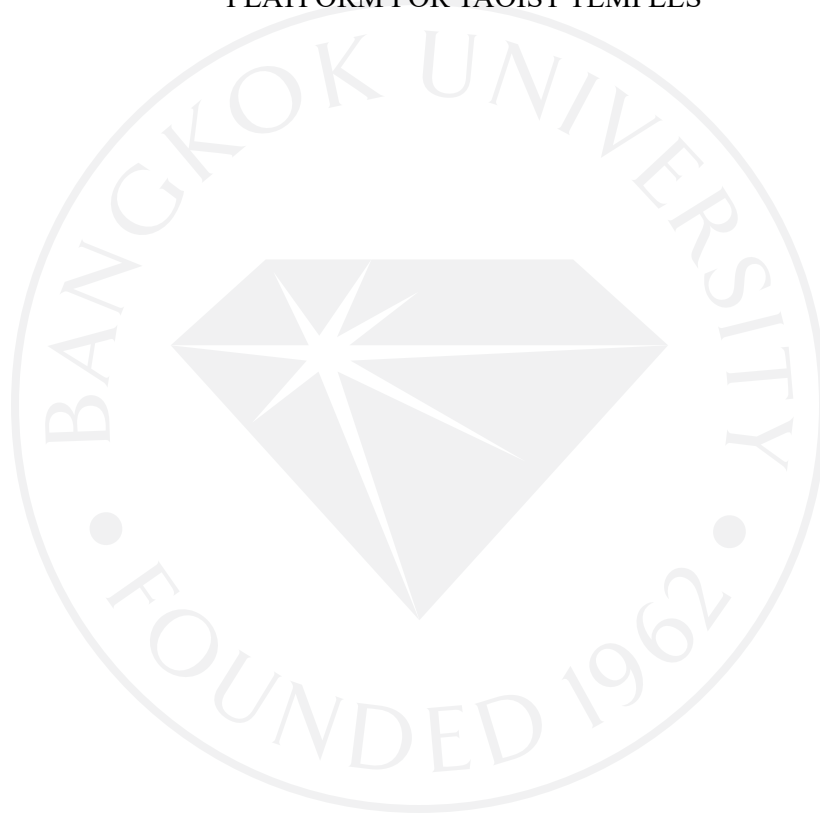
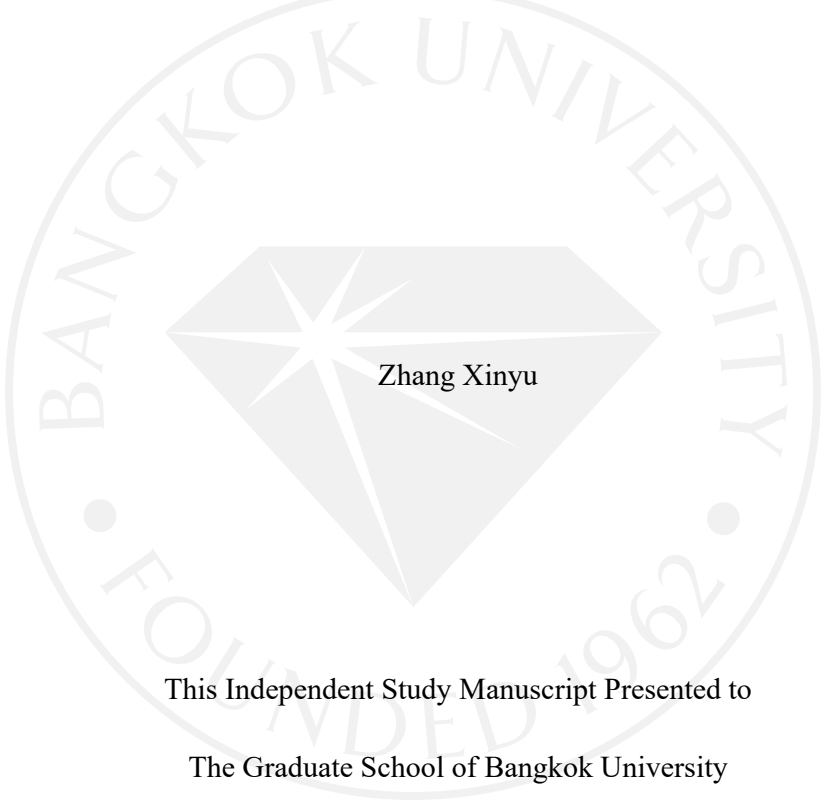


SOCIAL MEDIA COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGIES AMONG TAOIST
ORGANIZATIONS IN CHINA: THE ROLE OF WEIBO AS A COMMUNICATION
PLATFORM FOR TAOIST TEMPLES



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Zhang Xinyu

This Independent Study Manuscript Presented to
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of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts in Communication Arts

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the Graduate School
Bangkok University**

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ORGANIZATIONS IN CHINA: THE ROLE OF WEIBO AS A COMMUNICATION
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Author: Mr. Zhang Xinyu

Independent Study Committee:

Advisor



(Dr. Pablo Henri Ramirez)

Field Specialist



(Assoc. Prof. Dr. Boonlert Supadhiloke)



(Dr. Sansanee Thebpanya)

Dean of the Graduate School

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Social Media Communications Strategies among Taoist Organizations in China: The
Role of Weibo as a Communication Platform for Taoist Temples (93 pp.)

Advisor: Pablo Henri Ramirez, Ph.D.

ABSTRACT

Based on the concepts of ‘online religion’ and ‘religion online’ developed by Helland (2000), this study focuses on how three Taoist temples use the Chinese social media Weibo to both transmit information and interact with their religious followers. By analyzing the content of the articles posted on their Weibo channel during the month celebrating the 2016 Chinese New Year, the study will try to determine two things: Firstly, what kind of information each temple shares with its audience. Secondly, how do Taoist organizations perceive social media as a communication tool? According to this study, there are 20 functions of Weibo for temples to use and those serve ‘religion online’ purpose are utilized more by recruited temples than those for ‘online religion’ purpose.

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

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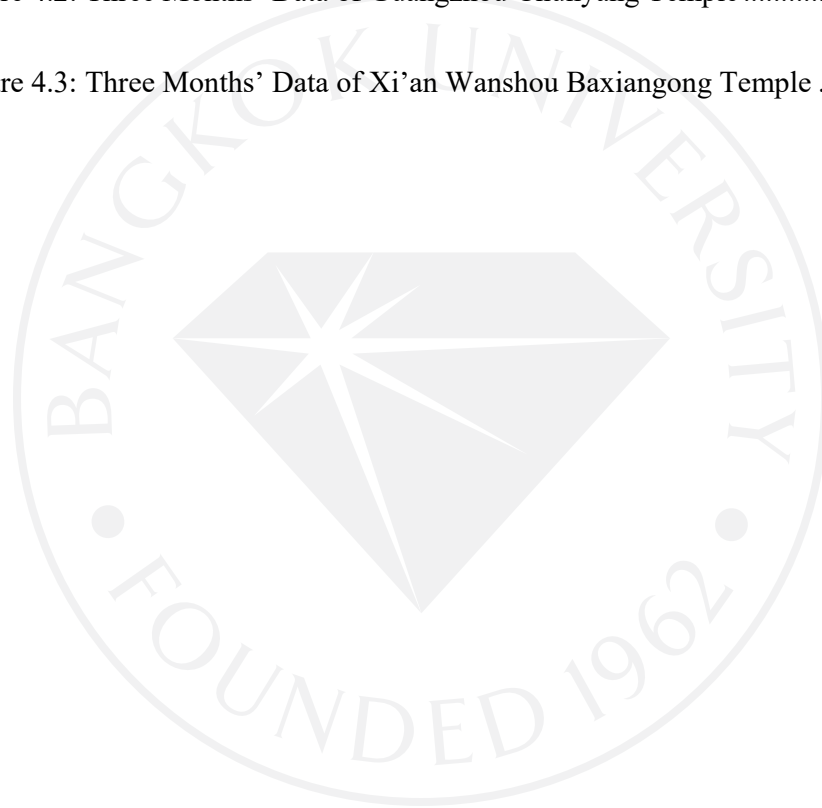
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Rationale and Problem Statement

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

Since the early 1980s, research questions have been focusing on several angles regarding the relationship between religion and the global digital networks. These studies go from enthusiastic speculation to objective study of real online practice and then more interpretive approach about practices like online-offline interactions (Campbell, 2006, as cited in Kyong, 2011). However, research on religion and digital media platforms has mostly focused on Christianity and Islam (Frost &

Youngblood, 2014). Even the attitudes toward new media and religion are especially framed in a Christian perspective (Kyong, 2011). While various religions are planted in diverse cultures and inherited by different people, as Kyong (2011) argued in his study about the waves of research on religion and the Internet, when it comes to usage of the Internet, different religions use Internet in different ways. This study will attempt to answer this question focusing on Taoism in China.

Studies have been focusing on how new media play its role in modern communication situations. Most of the organizational-level research about media usage are about websites and point out that the functions of websites are mainly information and dialogue. At the same time, precursor studies on social media have primarily focused on interpersonal communication (Lovejoy & Saxton, 2012). An important part of the studies researching the relationship between religion and new media evolve around web-based communication between religious organizations and their audience (Asamoah-Gyadu, 2007; Frost & Youngblood, 2014). Research focusing on the use of social media by religious organizations is sparser. Most of the time, social media and websites are always lumped together as components of ‘cyber communication’ or ‘digital culture’ to investigate how religion interacts with today’s society (Cloete, 2015). Considering that, this research will be based on the concepts of ‘religion online’ and ‘online religion’ developed by Helland.

Helland’s (2000) research came up with the concepts of ‘religion online’ and ‘online religion’ in order to describe the situations when a religious organization takes advantage of the Internet (as cited in Kyong, 2011).

1.2 Objectives of Study

As the basic concern of this research is how other religions besides the dominant worldwide religions like Christianity and Islam use the Internet, the objectives of this study are:

1.2.1 To explore the role social media is playing in religious communication within religious background other than dominant worldwide religions.

1.2.2 To investigate usage patterns of organizations on social media with religious background other than dominant worldwide religions.

1.3 Scope of Study

In this research, Taoist organizations are chosen as the religious organization to be studied.

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

1.4 Research Questions

Based on all the concerns above, the research questions for this research are:

Research Question #1: How are Taoist organizations using Weibo for 'religion online' purpose? More specifically, what kind of information do Taoist organizations broadcast on Weibo?

Research Question #2: How are Taoist organizations using Weibo for ‘online religion’ purpose?

Research Question #3: what is the preference of Taoist organizations to adopt functions of Weibo? That is are they using Weibo for religion online purpose more than for online religion purpose or not?

1.5 Significance of the Study

Given that researches on native religions and social media are both largely lack of attention within communication field, this research seeks to help to correct this imbalance.

Otherwise, the usage patterns discovered in this paper could be offered as reference to religious organizations or individuals for their making communication strategy on social media especially on content operation. The findings and data of this paper could also help offering fundamental academic materials for further study in fields like religion and media, media study, and religion study.

1.6 Definition of Terms

Definitions of terms used in this study are as follow.

1.6.1 *Taoism* is a native religion in China. It originated in the 2nd century AD and take ‘Tao The Ching’ as primary scripture; there are nearly 9,000 Taoist temples, 5 Taoist schools and about 48,000 Taoist priests in China, however there is no information regarding the number of believers following Taoism (State Administration for Religious Affairs of People’s Republic of China, 2014).

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

1.6.3 *Religion online* is used to describe the situation when a religious organization uses the Internet as a ‘one-to-many’ channel simply for information transmission as traditional medium (Helland, 2000, as cited in Kyong, 2011).

1.6.4 *Online religion* is used to describe the situation when the religious organization makes more use of the Internet to involve Internet users into more interactive communication process which probably influence users’ belief to a larger extent (Helland, 2000, as cited in Kyong, 2011).

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

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

2.1 Functions of Social Media

According to Campbell (2005a: pp. 14-20), the narratives of the Internet functions in religious perception should be a 'spiritual network', a 'worship space', a 'missionary tool', and a technology that can affirm 'religious identity'. As a spiritual network, the Internet can be perceived as designed by God to share spiritual experiences and to facilitate spiritual encounters with God, the divine or other spiritual seekers; The concept of 'worship place' understands the Internet as a space for implementing religious practices such as worshipping or online prayer meeting; The Internet can also be used as a tool to promote religion, this narrative is seen as 'missionary tool'; As connecting people who are with the same religious orientation is a common motivation for religious internet usage, another important function of the Internet is stressed that the Internet can be used to affirm users' 'religious identity' (Campbell, 2005).

In terms of social relationship marketing, the functions of social media could be grouped into four levels which are 'information provision', 'customer intelligence',

‘personalization’, and ‘community and relationship development’(Guo, 2014: pp.11-12).

