

A Study of University Students' Attention to International News in the New Media Environment: a Case Study of University Students in Guangzhou

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Abstract: With the development of international exchanges, China is increasingly connected to the world. Especially in the era of new media, everyone can be a spreader of international news. As the future main force of the Communist Party of China (CPC) and the country, it is critical for university students to keep up with international news in order to broaden their global perspective and develop their international communication skills. Through questionnaires and in-depth interviews, this paper analyzes the situation of university students in Guangzhou who use new media to follow international news. In addition, we make relevant suggestions to the media, universities, and individuals in the hope of building a social platform conducive to cultivating university students' international communication abilities and enhancing their international communication abilities.

1. Introduction

The report of the 20th Party Congress proposes strengthening the development of international communication capacity, improving the overall effectiveness of international communication, and developing an international discourse that reflects China's comprehensive national power and international status[1]. Building international communication capacity is critical as an internationalized society develops and the world becomes increasingly connected to China. Keeping up with international news helps to understand the world situation in today's rapidly developing globalized society, resulting in a more favorable external environment for China's development. University students, as the CPC's and the country's future workforce, must keep up with international news in order to broaden their international perspective and develop their international communication skills. In this paper, we use a questionnaire survey and in-depth interviews to investigate the use of new media by university students in Guangzhou, a city with a rapidly growing degree of internationalization, to analyze and discuss the problems that exist and to make constructive suggestions from the media, universities, and individuals. A social platform conducive to developing university students' international communication skills can be built. It improves students' ability to communicate international knowledge by encouraging them to keep up with international news and develop their media skills.

2. Survey Methodology and Process

A combination of questionnaires and in-depth interviews was used in this study.

2.1 Sample Composition of the Questionnaire

A random questionnaire distribution survey was conducted online, and 207 questionnaires were finally returned.

Sample source: University students in Guangzhou (starting now referred to as "students")

Data collection period: over half a month from 10 January 2023 to 24 January 2023.

2.2 Sample Composition for in-Depth Interviews

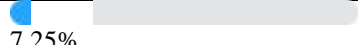
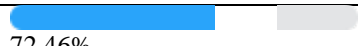
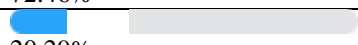
In this part of the research, based on the previous quantitative research, a typical sample of nine people was selected for in-depth interviews, with a sample gender ratio of nearly 1:1.

3. Research Findings and Problem Analysis

3.1 Passive Reception of News, Primarily by Chance or Interest

As shown in Table 1, 72.46% of students said they only “occasionally click on pop-ups to check them out,” while only 20.29% said they actively browse for news. Meanwhile, students interviewed in depth said they generally only follow news that pops up in their browser and is of interest to them. They even said they only actively follow international news if they surf the web. We infer from this that the student's level of interest in international news is random and passive, with interest being a driving factor.

Table 1 Do You Actively Follow International News?

Options	Subtotal	Proportion
Never	15	 7.25%
Occasional pop-ups will be clicked on to see	150	 72.46%
Will actively browse international news sites or relevant media software	42	 20.29%
This question is valid because of the number of people who filled in the question	207	

In today's new online media era, users have the power of choice and can take the initiative to find the content they are interested in. However, a recent change requires some users to be more active in their search for information. Many news and information platforms have returned to the traditional media business model of information push, which delivers information to users on a peer-to-peer basis[2]. From our analysis, most students do not actively search for news of interest. International news and information platforms need to actively adopt personalized algorithmic recommendations and other news distribution models, such as interest push and scenario-based push[3]. Also, significantly strengthen the push service for breaking international and hot events.

In addition, universities should also actively guide students to keep up with international news effectively. Universities actively innovate channels and carriers to build various media platforms on campus by using new media resources such as the official WeChat account and the official account of Sina Weibo, China's Twitter-like application. It is also recommended to integrate daily news events into students' daily lives in a form that is pleasing to them, enhancing their sense of subjectivity and cultivating their international perspective.

