.1 Conclusion of This Research**

In this research, the researcher aims at studying how conventional media, such as *People's Daily*, using WeChat official account platform to frame crisis news and the features of this kind of news reports. The researcher took 2015 Tianjin explosions crisis as a case study and analyzed 28 news reports from *People's Daily* WeChat official account during the crisis period. All the findings and analysis in this research would like to answer two questions the researcher brought up in the first chapter, which are how *People's Daily* WeChat official account framed the 2015 Tianjin explosions, and to find out other factors may influence the crisis news report in WeChat official account.

Through collected and analyzed the 28 news reports about the 2015 Tianjin explosions crisis from *People's Daily* WeChat official account, the researcher found that *People's Daily*, as one of the most influential national daily newspapers in China, has its own news framing and features about crisis news in WeChat official account platform. From all 28 news reports about 2015 Tianjin explosions crisis, the researcher concluded that human interest frame, attribution of responsibility frame and consequence frame are three main frames which *People's Daily* WeChat official account used to frame and report 2015 Tianjin explosions crisis.

The analysis and results from human interest frame of the 28 news reports showed that this kind of frame is the *People's Daily* WeChat official account used most frequently to frame 2015 Tianjin explosions crisis news. Especially the using of non-emotional human interest frame is 72.4 percent of all news reports. As the national daily newspaper, *People's Daily* willing to give the latest information and facts to people to let them keep calm when the crisis happened. At the same time, *People's Daily* as the newspaper media which governed under the communist party, also wants to use its WeChat official account to manage the Tianjin explosions crisis well and give people encouragement after the crisis.

The analysis and results from attribution of responsibility frame of the 28 news reports reflected that the attribution of responsibility in *People's Daily* WeChat official account about 2015 Tianjin explosions crisis can be divided into the explosions cause responsibility and the remedial responsibility. Although this frame

was applied less often, it still very important in crisis news report. *People's Daily* WeChat official account used this frame to point out the government should responsible for the remedial work after the crisis, and the company who managed the explosive depot should be responsible for the cause of the explosions.

The analysis and results from consequence frame of the 28 news reports suggested that the *People's Daily* WeChat official account described most and the people care about much is the casualties figure which the explosions caused. For example, the figure of injures and deaths. And the environmental impact is another consequence of the explosions that people concern more about.

To sum up, among three main frames, the human interest frame was used more frequency than other two frames about 2015 Tianjin explosions crisis in *People's Daily* WeChat official account.

Apart from different frames of news with different purpose in media itself, there are also still some other factors that can influence the crisis news report in *People's Daily* WeChat official account. After analysis, the researcher found that the features of *People's Daily*, 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.

## **5.2 Findings and Discussion**

After analysis of the 28 news reports, the researcher concluded that there are three main frames that the *People's Daily* WeChat official account used to frame and report the news of 2015 Tianjin explosions crisis. In the high-tech and new environment times, media still will make advantage of Internet and new platform to frame and disseminate some news or information with purpose. At the same time, the findings suggested that various internal and external factors can influence the crisis news report in *People's Daily* WeChat official account. Besides those findings, there are some other issues that merit attention and discussion.

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. More than half news information of the explosions crisis came from other media and edited by *People's Daily*. As we all know, today people can get news and information from many different channels instead of believing everything from one media report. A good new media should understand that now one valuable news report is combination of extract value from other authoritative media and with its own characteristics. 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.

It is another important point the researcher got from all 28 news reports that WeChat official account platform should have its own features and ways to

disseminate crisis news. There are serious competitions among thousand of WeChat official accounts, especially among the official accounts of conventional newspaper media. More and more conventional newspaper media like to use this platform to send news and information. If you subscribed the official account, you can get the latest news in a very short time. Because the WeChat official account platform is a very new channel to send news, there are many weaknesses the media should pay attention to. *The 2014 China mobile communication media index report* pointed out that more than 90 percent Chinese influential conventional media opened WeChat official accounts, but there still lack of high-quality accounts (Wang, 2015). 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. When 2015 Tianjin explosions crisis happened, many people may know the news from their social media, such as WeChat. The news and information from WeChat official account has very strong timeliness and widespread. For example, the first news from *People's Daily* WeChat official account about 2015 Tianjin explosions crisis appeared on August 13<sup>th</sup> morning, no more than ten hours after the crisis occurred.

Meanwhile, among all 28 news reports from *People's Daily* WeChat official account, the pageview of 25 news reports arrived more than 100 thousand times. Such large amount pageview means this explosions crisis got much attention from people, and the government also did a good job in crisis management by this new media platform. 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 helpful for the rescue work after the crisis.

### **5.3 Limitation of the Research**

As a content analysis of one selected new media, the researcher found there are also some limitations in this research.

