

‘Content Dissemination’ and ‘Interaction Patterns’ of Chinese Fans in SOTUS The Series Fan Communities: A Case Study of Weibo CP Super Topic

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Abstract

This study aimed to explore Chinese fans' content dissemination behaviors, dominant interaction patterns and internal communication ecosystem within the SOTUS The Series Weibo CP super topic. Adopting a qualitative methodology, this study analyzed ten high-engagement posts released between 2022 and 2024 and conducted online focus group discussions with sixteen active fans. This study referenced participatory communication theory, reception theory and social identity theory. The research objectives were to explore the motivations driving Chinese fans of SOTUS The Series to participate in Weibo CP super topic content dissemination, and to identify their frequently engaged content types and corresponding interaction patterns. The findings revealed three core interaction modes and four major content categories that jointly formed a stable cross-cultural communication system. Through reposting, commenting and fan creation, fans facilitated China–Thailand cross-cultural exchange, which effectively strengthened a sense of group belonging and community cohesion. This research supplemented transnational fandom studies and offered valuable directions for future multi-platform, mixed-method research.

Keywords: Content Dissemination, Interaction Patterns, Weibo CP super topic, SOTUS The Series

1. Introduction

In the era of traditional media, fans had very limited access to information about overseas celebrities and film and television works. Television, newspapers and magazines were the main information sources, which were monotonous and obviously time-lagged. The emergence of social media has changed this situation. Fans can follow their idols' latest updates in real time and interact with like-minded online users. Audiences are no longer mere information recipients but also participants in content production (Jenkins & Deuze, 2008), a feature that is particularly prominent in current online communities.

Since its launch in 2009, Weibo has gradually become a major platform for Chinese fans to gather and communicate. As a comprehensive social platform, Weibo provides the super topic function for interest-based communities, while CP super topics are special fan communities focusing on celebrity or character pairings. Its super topic function has created exclusive communication spaces for fans, where users can freely post texts, images and videos. Meanwhile, the platform maintains community order and ensures a stable communication environment (Yao, 2021). Fans from all regions gather here to form online communities featuring content dissemination, emotional communication and identity construction (Ma et al., 2021). Driven by media communication, an increasing number of Chinese audiences have turned their attention to overseas film and television productions. Premiered in 2016, the Thai drama SOTUS The Series has attracted numerous Chinese fans thanks to its original plot, excellent cast and distinctive Boys' Love theme. In China, Weibo has become the primary venue for fan communication (Wang, 2022).

The CP super topic of SOTUS The Series on Weibo serves as the main activity hub for Chinese fans. Fans post content related to the drama and its cast, engage in interactions, and share various practical information for new followers. They actively repost updates about the actors and the series, translate Thai content into Chinese, and create derivative works based on their understanding of the drama. These practices have won wide recognition within the community, boosted the popularity of the series and strengthened fans' group identity. Weibo's interactive functions including likes, comments and reposts allow fans to fully express their feelings, generate emotional resonance and further expand communication influence (Zhao, 2024). As one of China's largest and most influential social media platforms, Weibo plays a vital role in the dissemination of fan culture, interpersonal interaction, community building, information circulation and content creation (Han, 2020), making such fan communities worthy of in-depth research.

This study takes the CP super topic of SOTUS The Series on Weibo as the research subject and analyzes

Chinese fans' behaviors in content dissemination and interaction. Theoretically, this research can deepen academic understanding of fan culture and enrich empirical studies on transnational fan groups in the context of social media. Practically, it presents a clear picture of how overseas film and television works spread on Chinese social platforms and sorts out the behavioral logic of fan groups, providing references for subsequent studies on fan interaction and content dissemination.

2. Objectives

- 1) To study the motivations that lead Chinese fans to actively participate in the content dissemination of Weibo CP super topic.
- 2) To examine the types of content that Chinese fans in the Weibo CP super topic of SOTUS The Series most frequently engage with, and to explore the interaction patterns reflected in such content engagement.

3. Literature Review

3.1 Participatory Communication Theory

First proposed by Brazilian educator Paulo Freire, this theory holds that communication should proceed dialogically rather than relying on one-way information indoctrination. It stresses audiences' active participation, feedback and reflection (Freire, 1970/2000). The participatory communication theory emphasizes that audiences can break away from one-way information indoctrination and realize dialogic co-creation via online spaces. Chinese social platforms including Weibo, Tieba and Bilibili establish multi-layered participation channels for fans (Wang, 2019). When further applied to social media and online communities, it highlights communication features such as user dominance, interaction-driven operation and collaborative content creation. In the SOTUS the series Weibo CP super topic, fans independently post drama reviews, character analyses, plot interpretations and derivative creative works. Such spontaneous content production without official intervention forms a typical decentralized communication structure and fully demonstrates the dominant role of audiences.

