



Communication Effect and Restriction of Online Foreign Celebrities on Bilibili from a Cross-Cultural Perspective

A Case Study of YChina

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Abstract. This study selects a representative communication platform, Bilibili, and a sample case, YChina, to analyse the relationship between cultural opinion leaders and cross-cultural communication on the Internet under theories of “the other” and “use and satisfaction”. Firstly, the videos of YChina are divided into four categories: street interviews, field trips, science education, and humanities documentary, among which street interviews and field visits are the main communication content. Secondly, the communication effect can not only convey rational logic to audiences but also produce emotional resonance with the audiences with sensibility. From the perspective of the “use and satisfaction” theory, this study analyses cultural conflicts in cross-cultural communication as one of the communication restrictions, which meets audiences’ curiosity. Lastly, the formation of the communication effect is a complex social process, and some factors in the communication process may have significant impacts.

Keywords: Cross-cultural communication, Media studies, Foreign bloggers, Communication effects, YChina.

1 Introduction

With the increasingly close ties between countries and regions in the world, the exchanges brought about by the collision between different cultures are becoming more and more frequent. Cross-cultural communication has also become a common phenomenon in society. It is a social phenomenon of increasing social mobility and the integration of multi-ethnic races. It is an important channel for cultural exchanges among countries in the world and an interactive relationship between people that crosses the boundaries of different countries and nations. Cross-cultural communication has increasingly become a bridge between global cultures.

Past studies compare online celebrities’ influence in different countries and provide advice to help popularize Chinese culture [1]. Also, they mention that YChina is a good

case to investigate social media through a cross-cultural lens [2]. However, little research concerns the foreigners in China who share opinions online about Chinese culture. This paper chooses YChina as an example and analyzes the numbers of View, Like, Comment, and Repost to figure out how cross-cultural opinion leaders (COL) can achieve better cross-cultural communication online. Meanwhile, this paper collects audiences' feedback through the Likert Scale to figure out the restrictions and strengths of its videos in terms of cross-cultural online expression.

2 Findings and Analysis

2.1 As “the Other”, COLs Promote Cross-Cultural Communication

First, foreign bloggers are cross-cultural opinion leaders. This term is put forward by Paul Lazarsfeld [3]. Many scholars regard COLs as the “the others”, arguing that their videos about China are more objective in cross-cultural communication [4]. COL is a bridge to connect different cultures with positive and negative effects by sharing opinions online and inspires people to express Chinese culture online [5,6]. Meanwhile, research finds that online platforms with various users are useful to measure the effects of communication [7]. Also, in the research of cross-cultural communication, ethical problems and cultural sensitivity would be mentioned and noticed, which may promote better fair communication [8]. In this case study, from the viewpoint of the communication subject, the public and the “foreign netizens” use each other as intermediaries to prove their existence. The team members of YChina come from various countries, including China, Israel, the United States, Argentina, and other countries. YChina chooses foreigners as the main interviewers and COLs. The video subtitles are generally in both English and Chinese and are rich in cross-cultural elements. Hence, this paper chooses YChina as a typical research sample of COL [9].

YChina's videos are selected for classification and analysis, meanwhile, the evaluation of their content attractiveness and dissemination effect can be tracked through the numbers of View, Like, Comment, and Repost. Compared with the traditional mainstream media propaganda, YChina produces videos by foreigners in China and shares Chinese culture based on different cultural backgrounds. Cross-cultural communication from diverse perspectives improves people's credibility of the sources [10]. The videos also make reasonable use of the foreigners as the third party to honestly make people's voices heard [2]. To avoid mainly negative reporting of China set by foreign media, they are more rational in expression and are widely accepted by audiences [10].

The study selects 68 videos in 2019 and divides them into four categories: street interviews, field visits, science education, and humanistic documentary. Table 1 includes the numbers of Views, Comments, Likes, and Reposts. Street interviews and field trips are the most popular among audiences. However, although the amount of humanistic documentary videos is only half of the street interviews and field trips, its numbers of Views and Likes are far more than the other three types of videos.

