

Social Media Communications Strategies among Taoist Organizations in China: The Role of Weibo as a Communication Platform for Taoist Temples

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Abstract: Based on the concepts of “online religion” and “religion online” developed by Helland (2000), this study focuses on how three Taoist temples use the Chinese social media Weibo to both transmit information and interact with their religious followers. By analyzing the content of the articles posted on their Weibo channel during the month celebrating the 2016 Chinese New Year, the study will try to determine two things: Firstly, what kind of information each temple shares with its audience. Secondly, how do Taoist organizations perceive social media as a communication tool? Is it perceived in a similar way than the Christian organizations that been studied before?

Keywords: Taoism, Weibo, Social Media, China, Religion

Introduction

In China a rise of religion is ongoing, as Christianity has grown at an average of 15% annually while self-claimed Buddhist followers are expected number between 100 to 200 million people (Lu, 2012). This growing prosperity is indicative of a very enabling environment for religious organizations to develop their congregations. Along with rapid development of modern technology, digital media, especially the Internet, provide religious organizations with multiple methods to communicate with stakeholders. Websites have become a “traditional” tool in the “new media” arena and require investments in technique and staff to generate enough engagement and interactivity to validate effective communication between organizations and their stakeholders, while social networking sites, like Facebook and Twitter, make it easier for their natural characters of low cost and interactivity (Attouni and Mustaffa, 2014). Thus it is important for organizations, particularly religious organizations as non-profits, to take advantage of social media to communicate with stakeholders.

Since the early 1980s, research questions have been focusing on several angles regarding the relationship between religion and the global digital networks. These studies go from enthusiastic speculation to objective study of real online practice and then more interpretive approach about practices like online-offline interactions (Campbell, 2006, as cited in Kyong, 2011). However, research on religion and digital media platforms has mostly focused on Christianity and Islam (Frost and Youngblood, 2014). Even the attitudes toward new media and religion are especially framed in a Christian perspective (Kyong, 2011). While various religions are planted in diverse cultures and inherited by different people, as Kyong (2011) argued in his study about the waves of research on religion and the Internet, when it comes to usage of the Internet, different religions use Internet in different ways. This study will attempt to answer this question focusing on Taoism in China.

Studies have been focusing on how new media play its role in modern communication situations. Most of the organizational-level research about media usage are about websites and point out that the functions of websites are mainly information and dialogue. At the same time, precursor studies on social media have primarily focused on interpersonal communication (Lovejoy and Saxton, 2012). An important part of the studies researching the relationship between religion and new media evolve around web-based communication between

religious organizations and their audience (Asamoah-Gyadu, 2007, Frost and Youngblood, 2014). Research focusing on the use of social media by religious organizations is sparser. Most of the time, social media and websites are always lumped together as components of “cyber communication” or “digital culture” to investigate how religion interacts with today’s society (Cloete, 2015). Considering that, this research will be based on the concepts of “religion online” and “online religion” developed by Helland.

Helland’s (2000) research came up with the concepts of “religion online” and “online religion” in order to describe the situations when a religious organization takes advantage of the Internet. Religion online is used to describe the situation when a religious organization uses the Internet as a “one-to-many” channel simply for information transmission as traditional medium, while online religion is used to describe the situation when the religious organization makes use of the Internet to involve users into a more interactive communication process which probably influence users’ belief to a larger extent (as cited in Kyong, 2011).

In this research, Taoist organizations are chosen as the religious organization to be studied. Taoism is a native religion in China. It originated in the 2nd century AD and take “Tao Te Ching” as primary scripture; there are nearly 9,000 Taoist temples, 5 Taoist schools and about 48,000 Taoist priests in China, however there is no information regarding the number of believers following Taoism (State Administration for Religious Affairs of People’s Republic of China, 2014).

Since Taoism is a religion generated in, and mainly active in Chinese context, Weibo, as one of the most popular social network service sites in China is the first choice of social media to be used as a channel of exploration in this study.

