

THE CURRENT SITUATION OF NEW MEDIA MARKETING IN CHINESE HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS (HEIS): A CASE STUDY BASED ON HEIS IN HENAN, CHINA

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Abstract: In the context of the rapid development of the Internet and new media, marketing communication of HEIs using newspapers, radio, TV, and magazines as traditional media has encountered unprecedented impact, and new media platforms have gradually become an essential carrier of marketing communication HEIs. This paper reviews the advantages and characteristics of new media marketing and its bottlenecks and collects and organizes the marketing communication methods of new media platforms such as microblog, WeChat, and short video in Henan HEIs. Besides, the study analyzed the release contents, release rules and release characteristics of new media marketing platforms of HEIs, and discussed feasible suggestions for HEIs to build a new media communication matrix and expand the communication effect of new media marketing. The study concluded that new media marketing of HEIs should adhere to a holistic way of thinking in content distribution, maintain a high update frequency, improve content creation, strengthen communication effect analysis, continuously train high-quality professionals, and establish a feedback mechanism for public opinion to ensure the effectiveness and efficiency of brand marketing of HEIs. The purpose of the study is to provide a reference for new media marketing of HEIs.

Keywords: HEIs; Marketing; New media; Communication; Branding

1 INTRODUCTION

Traditional media, with newspapers, radio, TV, and magazines as media, have the characteristics of authority, rigor, and authenticity of information release. After years of development and accumulation, traditional media have accumulated rich experience and mature norms in the planning, editing, reviewing, and distributing content and have advantages that are difficult to replace. The brand marketing of HEIs has established a good brand image in the hearts of the general audience in terms of depth, breadth, and height of information with the advantages of traditional media. The marketing effect of traditional media has improved the authority and credibility of HEIs. However, the mobile Internet has broken people's original way of life and changed the way of accessing information, breaking through time and geographical restrictions. Traditional media communication is no longer able to meet people's demands for information acquisition. New media, a product of the information technology revolution, integrate pictures, sound, and video, enhancing the fun of reading and meeting people's needs for fragmented time reading. In addition, new media can realize the audience's independent choice and form an excellent two-way interaction of information, which makes the media and users more sticky. Under the background of mobile Internet, HEIs use new media platforms such as short videos, WeChat, and microblogs as an essential way to disseminate information and brand marketing. New media marketing improves school brand influence, increases school visibility and reputation, enhances internal cohesion and centripetal force, and forms a positive interaction between HEIs and the outside world. This paper intends to analyze the current situation of new media marketing in Chinese HEIs, focusing on the new media of HEIs in Henan Province, China, to provide reference materials for improving the effectiveness of marketing communication systems in HEIs in China the world.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

New media marketing is an emerging research field, and with the increased attention of scholars to this field, its research scale has shown a trend of the increasing year by year. New media marketing is a new marketing method carried out by the technology of new media platforms [1], which is mainly based on the Internet, mobile media, and digital media technology, and a series of marketing activities such as advertising communication, product promotion and image display under the online marketing platform [2]. The more popular new media marketing platforms are social platforms, electronic publications, and online video platforms [3]. Social media marketing refers to marketing activities conducted by companies using social media such as WeChat, Weibo, and QQ [4]. Online video marketing refers to marketing activities using conventional video platforms (e.g., Youku, Tencent Video, and Akiyip), short video platforms (e.g., Jitterbug, Crypto, and Weishi), and live streaming platforms (e.g., Hu Ya and Douyu) [5]. Marketing subjects can choose one or more new media marketing channels according to their needs, with the help of carriers such as pictures, videos, audio, and text [6], to improve consumers' attention to marketing subjects and marketing messages [7]. New media marketing is more flexible and interactive, breaking through traditional media marketing information dissemination [8]. In addition to this, new media marketing also has a short and wide range of information reception,