Table 1. YChina's video categories and relevant data

	amount	view	comment	like	repost
Street interviews	28	1137923	2563	46571	1965
Field trips	23	828826	2871	59478	2330
Science education	5	903800	2970	56600	3172
Humanistic documentary	12	1313833	2766	77833	3000

Humanistic documentary videos with a focus on hot topics are filmed from the first perspective to share local experiences and findings. They are more intuitively and truly presented in the form of a documentary. They cover diverse topics ranging from humanity, history to society, and have gained more attention, discussion, and communication power. Oppositely, questionnaires show that street interviews and field trips are known by the majority of the audiences, about 87%. Meanwhile, the number of Views of field visits is less than that of street interviews, but the numbers of Comments, Likes, and Reposts of field trips are higher, which indicates the field trips have better attractions and communication effects.

The videos about science education have the least amount among all categories, but they are released and published on the platforms both in China and abroad. They receive wide public attention and discussion and they are also reposted and commented on by the mainstream official media in China. One of the episodes of the channel is called *Showing a Vast China through Four Cities in the Southeast, Northwest, East, and West*. Eight foreigners explored the frontiers of China's territory and experienced the greatness of China from four directions, which is a typical case of successful promotion of China's local culture from foreign bloggers' perspective. The video was also reposted by *China Daily* and received positive feedback about cross-cultural communication. Among the questionnaires, most of the viewers, about 73% agree that the content of YChina's videos is objective and reliable.

According to Zhou, a variety of communication skills help express ideas in a video, and the most common ones are "appeal to reason" and "appeal to emotion" [3]. The video *Why do so many Foreigners like Li Ziqi Show Facts Calmly and Rationally* uses the skill "appeal to reason" to provide a logical and reasonable illustration for the audiences. The COLs persuade the audiences by analyzing two questions to prove the rationality and positivity of Li Ziqi's videos in terms of cultural export. The survey finds that among 77 respondents, only 2.7% disagree that the videos of YChina could provoke thinking while 37.84% agree, and 21.62% strongly agree that their videos could provoke ideas and they show positive attitudes towards culture and opinion output.

COL also tries to affect audiences by creating an atmosphere through strongly emotional words. This corresponds to the other skill, "appeal to emotion" [11]. For example, one of YChina's videos records how a COL chatted with a 90-year-old veteran when he watched the flag-raising ceremony in Beijing for the first time and he accompanied the veteran to walk around the streets of Beijing. The video uses background music to create a stunning atmosphere and inspire the audiences' emotional feelings. Furthermore, the parade creates a stunning atmosphere and allows the audi-

ences to empathize with China's development from the perspective of the older generation and understand how the sense of national identity is formed. The COL's role as "the other" and the music can link audiences' feelings with specific events and culture. This video promotes cross-cultural communication between China and foreign countries.

2.2 Cultural Conflicts and Recognition about COLs under the Theory of "Use and Satisfaction"

2.2.1. Discussion on Satisfaction in Cross-Cultural Communication of YChina

The theory of "use and satisfaction" is also a cross-cultural perspective, which refers to the process of audiences engaging with the media and having specific needs for video content [3]. For example, a hot topic is shared and analyzed from the perspectives of different nationalities and cultures to satisfy the audiences' curiosity. In terms of communication content, there are differences between different cultures, mainly in ways of thinking, language habits, and lifestyles. People may also differ in understanding themselves, evaluating others, and adapting to the environment. In particular, COLs bear the social responsibility of promoting international communication. While the content and views satisfy the audiences' curiosity, they should also have a neutral and objective attitude towards the culture and background represented by the content and opinions. Satisfaction is one of the aspects reflecting users' requests and the restrictions of the videos [3]. The questionnaires find those who have seen YChina's videos are generally satisfied with the videos dealing with some hot topics in China (see Table 2).

Table 2. Satisfaction about YChina from different aspects

	Interviewers	Topics	Hot topics about China	Cultural output	Video clip
Extremely Like	9	9	6	7	8
Like	20	20	23	19	23
Fair	8	8	8	10	6
Dislike				1	

Based on the Development Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS), cultural conflict discussions and sensitivities helps COLs receive users' feedback and create better cross-cultural communication in the future [12]. The video *When a Foreigner Randomly Knocks on the Door to Rub a Meal in China, does Anyone Open the Door for Him?* caused controversy and discussion in the comment section. Such sensitivity will, to a certain extent, help reduce the culture clash in the future and convey the connotation of Chinese culture in a more three-dimensional, comprehensive, and diversified way.