On the ‘information provision’ level, organizations use social media only for sending information to audiences; on the ‘customer intelligence’ level, organizations start to pay attention to audiences’ information, by collecting and analyzing information such as audiences’ comments or other forms of feedback. Organizations can then identify their audiences’ preferences and adjust their own communication behaviors. The ‘personalization’ function encourages organizations to offer any customized element of social media to audiences to co-create a more interactive communication; while the ‘community and relationship development’ level is seen as the highest level of social relationship marketing, on this level, organizations use social media to build online community by which they could maintain long-term relationship with their audiences (Guo, 2014).

Kietzmann, Hermkens, McCarthy and Silvestre (2011) cataloged functions of social media into seven functional blocks as ‘identity’, ‘conversations’, ‘sharing’, ‘presence’, ‘relationships’, ‘reputation’, and ‘groups’, that meant social media users including organizations use social media to reveal their identities, communicate with each other, exchange content, assess other users’ accessibility, confirm relationships with others, realize reputation about others as well as themselves, and form communities.

2.2 Functions Adopted by Religious Organizations: Religion Online and Online Religion

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

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

Even though many religious organizations treated the Internet as a space to release 'virtual brochures', researchers proposed that building interactive communication then cultivating relationships with stakeholders should be another primary function that nonprofit organizations including religious organizations should effectively and cost-efficiently use just as what profit organizations should do (Waters, Friedman, Mills & Zeng, 2011; Brasher, 2001; Bailey & Storch, 2007; Stephenson, 2010; Esrock, & Leichty, 2000; Park, & Reber, 2008; Taylor, Kent, & White, 2001; and Kaplan, & Haenlein, 2010). Communicating with other users on social media could

help to spread a religious group's beliefs (Brasher, 2001). Religious organizations could also expand their influence as much as possible as long as they manage to communicate online with stakeholders in appropriate manners (Stephenson, 2010).

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

Lovejoy and Saxton (2012) categorized non-profit organizations' tweets by three functional concepts which are 'information', 'community', and 'action'. 'Information' refers to the posts that used to exchange information with followers through one way interaction; 'community' refers to posts that used to interact with public, build relationship with followers, and form a sense of community, while 'action' refers to posts with purpose to advocate actions from message receivers (Lovejoy & Saxton, 2012). Since the 'information' is in consonance with 'religion online' concept given above while the 'community' and 'action' could explain 'online religion' further, the conceptual framework is constructed as shown in Figure 2.1.

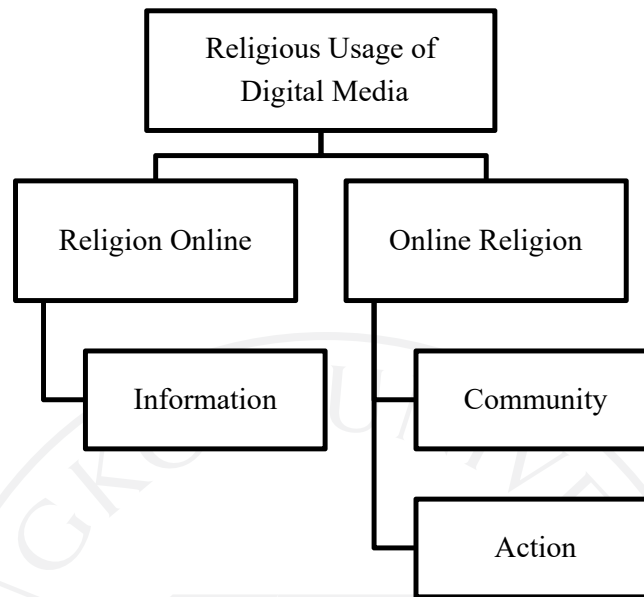


Figure 2.1: Conceptual Framework

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

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design and Sample

Qualitative approach was used in this research while simple quantitative data statistic was also involved. Some Taoist temples' official Weibo accounts were collected and studied. Considering the representativeness of this study, the influence of the temples in the Taoist religious arena was taken as main standard in deciding the participant. The chosen temples should be famous in Chinese society, authoritative among believers and Chinese Taoist temples, and own an important number of followers on Weibo.

The three temples were finally chosen: the Beijing Baiyun Temple in Beijing, the Guangzhou Chunyang Temple in Guangzhou, and the Xi'an Wanshou Baxiangong Temple in Xi'an. The three temples are considered as historic temples and typical in different regions of China, as Beijing Baiyun Temple in northern China, Guangzhou Chunyang Temple in southern China, and Xi'an Wanshou Baxiangong Temple in the middle, while they also own nationwide reputation. They own bigger amount of followers on Weibo comparing with other temples. Until September 21, 2016, the number of Beijing Baiyun Temple followers had reached 58,239, while the Guangzhou Chunyang Temple' followers' number was 10,837 and the Xi'an Wanshou Baxiangong Temple had 10,122 for the same period of time.

Subsequently, the Weibo utilization data of these temples' accounts during three months was gathered and its contents were analyzed. The three temples' posts

on February 2016 were collected at first. The traditional Chinese New Year which is also called Spring Festival takes place in that month. The fifteen days long festival is considered as the most important festival for current Chinese community as well as for Taoist organizations. Ceremonies, temple fairs, and many other types of activities are held during those days by temples for both the festival and religious holy days taking place along it. The boom of activities caused by both secular and religious culture generates the motivation to communicate with the public. Assuming that with the motivation temples may adopt a more comprehensive strategy to communicate with followers on Weibo which may cover more functions of the channel, posts on February 2016 were also used as primary samples for coding and building up the general category of functions that temples utilized. The number of posts on February 2016 was 476, and 2 of them have been deleted by original senders and no analyzable content left which made them unable to interpret. Based on that, the 2 posts were excluded from database; therefore 474 valid samples were used from February 2016.

In order to be able to assess the impact of the Chinese New Year Festival on the activity of the temples online, this study decided to include the posts on January and March 2016 to have a more comprehensive examination of how Taoist organization use Weibo to communicate before, during and after important religious celebrations. Data of those two month were analyzed in the same way as of February to build a more reliable and general mode of the temples' adoption of the channel. The number of valid samples on January was 476 with 4 invalid posts deducted from 480 posts, and the number of valid samples on March was 415 with 2 invalid posts deducted from 417 posts.

In total, the database of this paper contained the 1365 posts sent between January 1 and March 31, 2016 by official Weibo accounts of Beijing Baiyun Temple, Guangzhou Chunyang Temple and Xi'an Wanshou Baxiangong Temple.

3.2 Measurement and Procedure

The main task of the content analysis is to investigate various information Taoist organizations communicated with audiences under the religion online and online religion purposes. Based on prior research, the contents collected as data were also categorized into 'information' group as religion-online-orientated information, 'community' and 'action' group as online-religion-orientated information. Under these umbrellas, the contents were further categorized into smaller groups to get a more detailed picture of Taoist organizations' utilization of Weibo. For example, subcategories under 'information' function could further explain what kinds of information exactly did participants share with audiences. At the same time, quantitative statistic was used to count proportions of each collection to identify preference of those Taoist organizations on using the media. The categorizing was mainly based on February's data, and the mode built on the categorizing was also used to analysis other two month's data meanwhile the samples was also be rechecked whether more categories could be added to the existing mode or not.

Each post was assigned a single code. In cases where a post appeared to serve dual purposes, codes were assigned according to what was considered the post's primary purpose.

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



CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

4.1 Mode Based on Initial Data

20 types of posts emerge from the procedure. They are shown in Table 4.1 below and would be discussed in detail.

Table 4.1: Posts' Function (Based on Data from February, 2016)

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

(Continued)

Table 4.1 (Continued): Posts' Function (based on data from February 2016)

Category		Baiyun	Chunyang	Baxiangong	Total	Percent
Information	Introduce religious arts	16	0	2	18	3.8
	Share knowledge of religious medicine	2	24	0	26	5.5
	Report an event	60	11	15	86	18.1
Community					114	24.1
	Ask for opinions	1	0	0	1	0.2
	Celebrate a holy day	8	3	2	13	2.7
	Give recognition	10	3	0	13	2.7
	Greet followers	12	1	0	13	2.7
	Guide visiting	14	3	2	19	4
	Help practicing	10	7	0	17	3.6
	Interact with individual	21	10	3	34	7.2
	Response to consultation and challenge	2	2	0	4	0.8

(Continued)

Table 4.1 (Continued): Posts' Function (based on data from February 2016)

Category		Baiyun	Chunyang	Baxiangong	Total	Percent
Action					43	9.1
	Offer advice	3	4	0	7	1.5
	Promote an event	11	13	3	27	5.7
	Ask for transmitting message	5	0	0	5	1.1
	Recruit stakeholder	0	2	2	4	0.8
	Total	282	138	54	474	100

4.1.1 Religion Online

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

Introduce Taoist Priest

The Taoist priests introduced in this kind of post are not those famous priests in ancient history but priests alive in modern times that are able to represent the clergy nowadays. The posts contain pictures, videos, or links to share the priests' figure or story with the public. Beijing Baiyun Temple and Guangzhou Chunyang Temple posted 3 posts in total of this function, while 2 posts sent by Beijing Baiyun Temple

were forwarded to share pictures of current priest and Guangzhou Chunyang Temple sent 1 documentary article. Xi'an Wanshou Baxiangong Temple sent no post of this function in February. This function is not emphasized.

Example from Beijing Baiyun Temple:



Sender: Beijing Baiyun Temple

Content Source: Forwarded

Content: Not Available

Secondary Original Sender: Daomen.org

Secondary Original Content: He's Li Guangfu the president of Chinese Taoist Association.

Original Sender: Chongyu Taoist (volunteer editor of the temple)

Original Content: Candid photos of our presidents <image> Follow with Picture.

Example from Guangzhou Chunyang Temple:



Sender: Guangzhou Chunyang Temple

Content Source: Original

Content: #Zhaodou Arena# [Descendant of Tai Ji, Hero from Wu Dang] He went to Wu Dang Mountain to learn Kong Fu when he was young. He fell in love with Tai Ji Kong Fu

that time and became a descendant. Then he left the mountain and became a master promoting Tai Ji Kong Fu of Wu Dang both domestically and overseas. He is Master Bai Lichao, the 15th descendant of Wu Dang San Feng Tai Ji Martial, and current head coach of Martial club of Guangzhou Taoist association in Chunyang Temple.

Follow with Link and Picture.

Example from Xi'an Wanshou Baxiangong Temple: Not Available

Introduce the Temple

In this type of posts, temples share pictures of their view, introductory texts and any story or artistic work related to themselves. The information could help receivers building comprehensive image of the temple more than the religion. In February, 8 posts were sent. Beijing Baiyun Temple sent 7 posts to introduce itself as an attraction with good landscape and culture, While Guangzhou Chunyang Temple sent 1 post and the post is multifunction to share its culture with followers. Xi'an Wanshou Baxiangong Temple did not sent posts with this function.

Example from Beijing Baiyun Temple:



Sender: Beijing Baiyun Temple

Content Source: Forwarded

Content: Not Available

Original Sender: Yu Qizi

Original Content: #Visit Chinese Beautiful Taoist Temples# Beijing Baiyun Temple, located outside of Xipian Gate Xicheng District in Beijing, was founded during Tang Dynasty and used by emperor Tangxuanzong to enshrine LaoTzu. It was also called Tianchang Temple. Plenty of cultural relics are kept in this temple, and three of which are the most famous: 'Dao Zang' of Ming Dynasty version, sitting statue of Lao Tzu of Tang Dynasty, and stone carvings of Zhao Mengfu who is a great calligrapher lives in Yuan Dynasty. **Follow with Picture.**

Example from Guangzhou Chunyang Temple:



Sender: Guangzhou Chunyang Temple

Content Source: Original

Content: #Zhaodou Arena# [Taoist Kong fu Mix Taoist Music] We highly recommend this

MV to you tonight. It's about daily practice of the head coach of our Tai JiQuan club. And the background music named 'worship Tao and value virtues' is performed by young singer Chen Liangjun. The lyric of the song is written by Chief Priest of our temple Master Pan Chongxian and Mr.Fu Bang from Taoist Music Club. Click here and watch it! **Follow with Video and Picture.**

Example from Xi'an Wanshou Baxiangong Temple: Not Available

Share Knowledge of Religion

This kind of post takes the majority of all the samples (139 posts out of 474 posts in total) and they also composed the biggest part of each temple's content (85

posts out of 282 posts for Beijing Baiyun Temple, 36 posts out of 138 posts for Guangzhou Chunyang Temple and 18 posts out of 54 posts for Xi'an Wanshou Baxiangong Temple). The temples expose texts, pictures, and videos that offer Taoist religious knowledge of many detailed aspects. Seven types of knowledge emerged under this concept. As listed in Table 4.2, these messages cover physical symbols such as idols, behavioral symbols such as ritual, and verbal symbols such as scriptures. As West and Turner (2014) summarized that these three kinds of symbols compose an organizational culture, these messages tries drawing a full picture of Taoist culture.