3.2 Reception Theory

Reception theory shifts the focus of media research from creators and texts to audiences' interpretation and construction of meaning, concentrating on how audiences receive, perceive and interact with media content. Hans Robert Jauss argued that the meaning of literary and film works is not static. Instead, readers and viewers actively construct meaning based on their own perspectives, experiences and social contexts during the appreciation process (Wang & Song, 2024). Stuart Hall's Encoding/Decoding Model states that producers encode specific meanings into media texts, while audiences interpret them in three ways: dominant reading, negotiated reading and oppositional reading (Hall, 1980). In this study, Chinese fans actively decode and recreate content related to SOTUS The Series and posts in its CP super topic, reconstructing plot meanings through fan works and group discussions. The Weibo CP super topic serves as a sustained online venue for interpretation and communication, which directly verifies the core viewpoint of reception theory: audiences are not passive recipients of media texts, but active co-creators with independent interpretive capabilities.

3.3 Social Identity Theory

Put forward by Henri Tajfel and John Turner, social identity theory states that individuals establish self-perception based on their group membership and develop emotional bonds and a sense of belonging within the group (Tajfel & Turner, 2001). The theory assumes that people define their self-concept and self-esteem by identifying with social groups. They tend to categorize themselves as members of an in-group and others as out-groups, and generally favor their own group to enhance self-worth. Social identity refers to the self-image individuals derive from the groups they belong to, as well as the emotions and values they embrace as group members (Yan, 2016). People shape their self-concept via group affiliation, which further influences their social attitudes and behaviors (Yang, 2025). The theory consists of three core processes: social categorization, social identification and social comparison. Fans of SOTUS The Series form a collective group identity in the corresponding Weibo CP super topic by using exclusive community slang and taking part in group activities. Group identity strengthens community cohesion and motivates fans to continuously engage in online interaction and content dissemination.

3.4 Concepts of Fandom and Fan Communities

Fandom represents groups and related cultural practices formed around cultural phenomena, and fans are capable of producing symbols and reconstructing meanings. As Henry Jenkins put it, fans act as "textual poachers" who recreate and adapt official works. Shared hobbies and emotional connections unite fans, and fandom identity has become part of individual self-identification.

Fan communities feature interaction, group identity and organized operation. This study's community consists of fans of SOTUS The Series and its lead actors Krist and Singto. Evolving from loose exchanges on early online platforms, modern fan communities have formed structured teams including data groups, moderation teams and translation groups after the launch of Weibo Super topic. These communities have four core attributes: content creation and sharing, group identity, organized activities, and social interaction. In this CP super topic, fans have shifted from individual participation to collective collaboration. Active content production, dissemination and group activities further enhance community cohesion and collective identity.

4. Research Methodology

4.1 Selection of High-interaction Weibo CP Posts

This study extracted fan posts published between 2022 and 2024 within the SOTUS The Series CP super topic as textual research samples. This three-year research period was chosen for practical reasons: the main cast held more frequent public appearances and official fan events throughout these years. Driven by frequent star-related activities, fans created a large volume of diverse original fan works. A wide range of fan-generated content flourished during this period, which supplies abundant multi-dimensional materials for subsequent thematic analysis.

Three fan participation metrics (likes, comments, reposts) were collected for every post, as listed in Table 1 alongside each sample's serial number and release date. All posts from 2022 to 2024 were ranked by the total of these three indicators, and the top 10 highest-engagement posts were selected as samples.

Table1 Engagement Statistics of Selected Weibo Posts

Post number	Publishing Date	Likes	Comments	Reposts
1	2022.08.20	1354	224	387
2	2022.11.23	1179	232	175
3	2023.10.21	895	85	130
4	2022.08.24	638	55	29
5	2024.06.16	440	42	88
6	2024.07.04	445	52	68
7	2023.10.22	427	36	65
8	2022.08.20	299	22	62
9	2022.05.03	266	45	12
10	2023.10.13	213	18	28

These ten high-interaction posts cover multiple mainstream content types within the super topic, including location check-in sharing, discussions of cast interviews, fan-edited visuals, plot analysis and official event summaries. Collecting representative high-discussion content from each category ensures the subsequent analysis will not be confined to a single theme, enabling comprehensive observation of fan interactive behaviours. Likes, comments and reposts are all calculated in the screening process to fully reflect overall fan engagement inside this fandom community. With the 10 target samples confirmed, all full texts and interaction data of these posts were compiled as the textual dataset for analysis.

4.2 Online Focus Group Discussion

This study adopts online focus group discussion, combined with the textual analysis of Weibo posts. The focus group discussion further explores fans' internal motivations, interaction preferences and community perceptions.

All participants were recruited from active fans within the SOTUS Weibo CP super topic. Participants maintain stable and long-term participation in this community, including browsing fan works, participating in comment section exchanges or creating fan content. All participants took part in this academic research voluntarily.

Strict confidentiality standards were implemented throughout data collection. All personally identifiable information such as usernames and personal profile details was completely deleted during data sorting, all written records of group conversations were only applied to academic analysis.