comprehensive and accurate audience, and high conversion rate; novel and fragmented content and easy to accept [9-10]. New media marketing can enhance the space for innovation in marketing methods and better shape the company's image, and help create a brand effect [11]. However, new media marketing is also a double-edged sword, and if companies lack control over new media marketing, it can cause more negative problems in the marketing process. Wen shows that enterprises overly focus on marketing and ignore the substantive content of marketing [12], leading to a single means of using new media marketing, thus not entirely playing the effect of new media marketing. In the process of using new media marketing, companies overemphasize the form of the product without giving sufficient assurance to the quality of the product, then the marketing effect is counterproductive [4]. In addition, the flexibility of new media marketing means that its results are arbitrary and uncontrollable. If companies cannot handle negative information correctly, it can also spread rapidly through the new media platform and cause severe losses to the company's interests [13-14].

3 METHODS

Literature review method. By reviewing relevant professional books, Internet and journal work, materials and journal articles, collating and analyzing relevant domestic and foreign literature, obtaining relevant research information, and further organizing, analyzing, and sorting out the obtained information as the most basic information for writing this article.

Case study method. Taking Chinese undergraduate HEIs in Henan Province as an example, we summarize, summarize and analyze the overall situation of new media communication in Chinese HEIs, put forward the experiences and shortcomings in the process of new media communication in HEIs, and provide the information with a reference value for HEIs to better play the effect of new media communication.

4 RESULTS

Traditional media such as TV, school newspaper, and campus radio have long been the main marketing channels of HEIs and the vital information receiving platforms for teachers and students. Facing the strong impact of new media and the reality of media "iteration," HEIs have to adapt to the new situation, focus on the marketing advantages of new media, and reconstruct the new pattern of combining new media and traditional media. At present, the leading platforms of new media marketing for HEIs in China are official microblogs, WeChat public numbers, and short videos (TikTok and Kuaishou), which have gradually become the most mainstream communication vehicles for information promotion, image building, and brand marketing of HEIs in China. This paper collects and organizes the data of official microblog, WeChat public number, and short video platforms of HEIs in Henan, China, and analyzes and discusses the current situation of new media platform marketing of HEIs to provide a reference for new media brand media marketing of HEIs.

4.1 Microblog

Microblog is a platform for sharing, spreading as well as acquiring information based on user relationships. Users can form personal communities through WEB, WAP, and various clients, update information with text, pictures, and videos in about 140 characters and share them instantly, which has the characteristics of fast-spreading, comprehensive coverage, and significant influence. By the end of December 2020, all undergraduate HEIs in Henan Province have opened official microblogs with a total number of fans of about 2.2 million, an increase of 400,000 over 2019. The most significant number of fans is Zhengzhou University, with 640,000 fans. It is followed by Henan University and Xinyang Normal College, with 445,000 and 188,000 followers, respectively (Figure 1).

(1) In terms of fan increment, the number of fans of Henan undergraduate HEIs increased at a steady rate. Zhengzhou University stands out with faster growth in fan size, with an increment of about 170,000 fans in 2020.

(2) In terms of the number of content publications, 59 official microblogs of undergraduate HEIs in Henan Province published 227,200 news in 2020, 63,400 more than that in 2019. The number and originality of microblogs are outstanding, especially the official microblogs of Shangqiu Normal College publish the most news, with a total of 11,322 articles in 2020, with a daily average of 31.07 articles and 7,978 original news, with an originality rate of 73%; followed by Henan University of Traditional Chinese Medicine, with 7,929 articles in 2020 and 7,540 original articles, with an originality rate of 95%; and again by Anyang Normal College, with 6,722 articles were issued in 2020, with 6,619 original articles, and the originality rate reached 98.46% (Figure 2).

