

# Study on the Assessment and Enhancement Path of the Effectiveness of "One Belt, One Road" International Communication Based on Social Media

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**Abstract.** Since its inception, "One Belt, One Road" Initiative has become an important platform for promoting global economic cooperation and development. However, in the course of its development, "One Belt, One Road" Initiative has also faced many challenges. In order to effectively deal with these challenges, "One Belt, One Road" Initiative needs to develop a scientific and reasonable communication strategy. As an emerging information dissemination channel, social media has the characteristics of fast dissemination speed, wide coverage and strong interactivity, which provides a new opportunity for the dissemination of "One Belt, One Road" Initiative. Through the use of social media, it is possible to release authoritative information in a timely manner, respond to concerns and questions, display China's image, and enhance people-to-people communication with countries along the route. At the same time, the data analysis function of social media can be used to understand audience needs and feedback, providing a basis for adjusting and optimizing communication strategies.

**Keywords:** "One Belt; One Road"; media foreign communication; TikTok.

## 1. Introduction

"The external dissemination of the One Belt, One Road Initiative is a complex, long-term systematic project. Along with the advancement and development, the One Belt, One Road Initiative has gained richer connotations and more extensive cooperation projects, and it can be said that its development has entered a new period different from the initial stage. At the same time, this complexity is further deepened by the fact that the countries along the routes and their groups have their own understandings of the Initiative and their own demands, as well as the blocking and blocking of the Initiative by countries that hold the mainstream international discourse in terms of public opinion. At the same time, the complexity of the Initiative is compounded by the fact that the countries and groups along the route have their own understanding of and demands for the Initiative, as well as by the fact that the countries that hold the dominant international discourse are pursuing the Initiative in public opinion. Against this backdrop, it is increasingly necessary to build a basic foundation of cultural identity in the One Belt, One Road Initiative through external communication strategies. Therefore, the external media communication of the One Belt, One Road Initiative is of urgent practical significance nowadays. By studying and integrating media communication paths, summing up past experiences, sorting out problems and challenges, and proposing optimization strategies, which are not only in line with the current reality, but also in line with the trend of the times, it will effectively help the external communication of the concepts related to the One Belt, One Road Initiative.

## 2. The development history of the media's external communication path in the construction of "One Belt, One Road"

### 2.1. Definition of the scope of the media's external communication path in the "One Belt, One Road".

In the external communication of the One Belt, One Road Initiative, based on the practical experience gained in the seven years since the Initiative was put forward and on the judgement of future media



communication trends, the main communication paths of the corresponding media are news reports, academic exchanges, the Internet (social media platforms), cultural activities (tourism, film and television), education, diplomatic visits, and business operations. This can be summarized according to the logic of official, media, business, academia and civil society. It should be noted that the media and communication paths mentioned above are not all the media or paths in the external communication of the One Belt, One Road, but rather factors of higher importance that have been analysed and researched, and that the division of these media and communication paths is not absolute, and the boundaries of differentiation between the media and their paths are relative, and are in the process of interconnection and continuous transformation. The division of these media communication paths is not absolute, and the distinction between each media and its path is also relative and in the process of interconnection and transformation. Moreover, the relationship between external communication media and communication paths is not a simple one-to-one one, but a non-linear one-to-one or one-to-many relationship.

## **2.2. The Development History of Media External Communication Path in "One Belt, One Road" Construction**

In China's external communication work on the One Belt, One Road, there is a layout in which official and semi-official media are the mainstay, supplemented by private media. China's mainstream media are constantly committed to expanding the breadth and depth of their foreign communications, and in recent years, they have also actively expanded into overseas social media opinion forums. Mainstream media, represented by CCTV, China.gov.cn, China Global Television Network (CGTN), Xinhua News Agency, People's Daily, Global Times, etc., have opened accounts on YouTube and Twitter. Among them, CCTV has nearly 200,000 subscribers in YouTube, has opened a number of international channels in English, French, Korean, and Portuguese, and its video news and documentaries generally receive the highest number of hits among mainstream media accounts in China. The practice of mainstream media in overseas social media has achieved remarkable communication effects on the whole, but the number of comments from netizens is much lower than the number of clicks, which also shows that there is an urgent need for deep ploughing in the opinion field of overseas social media.

