

Characteristics and Motivations of Social Video Book Recommendations: A Case Study of Bilibili's "Reading Equals Height" Campaign (Post-print)

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Abstract

[Purpose/Significance] Social video book recommendations represent a new model for reading promotion, and in-depth research helps explore more precise and personalized reading promotion services. [Method/Process] Taking the top 99 recommended books and their recommendation videos from the "Reading as Tall as Yourself" activity on the Bilibili video platform as the research subject, we statistically analyzed the relationship between the characteristics of the recommended books, video features, and recommendation effectiveness, and applied grounded theory to construct a model of motivations for book recommendations. [Results/Conclusion] The content of social video book recommendations is primarily classic literature, the promotion methods exhibit strong interactivity and high influence, and the promotion motivations include individual characteristics, functions of reading, knowledge value, and social interaction factors. For libraries, social video reading promotion can be strengthened in five aspects: user behavior, video marketing, reading content, reading ecosystem, and brand building.

Full Text

Preamble

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Research on Characteristics and Motivations of Social Video Recommended Bibliography: A Case Study of Bilibili's "Reading as Tall as Yourself" Activity

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Abstract: [Purpose/Significance] Social video recommended bibliography represents a new model of reading promotion, and in-depth study helps explore more precise and personalized reading promotion services. [Method/Process] This study examines the top 99 recommended books and their recommendation videos from Bilibili's "Reading as Tall as Yourself" campaign. Statistical analysis was conducted on the relationships between recommended book characteristics, video features, and recommendation effectiveness, and grounded theory was applied to construct a motivation model for book recommendation. [Result/Conclusion] Social video recommended bibliography focuses primarily on classic literature, with promotion methods demonstrating strong interactivity and high influence. Promotion motivations include individual characteristics, reading function, knowledge value, and social interaction factors. For libraries, social video reading promotion can be strengthened in five aspects: user behavior, video marketing, reading content, reading ecology, and brand building.

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Recommended bibliography research is a timeless yet ever-renewing topic that has consistently attracted attention in library science, bibliography, and society at large. From the perspective of reading promotion, current recommended bibliography research primarily includes four aspects: (1) Research on recommendation subjects, which has evolved from renowned scholars and academic institutions to ordinary readers, including academic celebrities, libraries, university presidents, library directors, and professional teachers, demonstrating diversified characteristics. Examples include the national bibliography lists compiled by Hu Shi and Liang Qichao for young students in the 1920s, and the "52 Classics for Joyful Reading" bibliography released by Sichuan University Library in 2020. (2) Research on target audiences, which focuses on children and adolescents to guide reading trends and promote cultural literacy. (3) Research on recommendation content, which examines disciplinary characteristics, carrier forms, and content features of recommended bibliographies, such as studies based on big data from open course syllabi. (4) Research on recommendation methods, such as WeChat-based recommended bibliography studies and reading promotion through major events. Overall, recommended bibliography research exhibits characteristics of increasingly broad recommendation subjects, more refined segmented recommendations, and trending toward media convergence in recommendation methods.

Social video services have become a new paradigm for library reading promotion in the media convergence era, with provincial public libraries in China leveraging short video platforms like Douyin for innovative services. Social video platforms also serve as important venues for the "reading guidance mechanism," providing crucial data sources for analyzing behavioral habits and patterns of rural video platform users and helping break through barriers to rural reading. So-

cial video reading promotion and user behavior have begun attracting academic attention. For instance, Xu Tongyang and Li Ting analyzed the effectiveness of short video social reading promotion from correlation and importance perspectives using Douyin as an example. Yang Yuyu and Zhang Pengyi's research on Bilibili video tags demonstrated that video social tagging primarily aims to express user viewpoints and emotions, more directly reflecting users' intrinsic behavioral characteristics. Therefore, in-depth analysis of social video reading promotion content, forms, and influencing factors can help advance precision and personalization in reading promotion, thereby innovating reading promotion activity methods and expanding research boundaries.