Table 4.2: Types of Knowledge of Religion (Based on Data from February, 2016)

Subcategory		Baiyun	Chunyang	Baxiangong	Total	Percent
Knowledge of religion	Holy day	2	0	0	2	0.4
	Doctrine	16	6	9	31	6.5
	History	3	0	1	4	0.8
	Idols	13	6	6	25	5.3
	Ritual	16	7	0	23	4.9
	Scripture	30	14	2	46	9.7
	Talismen and spell	5	0	0	5	1.1
	Mythology	0	3	0	3	0.6
	Total	85	36	18	139	29.3

By sharing knowledge of *holy day*, temples remind audiences of a religious memorial day on that date or one day before and further introduce the meaning of the holy day. The content contains the name of the holy day, declaration of the date both on solar calendar and Chinese traditional calendar, the origin of the holy day and relevant knowledge. Although something about ritual or idols would also be mentioned in this kind of post, since main purpose of the posts is still reminding followers of the holy day, this type is identified separately. Beijing Baiyun Temple sent 2 posts to only introduce holy day while the other two temples did not sent any posts of this category.

Example from Beijing Baiyun Temple:



Sender: Beijing Baiyun Temple

Content Source: Original

Content: #Knowledge of Taoism# 'Shangyuan Festival', be well-known as the Lantern Festival, has become an important day in secular life. There are other two important

relevant holy days 'Zhongyuan Festival' and 'Xiayuan Festival'. The three holy days together is called 'Three Yuan Festival'. Follow with Picture.

Example from Guangzhou Chunyang Temple: Not Available

Example from Xi'an Wanshou Baxiangong Temple: Not Available

The knowledge of *doctrine* refers to the religion's philosophy, belief, and value. In these posts, the temples use manners like explaining a concept, answering a question, clarifying misunderstanding on Taoism, sharing a thinking, or interpreting a story to express their religious doctrine. Taken as instances, some of the topics in the posts are 'why Taoism is called Tao of loyalty and filial piety', 'what's 'the twelve willing' in Taoism', and 'keeping being soft is life wisdom'. Beijing Baiyun Temple sent 16 posts, Guangzhou Chuanyang Temple sent 6 posts and Xi'an Wanshou Baxiangong Temple sent 9 posts. Xi'an Wanshou Baxiangong Temple sent the most posts with this function among all posts to introduce knowledge of Taoism in February.

Example from Beijing Baiyun Temple:



Sender: Beijing Baiyun Temple

Content Source: Original

Content: Change is the nature law of the universe. In Taoist perspective, the whole universe is a changing system with continuous birth and development. 'Tao gives birth to One,

One gives birth to Two, Two gives birth to Three, and Three gives birth to all.' That is the main idea of Taoist cosmogony. The universe is a process, human is also a process. To be flexible means a person should change whenever the world changes. Only by doing that, can a man keep in harmony with the world, thus he/she could walk smoothly on his/her road of life .Follow with Picture.

Example from Guangzhou Chunyang Temple:



Sender: Guangzhou Chunyang Temple

Content Source: Original

Content: #Yunshui Court # [What Makes

Monkey King 'as great as the heaven'] Why

Monkey King can claim himself 'as great as heaven'? What gives him confidence? We would try to explain this in Taoist perspective in the article below. **Follow with Link.**

Example from Xi'an Wanshou Baxiangong Temple:



Sender: Xi'an Wanshou Baxiangong Temple

Content Source: Original

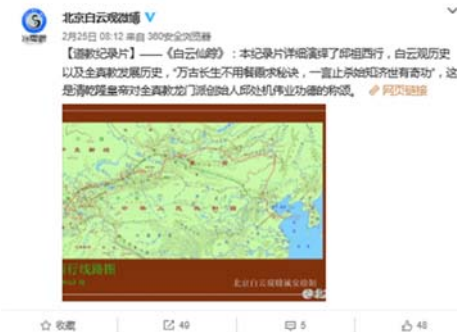
Content: What do Taoist think about other religions is that for those religions that have been inherited for thousand years the masters must be

great saints. Even though expresses differently as scriptures, the main idea of every great religion is always lead people to do good. Human beings are different according to value and geographical distribution, thus Tao manifests in various manners...**Follow with Link.**

Things shared as knowledge of religious history are actually happened in history and also been told in a documentary manner. Documentary films on history of Taoism are also shared. Beijing Baiyun Temple sent 3 posts, Xi'an Wanshou

Baxiangong Temple sent 1 posts and Guangzhou Chunyang Temple did not sent any post of this function.

Example from Beijing Baiyun Temple:



Sender: Beijing Baiyun Temple

Content Source: Original

Content: [Documentary of Taoism] This document 'Holy footprints on the cloud' tell the story of master Qiu Chuji's journey to the west, the history of Baiyun Temple, and the development of Quan Zhen sect of Taoism. Qian Long the emperor of Qing Dynasty highly praised founder of Quan Zhen sect Qiu Chuji with 'Long live to find truth without sustenance and make great contribution to society with one word preventing massacre.' **Follow with Link.**

Example from Guangzhou Chunyang Temple: Not Available

Example from Xi'an Wanshou Baxiangong Temple:



Sender: Xi'an Wanshou Baxiangong Temple

Content Source: Original

Content: Watch this! You'll never know they are all Taoist! Fan Li, characters Shao Bo, Han nationality, lives in Chu Kingdom of the Spring

and Autumn period. As a famous politician, counselor, and entrepreneur, he is revered as 'saint of commercial'...**Follow with Link and Picture.**

Knowledge of idols includes introduction and stories of Taoist gods and saints, clarifying misunderstanding of them, and also explanation of the god system. Normally the statues and the holy stories will be shared when introducing the idol. Many of these posts are released on the idol's birthday which is also a holy day of Taoism; they are not categorized into 'knowledge of holy day' because the date are not emphasized and the main purpose is to introduce the idol as follow example from Guangzhou Chunyang Temple. Beijing Baiyun Temple sent 13 posts, Guangzhou Chunyang Temple sent 6 posts and Xi'an Wanshou Baxiangong Temple also sent 6 posts.

Example from Beijing Baiyun Temple:



Sender: Beijing Baiyun Temple

Content Source: Original

Content: [Knowledge of Taoism] Immortals in Taoism. Ge Hong produced a theory that people could become immortals by learning and practicing. In his theory, there are three levels

of immortals that are immortals on heaven, immortals on earth, and immortals transformed after death. After inner alchemy theory arises, Zhong Liqun and Lv Dongbin claim that there are five levels of immortals, that are gods, immortals on heaven, immortals on earth, immortals among humans, and immortals as ghost.

Another famous priest Wang Chongyang suggests that immortals could be categorized into gods, immortals on heaven, immortals on earth, immortals with sword, and immortals as ghost. **Follow with Picture.**

Example from Guangzhou Chunyang Temple:



Sender: Guangzhou Chunyang Temple

Content Source: Original

Content: #Hongdao Court# [the Jade Emperor]
it is the birthday of the Jade Emperor today.

The Jade Emperor is the lord of all the gods in Taoism, with the top authority and sitting in a super high position among gods. As claimed in Taoist scriptures, the Jade Emperor lives in Haotian-Jinque-Miluo Heavenly Palace, keeping balance of all three realms, leading all spirits and with limitless salvation of mankind. He is the top god of heaven realm, king of heaven. The Jade Emperor takes charge of all Yinyang and fate in three realms, ten directions, catssa, and six paths. **Follow with Link.**

Example from Xi'an Wanshou Baxiangong Temple:



Sender: Xi'an Wanshou Baxiangong Temple

Content Source: Original

Content: General Guan Zhong is the Tai Sui of
Bing Shen year who take charge of people's fate

*in Bing Shen year. He looks like monkey and hold a Ruyi on his hand. General Guan Zhong was born in Yingshang of Qi kindom during the Spring and Autumn period. He's name is Guan Yiwu or Guan Jingzhong, characters Zhong, is well known as Guan Zi. Guan Zhong grown up as a child in a poor family...**Follow with Link and Picture.***

By sharing knowledge of rituals of Taoism, the temples try to guide audiences to behave in a right religious way in the temple or while interacting with others. The rituals could be about actions of worship, visiting temples, interacting with priests and everyday practice. The content usually consists in declarative texts, pictures, and a number of demonstration videos. Some of the used topics are ‘how to call priests and greet them’, ‘what is the appropriate way to enter and exit temple’, and ‘taboos of offering joss sticks’. Beijing Baiyun Temple sent 16 posts; Guangzhou Chunyang Temple sent 7 posts while Xi'an Wanshou Baxiangong Temple sent no post of this function.

Example from Beijing Baiyun Temple:



***Sender:** Beijing Baiyun Temple*

***Content Source:** Forwarded*

***Content:** Not Available*

***Original Sender:** Taoist Feng Yang*

***Original Content:** To start being a Taoist, one should convert to the Three Treasures first. The Three Treasures are Tao, Jing, and Shi. More specifically, it is to convert to*

*the greatest infinite Tao, to convert to the thirty six great scriptures, and to convert to Xuanzhong the great master. **Follow with Picture.***

Example from Guangzhou Chunyang Temple:



Sender: Guangzhou Chunyang Temple

Content source: Original

Content: #Chengxin Court# [taboos of worship (4)] Do not touch or play in temple casually, especially do not beat any Taoist

instruments in temple out of curiosity. That's not only because every Taoist instrument has its own manner to play, but also the Taoist instruments are for worshipping gods and playing them wrongly will lead to punishment from gods. We all come worshipping for good luck with sincere heart. It's not worth to get punishment for only making a slight mistake. **Follow with Link.**

Example from Xi'an Wanshou Baxiangong Temple: Not Available

Posts about scripture take the biggest part of knowledge of religion. Most of times, temples just pick one sentence from huge amount of classical religious scriptures and share as 'quotation of the day'. Explanation of some lections and introduction of a scripture are also posted. Beijing Baiyun Temple sent 30 posts; Guangzhou Chunyang Temple sent 14 posts while Xi'an Wanshou Baxiangong Temple sent 2 posts. Being different with the other two temples, Xi'an Wanshou Baxiangong Temples does not emphasize this function that the posts it sent of this function are less than posts for introducing doctrine and idols.

Example from Beijing Baiyun Temple:



✓ **Sender:** Beijing Baiyun Temple

Content Source: Original

Content: [Quotation of the day] No need to expect future, while also no need to recall the past. Retrieved from 'Nan-Hua Chen-Ching'.

Follow with Picture.

Example from Guangzhou Chunyang Temple:



✓ **Sender:** Guangzhou Chunyang Temple

Content source: Original

Content: #Hongdao Court# [Reading Tao Te Ching - 39] The universe receives harmony when it gets the One, and all things thrive for

being consonant with Tao. If you understand this, you will be humble. One person may fail if he/she does things on opposite direction of Tao. (Explained by Taoist Zhou Gaode) **Follow with Link and Picture.**

Example from Xi'an Wanshou Baxiangong Temple:



Sender: Xi'an Wanshou Baxiangong Temple

Content Source: Forwarded

Original Sender: Xi'an Wanshou Baxian Temple (sent in 2014)

Original Content: 'The Great San Yuan Cifu-Shezui-Jie'e-Xiaozai-Yansheng-Baoming

Miao-Ching' is also called 'Three Emperors Chen-Ching'. Three Emperors refers to emperors of god for heaven, for earth, and for waters... **Follow with Link and Picture.**

Temples also share knowledge of talismans and spells of Taoism. Being different from those been narrated in entertainment way as superpower tool to fight with ghost and zombies, the temples explain the talismans and spells in documentary manner. Beijing Baiyun Temple sent 5 posts of this function while the other two temples did not share any post on this function.

Example from Beijing Baiyun Temple:



Sender: Beijing Baiyun Temple

Content Source: Forwarded

Content: Not Available

Original Sender: Tencent Taoism Channel

Original Content: Taoist talisman 'demon revealing mirror' is powerful and multifunctional. It could help a human practicing to be immortal and it could also be used as deterrent to evils. **Follow with Link and Picture.**

Example from Guangzhou Chunyang Temple: Not Available

Example from Xi'an Wanshou Baxiangong Temple: Not Available

Mythologies are different from those shared as history, idols' myth, and evidence for doctrine. The stories are not real happened, their purpose is not to introduce an idol, and also not followed with highlight of a religious belief. The stories as mythologies are mainly in order to raise followers' interest to the religion. Only Guangzhou Chunyang Temple out of three temples sent 3 posts of this function.

Example from Beijing Baiyun Temple: Not Available

Example from Guangzhou Chunyang Temple:



Sender: Guangzhou Chunyang Temple

Content source: Original

Content: #Yunshui Court# [Taoist mythology:

adventuring to world in Linwu cave to look for holy book] There was a holy book named 'Lingbao Wufu Ching' in ancient time. It was released during the period of emperor Ku. Da Yu hid the book in the world in Linwu cave. At the end of the Spring and Autumn Period, king of Wu Kingdom Helv heard about it. He wanted the holy book so much that he asked Taoist Baoshan to find it for him. Taoist Baoshan,

also known as master Dragon Power, is good at Taoist spells. He went to the world in Linwu cave alone. Follow with Link and Picture.