In the face of the new crown epidemic that will ravage the world in 2020, the One Belt, One Road Press Coalition is actively playing an active role in upholding correct public opinion and jointly fighting the epidemic. The "One Belt, One Road" News Coalition is actively playing a positive role in upholding the correct orientation of public opinion and jointly combating the epidemic. In April of the same year, more than 300 representatives of think tanks and mainstream media from more than 60 countries and regions attended the Think Tank Exchange Sub-forum of the Second "One Belt, One Road" International Cooperation Summit Forum, which was unprecedented in scale and demonstrated that China's official and mainstream media have formed an ever-growing relationship with countries around the world due to the "One Belt, One Road". "This is a good indication that Chinese officials, mainstream media and the rest of the world have formed a closer and closer connection due to the One Belt, One Road initiative. Overall, in just a few years, the framework of media cooperation and information-sharing mechanisms among mainstream media has been constructed and is moving closer to the goal of stability and progress.

## **3. Problems and Challenges Facing the External Communication of the Media in the Construction of "One Belt, One Road"**

### **3.1. Problems in Media External Communication**

Relying on the development of Internet technology, social media, which is mainly characterised by audience-produced content, has increasingly become an important platform for external communication. China's foreign communication media, as "influence bearers", have the mission and responsibility of guiding the public to correctly interpret the One Belt, One Road Initiative and

conveying good news about its construction, and should make use of their own established advantages to communicate and respond to public opinion crises. However, the actual situation has not been satisfactory, and China's international image has been fragmented and solidified by inaccurate public opinion, as China's true intentions have been seriously interfered with by stereotypes. For example, a post titled "One Belt, One Road" is likely to become the biggest rotten building" on RenRen's website in 2015 did not receive much attention and retweeting at the beginning of its publication; it was originally an exchange and discussion among a few people, but due to the lack of a timely response and public opinion processing by Chinese mainstream media, the situation eventually spiralled out of control, and the negative sentiments of netizens accumulated like a snowball. The negative sentiment of netizens snowballed. A year later, this topic was raised again on Facebook and other new media platforms with a high user activity rate, and was frantically reposted and became a public opinion hotspot. This shows that China's mainstream media have paid insufficient attention to social media in their external communication work, are inefficient in handling public opinion, and are weak in taking measures and actions to clarify untrue news. In addition, some positions that should belong to Chinese mainstream media, such as the "One Belt, One Road" public homepage and the "One Belt, One Road" group, are operated and organized by individual foreign netizens. All these phenomenal problems show that Chinese media need to pay more attention to and handle China-related self-media public opinion on social media.

### **3.2. Challenges Facing the Media in External Communication**

The "butterfly effect" refers to the phenomenon of the possibility of small things having different degrees of influence on any other region of the world. Under the present environment of the world becoming a "global village", this effect has been more widely expanded by means of global interactions and through the emerging diversified paths. This effect has gained wider expansion through the emerging diversified paths of global communication under the present environment of the world becoming a "global village". Nowadays, with the upgrading and iteration of Internet technology, the speed of social development of countries around the world in the networked global village is also rapidly changing, and every individual in the global village can speak out through the network, and the interaction among members of the society presents an increasingly immediate and close situation, which will inevitably give rise to all kinds of unexpected new problems and challenges. Throughout the international community, there have been numerous "black swan" and "grey rhinoceros" incidents in recent years, which have seriously disrupted the construction of the global governance system. It can be said that China is still to some extent in the dilemma of "losing its voice" in the field of international discourse and "losing out" in the field of national cultural soft power.

The energy released by social media in the modern public opinion arena is immeasurable, and even in some emergencies and even political issues, it plays the role of the main public opinion arena of information entrance and exit. Western hegemonic countries have successfully launched "colour revolutions" by using the authoritative new media platforms of Twitter and Facebook. In the past few decades, from the dramatic changes in the Soviet Union and the "Rose Revolution" in Georgia to the "Orange Revolution" and the "Arab Spring" in Ukraine, all of them were "colour revolutions" instigated by the countries holding the hegemony of the discourse. The "colour revolutions" are all instigated by countries that hold the hegemony of the discourse. In short, the social media arena of public opinion in the Internet era is a field that China needs to protect in the construction of the One Belt, One Road, and the foreign media need to be ready to avoid and prevent it as well as fight for the right of discourse.

## **4. Analysis of the Current Situation of Social Media Landscape**

### **4.1. Monopolistic Trend of Social Media Products in the United States**

In terms of social media usage, among the countries and regions related to the "One Belt, One Road" and RCEP, except for China, which uses its own social media products, the top three social media

products used by other countries all contain U.S. products, although Russia's social media websites have been promoted and used in some of the CIS countries and West Asian countries. Although Russian social networking sites have been promoted and used in some CIS and West Asian countries, they have achieved a certain degree of influence. However, U.S. social media products are far more influential than those of other countries, both in terms of the number of products and the scope of use, and therefore, U.S. social media products have a very high market share.