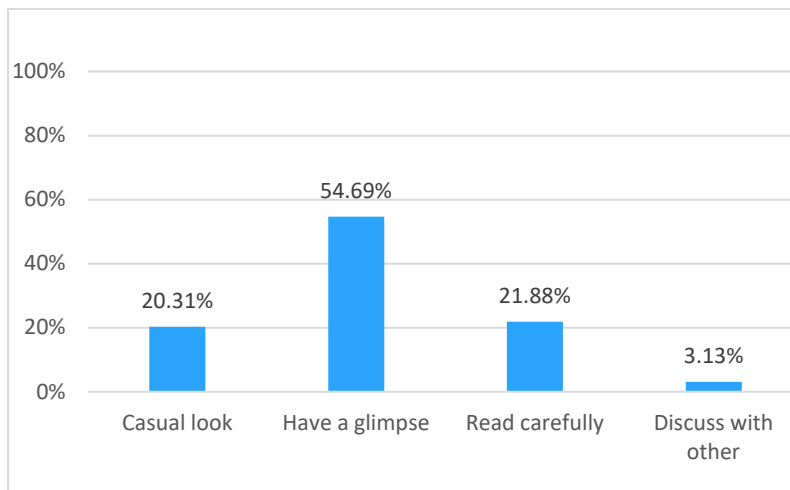
3.2 Cursory Knowledge Mainly, Lack of Follow-Up

In the question, “How do you usually follow international news?” The result is shown in Table 2. 54% of students said they only skimmed the news, primarily focusing on the events themselves, and could not continue searching and digging deeper into international news. In the in-depth interviews, more than half of the students had a basic understanding of recent hot topics, but when asked, “Have you thought about the reasons behind them?” they gave vague answers. As a result, most students needed to dig deeper into international news and interpret it objectively enough.

With the diversification of communication subjects in the era of new online media, the agenda-setting function of the media has changed in scope compared to the traditional media era. The media's coverage of public issues does not always pique the interest of netizens, whose interests and preferences frequently determine whether the issues are amplified or weakened. The media should not simply repeat or unilaterally amplify issues, according to the characteristics of agenda-setting in the online environment. They should, however, consider whether the issue can “integrate with the crowd” or “generate public discussion,” as this often determines a topic's popularity. This influences how much debate and attention a topic receives. It frequently determines how much debate and attention a topic receives. According to the study's findings, students have little interest in international news, and their intention to disseminate it is still low. That could explain why they only have a cursory understanding of it and have yet to progress to the level of close reading or desire to share it. To encourage the public to follow up on the news, the media should pay more attention to whether the news can influence the public's attention and provide more communities of belonging for

the public to exchange views on international news topics. For example, after the news is released, start topic discussions on platforms like Sina Weibo (China's Twitter-like application) and Little Red Book (China's Instagram-like application) to encourage netizen interaction and provide a forum for exchanging opinions, etc.

Table 2 How Do You Usually Follow the News?



On the other hand, universities should keep abreast of current affairs hotspots and strengthen the follow-up and promotion of relevant major news events through relevant campus new media platforms. They should take on ideological and cultural education for students, choose international news events with ideological and educational significance, and actively educate and popularize them[4]. In the case of the Itaewon stampede in South Korea, for example, schools can use the opportunity to provide safety education to raise students' awareness of safety hazards and crisis self-help, among other things. Along with education, this can help students develop their journalistic literacy.

3.3 Fragmented and Recreational Reading Habits

According to Table 3, 67.19% of students read the news for less than 10 minutes per day, and 91.67% of students use their free time to follow international news in bits and pieces. Furthermore, the author discovered that a large number of students follow news via short video platforms (such as Tiktok and Little Red Book) and social media platforms. Six interviewees indicated that the news sources they had recently followed were all short-video platforms during the course of the interviews. It demonstrates the fragmented and entertaining nature of students' news consumption. On this point, the graph below shows that a large number of people follow news via social media and video or short video platforms. The entertainment feature of following the news is also comparably noticeable.

Table 3 Which Platforms Do You Mainly Use to Browse International News?

Options	Subtotal	Proportion
Commercial portals (Tencent News, Today's Headlines, etc.)	92	44.44%
Social platforms (WeChat, QQ, Weibo, etc.)	134	64.73%
Video or short video platforms (Bilibili, Douyin, Little Red Book etc.)	148	71.5%
Audio platforms (Himalaya, Lychee FM, etc.)	22	10.63%
Official websites (People's Daily, Xinhua News, etc.) Other websites.	94	45.41%
Other things	0	0%
This question is valid because of the number of people who filled in the question.	207	

The Internet's information dissemination has become more fragmented and recreational, resulting in the absence of a comprehensive system for presenting both news content and audience reading.

