

How to go from popular to dissipating ?----The process and mechanism of the Chinese internet buzzword “YYDS”

Yutong Chen

School of Journalism & Communication, Anhui University, Hefei 230000, China;

Ahucyt0117@163.com

Abstract. In this era of rapid Internet development, Internet buzzwords have gradually penetrated into all aspects of people's lives. However, it is not clear how the process, mechanism, and micro-level application of Internet buzzwords work and their impact on people's language habits and thinking patterns. In order to explore the process and mechanism of the spread of Internet buzzwords, this paper selected the Chinese online buzzword "YYDS" (eternal God in English, Yong Yuan De Shen in Chinese) and examined its usage on the Weibo through content analysis. Then, the data obtained were analyzed and discussed. The results show that the application of the term in the Chinese context has a clear bias in terms of subjects, topics and emotional expressions, and its dissemination process can be divided into six stages: germination, precipitation, warm-up, explosion, stabilization and decline, while opinion leaders and mainstream media play important and different roles in its life cycle. This exploration provides scientific and practical reference materials for subsequent analysis and research on online language.

Keywords: Chinese internet buzzwords; YYDS; communication life cycle; discourse scenarios

1. Introduction

With the rapid development of the Internet in recent years, Internet language has gradually become a unique cultural landscape and an indispensable flavoring agent in people's lives (Yang, 2021). At the same time, Internet buzzwords associated with online language have also gradually attracted academic attention (Squires, 2010). In the past, Internet language was often defined as an emerging and unique hybrid linguistic variant that is neither written nor spoken (Squires, 2010). Internet buzzwords are the most active and fermentative part of this linguistic variant of the Internet.

The research object "YYDS" selected in this paper is one of the Internet buzzwords in China. "YYDS" has enjoyed high popularity in the past year and was included in the "American Slang Dictionary" in May 2021. "YYDS" is defined as the pinyin acronym for "Yong Yuan De Shen" in Chinese, which means "eternal god" in English. In Chinese culture, people have always worshipped the concept of God, so "YYDS" is often used to describe the person or thing that they love most and cannot be surpassed. Not only is the term used frequently, but it is also widespread, as people can add "YYDS" to anything they like in their daily lives. On July 24 of this year, Chinese shooter Xu Haifeng wrote "YYDS" with a brush to congratulate Yang Qian on winning her first gold medal at the Tokyo Olympics. It can be said that in China, the use of this word has reached the level of "everything can be YYDS". In addition, due to its flexible symbolic properties, "YYDS" is sometimes given other meanings in specific situations, such as "Yong Yuan Dan Shen(forever single)", " Ying Yang Da Shi(yin and yang master)", to express more diverse emotions.

In fact, most Internet buzzwords, including "YYDS," have not been widely known since their inception, and they may be only the product of cultural compartmentalization in the initial stage. Many of the Internet buzzwords that are widely spread today were initially common words in a certain circle. Still, some of them, such as "YYDS" in this study, have broken the boundaries of their original circles and entered a broader space due to their uniqueness or other coincidences, and have become truly popular with the help of meme reproduction, as well as new media and traditional mainstream media(Zhou & Wang, 2016).

Scholars have paid attention to these Internet buzzwords from different perspectives in terms of their characteristics, causes, and effects (Dong, 2021; Squires, 2010). However, as far as we can see,

most of the research on Internet buzzwords has been conducted under the perspective of linguistics, and relatively few studies have been conducted from the standpoint of communication (Squires, 2010; Dong, 2021). It is unclear what has happened to Internet language from its birth to its popularity and where it will go afterward. At the same time, most of these studies are qualitative studies at the macro level, while there are fewer studies on the transmission cycle of Internet buzzwords and the application scenarios and impacts at the micro level.

To fill the first gap, this paper first introduces the "life cycle" concept. The concept of "life cycle," which refers to the period from birth to death of an individual, is a common tool in mass communication research, but past research has mainly used it to discuss public opinion dissemination and rumor spreading (Xiao, Yang, Sang, & Liu, 2020; Liu & Liu, 2018). Based on excavating previous literature and practical investigation, this paper finds that the dissemination of network language and these phenomena studied by predecessors all belong to information diffusion in the network field, and their diffusion process is similar. Therefore, it is reasonable and innovative to explore the dissemination process of network language with the principle of "life cycle." And for the second gap, this study selects the online buzzword "YYDS", composes and summarizes its communication process from its birth to its emergence and then to its popularity, and adopts content analysis to quantify its usage on the Weibo platform, in order to better clarify the discourse scenario and influence of this online buzzword.

Weibo is the platform of choice because it is one of the most phenomenal apps in Chinese social media, with data showing that Weibo reached 523 million monthly active users and 229 million daily active users in the second quarter of 2020, with an average of more than 25 million microblog posts per day, generating about 785 microblog posts per second (Jinyun, 2020). As one of the major forces influencing the course of Chinese society in the new media era, Weibo's users cover a wide range of groups from government agencies and mainstream media to entertainment stars and ordinary people, and it penetrates people's lives in all aspects from consumption, sports, politics and entertainment. It is an important distribution center for hot social events and the culture of the rice circle, and it is also a position for the rise or spread of many Chinese Internet terms, such as "Hold Zhu" and "Gei Li". In addition, Weibo is a richer and more text-based medium than other social media in the Chinese context, such as Douyin and Kuaishou, which is more conducive to the ease and comprehensiveness of retrieval for this study.

