



Research on the Internal Communication Mechanism of Corporate Culture in the New Media Era

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Abstract. The continuous updating of new media technology has changed the communication method of corporate culture. To explore the impact of new media on the internal communication mechanism of corporate culture and the reconstruction of corporate culture, the communication content of the WeChat subscription established by Bank A for employees was investigated through text analysis, interviews, and participant observation. Besides the previous research, three new mechanisms and their cross-functional relationships were proposed: indirect induction, persona shaping, and grassroots feedback. It was found that in the internal communication mechanism of corporate culture under the new media situation, "indirect placement" replaced "direct propaganda," "two-way interaction," iterated "single-line communication," and "identity recognition" was accompanied by "cultural recognition." The boundaries between internal and external communication of corporate culture are disappearing.

Keywords: Corporate Culture, Internal Communication, Communication Mechanism, New Media.

1 Introduction

Corporate culture research emerged from the late 1970s to the early 1980s, focusing on the internal communication of corporate culture. The internal communication mechanism of corporate culture in the new media era has ushered in new opportunities and challenges.

Most scholars focus on practical application strategies in the internal communication of corporate culture. For example, narrative communication content can better promote employees' identification with corporate culture. A few scholars focus on communication mechanisms. For example, Qu Qing proposed five communication mechanisms: incentive induction, group pressure, environmental suggestion, individual learning, and personnel flow, which play an essential role in the internal communication of corporate culture[1-4].

Academic circles have conducted relevant research on the development trends of new media in the internal communication of corporate culture. The "one-way push" communication model that relies solely on traditional media has lags and limitations

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[10]. With its low application threshold, fast communication speed, and comprehensive coverage, new media has gradually occupied the right to speak in the internal communication of corporate culture[9].

To sum up, most scholars have explored the application strategies of corporate culture communication, but less research has been done on the internal communication mechanism of corporate culture. The research field focusing on the impact of the rise of new media on the internal communication mechanism of corporate culture is still blank.

Among new media channels, WeChat is one of the media with which employees have the most frequent daily contact. The WeChat subscription is one of the communication channels embedded in WeChat[5]. Articles released by official subscriptions certified by enterprises can ensure the authority and credibility of information release. Enterprises can use WeChat subscriptions to publish various forms of content, such as articles, posters, short videos, etc., to disseminate corporate culture information to the audience quickly, effectively, and resonantly (Guo Pengyu, 2024). Although it has internal and external communication functions, most of the attention audiences of corporate culture internal communication subscriptions are company employees, and it can be used as a research platform for internal communication mechanisms. This study will take the WeChat subscription as an example to explore the impact of new media on the current internal communication mechanisms of corporate culture, learn whether there is a new communication mechanism, and consider the significance of new media on the reconstruction of corporate culture[16].

Bank A is a large joint-stock commercial bank with tens of thousands of employees in more than 60 locations nationwide[6]. In 2023, Bank A proposed concrete corporate culture keywords for the first time and planned an internal communication strategy on the WeChat subscription mainly for employees, aiming to enhance the recognition of corporate culture among all employees within the bank. In 2023, the number of fans of Bank A's WeChat subscription exceeded 17,000, covering almost all employees, and it continued to export corporate cultural values to employees.

This study takes the content released by Bank a's WeChat subscription throughout 2023 as the research object. After data cleaning, 141 valid pieces of information remained out of 149 (see Figure 1 for specific data distribution).

