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Factors Influencing the Information Dissemination Effect of Government Bilibili Accounts: An Empirical Study (Postprint)

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Abstract

[Purpose/Significance] As a crucial platform for government-youth communication, the information dissemination effectiveness of government-affiliated Bilibili accounts directly determines their communication efficiency and effectiveness. Research on influencing factors of information dissemination effectiveness for such accounts facilitates improvement in communication effectiveness.

[Method/Process] Based on 471 samples from the Communist Youth League Central Committee's Bilibili account, this study systematically examines the effects of content themes, video categories, cover image types, screen formats, subtitles, organizational forms, editing rates, and video duration on information dissemination effectiveness using content analysis and regression analysis.

[Results/Conclusion] Results indicate that videos themed in science and technology, music, and fashion enhance overall dissemination effectiveness, with science and technology videos exhibiting the highest contribution; sitcoms, live-action videos, and surveillance videos all positively and significantly influence overall dissemination effectiveness, with live-action videos showing the highest contribution. Video editing rates, vertical-screen videos, subtitle addition, and collaborative creation significantly improve overall dissemination effectiveness, with vertical-screen format having the greatest contribution in the overall model. Video duration and cover images show no significant effects. Operation of government-affiliated Bilibili accounts should fully unleash youth patriotic potential, innovate video formats, optimize video production workflows, and innovate organizational forms.

Full Text

Preamble

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An Empirical Study on Factors Influencing the Information Dissemination Effect of Government Bilibili Accounts

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Abstract

[Purpose/Significance] As a crucial platform for communication between government agencies and youth, the information dissemination effectiveness of government Bilibili accounts directly determines their communication efficiency and outcomes. Research on the factors influencing this effectiveness can enhance communication impact. **[Method/Process]** Based on 471 samples from the Central Committee of the Communist Youth League's Bilibili account, this study employs content analysis and regression analysis to systematically examine how content themes, video categories, cover image types, screen format, subtitles, organizational form, editing rate, and video duration affect information dissemination effectiveness. **[Results/Conclusions]** Results indicate that videos on technology, music, and fashion themes improve overall dissemination effectiveness, with technology videos contributing the most. Scripted dramas, live-action footage, and surveillance videos all positively and significantly influence overall effectiveness, with live-action footage showing the highest contribution. Video editing rate, vertical screen format, subtitle addition, and collaborative creation significantly enhance overall dissemination effectiveness, with vertical screen format contributing the most in the overall model. Video duration and cover images show no significant effect. Government Bilibili account operations should fully unleash youth patriotic potential, innovate video formats, optimize production processes, and develop novel organizational forms.

Keywords: Government Bilibili Account; Government New Media; Communication Effect; Content Analysis

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1. Introduction

Government new media, defined as officially verified accounts of government agencies on various new media platforms, has become a critical channel for providing government information and services, guiding mainstream ideology, and

responding to government-related public opinion. From both practical development and theoretical research perspectives, China's mainstream government new media platforms currently focus primarily on Weibo, WeChat, and Toutiao, with short government videos not yet widely adopted as an evaluation metric. According to the 45th Statistical Report on China's Internet Development by CNNIC, as of March 2020, there were nearly 139,000 government Weibo accounts, approximately 83,000 government Toutiao accounts, 620 million users of WeChat city services, and over 17,000 government Douyin accounts. While the positive role of government new media has been repeatedly affirmed at the central level, numerous issues persist in overall activity levels, information reach, youth identification, and participation. Youth identification with government new media remains relatively low, significantly affecting its effectiveness. As heavy users of internet and new media platforms, young people's ideological dynamics are easily influenced by online information, making them primary targets for internet-based collective action. Considering that many young people pay little attention to mainstream traditional media, the leading role of government new media urgently needs strengthening.