2. Literature Review

2.1 How did netspeak go outside of the fixed circle and become popular

Before exploring this section, it is important to clarify the concepts of "go outside of the fixed circle" and "popular". A "circle" is commonly referred to as a unique pattern of social relations formed when people with similar status, circumstances or interests come together (Verbeke & Wuyts, 2007). Popularity refers to the emergence and popularity of a term over a period of time (Stevenson, 2010). If Internet language wants to transform into Internet buzzwords, it must first break through its original circle.

Based on the "binary relation theory", which states that symbols are composed of energy and reference, and the meaning of symbols is determined by the relationship between energy and reference (Saussure, 2011). some online language symbols gradually achieve a "second" interpretation of the referent in the process of dissemination, reflecting into the context of real life and thus satisfying people's needs to release the pressure of life, monitor power and express their demands (Luo & He, 2015). Moreover, language as a part of the culture cannot be transmitted without imitation and reproduction (Ermakov & Ermako, 2021; Dawkins, 1976). In the virtual field, when a word is created that resonates easily or is related to a hot event, people tend to select one of the morphemes as a "copying factor" to create a new word with the same structure and related semantics as the original word, and then generalize the structure into a specific word-making format,

eventually forming a widely spread. The structure is then generalized into a specific word formation format, resulting in a widely spread "buzzword cluster" (Castaño, 2013).

In general, the drivers of online language's rise to popularity have been discussed primarily in terms of the symbolic properties of the language itself, social psychology, and modal mechanisms (Squires, 2010; Ermakov & Ermako, 2021). However, in the Chinese context, mainstream media often also play an essential and unique role in the diffusion of online language, which is still less explored today.

2.2 The life cycle of Internet language

The concept of "life cycle" needs to be introduced to clarify these issues. "Life cycle" can be popularly understood as the whole process from the cradle to the grave. With the advancement of discipline research, this theory has gradually become a recognized tool for analyzing and evaluating more general human activities.

However, in the early days, the objects whose life cycles were considered were usually those tangible entities. In this regard, Horton (1988) argued that, information, as the movement state and mode of the internal structure and external connection of things, is also alive. With the expansion of predecessors' research horizons and the development of Internet technology, information-related phenomena, and concepts, such as information dissemination and diffusion, have gradually been included in the scope of the life cycle research. For example, Liu (2018) and others, have broadly categorized the state of public opinion surrounding public events or crisis events as incubation period, outbreak period, recession period, or hatching period. (as cited in Zhang, Wei, Boncella, & Delivery, 2020). In addition to public opinion dissemination, Xiao et al. (2020) proposed the entire model of rumor evolution based on the consideration of the rumor propagation life cycle (usually divided into the breeding period, spreading period, and extinction period).

It is worth noting that previous studies often referred to the concept of "viral transmission" when analyzing various stages of information diffusion, especially the process from incubation period to outbreak period. "Viral transmission" usually means that information, like a virus, can spread from person to person and replicate itself to achieve large-scale exponential diffusion. Welker (2002) believes that viral communication should first rely on a certain interactive technology platform. Secondly, the information itself should be relatively simple and clear and can arouse the emotional fluctuation of the receiver. These elements coincide with the communication characteristics of public opinion, rumors, and other information. Therefore, "Viral transmission theory" often plays a significant role in explaining the life cycle of the above transmission phenomena.

In general, in the Internet environment, the life cycle of information diffusion phenomena such as public opinion, rumors, and crisis dissemination is usually divided into 3-4 stages, and their life processes are often not one-way and one-time, but a periodic and cyclic movement process (Zhang, Wei, & Boncella, 2020). However, to date, few studies have used life cycle theory to examine the phenomenon of information diffusion in online language diffusion, and even if they do, they are relatively general. They do not systematically sort out the various stages in online language diffusion and the opportunities that come at each stage based on examples.

2.3 Social Media and Internet Language

The main reasons to analyze content based on network buzzwords on social media are as follows. For one thing, social media has now evolved into a mainstream communication channel in society, and it would be more representative to choose such media as a platform for examination. For another, social media provides a suitable environment for the development of online language, in which the phenomenon of the spread of online buzzwords will be relatively more typical. First of all, social media can give the public full freedom of expression (Schlagwein, Prasarnphanich, & Commerce, 2014). Secondly, the most loyal and eager social media users are teenagers (Hilte, Vandekerckhove, & Daelemans, 2019). Online language is closely related to youth subcultures, and some of it is the product of cultural distinction and the pursuit of identity by youth groups. Finally,

information communication in social networks presents many new features, such as user-created content, "point-to-point" communication mode, real-time communication, and rapid communication, which will be conducive to meme replication in network language dissemination to a certain extent (Liu & Liu, 2018). To sum up, social media is an essential node in today's network environment and a good hotbed for the breeding and disseminating network language. Choosing such media as a research platform will make the results more typical and representative.

2.4 Two-step-flow theory and Opinion Leaders

The two-step-flow theory originated from the fieldwork conducted by Lazarsfeld, Berelson, and Gaudet (1968) in the 1940 US presidential election. The theory argues that "media content generally flows from broadcast and print media to opinion leaders and from them to less active groups" (Katz & Lazarsfeld, 2017).