Though being called “Chinese Twitter”, Weibo goes beyond Twitter’s functionalities. It enables users to send long-form post to up to 10,000 characters, it offers customization features such as font style and size, and users can share multiple images, videos, links, files, and GIFs in one post and they can also compose polls (Linkfluence, 2016). Relationship between users on Weibo is asymmetric which means that users can follow any other users and add comments to a feed while reposting and liking posts without being followed back (Weibo Corporation, 2016). Weibo is now also seen as a combination of Facebook and Twitter while ultimately being unique (Koetse, 2016). Today Weibo is considered as one of the leading social media platforms and it continues its user growth. In June 2016 its number of monthly active users grew 33% compared to 2015 and reached 282 million while the average daily active users for June 2016 grew 36% compared to June 2015 and reached 126 million (SINA Corporation, 2016).

Based on all the concerns above, this study dedicates to explore the role Weibo is playing in Taoist Temples’ communication strategy and their usage pattern of it.

Functions of Social Media and those Adopted by Religious Organizations

Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) identified social media as web-based applications based on Internet technology with creation and exchange of user-generated content as primary features. Considering that, even if there are not as many articles focusing on the functions of social media for religious organizations as those focusing on websites, we can still take some research results as appropriate references.

According to Campbell (2005a, p14-p20), the narratives of the Internet functions in religious perception should be a “spiritual network”, a “worship space”, a “missionary tool” to promote the religion, and a technology that can affirm “religious identity”.

In terms of social relationship marketing, the functions of social media could be grouped into four levels which are “information provision”, “customer intelligence”, “personalization”, and “community and relationship development” (Guo, 2014, p11-p12). Kietzmann, Hermkens, McCarthy and Silvestre (2011) cataloged functions

of social media into seven functional blocks as “identity”, “conversations”, “sharing”, “presence”, “relationships”, “reputation”, and “groups”.

According to former studies on uncertainty reduction theory, reducing uncertainty of others is the primary objective of interpersonal relationships (Berger and Calabrese, 1975, as cited in Palmieri et al., 2012). To reduce uncertainty, various strategies are used, and strategies used for self-disclosure are basic (Parks and Floyd, 1996). According to previous research on Facebook, as the media provides a rich vehicle for communication, the more information users reveal of themselves the more uncertainty would be reduced (Palmieri et al., 2012).

After implementing an analysis of 177 websites of Protestant Christian organizations and interviewing 20 religious leaders, researchers found that revealing information was the main function of internet and in religious leaders’ perception internet was generally seen as a vehicle to send information to audiences (Cheong et al., 2009).

Even though many religious organizations treated the Internet as a space to release “virtual brochures”, researchers proposed that building interactive communication then cultivating relationships with stakeholders should be another primary function that nonprofit organizations including religious organizations should effectively and cost-efficiently use just as what profit organizations should do (Esrock and Leichty, 2000; Brasher, 2001; Taylor et al., 2001, Bailey and Storch, 2007; Park and Reber, 2008; Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010, Stephenson, 2010; Waters et al., 2011). Communicating with other users on social media could help to spread a religious group’s beliefs (Brasher, 2001). Religious organizations could also expand their influence as much as possible as long as they manage to communicate online with stakeholders in appropriate manners (Stephenson, 2010).

Helland (2000) proposed two famous terms that could be used to identify interactions between religion and the internet: religion online and online religion (as cited in Campbell, 2005b). “Religion online” refers to the situation when religious organizations take the Internet as a broadcast tool that is used for sending information to audiences in a one-way communication manner, spiritual seekers’ looking for religious information online could also be seen as a “religion online” process; “online religion” implies that religious organizations engage audiences with interactive approaches such as religious practices online (Helland, 2000, as cited in Kyone, 2011, Cloete, 2015).

In this paper, the manner that social media is used within religious background of Taoism is explored. Based on former research, posts of Taoist temples on the social media Weibo are analyzed to find their particular preferences on adopting Weibo as a day-to-day communication tool. The results are expected to be able to answer questions on two aspects as follows. First of all, based on the concepts of “religion online” and “online religion” developed by Helland, what kind of information are Taoist temples posting on Weibo to express themselves to the public? Secondly, how do Taoist organizations perceive social media as a communication tool? Is it perceived in a similar way than the Christian organizations that been studied before?

Case Study of Taoist Temples

Three Taoist temples’ official Weibo accounts were collected and studied. The three selected temples were Beijing Baiyun Temple in Beijing, Guangzhou Chunyang Temple in Guangzhou, and Xi’an Wanshou Baxiangong Temple in Xi’an. The three temples are considered as historic temples and typical in different regions of China, as Beijing Baiyun Temple in northern China, Guangzhou Chunyang Temple in southern China, and Xi’an Wanshou Baxiangong Temple in the middle, while they also own nationwide reputation. They own bigger amount of followers on Weibo compared to other temples. Until September 21, 2016, the number of

Beijing Baiyun Temple followers had reached 58,239, while the Guangzhou Chunyang Temple's followers' number was 10,837 and the Xi'an Wanshou Baxiangong Temple had 10,122 for the same period of time.

