

A Comparative Study of the Life Cycles of Internet Buzzwords on Sina Weibo

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Abstract. Internet buzzwords are an important reflection of social mood and cultural mentality. This study employs content analysis and inductive reasoning, complemented by quantitative trend analysis and qualitative semantic interpretation. Using public microblog data, it investigates the transmission trajectories and semantic evolution of two representative internet buzzwords, "yyds" and "lie flat," through trend charts, word clouds, and thematic content analysis. Data collation found that "yyds" presented a pulse communication mode, relying on external hot events to promote, "lie flat" accompanied by the evolution of social issues, and the heat was highly synchronized with public policy discussions. The final research conclusion points out that there are essential differences between the two in communication power, semantic function and mentality mapping: "yyds" reflects the emotional identity and follow-up under consumerism, and "lie flat" reflects the alienation and resistance mentality of young people under social pressure, and jointly reveals the multiple roles of network catchwords as a social mood refractor.

Keywords: Internet buzzword, Life cycle, social mood, Sina Weibo

1. Introduction

As a product of the interaction between language use and social culture in the digital era, Internet buzzwords have become an important window to insight into contemporary social emotions and cultural changes. Among many network terms, "yyds" and "lie flat" are widely spread on micro-blog platform in a similar period of time, but their generation mechanism, communication path and social meaning are significantly different. While "yyds" originated from fan culture as a highly affective expression of admiration, "lie flat" emerged from socio-economic pressures, representing a reactive attitude of youth toward a high-stress social environment. Although the academic research on single internet buzzwords has been more abundant, the systematic and comparative analysis based on platform data for typical hot words is still relatively lacking [1].

For this reason, this study aims to compare and analyze the similarities and differences between the two internet buzzwords "yyds" and "lie flat" in the communication cycle, semantic evolution and social psychological projection through the empirical data of the platform of Sina Weibo, and specifically explore the following issues: first, what is the life cycle trend of the two on Sina Weibo? Second, what social emotions and cultural motivations do these trends reveal? By answering the

above questions, this study hopes to provide new empirical materials and theoretical enlightenment for the cross research of network language and social mentality.

2. Literature review

In recent years, with the increasing influence of network language, the academic research on internet buzzwords is also increasingly in-depth. The existing research is mainly from three dimensions of communication mechanism, semantic evolution and social psychology, which provides an important theoretical reference for this study.

First of all, in the aspect of communication mechanism, Ji Naili, Gao Chaoyue and Chen Heshan in the research on the life cycle and communication mechanism of network hot words - based on the cluster analysis of 73 network hot words from 2012 to 2020, through the quantitative analysis of buzzwords for many years, summed up the typical stages of the life cycle of internet buzzwords: germination, eruption, diffusion and decline [2]. The research provides a framework basis for clustering analysis in terms of methodology, but its research objects span multiple platforms, and it does not conduct in-depth analysis on a single social media (such as Sina Weibo), or explore the comparison mechanism between words. On this basis, this study will focus on Sina Weibo, through the comparison between "yyds" and "lie flat", to explore the role of the characteristics of Sina Weibo in its communication.

In addition, memetics provides another important perspective for understanding the transmission power of internet buzzwords. While studying the memes such as China's "Burning Jesus" and "Weimo", Zhang and Cheong pointed out that the spread of China's network memes is not only a simple cultural copy, but also a "discourse resistance" under the specific social emotion and review system [3]. In "Research on the transmission mechanism of self mocking buzzwords on the Internet based on meme theory", Xing Lilong took self mocking buzzwords as an example to analyze how memes copy, vary and spread in the network [4]. Building on a cross-cultural perspective established in prior work on antagonistic negative emotion memes, this study shifts the focus to two distinct buzzwords: "lie flat," which blends social critique with personal expression, and the more neutrally valenced "yyds." This shift in focus is undertaken in order to assess the applicability and explanatory power of the emotional protest paradigm across a broader spectrum of online discourse.

While Ye Junli's case study of the internet buzzword "Pan Ga Zhi Jiao" effectively delineates its generation and dissemination from a communication perspective, demonstrating the value of in-depth case analysis, its findings exhibit limited generalizability to other lexical types [5]. By employing a comparative design across two distinct cases, this research seeks to derive communication patterns of broader applicability from specific phenomena.