The proposal of the two-step-flow theory breaks the previous view of media research that "information flows directly from mass media to individuals" (Karlsen, 2015). But as its importance has been recognized, the two-step-flow theory has also been heavily criticized. Bennett and Manheim (2006) argued that the development of society and Internet technology has made social isolation between individuals more and more serious, paving the way for one-step-flow. However, in the decades since, Research on two-step flow in the context of new media and social networks has gradually weakened the academic view of "disintermediation" in the digital realm and has shown that intermediation in social media networks is still relevant (Bravo & Del Valle, 2017; Karlsen, 2015; Turcotte et al., 2015).

As for the key concept of "opinion leader" in the two-step-flow theory, it has also been gradually expanded and refined in the process of theoretical development. Lazarsfeld (1968) and others considered opinion leaders to be politically interested, knowledgeable, and trustworthy sources of information in local social networks. With the emergence of various new forms of communication, those who are active on the Internet and good at analyzing and expressing opinions have begun to be regarded as opinion leaders in the Internet field (Karlsen, 2015). The opinion leaders mentioned in this article mainly refer to those individuals or teams who are active on Weibo, a social media, with many followers and strong discourse influence.

Generally speaking, many scholars have analyzed and summarised the characteristics, transmission motives, and influence of online language at a macro level through qualitative research from a linguistic perspective, but there are fewer studies on the popular transmission mechanisms of online language from a communication perspective, and quantitative evidence around the application scenarios and influence of online buzzwords at a micro-level is still scarce. Therefore, in order to solve these problems and to guide the spread of online language, this study selects "YYDS", an online buzzword in China in recent years. Based on the grounded theory, life cycle theory, and content analysis, this study explores the context, process, and mechanism of the spread of the online buzzword "YYDS" on the Weibo platform. The following are the two main research questions to be addressed in this inquiry:

RQ1: What is the life cycle of "YYDS" and how does it spread through the different stages of the life cycle?

RQ2: According to its life cycle process, what is the context and impact of the use of "YYDS" in Weibo?

3. Methodology

Based on grounded theory, this study conducted a content analysis of posts containing "YYDS" on the Weibo platform from August 2020 to July 2021. Content analysis methods are usually divided into quantitative and qualitative content analyses. The quantitative content analysis is selected in this study.

Content analysis is a crucial research tool in journalism and communication, considered as a means to extract the desired information by systematically and objectively analyzing specific features of the material (Smith, 2000). The advantage of this method is that it is more rigorous, objective, and does not rely on subjective perception (Boettger & Palmer, 2010). In addition, the quantitative content analysis also facilitates researchers to examine scenarios that no longer exist or to access or process large and long-term data (Boettger & Palmer, 2010). After the 1940s, content analysis expanded methodologically and began to be used by academics to study various issues related to the media (Gunter, 2000; Riffe, Lacy, & Fico, 2015). In this study, content analysis allowed us to categorize and code posts containing YYDS on Weibo according to rules and to visually represent specific application scenarios of "YYDS" through data analysis. However, content analysis alone may limit us in analyzing the broader connotations reflected by the phenomenon, so this study will also draw on grounded theory to consider the meaning and impact of communication behind the appearance of communication.

3.1 Sampling

The first question in this study used all posts on Twitter containing the keyword "YYDS" as the data source, i.e., all blog posts about YYDS from November 2017 to 8 years in 2021. At the same time, the second research question adopts the method of systematic sampling. The time frame for sample collection was determined to be from August 2020 to July 2021. The reason for choosing this period is that the "YYDS" has officially become popular, and the popularity has always been maintained at a high level. Therefore, selecting this time period as the sampling range can best reflect the application situation and impact of "YYDS." Once the time frame was determined, this study took one day every other month, starting on August 31, 2020, i.e., the last day of each month was taken, for a total of 12 days. It is known that each of these 12 days shows 50 pages of microblog posts, and we fix the first two microblog posts from each page, i.e., 100 samples are taken every day in these 12 days, and a total of 1200 samples are expected in a year. In the process of sampling, if the first two microblog posts on each page are untraceable, such as "the original author has set the microblog posts to be visible for six months and cannot be viewed anymore" or "the original author's account has been cancelled", the microblog posts will be eliminated and not counted in the sample, and the sampling range will be extended to the current page. The sampling range will be extended in order. When we took the sample for the last day of February 2021, we found a large number of duplicate and untraceable samples in 50 pages, so the final valid sample for that month was only 55. Therefore, for this study, the actual sample size drawn was 1155 entries.

3.2 Coding Categories and Operationalization

3.2.1 Division of the life cycle

This paper firstly conducts a keyword search on a year-by-year basis to determine the initial year in which "YYDS" appeared on Weibo, and then narrows the time span to identify further the date and time of the first Weibo post containing "YYDS." Then, starting from the initial time, this paper combs backward in order, examines the number of relevant microblogs and the time interval between adjacent microblogs, divides the communication stages of "yyds" according to the changes of the two, and confirms the key points that promote the transformation of different stages. In general, the number of tweets is low and the intervals are longest during the budding period; the number of tweets is low and the intervals are long during the settling period; the number of tweets increases and the intervals are shortened during the warm-up period; the number of tweets is highest and the intervals are shortest during the explosion period; the number of tweets is high and the intervals are short during the stabilization period; and the number of tweets decreases and the intervals are lengthened during the decline period.