Although China's mobile social media product TikTok is developing rapidly and has made some achievements in international promotion, the market share of social media products in the United States is still far ahead of other countries. According to statistics, of the 11 mobile social media products with the top three downloads, seven are affiliated with the United States. Among them, YouTube has the highest degree of internationalization. As the birthplace of the Internet and new media, the United States, with its advanced Internet technology and marketing concepts, has become a global leader in the development of social media, and its social media products have shown a monopoly trend by virtue of their wide range of use.

In the field of international politics, the agenda-setting function of the media makes it inevitable to have a certain tendency, the trend of mediatization is intertwined with power, which makes the media become the microphone of power, and it can be said that whoever masters the media masters the power, thus framing and limiting the scope of people's attention [1]. The strong dominance of the United States in social media has made the United States the dominant force influencing the development of global public opinion. The U.S. and Western governments have taken advantage of their leading position in the mainstream media to promote their own values through news websites and social media platforms, and to use them as a standard for cyber blocking and attacking countries or organisations with different views. 2022 saw the outbreak of the Russo-Ukrainian War. At the instigation of the US and Western governments, their media machines are once again firing on all cylinders, unilaterally accusing Russia of invading Ukraine and deleting all official Russian accounts on their own social media outlets, opening up a propaganda war of public opinion. In a video that went viral on Twitter, a father in military gear is saying goodbye to his daughter. The video's caption says that the father had to face the pain of separating his daughter to send her to the rear in order to resist the Russian invasion. In fact, the video, which was transferred from Russian media, shows the father, who is an Udon militia member fighting against the neo-Nazi organisation Azov Battalion, and the place where he has to send his daughter to is Russia. In this declared war, acts like this one, which are used frequently by the media to put words in their mouths, to call a stag a stag a stag, and to send new pictures of old ones, have greatly damaged Russia's image as a nation.

Various incidents have shown that the United States, by virtue of its monopoly in the social media market, has continuously used the power of social media to promote the influence of world public opinion, which not only adversely affects the international image of other countries, but even interferes in the internal affairs of other countries. Such media imperialism has greatly undermined the national security and interests of other countries, especially developing countries.

#### **4.2. TikTok Brings Opportunities for China's Social Media Internationalization**

The results show that China ranks second only to the United States in the number of social networking sites and mobile social media products. However, in terms of international influence, China's social media QQ, Sina.cn, and Weibo are only used in mainland China, and have not yet completed their promotion overseas, so they cannot be used as the main channels for the internationalization of China's social media. Similarly, in terms of mobile social media, there are four mobile social media in China, namely TikTok, WeChat, Viber, and QQ, of which WeChat and QQ are mainly used as communication software, Viber is the mobile version of Weibo, which is a platform for information sharing, and TikTok is a short video platform. In fact, the first three categories are still used mainly in their home countries, and WeChat and Viber are less well-known overseas, although they have entered the top six social media downloads in a few countries such as Malaysia and Singapore. When analysing TikTok's geographic coverage in the One Belt, One Road and RCEP regions, we found that

TikTok is among the top three mobile social media downloads in West Asia, South Asia, Central Asia, Central and Eastern Europe, and most of the RCEP countries. Not only that, TikTok has become a local phenomenal mobile internet product all over the world, in this sense, TikTok is increasingly becoming a powerful product that can be comparable to Facebook and YouTube in the United States.

In the era of new media, social media has maintained its user scale growth in recent years by virtue of its high interactivity and fast spreading speed. Before the emergence of TikTok, the internationalisation of China's social media was mainly carried out through overseas mainstream social media platforms, and many media and individuals in China have created accounts in overseas social media, especially in the three major international social media platforms of YouTube, FaceBook, and Twitter, to publicise China to the world, and have achieved certain communication effects. For example, CGTN operates 23 official accounts on 12 platforms around the world, and its English main account has become the number one media account on Facebook [2]. However, there is a large gap between the popularity of China's social media and Western mainstream media. Taking the views of YouTube accounts as an example, "BBC International" reached 856 million, "Al Jazeera English" was 527 million, while the "CCTV-News" account was only 43.7 million. The "CCTV-News" account is only 4.37 million [3]. It can be seen that at this time, China's social media overseas influence is still relatively insufficient.

