

## Research on Communication Strategies for Personal IP: A Case Study of Bilibili Uploader “硬核的半佛仙人” (Postprint)

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### Abstract

With the development of decentralized mobile networks, the power of individuals positioned at network dissemination nodes is being infinitely amplified, enabling them to accumulate traffic through high-quality content and subsequently form personal IP. Personal IP aggregates users by leveraging cultural attributes and linguistic systems compatible with its target audience, and outputs viewpoints through persuasive communication methods such as narrative expression, respect and domestication, sympathy and empathy, thereby influencing fan decision-making and achieving traffic monetization.

### Full Text

**A Study on Personal IP Communication Strategies: The Case of Bilibili UP 主 “Hardcore Half-Buddha Immortal” (Beijing Institute of Graphic Communication, Beijing 102600)**

### Abstract

With the development of decentralized mobile networks, the power of individuals positioned at network communication nodes is being infinitely amplified, enabling them to accumulate traffic through high-quality content and subsequently form personal IPs. Personal IPs gather users by aligning their cultural attributes and language systems with target audiences, output viewpoints through persuasive communication methods such as storytelling expression, respect and domestication, sympathy and empathy, influence fan decision-making, and ultimately monetize through traffic.

**Keywords:** personal IP, persuasive communication, communication strategy

## 1. IP Overview

The UP 主 “Half-Buddha Immortal” (hereinafter referred to as “Half-Buddha”) specializes in finance, wealth management, and investment, delivering popular science content in a relaxed and playful manner. Since releasing his first video on Bilibili on December 23, 2019, he has amassed nearly 6 million followers and over 50 million likes within two years, becoming one of Bilibili’s top 100 UP 主 s of 2020. Half-Buddha’s primary occupation is risk management. He wrote on Zhihu for six years, demonstrating strong creative ability and rapid update speed, and was once among Zhihu’s top 50 content creators. Leveraging his fan base accumulated on Zhihu, he created the WeChat public account “Half-Buddha Immortal” in December 2018 (focused on in-depth content) and a secondary account “Xianren JUMP” in May 2019 (focused on attitude). After joining Bilibili in 2020, he gained 2 million followers within three months. However, since his rise to fame on Bilibili in 2020, many similar UP 主 s have emerged, and his account’s follower growth has shown signs of fatigue since 2021.

He explains his motivation for creating content: “Everyone knows people will do questionable things for money, but as risk controllers, we specifically know exactly what people are capable of. We ‘battle’ problematic behaviors daily, experience many dark sides, and need a way to vent our emotions. ‘Abusing’ text is an excellent method.”

### 1.1 IP Content

Half-Buddha’s content primarily falls into three categories. First, pitfall-avoidance guides, which include investment pitfalls and consumption pitfalls. Investment pitfall videos expose the traps behind seemingly profitable “money-making opportunities” from an insider’s perspective, positioning Half-Buddha as a “professional risk controller” who helps viewers “avoid thunder” from a practical standpoint. For instance, in “How Pitifully Deceptive Milk Tea Franchise Can Be” (9.895 million views, 743,000 likes), he discusses issues such as lack of franchise filing, the scarcity of entrepreneurial talent, and site selection costs. His core message on investment is: “If there were a way to make money, no one would tell you.” Consumption pitfall videos, meanwhile, adopt the perspective of “a professional risk controller who has been repeatedly deceived,” alerting viewers to issues they should watch for when consuming. In “A Basic Guide to Avoiding Pitfalls at 4S Stores,” he points out potential bundled sales, forced financial service fees, insurance costs, and repair charges. His solutions involve calling manufacturers, 12315, local industrial and commercial bureaus, or local traffic radio stations as leverage in negotiations with 4S stores. His attitude toward these pitfalls is mildly critical: “When consumers have to become experts to avoid one pitfall after another, the industry itself becomes somewhat magical. I can only say, I love this magical world.” This attitude reflects a sense of helplessness derived from analyzing the interest chains behind these pitfalls and considering multiple perspectives,

representing a “deconstructive resistance” consistent with his video style.