3.2.2 Categories of content analysis

In order to clarify the specific application and influence of the online buzzword "YYDS", this paper sets up the following categories for content analysis based on the knowledge of previous studies and the characteristics of the microblogging platform and "YYDS" itself.

Table 1 Construction of coding categories (Please refer to the appendix for detailed coding classification and sources)

purpose	category
Application contexts	Poster identity
	Topic type
	Media Richness
	Placement of "YYDS"
communication impact	Emotional tone
	Microblog length

4. Results

4.1 The communication life cycle of "YYDS"

The following "six-stage" model reflects the basic propagation trend and diffusion pattern of the online language "YYDS". In Figure 1, the OP line is the axis that represents the number of posts containing "YYDS" on the microblogging platform, OT is the axis that represents the time series of the spread of the term. The S-curve is the evolution of the number of uses of "YYDS", reflecting the hotness and influence of the term at a certain point in time. The S-curve is divided into six segments by the dashed line, representing the six stages of the spread of "YYDS". The five points where each dashed line intersects the S curve (i.e., points A to E) represent the key events in the spread of the term, or the moment when the old and new stages change. In this paper, the six stages of the life cycle of YYDS are defined as: the germination period, the settling period, the warm-up period, the explosion period, the stabilization period and the decline period. The following discussion will focus on these six phases and five key points.

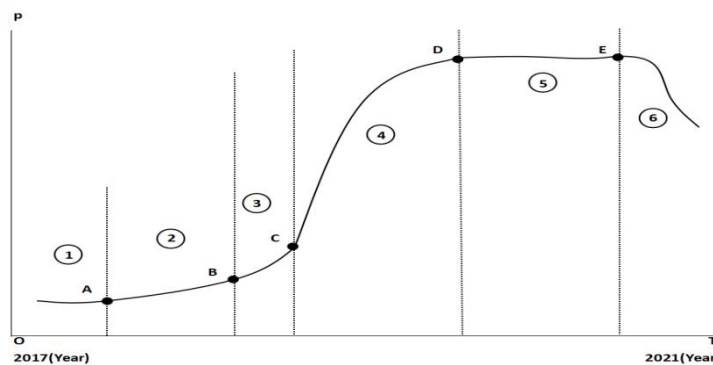


Fig.1 The communication life cycle of "YYDS"

4.1.1 ① : germination and Point A

This study found that the first post on Weibo containing the word "YYDS" appeared at 23:18 on November 12, 2017. Although there is no way to trace the origin of "YYDS" and whether it was used earlier, it is certain that the term was already known and used by some people at the latest at the aforementioned point in time. As can be seen in Figure 1, the S-curve from the beginning to point A is at the bottom of the OP axis and shows little growth. This indicates that that "YYDS" has not been noticed by influential communicators at this time, and is only used randomly and sporadically on the basis of human-to-human transmission. Therefore, Overall, the influence and proliferation of YYDS in the nascent stage are limited, with little potential for development, and it has not yet entered the realm of viral communication.

The arrival of point A has promoted the transformation of the propagation state of "YYDS" from the first stage to the second stage. Point A corresponds to November 10, 2019. On that day, during the League of Legends S9 Global Finals, an e-sports anchor, while commentating on the match between RNG and CG, praised the then RNG player Uzi as "Uzi, the eternal god", in which the words "eternal god" were gradually simplified to "YYDS" in the process of spreading. The words "Forever God" were gradually simplified to "YYDS" in the process of spreading later. The anchor was not the first to use "YYDS", but with his influence as an opinion leader, the term gained some buzz and a clearer "reference".

4.1.2 ② and ③: settling and warm-up periods

After point A, the second and third phases are entered. "YYDS" begins to become known to a small group of people concerned about the event and moves from interpersonal communication among individuals to a pattern of combined interpersonal and group communication. According to Figure 1, the number of "YYDS" usage is on the increase during this period as a whole. However, through observation, it is found that the AC segment can be divided into two stages: "settling period (AB segment)" and "warm-up period (BC segment)" according to the trend of the S curve. The existence of point B can be explained by the principle of viral transmission. After entering the second stage - the settling period - the influence of "YYDS" has begun to increase silently under the influence of individual interaction and group diffusion, but its attention is still low. At point B, the slow diffusion of the settling period reaches a critical value, and the cumulative effect of the message becomes apparent, thus entering the warm-up period (Welker, 2002). During this period, the rate of proliferation and the number of users of "YYDS" have both increased significantly, so although interpersonal and group communication is still the main focus of this period, "YYDS" has already become a possibility for mass communication.

4.1.3 Point C and ④: Explosive period

Point C represents the key event that propelled the spread of "YYDS" from the warm-up period to the explosive period. The event took place on June 3, 2020, and at 14:00 on the afternoon of that day, the person mentioned in this article when explaining point A - Uzi, then a professional League of Legends player - announced his official retirement on his Weibo account. The response to the post was huge, and a large number of fans forwarded it along with the slogan that was once used to describe him - "Uzi, YYDS" or "Uzi, the eternal god". At this time, "YYDS" not only has a high topicality, but also carries the common emotions and memories of many people.



Fig.2 Screenshot of Uzi's weibo post announcing his retirement

Translation: Hello everyone I'm uzi, and I'm sorry to tell you all that UZI has decided to retire.