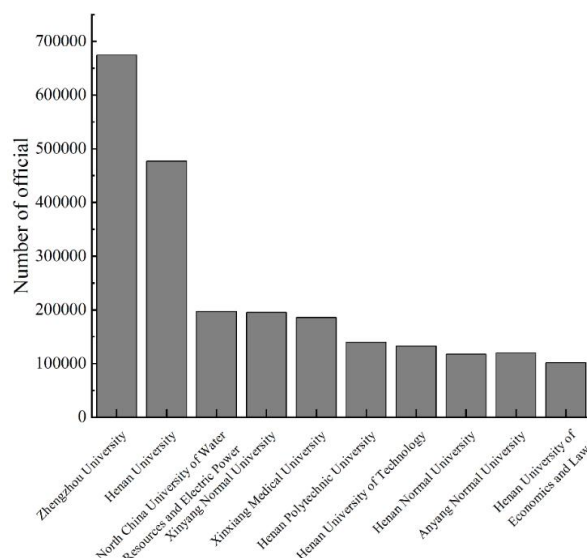


Figure 1 Top 10 Official Microblog Fans of Henan Undergraduate HEIs (From "New Media White Paper of Henan Province Education System 2020")

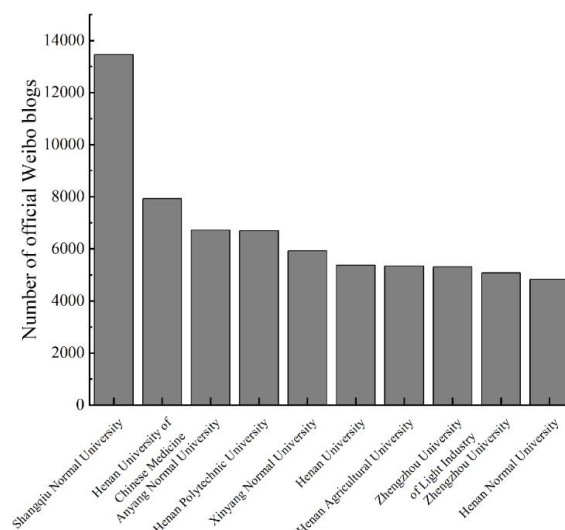


Figure 2 Top 10 Official Microblogs of Henan Undergraduate HEIs (From "New Media White Paper of Henan Province Education System 2020")

4.2 WeChat

WeChat is a chatting tool that can send voice messages, text, pictures, and videos over the Internet, and it has been trendy since it was developed and launched by Tencent in January 2011. By the end of 2014, more than 600 million registered WeChat accounts, with college students in higher education accounting for more than one-third of the total. According to a questionnaire survey conducted by Tencent Micro school and Xinbang on Chinese university students, more than 83% of students in higher education follow campus WeChat public numbers, and more than 80% of them follow more than 3 campuses WeChat public numbers, of which 42% follow 3-5 and 37% follow 6-10. More than half of the students check campus WeChat public websites every day, with 18% of them checking multiple times a day and 32% almost once a day. In addition, 41% of them use it more frequently than once a week. Campus WeChat public websites have been deeply integrated into campus life. Most students view 2-5 articles from campus WeChat public websites on average every day, and the proportion of students who view them for more than half an hour on average every day is nearly 70% (Tencent Microschool, 2019 New Media Observation Report for HEIs). By December 2020, all 59 undergraduate HEIs in Henan Province have opened official WeChat, and the overall operation is regular.

(1) In terms of the WeChat influence index (WCI): the highest WCI is Zhengzhou University with 913.53, followed by Henan University with 888.56. Henan Polytechnic University is in third place with 834.65 WCI.

(2) In terms of the number of releases and the number of articles issued: the total number of releases of 59 official micro letters of Henan undergraduate HEIs in 2020 was 15,750 for the year, which is 10,091 times more than the number of releases in 2019 (5,659). The total number of articles issued was 27394, which was 18,849 more than the total number of articles issued in the whole year of 2019 (8545). Huanghe Science & Technology College issued the highest number of articles with 1,400 articles, or an average of 4 articles per day, followed by Shangqiu Institute of Technology with

1,070 articles. The number of articles issued in 2020 by these two HEIs is higher than the number of articles issued in 2019. In the 2020 year, the official Weibo of Henan undergraduate HEIs with more than 100,000 articles produced 8 articles, including 3 articles of Zhengzhou University, 3 articles of Henan University, 1 article of Henan Agricultural University, and 1 article of Henan Police College (Table 1).