Thanks to the strong rise of TikTok overseas, the word "China" has been more and more included in the global vision. TikTok's video sharing function enables China's national image to be expressed in a more graphic and intuitive way, and more and more overseas people learn about China and appreciate the charm of Chinese culture through TikTok. Charm. As of January 2022, videos with the hashtag "China" have been viewed more than 27 billion times. "Chinese art, Chinese food, Chinese festivals, Chinese landscapes and other content have become popular hashtags and topics on TikTok. Chinese art, Chinese food, Chinese festivals, Chinese landscapes and other content have become popular tags and topics on TikTok. Take the Mid-Autumn Festival as an example, TikTok videos related to mooncakes have more than 70 million views, and many foreign netizens have joined in the discussion of the topic, ranging from mooncake sampling to Diy, with a variety of styles, which has set off a trend of "mooncake". In addition, the Chinese art of bamboo weaving was also promoted overseas, with more than 70 million views. Various places of interest and natural sceneries in China have also become travelling destinations for foreign netizens through the spread of TikTok videos, creating a Netflix effect. The popularity of Li Ziqi's Chinese-style videos has further made Chinese-style idylls inspire the yearning of overseas people, which has to a certain extent improved the stereotypical impression of overseas people on the poverty and backwardness of the country. In these videos, the language barrier appears to be minimal. With this cultural resonance across mountains and seas, netizens from different countries and nationalities around the world have been healed in the process of watching the videos and felt the charm of Chinese culture. In addition, many foreign mainstream media have also opened TikTok accounts to expand their influence. In addition to the Washington Post, large foreign news media such as NBC News and BBC have also stationed on TikTok. powerful traffic resources, so that TikTok has become one of the best platforms for news media to expand their influence.

With its strong usage rate, TikTok clearly provides a strategic opportunity for the internationalisation of China's social media. The presence of Chinese netizens on TikTok provides a way for Chinese culture to go out, and their social accounts and shared content can become a window for foreign netizens to learn about China. This way of cultural dissemination is different from the official media's voice, and is an equal dialogue between domestic and overseas netizens. This kind of dialogue is more lively, approachable and easy to be accepted by overseas users. At the same time, TikTok's low-threshold, decentralized and fast-spreading features can effectively stimulate the creativity and enthusiasm of foreign netizens, and attract overseas users to participate in Chinese cultural experiences and discussions. TikTok's various special effects and background music add more fun to the video content, which is conducive to boosting the interest of overseas netizens in Chinese culture-related videos. One loudspeaker is far less loud than a hundred mouths, and the emergence of TikTok

also builds a bridge between folk voices and official expressions. Through TikTok, every netizen can participate in the process of telling the "Chinese story". However, it is not enough to rely solely on the power of the private sector, but it is also necessary for the official media to speak out together, and the powerful synergy formed by the private sector and the official sector is enough to bring more possibilities for the development of China's foreign communication.

## **5. External Communication Strategies of Media Paths in the One Belt, One Road Initiative**

### **5.1. Promoting Educational and Cultural Exchanges in the One Belt, One Road Initiative**

Educational and cultural exchanges are an essential way to achieve people-to-people contact, which involves a number of external communication media to carry out specific cultural activities. Firstly, international youth exchanges should be strengthened. Youth is the future of the country, so it is necessary to strengthen official university co-operation, promote international students from countries along the "One Belt, One Road" to come to China and Chinese youth to "go out", and attract high-quality international students to come to China, so that they can experience the real China, and thus act as a "megaphone" for China's friendly image. Secondly, promote the development of Confucius Institutes into more and more international organisations. Second, promote the transformation of Confucius Institutes to a higher level. Confucius Institutes are important carriers of China's cultural image and windows for Chinese culture to go out. According to the latest official statistics, 550 Confucius Institutes and 1,172 Confucius Classrooms have been established in 162 countries. We will focus on promoting Confucius Institutes to key countries and regions along the "One Belt, One Road", launching successful models to play a demonstrative role, and at the same time developing a reasonable competition mechanism among Confucius Institutes to invite out those that fail to perform well.

### **5.2. Conducting Audience Research on "One Belt, One Road" Communications**

Audience is the starting point for formulating communication strategies and examining communication effects, and the degree of understanding and cognitive level of the audience will profoundly affect the pre-design of communication activities and the judgement of communication effects, as well as determine the direction and intensity of communication effects. In order to make the external communication strategy more scientific and precise, and better discover the mistakes and corresponding countermeasures in the external communication of "One Belt, One Road" from the perspective of the audience, it is necessary to conduct an in-depth and detailed research on the audience of "One Belt, One Road" communication, which is the first step to formulate the external communication strategy. It is also the first step to formulate foreign communication strategies. Therefore, in the study of the audience of "One Belt, One Road", the soft factors such as history and culture, ethnic background, religion and other factors that deeply affect the audience's psychology must be fully taken into account, so that the external communication of "One Belt, One Road" can realise refined and precise communication on this basis. Precise communication. As the construction of "One Belt, One Road" progresses, we are faced with not only construction projects, but also complicated humanistic projects. Therefore, the foreign communication media need to "know themselves and know their enemies", and start to formulate a complete set of audience research plans as early as possible, and put forward differentiated and refined response plans according to the audiences in different countries and different cultural backgrounds.