Because of years of stress, obesity, irregular diet and late nights, I was found to have type 2 diabetes during my medical checkup last year...

After this, "YYDS" has broken through the original circle and entered the realm of mass communication, achieving the first "Become a Household Name", which also means that the term has ushered in the period of the explosion of the spread of the word. From Figure 1, we can see that the S curve from point C to point D has a steep upward trend and a large climb, indicating that the influence of "YYDS" has increased significantly and the speed of diffusion has accelerated during this period. Compared with the settling and warm-up periods, the number of opinion leaders involved in spreading the word during the outbreak period is much higher, as they pass the word to their first-level followers through their Weibo accounts, who in turn pass it to their fan circles and groups, and so on. This further promoted the formation of a large-scale fission-type spread and exponential growth model of "YYDS" on the Weibo platform. In addition, during this period, fragmented content about YYDS was produced, and some users began to interpret, add to, or modify YYDS from different perspectives, and the scenarios in which the term was used expanded in this process.

4.1.4 Point D and ⑤: stabilization

The D point corresponds to December 31, 2020, when all the major TV stations held their New Year's Eve parties and many celebrities were invited to attend and perform, and fans used the term "YYDS" to express their admiration and love for their idols on the microblogging platform. The use of the term reached its highest level in the previous six months or so.

In the following period, the number of "YYDS" usage occasionally fluctuates, but the overall change is not significant, in a high and stable state, this paper defines this period as a stable period in the process of "YYDS" dissemination.

4.1.5 Point E

Point E corresponds to July 23, 2021, the day the Tokyo Olympics begin, and the Chinese mainstream media "People's Daily" officially used the term "YYDS" to describe China's Olympic athletes on its official Weibo account. The microblogging received 1.55 million likes and nearly 300,000 forwards, with netizens following suit and using "YYDS" to cheer on the athletes. This phenomenon reflects the change in the acceptance of this internet buzzword by the mass media, and also marks the second "exit" of "YYDS" from the subculture into the mainstream culture.



Fig. 3 Screenshot of *People's Daily's* Weibo post

Translation: [#Chinese delegation entrance in HD is here!]Chinese red, yyds! #Chinese delegation entrance#

4.1.6 ⑥: Decline

The number of uses of YYDS did not fluctuate significantly after the entry of mainstream media, but the shift in usage scenarios was more pronounced, with the number of microblog posts containing YYDS with the theme of sports rising significantly during the Tokyo Olympics.

However, after point E, the S-curve shows a brief plateau, followed by a slow and fluctuating decline, indicating that the influence and proliferation of YYDS is waning, and that a period of decline has arrived. In fact, the mainstream media's citation of YYDS has expanded the breadth of its dissemination, but at the same time, it has transcended its specific scope and developed in the direction of "generalization" and "everydayness", in turn, its popularity has diminished or even disappeared.

4.2 Discourse scenarios for YYDS

Based on the above understanding and research design, this study conducted a multi-dimensional content analysis of the application scenarios of "YYDS" on the microblogging platform. (See Table 2 for summary statistics of data)

4.2.1 mostly focused on regular users

After analyzing the identities of the posters of the sample microblog posts, this paper found that "ordinary personal users who are not celebrities" accounted for the largest number of users, about 98%. Celebrities with more than 100,000 followers and a high authentication level were the next most popular, accounting for 1.7%, while the rest were "corporate" users. Of the 1,155 samples taken, the number of publishers identified as "mainstream media" and "government agencies" was zero. However, in the first research question, the entry of mainstream media was a crucial point in the life cycle of YYDS. This suggests that the influence of the mainstream media on the dissemination of Internet language relies primarily on their authority and discourse rather than on the piling up of the number of dispersals.

4.2.2 mostly light-hearted topics

By analyzing the category of "topic type", this paper found that these microblogs can sometimes have multiple topics at the same time. The statistics show that the largest number of microblogs have the theme type of "entertainment" (including painting, celebrity, film, music and games), accounting for about 79% of the total, while the second largest number of microblogs have the theme type of "daily life", accounting for about 15%. The next largest number of microblog posts were "sports" and "business" microblog posts, each accounting for about 5 percent and 1 percent respectively. The "politics", "economy", "science and technology" and "education" categories together accounted for about 0.9 percent of the total number of microblogs. The total percentage of "political", "economic", "scientific" and "educational" microblogs is about 0.9%. In addition, about 1% of the sample microblog posts did not belong to any of the above categories (e.g. chicken soup text, pet pictures, etc.). Thus, it can be seen that people tend to use "YYDS" to describe light-hearted and simple things, while serious and solemn topics are less frequently mentioned.

4.2.3 clear and fast delivery methods are favoured

The study found that the largest number of microblog posts containing "YYDS" were in the form of "graphics", accounting for about 57% of the total, while "text-only" and "text and video" microblog posts was about 21% and 22% respectively. In addition, about 29% of the above-mentioned microblog posts were accompanied by links. These figures show that users tend to use "YYDS" with a clear description of the target audience, and will use other forms of presentation than text. However, they also take into account the ease of use, so the number of samples that include videos is less than 1/2 of the number of "text" microblog posts, and less than 30% of the total number of microblog posts with links.