A semi-structured question framework was designed according to the research objectives, divided into two main dimensions: content dissemination and interaction patterns. The complete list of discussion questions is shown in Table 2, and all dialogue generated during the group talks was transcribed into text data for subsequent coding.

Table2 List of Questions for Focus Group Discussions

Classification of the problem	Problem
Content Dissemination	1. What types of content do you typically publish in CP super topic (e.g., images, fan fictions, videos)?
	2. What factors do you consider before posting content (e.g., audience response, creativity, trends)?
	3. Have you ever copied or been inspired by other fans' content styles? Why?
	4. What kind of content you publish that usually gets the most engagement (likes, comments, retweets)?
	5. Have you ever collaborated with other fans to create or edit content?
	6. How do you decide which CP moments or interactions are worth turning into content?
	7. How do you feel when your content is widely shared or discussed in the community?
	8. Have you ever adjusted your content strategy to gain more visibility or resonance?
Interaction patterns	1. What is your usual mode of interaction?
	2. Are you usually the initiator or responder of interactions? Why?
	3. Can you share a memorable interaction (positive or negative) you've had in a Super topic?
	4. Do interactions with others affect your willingness to leave or post content?
	5. How do you feel about the emotional climate of fan discussions in Weibo CP super topic?
	6. Have you built stronger relationships or offline friendships through these interactions?

4.3 Qualitative Analysis

This study applied Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-stage reflexive thematic analysis framework to two independent datasets with differentiated analytical workflows, and the complete analytical procedure is illustrated in Figure 1.

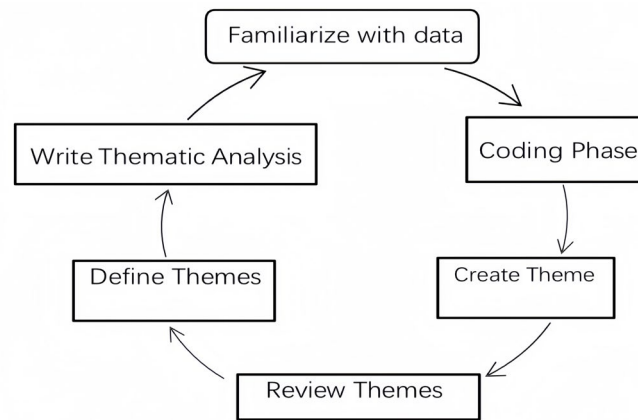


Figure 1 Braun and Clarke (2006) six-stage model

The 10 selected high-interaction public Weibo posts, including original texts and all comment threads, were imported into NVivo 15 for line-by-line initial coding and thematic clustering to identify recurring fan content dissemination strategies and interaction patterns. Verbatim transcripts from online focus group discussions were processed via manual thematic analysis. Focus group interview questions were designed around two core dimensions: content dissemination and interaction patterns. Instead of relying on pre-defined fixed themes, this study extracted emerging themes organically from participants' open-ended responses, and representative quotations from participants were preserved to support thematic interpretation in later chapters.

Intra-coder reliability was adopted to mitigate subjective bias in coding. After finishing the first round of coding for Weibo textual materials, all coding nodes were archived for a one-week interval before a full second recoding. Any ambiguous or inconsistent coding labels were unified and revised. Final stable thematic categories were confirmed only if consistent classification results appeared across both coding sessions, establishing a high degree of consistency in the analysis.

Rigorous data privacy protection measures were implemented throughout the whole research process. All public Weibo textual data were fully anonymized before analysis by removing every identifiable personal marker such as usernames, creator IDs and profile tags, with only neutral discussion content reserved for thematic analysis. Regarding the focus groups, all participants received clear written advance information about the research purpose, data usage and voluntary participation rights. They provided explicit informed consent prior to the discussion, with the right to withdraw from the study at any time. Additionally, all chat records were permanently de-identified after transcription, with no sensitive personal information collected throughout the entire research process.

5. Research Results

This study analyzes popular posts and focus group records collected from the Weibo CP super topic Teamperaya, and sorts out three major fan interaction patterns and four core content types within this fan community. The three interaction patterns are emotional interaction, belonging-oriented interaction and informational interaction. The four content types are star-focused content, plot-focused content, fan-created content and interactive discussion content. These interaction patterns and content types interact with each other, maintain long-term activities of the fan community, and also realize cross-cultural communication among Chinese fans.

5.1 Motivations and Forms of Fan Participation in Content Dissemination

This section explores the internal factors motivating Chinese fans to create, repost and discuss content within the SOTUS Weibo CP super topic. Based on coded Weibo textual data and recorded online focus group discussions, this subsection analyzes the psychological drivers behind fans' active content participation and dissemination.

