University Media Communication and Student Engagement: The Impact of Interactive Content on Dissemination Effectiveness

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Abstract: This study investigates university students' perceptions and engagement with official university social media platforms, focusing on attention, interactivity, and communication effectiveness. Through a survey of 160 undergraduate students in Guangdong Province, China, the research reveals that while most students (86.88%) follow university social media platforms, primarily WeChat Official Accounts (89.38%) and Weibo (63.75%), their interaction remains limited, with liking posts (85.71%) as the dominant form of engagement. Despite high visibility, daily engagement is low (17.5%), and interactions such as commenting (42.86%) or sharing (57.14%) are infrequent. Students perceive these platforms as valuable for accessing academic updates (92.5%) and campus activities (65.63%), with 76.88% acknowledging their role in enhancing institutional branding. However, content on external collaborations receives minimal attention (21.88%). The findings highlight a positive correlation between attention, interactivity, and perceived communication effectiveness, emphasizing the platforms' potential to foster student-school connections and institutional identity. This study contributes insights into leveraging social media for higher education branding and student engagement.

Keywords: university social media platforms; interactivity; student engagement; communication effectiveness

1. Introduction

With the rapid development of social media worldwide, social media platforms have become important tools for information dissemination in modern society [1]. Especially in universities, social media not only provides schools with channels to showcase themselves and communicate with students, but also serves as a crucial way for students to access school information and participate in campus activities. Against this backdrop, the use of official university social media platforms (such as WeChat official accounts, Weibo, etc.) has become increasingly widespread among university students, becoming a part of their daily lives. Social media not only influences personal social behavior, but also plays an important role in university branding [2].

In recent years, more and more universities have recognized the significance of social media platforms in campus promotion, image building, and teacher-student interaction [3, 4, 5]. Universities use these platforms to release school news, activity notifications, teaching information, and information about external cooperation projects [6]. Meanwhile, students can share feedback via social media, enabling direct communication with schools [7]. Through this kind of two-way interaction, students can not only get the information of school development synchronously, but also deepen their emotional identity and sense of collective belonging to the school during their participation.

Therefore, carrying out studies on students' perceptions of university social media attention, interactivity, and dissemination effectiveness allows not only a more accurate understanding of student-school relations, but also immediate practical consequences for the management and optimization of university social media. The main purpose of this study is to examine university students' attitudes toward the attention, interaction, and dissemination effects of official university social media websites. By researching how students use several social media websites, this study investigates the relationship between their usage behavior on the social media websites and school information dissemination efficiency, and how the university social media websites affect the perception of students towards the school and brand name.

This research not only provides a new perspective for understanding students' behaviors on social media platforms but also offers practical value for universities on how to use these platforms to enhance their school image and increase student engagement. Through the results of this study, it is expected to be able to provide data-based guidance on how to optimize university social media pages so that universities can leverage the power of social media to enhance their brand reputation and student engagement.

2. Research Methodology

This study employs the survey questionnaire approach to collect data about university students' perceptions of the interactivity and dissemination effectiveness of university social media platform content. The research participants are undergraduate students from universities in Guangdong Province, with data collection conducted from January 17 to January 27. The questionnaires were distributed through an online platform to ensure broader coverage of the target group. To guarantee the confidentiality and reliability of the data, the survey was conducted anonymously.

3. Results

The findings of this study are based on a questionnaire analysis conducted among university students, aiming to reveal their attention to, interaction with, and perception of the communication effectiveness of official university social media platforms. This section presents the main results of the questionnaire data analysis, including the frequency of students' engagement with social media platforms, their interaction methods, and their evaluation of communication effectiveness. A total of 160 valid responses were collected.

Regarding whether university students follow official university social media platforms, the majority of respondents (approximately 86.88%) indicated that they do, particularly on WeChat Official Accounts and Weibo. This suggests that university social media platforms enjoy high visibility and attention among students. Specifically, among the platforms chosen by respondents, WeChat Official Accounts remain dominant (89.38%), followed by Weibo (63.75%) and WeChat Channels (25.63%). In contrast, other platforms received significantly lower levels of attention, particularly Bilibili, which accounted for only 7.14%.
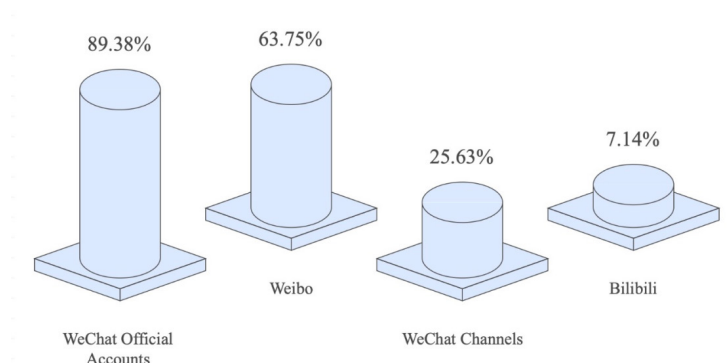