In general, existing research has made remarkable progress in theoretical construction and case analysis, but there are still research gaps in platform characteristics, multi-case comparison and longitudinal data tracking. Through the integration of quantitative trend analysis and qualitative semantic interpretation, and combined with the two-year data of Sina Weibo, this study tries to supplement in the following aspects: first, reveal the life cycle differences of "yyds" and "lying flat" on Sina Weibo; second, compare their semantic functions and socio-psychological mapping. Different functions; Third, deepen the understanding of online buzzwords as social emotional refractors from a comparative perspective [6].

3. Research methods

This research adopts the research strategy of combining content analysis and induction to systematically examine the communication trajectory and semantic evolution of "yyds" and "lying flat" on Sina Weibo. The design of the research framework draws on the life cycle analysis model proposed by Ji Naili and others and the semantic network analysis method proposed by Zuo Yue in cognitive sociolinguistics to ensure that the analysis process has both theoretical basis and empirical support [2,7].

3.1. Data resources

The data of this study comes from the posts and topic data published on the Weibo platform. Specifically, the collection time span of "yyds"-related data is from August 2021 to August 2023, and the coverage time of "lying flat"-related data is from August 2022 to August 2023. In the process of data acquisition, researchers use Weibo open API and keyword crawling tools to collect original microblogs, forward and comments containing target words, and carry out de-weighting and cleaning, and finally form a structured data set that can be used for analysis. The choice of time span is based on the active cycle of these two words on Sina Weibo to ensure that the critical stages of their life cycle are covered.

3.2. Analysis framework

The analytical framework of this study includes three main parts: trend analysis, semantic network analysis, and thematic content analysis. Each section combines quantitative and qualitative methods to ensure the comprehensiveness of the analysis results.

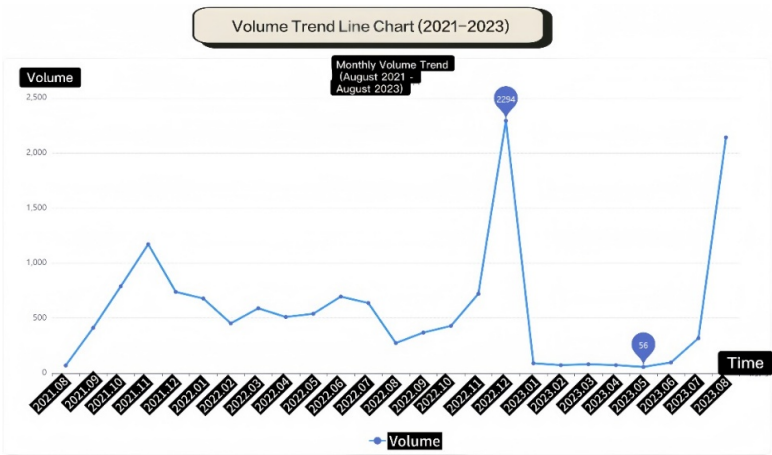


Figure 1. "YYDS" Sina Weibo platform data trend line chart

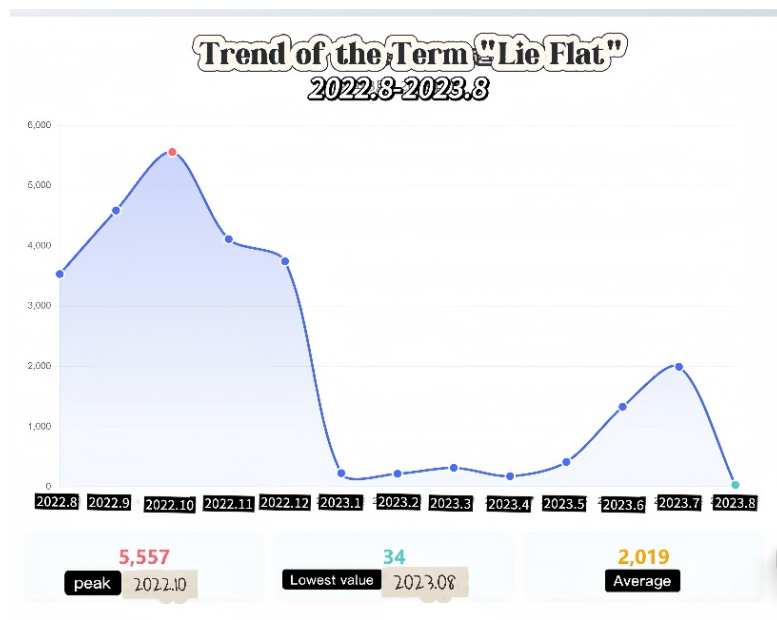


Figure 2. "Lie Flat" Sina Weibo platform data trend line chart



Figure 3. Word cloud of “YYDS”