For emotional interaction, fans release personal inner feelings via comment and repost functions under all types of community posts. They express fondness for SOTUS The Series and its two lead actors Krist and

Singto, and related emotional texts will be widely forwarded by other fans inside the super topic to exchange individual inner thoughts. Years of following this CP community create shared emotional memories among fans, which easily generate emotional resonance when they view similar fan content. Fans carry out emotional communication through commenting and reposting to gain spiritual comfort and a sense of satisfaction in daily life. Many focus group discussants mentioned that the Teamperaya CP super topic acts as a stable spiritual harbor to ease pressure and negative emotions in real life, which becomes a key reason for fans to frequently browse and communicate within the community.

One representative comment extracted from the screened top 10 high-interaction Weibo posts stated, “Honestly, the second their voices came together, I couldn’t hold back my tears. They’re my youth, my white moonlight.” This line demonstrates that the series and its lead actors have become irreplaceable emotional symbols for fans, and such deep-rooted nostalgia constitutes the fundamental trigger of large-scale comment and reposting interactions across the CP super topic.

A prominent remark from one focus group participant illustrates the psychological function of the fan community: “For me, scrolling through the super topic every day has become my emotional anchor. When I’m in a bad mood, browsing posts and chatting instantly lifts my spirits.” (FG 2-3). This quotation reveals a vital function of the CP super topic: it constructs an exclusive emotional buffer zone separated from real-life troubles. Unlike daily social circles that cannot understand fans’ obsession with Thai BL works, this online space is filled with consistent warmth and shared passion. When individuals encounter frustration or negative emotions offline, they can acquire instant emotional comfort merely by immersing themselves in discussions about the drama and its leads. This explains why participants maintain daily, long-term visits to the super topic, forming habitual emotional interaction behaviors. Other focus group participants echoed this perspective. Most interviewees mentioned the loneliness of lacking people around them who share the same fandom interest before joining the super topic; the sense of gratification brought by mutual emotional sharing with fellow fans continuously drives them to comment, repost and even produce derivative fan content to sustain ongoing emotional communication.

In terms of belonging-oriented interaction, fans will intensively post and repost relevant content on the drama, actor anniversaries and other important commemorative nodes to form unified group behaviors inside the community. Exclusive community symbols and collective vocabulary such as “Peraya” frequently appear in fan comments, reposts and original fan works. As reflected in focus group sharing, fans are bonded by the same love for SOTUS The Series and the CP pair of Krist and Singto, thus forming a unique group identity. They take part in collective voting, anniversary interaction and other group activities, continuously reinforcing the sense of community belonging. This stable group attachment is the primary factor that keeps most fans actively engaged over the long-term on this CP super topic.

Empirical evidence further supports the formation of collective belonging among fans. Slogans circulating within the high-interaction Weibo samples embody unified group cognition, including “We’ll always be here, Peraya as one! KristSingto forever!” Labeled with the exclusive fandom term “Peraya”, the slogan draws clear in-group boundaries and encapsulates shared nostalgic memories that unite all participants as a collective community.

One representative excerpt from records from focus group discussions fully reflects the identity value brought by the fan community: “None of my friends really follow the Thai drama fandom, so after joining the super topic, it felt like I’d finally found my people. Having fellow fans around is such a wonderful gift and motivation—it pushes me to share more of my videos and keep up with what everyone else is into lately.” (FG 2-6). Separated from fandom companions in offline daily life, fans turn to the super topic as a designated communal space, where mutual recognition encourages sustained content creation and consistent group engagement to solidify shared group identity. Similar sentiments emerged among other participants, many mentioned building deep, long-lasting friendships within the super topic, and such intimate interpersonal connections, rather than temporary fondness for celebrities, maintain their continuous participation in group activities over the years. Some also recalled large-scale collective activities such as cross-regional voting campaigns, which further strengthen the collective sense of honor and belonging of all group members.

As for informational interaction, fans actively supplement star schedules, interview materials and other practical information in comment zones, and voluntarily answer questions raised by new community members. High-value fan posts will be continuously reposted to expand information coverage within the super topic. According to focus group data, fans from different regions rely on mutual information exchange to solve puzzles about Thai campus culture, drama shooting locations and offline fan meeting participation channels. Fans take the

initiative to translate Thai interview clips and sort out drama background knowledge to provide reference materials for fan creation. New fans put forward questions about the drama and celebrity dynamics while senior fans respond proactively, building a sustained mutual aid information circulation environment inside the CP fan community.

Textual data retrieved from the Weibo super topic corpus delivers tangible evidence of such information exchange practices. One fan's firsthand narrative states: "I'd checked in at Rangsit University and Rama VIII Bridge just the day before, and then the next day I got to watch them sing the theme songs of both Season 1 and Season 2 live at the fan meeting. This time, I've finally had my dream come true because I've visited every place I've been longing to go to." This personal account evokes follow-up questions from new fans about location-specific details, constructing a sustained bidirectional information-sharing dynamic throughout the community.