2 Research Design

2.1 Research Object

With the rapid development of social video platforms represented by Douyin and Bilibili (hereinafter referred to as B 站), social video services have become a new model for reading promotion. On the occasion of the 25th World Book Day, Bilibili launched the large-scale thematic campaign “Reading as Tall as Yourself” in collaboration with Xinhua Net, Xinhua Media, Beautiful China, Yanjiji, JD.com, and nine universities including Peking University, Tsinghua University, and Fudan University. The campaign called on people to enrich their spiritual world through reading and improve national quality through reading. Between April 3 and 23, 2020, for every “Reading as Tall as Yourself” topic video posted by users, Bilibili donated one book to children in Beautiful China public welfare schools. Video content primarily involved recommending favorite books, personal reading histories, reading classic passages aloud, etc. During this period, approximately 10,668 reading promotion videos were released. This study selected 100 books recommended by Bilibili UP owners (content creators) and their recommendation videos as research objects for the following reasons: (1) Typicality: Bilibili is a highly influential video-sharing social platform in China with a primarily young user base. This campaign attracted numerous participants, and extracting recommended books, commentary, publisher information, and user data such as views, forwards, and bullet comments from these videos provides an excellent perspective and data source for constructing a group reading profile of young readers. (2) Data accessibility: The 100 books were statistics compiled by Bilibili itself from the “Reading as Tall as Yourself” video collection campaign, representing the 100 most frequently recommended books by Bilibili users. Since the campaign's backend data was not publicly accessible, these 100 books and their recommendation videos were selected as research objects based on comprehensive consideration of data accessibility, feasibility, and sample representativeness.

2.2 Research Methods

This study aims to explore the content and underlying reasons of the “Reading as Tall as Yourself” video reading promotion campaign—in other words, to

answer several fundamental questions about social video bibliography recommendations: “Who is recommending?” “What content is being recommended?” “How is it being recommended?” “What is the recommendation effect?” and “What are the reasons for recommendation?” Following an exploration approach from surface to depth and from phenomenon to essence, this study adopts a mixed-methods research path. The purpose of mixed-methods research is to enable researchers to apply knowledge based on practical reasons (result-centered, problem-centered, and pluralism) and to better understand research problems through the collection of digital information (quantitative) and textual information (qualitative). Specific methods include: (1) Content analysis method: Statistical analysis of the Top 100 books and their recommendation videos to quantitatively analyze basic characteristics of recommended books and videos, revealing both the distribution of recommended bibliographies and recommendation effectiveness. (2) Grounded theory method: Abstracting and generalizing video subtitle data to analyze underlying recommendation motivations, maintaining both the intrinsic relevance of original materials and theoretical abstraction.

2.3 Data Processing

First, 100 books recommended by Bilibili UP owners were selected and sorted by recommendation frequency from high to low. Since *A Brief History of Humankind* and *Sapiens: A Brief History of Humankind* are the same book, 99 books were ultimately selected for analysis. Second, book information was supplemented by collecting data from the CALIS Union Catalog Database, including authors’ countries and book categories, and background information such as book tags from Douban to support subsequent reading characteristic analysis. Third, recommendation videos were located by searching Bilibili using the query “book title + Reading as Tall as Yourself,” selecting the most-viewed videos and their subtitles as data sources while recording basic information such as UP owner, broadcast volume, likes, and video duration. The initial search yielded 80 videos; after removing duplicates, 74 videos were selected for analysis. Finally, subtitle data was extracted using video subtitle extraction and audio-to-text conversion software, producing over 170,000 characters of subtitle data from 74 videos as the recommendation motivation dataset. Additionally, 10 videos were randomly selected from the remaining 10,594 campaign videos as reserved samples for theoretical saturation testing. Data collection occurred from September to October 2020, with specific processing steps shown in Figure 1 [Figure 1: see original paper].

3 Research Results

Following the research approach described above, this study first organized and analyzed the authors, publication periods, and types of the 99 recommended books. Based on this foundation, the promotion effectiveness of recommendation videos was further examined. Finally, through open coding, axial coding,

and selective coding, the study explored the motivations behind UP owners' book recommendations.