In recent years, party and government organizations represented by the Central Committee of the Communist Youth League have attempted to establish accounts on youth-oriented new media platforms to achieve positive interaction with young audiences. Given that Bilibili's core user base consists primarily of "post-95s" and "post-00s" generations, the Communist Youth League Central Committee officially joined Bilibili on January 2, 2017, creating a new wave under the moniker "Pipituan." The success of this account is evident across multiple metrics. As of February 2020, through active exploration of various column formats including text columns, audio content, online open courses, and live streaming, the account had published 2,351 videos, amassed 6.003 million followers, received 80.996 million likes, and achieved 880 million total views. Despite such successful practices by some government Bilibili accounts, academic focus remains concentrated on examining dissemination effects and influencing factors of government WeChat and Weibo accounts, with only a few scholars beginning to investigate the communication style, propaganda strategies, and effects of the Communist Youth League's Bilibili account. Research on factors influencing information dissemination effectiveness of government Bilibili accounts remains scarce.

This study takes the Communist Youth League Central Committee's Bilibili account as a case study to construct an evaluation index system for information dissemination effectiveness of government Bilibili accounts. Based on the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM), we systematically examine factors influencing this effectiveness from perspectives including content themes, video categories, cover image types, video editing rate, screen format, subtitle usage, video duration, and organizational form, ultimately proposing targeted policy recommendations to optimize operational practices.

2. Research Questions and Theoretical Model

2.1 Measurement Dimensions of Information Dissemination Effectiveness

How to measure the information dissemination effectiveness of government new media? Existing research offers various approaches. For government WeChat, scholars have used metrics such as likes, shares, reads, comments, audience activity, coverage scope, net increase in followers, and influence enhancement. For government Weibo, forward counts and comment volumes serve as common indicators. These studies share the characteristic of constructing evaluation metrics based on platform features—for instance, using read counts for WeChat and forward/comment counts for Weibo. Given the inherent differences among liking, sharing, and commenting behaviors (with commenting requiring greater cognitive effort), hierarchical considerations are necessary when using these indicators. Luo Xue's research on CGTN's Twitter account international communication effectiveness offers a new framework, evaluating from three dimensions: communication breadth (audience scale), communication depth (audience influence), and communication participation (audience interaction). This study adapts this framework to Bilibili's characteristics, operationalizing communication depth as communication identification through three objective indicators (favorites, likes, and coin donations), communication breadth through view counts, and communication participation through bullet comments and regular comments.

2.2 Factors Influencing Information Dissemination Effectiveness

The generation of information dissemination effectiveness for government Bilibili accounts essentially involves audience selection. Research indicates that short videos with novel topics and rich knowledge points tend to excel. While Bilibili has been youth subculture-dominated, videos based on mainstream culture—such as *National Treasure*, which conveys national identity and positive values through creative expression—also attract young audiences. Therefore, content themes may significantly influence effectiveness.

Video categories on the Communist Youth League's account vary widely, including scripted dramas, live-action footage, and surveillance videos. Existing research shows that live-action footage, surveillance videos, and scripted dramas generate high participation, with scripted dramas being particularly effective due to their affinity, practicality, and strong operability. Surveillance videos can reveal truths with strong stimulation and narrative power, enhancing audience realism and empathy. Thus, video categories may significantly affect dissemination effectiveness.

Regarding cover image types, previous WeChat studies demonstrate that cover image colors significantly impact article reads and likes. On Bilibili, where information diversity is high, audiences selectively engage with content. As decoders, audiences' first contact is typically the video cover. The popular bullet

comment phrase “see cover, click video” suggests that cover images meeting audience needs may influence effectiveness. Therefore, we hypothesize that cover image types significantly impact dissemination effectiveness.

Video editing rate represents another potential factor. Editing is a crucial production stage, and editing frequency directly affects video rhythm, emotion, and overall style. Data from *People’s Daily’s* Douyin account shows that inappropriate editing techniques directly impact audience attention. Thus, editing rate may significantly influence effectiveness.