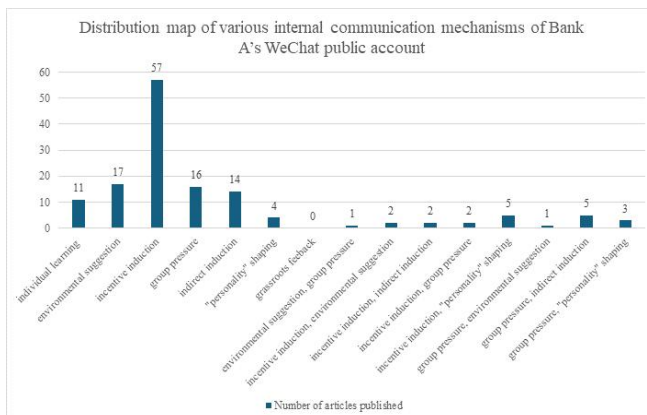


Fig. 1. Distribution of various internal communication mechanisms of Bank A’s WeChat public account

From April 3 to April 17, 2024, this study conducted interviews with Bank A’s headquarters employee, a branch center manager, and a branch center comprehensive management office manager representative, respectively, trying to supplement the research on the internal communication mechanism of corporate culture and the reconstruction of corporate culture under new media.

Table 1. Basic information of Bank A respondents

Respondents	Age	Gender	Position	Number of years working in Bank A
X	27	Male	Ordinary employees at headquarters	3
Y	42	Male	General manager of branch center	10
Z	34	Female	Branch center comprehensive management office manager	5

2 The Study Found

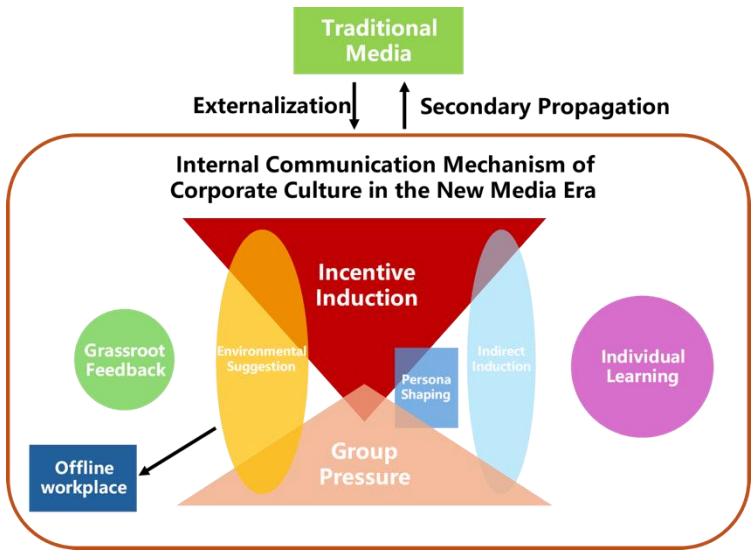


Fig. 2. Internal Communication Mechanism of Corporate Culture in the New Media Era

In the new media environment, the incentive induction mechanism, group pressure mechanism, environmental suggestion mechanism, and individual learning mechanism proposed by previous studies (the personnel flow mechanism in the new media environment does not apply to this study) are presented individually or cross-applied. Three new mechanisms have been derived: indirect induction, persona shaping, and grassroots feedback. See Figure 2 for details on the relationship[7].

2.1 Incentive Induction Mechanism

The incentive induction mechanism usually refers to formulating positive incentives that meet personal needs or negative incentives that deprive personal interests, which promotes employees to deepen their understanding of corporate culture. For Bank A, the WeChat articles under the incentive mechanism mostly report major awards and outstanding individual deeds. Employees are encouraged to understand and identify with the corporate culture based on establishing honors and heroic role models. Among the WeChat articles released by Bank A in 2023, contents based on the incentive and induction mechanism account for 40.43%, and 68.42% of which have been read by more than 1,000 people[4].

All three interviewees provided suggestions for incentive-oriented internal communication strategies during the interviews. X suggested giving more gifts to encourage employees to participate in the WeChat interaction: "If there are some interesting activities where you can get small gifts, I will be thrilled to participate!". Y suggested commending branches and individuals who actively read and disseminate corporate culture articles. He said he had established a reward mechanism for submitting articles to the Bank A WeChat subscription within the branch center. Z said the corporate culture concept would be incorporated into the system construction (negative incentives) to strengthen employees' rigid understanding of corporate culture.