Figure 1. Engagement of University Students with Social Media Platforms

Regarding the frequency of engagement, approximately 39.38% of students reported that they occasionally follow university social media accounts, checking them about once a week. Additionally, 26.88% stated that they frequently follow these accounts, though not on a daily basis. This group tends to check content multiple times per week, indicating a relatively high level of engagement. Furthermore, around 17.5% of students reported following university social media accounts daily, demonstrating continuous attention and strong interest in such information. On the other hand, approximately 16.25% of students indicated that they rarely follow these accounts. These findings suggest that while university students exhibit a certain level of attention to university social media platforms, their engagement behavior remains intermittent and relatively infrequent.
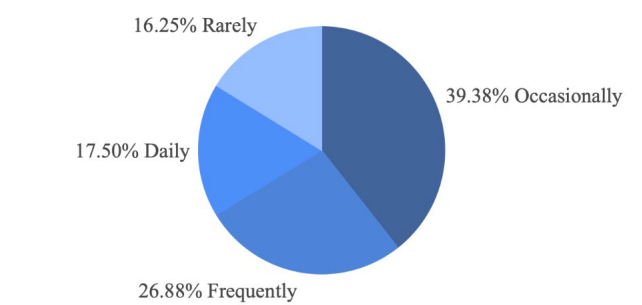

Figure 2. Distribution of Student Engagement with University Social Media

In terms of interactivity, respondents displayed a relatively conservative attitude toward engaging with university social media platforms. Around 60% of respondents reported "occasional interaction" or "rare interaction," while the proportions of those who "frequently interact" or "never interact" were relatively low. Specifically, liking posts (85.71%) was the most common form of interaction, while sharing (57.14%) and commenting (approximately 42.86%) were less frequently utilized. This suggests that while university students exhibit a certain level of attention to university social media platforms, their interaction is primarily focused on lightweight engagement, such as liking posts
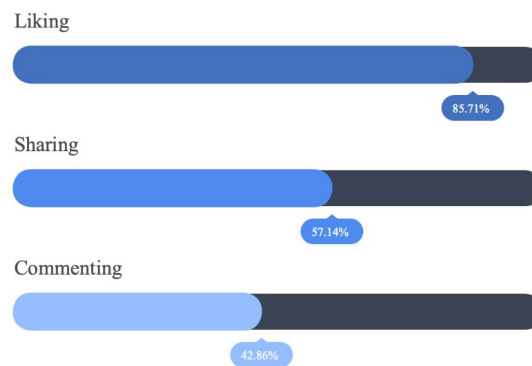

Figure 3. Frequency of Social Media Interactions.

In terms of communication effectiveness, respondents generally perceived the content published on university social media platforms as valuable. Their motivations for following these platforms exhibited significant diversity. Specifically, as many as 92.5% of respondents used these platforms to obtain updates on academic and administrative matters, highlighting the crucial role of social media in the timely dissemination of campus information. In addition to this, 65.63% of students utilized social media to participate in campus culture and events, which also indicates that social media is also performing an important function in spreading campus culture, reinforcing the sense of belonging among students, and facilitating social interactions. However, only 21.88% of students utilized university social media to obtain information regarding external cooperation and exchange programs. This relatively low percentage may reflect a relative absence of interest in off-campus options or evidence the limited visibility and communication of such information through social media. Briefly, these diverse motivations underscore the important role of university social media sites in different areas, including information dissemination, promotion of university culture, interaction among students, and the potential exploration of possibilities for collaboration among universities.
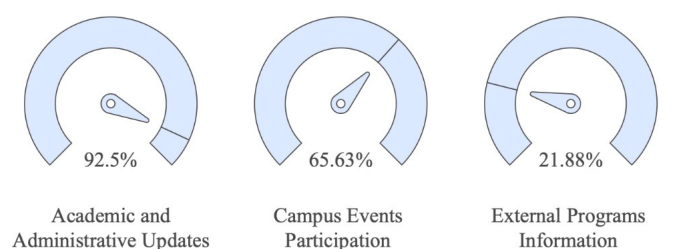

Figure 4. Student Engagement with University Social Media.