Example from Xi'an Wanshou Baxiangong Temple: Not Available

Sharing News of Other Temples or Other Taoist Events

Most posts under this function are forwarded posts. The messages are records of some religious activities held by other Taoist temples, breaking news in Taoism field and social events with some Taoism elements involved. 13 posts in total were sent. Beijing Baiyun Temple and Guangzhou Chunyang Temple both sent 5 posts and Xi'an Wanshou Baxiangong Temple sent 3 posts of this function.

Example from Beijing Baiyun Temple:



Sender: Beijing Baiyun Temple

Content Source: Forwarded

Content: Not Available

Original sender: Xi'an Wanshou Baxiangong Temple

Original content: Xi'an Wanshou Baxiangong

held a kitchen-worship ceremony, wishing everyone happy under Lv Dongbin the master god's protection!

Example from Guangzhou Chunyang Temple:



Sender: Guangzhou Chunyang Temple

Content Source: Original

Content: Look at the theme train of Guangzhou

Temple Fair on subway line six! The train is painted with symbols of Guangzhou including characters of our temples and priests. Would you like to experience it? **Follow with Picture.**

Example from Xi'an Wanshou Baxiangong Temple:



Sender: Xi'an Wanshou Baxiangong Temple

Content Source: Forwarded

Content: Not Available

Original sender: Shanxi zhenren Temple

Original Content: Shanxi Ziyang Xianyue

Temple sits under Qibao hill Huangquan village Ziyang city. It has been broken a lot after built in Ming dynasty with only three statues left. Then the whole society put effort to fix it. Finally, it reopened on February, 28 this year. Best wishes to it! **Follow with Link and Picture.**

Reminding Connection between Religion and Secular Culture

In these posts, the temples offer knowledge of a particular traditional secular festival or secular belief and pointed out the Taoist background of them. By claiming

the direct or indirect relationship between Taoism and secular culture, Taoism's historical importance in building Chinese culture is emphasized. 24 posts in February was sent to remind public the connection. Guangzhou Chunyang Temple sent 12 posts of this function and the number is more than 8 from Beijing Baiyun Temple and 4 from Xi'an Wanshou Baxiangong Temple.

Example from Beijing Baiyun Temple:



Sender: Beijing Baiyun Temple

Content source: Original

Content: [Taoism and Chinese secular culture]- 'twenty three, stick with candy': the Kitchen God has stayed in people's home to protect and monitor them since the last new

year and only left to heaven on twenty three of the last month of the year to report the family's behaves to the Jade Emperor. The Jade Emperor will decide the family's fate according to the Kitchen God's report. Then every family will hold ceremony to send the Kitchen God back to heaven. **Follow with picture.**

Example from Guangzhou Chunyang Temple:



Sender: Guangzhou Chunyang Temple

Content Source: Original

Content: #Hongdao course# [calendar for Spring Festival: the sixth day of the New Year]

*Things to do today: start business and blow off poverty. Things not to do: stay at home and divine. Lucky color if the day: green and red. Luck food of the day: white rabbit milk candy. The sixth day of the New Year is called 'horse day', and people should blow off poverty today. It is an ancient folk culture. This date is also the day for merchants starting their business on New Year. **Follow with Picture.***

Example from Xi'an Wanshou Baxiangong Temple:



Sender: Xi'an Wanshou Baxiangong Temple

Content Source: Original

Content: [Taoism and secular culture] the twenty third day of the twelfth month according to lunar calendar is the off-year. People

*celebrate the off-year and worship the kitchen god on this day. Atmosphere of spring festival arises since that day. **Follow with Link and Picture.***

Introduce Religious Arts

Painting, music, calligraphy, poetry and video works that made by Taoist people or with Taoist contents are shared in some posts. 18 posts in total were sent to introduce Taoist arts. Beijing Baiyun Temple sent the majority of 16 posts and Xi'an Wanshou Baxiangong Temple sent the other 2 posts. Guangzhou Chunyang Temple did not sent any post of this function.

Example from Beijing Baiyun Temple:



Sender: Beijing Baiyun Temple

Content Source: original

Content: [knowledge of Taoism]-Taoist

Music: Originating from ancient sacrificial rites, Taoist music was combined with Taoist scriptures during long time development then

become a special musical language to transfer Taoism. Tone, sound level, and cadence of speaking the language construct a thymes, and the rhymes make up the immortalTaoist music. Follow with Picture.

Example from Guangzhou Chunyang Temple: Not Available

Example from Xi'an Wanshou Baxiangong Temple:



Sender: Xi'an Wanshou Baxiangong Temple

Content Source: Original

Content: What impacts did Taoism make to Chinese arts? Taoism influence Chinese arts on many aspects. Let's start with music. Taoist

music is called immortal music. It originates during the Northern Wei Dynasty Period and got development in Sui Dynasty and Tang Dynasty. Taoist music thrived in Song Dynasty and Yuan Dynasty and got widely spread in Ming Dynasty and Qing Dynasty...Follow with Link and Picture.

Share Knowledge of Religious Medicine

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

Example from Beijing Baiyun Temple:



Sender: Beijing Baiyun Temple

Content Source: Original

Content: [Knowledge of Taoism]- 'What is Taoist Medicine': Taoist medicine is a religious medicine. As a result of interaction between religion and science, Taoist medicine is a

special medicinal system that based on religious value and scripture and aim to solve basic religious purpose of Taoist. It is on the fundamental of Chinese traditional medicine and could also be seen as a special sect of Chinese traditional medicine with vivid Taoist characters. Follow with Picture.

Example from Guangzhou Chunyang Temple:



Sender: Guangzhou Chunyang Temple

Content Source: Original

Content: #Wuzhen course# [Taoist Breathing

Method (1): expiration-focused

methods] Practicing breathing is emphasized by

Taoist Medicine. A lot of breathing methods

are given by many Taoist books. Expiration-focused methods are methods that focusing on exhaling, to practice this kind of breathing, a person should exhale longer than inhaling. These methods are for eliminating wastes and stimulating power of organics. Follow with Picture.

Example from Xi'an Wanshou Baxiangong Temple: Not Available

Report an Event

Temples share report of an activity they held, and the contents are always documentary text with pictures or videos of the event. The posts are sent after the activity as a summary of it or before the activity as a record without the intention to ask followers to participant in, that divides these posts from others with 'promoting events' function. 86 posts of this function were sent in February. Beijing Baiyun Temple sent the biggest part with 60 posts and Xi'an Wanshou Baxiangong Temple sent 15 posts of this function. Guangzhou Chunyang Temple sent the least with 11 posts.

Example from Beijing Baiyun Temple:



Sender: Beijing Baiyun Temple

Content Source: original

*Content: Beijing Baiyun Temple celebrated the holy birthday of the Jade Emperor. The ceremony was perfectly done. **Follow with Picture.***

Example from Guangzhou Chunyang Temple:



Sender: Guangzhou Chunyang Temple

Content Source: Original

*Content: [First look at blessing events in our temple!] We thought we've made a deal to have live broadcast on TV but it turns out to be no. The priest as editor has already cried dead in toilet. Luckily, we found news video of the event. Let's have a look! **Follow with Link.***

Example from Xi'an Wanshou Baxiangong Temple:



Sender: Xi'an Wanshou Baxiangong Temple

Content Source: Original

Content: Taoist ceremony for preying to Tai Sui is on-going in Xi'an Baxiangong Temple. **Follow with Picture.**

4.1.2 Online Religion

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

Ask for Opinions

Only Beijing Baiyun Temple sent 1 post named 'investigation' which contained a question of 'what kind of public activity you want us to hold'. Guangzhou

Chunyang Temple and Xi'an Wanshou Baxiangong Temple both do not take Weibo as a tool to collect followers' opinion.

Example from Beijing Baiyun Temple:



Sender: Beijing Baiyun Temple

Content Source: Original

Content: [investigation] Beginning with public service activity for promoting Taijiquan, we would like to offer public with more activities that could cover many aspects of Taoism like reading scripture, body building, preserve health, and so on. What activity will you expect the most? Follow with Picture.

Example from Guangzhou Chunyang Temple: Not Available

Example from Xi'an Wanshou Baxiangong Temple: Not Available

Celebrate a Holy Day

On the holy day, temples would post a message of this kind; being different from those for introducing a holy day, these posts are in a manner of reminding followers to celebrate the holy day or leading followers to celebrate. In some posts, temples also offer followers with the particular scripture for worshipping on that holy day to help followers practicing. By leading followers to celebrate the holy day, temples could strengthen followers' religious identity and further sense their belonging to the community. 13 posts of this kind were sent. Beijing Baiyun Temple

sent 8 posts, Guangzhou Chunyang Temple sent 3 posts and Xi'an Wanshou Baxiangong Temple sent 2 posts.

Example from Beijing Baiyun Temple:



Sender: Beijing Baiyun Temple

Content Source: original

Content: Ding-You time of Bing-Chen Day of Geng-Yin month of Bing-Shen year, as 17:46 at February, 4 in 2016 of solar calendar, is

*beginning of spring, and it is also the very start of Bing-Shen year of monkey. Great appreciation to Tai Sui of Yi-Wei year the General Yang Xian for his protection in the past year! Sincerely welcome Tai Sui of Bing-Shen year the General Guan Zhong! Wish with Tai Sui of Bing-Shen year the General Guan Zhong's protection, we will receive prosperity and peace both for our country and our own. Wish everything goes well. Wish Taoism get thrived. Wish everyone get good luck for whole family. **Follow with Picture.***

Example from Guangzhou Chunyang Temple:



Sender: Guangzhou Chunyang Temple

Content source: original

Content: Guys, do not forget to worship the Kitchen God after supper today! The Kitchen God is in charge of monitoring people's behavior which leads to a family's

fortune. Talking about worshipping the Kitchen God, I can not help repeating this brain-washing video clip...Follow with link.

Example from Xi'an Wanshou Baxiangong Temple:



Sender: Xi'an Wanshou Baxiangong Temple

Content Source: Original

*Content: [Celebrate on birthday of great
Guang Yuan Pu Du Supernature immortal*

Qiu]An Ancient Scripture for Worshipping is Shared. Follow with Picture.

Give Recognition

In these posts, temples give public praise to their followers, volunteers, individual of the organization, and supporters of their events such as polices and local governments for their actions or works. This kind of post also includes those in which temples publicly show their support and acceptance to other's work or opinion. 13 posts of this function were sent in February, and most of them were sent by Beijing Baiyun Temple with 10 posts. Guangzhou Chunyang Temple sent the rest 3 posts while Xi'an Wanshou Baxiangong Temple sent no post to give recognition.

Example from Beijing Baiyun Temple:



Sender: Beijing Baiyun Temple

Content Source: Original

Content: It is 5 am in the morning; officers from relevant departments such as Public Security and Fire Protection are ready for traffic control around Baiyun Temple. Every

year at this time of temple fair, government always pays a lot of attention to ensure the security of Baiyun Temple. Thank you all for your hard working! **Follow with Picture.**

Example from Guangzhou Chunyang Temple:



Sender: Guangzhou Chunyang Temple

Content Source: Forwarded

Content : < image: hug> we should thank all of you for your support and contribution.

Please notice the article will be published on Wechat this Wednesday. I have some sincere words to speak to you!

Original Sender: Mr -pineapple prince

Original Content: got recognition from Baiyun Temple for volunteer service in 2015!

Thank you for your recognition! @Guangzhou Chunyang Temple @ Lei Gaocheng

Follow with Picture.

Example from Xi'an Wanshou Baxiangong Temple: Not Available

Greet Followers

In these posts, temples say hello or give wishes to followers in a way that show closeness between them. Sometimes there are also introductions of coming events or the day if it is a holy day, but the main purpose is still greeting followers and there are also posts particularly introducing the holy day later that day, that's why the posts are categorized into 'greet followers' function. 13 posts were sent to greet followers. Beijing Baiyun Temple contributed 12 of them and the rest one is sent by Guangzhou Chunyang Temple. Xi'an Wanshou Baxiangong Temple also did not send post to greet followers.

Example from Beijing Baiyun Temple:



Sender: Beijing Baiyun Temple

Content Source: Original

Content: What a peaceful morning! Good morning, everyone! Follow with Picture.

Example from Guangzhou Chunyang Temple:



Sender: Guangzhou Chunyang Temple

Content Source: Original

Content: Guangzhou Taoism Chunyang Temple and Guangzhou Du Cheng Huang

Temple wish you happy Monkey Year and achieve more both on luck and wealth.

Wish you everything goes on well and have a happy family. Good luck! A Quotation from Ancient 'Yue Fu Lyrics' with Good Will is also Shared at the Beginning.

Follow with Picture.

Example from Xi'an Wanshou Baxiangong Temple: Not Available

Guide Visiting

In these posts, temples offer advices or emphasized some important regulations to followers to help them gaining better visiting experience. Three temples sent 19 posts in total. Beijing Baiyun Temple sent 14 of them, Guangzhou Chunyang Temple sent 3 posts and Xi'an Wanshou Baxiangong Temple sent the rest 2.

