Reviews on an Article of Chinese Railway Network Commentator from Critical Thinking Perspective

Hao-Wen FENG\textsuperscript{a} and Wei-Min OUYANG\textsuperscript{b,}\textsuperscript{*}

Shanghai University of Political Science and Law, 200438 Shanghai, China
\textsuperscript{a}Fenghaowen@shupl.edu.cn, \textsuperscript{b}oywm@shupl.edu.cn
\textsuperscript{*Corresponding author

Keywords: Critical thinking, Thinking fallacy, Post hoc fallacy, Appeal to motive.

Abstract. Spring Festival is the most important traditional festival in China. During the Spring Festival travel period, passengers are faced with ticket scarcity. In order to improve the experience of buying tickets, the Ministry of Railways has launched the "12306" online ticketing platform since 2012. Since the online ticketing platform has been running on-line, the platform has been criticized. In the face of social criticism, the China Railway Network commentator Jiang Le published the "spring festival train tickets were sold out in one second, is '12306' platform?" As soon as this article was published, all kinds of criticism are all over the places. Most of the criticism is emotional more than rational. In this paper, we will make rational reviews on this article from the perspective of critical thinking in this paper.

Introduction

Spring Festival is the most important traditional festival in China. One of the events that accompany this important festival is the annual spring travel tide. During the Spring Festival travel period, for those who want to go home for the Spring Festival, they should not only endure the dirty, disorderly and bad management environment, but also often cannot get train tickets. In order to improve the experience of buying tickets, the Ministry of Railways has launched the "12306" online ticketing platform since 2012. Since the online ticketing platform has been running on-line, the platform has been criticized.

In the face of social criticism, the China Railway Network commentator Jiang Le published the "spring festival train tickets were sold out in one second, is '12306' platform?" As soon as this article was published, all kinds of criticism are all over the places. Most of the criticism is emotional more than rational. In this paper, we will make rational reviews on this article from the perspective of critical thinking in this paper.

The remainder of this article is organized as follows: firstly we analyzes the main fallacies committed by this article and concludes with a summary.

Thinking Fallacy of Post Hoc Fallacy

In causal relationship, the cause always occurs before the result, so there is the illusion that something happened before the result must be the cause.

After the event A happens, then the event B also happens, so we assume that A causes B. The method of judging causality only by the sequential relation among occurrence time of events is the thinking fallacy of post hoc fallacy.

For example, we know that birds always sing before the sun rises, but we can't conclude that the singing of birds leads to the daily sunrise. Otherwise, we are committed the thinking fallacy of post hoc fallacy.

Ex post attribution is a common fallacy of thinking. One thing happens to happen before another thing, which is not enough to conclude that there exists a causal relationship between them. We need more information to make this judgment. If we can only get so much information, then the proper conclusion we can draw is that what happened first may be the cause of what happened later.
The commentator of Chinese railway network Jiang Le said as follows:

Since the launch of the 12306 railway ticketing website, train ticket purchase channels has been widened, the phenomenon of long queues at the station window gradually gone, those phenomenon of lying all night on the ground at the ticket office in order to buy a train ticket has become the past, repeated negotiations between passenger and the conductor, quarrel between passengers, gradually become very rare; The buying environment has become both convenient and comfortable.

Indeed, the railway system, launched 12306 online ticketing platform, really broadens the train ticket purchase channels, however, queuing to buy tickets, staying up late to buy tickets and brawling each other have decreased, the main reason is not just launch of 12306 online ticketing platform, but the improvement of the capacity of the passenger train and the level of social civilization in recent years.

Moreover, there is no direct causal relationship between the latter changes and the 12306 online ticketing platforms. Obviously, the author, Jiang Le, has committed the thinking fallacy of post hoc fallacy.

As for saying the environment of buying tickets are both convenient and comfortable, it is not necessarily consistent with the facts.

Although 12306 of the online ticketing platform has been improved for all the time, but the bad user experience of the platform is the social consensus, in particular all kinds of weird user verification code adopted by the platform makes convenience and comfort to become a one-way dream of the railway system. So, the author, Jiang Le, has committed the thinking fallacy of wishful thinking.

**Thinking Fallacy of Appeal to Motive**

Appealing to motive is a kind of appealing to Ad Hominem, which attacks or comments on the motives of the advocate, and takes it as a basis to refute or approve his viewpoints. We want to comment on something rather than someone, and the suspicion and revelation of the arguer's motives is a deviation from the issue itself.