Screen format matters significantly in an era where mobile phones dominate media consumption. To better suit user habits, many video platforms have introduced vertical screen modes to enhance viewing experience. Platforms like Snapchat, YouTube, Douyin, and Pear Video now offer vertical screen functionality, ushering in the vertical screen era. Compared to horizontal screens, vertical screens focus on specific subjects, magnifying details to mobilize audience emotions and improve dissemination effectiveness. Bilibili already supports vertical screen mode without affecting bullet comments, comments, or other functions, offering greater flexibility and interactivity to meet audience needs and increase participation and conversion rates. Therefore, vertical screen mode may significantly influence effectiveness.

Subtitles serve as important supplements to audio and visuals in video creation, enhancing program effects. Despite high production costs, subtitles merit attention. Research on domestic reality shows reveals that subtitle language extends visual information to psychological levels, playing crucial roles in emotional rendering and information cues. Since subtitles can deepen audience understanding, their usage may significantly improve dissemination effectiveness.

Information richness theory emphasizes that richer content facilitates audience comprehension. However, information explosion has made audience attention a scarce resource. The tension between video content oversupply and scarce attention resources demands that videos capture users quickly. Government Douyin data confirms that “viral” short videos are mostly under 30 seconds, though other research suggests video duration doesn’t significantly affect likes, forwards, or comments. Given the trend toward shorter, more fragmented content, video duration has become an important factor.

Collaborative video creation is a unique Bilibili feature. Creators can partner with other bloggers to form teams that leverage complementary strengths to produce better content. These teams comprise planners, organizers, video producers, lyricists, composers, performers, and other roles working around specific themes, with “collaboration” tags appearing in video corners. Collaborative production can fully tap resource potential—including content, materials, and production resources—to form stable, high-quality production lines continuously supplying excellent products. Since quality content fundamentally attracts audience attention and achieves ideal dissemination effects, collaborative creation may significantly improve effectiveness compared to independent production.

Based on ELM and Bilibili's characteristics, this study constructs a theoretical framework around central cues (content themes) and peripheral cues (video categories, cover image types, editing rate, screen format, subtitles, video duration, and organizational form), as shown in Figure 1 [Figure 1: see original paper].

3. Research Methods

3.1 Data Collection

Given that the Communist Youth League Central Committee was among the earliest government agencies to join Bilibili and remains highly popular, we selected its account as our research object. From its January 2, 2017 entry through February 14, 2020, the account published 2,356 videos. To avoid content clustering during specific hot periods, we adopted systematic random sampling following L.V. Huang and T.E. Yeo's approach, selecting every 5th video. If a selected video had disabled comments, we selected the next one, ultimately obtaining 471 valid samples.

3.2 Variable Measurement

(1) Dependent Variable Measurement. The dependent variable is information dissemination effectiveness of government Bilibili accounts. Quantifiable Bilibili metrics include views, bullet comments, "one-click triple support" (likes, coin donations, favorites), regular comments, and shares. The "one-click triple support" function allows users to simultaneously like, donate coins, and favorite by long-pressing the like button, representing strong affirmation. Coins are platform virtual currency obtained through login and content contributions. Following previous research, we weighted communication breadth, identification, and participation at 0.5, 0.3, and 0.2 respectively. Communication breadth emphasizes coverage scope; view counts serve as the most direct influence indicator, with high-view videos receiving "popular" yellow tags below titles or homepage recommendations that spark curiosity and promote sharing.

Communication identification reflects user attitudes and acceptance, measured through likes, coin donations, and favorites. While "one-click triple support" represents ultimate affirmation, users more commonly perform individual actions. Liking indicates approval with low cost and high ease-of-use, yielding the highest numerical values. Coin donation, being costlier, powerfully demonstrates value recognition. Favoriting similarly indicates content approval. For communication participation, bullet comments and regular comments best reflect active user engagement. Bullet comments are real-time commentary subtitles scrolling across videos, creating unique interactive experiences different from traditional comment modes. To reduce impact from large numerical ranges, we applied natural logarithm transformation to weighted results, yielding the formal description in Formula (1):

$$C_n = \ln[0.5P_n + 0.3(L_n + M_n + S_n) + 0.2(D_n + R_n)], \text{ where } n \geq 1$$

Where: C = communication effectiveness, P = views, M = coin donations, S = favorites, L = likes, D = bullet comments, R = regular comments.