Figure 4. Word cloud of “Lie Flat”

First of all, in the aspect of trend analysis, the researchers identify the propagation cycle, outbreak nodes and decline track of "yyds" and "lie flat" on Sina Weibo by drawing the monthly

heat line chart (Figure 1 & Figure 2). The analysis method refers to the division standard of life stage of buzzwords by Ji Naili and others, and analyzes the attribution of specific social events to reveal the driving effect of external factors on buzzwords [2].

Moreover, semantic network analysis was conducted. Based on word co-occurrence cloud maps (Figure 3 & Figure 4), high-frequency terms associated with the target buzzwords were extracted to construct a semantic association network. This approach is informed by the concept of the "semantic field" from cognitive sociolinguistics. It utilizes visualization to map discursive patterns across contexts, subsequently tracing pathways of semantic generalization or specification [7].

Finally, an analysis of thematic evolution was performed. The discourse materials summarized every month are coded and classified to identify the changes in thematic focus and context adaptability of "yyds" and "lying flat" over time. This stage adopts a combination of open coding and axial coding to ensure that the extracted theme is both rooted in the corpus and theoretically generalizable [8].

Through the above multi-dimensional analysis, this study tries to achieve a balance between data-driven and theoretical guidance in terms of methods, so as to systematically and deeply interpret the dissemination and semantic characteristics of the two hot words.

4. Research analysis and findings

Although "yyds" and "lying flat" both belong to the high-hot stalkers of the social media era, they show sharp contrast in the communication mode and semantic evolution. Based on this, the following will integrate and compare these two cases to further explore the potential reasons and theoretical significance of their similarities and differences.

4.1. The pulse-like dissemination and semantic evolution of "yyds" in the social media environment

Regarding the communication trend, "yyds" shows a typical pulsed fluctuation pattern on Sina Weibo. As shown in the line chart in Figure 1, its heat is not maintained continuously, but intermittently outbreaks with external hot events. Specifically, three significant peaks can be identified during the observation period: the first peak occurred in November 2021, which is closely related to the judgment of the e-sports anchor "Shanniruo". This incident has triggered a wide discussion on derivative topics such as "e-sports leaks", and promoted the rapid use of "yyds". Rise rapidly. The second peak occurred at the end of 2022, with a fever index of 2294. This period coincides with the peak season of entertainment consumption, including the centralized release of New Year's Eve parties and annual inventory, which provides a rich context for the use of "yyds". The third peak occurred in August 2023, once again promoted by cultural activities such as summer blockbusters and concerts. It is worth noting that between these peaks, the heat of "yyds" continues to remain at a relatively low level. This shows that its transmission depends to a large extent on the drive of external events rather than the continuous intrinsic semantic attraction. This phenomenon further confirms the view that "meme transmission depends on the host environment" in memeology, showing that the vitality of online buzzwords is closely related to the activity of its cultural context [4].

Regarding semantic networks, the evolutionary path of "yyds" shows a general trend from the jargon of a specific community to universal praise. Word cloud (Figure 3) shows that its high-frequency co-existing words such as "music" and "CP" are common words in the entertainment industry, reflecting the origin of its fan culture [9]. With the expansion of usage scenarios, the

semantic boundaries of "yyds" continue to widen. It has gradually expanded from purely entertainment-related praise to many fields such as tourist attractions (such as "Pingtan Island"), cultural products (such as "copywriting design") and even daily consumer goods (such as "sweeping robots"). This cross-field semantic migration has transformed it from an original industry-specific term to a general compliment widely used in daily communication. However, extreme semantic generalization has also led to a crisis of expression. Because it is frequently used in too diverse contexts, the originally strong connotation of "high recognition" is gradually diluted, and finally the word is downgraded to a general exclamation with weakened emotional intensity. This process reflects the "semantic bleaching" phenomenon common in rapidly spreading network languages [8], that is, a word gradually loses its original emotional power and context specificity through excessive use.