4.2.4 almost all original

A post usually contains an original part, a retweet part, and sometimes a hashtag. In the sample, 99% of "YYDS" appeared in the original part, while the remaining 1% appeared in the forward section or hashtag. This shows that the vast majority of Weibo users in the sample use "YYDS" voluntarily and actively.

4.2.5 predominantly positive and high emotional polarity

If we look at the category of "emotional tone", we can see that about 97.5% of the microblogs show positive and positive emotional tone, and among these positive emotional microblogs, the largest number of microblogs contain admiration, accounting for about 63%, followed by those containing satisfaction, accounting for about 45%. The percentage of microblog posts expressing gratitude, happiness, hope and pride was 0.5%, 1.6%, 2.6% and 3.4% in descending order. This indicates that the emotions expressed by people using "YYDS" are not only predominantly positive, but also highly polarized, and are mainly used to convey their admiration for someone or love for something, which is closely related to the positive meaning of "YYDS" itself. However, among all the samples, 6 microblog posts expressed neutral emotions and 4 microblog posts expressed negative emotions (e.g., sarcasm, flirtation, etc.). This indicates that Internet language, due to its symbolic characteristics, is flexible and versatile, leaving great room for creativity, and users give new meanings to it according to their own ideas in the process of spreading and proliferation. In addition, nearly 1.6% of microblog posts could not identify the emotional tone due to reasons such as lack of context or confusing expressions.

4.2.6 high number of short microblog posts

Based on the characteristics of the microblogging platform, this position defines microblog posts of less than 140 characters as short microblog posts and those of more than 140 characters as long microblog posts. According to the statistics, about 96% of the samples belonged to short microblog posts, while long microblog posts accounted for 4%. This phenomenon indicates that users tend to use YYDS in a more fragmented way.

Primary category	Secondary category	Cumulative number (proportion)
Poster identity	government	0/1155 (0)
	main streamer	0/1155 (0)
	celebrity	20/1155 (1.7%)
	business	4/1155 (0.03%)
	personal blogger	1131/1155 (98%)
Topic type	recreational category	908/1155 (79%)
	sports category	57/1155 (5%)
	daily life category	177/1155 (15%)
	commercial category	16/1155 (1%)
	political category	7/1155 (0.6%)
	economic category	1/1155 (0.09%)
	science and technology category	1/1155 (0.09%)
	education category	2/1155 (0.17%)
	other categories	15/1155 (1%)
Media Richness	plain text	242/1155 (21%)
	graphic	659/1155 (57%)
	text and video	252/1155 (22%)
	contain links	331/1155 (29%)
Placement of "YYDS"	in the original section	1144/1155 (99%)
	in the forwarding section	6/1155 (0.5%)
	in the label	8/1155 (0.7%)
Emotional tone	a sense of ease	0/1155 (0)
	a sense of interest	0/1155 (0)
	a sense of pride	39/1155 (3.4%)
	a sense of hope	30/1155 (2.6%)
	a sense of pleasure	18/1155 (1.6%)
	a sense of satisfaction	515/1155 (45%)
	a sense of admiration	733/1155 (63%)
	a sense of gratitude	6/1155 (0.5%)
	a negative emotion	4/1155 (0.3%)
	a neutral mood	6/1155 (0.5%)
emotionally unknown	18/1155 (1.6%)	
Microblog length	long post (140 characters or more)	1109/1155 (96%)
	short post (140 characters or less)	46/1155 (4%)

Table 2 Data summary statistics

According to the above data, this article roughly classifies the most frequent and unique "YYDS" application scenarios into the following eight types (Because "Media richness" and "Placement of "YYDS" " have little effect on the difference between scenarios, this paper does not distinguish specific situations in these two categories in the following scenarios):

Table 3 Scenario analysis

Scenario Type	explanation
Scenario 1	The number of cultural and entertainment microblogs is the highest among all samples, and most of these cultural and entertainment microblogs are posted by ordinary users, and the feelings expressed are mostly admiration and love for artists or art works, and sometimes these two feelings appear at the same time.
Scenario 2	In the short microblogs of daily life, most of them express personal blogger's satisfaction and love for a certain thing or an item in life.
Scenario 3	The Long microblogs appear relatively frequently under the topic of daily life; The emotions expressed in the long microblogs under the theme of daily life are relatively scattered, including "satisfaction," "admiration," "gratitude," and "happiness," and these kinds of emotions are sometimes combined in these long Weibo posts, with no apparent bias.
Scenario 4	Most of the sports microblogs posted by ordinary users expressed their admiration for the athletes. Because the sports microblogs in the sample were closely related to international events, these texts usually also implied the users' pride in their home countries.
Scenario 5	The commercial microblogs posted by individual bloggers usually express their expectations of obtaining a specific product.
Scenario 6	There are three microblogs related to education and technology among all the samples, which are relatively few. The emotions they express are all focused on admiration, and the posters are all ordinary bloggers.
Scenario 7	Among the 1155 samples, a total of 4 microblogs with "YYDS" expressed negative emotions, and among these four microblogs, 3 of them were about daily life. In this type of microblog, the posters used "YYDS," which is supposed to be positive, to ironize and flirt with life's unsatisfactory events. Although the frequency of these microblogs is low, they are unique.
Scenario 8	Among all the samples, a total of 20 microblogs were posted by influential opinion leaders. The majority of these 20 microblogs were in the entertainment category, and "admiration" and "satisfaction" were often interspersed or appeared simultaneously.