### **5.3. Enhance the Interpretive Power and Discourse Power of Foreign Communications of the One Belt, One Road Initiative**

In terms of improving explanatory power, it is important not to flood the content with "slogan shouting", but rather to establish a broad view of history, tap into the world's recognised historical facts as part of the content of communication, and then start to tell the story of China by taking the greatest common denominator in the perceptions of the world's citizens. For example, in modern

times, the West has risen rapidly through the opening up of new shipping routes and world trade, accumulating wealth around the world while at the same time exercising cultural hegemony over other countries. However, looking at the pattern of history, it is easy to find that the hegemony cycle of these countries has not exceeded 130 years, and at the same time, one thing they have in common is that they are not ancient civilisations in the centre of human civilisation. In contrast, although China is now rising economically, and the One Belt, One Road Initiative is bound to reshape the world, what China is pursuing in diplomacy and will pursue in the future is by no means the construction of a new hegemony, but rather the idea of a community of shared destiny. Telling China's story in this way is both justified and credible, and is more likely to resonate with and appeal to the audience.

#### **5.4. Cultivating Opinion Leaders of the One Belt, One Road Initiative**

A study of some of the hot topics of "One Belt, One Road" in social media reveals that opinion leaders play a greater role in shaping public opinion, and some influential self-media accounts also carry their own heat and traffic. According to an overseas social media survey, young people are three times more likely to be aware of the One Belt, One Road Initiative and Chinese culture, which means that they are not only more interested in China, but also have a higher level of awareness of Chinese culture, indicating that young people abroad are more likely to be positively influenced. Therefore, China's foreign communication media camp should pay attention to cultivating young opinion leaders among foreign youth, especially those who understand the real situation of "One Belt, One Road" and China. They should guide public opinion on social media towards the promotion of people-to-people communication and the mobilization of people's willingness to participate in the construction of the One Belt, One Road, so as to effectively promote the credibility and conversion rate of information dissemination.

#### **5.5. Setting Issues and Telling China's Story Well**

Under the current international public opinion environment, it is very unlikely that Western mainstream media will cooperate with Chinese media to positively interpret the One Belt, One Road, so the focus of cooperation should be shifted to foreign social media. We should set the agenda of "One Belt, One Road" on social media platforms with strong audience stickiness such as Facebook and Twitter in a timely manner and select topics in a targeted manner, fully explore cultural resources that are easy to understand, universal and fresh in countries and regions along the route, and select topics based on the living experience and cultural background of the people of the other countries, and select topics based on their close relationship with them. Based on the living experience and cultural background of the people of other countries and the selection of appropriate cultural symbols and carriers, a common space of meaning is created. For example, food and tourism themes that are generally accepted by the public can be used to make and truly show contemporary Chinese culture. At the same time, it is necessary to conduct in-depth research and respond to the concerns of netizens in a timely manner, and make use of the power of opinion leaders of the "One Belt, One Road" to promptly respond to and clear up doubts. In terms of telling a good "China story", it is important to select cases that are persuasive, immersive and easy to establish an emotional connection with the audience.

### **6. Conclusion**

As the window through which China's national image is shaped, the foreign communication media have an important, urgent and arduous mission. Doing a good job of communicating the One Belt, One Road Initiative to the outside world is not only an inherent requirement of the media, but also a practical necessity for China to enhance its international influence and develop its great power diplomacy. In the seven years since the initiative was put forward and put into practice, although it has received the response and support of most of the countries along the route, the international community and the co-constructing countries always have doubts and misunderstandings about the One Belt, One Road Initiative. Only by upgrading the media's external communication power can we

better increase trust and dispel doubts for the One Belt, One Road Initiative, so that China's One Belt, One Road global governance programme can gain the recognition of the international community, thus improving the One Belt, One Road Initiative's radiance and influence, and enhancing its effectiveness. The "One Belt, One Road" global governance programme will be recognised by the international community, thus increasing the radiation and influence of the "One Belt, One Road" and enhancing China's discourse power in the international public opinion arena.

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