A representative focus group discussion excerpt further unpacks the self-organized information ecosystem maintained by fandom members: "I prefer sharing their latest updates. Sometimes, if there are inaccuracies in the translations, other fans will correct them in the comments section. This makes it easier for everyone else in the CP super topic to stay informed about what they are up to lately, eliminating the sense of distance and unfamiliarity caused by geographical and linguistic differences." (FG 1-6). Hindered by transnational linguistic and geographical barriers, fans depend on communal resource sharing to acquire up-to-date and verified celebrity-related information, with peer proofreading mechanisms guaranteeing the reliability of circulated content. Additional narratives from interviewees expand on the multifaceted mutual-aid framework of the community. Multiple participants noted that they systematically sort Thai cultural and series background materials to facilitate peer fan fictions creation, while continuous community translation and resource collation substantially reduce information acquisition costs for newly recruited fans.

5.2 Major Types of Fan-Shared Thematic Content

Based on coded posts and comment excerpts from SOTUS The Series Weibo CP super topic alongside records from focus group discussions, four core content categories are established. The analysis examines high-participation fan content within the community and explores the interaction patterns shown through engagement with these contents.

Star-focused content occupies the highest traffic proportion of all posts on the Teamperaya CP super topic. This content type centers on Krist and Singto, covering celebrity daily updates, media interviews, live stage performances and fan meeting recordings. Statistics of the ten selected high-interaction posts proved that posts about actor interviews and joint stage shows obtain far more likes, comments and reposts than other content forms. During focus group discussions, several fans mentioned that Krist and Singto have turned into irreplaceable emotional symbols and youthful memories after the drama's release. Fans spontaneously release and forward star-related materials, and carry out in-depth discussions in comment areas regarding their real-life interactions, which continuously promotes the spread of star-focused content and strengthens the emotional bond between fans and the two lead actors.

Textual data extracted from the study's Weibo corpus provides empirical evidence of this star-oriented interactive tendency. One representative fan statement reads: "Whether or not they collaborate on future projects, I believe they'll share the screen and have opportunities to appear together. If they do appear together, I'll be overjoyed; if not, I'll forever be a Peraya." The quote encapsulates the enduring, long-term emotional investment fans hold toward the two celebrities, regardless of future collaborative arrangements.

A typical excerpt from focus group discussion further contextualizes fans' consistent engagement with star-related content: "I became a fan of the real-person CP "Singto and Krist" (nicknamed "Lion and Nuan nuan" by fans) after watching SOTUS, and this is the only real-person CP I ship. As a result, I re-downloaded Weibo, which I had uninstalled years earlier, to follow their CP super topic." (FG 1-3). Driven by profound affection for this celebrity pairing, fans actively rebuild their social media participation pathways to track real-time updates centered on Krist and Singto. Supplementary perspectives shared by other interviewees elaborate on diversified fan engagement behaviours. Many devote daily leisure time to browsing cross-platform footage and fan-edited clips of the duo, while a large number of "Mama fans" (fans who hold maternal affection toward the actors) consistently repost fan art, fan fictions and daily snippets to maintain active star-focused discussion within the community. These persistent emotional attachments and content production practices fundamentally explain the dominant prevalence of star-focused content within the super topic's overall content structure.

Combining coded statistical data from the Weibo corpus and authentic narratives provided by focus group participants, this type of star-focused content mainly generates emotional interaction in the fan super topic. Fans

share personal fondness, youthful memories and sentimental feelings about Krist and Singto through reposts and comment exchanges. Such consistent emotional expression builds collective sentimental resonance, which forms the core emotional communication logic of this cross-cultural fan community.

Plot-focused content drives both emotional interaction and belonging-oriented interaction within the fan community. Shared nostalgic discussion of classic drama moments unites dispersed individual fans and consolidates unified group identity through continuous content engagement. This content category takes classic scenes, iconic lines, original soundtracks and filming locations of SOTUS The Series as core creation carriers. Nostalgic posts related to the drama still maintain strong communication vitality many years after the drama aired. Records from focus group discussions mentioned that fans still rewatch the original drama and fan-edited clips frequently even though the series concluded a long time ago. Every release of nostalgic topics sparks heated discussions within the CP super topic. Iconic shots such as the bridge hand-holding scene and the gear badge symbol frequently trigger fans' shared memories, allowing plot-related content to retain lasting discussion momentum inside the fan community.

Fan postings and comments within the super topic vividly reflect fans' enduring emotional attachment to the drama's classic plot settings and iconic dialogue. One typical fan comment directly revisits the series' classic lines and narrative atmosphere: "I don't like boys, I just like P'Arthit.' 'I don't know what the right distance is.' These lines and scenes flashed through my mind again." Such commentary demonstrates how deeply the drama's core story and representative dialogue have settled in audience memory. Even when fans respond to the cast's real-life performances, their perceptions often reference key plot moments. For example, observations regarding the duo's hand-holding gestures during concerts frequently evoke recollections of the iconic bridge scene in SOTUS, showing that current fan experiences continuously resonate with established plot memories.