4.2. The stage-wise social trend and public narrative of "lie flat"

Compared with "yyds", the communication trend of "lying flat" on the Weibo platform shows more obvious stage characteristics, and its popularity fluctuations are closely synchronized with the development of social problems. As shown in the line chart in Figure 2, the word reached its peak in popularity in October 2022 (index value: 5557). During this period, the word quickly became the focus of public opinion when there was a fierce discussion on China's epidemic prevention and control policy, especially after the People's Daily and other official media criticized the "lying flat" mentality [10]. Subsequently, with the adjustment of the epidemic prevention and control policy in early 2023, the public's attention to this topic gradually weakened, resulting in a rapid decline in the popularity of the term on the Internet. Due to the brief return of the epidemic, there was a brief and small rebound in May 2023, and since then, its popularity has remained at a low level. This complete "appearance-outbreak-regression" life cycle clearly shows the dependence of socially derived buzzwords on the cycle of public issues. Its popularity not only depends on the communicability of the vocabulary itself, but also is deeply affected by the rhythm of the evolution of macro-social discourse [2].

Regarding its semantic network, the structure of "lying flat" shows multi-level and multi-dimensional composite characteristics. According to the word cloud (Figure 4), its semantic structure can be divided into four main levels. The first level is dominated by words such as "epidemic" and "COVID-19", reflecting the specific social background of its epidemic. The second level includes words related to social psychology, such as "inner volume", "mental internal consumption" and "workplace slave", which reveals the psychological foundation behind its popularity. The third layer involves terms in economic life, such as "A-share" and "fund", indicating that the term is embedded in the discourse system of daily economic practice. The fourth layer includes expressions with value judgment and cross-cultural comparison, such as "unwise", "lazy" and "quiet resignation", reflecting the public's differences and diversified interpretations of the attitude of "lying flat". This superposition of multiple semantic layers makes "lying flat" change from a simple behavioral descriptor to a public noun discourse that integrates social criticism, psychological state and value position [6]. Its semantic breadth even transcends national borders. Through comparison with international workplace phenomena such as "quiet resignation", it further expands the discourse space and shows the cross-cultural resonance of social mentality under the background of globalization [1]. This observation is consistent with the point pointed out by Zhang Hezhang, that is, as a tool for "emotional discourse struggle", online memas can quickly condense and express collective emotions in a specific social context [3].

5. Conclusion

This study, through a comparative analysis of the dissemination trajectories and semantic evolution of "yyds" and "lie flat" on the Weibo platform, yields the following key conclusions:

First of all, in terms of communication power, the popularity of "yyds" is mainly driven by fragmented hotspots in the fields of entertainment and consumption, presenting a typical event-driven pulse model. In contrast, the rise of "lying flat" is closely related to a single macro-social issue (such as epidemic prevention and control), and its epidemic curve is highly synchronized with the public discourse cycle. This difference in communication mechanism reflects the diversified survival strategies of online hot words under different social dynamics.

Secondly, at the level of semantic function, "yyds" is a tool for emotional reinforcement. Its main function is to create a consumption boom and promote group identity, which essentially represents an acceptance and identification of mainstream culture. "Lying flat" is a symbolic action of position declaration. Its function is to express passive resistance to structural pressure, reflecting a combination of detachment and protest mentality. This functional difference gives the two terms a completely different role in reflecting the emotions of contemporary youth.

Finally, in describing the public mentality, the widespread use of "yyds" reflects young people's pursuit of instant happiness and social identity in the context of consumerism. On the contrary, the popularity of "lying flat" deeply reveals the powerlessness and adaptive negative attitude of young people in the face of social pressure. Together, the two constitute the double-sided mirror of the emotional structure of contemporary Chinese youth, reflecting both the outward trend of their emotional expression and the introverted trend of their social participation.

This research has certain enlightening significance for future theory and practice. Theoretically, through the adoption of double-case comparison methods and the integration of multiple analysis methods, the empirical basis of the research on the life cycle of Internet buzzwords has been enriched. In practice, the research results can provide reference for social media content management, provide guidance for youth psychological guidance, and even provide reference for public policy formulation. Future research can be expanded in the following directions: first, expand the scope of comparison to cover more types of online buzzwords to test the universality of the conclusions of this study; second, conduct cross-platform comparative research (such as on WeChat and TikTok) to analyze the impact of platform characteristics on the spread of buzzwords. Through continuous in-depth research in this field, the academic community can more systematically grasp the interaction logic between online language and social mentality, thus providing further insights into the understanding of the cultural dynamics of contemporary China.

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