5. Discussion

5.1 Theoretical findings

This paper eventually draws the following conclusions through experiments and analysis:

"The life cycle of YYDS can be divided into six phases, namely: the germination phase, the settling phase, the warm-up phase, the explosion phase, the stabilization phase and the decline phase, depending on the number of users and the speed of diffusion. The first stage is mainly interpersonal, the second to third stage is a mixture of interpersonal and group communication, and in the third stage, the spread of YYDS officially enters the realm of mass communication. This paper introduces the life cycle theory, which is often used to study rumors and public opinion dissemination, into the category of online language, and not only captures some commonalities of information diffusion in the online field, that is, roughly the process from latent to eruption to dissipation or incubation (as cited in Zhang, Wei, & Boncella, 2020; Xiao, 2020), and also discovered the characteristics of the online language propagation process, which provides a new communication perspective for distinguishing and discriminating online languages. In the past, scholars have previously used the term "an emerging and distinctive hybrid linguistic variant that is

neither written nor spoken" to describe online language. This paper takes this linguistic perspective further in defining online language (Squires, 2010).

Also, for the second research question, this paper finds that, the vast majority of its users are ordinary netizens, and celebrities, enterprises, especially mainstream media and government agencies, are always cautious in their acceptance. Moreover, both ordinary netizens and opinion leaders who have embraced the term tend to use "YYDS" to talk about lighter topics, such as entertainment events and daily life, and less about serious and profound issues such as politics and economics. At the same time, when people use "YYDS" on social media, they tend to post in a clear, concise, and fragmented manner. At the same time, "YYDS" is mainly used to express positive emotions with high polarities, such as admiration and satisfaction. Still, in the dissemination process, it has also been given a playful and ridiculed meaning by a small number of people due to its flexible symbolic characteristics. When people use it, there are also problems of lack of rationality and careful thinking, such as "unclear meaning," "illogical," etc. Dong (2021) and others once believed that negative buzzwords might destroy the thinking of young people and seriously affect their life, work, and study. However, this study found that even positive Internet language, long-term use will have a certain degree of impact on people's thinking and language habits, which will be discussed in the practical significance section.

In addition, this paper also produces some unique insights into opinion leaders in two-step-flow. According to the literature review, the two-step-flow theory was initially mainly applied to political communication. Today, however, the seminal role of the two-step-flow theory in communication studies and its networking and contextual characteristics has drawn scholars' attention to the relevance of the theory in new media environments (Soffer, 2019). Turcotte (2015) and others examine the impact that opinion leaders on social media have on how people receive news, while Soffer (2019) compares contemporary personalized recommendations to opinion leaders to explore the next two levels of communication in the age of algorithms. These studies show that the one-step-flow theory of Bennett et al. (2006) is not yet fully established and re-evaluate the two-step-flow model in the new environment. Opinion leaders in the Internet age are no longer simply the audience of mass media but can spontaneously convey some information or ideas. According to traditional influence assumptions, today's opinion leaders are still often regarded as a critical factor in bridging the gap between mass communication and interpersonal communication, thereby increasing audience interest and promoting the transfer of media information to large-scale dissemination. However, the experiment revealed an interesting phenomenon: the emergence of opinion leaders (e-sports anchors) at point A did not cause the spread of "YYDS" to explode, but rather the term was just "settling and warming up" in the circle. What really made YYDS out of the circle for the first time was the concentrated and large-scale "screening" of netizens when the e-sports player UZI retired at point C. Because "YYDS" was used to describe the retired player at point A, its explosive use at point C may be related to the group memory and emotion it evokes, while this explosive use is the spontaneous behavior of ordinary netizens. Although the paper also notes that some celebrities (such as actor Zhang Binbin) were involved in the outbreak, their role was not decisive. In general, looking at the dissemination of "YYDS" from point A to point D, although opinion leaders played a small-scale "warm-up" role at the earliest stage, the explosive growth of "YYDS" on social platforms dissemination and large-scale coverage mainly depends on the spontaneous and active use of ordinary users. This finding seems to be similar to the research conclusion of scholars such as Zhang (2016), that "opinion leaders can start to spread locally, but only with the participation of ordinary users can they form a broad coverage and eventually form a trend."

When "YYDS" became explosive, it was inevitable that people from outside the community would join in. This article argues that this "influx" seems to provide some insight into the underlying social psychology. On the one hand, the microblogging platform is flexibly controlled by capital and the state, and most of the users on it are mostly "negative audiences," so their use of "YYDS" may be a reflection of the "spiral of silence" to some extent (Repnikova & Fang, 2018).

The spiral of silence was proposed by Elisabeth (1974), which was initially used in the political field, and then gradually emerged in Internet research (Hou, Chen, & Sim, 2022). In the microblogging platform, when the "negative audience" sees that most people are using "YYDS", they may participate unconsciously and uncritically for fear of isolation. On the other hand, experiments point out that language represents a shared identity, and its role as a powerful social medium initiates sustains relationships and builds a sense of belonging in people's minds (Susan, 2017). Thus, it seems that the use of "YYDS" by netizens can also be regarded as a kind of behavioral expression of seeking a sense of belonging and identity.