(2) Independent Variable Measurement. Independent variables include content theme, video category, editing rate, cover image type, screen format, subtitle usage, video duration, and organizational form.

For content themes, Bilibili's mature partition system includes 17 categories. Based on the Communist Youth League account's characteristics, we categorized themes into animation, drama, domestic animation, music, dance, gaming, technology, digital, lifestyle, "ghost animal" (parody), fashion, advertising, entertainment, film/TV, and documentary—15 types total, coded according to sample video partitions.

For video categories, following Wang Chengwei and Ma Liang's classification, we identified scripted drama, live-action footage, surveillance video, adapted video, and open course. Scripted dramas reenact real events for public education and legal popularization. Live-action footage presents real scenes chronologically, offering strong on-site presence for news reporting and interviews. Surveillance videos capture hard-to-film scenes from third-person perspectives. Adapted videos compile different clips with background music or narration for novel viewing experiences. Open courses are Bilibili's unique educational videos, such as the "Youth Course" series focusing on knowledge transmission and youth ideological, political, and patriotic education.

Video duration uses the platform's own classification: under 10 minutes, 10-30 minutes, 30-60 minutes, and over 60 minutes. Editing rate typically counts shots per minute; we adapted this by randomly selecting 30-second segments and counting edits. Cover images divide into system-selected and self-designed types, determined by whether images originated from video content or were independently created. Organizational form is identified by "collaboration" icons on video covers. Screen format includes horizontal and vertical.

3.3 Reliability Testing and Sample Coding

Two coders analyzed all 471 videos after operationalization training and pilot-coded 50 samples. Inter-coder reliability showed Kappa values of 1 for content theme, screen format, subtitle usage, organizational form, and video duration; 0.88 for video category; 0.75 for cover image; and 0.96 for editing rate—indicating high consistency. Coders then independently coded samples with ongoing discussion, with results shown in Table 1 .

Table 1 reveals that content themes primarily focus on technology (48.9%), lifestyle (24.1%), and music (10.6%). Video categories are dominated by live-action footage (67.1%) and adapted videos (23.6%). For cover images, 48.8% were selected from video content and 51.2% were independently designed. Screen format shows 89.8% horizontal videos. Subtitles appear in 94.7% of videos, 92.6% are independently created, and 77.8% are under 10 minutes. Editing

rates range from fast-paced (32 shots in 30 seconds) to slow-paced (1 shot in 30 seconds), averaging 6.9 edits. For dissemination effectiveness, maximum views reached 6,967,000 with a minimum of 6,034 and mean of 403,674. Bullet comments ranged from 6 to 16,800 (mean: 11,476). Regular comments ranged from 64 to 51,000 (mean: 2,507). Likes ranged from 9 to 716,000 (mean: 27,021). Coin donations ranged from 77 to 789,000 (mean: 12,995).

4. Research Results

We used SPSS regression analysis to test hypotheses. All independent variables had Variance Inflation Factors (VIF) below the critical value of 10, indicating no multicollinearity and allowing all variables into the model, as shown in Table 2.

Results show that compared to entertainment videos, drama (Beta = 0.103, $P < 0.05$), music (Beta = 0.168, $P < 0.05$), technology (Beta = 0.316, $P < 0.01$), and fashion (Beta = 0.105, $P < 0.05$) significantly and positively affect overall communication effectiveness. Compared to open courses, scripted drama (Beta = 0.182, $P < 0.001$), live-action footage (Beta = 0.184, $P < 0.05$), and surveillance video (Beta = 0.110, $P < 0.01$) significantly influence overall effectiveness, while adapted videos show no significant effect. Compared to system-selected covers, self-designed covers show no significant impact (Beta = -0.057, $P > 0.05$). Video editing rate positively affects effectiveness (Beta = 0.086, $P < 0.05$), indicating audience preference for fast-paced videos. Vertical screen format promotes effectiveness (Beta = 0.358, $P < 0.001$). Subtitle addition (Beta = 0.126, $P < 0.01$) significantly enhances effectiveness. Using videos over 60 minutes as reference, duration shows no significant effect. Compared to independent creation, collaborative creation significantly increases effectiveness (Beta = 0.168, $P < 0.001$).

