

ESG Communication by International Organizations: An Analysis of UNESCO's WeChat Official Account (2023–2025)

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Abstract. This study explores the relationship between the ESG concept and the United Nations system, as well as the role of international organizations, particularly the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), in the dissemination of ESG. The research aims to analyze the ESG communication characteristics and strategies of UNESCO's WeChat official account, covering 849 posts from 2023 to 2025, employing content analysis, categorizing ESG dimensions (E/S/G), conducting title word frequency analysis and descriptive statistics, and using reading volume as an indicator of communication effectiveness. The main findings reveal that the S dimension dominates, with E and G dimensions playing supporting roles, and that the topics align well with the organization's mission. There is a concentration of content in Asia, and significant differences in reading volumes are observed, with various influencing factors identified. The study concludes that UNESCO's ESG communication model features a strong social focus and offers insights for international organizations in ESG communication and digital public diplomacy.

Keywords: ESG communication, WeChat official account, International organizations, Sustainable development

1. Introduction

The ESG concept (Environment, Social, Governance) was explicitly put forward in the Who Cares Wins report released by the United Nations in 2004. The UN is the main proponent and promoter of the ESG concept. Nonfinancial disclosure of Environmental, Social, Governance (ESG) goals by global corporations is increasing at a significant rate [1]. As a specialized agency under the UN dedicated to promoting international cooperation and peace through education, science, and culture, UNESCO's core work covers areas such as world heritage protection, promoting universal education, and safeguarding cultural diversity, which aligns with the ESG philosophy and also plays a significant role in disseminating ESG. The topic selection direction of its tweets is instructive for our research on ESG. The popularization of new media, especially social media and mobile new media, has further provided conditions for the public to understand and participate in public topics. WeChat has become one of the main channels and important ways for the informatization of popular science [2]. The WeChat official account, as an important platform for UNESCO to disseminate, promote, and publicize in China, mainly releases public welfare updates and related event

invitations. The content of its posts can reflect the main dissemination ecology and strategies of this organization in China. During the three-year period from 2023 to 2025, all 849 public account posts released contained ESG-related content. However, the frequency of the three aspects mentioned in the official account posts, as well as the coverage of different continents, shows differences, and the reading volume of the responses to the posts also varies. What structural characteristics does the UNESCO ESG communication present? What differences do the various ESG dimensions show in terms of issues, regions, and communication effects? How does its communication strategy reflect the organization's positioning and global governance concepts? This article attempts to explore the ESG communication logic of international organizations by analyzing the content of UNESCO's official account posts from 2023 to 2025.

2. Methodology

This study adopts a systematic and rigorous research design to explore the content characteristics and communication effects of UNESCO's WeChat Official Account, with clear definitions of sample selection, analytical dimensions, and research methods. The research object is specifically the WeChat Official Account of UNESCO, and the time frame is set to cover all posts from 2023 to 2025 to ensure a comprehensive and longitudinal understanding of the account's content release rules and communication trends. For the analytical framework, a multi-dimensional coding system is constructed based on practical research needs and academic norms. To begin with, the ESG concept is divided into three core dimensions of Environment (E), Society (S), and Governance (G) to systematically identify and classify the sustainability-related content released by the account. Secondly, the geographical dimension classifies the content by continents and global issues to clarify the geographical focus and global layout of UNESCO's publicity through the account. Last, reading volume statistics and cross-period, cross-theme comparisons measure the effectiveness of the account's information dissemination. Corresponding to the analytical dimensions, the content analysis method is used to conduct systematic topic classification and ESG coding of all selected posts, ensuring the objectivity and systematicness of content analysis through standardized coding rules and descriptive statistics and comparative analysis, which are used to sort out, summarize and compare the coded content data and reading volume indicators, so as to reveal the distribution characteristics of the account's content in different ESG dimensions and geographical categories, as well as the differences in communication effects, laying a solid methodological foundation for the subsequent research conclusions.