(3) Total number of reads and in-views: Zhengzhou University ranked first in terms of a total number of reads with 6.53 million, followed by Henan Polytechnic University and Henan University with 4.95 million and 4.9 million respectively. Anyang Normal University ranked first with 73,811 in total reads. In addition, Henan University ranked first with the most significant number of in-views of 9,369. Overall, the number of articles read by undergraduate HEIs has improved significantly compared with 2019, and the number of in-views of HEIs has increased accordingly (Table 2).

Table 1 Statistical table of 100,000+ articles on WeChat public websites of undergraduate HEIs in Henan in 2020 (8 articles)

No.	University	WeChat article
1	Henan University	Inside the list! Henan University 52 people rush to Wuhan
2	Henan Agricultural University	Good news New coronavirus prevention is expected to achieve a quick self-test with one test paper!
3	Zhengzhou University	March! Zhengzhou University's "Retrograde Walkers" are coming to the aid of Wuhan!
4	Zhengzhou University	It is April Day at Zhengzhou University
5	Zhengzhou University	Notice of Zhengzhou University on the return of students in the spring semester of 2020
6	Henan Police College	[Golden List Release] 2020 Henan Police College Public Security Major Early Batch Admissions List
7	Henan University	The alma mater is 108 years old. What do you want to say?
8	Henan University	Briefing!

Note: From "New Media White Paper of Henan Province Education System 2020".

Table 2 Top 10 Official WeChat Influence Index of Undergraduate HEIs in Henan

Top 10	WeChat Public Number	Total number of articles	Total number of reads	Total number of views	Number of posts	Number of headline articles read	Max Reads	Maximum number of views	WeChat influence index
1	Zhengzhou University	454	6530000	73060	444	6480000	100001	6426	913.5356632
2	Henan University	341	4900000	72572	213	4820000	100001	9369	888.5694298
3	Henan Polytechnic University	516	4950000	40114	240	4840000	52479	825	834.6499691
4	Anyang Normal University	364	3170000	73811	364	3170000	73112	613	812.3592865
5	Henan Normal University	442	3130000	38612	193	3040000	92550	1261	788.4833547
6	North China University of Water Resources	409	2740000	34566	194	2644097	59298	645	763.30289
7	Sias University, SIAS	479	3350000	14973	308	2970000	65032	407	758.0267066
8	Xinyang Normal University	397	2370000	30119	396	2370000	31861	623	734.9926244
9	Railway Police College	505	2250000	30703	366	1950000	53649	472	715.8916703
10	Henan University of Technology	376	2010000	18011	291	1920000	53815	2197	713.0455117

Note: From "New Media White Paper of Henan Province Education System 2020".

4.3 Short Videos

Short videos are developed based on the development of mobile Internet, they are disseminated through mobile Internet, following the trend of fragmentation time, and the short, fragmented content dissemination meets users' needs. This entertaining and interactive form of communication is very much in line with young groups and fashion trends.

4.3.1 TikTok

In 2020, 45 of the 59 undergraduate HEIs in Henan Province entered TikTok, 14 new institutions compared to 2019. Four HEIs have TikTok accounts with more than 100,000 followers (Henan Police College, Shangqiu Institute of Technology, Zhengzhou University, Railway Police College). Among them, Henan Police College has 355,000 followers, an increase of 97,000 over the previous year. From July to December 2020, the top ten TikTok likes of undergraduate HEIs in Henan accumulated 119,000 likes, and the number of likes of Shangqiu Institute of Technology was 1.98 million at the top of the list. The highest number of TikTok retweets during July-December 2020 is

Zhengzhou Shengda University, with 11524 retweets. During July-December 2020, Shangqiu Normal University had the highest number of TikTok platform posts and the highest frequency of posts, with 342 short videos posted and a daily average of 1.8. They are followed by Shangqiu Institute of Technology and Xinyang Agriculture and Forestry University, with 240 and 205 releases, respectively. The top 10 official TikTok fans, likes, and releases of HEIs in Henan Province from July to December 2020 are shown in Figure 3, Figure 4, and Figure 5.