We further examined effects on the three dimensions: communication breadth, identification, and participation. For content themes, drama significantly affects participation (Beta = 0.104, $P < 0.05$), while fashion videos significantly improve identification (Beta = 0.093, $P < 0.05$). For video categories, scripted drama significantly enhances breadth (Beta = 0.110, $P < 0.05$), identification (Beta = 0.150, $P < 0.01$), and participation (Beta = 0.177, $P < 0.001$). Live-action footage expands identification (Beta = 0.263, $P < 0.01$) and participation (Beta = 0.247, $P < 0.01$). Adapted videos improve identification (Beta = 0.173, $P < 0.05$) and participation (Beta = 0.210, $P < 0.05$). Self-designed cover images show no significant effects across dimensions. Vertical screen format significantly improves breadth (Beta = 0.376, $P < 0.001$), identification (Beta = 0.320, $P < 0.001$), and participation (Beta = 0.285, $P < 0.001$). Subtitles increase breadth (Beta = 0.093, $P < 0.05$) and identification (Beta = 0.101, $P < 0.01$). Collaborative creation improves breadth (Beta = 0.168, $P < 0.001$) and identification (Beta = 0.246, $P < 0.001$). Editing rate positively affects identification (Beta = 0.148, $P < 0.01$). Compared to videos over 60 minutes, 30-60 minute videos significantly reduce identification (Beta = -0.123, $P < 0.05$).

5. Discussion and Analysis

5.1 Results Discussion

This study systematically explored factors influencing government Bilibili account effectiveness using the influential Communist Youth League Central Committee account. Results show that drama, music, technology, and fashion themes enhance overall effectiveness, with technology videos contributing most. Scripted drama, live-action footage, and surveillance videos achieve good overall results. Vertical screen format, collaborative creation, and subtitles produce optimal overall effectiveness; editing rate positively affects overall effectiveness.

Specifically, drama significantly affects participation, while fashion videos improve identification. Scripted drama significantly enhances all three dimensions; live-action footage and adapted videos expand identification and participation. Vertical screen format significantly improves all dimensions; subtitles and collaborative creation increase breadth and identification; editing rate positively affects identification; 30-60 minute videos significantly reduce identification compared to videos over 60 minutes.

First, different content themes show significant effectiveness differences, consistent with previous findings. For instance, data from Chinese provincial health departments' Douyin accounts confirm that medical staff-related themes are most popular, while medical reform and daily diet videos have lowest view counts. European local government YouTube data also shows significant theme-based differences in video views. This can be explained by uses and gratifications theory: audiences actively select media content based on specific needs arising from individual and environmental factors, and the degree to which media satisfy these needs determines usage and effects. Therefore, different themes perform differently across effectiveness dimensions. Notably, technology videos' contribution to overall effectiveness is second only to vertical screen format. Specifically, "Xinghai" (formerly the military section), a sub-section of technology, is deeply popular among youth. Among the top ten most-viewed videos, 90% belong to the technology section, covering topics like "Hong Kong riot records" and "Ministry of Foreign Affairs' domineering responses." Youth express strong patriotic sentiments through comments and bullet comments, significantly enhancing national identity and pride, creating new online phenomena like "following news on Bilibili" and "expressing patriotism through bullet comments." In the fashion section, the Communist Youth League actively promotes "Chinese Hanfu Day," paying tribute to classical Chinese costume culture and receiving widespread acclaim.

Second, vertical screen format contributes most to overall effectiveness. This can be explained by innovation diffusion theory, which posits that relative advantage significantly influences innovation adoption. As an innovative video format, vertical screen mode perfectly matches mobile reading habits while maintaining full functionality for bullet comments, likes, comments, and sharing without requiring screen rotation, offering stronger flexibility and usability. Content

or format innovation and its relative advantages are important drivers of viral dissemination, as they become social talking points more easily. A core contribution of this study is empirically confirming vertical screen's positive effect on dissemination effectiveness before it becomes a mainstream trend.