Finally, this paper finds that although the mainstream media has a cautious attitude towards online language, it also accepts it to a certain extent. And this acceptance has not only expanded the breadth and depth of communication of the term, prompting its application to more mainstream scenarios but has also brought the mainstream media closer to its audience, helping it to better convey ideas and guide public opinion. However, when "YYDS" entered a wider field with the help of mainstream media, it gradually lost its popularity because it became more and more common.

In all, although this paper has to a certain extent, filled the gap in previous research on Internet language, the representativeness of this study is still insufficient because of the special meaning of the term "YYDS" and its prominent emotional characteristics. In addition, due to the time limitation, the dissemination cycle of "YYDS" has not been fully presented, and the influence of mainstream media on Internet language over a long period has not been thoroughly studied. Therefore, scholars need to conduct a more detailed and in-depth exploration of Internet language's transmission process and mechanism in future studies.

5.2 Practical implications

This study found that people often use "YYDS" when expressing solid and positive feelings such as admiration and affection. The emergence of this convergence behavior can be seen as a result of the popularity of the term after it has gone through various stages of dissemination, and, as mentioned above, its proliferation on the microblogging platform also reflects some latent social psychological factors. Akpınar (2015) and others argue that language is the basis of culture and that words metaphorically associated with the senses are more likely to be culturally successful. In other words, why "YYSD" is remembered and popular may also be related to the sensory metaphors it generates. "YYDS" is an abbreviation of "Yong Yuan De Shen," which has been the object of worship for most people in Chinese culture. Therefore, the word has more sensory associations with Chinese people than other words and thus has a broader cultural and psychological base. However, the large-scale and prolonged penetration of such language in people's lives also has adverse effects. First of all, the study shows that language is the carrier of thinking, a tool and way for people to think about the world. The singleness and degradation of language will eventually turn into a lack and simplification of thinking and expression ability. Content and cross-tabulation analyses show that satisfaction and admiration are the most frequent expressions of "YYDS" in the context of daily life and recreation, respectively. This reflects, to a certain extent, that some people nowadays often fail to get to the point when describing the beauty of something or the incredible performance of a person. They only shout "YYDS!" when they get excited. Secondly, when analyzing the "topics" category of the sample microblogs, this study found that the majority of discussions on YYDS are about lighter topics. And events related to the state and society although less but also mentioned. On the one hand, this phenomenon reflects that netizens nowadays prefer shallow and lacking in-depth topics when they engage in linguistic revelry. On the other hand, it also reflects the tendency of pan-entertainment in which all public discourse can appear entertainingly. If this phenomenon continues, it may weaken the audience's ability to make active choices. Even if they see meaningful information, they can only discover the entertainment factor in it but cannot perceive the profound meaning behind the information.

Also, in terms of the cultural significance of this study, the entrance of the Chinese mainstream media account "People's Daily" during the dissemination of "YYDS" provides some insights into

the relationship between subculture and mainstream culture in the present. In order to avoid confusion, the following discussion will be based on the relevant views of the Birmingham School. Subculture is mainly concerned with the agency and behavior of a social subset that is different from the mainstream culture but related to it. The resistance color in its connotation has been emphasized by predecessors (Blackman, 2005). According to CCCS theory, such a resistance mainly stems from the contradictions in the social class and the youth group's search for identity and is primarily manifested at the level of style, that is, the symbol (Cohen, 2003; Hall & Whannel, 2018; Hebdige, 2012). However, the Birmingham School's over-focus on subcultural resistance can sometimes make people overlook its compromised side. For now, in the Chinese context, even if subcultures, as potential opponents, have brought some challenges to the mainstream culture, they are usually unavoidable to be assimilated. In this study, the mainstream culture's assimilation of "YYDS" is mainly reflected at the ideological level. According to the content analysis, the early application context of "YYDS" primarily focused on the theme of relaxation and pan-entertainment. However, during the Tokyo Olympics, the People's Daily's Weibo account introduced this online term to issues related to social and public events, which led to large-scale imitation. This quiet substitution distinguishes "YYDS" from its suitable historical context, reduces its subcultural characteristics to a certain extent, and promotes its popularization. Such a situation is not an isolated case, and it would be slightly biased to interpret this phenomenon as the demise of subcultures. As mentioned above, the subculture phenomenon is a manifestation of social and class contradictions, and its resistance will not stop (Cohen, 2003). For example, the popularity of "YYDS" has decreased after becoming popular, and new buzzwords may already be "ready to go." . This assimilation establishes the ambiguous and complex relationship between the current subculture and the mainstream culture. Also, it reflects the vitality and inclusiveness of the mainstream culture, allowing people to see the possibility of mutual conversion between different types of cultures.

At the end of the article, this paper will also follow the way of thinking from general to unique to general, look at other information diffusion phenomena in the network field from the dissemination cycle and mechanism of the network language "YYDS," and manage such phenomena as rumors and public opinion. Make a few suggestions with the guide. First, we should grasp the budding period and the precipitation period of information diffusion. These two stages spread slowly and last for a long time, conducive to timely correction of inappropriate information or remarks. Second, to prevent opinion leaders from becoming the critical points in the social discourse space to transmit wrong information and incite negative emotions, society should strengthen the purification of the network environment and call on these new gatekeepers to continuously improve their media literacy. Third, whether it is rumors, public opinion, or online language, it is necessary to guard against irrational spread caused by group pressure.

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