3. Findings

3.1. ESG communication patterns in UNESCO

Based on the comparison and analysis of 849 tweets, the ESG communication of UNESCO shows highly stable dimension distribution characteristics. In terms of quantity structure, there are 595, 242, and 12 tweets respectively in the social (S), environmental (E), and governance (G) dimensions, with proportions of 70.08%, 28.50%, and 1.41% according to Figure 1. From a temporal perspective, the ESG communication distribution in each month also maintains similar characteristics. The social dimension maintained the highest communication frequency in all 12 months (an average of 48.3 pieces per month). This temporal distribution pattern further strengthens the conclusion of the stability of the ESG communication structure, which indicates that the ESG

communication focus of UNESCO is not randomly selected but a strategic communication pattern based on the organization's core mission.

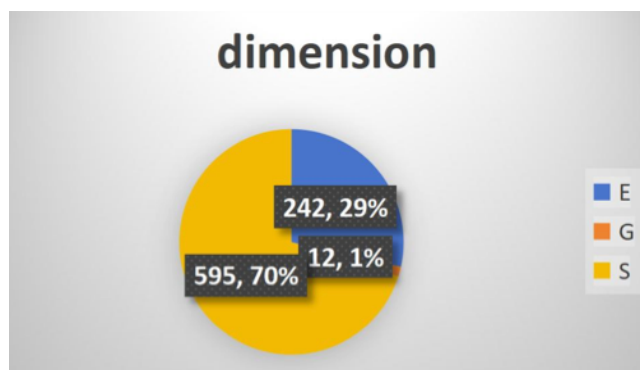


Figure 1. Proportion of dimensions mentioned

3.2. Dominance of the social dimension (S) and underlying reasons

The social dimension, with an absolute proportion of over 70%, has become the core pillar of UNESCO's ESG communication. Its dominant position is reflected in three key aspects. First of all, there is an advantage in the communication scale. The number of social dimension tweets is 2.46 times that of the environmental dimension and 49.6 times that of the governance dimension, forming an overwhelming communication scale. Another convincing aspect is the public appeal of social issues. The average reading volume of social dimension content reached 1,415.61 times, which was 28.4% and 8.9% higher than that of the environmental dimension and the governance dimension, respectively. The deep reason for the dominance of the social dimension lies in the organization's functional positioning. As a UN agency focused on education, science, and culture, UNESCO's core mission is highly consistent with the social dimension. Communication contents such as Youth Creativity and Heritage Forum directly reflect its core functions in promoting social inclusion, cultural heritage, and youth empowerment. A more universal reason existing on many occasions where the ESG concept is used as a crucial standard is the low possibility of changing for good, and the sensitivity of the topic. It is found that usually E and S dimensions are easier to carry out, whether in the publication of the article itself or the action to evolve, while governance is the most sensitive and complicated one among the three dimensions. From the perspective of international relations, global governance issues covered by the G dimension are often accompanied by divergent interests and value conflicts among different countries and blocs. Disparities in development stages, institutional models and strategic demands lead to a lack of universal consensus on global governance norms, making it hard for international organizations to formulate communication content that aligns with the expectations of all parties. It is found in ESG practices that, in certain cases, the three dimensions are deeply connected. For instance, in ecologically fragile regions, people often have a low quality of life, which leaves them lacking the awareness and capacity for environmental protection. UNESCO frequently organizes training programs in such areas, creating employment opportunities while safeguarding natural heritage.

3.3. Alignment of ESG communication with UNESCO's people-centered mission

The structure of UNESCO's ESG communication is deeply aligned with its core mission of people-centeredness. As the data shows, 70% of tweets related to the social dimension directly reflect the

organization's priority on human development, social inclusion, and cultural heritage. Through its vast network, the UN connects public organisations, businesses, and non-governmental organisations with the aim of achieving the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) identified in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development [3]. Although the three dimensions of ESG have different shares, they all revolve around the United Nations' 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The social dimension focuses on human development, the environmental dimension ensures ecological foundations, and the governance dimension provides institutional support, forming a complete sustainable development dissemination system.