The three temples' 474 valid posts on February 2016 were collected. The traditional Chinese New Year which is also called Spring Festival takes place in that month. The fifteen days long festival is considered as the most important festival for current Chinese community as well as for Taoist organizations. Ceremonies, temple fairs, and many other types of activities are held during those days by temples for both the festival and religious holy days taking place along it. The boom of activities caused by both secular and religious culture generates the motivation to communicate with the public. Assuming that with the motivation temples may adopt a more comprehensive strategy to communicate with followers on Weibo which may cover more functions of the channel; posts on February 2016 were used as samples for coding and building up the general category of functions that temples utilized. An extra 891 posts from the months of January and March 2016 were also analyzed in the same way in case that the extraordinary festival may distort temples' normal usage pattern on Weibo.

The main task of the content analysis is to investigate various information Taoist organizations communicated with audiences under the religion online and online religion purposes. Lovejoy and Saxton (2012) categorized non-profit organizations' tweets by three functional concepts which are "information", "community", and "action". Based on prior research, the contents collected as data were also categorized into "information" group as religion-online-orientated information, "community" and "action" group as online-religion-orientated information. Under these umbrellas, the contents were further categorized into smaller groups to get a more detailed picture of Taoist organizations' utilization of Weibo. For example, subcategories under "information" function could further explain what kinds of information exactly did participants share with audiences. At the same time, quantitative statistic was used to count proportions of each collection to identify preference of those Taoist organizations on using the media. Each post was assigned a single code. In cases where a post appeared to serve dual purposes, codes were assigned according to what was considered the post's primary purpose.

Interview with communicators from the three temples was adopted at last to make further interpretation of findings of content analysis which also added reliability to the study.

Functions of Social Media Emerge from Temples' Posts

20 types of posts emerged from the procedure. They are explained separately as follows and are summarized in Table 1 with exact quantity at the end of this chapter.

Religion Online

As mentioned above, Religion Online, being consistent with "information" function, refers to one way interaction. The Taoist temples exchange their information with public and the information broadly cover more than events they hold but also something religious and historic. There are 8 types as follow.

1. Introduce Taoist priest

The Taoist priests introduced in this kind of post are not those famous priests in ancient history but priests alive in modern times that are able to represent the clergy nowadays. The posts contain pictures, videos, or links to share the priests' figure or story with the public.

2. Introduce the temple

In this type of posts, temples share pictures of their view, introductory texts and any story or artistic work related to themselves. The information could help receivers building comprehensive image of the temple more

than the religion. Beijing Baiyun Temple sent 7 posts to introduce itself as an attraction with good landscape and culture, While Guangzhou Chunyang Temple sent 1 post and the post is multifunction to share its culture with followers. Xi'an Wanshou Baxiangong Temple did not sent posts with this function.

3. Share Knowledge of religion

This kind of post takes the majority of all the samples (139 posts out of 474 posts in total) and they also composed the biggest part of each temple's content (85 posts out of 282 posts for Beijing Baiyun Temple, 36 posts out of 138 posts for Guangzhou Chunyang Temple and 18 posts out of 54 posts for Xi'an Wanshou Baxiangong Temple). The temples expose texts, pictures, and videos that offer Taoist religious knowledge of many detailed aspects. Seven types of knowledge emerged under this concept that are about "holy day", "doctrine", "history", "idols", "ritual", "scripture", "talisman and spell", and "mythology". These messages cover physical symbols such as "idols", behavioural symbols such as "ritual", and verbal symbols such as "scriptures". As West and Turner (2014) summarized that these three kinds of symbols compose an organizational culture, these messages are used to draw a full picture of Taoist culture.

4. Sharing News of other temples or other Taoist events

Most posts under this function are forwarded posts. The messages are records of some religious activities held by other Taoist temples, breaking news in Taoism field and social events with some Taoism elements involved.