Example from Beijing Baiyun Temple:



Sender: Beijing Baiyun Temple

Content Source: Original

Content: Since many believers lined up as early as 4 am to worship in Baiyun temple

before, those who would come before 6 am, the opening time of our temple, please wear enough clothes to keep warm. Wish you all happy and good luck. See you at 6! Follow with Picture.

Example from Guangzhou Chunyang Temple:



Sender: Guangzhou Chunyang Temple

Content Source: Original

Content: [Special announcement] As superior apartment acquired, Guangzhou Chunyang Temple will give discount to entrance ticket.

The current price is 2 yuan per person lower than 3 yuan per person before. Please be noticed. Otherwise, because of limitation of parking spots in our temple, please try to take public traffic to here. We also suggest public to offer joss sticks in appropriate manner. Thank you for understanding.

Follow with Link.

Example from Xi'an Wanshou Baxiangong Temple:



Sender: Xi'an Wanshou Baxiangong Temple

Content Source: Original

Content: Suggestion to visitors: to standardize rituals in temple and to keep a safe environment for visitors to pray, there are

some suggestions on visitors' behavior given by us. One, please do not take pets and

*firecrackers into temple. Do not smoke or speak loud in temple. Two...**Follow with Link and Picture.***

Help Practicing

In these posts, temples help believers improving their practice by various ways including reminding them to practice in right way and in right time as religious ritual acquires, sharing other believers' experience to encourage others to practice, and offering authoritative advice on particular practice action. In some posts, temples offer followers with scriptures and explained them, but being different with those with 'share knowledge of religion' function, temples explain more on how to use them for practicing as detailed as how many times should people read them. And the advices on practice are also different from just sharing knowledge of rituals for the former ones focusing more on encouraging personal practice and followed with inventive language such as 'did you practice?' 17 posts were sent to help practicing. Beijing Baiyun Temple sent 10 posts and the rest 7 posts are sent by Guangzhou Chunyang Temple. Xi'an Wanshou Baxiangong Temple sent no posts of this function.

Example from Beijing Baiyun Temple:



***Sender:** Beijing Baiyun Temple*

***Content Source:** Original*

***Content:** [Friendly reminder] tomorrow (the 19th day of first month of traditional calendar and February 26th in 2016 of solar calendar)*

is the 'Wu' day. All please be remind that no practice should be done on this day. (We will not hold any events either.) **Follow with Picture.**

Example from Guangzhou Chunyang Temple:



Sender: Guangzhou Chunyang Temple

Content Source: Original

Content: #Chengxin Court# [see immortals in Baiyun] On January, 18 of this year, a ceremony was hold in Guangzhou Baiyun Temple to celebrate its reopen for Taoist

utilization. A Taoist of Guangzhou Du Cheng Huang Temple Tian Sinan attended the ceremony as volunteer. Being a beginner of Taoism, he saw a immortal picture that general people could not see. I think that maybe fate to meet Tao! **Follow with Link.**

Example from Xi'an Wanshou Baxiangong Temple: Not Available

Interact with Individual

Without obvious intention being shown in posts as others, posts under this category are casual and simple. Temples forward the original posts with simple comments to fulfill an interaction with the message sender. Being different with other posts, personal relationship but not public relationship is emphasized in these posts. 34 posts were sent under this category. 21 posts were sent by Beijing Baiyun Temple, 10 were sent by Guangzhou Chunyang Temple and Xi'an Wanshou Baxiangong Temple sent 3 of them.

Example from Beijing Baiyun Temple:



Sender: Beijing Baiyun Temple

Content Source: Forwarded

Content: Did not expect you could find the monkey's bottom<image>, wish you good luck in new year!

Original content: I went to Baiyun Temple to touch monkey's bottom for getting luck! <images> Hope everything will be better in monkey year~ **Follow with Picture.**

Example from Guangzhou Chunyang Temple:



Sender: Guangzhou Chunyang Temple

Content Source: Forwarded

Content: What happened to you→_→

Secondary Original Sender: magical boy A

SaXin; enjoy flowers _Why_always_US; official

account of Jianchun Group

Secondary Original Contents: Because you can get dps for turning on purple air!

<from magical boy A Sa Xin>; it bursts <from enjoy flowers _Why_always_US>;

purple air may brings good luck.<from official account of Jianchun Group >

Original Sender: Guangzhou Chunyang Temple

Original Content: #Yunshui Court# [Why do Chinese like purple air from the east]
'Purple air comes from the east' means good luck arrives. Because of the implication of good will, Chinese like to use the words in Spring Festival couplets that will be pasted on their doorframes. By doing that, people wish purple air may bring luck, wealth, and happy to their family. How many storied about this do you know? Follow with Link.

Example from Xi'an Wanshou Baxiangong Temple:



Sender: Xi'an Wanshou Baxiangong Temple

Content Source: Forwarded

Content: Reply @ Siming-Hongdao Taoist:

Yes, it works! <image: haha>

Secondary Original Sender: Siming-Hongdao Taoist

Secondary Original Content: It works! The visitors all pray with right ritual.

Original Sender: Xi'an Wanshou Baxiangong Temple

Original Content: Ceremony for Blessing to Tai Sui is on-going in Xi'an Baxiangong Temple Follow with Picture.

Response to Consultation and Challenge

These posts are used to answer particular questions asked by media users.

Temples forward users' questioning post with answer as the comment or send a

particular post with quotation of public's question. Because of the strong intention of responding followers' question, this function is listed separately from the previous one. 4 posts in total were posted. Beijing Baiyun Temple and Guangzhou Chunyang Temple sent 2 posts each. Xi'an Wanshou Baxiangong Temple sent no posts of this function.

Example from Beijing Baiyun Temple:



Sender: Beijing Baiyun Temple

Content Source: Forwarded

Content: Reply @ inner telephone number: the activity of 'Master offering Fu' continues tomorrow.

Secondary Original Sender: inner Telephone number, Beijing Baiyun Temple

Secondary Original Contents: sir, will the 'Master offering Fu' activity continue tomorrow, please? Thank you! <from inner telephone number>; no Taoist events will be hold tomorrow in Baiyun Temple while the temple will be open for normal visiting <from Beijing Baiyun Temple >;

Original Sender: Beijing Baiyun Temple

Original Content: [Important notice] Because the ninth day and the nineteenth day of the first month of this (Bing Shen) year is 'Wu' day, ceremony for celebrating the birth of the Jade Emperor and ceremony for celebrating the birth of Master Qiu will be suspended. There will be alternative activities on the day before each day.

Everyone please kindly inform others of this. Wish you good luck! ***Follow with picture.***

Example from Guangzhou Chunyang Temple:



Sender: Guangzhou Chunyang Temple

Content Source: Original

Content: #Chengxin Court# [Can you be qualified to be immortal for understanding classical Chinese?] The entrance exam of

Chongxuan Court received a lot of attention from public. Negative voices also arose such as 'can you be qualified to be immortal for understanding classical music?' We all know what happened in Taoism arena. Some people treat Taoism as tool to accumulate wealth, some people just make Taoism as vulgar as nothing but ghost and magic... We are now doing a lot to activate Taoism. We want public to know that Taoism is everything related to our daily life. Taoism is something people can see and people can feel... At last, I must say that if you can not understand classical Chinese, how are you able to understand scriptures and thus practice to be immortal?

<image:doge> ***Follow with Picture.***

Example from Xi'an Wanshou Baxiangong Temple: Not Available

Offer Advice

In these posts, temples try to leading direct behavioral reaction from followers by giving their recommendation. The recommendation could be about an

appropriate religious thinking, an expected behavioral change of visitors, or just downloading their publications. Beijing Baiyun Temple and Guangzhou Chunyang Temple sent 7 posts in total with 3 posts and 4 posts each. Xi'an Wanshou Baxiangong Temple sent no posts of this function.

Example from Beijing Baiyun Temple:



Sender: Beijing Baiyun Temple

Content Source: Forwarded

Content: Free captive animals naturally, chose appropriate captive animal, and free them anytime they need without waiting for 'right' moment. As it's recorded in scripture, digging well along a road, planting trees, and building bridges are also kindness. It's highly

recommended to planting trees and your planting trees will bring lucky to your children!

Original Sender: Daomen.org

Original Content: #Inform those who are obsessed with freeing animals# As spring is coming again, those who believe in freeing captive animal to make merits please do not release animals that not fit local biological chain. Especially for those who believe the more dangerous the animal they release the more merits they could make, please do not release crocodiles, snakes, rats carelessly anymore. It would be better if we could focus more on planting trees to protect environment and help recovering our

*water resource, and that could contribute to more merits. As it's said in scripture, our path follows the nature. **Follow with Picture.***

Example from Guangzhou Chunyang Temple:



***Sender:** Guangzhou Chunyang Temple*

***Content Source:** Original*

***Content:** <image: celebrate> Hi, guys in Guangzhou! If you plan to or are already on your way to flower market in Yuexiu district, please do come to the vendor No. 143 on*

Jiaoyunan Road, because it is our Guangzhou Du Cheng Huang Temple's vendor!

Yes, you get it right, we are opening our small business there!<image: like> We have wonderful products with authentic Taoism character that really worth consuming!

*Let's go! <image: fighting>**Follow with Link.***

Example from Xi'an Wanshou Baxiangong Temple: Not Available

Promote an Event

Offline activities are important for the temples to keep relationship with communities. In that case, these kinds of posts are sent not only for reminding followers about the events they would hold but also for involving them to join the events. Thus these posts always contain welcoming language as well as detailed information of the coming events. Three temples all sent posts to promote their events

with 27 posts in total. Beijing Baiyun Temple sent 11 posts, Guangzhou Chunyang Temple sent 13 posts and Xi'an Wanshou Baxiangong Temple sent 3 of them.

Example from Beijing Baiyun Temple:



Sender: Beijing Baiyun Temple

Content Source: Original

Content: [Beijing Baiyun Temple will hold salvific ceremony for fellow citizens who lost their life in the latest earthquake in northern Taiwan] Beijing Baiyun Temple will hold

salvific ceremony for fellow citizens who lost their life in the latest earthquake in northern Taiwan at 4 pm on February, 13. Donation ceremony will be held after the salvific ceremony. Chinese Taoism Association, Beijing Baiyun Temple, and Beijing Huoshen Temple will collect all donation together and send them to disaster area in northern Taiwan to help fellow citizens passing through the difficulty. Follow with Picture.

Example from Guangzhou Chunyang Temple:



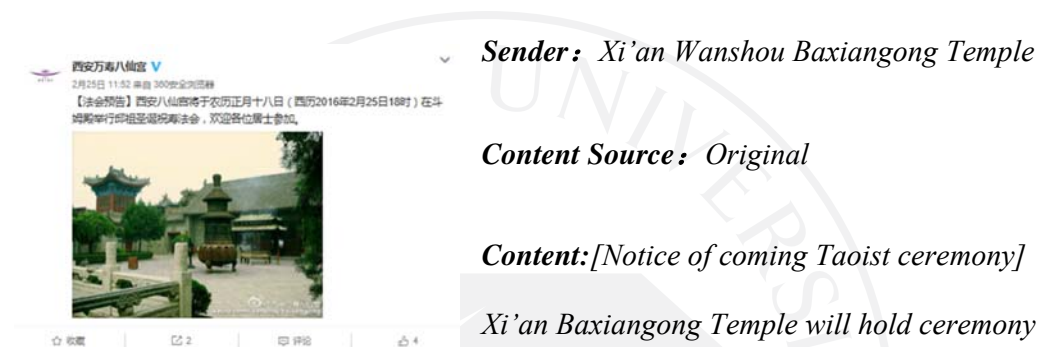
Sender: Guangzhou Chunyang Temple

Content Source: Original

Content: The palanquin is ready. We will use it to sincerely take Guangzhou's ombudsgod to Zhongyou Square from Guangzhou Du Cheng

*Huang Temple to attend blessing ceremony! The activity will be held on 9 am tomorrow (February, 28, Monday) at Zhongyou Square. Guys, do not miss it! For those friends out of Guangzhou, you can watch live broadcasting on News Channel of Guangdong TV and website of Lychee TV (www.ghtv.cn). **Follow with Picture.***

Example from Xi'an Wanshou Baxiangong Temple:



to celebrate the birth of Master Qiu in Doumu Palace on the eighteenth day of the first month of the year in lunar calendar (at 18:00 on February, 25 in 2016).

*Everyone is welcomed. **Follow with Link and Picture.***

Ask for Transmitting Message

In these cases, temples make an announcement of some emergencies and require followers to help transmitting that to more population. As in the samples, the posts are about an urgent adjustment of the schedule of an activity. The posts all contain imperative language such as 'everyone please kindly inform others of this'. Only Beijing Baiyun Temple sent 5 posts with requirement for transmitting. Guangzhou Chunuyang Temple and Xi'an Wanshou Baxiangong Temple did not sent post of this function.