The distinction between news and mass entertainment is becoming increasingly hazy[5]. Of course, fragmentation does not imply a lack of depth or comprehensiveness. As a result, the media can produce high-quality, diverse content and disseminate “short and concise” news; they can also launch new features to meet the characteristics of fragmented news reading and strengthen the unitary integration of new information to make each fragment more logical. Currently, audiences are used to browsing news on social media and short video platforms. This phenomenon requires news and information platforms to strengthen the social dissemination of news, use social media as a new base for content distribution, and prioritize content dissemination on short video platforms.

Colleges and universities, for their part, continue to be influential. Increase the number of public elective courses on international news, such as news commentary and current affairs interpretation. Allow students to deeply think about and analyze news events, among other things.

3.4 Low Participation and Weak Feedback Mechanism

As previously stated, students' interest in international news needs to be more superficial. A lack of understanding of the news causes a lack of engagement. Interaction with current events can occur both offline and online. The questionnaire found that students' offline participation in news discussions is primarily through conversations with friends and classroom discussions. Online discussions, on the other hand, are comments on current events or interactions with online friends. According to the survey, only 27% of students said they would actively participate in interactive classroom discussions of international news, and only 10% said they would actively participate in interactive online comments on international news events, indicating that students have only one channel of interactive feedback on international news, which is interpersonal communication. Take a look at Table 4, which contains an interview.

Table 4 Do You Post or Talk about News Events with Friends on Online Platforms?

Would you post the news on the online platform or talk about it with your friends?
Answer 1: I wouldn't post it on the platform, I would talk about it with my friends.
Answer 2: I would just talk about it with my friends, because speaking online can easily be used by foreign powers to create a bigger public opinion, which is not good for the country.
Answer 3: I will just talk about it with my friends.

It is clear that students do not engage in much online commentary on international news events, particularly those that are politically sensitive. They are more likely to consider the impact of their own words and actions on the country; offline discussions are also limited to discussing news events with their “well-connected” friends. Overall, students' feedback channels for news events are limited to offline interpersonal communication, with a poor feedback mechanism and a narrow range of influence.

Topics are frequently discussed in online spaces in the form of groups, and participating in the discussion of a specific topic is frequently equivalent to participating in a specific circle. People join a topical discussion primarily for the sake of emotional sharing and social belonging[6]. The topic's lack of cohesiveness is reflected in the low audience participation, and while the media can determine what the audience “pays attention to” through news gatekeeping and agenda setting, the effect of this approach is limited. As a result, when news topics are released, media outlets can direct audiences to form discussion circles in order to stimulate their sense of social belonging and emotional resonance, thereby increasing news interaction and feedback channels.

Colleges and universities should prioritize the development of interactive international news platforms. Innovative teaching formats, such as holding classroom exchange discussions on current affairs news and holding related competitions, allow students to participate in news discussions and express their ideas. collaboration between online and campus radio stations to launch interactive international news columns, expand the news communication corner, expand communication feedback channels, and encourage students to actively participate in international news discussions. Through exchange and feedback, a virtuous cycle is created. Universities should develop students' output skills and teach them how to express themselves while inputting news, thereby improving their international communication skills.

Along with the media and universities, college students should consciously strengthen their habits of following international news and reading habits, as well as improve their news literacy and media literacy. Avoid associating “following the new” with “fragmented recreation,” as this leads to a skewed interpretation of the news. At the same time, students should avoid relying too heavily on the platform's information service, focusing only on the news that interests them without actively searching for news information, passively accepting the algorithm's “feeding.” eventually succumbing to information cocoons. Students also need to strengthen their abilities to participate in and disseminate international news. In the new media era, everyone can be the subject of international communication, particularly in the context of highly developed transnational communication technology and global informationization, which increase the frequency and closeness of information flow between different countries and regions[7]. College students must constantly broaden their international vision and improve their international news communication abilities, which is critical for their own development and the construction of our national image.

4. Conclusion

This paper summarizes four issues that Guangzhou College students encountered while following international news. Its solutions are based on text questionnaires and in-depth interviews. The media must exert its influence online, constantly guide the audience, and build a network platform conducive to international news dissemination. Universities must take a leadership role in ideological education, as well as innovate teaching methods and expand interactive feedback channels for international news among college students. College students must avoid fragmented, recreational, and simplistic interpretations of international news while also improving and practicing media literacy and news literacy.

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