4. Geographical distribution of ESG content

According to Figure 2, the geographical distribution of UNESCO's ESG communication is dominated by Asia, with the rest of the world serving as a supplement. From the available data, more than half of the tweets focused on Asia. The Asia region accounted for 96.8% (347/359) in the social (S) and environmental (E) dimensions, and 98.1% (154/157) in the governance (G) dimension. Although the sample size for the governance dimension was small (2 pieces), all of them focused on Asia, forming an absolutely dominant position. Global issues were supplemented by forms such as International Day and Global Governance, for example, the content related to UNESCO International Day covered multiple regions, but the core implementation still favored the Asia-Pacific region.

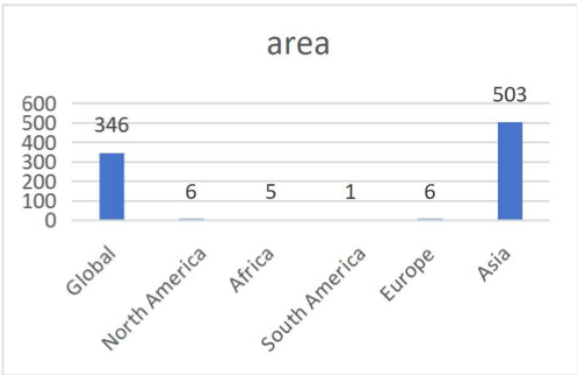


Figure 2. Geographical distribution of ESG content

The focus on the Asia-Pacific region is not only due to the precise grasp of the taste of the Chinese audience, but also takes into account multiple real factors. First of all, the region has an abundant cultural heritage, and it is necessary to strengthen protection and inheritance. Moreover, the region is home to a concentration of developing countries, and there is an urgent need for social inclusiveness and capacity building; third, the ecological vulnerability is prominent, and projects such as the East Asian Biosphere Reserve Network need to be prioritized. This geographical selection precisely aligns with the inclusive nature of ESG and the development-oriented concept, and through the allocation of preferential communication resources, it helps the Asia-Pacific region solve the problem of development imbalance, such as the Belt and Road cultural projects in the social dimension and the biosphere protection plan in the environmental dimension, which directly serve regional sustainable development. Such communication resource allocation reflects the organization's strategic logic of key breakthroughs and global collaboration: prioritizing the focus on the most urgent needs and the highest alignment with the organization's mission in the Asia-Pacific

region, while maintaining international influence through global issues, ensuring both communication effectiveness and the organization's participation as a global balancer.

5. Communication effectiveness and reading volume analysis

The reading volume performance of different ESG dimensions varies significantly. The social dimension leads with an average reading volume of 1,415.61 times, followed by the governance dimension (1,298.75 times), and the environmental dimension (1,055.59 times) is the lowest, reflecting the stratified attention of the audience to different topics. Tweets with high volume present two typical characteristics: one is major global governance events, such as UN Climate Agreement and Director-General Nomination, which drive reading volume with high attention; the other focuses on local topics, such as Yunnan Stone Forest Cultural Heritage Pilot Report and East Asia Biosphere Reserve, which gain high interaction due to their proximity to the needs of the Asia-Pacific audience. The influencing factors of the reading volume differences are clear. The consensus on ESG topics varies. The social topics such as Cultural Inheritance and Youth Empowerment have high consensus, while the governance dimension topic, Artificial Intelligence Governance, is highly specialized, and the environmental topics are relatively segmented, resulting in differences in audience coverage. The geographical relevance of the audience directly affects the communication effect, and content focused on Asia is more likely to attract the attention of the local audience. The lack of a multilingual and multi-version strategy may limit the communication radius. The current content does not clearly reflect multilingual adaptation, which, to some extent, restricts the reading volume in non-Asian regions.