Example from Beijing Baiyun Temple:



Sender: Beijing Baiyun Temple

Content Source: Original

Content: [Important notice] Because the ninth day and the nineteenth day of the first month of

this (Bing Shen) year is 'Wu' day, ceremony for celebrating the birth of the Jade Emperor and ceremony for celebrating the birth of Master Qiu will be suspended. There will be alternative activities on the day before each day. Everyone please kindly inform others of this. Wish you good luck! Follow with Picture.

Example from Guangzhou Chunyang Temple: Not Available

Example from Xi'an Wanshou Baxiangong Temple: Not Available

Recruit Stakeholder

Posts of this kind are used to recruit stakeholders. As shown in data, the stakeholders being mentioned are volunteers for the temples' campaign and employees. As in samples, the campaigns that need volunteers are all offline religious activities held by temples. Detailed offline contracts also provided. 4 posts in total were sent in February. Guangzhou Chunyang Temple sent 2 posts to recruit volunteers and Xi'an Wanshuo Baxiangong Temple sent 2 posts to recruit employees.

Example from Beijing Baiyun Temple: Not Available

Example from Guangzhou Chunyang Temple:



Sender: Guangzhou Chunyang Temple

Content Source: Original

Content: [Emergent recruitment of volunteers]

*From today till the New Year's Eve, we need volunteers to help us prepare for the coming Spring Festival. If you are willing to help, please register to us by sending private message through Weibo. Just give us your real name and telephone number and show up at our temple before 9 am. Please contact @Lei Gaocheng. **Follow with Link.***

Example from Xi'an Wanshou Baxiangong Temple:



Sender: Xi'an Wanshou Baxiangong Temple

Content Source: Original

*Content: [Recruitment] We are recruiting 4 staffs(2 staffs to serve visitors, under 50 of age, with good condition on moral and physical health, owning relevant working experience and having religious belief would be preferred; 2 staffs as manager in monitor office, under 50 of age, fine moral character, being able to operate computer, owning relevant working experience and having religious belief would be preferred). For applying please contact manager office of Baxiangong Temple. Tel: 029-82488214. **Follow with Link and Picture.***

4.2 Conclusion on February's Data

20 functions emerge from the data. Beijing Baiyun Temple's posts cover 19 functions, Guangzhou Chunyang Temple's posts cover 17 of them and Xi'an Wanshou Baxiangong Temple's posts cover only 10 functions. Beijing Baiyun Temple and Guangzhou Chunyang Temple's contents are of richer diversity than Xi'an Wanshou Baxiangong Temple's.

According to ranking of three temple's posts by number (Table 4.3), different strategies of using Weibo emerge.

Beijing Baiyun Temple: the two top most posts are for sharing knowledge of religion and news of its events. The two kinds of posts make up more than half of the total (85 posts of 'share knowledge of religion' function, 60 posts of 'report an event' function, posts combine to 145 posts out of 282 posts in total, that make it 51.4% of the whole). And the third most posts that are for interacting with individual are merely around one third of the second most posts (21 posts with 'interact with individual' function compare with 60 posts of 'report an event' function). This shows that for the huge amount of posts the temple sent, the priorities for Beijing Baiyun Temple's using Weibo are introducing Taoism to public and reporting its activities.

There are 9 out of 19 kinds of posts with quantity above 10, and 6 of them are of 'community' and 'action' functions, that are 21 'interact with individual' posts, 14 'guide visiting' posts, 12 'greet followers' posts, 11 'promote an event' posts, 10 'give recognition' posts, and 10 'help practicing' posts. This shows that although the temple uses Weibo mainly for sending message to public, it also treat Weibo as a tool to serve 'online religion' purpose.

Guangzhou Chunyang Temple: compared with intensive allocation of Beijing Baiyun Temple's posts, Guangzhou Chunyang Temple's posts distribute more equally. The top two most posts take 43.5% of the total which is 36 'share knowledge of religion' posts and 24 'share knowledge of religious medicine' posts combining to 60 posts out of 138 posts in total. The second most posts are more than the third most posts by only 11 posts. And the third to the sixth most posts are with familiar amount that are 13 for 'promote an event' post, 12 for 'remind connection between religion and secular culture' post, 11 for 'report an event' post, and 10 for 'interact with individual' post. Judging from the data, introducing Taoism to public is also an important reason for the temple using Weibo while reporting its events is as important as provoke public to attend them.

Considering introduce Taoism to public, knowledge of Taoism and Taoist arts are emphasized by Beijing Baiyun Temple while Guangzhou Chunyang Temple shares more information about Taoist medicine and connection between Taoism and secular culture as well as knowledge of religion while Taoist arts is not even mentioned. As Taoism medicine is relevant to people's health preserving, Guangzhou Chunyang Temple tries to promote Taoism in a more amiable and easy-to-understand way by emphasizing the helpfulness and accessibility of Taoism. While in Beijing Baiyun Temple's narration, Taoism is documentary and literary.

Xi'an Wanshou Baxiangong Temple: this temple sent the least posts among three temples. All posts it sent are less than Beijing Baiyun Temple's event reports. The same as Beijing Baiyun Temple, posts for sharing knowledge of religion and for reporting an event make up more than half of the total (18 posts of 'share

knowledge of religion’ function, 15 posts of ‘report an event’ function, posts combine to 33 posts out of 54 posts in total, that make it 61.1% of the whole). The third most post are of ‘remind connection between religion and secular culture’ function and the number is 4 which are less than one third of the second most posts. This shows that the same as Beijing Baiyun Temple, the priorities for Xi’an Wanshou Baxiangong Temple are also introducing Taoism to public and reporting its activities.

With small amount of posts, Xi’an Wanshou Baxiangong Temple is not able to explore many functions of Weibo as other two temples do. While among the ten functions emerge from its posts, functions of ‘community’ and ‘action’ took half of them (‘interact with individual’ ‘celebrate a holy day’ ‘guide visiting’ under ‘community’ section and ‘promote an event’ ‘recruit stakeholders’ under ‘action’ section). This shows that Xi’an Wanshuo Baxiangong Temple also treats Weibo as a tool that could serve ‘online religion’ purpose, but the functions are far not valued by the temple compared with the other two.

Table 4.3: Ranking of Three Temples’ Posts in February, 2016

NO.	Baiyun		Chunyang		Baxiangong		Total	
1	Share knowledge of religion	85	Share knowledge of religion	36	Share knowledge of religion	18	Share knowledge of religion	139

(Continued)

Table 4.3 (Continued): Ranking of Three Temples' Posts in February, 2016

NO.	Baiyun		Chunyang		Baxiangong		Total	
2	Report an event	60	Share knowledge of religious medicine	24	Report an event	15	Report an event	86
3	Interact with individual	21	Promote an event	13	Remind connection between religion and secular culture	4	Interact with individual	34
4	Introduce religious arts	16	Remind connection between religion and secular culture	12	Share news of other temples or relevant event	3	Promote an event	27
5	Guide visiting	14	Report an event	11	Interact with individual	3	Share knowledge of religious medicine	26

(Continued)

Table 4.3 (Continued): Ranking of Three Temples' Posts in February, 2016

NO.	Baiyun		Chunyang		Baxiangong		Total	
6	Greet followers	12	Interact with individual	10	Promote an event	3	Remind connection between religion and secular culture	24
7	Promote an event	11	Help practicing	7	Introduce religious arts	2	Guide visiting	19
8	Give recognition	10	Share news of other temples or relevant event	5	Celebrate a holy day	2	Introduce religious arts	18
9	Help practicing	10	Offer advice	4	Guide visiting	2	Help practicing	17
10	Remind connection between religion and secular culture	8	Celebrate a holy day	3	Recruit stakeholders	2	Share news of other temples or relevant event	13

(Continued)

Table 4.3 (Continued): Ranking of Three Temples' Posts in February, 2016

NO.	Baiyun		Chunyang		Baxiangong		Total	
11	Celebrate a holy day	8	Give recognition	3	Introduce Taoist priest	0	Celebrate a holy day	13
12	Introduce the temple	7	Guide visiting	3	Introduce the temple	0	Give recognition	13
13	Share news of other temples or relevant event	5	Response to consultation and challenge	2	Share knowledge of religious medicine	0	Greet followers	13
14	Ask for transmitting message	5	Recruit stakeholders	2	Ask for opinions	0	Introduce the temple	8
15	Offer advice	3	Introduce Taoist priest	1	Give recognition	0	Offer advice	7
16	Introduce Taoist priest	2	Introduce the temple	1	Greet followers	0	Ask for transmitting message	5

(Continued)

Table 4.3 (Continued): Ranking of Three Temples' Posts in February, 2016

NO.	Baiyun		Chunyang		Baxiangong		Total	
17	Share knowledge of religious medicine	2	Greet followers	1	Help practicing	0	Response to consultation and challenge	4
18	Response to consultation and challenge	2	Introduce religious arts	0	Response to consultation and challenge	0	Recruit stakeholders	4
19	Ask for opinions	1	Ask for opinions	0	Offer advice	0	Introduce Taoist priest	3
20	Recruit stakeholders	0	Ask for transmitting message	0	Ask for transmitting message	0	Ask for opinions	1

4.3 Recheck with More Data

The functions summarized from initial data also covered more samples from other two months. Categorizing process achieved without new function added. And the result is shown in Table 4.4.

Table 4.4: Posts with Different Functions Located in 3 Months

Category		Date			Total	Percent
		Jan.	Feb.	Mar.		
Information		353	317	296	966	70.8
	Introduce Taoist priest	22	3	4	29	2.1
	Introduce the temple	21	8	16	45	3.3
	Share knowledge of religion	184	139	138	461	33.8
	News of other temples or relevant event	32	13	32	77	5.6
	Remind connection between religion and secular culture	15	24	5	44	3.2
	Introduce religious arts	23	18	19	60	4.4
	Share knowledge of religious medicine	33	26	39	98	7.2
	Report of an event	23	86	43	152	11.1
Community		85	114	86	285	21.9
	Ask for opinions	0	1	0	1	.1
	Celebrate a holy day	0	13	8	21	1.5
	Give recognition	48	13	46	107	7.8
	Greet followers	5	13	0	18	1.3
	Guide visiting	2	19	3	24	1.8
	Help practicing	15	17	12	44	3.2

(Continued)

Table 4.4 (Continued): Posts with Different Functions Located in 3 Months

Category		Date			Total	Percent
		Jan.	Feb.	Mar.		
Community	Interact with individual	12	34	12	58	4.2
	Response to consultation and challenge	3	4	5	12	.9
Action		38	43	33	114	8.4
	Offer advice	10	7	12	29	2.1
	Promote an event	26	27	20	73	5.3
	Ask for transmitting message	2	5	0	7	.5
	Recruit stakeholder	0	4	1	5	.4
Total		476	474	415	1365	100.0

As shown in Table 4.4, the posts that with function of ‘celebrate a holy day’, ‘greet followers’, ‘guide visiting’, ‘interact with individual’ increased in February compared with in January and decreased in March. The functions could be directly related to holy days, festival and offline activities, for example as offline activities were hold in temple, the temple was intended to send more posts to guide visiting that helped visitors joining activities in expected way so as to ensure good order. As those above are under ‘online religion’ especially ‘community’ part, same thing happened to reports of the temples events which are posts with ‘report of an event’ function under ‘religion online’.

Separating the rough data into each temple, the general increase of posts with community function attributes to Beijing Baiyun Temple's change on posting. As shown in Table 4.5, Beijing Baiyun Temple sent more 'community' posts than other two temples' combined. Because of that, even though Guangzhou Chunyang Temple and Xi'an Wanshou Baxiangong Temple kept a steady frequency of posts with the four functions in three months, Beijing Baiyun Temple's emphasizing the function made the total change obvious. Same thing happened when observing the posts with information function (Table 4.6), though the posts with 'report of an event' function increased slightly for Guangzhou Chunyang Temple and Xi'an Wanshou Baxiangong Temple in February (Guangzhou Chunyang Temple posted 1 more and Xi'an Wanshou Baxiangong Temple posted 5 more), Beijing Baiyun Temple posted 57 posts more (from 3 in January to 60 in February) and that led to the steep increase in term of total data.