3.1 Recommended Bibliography

3.1.1 Recommended Authors

- (1) Highly Recommended Writers: The 99 books were authored by 77 writers, with 13 authors having two or more recommended works (see Table 1). The top three were a mystery writer, an animation writer, and a science fiction writer, directly reflecting Bilibili users' reading preferences.
- (2) Authors' Countries: Authors of the 99 recommended books came from 12 countries (see Figure 2 [Figure 2: see original paper]), with the majority from China, Japan, the United States, the United Kingdom, France, and Russia, accounting for 92% of recommended books.

3.1.2 Publication Period Based on first edition or completion dates, 16 works were published before the 20th century, primarily classics such as *I Ching*, *Dream of the Red Chamber*, *Das Kapital*, *The Brothers Karamazov*, and *The Interpretation of Dreams*—time-tested eternal classics of human knowledge. Forty-two works were from the 20th century, mainly literary and historical classics like *Love in the Time of Cholera*, *The Moon and Sixpence*, *Ci Poetry in the Human World*, and *A Global History*, along with popular science works like *A Brief History of Time*, textbooks like *Social Psychology*, and fantasy novels like *The Lord of the Rings*, demonstrating greater diversity. Forty-one works were from the 21st century, with popular literature, classic literature, science fiction, and picture books accounting for a significant proportion, such as *Fang Siqi's First Love Paradise*, *Kafka on the Shore*, *The Three-Body Problem*, and *Gazing at the Classic of Mountains and Seas*.

3.1.3 Book Categories According to the Chinese Library Classification, the 99 books belong to 12 categories, as shown in Table 2 . Literature accounts for 69 books (69.70%), such as Cao Xueqin's *Dream of the Red Chamber* and Alexandre Dumas's *The Count of Monte Cristo*. History and geography account for 7 books, such as L. S. Stavrianos's *A Global History*. Art accounts for 6 books, such as E. H. Gombrich's *The Story of Art*. Philosophy and religion account for 5 books, such as Sigmund Freud's *The Interpretation of Dreams*. Politics and law account for 3 books, such as Luo Xiang's *Circle of Justice*. Marxism-Leninism-Mao Zedong Thought-Deng Xiaoping Theory accounts for 2 books, such as Karl Marx's *Das Kapital*. Social sciences general accounts for 2 books, such as Gustave Le Bon's *The Crowd*. Industrial technology accounts for 1 book: Thomas H. Cormen's *Introduction to Algorithms*. Biological science accounts for 1 book: Richard Dawkins's *The Selfish Gene*. Mathematics and chemistry accounts for 1 book: George Gamow's *One Two Three... Infinity*. Astronomy and earth science accounts for 1 book: Stephen Hawking's *A Brief*

History of Time. Culture, science, education, and sports accounts for 1 book: Mortimer J. Adler and Charles Van Doren's *How to Read a Book*.

3.2 Recommendation Effect

3.2.1 Video Characteristics The duration, views, likes, coin donations, favorites, forwards, comments, and bullet comments of 74 videos depict the basic situation of recommended bibliography videos, with descriptive statistical features shown in Table 3. The longest video was 1,587 seconds (“[Reading] #03 A Unique Pig || Science, Rationality, Culture, Superstition”) recommending *A Unique Pig*. The shortest was only 45 seconds (“2020.4.23, Let’s Read *The Prince* Together”) recommending *The Prince*. The highest view count was 2,473,000 (“[Luo Xiang] World Book Day is Coming, Recommend a Book I’m Reading Recently”) recommending *Confessions*, which also had the highest likes (265,000) and coin donations (95,000). The lowest view count was only 7 (“[Reading as Tall as Yourself] Reading is a Habit, Immersion is Enjoyment”) recommending *Your Name*. The video with zero likes, coin donations, forwards, comments, and bullet comments was “Book Sharing (Mystery Novels)” recommending *The Devotion of Suspect X*. The video with highest favorites (47,000), forwards (13,000), and bullet comments (13,000) was “Understanding This Masterpiece, Completely Avoiding IQ Tax! ~ Charlie Munger’s Book [Director]” recommending *Poor Charlie’s Almanack*. The video with zero favorites was “No Doubt! I’m Just Here for That Nice Avatar Accessory” recommending *Silent Reading*. The highest comment count was 9,899, recommending *Fang Siqu’s First Love Paradise*.