Third, editing rate and subtitles positively affect overall effectiveness. Fast-paced editing with frequent shots and diverse scene transitions better suits youth viewing habits, providing strong visual impact. Connecting multiple short shots can enhance video rhythm and express richer audio-visual content, thereby moving audiences and improving effectiveness. Subtitles enrich original audio-visual expression and assist content delivery. Their importance becomes more prominent when audio language cannot be used or is prohibited. Sample data shows most Communist Youth League videos feature diverse subtitles.

Fourth, collaborative videos significantly improve overall effectiveness. Collaborative creation, a Bilibili feature launched in 2018, encourages video producers to cooperate and complement each other's strengths. The Communist Youth League's collaborations with film, music, and video bloggers demonstrate good effectiveness. Collaborative production also represents overlapping fan circles, positively expanding reach and influence. Theoretically, collaborative video creation is a form of citizen co-production. In social media contexts, citizen co-production features typical two-way communication, effectively promoting participation and community identification, thereby generating better dissemination effects. This study provides strong empirical support for this proposition.

5.2 Limitations and Future Directions

This study has several limitations. First, our data were collected at a specific time point, representing typical cross-sectional data. While widely accepted, cross-sectional data poorly reveal causality. Future research could collect data at multiple time points for longitudinal studies. Second, this case study of the Communist Youth League Central Committee account requires further verification to determine whether findings generalize to other government agencies' Bilibili accounts. Future studies could compare different agency types.

6. Policy Recommendations

Based on empirical findings, we recommend government Bilibili account operations focus on unleashing youth patriotic potential, innovating video formats, optimizing production processes, and developing novel organizational forms.

First, content operations should strengthen national identity and fully release youth patriotic potential. Our findings show youth demonstrate strong enthusiasm and participation for ideological and patriotic education content in the Communist Youth League's account, particularly in foreign affairs response and national power demonstration videos. Government Bilibili accounts should leverage platform advantages, learn from the Communist Youth League's successful

experience, and actively disseminate military, scientific, and international relations content that youth rarely encounter on other platforms. This can inspire patriotic passion amid the wave of online nationalism emerging from idol worship culture. Additionally, integrating cultural heritage, historical stories, current affairs, and defense knowledge with youth-preferred elements like animation, parody, pop music, and online gaming can create unique reporting styles.

Second, cater to youth psychological appeals and boldly innovate video formats. The Communist Youth League account integrates scripted drama, live-action footage, and surveillance video into youth education, weakening one-way knowledge transmission and forming a “soft communication” mode. Government Bilibili accounts should increase surveillance video usage, avoiding excessively violent or bloody images while selecting positive stories about ordinary heroes like traffic police, workers, doctors, and service providers. Using civilian perspectives and respecting privacy, these accounts can publicize excellent qualities and touching deeds to guide mainstream values.

Third, optimize video production processes to match user media habits. Government Bilibili video production should combine editing rhythm with content themes, coordinating with background music to express diverse emotions and enhance visual effects. Production details require careful attention, including subtitle addition and selecting impactful, humorous, or emotional cover images to attract audiences. Accounts should explore vertical screen video potential, adopting differentiated content-splitting formats and actively applying vertical screen mode to timely, information-rich videos while maintaining horizontal screen for audio-visual intensive content like dubbing, original music, and dance to ensure sensory experience.

Fourth, innovate organizational forms and strengthen exchanges through “strong-strong alliances.” Our findings show the Communist Youth League’s collaborative production model achieves good effectiveness. Government Bilibili operations should fully leverage collaborative creation advantages, broadening cooperation scope with creators across music, dance, film, and dubbing fields. By pooling collective strengths and achieving mutual complementarity, they can produce more influential video products.

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Author Contributions

Ma Xiaoyue: Data collection and analysis

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Zhang Yangyi: Data collection and analysis, paper writing

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

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