Because the motivation exists in the arguer's heart, others conjecture on the it’s motives can neither be confirmed, nor be falsified, even publicly expressed motives by a arguer, especially those sounds magnificent, noble altruistic motives, due to the inherent nature of mankind egoism, are often not necessarily true, therefore, Appealing to motive make no sense to the argument in logic.

The author Jiang Le said as follows:

This is a party to cattle ridge, which not only became a lion in the way for ordinary travelers to buy tickets, reduced the accuracy of the input, but also caused the railway departments to drown in the sound of the sharp jokes.

Jiang Le claims that the various bizarre user authentication codes designed by 12306 system are supposed to create obstacles for scalpers who resell tickets, not to obstruct ordinary travelers from buying tickets smoothly. But, objectively, this practice has made trouble for ordinary passengers and has caused widespread complaints about the railway system. Weather a thing is good or bad is not decided by the subjective motivation, is decided by the objective effect, and not because of the subjective desire is good, the objective effect must be good, even if not good, it also should be forgiven. In fact, even if the various bizarre user authentication codes designed by 12306 system are really used to create obstacles for ticket scalpers, however, the author of the article, Jiang Le also said: "with the increasement of difficulty in the verification of 12306, the difficulty in Brush tickets by scalpers increased a certain degree, but also increased the difficulty of passenger to log into the official website." Daily life experience tells us that the skill in reselling tickets for ticket scalpers is much higher than that of ordinary passengers, all kinds of difficult user authentication code can make certain difficulties to scalpers, and difficulties for ordinary passengers will be greater.

This common sense, although Jiang Le did not say out, but he and 12306 system designers should be clear in heart, wouldn't have known about it. Of course, it will be difficult for scalpers to make it, and the difficulties for ordinary passengers will obviously be greater. Here, the author,
Jiang Le, not only committed the fallacy of appealing to motive, but also committed thinking fallacy of wishful thinking and contradictory.

Jiang le also said in his article:

*Behind the earth-shaking changes of the past few years, every action of the railway, none has not carried out from the standpoint of the people, none is not for his interests of the passengers. Just for this, we have reason to say thanks for the railway system.*

Here, the author Jiang Le did not take the objective concrete humanized services for ordinary passenger, which were supplied by railway departments, as the reason for ordinary passenger to thank railway system, but took the subjective abstract reason, such as "standing on the perspective of the people", as the reason for ordinary passenger to thank railway system. Here, the author, Jiang Le, has again committed the thinking fallacy of appealing to motive.

**Thinking Fallacy of Appeal to Halo Effect**

The halo effect Halo effect, also known as halo effect, belongs to the psychological category. The halo effect refers to the phenomenon that people make cognitive judgment of others firstly based on personal likes and dislikes it, and then deduce other qualities of cognitive object from this judgment.

The improper use of halo effect in thinking logic is to use vague and abstract positive energy words to short-circuit our thinking and let us accept an opinion immediately. The halo effect will make us to support or accept a conclusion without examining the relevant causes, evidence and detailed advantages or disadvantages.

The author Jiang Le said as follows:

*All kinds of people-benefit welfare are inundated, the sense of mission and sense of responsibility, brings people travel with thick sense of security. It is this strong sense of existence that changes the people’s dirty, disorderly and bad impression of railway travel.*

Le Jiang did not describe concrete people-benefit, actual content of the welfare and connotation of the sense of security provided by railway system, but continuously used those positive words such as "people-benefit" and "welfare" and "sense of security" to describe the railway system, trying to utilize these vague and abstract words to make us thinking short-circuit, then accept his view immediately. So, he has committed the thinking fallacy of appeal to halo effect.

The author Jiang Le also said:

*In recent years, in order to help the people to travel, the new policies and new measures introduced by the railway can be said to be as countless, and many feasible new routines have been tested in practice.*

Similarly, Jiang Le continuously used of new policies, new initiatives and new routines, but did not describe actual content of new policies, new initiatives and new routines, and also used "help people travel" and "countless" to describe a positive image for railway system to handle practical affairs and seek practical benefits for the people, trying to utilize these vague and abstract words to make us thinking short-circuit, then accept his view immediately. So, he has again committed the thinking fallacy of appeal to halo effect.

**Thinking Fallacy of Self-interest Attribution Bias**

The so-called self-interest attribution bias refers that people attribute their good behavior or success to their own subjective factors such as ability or effort, and attribute their bad behavior or failure to external objective factors such as luck or other people. For example, employees tend to attribute their rewards to their own efforts, and attribute their punishment to managers’ prejudice against us even social injustice.