Firstly, in this research, the researcher chose only one typical new media, *People's Daily* WeChat official account to study. Although this official account rank at the top position among all newspaper WeChat official accounts since August 2014 (Qi & Hu, 2015), there are still some other influential WeChat official accounts and new WeChat official accounts in WeChat platform. Only *People's Daily* WeChat official account can not comprehensively represent the features of all newspaper WeChat official accounts.

Secondly, the samples of this research are just 28 news reports from *People's Daily* WeChat official account about one serious crisis——2015 Tianjin explosions crisis. Even this explosions crisis caused very huge damage and effects, 28 news

reports are not rich resources of the study. Furthermore, the news about this explosions crisis only was reported till August 20 in *People's Daily* WeChat official account and this media not continue to report the final result. So the researcher can not analyze and comment the whole crisis management in *People's Daily* WeChat official account.

At last but not least, WeChat official account is a very new platform to release news and information. WeChat is a very influential social media in China now and it was created in 2011, and WeChat official account platform was created in 2012 (Wu, Liu, and Tang, 2015). Until now, WeChat and its various official accounts have huge influence on Chinese people's daily lives. However, the previous researches are not a lot and it lacks enough relevant articles about it, especially about the crisis news report.

#### **5.4 Recommendation for Newspaper Media Development in WeChat Official Account**

After all analysis and discussion of the 28 news reports about 2015 Tianjin explosions crisis from *People's Daily* official account, the researcher would like to give some recommendations for newspaper media WeChat official accounts in their future development.

Nowadays, with the development of the Internet technology, people's reading habits have changed and they willing to get news from more convenient channels.

Thus, WeChat official account platform has more competitive in media market.

Based on the situation and features in news reports from *People's Daily* WeChat official account, some recommendations will be given as follows:

At first, it is a trend that the combination of conventional media and new media. WeChat official account as one of new media platform, the information and news from this platform need both news frame traditions from conventional newspaper media and new frame factors from new media. If the newspaper media WeChat official accounts take advantage of their original newspaper, and have own features of news report, the official accounts can development better.

Secondly, from the news reports about 2015 Tianjin explosions crisis in *People's Daily* WeChat official account, we can see that the news and information release are very timely. No more than ten hours the news was spread through this platform. However, all newspaper media WeChat official account should keep in mind that all news they report, especially the crisis news, need to follow up, from the beginning to the end. The subscribers and readers want to know and need to know the final result of the crisis investigation instead of only the casualty figure. Only find out the truth of crisis or accident, can avoiding tragedy happen again.

And then, the news and information from WeChat official account must pay attention to authenticity. More channels of news release may produce some fake news and lead to some bad impacts. People can not make it clear that which news is real or which news is wrong. Before report the issue or release the news, every



WeChat official account should do good job of gatekeeping about the information to ensure the authenticity of the news.

At last, WeChat, as one of the most influential social media APP in China, is very close to people's life in daily. And the dissemination of news is not a one way activity any more. The WeChat official account should emphasize on interaction with the users and subscribers. People's voice and feedback are very helpful in selecting and editing news. More interaction with the audiences is benefit for the development of conventional media in new media market.

### **5.5 Recommendation for Future Study**

According to the findings and analysis, the researcher also has some recommendations for future study.

On the one hand, further study should pay more attention on new media news dissemination, especially on WeChat official account, because it is an unavoidable trend of getting news and information from this channel. At present, the monthly users of WeChat have already reached 330 million and 79.3% of those users subscribed WeChat official account (iResearch Consulting Group, 2015). Meanwhile, more and more conventional media, such as newspaper media found the benefits of sending information and news in WeChat official account platform. Newspaper media will not disappear while WeChat official account can not replace conventional newspaper media. Only both of them have cooperation in the future, can they have a

vigorous development (Yang, 2014). The existence problems and countermeasures of conventional newspaper media using WeChat official account platform to development should be researched more in the future.

On the other hand, the future research can focus on how government takes advantage of new media, in particular WeChat official account to release crisis news and manage crisis. Nowadays, the freedom of speech was reflected more on new media platform, and people can express more what they thought on the Internet. After 2015 Tianjin explosions crisis, people have various opinions when they heard the news from media. Many people feel sympathy and condolences for the victims, at the same time, they unsatisfied with the crisis management of the government to some degree (Fang, 2015). Therefore, the future researchers are supposed to conclude experience from other similar crises and give some suggestions of crisis management to government from the perspectives and benefits of people.

Last but not least, according to the flourish of WeChat official account platform, future study are suggested to focus on other frames which were used on newspaper media WeChat official accounts and more frames which will be applied appropriately in this platform about crisis news.

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