When asked about the function of university social media pages in institutional brand image, nearly 76.88% of the respondents believed that the content shared on such sites assists in enhancing the general image of the university. More than half of the respondents (nearly 55%) indicated that social media assisted them in having a clearer and more comprehensive idea about their university. Surprisingly, almost 30% of the surveyed people stated that such content engaged their interest about a particular university's brand value or even had an impact in altering their previously held notions. Notably, about 30% of respondents indicated that such content sparked their interest in a particular university's brand image or even altered their previous perceptions. These findings suggest that social media platforms play a positive role in shaping and promoting university brand identity, significantly influencing students' perceptions of their institution.

The majority of respondents held a favorable view of the communication effectiveness of university social media plat-

forms. Approximately 70% believed that the content disseminated through these platforms reaches a broad student audience efficiently and enhances the university's influence among students. In particular, highly interactive content—such as comments, likes, and shares—further strengthens students' sense of engagement and belonging.

4. Discussion

The findings of this study reveal the multidimensional perceptions and behavioral characteristics of university students regarding their attention to, interaction with, and assessment of the communication effectiveness of official university social media platforms. Through an analysis of questionnaire data, we found that while university social media platforms enjoy a high level of attention among students, their level of interaction remains relatively low. However, these platforms play a significant role in communication effectiveness and in shaping the university's brand image.

The study indicates that most students follow official university social media accounts, particularly WeChat Official Accounts. This aligns with previous research, as many scholars have pointed out that social media is highly prevalent among university students and serves as a crucial channel for accessing university-related information and participating in campus activities [8]. Moreover, we found that the frequency of engagement is generally low, with only a small proportion of students checking university social media platforms daily or frequently.

In terms of interactivity, engagement levels remain relatively low, with liking being the primary form of interaction. As a communication tool with inherently strong interactive features, social media platforms are expected to encourage more frequent student participation. However, the actual data suggest that students' interaction behavior does not reach a high frequency. This phenomenon may be related to factors such as the attractiveness of platform content, the design of interactive features, and students' motivations and attitudes toward engagement. Hence, universities should take into account methods to spark students' motivation to engage when crafting social media content. Utilizing strategies like organizing online activities, issuing student challenges, and holding question-and-answer sessions can effectively enhance participation and foster interaction among students.

The study indicated that a significant number of respondents think social media content elevates universities' overall image and aids students in gaining a more precise understanding of their institutions. Additionally, social media has turned into a vital branding instrument for universities, effectively molding and advancing their institutional identity via consistent content updates and interactions. This finding aligns with numerous studies, particularly in the field of brand communication, where scholars widely recognize that social media serves as a real-time, interactive, and precise channel for brand engagement [9,10]. Hence, institutions need to employ social media tools proactively by releasing content connected to institutional culture, quality education, and students' life for boosting brand identification and recognition.

5. Conclusion

This study aims to investigate the influence of student interactivity and involvement in social media communication effectiveness. Findings indicate that interactivity has a substantial impact on communication outcomes, where the greater the interactivity of content, the greater the sense of students being recognized and identified with the information, thereby improving communication effectiveness. The study further indicates that student attention and interactivity are positively correlated: the greater the attention, the more interactions there are, and this in turn leads to stronger development of communication effectiveness. Furthermore, students' participation and interactivity are closely related to their evaluation of communication effectiveness. Students with higher participation levels generally perceive the communication effectiveness as better. In conclusion, interactivity and attention are key factors influencing the communication effectiveness of social media, interacting with each other to enhance both the breadth and recognition of information dissemination.

Although this study offers theoretical and practical value, it has some limitations. First, the data is primarily based on questionnaire surveys, which may contain subjective bias. Future research could incorporate user behavior data for a more objective analysis. Second, the sample in this study is mainly composed of university students from Guangdong Province, and its representativeness and diversity are limited, which may not fully reflect the attitudes and behavior patterns of students across the country. Therefore, future research should consider expanding the sample range to include students from different regions and types of universities to enhance the generalizability of the findings. Additionally, different types of content (e.g., short videos, graphic posts) may have varying impacts on communication effectiveness, so future research could further explore the dissemination characteristics of different content formats to optimize universities' social media communication strategies.

This study provides new insights into the communication model of university social media platforms and offers practical guidance for improving communication effectiveness. Future research could further explore the potential of social media

in the education field.

Acknowledgments

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