4.3.2 Kuaishou platform

As of December 2020, 24 undergraduate HEIs in Henan Province entered the Kuaishou platform, among which 8 official Kuaishou accounts of HEIs have more than 10,000 fans, and 9 official Kuaishou accounts of HEIs have more than 100,000 likes. It is worth noting that Zhengzhou University's Kuaishou platform has more than 180,000 fans, ranking first in the ranking of official Kuaishou fans of HEIs in Henan Province. Between July and December 2020, the Shangqiu Institute of Technology had the highest Kuaishou activity, with 209 short video works published, 56.91 million plays, and 2.605 million likes. By the end of 2020, Shangqiu Institute of Technology's Kuaishou platform had published a total of 738 short video works with 100,000 followers. The top 10 official Kuaishou fans and releases of HEIs in Henan Province are shown in Figure 6 and Figure 7.

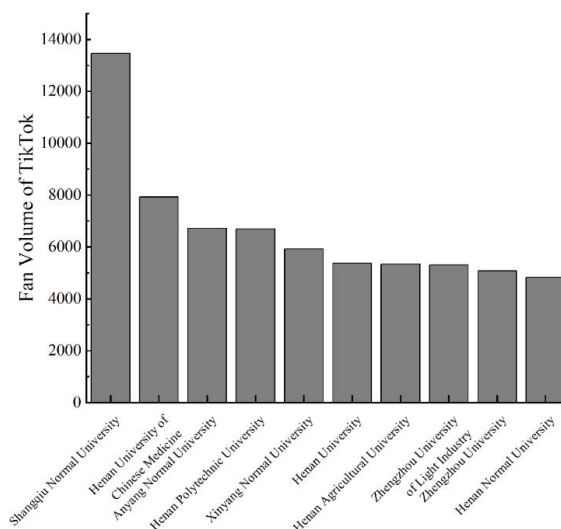


Figure 3 Top 10 TikTok Fans of Undergraduate HEIs in Henan (From "New Media White Paper of Henan Province Education System 2020")

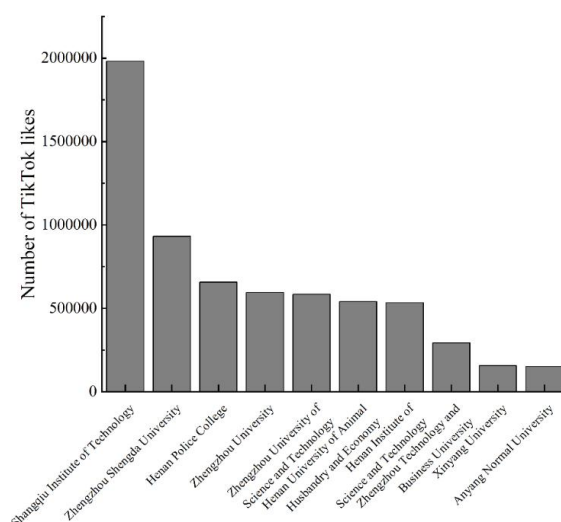


Figure 4 Top 10 TikTok Likes of Undergraduate HEIs in Henan (From "New Media White Paper of Henan Province Education System 2020")

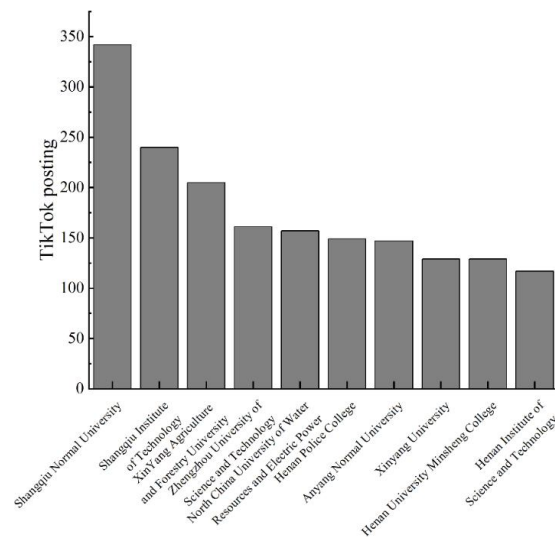


Figure 5 Top 10 of TikTok Posting Volume of Undergraduate HEIs in Henan (From "New Media White Paper of Henan Province Education System 2020")