Second, viewpoint and decision-making content, such as “Is Not Being Able to Afford Luxury Goods Being Poor? No, Being Smart” (8.967 million views, 690,000 likes) and “Should Young People Buy Houses as Early as Possible?” (5.09 million views, 246,000 likes). These videos provide solutions to viewers’ real-world problems through the rational thinking of a financial practitioner, precisely targeting Bilibili’s primary user base. The main approach prioritizes “input-output ratio” and solves problems from the perspective of a purely rational actor.

Third, hot topic analysis, such as “Why Does Trump Disregard American Lives?” (9.597 million views, 795,000 likes) and “Who is the Biggest Winner in the Xiao Zhan Incident?” (8.543 million views, 477,000 likes). These videos deeply interpret trending events, telling stories from multiple perspectives to analyze the underlying interest chains and help viewers understand the causes and impacts. This category best aligns with internet-era content dissemination patterns but has the lowest practical guidance effect. The core message is that “any issue involving money is no joke,” analyzing the profit motives behind seemingly irrational group behaviors. In these videos, Half-Buddha’s persona is “a fat man who sees through everything,” with many analyses and solutions containing joking elements that create a sense of “seeing through everything yet remaining confused.” This plays an important role in enriching and consolidating his persona.

## 1.2 IP Characteristics

**1.2.1 Language Attributes: Bilibili-Style Discourse System** Half-Buddha’s language system embodies Bilibili-style discourse. First, regarding emoticons: recent research indicates that online youth subculture exhibits characteristics of “deconstructive resistance” toward mainstream culture, having shed its colors of “direct conflict” and “overt resistance” to become more about “self-venting” and “self-satisfaction” [1]. Emoticons serve as an important manifestation. Their “antagonistic” elements have been gradually deconstructed during dissemination, transforming into tools for entertainment and self-expression. In Half-Buddha’s videos, visual elements are primarily emoticons, which serve four functions: (1) creating context and expressing emotions; (2) achieving humor through reversal; (3) enhancing participation; and (4) fostering subject identification and identity recognition. For example, in “Want to Learn Stocks, Dear? The Kind That Bankrupts You,” he uses a “Shiba Inu frantically shaking head” emoticon with the caption “I don’t believe it, I don’t believe it,” creating a context of vehemently rejecting a “scammer” who wants to teach you stock trading, thereby enhancing the emotional impact of his message. In “How Luckin Coffee Beat Capitalism,” he uses a panda head emoticon (honest person expression) with the caption “Don’t know, I don’t know!” to create a reversal about whether Luckin “knew or didn’t know” the actual situation of coffee in China, achieving a comedic effect. These widely

popular emoticons help young people categorize Half-Buddha as one of “us,” increasing identification and dissemination efficiency.

Second, regarding language text: Half-Buddha’s language demonstrates strong “internet sensibility,” manifested in focusing on hot events and skillfully using current internet catchphrases and expressions. During the pandemic, when schools used DingTalk for online education, he released “Gently DingTalk, On-line Beating,” quipping: “As a workplace professional who has suffered greatly, I deeply believe that only the ‘beating of society’ can make the flowers of the motherland bloom more vibrantly.” Semiotician Saussure proposed that signs consist of signifiers and signifieds. In internet catchphrases, “society’s beating” signifies experiencing violence in society but refers collectively to the setbacks and hardships young people experience after entering society. Popularized on Douyin in 2018, it carries connotations of mockery, helplessness, and even satire, representing a deconstruction of real-world pressures. As a special media symbol, this “meme” brings humor while evoking emotional resonance among workplace professionals, promoting community identification.

Third, regarding addictive background music: Half-Buddha’s background music is “The Next Episode,” characterized by strong rhythm, high recognizability, and easy brainwashing. The opening has strong impact, paired with his self-introduction: “Hello everyone, I’m Half-Buddha, a hardcore man who kowtows to himself in the mirror daily.” This creates an “opening screen critical hit” feeling, aligning with the “loudness war” logic in music and leaving a strong impression on viewers. Compared to text, background music more efficiently transmits excitement to users. The rap song’s rhythm also suits short, punchy statements, and using 1.25x speed voiceover with this BGM is highly suitable for content consumption and dissemination in the fragmented era.