5. Reminding connection between Religion and secular culture

In these posts, the temples offer knowledge of a particular traditional secular festival or secular belief and pointed out the Taoist background of them. By claiming the direct or indirect relationship between Taoism and secular culture, Taoism's historical importance in building Chinese culture is emphasized.

6. Introduce Religious arts

Painting, music, calligraphy, poetry and video works that made by Taoist people or with Taoist contents are shared in some posts.

7. Share knowledge of Religious medicine

Taoist medicine is seen as a special medical system which is also a branch of Chinese traditional medicine (Beijing Baiyun Temple, post on Weibo, February 23, 2016). In these posts, temples do not share much academic introductions but offer guidance of keeping health in various situation of daily life based on Taoist medicine theory and wider Chinese traditional medicine theory. Some of the topics are "what is Taoist medicine", "how to keep healthy by practicing breath", "taboos of drinking tea". 26 posts were sent to share knowledge of Taoist medicine. Guangzhou Chunyang Temple sent 24 of them and the other 2 were sent by Beijing Baiyun Temple.

8. Report an event

Temples share report of an activity they held, and the contents are always documentary text with pictures or videos of the event. The posts are sent after the activity as a summary of it or before the activity as a record without the intention to ask followers to participant in, that divides these posts from others with "promoting events" function.

Online religion

According to former studies, communication with online religion purpose leads to more than just sending information but focuses on cultivating relationship, building community, or other interactive adoption of media. In this paper, “community” and “action” are used as origin model to classify the samples. As Lovejoy and Saxton (2012) explained, “community” refers to intention of interacting with others and building good relationship and forming a sense of community, while “action” leads to more aggressive communication that mean to advocate more substantive actions from message receivers such as donating or attending some activities. Posts with “action” function require deeper interaction from message receivers than those with “community” function.

1. Ask for opinions

Only Beijing BaiyunTemple1 post named “investigation” which contained a question of “what kind of public activity you want us to hold”. Guangzhou Chunyang Temple and Xi’an Wanshou Baxiangong Temple both do not take Weibo as a tool to collect followers’ opinion.

2. Celebrate a holy day

On the holy day, temples would post a message of this kind; being different from those for introducing a holy day, these posts are in a manner of reminding followers to celebrate the holy day or leading followers to celebrate. In some posts, temples also offer followers with the particular scripture for worshipping on that holy day to help followers practicing. By leading followers to celebrate the holy day, temples could strengthen followers’ religious identity and further sense their belonging to the community.

3. Give recognition

In these posts, temples give public praise to their followers, volunteers, individual of the organization, and supporters of their events such as the police and local governments for their actions or works. This kind of post also includes those in which temples publicly show their support and acceptance to other’s work or opinion.

4. Greet followers

In these posts, temples say hello or give wishes to followers in a way that show closeness between them. Sometimes there are also introductions of coming events or the day if it is a holy day, but the main purpose is still greeting followers and particular posts that introduce the holy day always be sent later on that day, that’s why the posts are categorized into “greet followers” function.

5. Guide visiting

In these posts, temples offer advices or emphasized some important regulations to followers to help them gaining better visiting experience.

6. Help practicing

In these posts, temples help believers improving their practice by various ways including reminding them to practice in right way and at the right time as religious ritual acquires, as well as sharing other believers’ experience to encourage followers to practice. Offering authoritative advice on particular practice action is also included. In some posts, temples offer followers scriptures and explain them. Being different with those with “share knowledge of religion” function, temples explain more on how to use the scriptures for practicing as detailed as how many times should people read them. The advices on practice are also different from just

sharing knowledge of rituals as the former ones focus more on encouraging personal practice and are followed with inventive language such as “did you practice?”

7. Interact with individual

Without obvious intention being shown in posts as others, posts under this category are casual and simple. Temples forward the original posts with simple comments to fulfill an interaction with the message sender. Being different with other posts, personal relationship but not public relationship is emphasized in these posts.

8. Response to consultation and challenge

These posts are used to answer particular questions asked by media users. Temples forward users’ questioning post with answers as the comment or directly quote public’s question and answer it in its own post. Because of the strong intention of responding followers’ question, this function is listed separately from the previous one.

9. Offer advices

In these posts, temples try to lead a direct behavioural reaction from followers by giving their recommendation. The recommendation could be about an appropriate religious thinking, an expected behavioural change of visitors, or just downloading their publications.