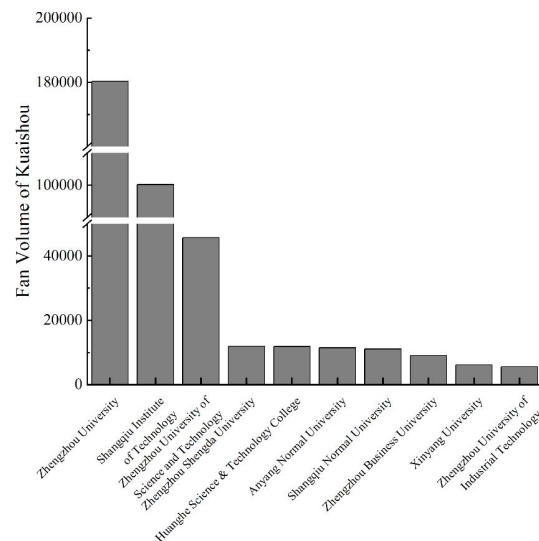


Figure 6 Top 10 Kuaishou Fans of Undergraduate HEIs in Henan (From "New Media White Paper of Henan Province Education System 2020")

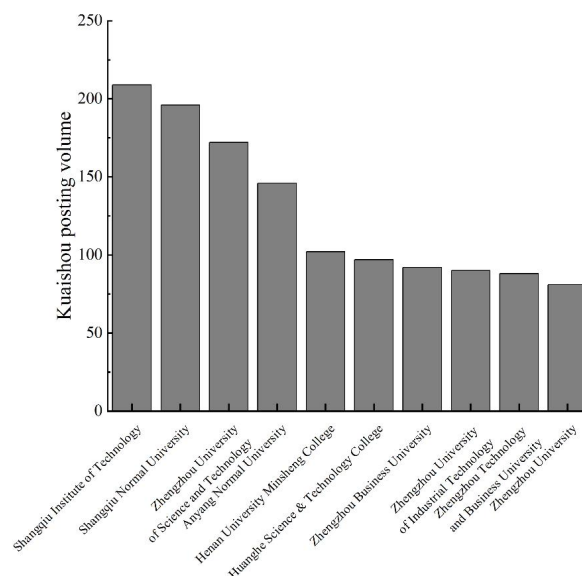


Figure 7 Top 10 Undergraduate HEIs in Henan Kuaishou Posting Volume (From "New Media White Paper of Henan Province Education System 2020")

5 DISCUSSIONS

5.1 Microblog Marketing of HEIs

As a low-cost, high-efficiency, and wide-ranging communication platform, microblogs are open, convenient, and friendly, which helps to bring the university closer to its followers and facilitate them to express their opinions freely. Henan University's official microblog is named "Xiaohe" which personalizes it and uses pronouns to make it more lively. The official microblog of Zhengzhou University is close to the daily needs of students and faculty and speaks for students, both sharply and tenderly, such as posting exciting and hot topics on campus or in the community and inviting students to participate. Henan University of Chinese Medicine microblogging insists on producing interactive topics, good morning and good night topics, interesting stories sharing topics, knowledge sharing topics, campus scenery topics. The text usually ends with questions or interactive expressions, often with naughty emoticons to attract followers' attention and comments. This lively form of interaction with fans is more likely to attract fans and increase attention. In addition to this, the microblog of HEIs can timely, comprehensively, and accurately release the progress of the school's work in talent cultivation, scientific research, social services, cultural heritage, and innovation. Relying on the Weibo platform, teachers and students are organized and mobilized to plan attractive jointly, highly participatory, and interactive online promotional activities to showcase the changes and achievements of the university in promoting economic and social development, with remarkable marketing effects. For example, the official microblog of the Henan University of Chinese Medicine has opened a unique topic of Chinese medicine, highlighting the characteristics of the school, which is conducive to the dissemination of Chinese medicine knowledge and the enhancement of the school's influence. Henan University's official microblog often promotes its century-long university history and humanistic accumulation and increases exposure through daily interaction with other institutions' official microblogs. In general, current Chinese universities can use the interactive and immediacy of Weibo to effectively strengthen communication with the outside world and continue to gather and integrate resources. At the same time, promote teacher-student exchanges and provide services for teacher-student learning and learning to highlight the campus-style and teacher-student spirit and effectively market the university brand.