A representative focus group statement further explains the persistent appeal of plot-focused content within the community: "This show feels quite chaste on the surface, yet the leads' relationship is exquisitely delicate. Its slow-burn development stirs up the feeling of first love for me. I struggled to get into the first few episodes at first, but it touched me more and more as I watched on—especially the hand-holding scene by the bridge. To this day, this drama remains my all-time favorite." (FG 2-2). The series' subtle romantic storytelling and symbolic visual moments create long-lasting emotional impressions that sustain ongoing fan nostalgia. Other participants similarly emphasized the drama's unique and irreplaceable status within their viewing experience. Many fans repeatedly revisit the series and gain renewed understanding through each rewatch, continuously generating new plot-based reflections and emotional interpretations. These stable nostalgic sentiments and sustained narrative engagement fundamentally support the continuous output and enduring popularity of plot-focused content in the super topic's overall content ecosystem.

Fan-created content mainly supports informational interaction within the fan community. Volunteer translations, edited clips and interpretative fan works break cross-language barriers and build the core channel for information exchange among all community members. Diverse forms of fan-created works circulate in the super topic, including highlight montages, translated interview transcripts, fan fictions and hand-drawn illustrations. These derivative productions greatly enrich the overall content ecosystem. Translation and cultural interpretation posts stand out most significantly, bridging communication gaps between Chinese and Thai fans by removing language limits. Members of content creation groups regularly share original works to join community activities, ensuring constant updates of fan-created content on the super topic.

Such fan derivatives and their accompanying comment interactions directly reflect the community's strong demand and widespread recognition of grassroots creative outputs. Volunteer translation constitutes one of the most essential and popular fan creation practices, in which enthusiastic fans independently translate Thai interviews, program clips and celebrity daily content for the whole community. One typical user comment fully demonstrates the practical value of such translated creations: "So sweet! Check your DMs—there's a little bit more. Please translate it." This interactive dialogue illustrates that fan-led translation productions effectively eliminate cross-linguistic obstacles, compensate for information asymmetry caused by geographical and cultural distance, and enable ordinary community members to access first-hand celebrity and program resources that they could not otherwise obtain. Such grassroots interpretive work serves as a fundamental informational guarantee for sustainable community communication.

A representative focus group discussion further clarifies the operational mode and community contribution of fan creation behaviors: "I make edited videos of Singto and Krist and post them on Weibo, including clips from their new dramas, old dramas and daily updates. When I post them, many people chat in the

comments, talking about the little details in the videos. Occasionally, some people ask about the relevant cultural address terms in them.” (FG 1-4). Beyond simple video editing, fan creators continuously undertake cultural interpretation and popularization work within their productions, triggering ongoing discussion of cross-cultural details among community members. Combined with various derivative outputs such as fan fiction and hand-drawn illustrations, these spontaneous creative practices continuously diversify the super topic’s content structure. Such persistent grassroots creation and voluntary knowledge sharing fundamentally sustain the abundance, activity and self-operating vitality of fan-created content within the community.

Interactive discussion content mainly drives informational interaction within the fan community, while sustained collective exchanges also generate belonging-oriented interaction. Practical consultation and idea-sharing threads deliver event-related information to all participants, and fans with shared interests build stable communal bonds through consistent group communication. Interactive discussion content covers plot analysis, character interpretation, Thai cultural exchange and practical consultation about offline activities. The super topic regularly holds themed discussion activities on anniversaries and celebrity events to attract wide participation from community members. Records from focus group discussions show that discussion threads involve a broad range of practical topics. For new participants, these posts act as an entry point to integrate into the community; for long-term community members, they provide a platform to exchange opinions and maintain steady interpersonal ties with other participants.

A large proportion of interactive discussion content originates from event-related posts centering on the cast’s live performances and fan meeting activities. Such performance-themed posts easily arouse community members’ willingness for communication and information exchange. Under posts featuring concert and fan meeting footage, practical consultation frequently emerges within comment sections. One fan leaves a practical question seeking participation information: “Can anyone help? How do I buy tickets for this meet-and-greet? Are there any channels available?” This inquiry sparks continuous exchanges among fans in the comment area. Experienced fans share official ticketing platforms, price ranges and venue information in response. The conversation then expands to past offline events: one fan replies that the two actors have held a large number of fan meetings across China in the past two years, and another long-time fan adds supplementary information, stating “Yeah, I remember they used to have 22 fan meetings before.” This back-and-forth consultation and experience sharing in comment zones forms the core form of interactive discussion content in the super topic.

A typical excerpt from focus group discussion further explains the community’s strong reliance on interactive discussion threads: “I prefer reading the latest updated comment interactions. Especially when it comes to analyzing plotlines and characters’ psychology, I feel the urge to join the discussions and express my own opinions. When many people agree with and supplement my ideas, it’s an amazing experience to have such a collision of thoughts, and I get a strong sense of belonging to a collective.” (FG 1-5). Whether for plot interpretation or practical information consultation, open discussion threads satisfy fans’ needs for opinion exchange and problem-solving. Additional participant accounts further verify the practical value of such interactive content. Constrained by cross-border information barriers, domestic fans rely heavily on real-time updates and experience sharing within super topic discussion comment sections. These ongoing opinion collisions and practical mutual-aid dialogues fundamentally enrich the content diversity of the super topic and maintain the stable output of interactive discussion content within the overall content structure.