**1.2.2 Cultural Attributes: Bilibili-Style Sang Culture** Half-Buddha’s cultural attributes reflect Bilibili-style “Sang culture.” Sang culture can be defined as language, text, or images popular among youth groups that carry emotions and colors of decadence, despair, and pessimism, representing a new form of youth subculture [2]. Freud’s structural theory of personality includes “id,” “ego,” and “superego,” where the ego is the perceptual system formed from the id under external world influence, the executor of personality [3]. Social psychology holds that self-concept is acquired through interaction with others in social environments [3]. Online Sang culture can be understood as the ego’s rebellion against social discipline during intense conflict between id and superego. As an important gathering place for Sang culture, Bilibili provides Half-Buddha with substantial attention. Self-proclaimed “society’s beating enthusiast,” Half-Buddha states in “Is Not Being Able to Afford Luxury Goods Being Poor? No, Being Smart” that “Do you think buying certain brands can bring sunshine to your lifeless existence? Poverty is the powerful weapon against consumerism.” In “How to Make Money by Seducing Rich Older Women,” he jokes “Which boy doesn’t want a rich auntie who tolerates his gaming?” These expressions

exhibit strong Sang culture characteristics. Through subversive expression of mainstream culture and values, he creates a persona of “not pretending,” “not bragging,” and “down-to-earth,” fostering identification and belonging among youth groups.

## 2. IP Communication Strategy: Persuasive Communication Methodology

From the perspective of mass communication techniques, Half-Buddha’s videos demonstrate highly sophisticated persuasive communication skills. First, the principle of proximity: he playfully addresses viewers as “dear husbands,” instantly closing the distance through this internet term that appeals to all genders. Second, storytelling expression: his videos consistently feature the character Teacher Newton, similar to Yu Qian’s father in Guo Degang’s comedy, serving as a target for jokes and a vehicle for creating scenarios and stories. In “How to Make Money by Seducing Rich Older Women,” he uses storytelling to narrate Teacher Newton’s “turbulent early life” to persuade young people that “unconventional shortcuts often come with unexpected costs.” Third, domestication and respect: as a knowledge area UP 主, he appropriately demonstrates professional competence to gain user respect. In the same video, he uses highly specialized vocabulary to argue his core thesis: “The reasons for not encouraging seducing rich older women are: first, status inequality leads to instrumentalization; second, instrumentalization leads to reduced novelty; third, uncertain returns; fourth, severe supply-demand issues.” Fourth, empathy and sympathy: beneath his Sang culture exterior lies a positive value core. For example, “Is Not Being Able to Afford Luxury Goods Being Poor? No, Being Smart” encourages young people to reject being “leeks” (suckers) of capitalism and think rationally to avoid overconsumption. Through extensive Sang culture expressions, users feel understood, enhancing identification and creating empathy that bridges communication, ultimately achieving persuasive effects through positive content that aligns with traditional values. Fifth, as proposed in *The Crowd*, mass communication’s three techniques are repetition, conclusion, and infection [4]. Half-Buddha’s videos typically state viewpoints in titles, repeat arguments multiple times, and infect viewers through details and emotions. In “Why Does Trump Disregard American Lives,” after describing capitalism’s ruthlessness, he shares: “My wife is a medical professional. Most of her classmates have gone to the battlefield, and she is ready to go anytime. I asked if she was scared. She said terrified, but she must go. I don’t oppose her decision because it’s an innate recognition, the pride and glory of our entire nation.” This detail, combined with public gratitude toward medical workers and national pride during the pandemic, achieved excellent communication results with over 9.6 million views and nearly 800,000 likes.

### 3. IP Business Model: Traffic-Based Secondary Sales

Half-Buddha's business model mirrors that of many Bilibili UP 主 s, relying on Bilibili's incentive plan and soft advertising. The incentive plan, from Bilibili official, correlates with video playback, likes, coins, and other data, but offers limited income. His primary income comes from soft advertising. Self-proclaimed "King of Taking Money" (with "taking money" referring to earning from soft ads), Half-Buddha early on expressed his views on accepting soft ads, considering them a legitimate source of income and reasonable compensation for video production, which most fans understand. This frank expression also reinforces his persona. His soft ads integrate well with content; for example, "Why Some People Can Get High Salaries for Doing Nothing While You Go Bald Taking the Blame" (2.369 million views, 106,000 likes) maintains strong viewpoint expression without reduced viewership or likes due to advertising.