3.2.2 Correlation Analysis The relationships among eight descriptive feature variables of recommendation videos reflect the intrinsic effectiveness of bibliography recommendations. Pearson correlation analysis in Table 4 shows that although video duration conveys information richness, it has no correlation with views, likes, coin donations, favorites, forwards, comments, or bullet comments. However, views, likes, coin donations, favorites, forwards, comments, and bullet comments are significantly correlated, indicating that user video playback frequency is the most direct indicator of recommendation video effectiveness, directly reflecting users’ personal and interactive behavioral intentions.

3.3 Recommendation Motivations

Video subtitles constitute the content elaboration of bibliography recommendation reasons. Analyzing subtitle data can explore various motivations behind UP owners’ book recommendations. Therefore, this study establishes internal associations in the data through open coding, axial coding, and selective coding to generate a theoretical model explaining video and bibliography recommendation motivations.

3.3.1 Open Coding Open coding is the process of data interpretation, classification, and conceptualization. First, using NVivo 12 Plus qualitative analysis software, 74 original subtitle texts were coded according to principles of openness and authenticity, yielding 553 original statements and their corresponding tags. Second, through comparative analysis and tag integration, 43 concepts were obtained. Finally, through induction, integration, and categorization of initial concepts, 10 categories were developed, with coding examples shown in Table 5 .

3.3.2 Axial Coding Axial coding builds upon open coding to deeply explore relationships between categories, discovering connections and differences between concepts and categories. Through axial coding analysis, this study extracted four main categories: individual characteristics, reading function, knowledge value, and social interaction, with their connotations and corresponding categories shown in Table 6 .

3.3.3 Selective Coding Selective coding involves theoretical generalization of main categories and their relationships, clarifying the main thread of research questions, developing core categories, and elevating raw materials to theoretical heights. Through analysis of subtitle data, concepts, categories, and main categories, this study extracted the core category of “motivations for social video bibliography recommendation,” with the selective coding process shown in Figure 3 [Figure 3: see original paper].

- (1) Individual characteristics constitute the internal reason for book recommendation, including features of both recommenders and recommendation targets, determining the selection of book content and form. Recommenders choose books based on their own hobbies, experiences, or personalities, establishing the tone of reading, while also considering the preferences of recommendation targets to provide reference booklists. For example, recommending *Social Psychology* to those interested in interpersonal relationships and *A Brief History of Time* to those curious about cosmic origins.
- (2) Reading function constitutes the fundamental factor in bibliography recommendation, including problem-solving, cognitive expansion, and ability enhancement. Problem-solving refers to books that help readers address issues in real life, study, or work, such as *The Courage to Be Disliked* providing references for handling interpersonal problems. Cognitive expansion refers to books that provide multiple perspectives for understanding things, broaden readers’ knowledge, and influence their thinking patterns, with recommended books having considerable breadth and depth, such as Niccolò Machiavelli’s *The Prince* offering readers a profit-oriented perspective. Ability enhancement refers to books that help readers improve skills and acquire new techniques and methods, primarily practical books such as Mortimer J. Adler and Charles Van Doren’s *How to Read a Book*.

- (3) Knowledge value is the direct reason for bibliography recommendation, including both content value and formal value of works. For example, language style and edition quality are also recommendation motivations. UP owners combine their reading experiences to recommend lively and interesting books to attract readers, as overly professional and hardcore content may deter readers. Particularly for popular science books, UP owners generally recommend accessible and humorous works such as Yuval Noah Harari's *Sapiens*. High-quality editions can enhance good books, while poor editions affect reading experience, making edition quality an aspect that UP owners pay attention to and emphasize, with some specifically recommending the better-translated version of *Crime and Punishment* by Yue Lin.
- (4) Social interaction constitutes the external reason for bibliography recommendation, including social influence, interpersonal interaction, and book promotion strategies. During Bilibili's "Reading as Tall as Yourself" campaign, the ongoing global COVID-19 pandemic directly influenced UP owners' book recommendations, with works like *The Plague* and *Love in the Time of Cholera* being frequently mentioned. Interpersonal communication and interaction generate reading desire for books recommended by others, while book promotion and publicity are necessary means to stimulate readers' interest, though these have relatively smaller influence scope compared to social impact.