6. Practical implications for ESG communication in international organizations

International organizations are a vital driving force behind the global development of ESG. Proposing and implementing initiatives, as well as formulating and promoting standards, constitute their key approaches to advancing ESG development. Over the past two decades, international organizations have gradually shifted from independently developing and launching international ESG standards, frameworks, principles and initiatives to engaging in mutual cooperation and collective action. Consequently, the coordination, compatibility and interoperability of international ESG standards, frameworks, principles and initiatives have been steadily enhanced [4]. As a core international organization focusing on education, science, and culture, UNESCO has established a complete system for ESG communication that is both mission-aligned and operationally feasible, providing a highly valuable reference model for other international organizations and relevant Chinese government departments to optimize their ESG communication strategies. From controlling the communication rhythm, transforming content narratives to expanding boundaries, UNESCO's practices are deeply rooted in its own functional positioning while precisely responding to the global sustainable development needs, demonstrating the professionalism of international organizations in ESG communication.

6.1. Agenda setting and narrative design

UNESCO's core advantage lies in precise publication time control, which relies on short-term focus on key nodes and long-term cycle planning to realize efficient communication resource allocation and effect maximization.

Take the governance (G) dimension as an example. Its communication content is highly concentrated at year-end, with 83.3% of the G-dimension communication volume occurs from October to December, a period when international organizations summarize annual work and plan for the next year, thus easily attracting audience attention to global governance issues.

In the terms of S-dimension, International Days serve as its core communication themes. Relevant content has appeared 35 times, mostly around corresponding International Days, forming a complete communication chain of pre-event warming up, on-the-day focus and post-event extension. For example, around World Heritage Day and International Youth Day, UNESCO concentrated on promoting contents like the Youth Creativity and Heritage Forum, which not only aligns with the event theme but also strengthens the core issues of the social dimension. This time-node coordination and agenda setting avoids blind and scattered communication, enabling limited resources to precisely catch the audience attention peak.

UNESCO stand out from other organizations by achieving a key transformation from abstract concept output to concrete practice narratives, which makes ESG values perceivable and participable for the audience. In the social dimension, among 595 communication contents, practical contents such as event invitations, creative forums and cultural projects account for over 60%. Instead of simple concept preaching, the tweets take specific activities as carriers, clearly informing the audience of participation channels, activity values, forum themes, agendas, registration methods and deadlines, turning concept advocacy into direct audience participation opportunities.

The environmental (E) dimension practice narrative shares the same feature. Contents like the East Asia Biosphere Reserve Network and Pilot Report on Cultural Heritage in Yunnan Stone Forest not only present project progress and results but also demonstrate specific paths for the integration of ecological protection and cultural heritage.

Overall, this narrative approach uses specific cases and data to prove ESG practice effectiveness. It not only enhances content credibility but also lowers the audience's understanding threshold, making ecological protection no longer an abstract concept but an observable and referenceable practical action plan. This concept-to-practice transformation ultimately enables UNESCO's ESG communication to establish a deep connection with the target audience.

6.2. Strategic insights for international organizations

In general, international organizations are part of the evolving, complex system of global governance. They need to navigate their tasks, mandate, members, network and themselves through this complexity [5]. UNESCO's ESG communication practice clearly shows that the ESG communication of international organizations must first balance the global perspective and regional needs to ensure that communication does not deviate from its direction and does not waste resources. From the data on geographical distribution, the proportion of Asia in the social and environmental dimensions is 96.8% and 98.1%, respectively. This choice not only aligns with UNESCO's core mission of protecting cultural diversity and promoting capacity building in developing countries, but also precisely matches the region's real problems, such as insufficient social inclusion, high pressure on ecological protection, and a shortage of youth development resources. The ESG communication of international organizations often faces the dilemma of balancing professionalism and mass appeal. If it is too professional, the audience coverage will be narrow; if it is too popular, it may lose its authority. UNESCO has effectively addressed this contradiction through a stratified communication strategy, providing an important reference for other international organizations. In terms of content stratification, it designs differentiated content for different audience groups. Legal Framework for the Impact Assessment of Cultural Heritage and