5.3 Synthesis of Fan Content Types and Community Interaction Patterns

Drawing on the detailed thematic analysis in Sections 5.1 and 5.2, this subsection integrates the correlations between the four identified categories of fan content and three core community interaction patterns. Table 3 systematically maps these relationships, with its third column summarizing empirical evidence obtained from coded excerpts of ten high-interaction Weibo posts and participant narratives from focus group discussions to validate each matching correlation.

Table3 Mapping of Content Types, Interaction Patterns & Empirical Support

Fan Content Type	Matching Interaction Patterns	Supporting Empirical Data Materials
Star-focused content	Primary: Emotional interaction Secondary: Belonging-oriented interaction	Weibo celebrity posts reflect fans' emotional outpouring; focus group transcripts interpret collective sentimental resonance among fans
Plot-focused content	Primary: Emotional interaction Secondary: Belonging-oriented interaction	Nostalgic drama commentaries on Weibo show shared fondness for the series; focus group transcripts elaborate fans' unified memories of plot scenes
Fan-created content	Primary: Informational interaction	Weibo fan fictions, translated resources and fan-made materials record resource-sharing behavior; focus group transcripts capture fans' practical information exchange about fan creation
Interactive discussion content	Primary: Informational interaction Secondary: Belonging-oriented interaction	Weibo consultation threads for fan meetings and tickets record information demands; focus group transcripts explain the sense of community built through repeated mutual communication

Community interaction patterns are fundamentally shaped by the functional attributes of different fan content. Star-focused content and plot-focused content carry collective fandom emotional experiences, which predominantly drive emotional interaction. Continuous affective resonance strengthens communal identity and fosters stable belonging-oriented interaction within the community. Fan-created content, including fan fictions and translated resources, focuses on creative production and community resource sharing, mainly generating informational interaction. Interactive discussion content centers on fan communication and opinion exchange. Sustained bilateral dialogue strengthens interpersonal bonds, developing interactive characteristics that combine both informational exchange and community belonging.

Combining two sets of empirical materials, coded Weibo excerpts and focus group discussion excerpts, this subsection integrates fan content types and community interaction patterns analyzed in previous sections, sorts out their corresponding connections, and intuitively demonstrates the matched interaction patterns of all content types within the context of community content dissemination.

5.4 Interplay of Content Dissemination and Interaction Patterns

Drawing upon all textual evidence presented in the prior sections, including coded excerpts of high-interaction Weibo posts and focus group discussion excerpts, this subsection synthesizes the four classifications of fan-generated content and three modes of community interaction to examine their reciprocal dynamic relationships.

Empirical analysis built upon the aforementioned corpus reveals that content themes and interaction modes are intrinsically interconnected and mutually reinforcing within this cross-cultural fan community, jointly constituting an integrated communication ecosystem. Diverse fan-created content establishes the fundamental framework for differentiated interactive modalities. In turn, fans' intrinsic participation incentives motivate consistent reposting, secondary creation, and interpretative commentary. Such sustained participatory practices broaden the circulation scope of fan content and sustain the stable operation of the super topic's community ecosystem.

Coded Weibo textual excerpts and focus group discussion excerpts collectively delineate the complete operational cycle of fan activities within the community. Synthesized evidence from the two data sources elucidates the internal drivers that prompt Chinese fans to engage actively in content dissemination, while

simultaneously outlining the prevalent categories of fan content and the varied interaction modes emerging alongside such published posts.

Overall, fan content delineates the core orientation of community interactions, whereas continuous interactive exchanges continuously augment the emotional and practical value embedded in original posts. This mutually facilitative cyclic relationship between content dissemination and interactive conduct sustains enduring communicative vitality within the SOTUS The Series Weibo CP super topic long after the official broadcast of the drama.

6. Discussion

Fans forge bonds based on shared interests and long-standing collective memories, and build strong group cohesion through continuous interaction. Rooted in the concepts of social categorization, social identification and social comparison, Social Identity Theory explains that the Weibo CP super topic serves as a major venue for Chinese fans to construct their group identity. Yan (2016) pointed out in theoretical review that in offline social contexts, individuals primarily rely on specific group symbols to draw ingroup-outgroup boundaries and complete the process of social categorization. However, the findings of the present study extend this classic viewpoint to online community scenarios. This study verifies that the platform operation rules of Weibo Super topic, together with fan-produced original content, jointly constitute a new form of technological and cultural symbols. Functions such as daily check-in, member level ranking and exclusive CP content circulation inside the super topic provide clear judgment standards for fans to distinguish insiders from outsiders and realize self-categorization.