10. Promote an event

Offline activities are important for the temples in order to keep a relationship with communities. In that case, these kinds of posts are sent not only to remind followers about the events they will hold but also to involve them in joining the events. Thus these posts always contain welcoming language as well as detailed information of the coming events.

11. Ask for transmitting message

In these posts, temples make an announcement of some emergency and require followers to help transmitting the message to the population. The posts all contain imperative language such as “everyone please kindly inform others of this”.

12. Recruit stakeholder

Posts of this kind are used to recruit stakeholders including volunteers for the temples’ campaign and employees. Detailed offline contracts also provided.

Table 1 Posts’ Function (Based on Data from February, 2016)

Category	Baiyun	Chunyang	Baxiangong	Total	Percent
Information				317	66.9
Introduce Taoist priest	2	1	0	3	0.6
Introduce the temple	7	1	0	8	1.7
Share knowledge of religion	85	36	18	139	29.3
Share news of other temples or relevant event	5	5	3	13	2.7
Remind connection between religion and secular culture	8	12	4	24	5.1
Introduce religious arts	16	0	2	18	3.8

	Share knowledge of religious medicine	2	24	0	26	5.5
	Report an event	60	11	15	86	18.1
Community					114	24.1
	Ask for opinions	1	0	0	1	0.2
	Celebrate a holy day	8	3	2	13	2.7
	Give recognition	10	3	0	13	2.7
	Greet followers	12	1	0	13	2.7
	Guide visiting	14	3	2	19	4
	Help practicing	10	7	0	17	3.6
	Interact with individual	21	10	3	34	7.2
	Response to consultation and challenge	2	2	0	4	0.8
Action					43	9.1
	Offer advices	3	4	0	7	1.5
	Promote an event	11	13	3	27	5.7
	Ask for transmitting message	5	0	0	5	1.1
	Recruit stakeholder	0	2	2	4	0.8
	Total	282	138	54	474	100

The functions above also cover samples from the other two months. No new function emerged when categorizing posts sent from the months of January and March 2016.

Temples with different strategies

Though posts for “share knowledge of religion” take up the majority of all temples’ posts all three months (as shown in Figures below), the temples’ utilization of the other functions is diverse, which indicates different strategies.

Beijing Baiyun Temple sends most posts among three temples (282 on February and 717 in three months). Figure 1 (below) shows some features of the temple’s usage as follows. “Introduce Taoist priest” and “introduce religious arts” were emphasized while in February attention was transferred to reporting its offline events. The second most “give recognition” posts both in January and March also decreased in February as posts of “celebrate a holy day” “greet followers” “guide visiting” and “interact with individuals” functions rose. Being consonance with the Spring Festival, Beijing Baiyun Temple turned to adopt relevant functions more to support their activities by recording its activities with “report an event” posts, guiding followers to join with “guide visiting” posts, and response to followers’ involvement with “interact with individuals”. Despite the flexibility on communication strategy, the temple keeps big amount and diversity of its posts, that makes it a comprehensive authority on Taoism.