2.2 Group Pressure Mechanism

The group pressure mechanism refers to the expectation of corporate employees that other company members can jointly identify with the corporate culture, thereby maintaining group consistency[8]. On the one hand, Bank A uses the personal charisma of leaders and the mandatory requirements of middle and senior management to create group pressure on lower-level employees by publicizing general manager speeches, management meetings, etc., and prompting employees to actively or passively accept the corporate culture. On the other hand, Bank A uses the business development stories of front-line salespeople to stimulate the emotional resonance of grassroots employees and actively motivate them to spread corporate culture through actual herd behavior[4].

Both X and Y were deeply impressed by the speeches made by the leadership of Bank A. Due to differences in age and position, X was pressured by his superiors to

repost some management speeches as a young employee. "For example, my boss asked everyone to repost the general manager's New Year's speech, and we must show evidence to prove we had reposted it. Y pays more attention to the management's business strategy and articles about his branch center and actively pressures his subordinates to forward it.

2.3 Environmental Suggestion Mechanism

In the context of internal communication of corporate culture, the company's internal environment, colleagues' behavior, and promotional stories have a suggestive effect on employees[4]. Bank A's WeChat subscription repeatedly mentioned corporate culture keywords in many articles. Some directly presented the keywords in the title; others continuously explained the connotation of corporate culture in the text so that employees could subtly accept company culture in the repeatedly emphasized new media context. Z said that she had taken the initiative to print the corporate culture keywords promoted in Bank A's WeChat subscription into posters and posted them in the offline workplace, realizing the extension of the environmental suggestion mechanism from online new media to the offline workplace environment. "I specifically found the WeChat subscription editor to get the posters and posted it in the workplace of the branch center."

2.4 Individual Learning Mechanism

The individual learning mechanism is opposite to the group pressure mechanism, which means that individual employees exert their subjective initiative and spontaneously learn corporate culture [4]. Since the WeChat subscription is designed to help employees passively receive the connotation of corporate culture, Bank A rarely uses individual learning mechanisms. Some content related to the party's cultural construction and corporate systems are regarded as learning materials by employees due to their strong objectivity, triggering the individual learning mechanism. In the interview, Y suggested that Bank A's WeChat subscription should be used to regularly integrate and report financial industry information to help employees systematically learn corporate culture and apply the learned experience to the reconstruction of corporate culture.

2.5 Indirect Induction Mechanism

The indirect induction mechanism is a new mechanism derived from new media communication channels[11]. For WeChat subscriptions built for employees within the company, the number of readers reflects the coverage of internal communication of corporate culture to a certain extent. In the new media era of information fragmentation, the attractiveness of titles directly affects the number of articles read[12]. Therefore, to increase the number of readers, Bank A did not directly present the corporate culture in most of its subscriptions but softly conveyed the corporate culture through writing methods such as clickbait, metaphors, and symbols,

which indirectly induce employees to accept and understand the true connotation of Bank A's corporate culture[13]. This study found that the average delivered reading rate of articles with the indirect induction mechanism is 3.07%, higher than that of Bank A's articles in 2023. "It turns out that volunteer service articles can be introduced with a short story so that everyone can have a more concrete understanding of the corporate culture."

2.6 Persona Shaping Mechanism

In the two-way interaction between language constructors and the public, the impression feedback of identity drawn by the public is called "persona" [17]. As a new media with social functions such as likes, wows, and comments, WeChat creates a constructive environment for persona. Based on the nature of the financial industry, customers can generally see the WeChat moments of bank staff, which is also a process of helping bank employees build their persona. According to the study, the financial knowledge popularization, official policy interpretation, and social responsibility articles published by Bank A have received many forwards and support from employees. Unlike the individual learning mechanism, the primary purpose of employees forwarding such articles is not to learn the corporate culture but to establish a professional financial persona in social interactions with customers. Constructing a "persona" is accompanied by understanding the corporate culture. "In the WeChat subscription service, it is recommended that the bank's awards and annual events be summarized yearly so that customers can intuitively understand that we are a professional and leading senior financial services team."