5.2 WeChat Marketing of HEIs

The flexible and interactive nature of WeChat makes it easier for HEIs to reach their audiences and makes HEIs more "reachable" and impressive. Therefore, WeChat has become one of the most popular and convenient ways for Chinese HEIs to disseminate information, showcase campus culture, promote unique campus content, and interact with students and teachers. Overall, whether the official WeChat activity, the number of posts, or the number of page views and page views of the undergraduate colleges and universities have increased compared with 2019. WeChat postings of HEIs in Henan Province gradually shifted from fewer and more precise to more extensive and better, and the quality of content planning in terms of choosing angles and fitting hotspots has improved. The focus of public number operation is tilted toward creating high-quality, high-quality content. Zhengzhou University's official WeChat article "It is April Day at Zhengzhou University" has achieved more than 100,000 reads. The article was published at an essential point of the new epidemic, depicting the beauty of spring at Zhengzhou University and expressing the determination and confidence of teachers and students to overcome the epidemic. The article is well-titled, choosing the entry point from the audience, hitting the heart, and being highly readable. The concise and compelling text combined with eye-catching illustrations made the article a hit as soon as it was released. The official WeChat of the HEIs releases the accumulated school history, proud school achievements, positive energy-filled role models, and familiar and friendly campus scenery, thus triggering emotional resonance, awakening shared fond memories, and increasing the attention of the public number. The article "Alma Mater is 108 years old, what do you want to say" pushed by Henan University's WeChat platform stood out with 100,000+ reads and 2,102 likes. The article's title is eye-catching, and the main idea of the article is clearly stated while leaving enough space for interaction with fans, which is a prominent marketing effect. In terms of content, the article closely follows the hotspot of "university celebration". It starts from emotions, combining the history of Henan University with the beautiful scenery of the campus in four seasons, expressing the good wishes for Henan University and arousing the resonance of alumni. The strength of this article is that it combines the hot topics at the right time and captures the proper focus of the article. In addition to this, the targeted and phased release of information by HEIs through the WeChat platform to guide the rumor spread can effectively shape the good social image of the university and prevent adverse news events of HEIs from spreading rapidly in a viral way and triggering public opinion crisis [14]. On October 7, 2020, Henan University's official WeChat released the "Information Bulletin" to promptly inform and respond to the adverse events of the university after they had aroused more attention and discussion on the Internet, which prevented further fermentation of public opinion. The article spread quickly after its release, gaining 100,000+ reads, 1,600+ views, and 2,900+ likes. Students, faculty, alumni, and the community were generally concerned and affirmed the university's positive attitude in dealing with such incidents.

In a word, WeChat has become an essential medium for teachers and students to communicate, share and comment on various information in campus life, an essential platform for the public to understand the information of HEIs, and an authoritative platform for branding and image communication of HEIs. The WeChat public website helps HEIs build a good brand image and enhance its popularity, reputation, and social influence through its marketing advantages and high-quality marketing communication content.