In 1972, American communication scientists McCombs and Shaw published their paper *The Agenda-Setting Function of the Mass Media* and suggested that there is a high degree of correlation between the media's agenda-setting and audience agenda perception [13]. YChina's videos mostly promote creators' viewpoints through field-

work, accompanied by exciting music and language and use the mass media to give varying degrees of prominence to the ideas they want to express to influence audiences' perceptions of events. By defining respondents as independent variables through their occupations, this research finds that the groups working in private and foreign companies show the highest satisfaction level, about 50%, much higher than students. It means that a diverse working environment creates cross-cultural opportunities.

2.2.2. Discussion on Recognition in Cross-Cultural Communication of YChina

The formation of communication effects is a complex social process, and some factors in the communication process may significantly impact the production of videos because audiences have different social backgrounds. Lazarsfeld's "selective exposure" suggests that audiences do not accept all the information they receive from mass communication but prefer to choose the content which is consistent with or close to their established positions [13]. After the broadcast of the video called *Foreigners Live in China* and 100,000 Questions about China, audiences gave controversial comments. Some people even made a video to defend the controversial topic. Regarding research results, 48.28% of the respondents follow foreign bloggers on Bilibili and approve that YChina creates more videos about Chinese culture. Similarly, the respondents who do not follow foreign bloggers on Bilibili also share the same opinion. However, audiences have a stronger interest in the COLs who create videos about foreign cultures. It indicates that Bilibili's users are more interested in other countries' cultures than local culture.

YChina's videos focus on "personal topics", "conversation topics", and "public topics". Through Bilibili, the content can be quickly disseminated and received by the audiences in a short time. The video content of YChina promotes the positive image of China, catering to the audiences. Regarding the demand for guidance, people are naturally curious, and with the huge amount of electronic information nowadays, society needs a positive guidance mechanism and YChina provides just such guidance. Based on this, the study also investigated audiences' recognition level of the different aspects (see Table 3). The majority of the audiences agree that COLs can help them understand cultural differences in cross-cultural communication.

From the audience's perspective, the theory of "use and satisfaction" proposes different characteristics of "satisfaction" with video content, and the "skewed research meeting" obviously plays the role of mind transformation and self-confirmation utility [14]. The video content is also used for self-affirmation. The fundamental linguistic and cultural entertainment content provides amusement and emotional release for the audiences. The range also provides a frame of reference for self-evaluation by examining the resolution of conflicts in the participatory content. By comparing the scenarios in audiences' minds, they can reflect on their behavior and improve it. Moreover, all the expenses of a video come from the income brought by people's likes, coins, collections, and charges in the previous video series, which gives the audiences a strong sense of participation and, to some extent, they satisfy people's psychological need that they have accomplished something meaningful together with the host.

Finally, as audiences, they are dynamic. They can choose and interpret dynamically. They are more inclined to choose the content that matches their ideology and under-

stand and interpret the information they get. Therefore, based on the “use and satisfaction” theory, the communication content which treats audiences as individuals with specific “needs”, makes them more receptive to the content they are exposed to.

Table 3. Recognition of YChina from different aspects

	Objective and reliable	Satisfy curiosity	Provoke thinking	Understand cultural differences	Widen acknowledge scope	Release or change stereotypes about China
Extremely agree	6	5	8	9	8	7
Agree	22	22	14	24	22	20
Fair	10	10	14	4	7	10
Disagree			1	1		

3 Conclusion

This study analyzes the effects and constraints of cross-cultural communication with COLs as the leading groups. The research finds that foreign bloggers have played a positive role in promoting and sharing Chinese culture from the perspective of “the other” in cross-cultural communication. Audiences are most interested in and satisfied with the forms of street interviews and documentaries. This study provides a reference for the content and form of cross-cultural communication and also offers diversified forms and ideas for Chinese mainstream media to promote Chinese culture. The research would be more comprehensive if there were comparative analyses of similar types of cross-cultural communication. However, this study has value for future research from a cross-cultural perspective. Moreover, future cross-cultural research needs to consider how to better present and convey comprehensive, three-dimensional, diverse, and authentic local culture.

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