2.7 Grassroot Feedback Mechanism

As an interactive media carrier, WeChat subscriptions can convey the opinions of upper-level management to the grassroots and allow the voices of the grassroots to be fed back to the leadership from bottom to top, promoting the reconstruction of corporate culture[14]. The comment function is currently one of the ways Bank A employees can provide feedback on corporate culture. "I hope to establish an online anonymous mailbox on the Service for front-line colleagues to give feedback and suggestions. Their practical experience can substantially help the development of the bank." (Y) In the future, Bank A can set up a "general manager's mailbox" in the Service of the subscription to convert the existing offline suggestion box into an online variant, allowing the feedback from frontline employees to go directly to the corporate headquarters management to help the enterprise enrich and improve the connotation of the corporate culture.

3 Discussion

3.1 Indirect Communication Instead of Direct Publicity: The Expansion of the Reach of Internal Communication

To adapt to public reading habits in the new media era, the internal communication of corporate culture based on WeChat subscriptions differs from traditional media in writing methods. Traditional media, such as corporate magazines and newspapers, usually use the 5W model to write corporate culture articles objectively[15]. However, as the WeChat subscriptions continue to be revised, the messages released by the current subscription account are presented as information flow in the order of release time. Whether users are willing to click to read depends on the eye-catching degree of the article header image and title. Suspenseful, exaggerated, and ridiculing titles and colloquial, superficial promotional content can better stimulate the audience's interest in reading. Therefore, the indirect induction mechanism emerged as time required. The corporate culture connotation is processed twice, using metaphors, narratives, symbolic content, and various forms of posters, H5, and short videos to replace a single objective journal, and indirectly output corporate culture to the audience, bringing more possibilities to expand the scope of internal communication of corporate culture.

3.2 Two-way Interaction Replaces Single-line Communication: The Advancement of Corporate Culture Reconstruction

In the era of traditional media, due to the lack of feedback mechanisms, internal communication of corporate culture is primarily top-down, one-way communication. As new media, WeChat subscriptions have interactive functions such as comments and customized Service, which provide a smooth channel for grassroots employees to give feedback on corporate culture from the bottom up. In the two-way interactive internal communication process of corporate culture, employees are both the audience and the subject that can reconstruct corporate culture through grassroots feedback mechanisms.

3.3 Personal Identity Accompanies Cultural Identity: Employees' Increased Sense of Identity with Corporate Culture

The essence of persona construction is constructing the identity and differences of individuals in the group through labeling language in social interaction [16], thereby obtaining an identity in the social group. The persona construction is dominated by "people" with strong initiative and subjectivity. When employees face corporate culture communication content that is conducive to the construction of their persona, they tend to forward public information from the WeChat subscription to private social circles through functions such as sharing, liking, and wowing, which transforms online communication content into material for persona construction when conducting business offline[18]. Since the constructors recognize the communication

content that can construct their persona, they are more inclined to agree with the corporate culture contained during communication.

3.4 The Gradually Blurring Boundaries Between Internal and External Corporate Culture Communication

The communication characteristics of WeChat subscriptions gradually blur the boundaries between internal and external corporate culture communication. The content published by WeChat subscriptions that disseminate corporate culture to employees can also reach the public and become a news source for traditional media. Meanwhile, corporate culture reports written by external traditional media can also become the content of new media for internal corporate culture communication through incentive induction mechanisms. In short, new media promotes two-way interaction between traditional and new media, externalizing internal corporate culture communication and the secondary processing of external communication content.

4 Conclusion

Internal corporate culture communication in the new media era has added indirect induction, persona shaping, and grassroots feedback mechanisms. The boundaries between internal and external corporate culture communication are being eliminated. Under various internal communication mechanisms, corporate culture has realized two-way interaction between grassroots and management, online and offline, and traditional media and new media. This means enterprises can better spread the core of corporate culture through new media. In the follow-up, this study will conduct a correlation study on the internal communication mechanism and communication effects towards Bank A's WeChat subscription, providing more specific suggestions for enterprises to enhance employees' identification with corporate culture in the new media environment.

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