Interview with the Director-General maintain a high level of professionalism and policy depth, targeting policymakers and the academic community to meet the needs of high-end audiences. Event Invitations and Youth Forums focus more on accessibility and participation, targeting the general public and young people to lower the barriers to understanding and participation. The progress of the East Asia Biosphere Reserve Network strikes a balance between professionalism and practicality, targeting professionals and aiming to provide practical solutions for reference. This indicates that the ESG communication of international organizations does not need to cover a single type of audience comprehensively but should provide appropriate content for different groups through clear audience stratification, finding a dynamic balance between professionalism and mass appeal. The stability and adaptability of UNESCO's ESG communication provide important insights for international organizations in building a sustainable communication system. As an international organization, UNESCO's tweet structure is similar, repeatedly emphasizing important issues, and demonstrating stability. At the same time, it also maintains necessary flexibility on the basis of long-term stability. For example, it adjusts the focus of topics according to global development needs, such as incorporating new topics like digital governance and artificial intelligence into its communication scope, and optimizes regional communication strategies based on changes in regional demands to ensure that communication always aligns with the latest trends in global sustainable development. This combination of long-termism and flexible adjustments is the key to the sustainability of ESG communication in international organizations. For other international organizations, they need to establish a dynamic adjustment mechanism on the basis of adhering to their core missions, regularly optimizing the topic settings, regional priorities, and communication forms of ESG communication in accordance with global development trends, regional demand changes, and technological development trends, to build a sustainable communication system that is both stable and adaptable.

7. Conclusion

The study of 849 posts shows that UNESCO's ESG communication on its WeChat official account features a distinct social dimension dominance as the core characteristic, aligned with the organization's core mission of advancing education, science, culture and human-centered development. Another prominent trait is its Asia focus for regional relevance, a strategic choice that responds to the Asia-Pacific's urgent development needs in cultural heritage protection, social inclusion and ecological governance, and significantly boosts communication effectiveness by resonating with local audience demands. Transformation of ESG from abstract concept to practice in its communication: rather than mere conceptual advocacy, the majority of social dimension content is rooted in concrete practices such as event invitations, cultural projects and youth forums, while environmental dimension content showcases tangible project progress and results. This research bears notable theoretical and policy implications for global communication and ESG practice. Theoretically, it enriches the research framework of international communication by verifying the effectiveness of mission-driven localized content strategy in cross-border ESG dissemination, providing empirical evidence for the integration of organizational core positioning and regional communication needs in international communication theory. For digital diplomacy, UNESCO's practice constructs a replicable new media-based digital ESG diplomacy model, which demonstrates how international organizations can leverage localized social media platforms to realize targeted and efficient value dissemination, and expand the connotation and practical approaches of digital public diplomacy in the era of sustainable development. There are several promising directions for future research. First, a cross-platform comparative analysis of UNESCO's ESG communication on different social media platforms (e.g., WeChat vs Twitter vs Facebook) can be conducted to explore

the differences in content strategy, communication effect and audience response under different platform attributes and cultural contexts. Second, research on multilingual and cross-cultural ESG communication effects is needed, focusing on how language adaptation and cultural context adjustment influence the dissemination of ESG concepts in different regions and among different ethnic groups, and exploring the optimal path of cross-cultural ESG communication. Third, follow-up studies can further investigate the interactive participation degree of the audience in UNESCO's WeChat official account ESG content, including comment, share and forward behavior, and analyze the influencing factors of audience interaction to deepen the understanding of the communication depth and social influence of ESG content on localized new media platforms. Fourth, longitudinal research can be carried out to track the dynamic changes of UNESCO's ESG communication strategy and its effect over a longer time span, and explore the adaptation and adjustment of international organizations' ESG communication strategies in response to global sustainable development trend changes and regional demand evolution.

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