For example, the author Jiang Le said:

*Although the ideas for serve people have been changed, the modes have been changed, but the limited transportation capability of the railway has not be changed, but the train ticket is still difficult to buy, which has not be changed, the situation that can not meet the needs of the people has not be*
changed. Even if the railway changes much more dramatically, the knotty problem of long-standing which people most concern has not been solved, all the other efforts seem to be just playing house.

In this passage, Jiang Le attributed the difficulty of buying tickets on "12306" to the situation that can not meet the needs of the people, the limited transportation capability of the railway, and the huge population. Obviously, author Jiang Le mainly emphasizes objective reasons when he explains why the Spring Festival tickets is difficult to buy. As long as the situation has not be changed, no matter how much effort the railway sector has made, it is useless, especially the railway system cannot significantly reduce the population during the spring festival. The implication is that, in this case, the problem of buying tickets during the Spring Festival will be a long standing problem, and the society should not continue to criticize the railway department. So, he has committed the thinking fallacy of self-interest attribution Bias.

The author Jiang Le also said as follows:

How to solve the issue of the train ticket buying, the railway departments and 12306 official website should find the problem from the aspects of their own as soon as possible. Only when the railway found out problems, made in-depth rectification, got out a technical authentication network platform with no loopholes, there is more hope for passengers to buy ticket smoothly.

Obviously, the author Jiang Le also knows that although the problem of buying tickets during the Spring Festival will exist for a long time, even if it cannot be completely solved, the railway departments should still make efforts to alleviate and improve the difficulty of buying tickets. However, he suggested that only if a technical authentication network platform with no loopholes could be developed, passengers can have more hope to buy ticket smoothly. The question is that "technology certification network platform with no loopholes" does not exist in reality, therefore, it is normal for the 12306 platform to have all kinds of defects, society should not criticize. As a result, the author Jiang Le have attributed the problem that 12306 tickets platform always exists defects to an objectively nonexistent platform, rather than the railway departments don't work hard. Thus, the author Jiang Le has committed the thinking fallacy of self-interest attribution Bias.

Thinking Fallacy of Appeal to Hypocrisy

You don't respond positively to other people's criticisms of you, but use criticism of others as your response. You want to avoid the responsibility of defending yourself by responding to criticism with criticism. You use this method to suggest that the other people are a hypocritical person, but no matter whether others are hypocritical or not, you are just avoiding criticism from others.

For example, when Xiao Ming argued with Xiao Hong, he pointed out that Xiao Hong had made a logical fallacy. Xiao Hong didn't defend himself positively, instead, replied, "you made a logical fallacy before." Here, Xiao Hong has committed the thinking fallacy of appeal to hypocrisy.

The author Jiang Le said as follows:

Devote to the battle for buying train ticket during the spring travel, the key in the war, only to see sink like a stone, but stand out from the crowd.

This reminds me of famous words by 18th-century French philosopher Holbach:

Hell is a stove with a monk's hot pot on it. It's a priest's stove. The great chef of priest of Heavenly Father, who was concerned with improving the nutrition of the monks, placed his own children, who did not follow the monastic commandments, on the roasting pan.

In this passage, author Jiang Le responded to the criticism of the ticket scarcity with the French philosopher Holbach's famous remark to encourage people to obey the rules. The problem is that ordinary passengers are still difficult in buying tickets after they stuck to obey all rules formulated by the railway system, but reselling ticket scalpers are not difficult in buying tickets though exploiting an advantage of the loopholes in the imperfect rules and poor management. The reality of railway ticket buying is that ordinary passengers who abide by the rules are "placed on the roasting pan", while the scalpers who does not abide the rules are enjoying a big meal. So, author Jiang Le has not only committed the thinking fallacy of appeal to hypocrisy, but also committed the thinking fallacy of self-contradiction.
Conclusions

To sum up, this article "spring festival train tickets were sold out in one second, is '12306' platform?" exists many thinking fallacies, some of the fallacies are very low, and easy to be found, these fallacies reduced the credibility and persuasion of this article, makes the correctness and authenticity of the viewpoints delivered by this article is questionable.

As a special commentator of Chinese railway network, Jiang Le should have a high quality, and can fairly and objectively comment on the event itself, should not commit so many low-level thinking fallacies in the comments. Because of the author's own position and emotion, the author tried to induce readers to support his views by using these thinking fallacies, which seriously affected the objectivity and persuasiveness of the article.

Reference

[1] Hao-wen Feng, Wei-min Ouyang, Critical Thinking Perspective on the Han Xiaorong’s Truth about Fudan Propaganda Video, In Proceeding of the second international conference on education and social development, Nanjing, China, Dec. 5-6,2015, pp. 50-54.