At the individual level, personal characteristics determine the selection of knowledge value, thereby promoting reading function. At the social level, reading habits promote individual development, reading activities promote social progress, and the social environment influences reading value orientation and individual characteristics.

3.3.4 Theoretical Saturation Test After completing coding for 74 videos, this study conducted theoretical saturation testing on the reserved sample of 10 videos, finding no new categories emerged. Therefore, the theory developed in this research has reached saturation.

4 Conclusions and Implications

4.1 Main Conclusions

- (1) Regarding recommendation content: First, classic literature dominates because it has withstood the test of time and can inspire reflection across eras. Even after reading, classics can be reread with new discoveries. Second, popular literature, science fiction, and picture books account for significant proportions. As a cultural community gathering Chinese youth, with 78% of users aged 18-35 and most UP owners between 20-35, recommended works reflect younger generation preferences. Third, Japanese works also occupy a considerable proportion (20.20%), distributed across

various ranking stages, indicating substantial recommendation frequency. Among them, mystery writer Keigo Higashino is one of Bilibili's most popular writers, with eight books recommended, his works aligning with contemporary youth psychology—*Journey Under the Midnight Sun* features rigorous reasoning, tight plots, and brain-burning storylines that require full reader engagement, providing not only mental stimulation but also stress relief. Fourth, ACGN subculture influence is evident. ACGN (Animation, Comic, Game, Novel) subculture, originating from Japan and also called “two-dimensional culture,” has a significant following on Bilibili, influencing recommended bibliographies, such as Makoto Shinkai's *Weathering with You*, *Weathering with You Official Visual Guide*, *The Garden of Words*, and *Your Name*—original and derivative works of animated films.

Compared with traditional reading promotion content, social video can more intuitively and effectively reflect users' reading interests and emotions. Clear understanding of user reading preferences is essential for continuously improving video influence. Traditional reading promotion content primarily comes from libraries, mainstream media, and renowned experts, creating some distance from user preferences. In this sense, social video reading promotion content and traditional reading promotion content have good mutual reference value.

- (2) Regarding recommendation methods: Social video's strong 趣味性 (interest), vividness, and interactivity have brought considerable user numbers, with some videos receiving hundreds of thousands or even millions of views—an influence unmatched by traditional channels. Video length shows no significant correlation with influence, which is mainly reflected in views, likes, coin donations, favorites, forwards, comments, and bullet comments, all significantly correlated with each other. Traditional reading promotion forms primarily include book exhibitions, picture exhibitions, film exhibitions, reports, exchanges, and competitions, using paper media such as books, newspapers, and journals for top-down, one-way promotion. Social video reading promotion not only offers rich content types but also enables real-time interactive feedback, with each play, like, comment, and forward representing users' self-presentation of attitudes and interests, better reflecting behavioral characteristics and promotion effects.
- (3) Regarding recommendation motivations: Individual characteristics, reading function, knowledge value, and social interaction constitute dimensions of social video bibliography recommendation motivations, indicating that bibliography recommendation results from both internal and external factors. Particularly, the content and formal value of works and the value derived from reading are primary reasons, while social interaction is secondary, as most UP owners rarely recommend based on short-term social hotspots, and readers mainly understand and follow social hotspots through news and self-media reports, with reading cycles being relatively long and 不利于 (unfavorable for) producing views on social hotspots in short timeframes.

Compared with traditional reading promotion motivations, social video reading promotion motivations show stronger personal 倾向性 (tendency), better reflecting users' own reading habits and preferences. Traditional reading promotion motivations primarily focus on leading mainstream values, inheriting classic culture, and promoting excellent traditions, while social video promotion shows more obvious social interaction influence and utilitarian tendency, indicating users care more about direct benefits obtained from reading.