The collective belonging and emotional interaction patterns observed in this research align closely with Yang (2025), who regarded a sense of community belonging as the core psychological driver of individual conduct. To earn group recognition, fans adjust their attitudes and behaviors to match communal norms, a pattern clearly reflected in frequent daily check-ins, continuous interactive exchanges and voluntary community outreach. Such belonging-oriented motivation applies equally to e-commerce groups and Weibo CP fandom. As Yu (2020) pointed out, fan communities nurture collective pride built on shared passions, and this communal attachment serves as an internal engine that maintains long-term fan interaction and content dissemination, forming stable emotional bonds within the super topic.

Furthermore, Participatory Communication Theory was first put forward by Freire (1970/2000), who criticized the one-way banking model of information indoctrination and advocated equal two-way dialogue where all participants enjoy the right to create and exchange information instead of being passive receivers, and this core logic is fully reflected in the proactive cross-cultural interactions of SOTUS fans including translating overseas materials, interpreting Thai culture and sharing behind-the-scenes footage. Wang (2019) studied Chinese Sherlock fans and found that translation, subtitle production and fan derivatives could bridge cultural gaps between Chinese and overseas fandoms. This viewpoint aligns closely with the phenomenon observed in the Teamperaya Weibo CP super topic, where fans conduct frequent fan creation, daily check-ins, reposting and voting to maintain community algorithm visibility. That prior research also framed online fans as organized prosumers engaging in consistent digital labor beyond simple media consumption. Yet this study extends the scope of the earlier study substantially. The prior analysis centered on loose, unregulated fan spaces, while this study focuses on Weibo Super topic, a centralized platform where all fan participation and digital labor are standardized, restricted and guided by built-in level mechanisms and algorithm rules. Apart from translation highlighted in that earlier research, SOTUS fans further developed diversified communication modes such as in-depth cultural interpretation and real-time information synchronization, and all these multi-dimensional interactive practices jointly break cross-cultural barriers and sustain the daily operation of the CP super topic.

From the perspective of Reception Theory, Wang and Song (2024) posited that media texts do not carry fixed or immutable meanings; rather, audiences actively reconstruct textual significance based on their personal experiences and perceptions. Stuart Hall's (1980) encoding and decoding model provides the foundational analytical framework for this interpretative process, which effectively accounts for fans' diversified re-creations of television drama content. In online fandom contexts, such active decoding often gives rise to subcultural linguistic systems. Wu (2024) argued that exclusive fan terminology is unique and irreplaceable, acting as proprietary communication codes within distinct fan groups. In this study, recurring expressions including "white moonlight", "gear" and "peraya" in the Teamperaya Weibo CP super topic stand as typical evidence of this mechanism, embodying the exclusive connotations decoded and shared by the fandom's insiders. Furthermore,

when it comes to concrete fan participatory practices, Li (2023) focused on domestic Chinese drama super-topics and classified fan engagement into two dimensions: cultural creation and community interaction. The fan edits, original fan fictions and thematic discussions observed in the Teamperaya community strongly corroborate these two core modes of fan practice, showing that fans continuously reinterpret and reshape the original drama by integrating individual feelings with collective consensus. Nevertheless, Li's (2023) research was confined to single-culture domestic drama communities, whereas the present study expands the application scope of Reception Theory by adopting a transcultural research perspective. Taking Chinese fans of the Thai drama SOTUS as research objects, this study identifies translation, linguistic localization and cross-cultural symbolic interpretation as additional distinctive decoding behaviors exclusive to transnational fandoms. This finding further validates the core premise of Reception Theory, demonstrating that audiences hold strong subjective agency to reconstruct media texts and endow them with localized, culturally hybrid meanings.

In a cross-cultural context, fans' participation in this community presents dual characteristics, which are consistent with the research findings of Liu and Gu (2024). On the one hand, fans maintain mutual connections through emotional interaction; on the other hand, they engage in regular content production and information collaboration as a form of digital labor. Emotional attachment and practical labor are intertwined. Driven by a strong sense of belonging, fans keep creating, communicating and disseminating content, sustaining the long-term vitality of this cross-border fan community. This study also offers implications for the localized communication of overseas film and television works on Chinese social platforms. Platforms can optimize functional sections including translation zones and celebrity schedule columns, so as to improve cross-cultural communication through fans' spontaneous sharing and dissemination.

7. Recommendations

This study has three key limitations. It only analyzes the top 10 high-interaction posts from 2022–2024 and ignores routine fan content; focus group data come exclusively from 16 core fans excluding new followers, casual viewers and lurkers; all data are limited to the SOTUS The Series Weibo CP super topic without cross-platform evidence of fans' cross-media behaviors.

Future research can enrich sample diversity and combine questionnaires with quantitative text analysis to validate qualitative results. Multi-platform data from Bilibili and Little Red Book should be collected to compare fan creation and interaction patterns. Further studies can also adopt a cross-cultural reception perspective to explore how Chinese fans reinterpret cultural meanings via derivative fan works.

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