Table 4.5: Posts with Community Function from Three Temples

Community	Baiyun Temple				Chunyang Temple				Baxiangong Temple			
	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Total	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Total	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Total
Ask for opinions	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Celebrate a holy day	0	8	4	12	0	3	2	5	0	2	2	4
Give recognition	24	10	25	59	21	3	15	39	3	0	6	9

(Continued)

Table 4.5 (Continued): Posts with Community Function from Three Temples

Community	Baiyun Temple				Chunyang Temple				Baxiangong Temple			
	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Total	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Total	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Total
Greet followers	1	12	0	13	3	1	0	4	1	0	0	1
Guide visiting	1	14	3	18	1	3	0	4	0	2	0	2
Help practicing	8	10	9	27	4	7	1	12	3	0	2	5
Interact with individual	4	21	6	31	8	10	6	24	0	3	0	3
Response to consultation and challenge	1	2	0	3	2	2	5	9	0	0	0	0
Total	39	78	47	164	39	29	29	97	7	7	10	24

Table 4.6: Posts with Information Function from Three Temples

Information	Baiyun Temple				Chunyang Temple				Baxiangong Temple			
	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Total	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Total	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Total
Introduce Taoist priest	17	2	4	23	2	1	0	3	3	0	0	3
Introduce the temple	11	7	7	25	8	1	5	14	2	0	4	6

(Continued)

Table 4.6 (Continued): Posts with Information Function from Three Temples

Information	Baiyun Temple				Chunyang Temple				Baxiangong Temple			
	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Total	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Total	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Total
Share knowledge of religion	90	85	78	253	42	36	38	116	52	18	22	92
News of other temples or relevant event	16	5	14	35	9	5	12	26	7	3	6	16
Remind connection between religion and secular culture	11	8	3	22	1	12	1	14	3	4	1	8
Introduce religious arts	20	16	12	48	1	0	2	3	2	2	5	9

(Continued)

Table 4.6 (Continued): Posts with Information Function from Three Temples

Information	Baiyun Temple				Chunyang Temple				Baxiangong Temple			
	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Total	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Total	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Total
Share knowledge of religious medicine	4	2	7	13	24	24	31	79	5	0	1	6
Report of an event	3	60	25	88	10	11	10	31	10	15	8	33
Total	172	185	150	507	97	90	99	286	84	42	47	173

Looking into details of Knowledge of ‘Share knowledge of religion’ posts as shown in Table 4.7, the knowledge about doctrine and scripture takes majority not only in February but also in all three months for all three temples. A literary and metaphysical narration of Taoism persists during the time.

Table 4.7: Types of Knowledge of Religion (Based on Data from Three Months)

Knowledge of religion	Baiyun Temple			Chunyang Temple			Baxiangong Temple			Total
	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	
Holy day	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	3
Doctrine	22	16	19	30	6	27	34	9	11	174

(Continued)

Table 4.7 (Continued): Types of Knowledge of Religion (Based on Data from Three Months)

Knowledge of religion	Baiyun Temple			Chunyang Temple			Baxiangong Temple			Total
	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	
History	1	3	2	7	0	2	1	1	2	19
Idols	6	13	8	0	6	3	9	6	4	55
Ritual	19	16	14	1	7	0	0	0	3	60
Scripture	37	30	32	3	14	4	5	2	1	128
Talisman and spell	3	5	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	11
Mythology	2	0	1	0	3	2	3	0	0	11
Total	90	85	78	42	36	38	52	18	22	461

Considering the ‘action’ function, the number of posts did not change much in three months for all the three temples (Table 4.8).

Table 4.8: Posts with Action Function from Three Temples

Action	Baiyun Temple				Chunyang Temple				Baxiangong Temple			
	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Total	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Total	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Total
Offer advice	5	3	2	10	3	4	10	17	2	0	0	2
Promote an event	11	11	9	31	14	13	11	38	1	3	0	4

(Continued)

Table 4.8 (Continued): Posts with Action Function from Three Temples

Action	Baiyun Temple				Chunyang Temple				Baxiangong Temple			
	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Total	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Total	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Total
Ask for transmitting message	0	5	0	5	2	0	0	2	0	0	0	0
Recruit volunteer	0	0	0	0	0	2	1	3	0	2	0	2
Total	16	19	11	46	19	19	22	60	3	5	0	8

In sum, Beijing Baiyun Temple sent the most posts and in February used interactive functions more to correspond to Spring Festival and relevant events.

Guangzhou Chunyang Temple sent the most posts with ‘action’ function (Guangzhou Chunyang Temple 60 posts, Beijing Baiyun Temple 46 posts, and Xi’an Wanshou Baixiangong Temple 8 posts). And combined with posts with ‘community’ function,

interactive posts considered as of ‘online religion’ function got higher proportion in the three month’s posts of Guangzhou Chunyang Temple (157 posts in 443 posts,

35.4%) than the other two temples (209 posts in 717 posts, 29.1% for Beijing Baiyun Temple; 32 posts in 205 posts, 15.6% for XI’an Wanshou Baxiangong Temple). Xi’an

Wanshou Baixiangong Temple sent the least posts and sent the most posts with

‘information’ function in proportion among the three temples.

The data are also contrasted in term of each temple as follow.

Beijing Baiyun Temple: as shown in Figure 4.1, the situation that the temple's posts concentrate to the 'share knowledge of religion' function and 'report of an event' function is not common for the other two months. Even though the posts of 'share knowledge of religion' function are still majority in January and March, the second most posts are 'give recognition' posts (24 posts) in January while in March they are 'give recognition' posts and 'report of an event' posts with the same number (25 posts each). Unlike in February the second most posts is almost triple of the third most posts (60 'report of an event' posts vs. 21 'interact with individual' posts), the second most posts in January are 4 posts more than the third and in March the second most posts are 11 posts more than the third which is a smaller gap comparing with 53 posts between the first and the second largest number of posts.

Under 'information' concept, the posts locate diversely in three months. Despite the absolute majority of 'share knowledge of religion' post, 'introduce Taoist priest' and 'introduce religious arts' are emphasized in January and priority change to 'report an event' in March though the number is 35 less than in February.

Under 'community' concept, posts of each function locate in similar manner in January and March, but posts of 'celebrate a holy day' 'greet followers' 'guide visiting' and 'interact with individuals' functions rise in February while the 'give recognition' posts decrease. And the contents of the four kinds of increased posts are mainly about the activities during Spring Festival. And the number of 'action' posts does not differ much in three months.

Based on that, being consonance with the coming Spring Festival, communication strategy of Beijing Baiyun Temple turns to adopting relevant functions more to support their activities. Considering the diverse information shared, Beijing Baiyun Temple makes itself a comprehensive authority on Taoism.

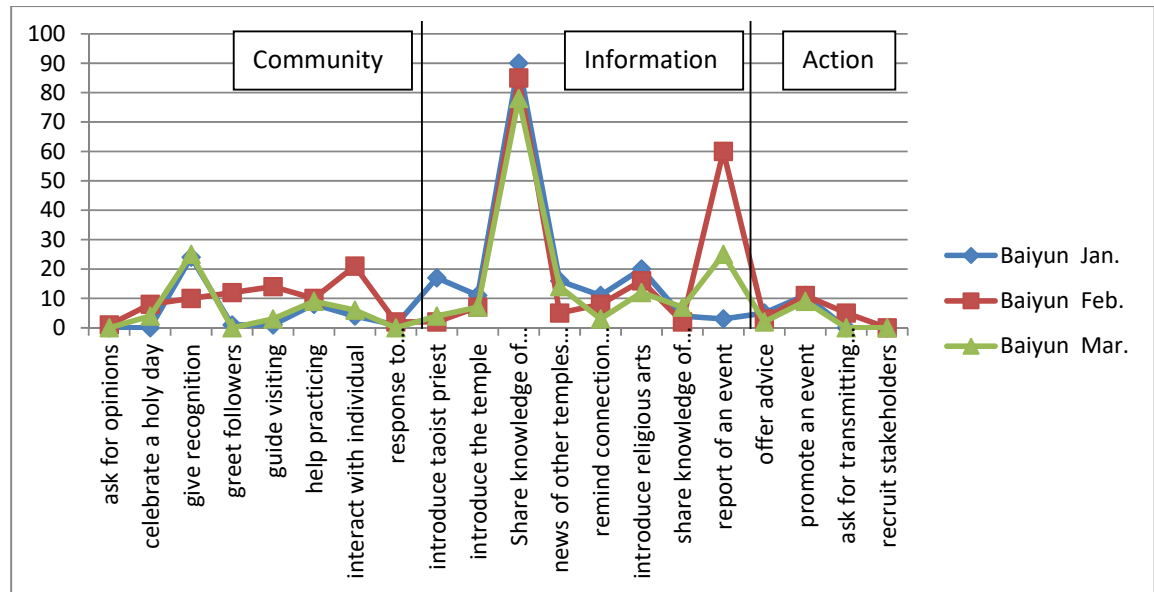


Figure 4.1: Three Months' Data of Beijing Baiyun Temple

Guangzhou Chunyang Temple: as shown in the Figure 4.2, the 'share knowledge of religion' posts and 'share knowledge of religious medicine' posts stay the top two most posts for all three months. 'Give recognition' posts decreased and 'remind connection between religion and secular culture' posts increased in February, and number of posts with other functions changes little in three months with fluctuation within 10 posts.

As in February secular custom is densely reached because of the Spring Festival, the temple sent more posts to relate the secular custom to Taoism thus to gain people's awareness on the religion. Attention also removed from giving

recognition to public to other processes. But the main strategy of communication does not change much comparing with what Beijing Baiyun Temple does. Taoist knowledge that related to secular daily life and posts under ‘online religion’ category are continually emphasized by Guangzhou Chunyang Temple.

Based on that, Guangzhou Chunyang Temple is building an amiable image to public.

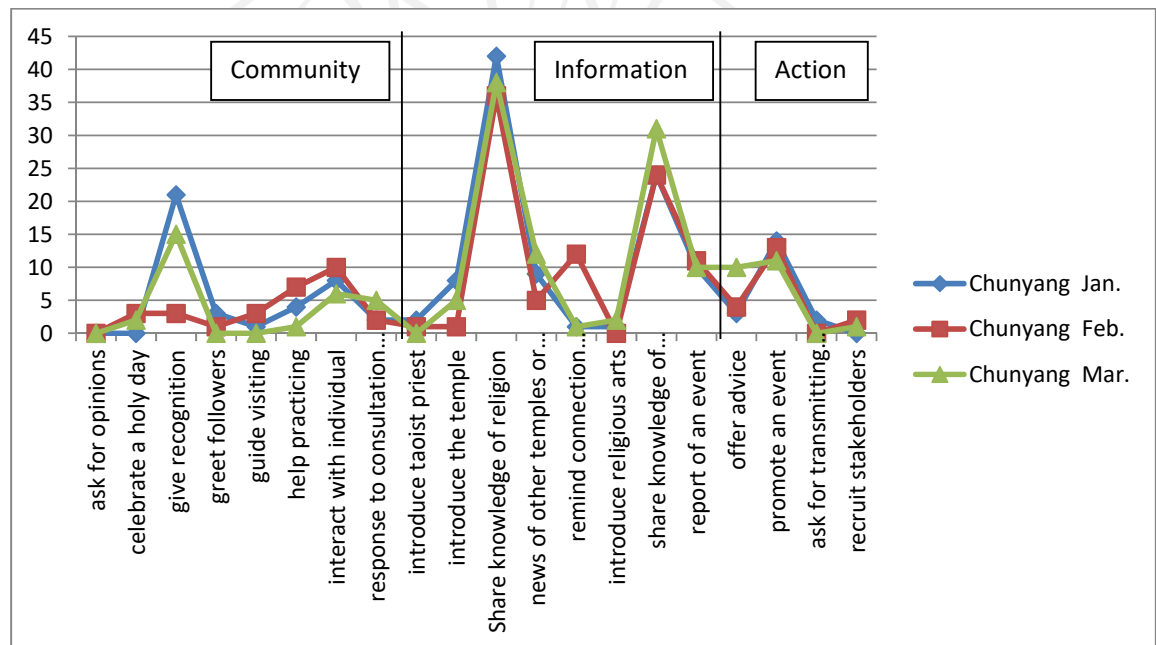


Figure 4.2: Three Months' Data of Guangzhou Chunyang Temple

Xi'an Wanshou Baxiangong Temple: as shown in Figure 4.3, ‘share knowledge of religion’ posts and ‘report an event’ posts take majority in all three months. No obvious wave emerges on number of posts in February. The Spring Festival did not influence the temple’s utilization of Weibo.

The ‘share knowledge of religion’ posts drops with 34 posts from January to February, and in March the posts are still 30 less. The reason lies in the change that in January there are 29 posts sharing article directly cited from ‘Xuan Men Dao Yu’ which is a internal magazine of the temple and the 29 posts all belong to ‘share knowledge of religion’ function. But in February and March, the temple stops doing that. According to that, the abnormal number of the posts on January is caused by temporary message strategy. Its utilizations of Weibo stay the same in three months.

Since so few contents available for analyzing either for each function or in total, no feature could be concluded for its strategy so far.