5.3 Short Video Marketing for HEIs

According to the "2020 TikTok College Student Data Report" released by TikTok, the number of college student users has exceeded 26 million as of December 31, 2020, accounting for nearly 80% of the total number of college students in China. Based on the high-frequency usage of new media and the great attention to new media information among contemporary students, HEIs have seized the short video windfall, built short video platforms, and strengthened short video operation. 799 HEIs in China have entered new media platforms such as TikTok, Kuaishou, and B Station to enhance interaction with students and launch higher education brand marketing. Comparing the two platforms, TikTok and Kuaishou, Chinese HEIs have more total followers and more significant influence on the TikTok platform, which may relate to the short video platform's audience and promotion efforts. Among the HEIs in Henan Province, Shangqiu Institute of Technology has performed more outstandingly in the marketing operation of short video platforms, entering two short video platforms, TikTok and Kuaishou, and its short video position building has gained strong momentum, with a total of 347,000 fans on the two platforms. The released contents mainly focus on students' daily life, campus food, and school activities, and the scenes are mainly located in the school canteen, playground, classroom, and dormitory. The content is exciting and diverse, primarily responding to the issues and topics of most concern in the daily life of college students. The text is short and exciting, with a fresh style, using storytelling and exciting editing techniques to increase the video's ornamental. It is worthwhile to promote Shangqiu Institute of Technology's official TikTok to other HEIs because it accepts submissions from all students and faculty members and receives works from a wide range of channels, making the platform more diversified. It is worth mentioning the short video "Let your school shoot you" released by Shangqiu Institute of Technology on October 20, which adopts the way of "music stomping clip" and introduces the video through the topic, which organically combines the school and students and reflects the youthful vitality of the students. In addition, using the school's characteristics and advantages to promote the correct values and encourage young people to work hard in the short video platform will also get more likes and retweets. Henan Police College uses TikTok to show the daily training of students and selects the most realistic contents of the school as short video materials to promote the spirit of students and school scenery, which attracts the audience's attention and effectively improves the brand marketing of HEIs.

In general, Chinese HEIs have not paid enough attention to the construction of short videos, and most of them have no or few updates. If short videos can be deeply integrated with other social network media, it can lead to greater exposure of video content on their platforms in other social network media.

The analysis of the results of brand marketing communication of colleges and universities in Henan Province reflects that Chinese colleges and universities attach great importance to the marketing opportunities brought by new media. Colleges and universities are ready to take advantage of the rapid dissemination and interactive linkage of new media to design and produce engaging, interactive content and highlight colleges and universities' brand characteristics through new media platforms such as Weibo, WeChat, and short videos. However, different new media marketing channels will be fragmented without an excellent macro design, and marketing effectiveness will be weakened. Therefore, HEIs should fully integrate all kinds of communication channels, establish all-media thinking, build a new media communication matrix, and expand the new media marketing communication effect. Facing the current situation that new media marketing in higher education is still in the exploration and initial stage, new media marketing in higher education should follow.

First, new media can adopt a holistic way of thinking in content distribution to avoid content re-distribution and omission. Secondly, the new media platform should maintain a specific update frequency to retain the fan ownership rate and make the new media account gain longevity. Thirdly, the new media should improve content creation, fully take advantage of the school's unique talent and intellectual advantage, and produce high quality, high likes, and high spread works on the premise of profound mastery of the new media platform communication law. Fourthly, the new media marketing department of the school should strengthen the analysis of marketing and communication effects and provide new ideas for the next new media selection planning by analyzing the communication channels, communication trends, and reproduction of specific contents. Fifth, it is necessary to train professional talents within HEIs and make full use of big data to enhance the ability of public opinion analysis and build public opinion early warning and feedback mechanisms to ensure that information favorable to the university is quickly and effectively led and negative impacts on the university are dissipated.

6 CONCLUSIONS

In the new media environment, emerging media such as WeChat, micro-blog, and short video have broken the traditional monolithic marketing communication method of HEIs and become one of the most critical channels for HEIs' brand marketing. Making full use of the timely, sharing, and exciting features of new media saves the time cost of brand marketing of HEIs and effectively improves the reach of brand marketing of HEIs. Chinese colleges and universities have made full use of the resource advantages and application characteristics of different new media to continuously optimize their working mechanisms, improve their operational levels, and integrate their strengths. New media in colleges and universities should mainstream information release and public opinion guidance; standardize platform operations and the team of practitioners; carry out various branding activities to take this opportunity to continue to increase user stickiness. Enhancing the communication power of new media strengthens the school brand marketing communication and promotion, thereby improving the influence.

COMPETING INTERESTS

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