### 4. IP Evaluation

The digital age is characterized by information overload, knowledge shortage, and particularly scarce knowledge for solving immediate problems. Dry, difficult economic theories are hard for the general public to deeply understand and apply, with numerous numbers and technical terms constituting "noise" as proposed in Shannon's information theory. Half-Buddha's videos aim to "denoise" sophisticated economic principles through audience-friendly expression, transforming knowledge into practical solutions for users' immediate problems. Therefore, his videos meet audience needs. However, this satisfaction remains at the knowledge provision level rather than knowledge service. He provides knowledge but not targeted, problem-solving services.

Moreover, his videos are products of the short-term (or medium-term) unintended effects of internet technology. The economic knowledge they contain is mostly fragmented, lacks systematic structure, and has insufficient connections between knowledge points. His knowledge dissemination employs rich mass communication techniques from a "user-centered" perspective, touching only the surface without reaching theoretical depth or inspiring critical thinking.

Simultaneously, his videos address problems solely from an economic perspective, prioritizing "input-output ratio" with instrumental rationality outweighing value rationality, showing insufficient concern for human beings themselves. Therefore, as he states, his videos "only provide a perspective for viewing problems," and viewers should engage in critical thinking about his content.

### 5. IP Development Recommendations

#### 4.1 Enhance Social Responsibility, Improve Knowledge Services

As a well-known knowledge area UP 主 on Bilibili, audience expectations for Half-Buddha include four aspects: First, for socially hot events difficult to judge and

prone to reversal, audiences expect him to play the role of “opinion leader,” clarifying interest relationships behind events through his professional perspective and offering viewpoints. Second, providing knowledge that solves real-world problems. Third, entertainment functions. Fourth, bringing identification and belonging. For Half-Buddha, first, he must enhance social responsibility, recognizing his role as an information “gatekeeper” for fans and providing higher-quality knowledge that inspires rational thinking rather than blindly catering to audiences and tending toward vulgarity. Second, he can categorize video content into several sections, placing investment pitfall avoidance, consumption pitfall avoidance, hot topic analysis, and viewpoint decision-making videos under sub-directories and grouping videos on the same topic to improve user information search efficiency.

Additionally, transforming from a knowledge provider to a knowledge service provider is worth attempting. For viewpoint decision-making videos, he could adopt a user-service concept, increasing interactivity by allowing users to select their actual circumstances and providing more practical decision-making suggestions for different situations to facilitate real-world application.

#### 4.2 Enrich Para-social Interaction, Leverage Competitive Advantage

As Half-Buddha’s popularity on Bilibili has grown, similar finance UP 主 s have proliferated, imitating his language style, presentation forms, and background music, while his own fan growth has shown fatigue. His unique “persona” is his irreplaceable asset. Therefore, he can strengthen his “non-bragging, non-pretentious but wise fat man” persona through various means: participating in speech and debate variety shows or Bilibili live events, interacting more with fans, and creating more personal videos. Through appropriate self-disclosure, he can engage in para-social interaction with fans. Psychologists Horton and Wohl proposed the concept of para-social interaction, referring to “the illusion of a face-to-face relationship with performers that mass media brings to audiences, making performers seem to be in their social circle” [5]. Through such para-social interaction, he can form more unique and intimate relationships with fans, increasing fan stickiness and willingness to pay.

[1] Ma Zhonghong: *The Other Force That Cannot Be Ignored: Research on New Media and Youth Subculture*, Tsinghua University Press, 2015, pp. 60-61.

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[4] Gustave Le Bon. *The Crowd* [M]. Beijing: China Women’s Publishing House, 2017.

[5] Horton, Donald, & R. Wohl, Mass communication and para-social interaction: Observations on intimacy at a distance. *Psychiatry*, Vol. 19, No. 3, 1956, pp. 1.

*Note: Figure translations are in progress. See original paper for figures.*

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