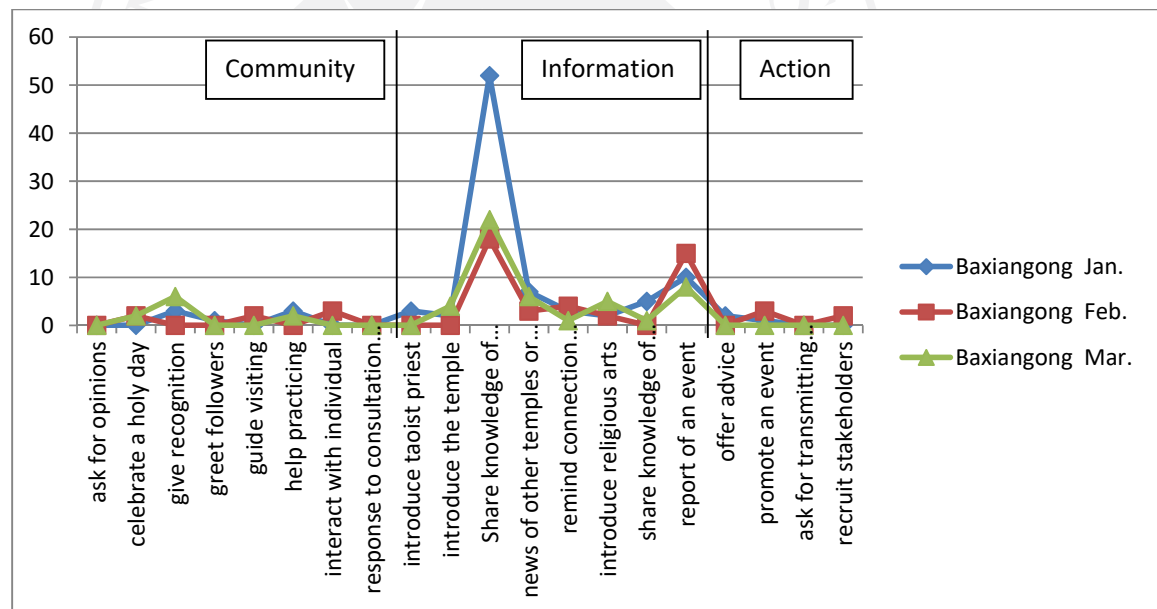


Figure 4.3: Three Months’ Data of Xi’an Wanshou Baxiangong Temple

According to that above, the three temples use Weibo in different manners. However, the general picture of the temples’ using Weibo does not change much, which means the posts for ‘religion online’ purpose took majority in all three months

(353 in 476 in January made up 74.2%, 316 in 474 in February made up 66.7%, 296 in 415 in March made up 71.3, and it was 70.7% on average during these three months). Even though the data is influenced by the Spring Festival in February, the temples' preference on using Weibo and their communication strategy remain the same through the three months.

4.4 Findings to Answer the Questions

According to the results above, the three research questions could be answered as below.

Research Question #1: How are Taoist organizations using Weibo for 'religion online' purpose?

Temples use Weibo to broadcast various messages to followers that covered many aspects of Taoism and relevant knowledge. Among those messages, what been used to introduce knowledge of Taoism took the majority (139 posts in 474, 29.3% of the total in February; 461 posts in 1365, 33.8% of the total in three months) while reports of temples' events followed (86 posts in 474, 18.1% of the total; 152 posts in 1365, 11.1% of the total in three months), and those for introducing the temples themselves were less (1.7% in February and 1.7% in three months). According to that, once using Weibo as a tool for publicity, temples take promoting Taoism as a religion to the first place, which is more important than introducing themselves. For Beijing Baiyun Temple and Xi'an Wanshou Baxiangong Temple, Scriptures and doctrine of Taoism were shared more than other kinds of knowledge both about religion and relevant fields, which leads to a literary and metaphysical narration of Taoism; Function of recording is also emphasized; temples report their events afterward more

than sharing real-time information during the process. For Guangzhou Chunyang Temple, it also has intension to shorten distance between Taoism and civilians by offering public with useful Taoist information for daily life, and Taoist medicine for health keeping is emphasized as important as knowledge of Taoism.

Research Question #2: How are Taoist organizations using Weibo for ‘online religion’ purpose?

Because the posts with ‘community’ function (116 in 474, 24.5% of the total in February; 284 in 1365, 21.0% in three months) are more than those of ‘action’ function (42 in 474, 8.9% of the total; 114 in 1365, 8.4 in three months), temples use Weibo to form sense of community more than provoke followers’ interactive behaviors. One-to-one communication in casual manner is used to build close relationship with other users. Several manners including encouraging, helping, daily greeting, and recognizing people are used to maintain relationship with followers. Helping recruiting participants for offline campaign is another objective for temples to interact with followers since posts for promoting events (27 in 474, 5.7% of the total; 73 in 1365 in February, 5.3% in three months) took the second large number under the ‘online religion’ category in all three months while the first large number differs as it is ‘interact with individual’ in February and ‘give recognition’ in other two months.

Research Question #3: what is the preference of Taoist organizations to adopt functions of Weibo?

Temples use Weibo for ‘religion online’ purpose more than for ‘online religion’ purpose. Posts of ‘information’ took the majority (317 in 474, 66.9% of the

total in February; 967 in 1365, 70.7% in three months).According to the research, most of the time temples use Weibo as an online publication to introduce Taoism and report their religious activities to their followers.



CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

5.1 Interpretation of the Findings

The findings gain recognition from the three temples. Three persons in charge of operating Weibo account from the three temples were informed with the findings, and they admitted that spreading knowledge of Taoism is the main purpose for them to use Weibo. Since they see their temples as a part of Taoism system as well as it is their responsibility to popularize Taoism, they think it is inevitable that Weibo is used to introduce knowledge of Taoism more than knowledge of their temples. Talking about interactive functions of Weibo, even though they all claim that they also pay attention to it and acknowledge the importance of interaction on social media, their cognition of interactive function is mainly limited to responding followers' action. That leads to a passive status of the temples in a mutual relationship with public, which means that the temples rarely initiate a communication with public intentionally; that is to say if no one take action first like leaving comments or requiring response that offer opportunities to interact, they will just go on with one-way informing. The passive attitude is shown as the priest of Guangzhou Chunyang Temple explained his respect for interactive function of Weibo: 'for formal Weibo accounts of domestic Taoist temples, 'information' functions are put at the first place, but that does not mean we ignore interactive functions. Our Weibo account seems lack of interactivities because we do not have many comments or forwards, but we try to answer every question that our followers asked.' (Lei Gaocheng, personal communication, November 12, 2016)

Findings of content analyze are also in consonance with their subjective willing. For Guangzhou Chunyang Temple, the operator has strong intention to serve followers; he treats Weibo as important as other media like official magazine, official website, and official publicity accounts on Wechat while he evaluates the posts on Weibo by quantity of comments and forwards, the posts with appreciable comments and forwards will be analyzed to investigate publics' preference then the temple will adjust its posts in future according to publics' preference. With that consideration, posts of Guangzhou Chunyang Temple owns the highest proportion of 'community' and 'action' posts in consonance with the 'serve followers' intention, and the contents are amiable and closer to the public's daily life comparing with other two temples. For the Xi'an Wanshou Baxiangong Temple, Weibo is seen the fourth important communication tool after official website, official publicity accounts on Wechat, and official blog, while the accuracy and expertise are two main points of its posts. In consonance with that, contents of the temple's posts are formal and with the smallest amount. For Beijing Baiyun Temple, though it also has official website and official publicity accounts on Wechat as other communication tools, the operator emphasize Weibo as the primary one, at the same time the temple sent the largest number of posts on weibo among the three.

5.2 Conclusion

The same as to other organizations and individuals, social media also offered lower-cost and more interactive tool to Taoist temples to communicate with public compared with traditional media. To draw a picture of the encounter of the technology and ancient religion, this paper studied on how Taoist temples use the tool with their

religious background. 474 posts sent on February were used to develop a typology of Taoist temples' microblogging functions. Then 891 more posts were recruited to recheck the typology and confirm findings with bigger database.

Although three temples have different strategies, there is something common in their using. First, for 'religion online' purpose, 8 kinds of posts are sent by the temples and sharing basic knowledge of Taoism is primary for the temples, the other 7 functions are 'introduce Taoist priest', 'introduce the temple', 'share news of other temples or relevant event', 'remind connection between religion and secular culture', 'introduce religion arts', 'share knowledge of religious medicine' and 'report an event'. Comparing with introducing their own status, the temples like to promote the religion first. The basic knowledge of Taoism also broadly covers 8 aspects, among which literary doctrines and metaphysical scriptures took the majority. Second, for 'online religion' purpose, 12 kinds of posts are sent by temples both for maintaining relationship with public and motivating behavioral response from audiences. The functions are 'ask for opinions', 'celebrate a holy day', 'give recognition', 'greet followers', 'guide visiting', 'help practicing', 'interact with individual', 'response to consultation and challenge', 'offer advice', 'promote an event', 'ask for transmitting message', and 'recruit stakeholders'. Temples take advantage of Weibo's interactive character intentionally that they interact with other users by giving public encouragement, greeting, guidance, recognition and conducting one-to-one individual communication. Provoking followers to join their offline activities is also an important occasion for the temples' interacting with public. Religious behaviors are also included: temples lead followers to celebrate religious holy days and to practice, by that a sense of community could be strengthened. The last, considering the

preference between sending message and interacting with public, Weibo is mainly used as online publication to introduce Taoism. Even temples concern interactive functions of the platform and some temple emphasize interaction especially on festival; posts of information make up majority of their contents all the time.

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

5.3 Limitation of this Study

This paper accomplished a case study on primary Chinese Taoist temples' utilizing social media. To gain a more general picture, more temples or other kinds of religious organization such as religious unions and posts sent in more than three months could be recruited building a bigger database to be studied. A rough typology

emerged in coding process under scheme of prior research; discrepancies of coding could be discussed to form a more detailed and accurate typology.

5.4 Recommendation for Application

20 kinds of contents emerge as reflection of Weibo's functions utilized by Taoist Temples, other Taoism Temples, religious individuals, or organizations of other religion could choose any variety from the 20 to form their own content matrix, and they can also develop new type of contents based on this existing category.

5.5 Recommendation for Further Research

This paper has found that some temples conducted a literary and metaphysical narration of Taoism by sending scripture and doctrine as major content. How does that influence identity of Taoism in audiences' perspective and whether it is helpful or not to promote Taoism to broader public could be studied in future research. The effects of all those temples' communication should also be concerned.

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

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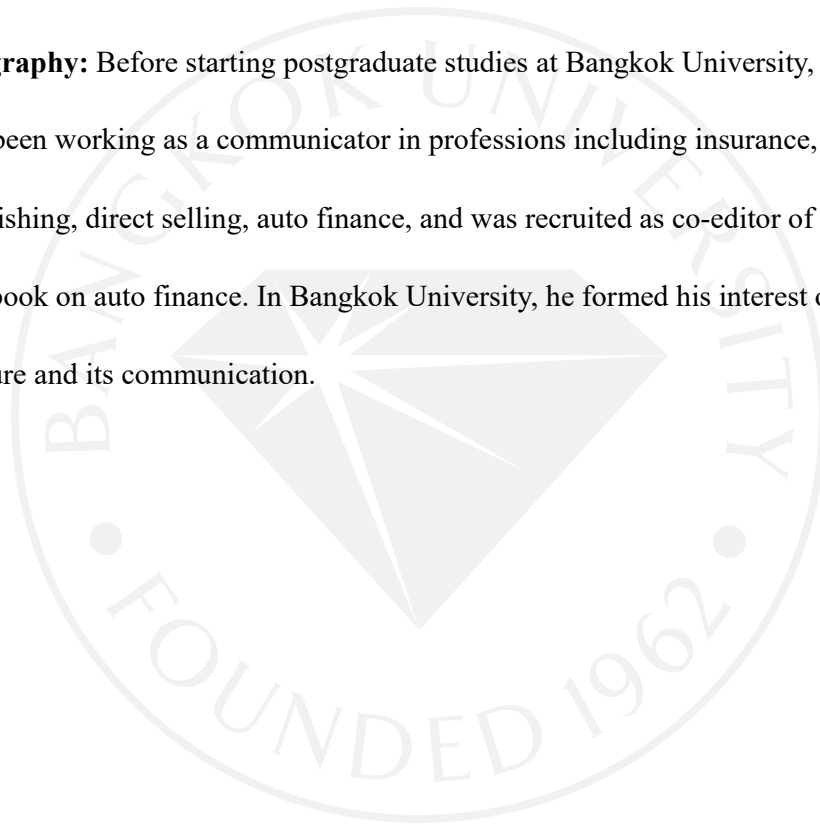
Name – Surname: Xinyu Zhang

Address: 4004/731 Rama4 Road, Phra Khanong, Klongtoey, Bangkok, 10110

Contact Number: 09-9576-8638

E-mail: Zhang.xiny@bumail.net

Biography: Before starting postgraduate studies at Bangkok University, the author has been working as a communicator in professions including insurance, education, publishing, direct selling, auto finance, and was recruited as co-editor of vocational textbook on auto finance. In Bangkok University, he formed his interest on religious culture and its communication.



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Soi _____ Street Rama 4
Sub-district Phra Khanong District Klongtoey
Province Bangkok Postal Code 10110 being a Bangkok
University student, student ID 7580300825

Degree level ☐ Bachelor ☒ Master ☐ Doctorate

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