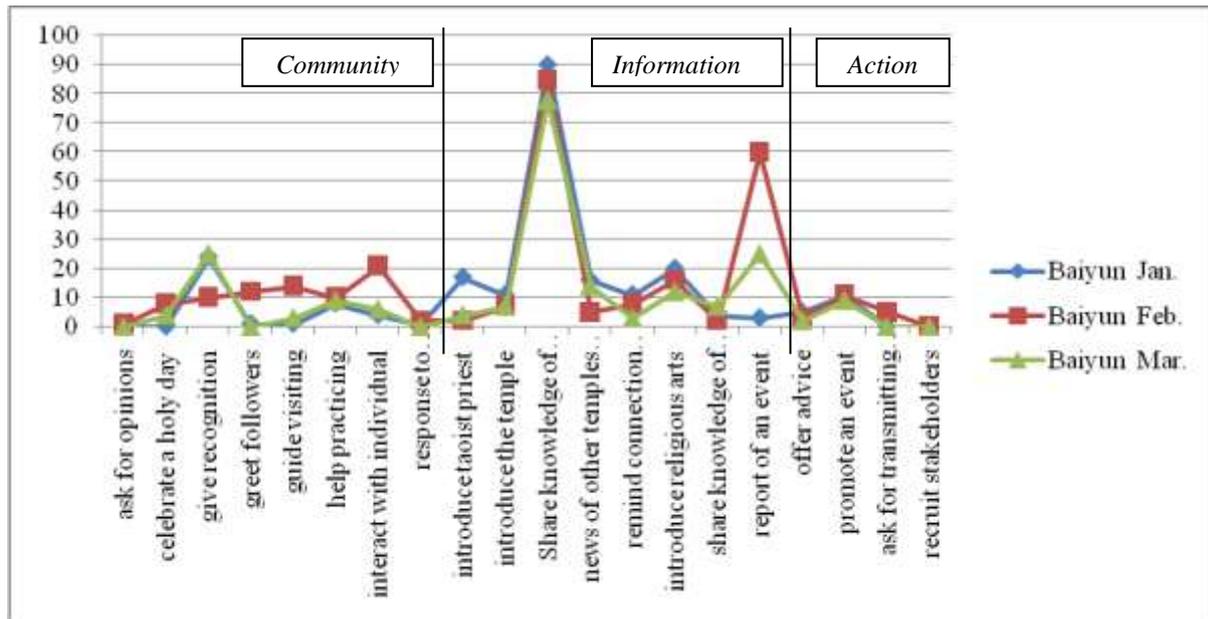


Figure 1 Three month's Data of Beijing Baiyun Temple

For Guangzhou Chunyang Temple, It sent 138 posts on February and totally 443 in three months. As shown in Figure 2 (below), the “share knowledge of religion” posts and “share knowledge of religious medicine” posts stay the top two most posts for all three months. As in February secular custom is densely reached because of the Spring Festival, the temple sent more posts to relate the secular custom to Taoism to gain people’s awareness on the religion. But the allocation of different kinds of posts does not change much comparing with Beijing Baiyun Temple. Taoist knowledge that related to secular daily life and posts under “online religion” category are continually emphasized by Guangzhou Chunyang Temple. Based on that, Guangzhou Chunyang Temple is building an amiable image to public.