Overall, Bilibili's social video reading promotion has three characteristics: (1) Grassroots originality and content diversity—users come from diverse social groups including students, teachers, writers, singers, and self-media professionals with rich knowledge backgrounds, making video content more diverse, such as writer-UP owner A Xin's original literary works recommending books that can quickly improve writing skills. (2) Decentralization and cultivated interactivity—multiple videos on the same book explain and recommend from different perspectives, such as UP owner Qu Zhi Buyuan interpreting *White Deer Plain* from a psychosexual crisis perspective, while users' play, like, and other interactive behaviors determine video influence and promotion effectiveness. (3) Self-value expression and social-value realization are two motivations for social video promotion—Professor Luo Xiang's promotion videos from China University of Political Science and Law express his self-value through legal knowledge, while achieving social value through legal popularization, two sides of the same coin that mutually reinforce each other.

4.2 Practical Implications

Young people represent the highest proportion of digital reading users and are important targets for reading promotion. Libraries should comprehensively understand their reading behaviors and interests. As a popular social video platform and youth cultural community in China, Bilibili has attracted several libraries to open official accounts with rapidly growing followers, such as Shanghai Library's 21,000 Bilibili followers. Leveraging social video platforms for services undoubtedly has a good user foundation. Therefore, social video reading research has strong timeliness and practical significance, offering the following implications for library reading promotion:

4.2.1 Profile Users and Focus on Youth Reading Characteristics Platforms like Bilibili, Douyin, Kuaishou, and Douban are youth-dominated platforms with over 100 million monthly active users, providing excellent data samples for libraries to study youth reading behaviors and characteristics. In addition to Bilibili's "Reading as Tall as Yourself" campaign, Douyin's "Everyone Reads" national reading plan, Kuaishou's "Reading with You" live events, and Douban's annual book lists have accumulated rich reading data. Mining and analyzing this reading data to present youth reading profiles has positive reference value for grasping social media users' reading trends and conducting targeted reading promotion.

4.2.2 Actively Establish Presence and Emphasize Video Marketing Models Libraries can actively establish official accounts on social video platforms like Bilibili, Douyin, and Kuaishou to innovate service forms. Continuous innovation in service positioning, topic planning, video production, content arrangement, promotion, quality review, and effectiveness evaluation can transform traffic into reading volume and convert guided reading into joyful reading.

4.2.3 Promote Classics and Guide Mainstream Reading Culture Every platform has its own cultural atmosphere. As a video platform originating from ACGN subculture, Bilibili has strong subcultural characteristics. Subculture, as a culture carried by minorities, is essentially a non-mainstream and anti-mainstream marginal cultural product. Therefore, libraries should actively participate in mainstream online culture construction, promoting excellent traditional Chinese culture and the era's main melody while balancing practical and popular works, guiding positive and healthy reading culture.

4.2.4 Enable Two-Way Interaction and Establish a Good Reading Ecology On one hand, video views, likes, and comment counts represent user responses to videos, allowing libraries to mine and analyze platform backend data to timely grasp potential demand changes and reading behavior patterns. On the other hand, libraries should incentivize user participation in topic initiation, video production, and discussion, activating grassroots power and enabling genuine user participation in reading promotion activities. Through effective interaction, a good reading ecology can be cultivated and video users' reading experiences enhanced.

4.2.5 Improve Quality and Shape Activity Brands Attractive topics, moving visuals, and excellent content are essential requirements for increasing fan engagement. Video reading promotion should emphasize not only topic planning, scriptwriting, dialogue style, character image, filming techniques, and costumes/props, but also video presentation methods, creating characteristic series promotion activities, shaping reading promotion activity brands, thereby attracting more users and enhancing library reading promotion influence.

This study has several limitations, including small sample size, relatively simple video analysis methods, and weak correlation with library data. Future research should conduct more in-depth studies on bibliography quantity, data completeness, and promotion effectiveness evaluation.

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