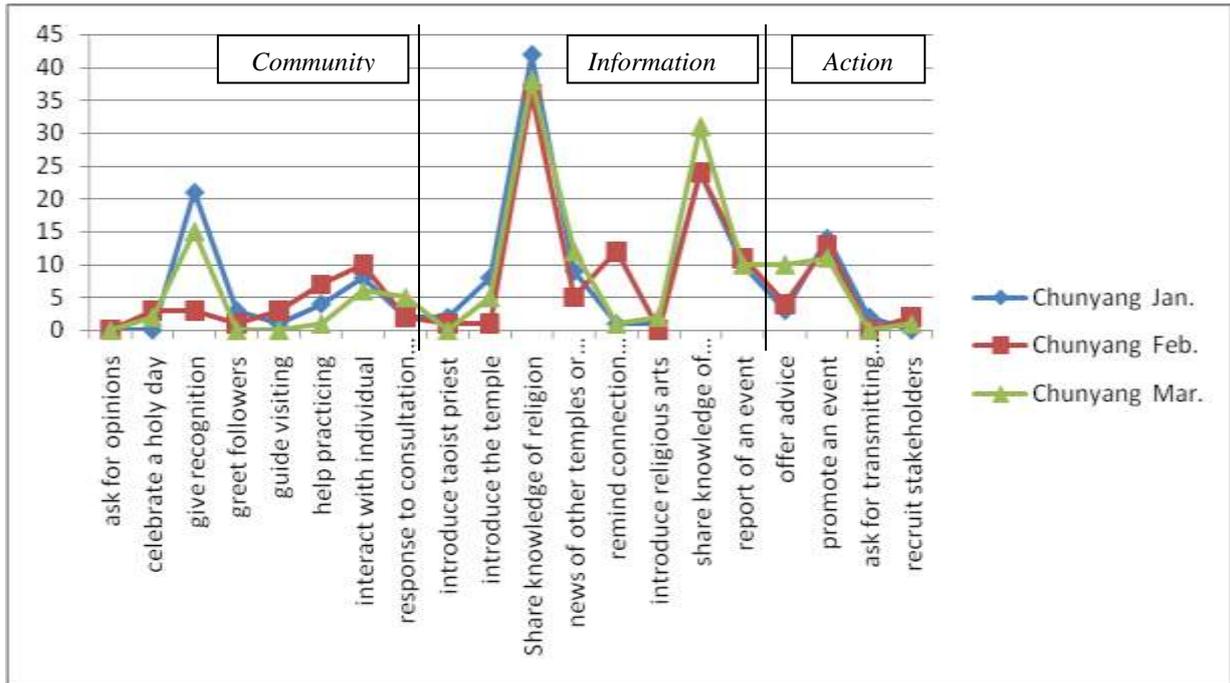


Figure 2 Three months' data of Guangzhou Chunyang Temple

Xi'an Wanshou Baxiangong Temple sent the least posts among the three temples (54 on February and 205 in three months). "Share knowledge of religion" posts and "report an event" posts take majority in all three months (as shown in Figure 3 below). No obvious wave emerges on number of posts in February. The Spring Festival did not influence the temple's utilization of Weibo. Since so few contents available for analyzing either for each function or in total, no feature could be concluded for its strategy so far.

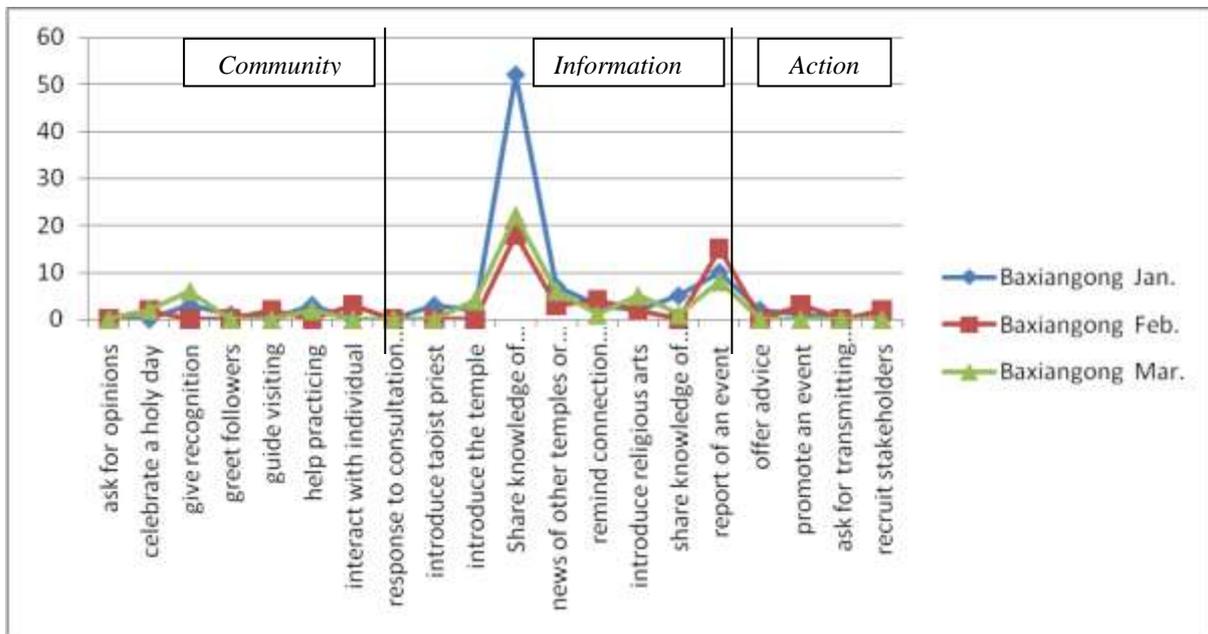


Figure 3 Three months' data of Xi'an Wanshou Baxiangong Temple

Even though the data is influenced by the Spring Festival in February, a general picture could be seen as given below.

Social media for temples: online publication with passive interactivity

According to the results above, the temples use Weibo to broadcast various messages to followers that cover many aspects of Taoism and relevant knowledge, form sense of community and provoke followers' interactive behaviors.

When using Weibo as a tool for publicity, temples take promoting Taoism as a religion to the first place, which is more important than introducing themselves. The function of recording is also emphasized; temples report their events afterward more than sharing real-time information during the process even though instantaneous posting is available. Different manners emerge from three temples' utilization: for Beijing Baiyun Temple and Xi'an Wanshou Baxiangong Temple, scriptures and doctrine of Taoism were shared more than other kinds of knowledge both about religion and relevant fields, which leads to a literary and metaphysical narration of Taoism, while Guangzhou Chunyang Temple has intension to shorten distance between Taoism and civilians by offering public with useful plain Taoist information for serving daily life, considering that Taoist medicine for health keeping is emphasized as important as knowledge of Taoism.

For "online religion" purpose, temples use Weibo to form sense of community more than to provoke followers' interactive behaviors. Temples take advantage of Weibo's interactive character by giving public encouragement, greeting, guidance, recognition and conducting one-to-one individual communication. Provoking followers to join their offline activities is also an important occasion for the temples to interact with public. Religious behaviors are also included: temples lead followers to celebrate religious holy days and to practice, by that a sense of community could be strengthened.

Posts of "information" (Religion Online) represent the majority of the posting activity (66.9% of the total in February while 70.7% in three month), thus most of the time temples use Weibo as an online publication to introduce Taoism and report their religious activities to their followers. Though the temples claim that they also pay attention to the importance of interactivity on social media, they act passively in an online mutual relationship with public, which means that the temples rarely initiate a dialogue with public. The passive interactivity is shown as the priest in charge of the communication of the Guangzhou Chunyang Temple explained his respect for interactive function of Weibo: "for formal Weibo accounts of domestic Taoist temples, "information" functions are put at the first place, but that does not mean we ignore interactive functions. Our Weibo account seems to lack interactivity because we do not have many comments or forwards, but we try to answer every question that our followers asked." (Lei Gaocheng, personal communication, November 12, 2016

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Conclusion

The same as to other organizations and individuals, social media offers a lower-cost and more interactive tool to Taoist temples to communicate with the public compared with traditional media. To draw a picture of the encounter of the technology and ancient religion, this paper studied on how Taoist temples use the tool with their religious background. 474 posts sent on February were used to develop a typology of Taoist temples' microblogging functions. Then 891 more posts were recruited to recheck the typology and confirm findings with bigger database.

Although three temples have different strategies, there is something common in their use of Weibo. First, for "religion online" purpose, 8 kinds of posts are sent by the temples and sharing basic knowledge of Taoism is primary for the temples. Comparing with introducing their own status, the temples like to promote the religion first. The basic knowledge of Taoism also broadly covers 8 aspects, among which literary doctrines and metaphysical scriptures took the majority of the posts. Second, for "online religion" purpose, 12 kinds of posts are sent by temples both for maintaining relationship with public and motivating behavioural response from

audiences. Temples take advantage of Weibo's interactive character intentionally that they interact with other users by giving public encouragement, greeting, guidance, recognition and conducting one-to-one individual communication. Provoking followers to join their offline activities is also an important occasion for the temples' interacting with public. Religious behaviors are also included: temples lead followers to celebrate religious holy days and to practice, by that a sense of community could be strengthened. At last, considering the preference between sending message and interacting with public, Weibo is mainly used as an online publication to introduce Taoism.

In sum, according to the data presentation of the temples' utilization of Weibo and operators' opinion, the temples' communication strategy on Weibo is rough on objective (to popularize Taoism) and lack evaluation. The sociability of social media is not paid as much attention as the informative function that attribute to the temples' preference on releasing information and passive attitude to interacting with the public. Despite a detailed utilization, the temples hold an aggressive attitude to Weibo as well as any other communication channels as it is said by the operator from Xi'an Wanshou Baxiangong Temple: "Taoism is a living fossil of Chinese traditional culture, it inherits China's 5000 year's civilization. Now a time, western culture is diluting Chinese people's passion on traditional culture and religious value, we must try everything to help our people getting in touch with and study our own culture including adapting internet which is the inevitable result of social development." (Fu Wei, personal communication, November 17, 2016)

Suggestion

This paper accomplished a case study on primary Chinese Taoist temples' utilizing social media. To gain a more general picture, more temples or other kinds of religious organization such as religious unions and posts sent in more months could be recruited building a bigger database to be studied. A rough typology emerged in coding process under scheme of prior research; discrepancies of coding could be discussed to form a more detailed and accurate typology.

Even though Weibo primarily is a social media, it is not saying that the temples recruited in this paper did not use it in an appropriate way by mainly sending information but not behaving more interactively. As mentioned above, to fulfill radical needs of express oneself, sharing one's own information with others is always important in communication. It is not the more interactive posts they send on social media the better but finding a perfect proportion of each kind of posts more important. The perfect proportion may be determined by each temple's status, and to find a model helping define the perfect proportion for each organization could be implemented in future research.

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