

# ไมโครบล็อกรัฐบาลจีน : กรณีศึกษา การทูตภาครัฐทาง Sina.com A Case Study on Micro Blogs of Sina.com in China\*

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## Abstract

This study analyzes government micro blogs' status quo and provides some recommendations on the basis of quantitative data.

Firstly, the study analyzes 1586 real-name authenticated public diplomacy micro blogs of government on August 30, 2012 at Sina.com. Three aspects of the government's micro blogs are analyzed: 1) Basic information includes geographical distributions, administrative ranks and page information. 2) The usage of government micro blogs has three aspects: time of micro blog's establishment, login days within one year and the degree of activity. 3) Government micro blogs' interactive dissemination has three dimensions: attracted attention, fans, degree of public response.

Secondly, economically developed areas pay more attention to government micro blogs than underdeveloped areas. For instance, the number of government micro blogs in Beijing, Chongqing, Jiangsu

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Province, Zhejiang Province and Guangdong Province adds up to 663, which accounts for 58.36% of all. Although many government micro blogs cannot provide sufficient information on time, they are still treated as key opinion leaders in the cyberspace by many netizens. The number of government micro blogs which have more than 100,000 fans reaches 60 from 160 selected samples.

Finally, the study suggests some measures for government micro blogs, such as how to improve laws and regulations, how to make better content management with high quality, and how to promote effective interactivity with users.

158 **Key Words:** Government Micro Blogs / Government Diplomacy / Micro Blogs Improvement

## บทคัดย่อ

การศึกษานี้มีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อวิเคราะห์สถานการณ์ภาพไมโครบล็อกของรัฐบาลจีน และเสนอแนวทางการใช้ไมโครบล็อกของรัฐเพื่อสื่อสารกับสาธารณะ โดยวิเคราะห์ 1,586 ไมโครบล็อกการทูตสาธารณะของรัฐที่ใช้ชื่อจริง จาก Sina.com ข้อมูล ณ วันที่ 30 สิงหาคม พ.ศ.2555 เพื่อวิเคราะห์ 3 ประเด็น คือ 1) ข้อมูลทั่วไป ประกอบด้วย สภาพทางภูมิศาสตร์ ระดับการปกครองของรัฐ และข้อมูลบนหน้าไมโครบล็อก 2) การใช้ไมโครบล็อกโดยรัฐ มี 3 ด้าน คือ ปีที่เริ่มใช้ไมโครบล็อก จำนวนวันที่เข้าใช้ไมโครบล็อกในรอบหนึ่งปี และระดับของกิจกรรมการใช้บล็อก 3) การเผยแพร่ข้อมูลการติดต่อสื่อสารทางไมโครบล็อกของรัฐ มี 3 ด้าน คือ การดึงดูดความสนใจ ผู้ติดตาม และระดับการตอบสนองจากผู้ใช้ไมโครบล็อก

ผลการศึกษาพบว่า ในมุมมองของการพัฒนาเศรษฐกิจได้ให้ความสำคัญกับการใช้ไมโครบล็อกของรัฐมากกว่าการพัฒนาด้านอื่นๆ ดังตัวอย่างจำนวนไมโครบล็อกของรัฐ ในปักกิ่ง ฉงชิ่ง เจียงซู เจ้อเจียง และกวางตุ้ง ซึ่งเพิ่มขึ้นเป็น 663 ไมโครบล็อก คิดเป็นร้อยละ 58.36 จากไมโครบล็อกทั้งหมด แม้ว่าไมโครบล็อกของรัฐจำนวนมากไม่สามารถให้ข้อมูลเพียงพอและทัน่วงที่ แต่ไมโครบล็อกเหล่านี้ยังคงเป็นแหล่งข้อมูลหลักสำหรับเครือข่ายพลเมืองเน็ต ดังที่มีผู้ติดตามไมโครบล็อกกว่า 100,000 ราย เข้าใช้ 60 ไมโครบล็อก จากกลุ่มตัวอย่าง 160 ไมโครบล็อก

การศึกษานี้ให้ข้อเสนอแนะต่อไมโครบล็อกของรัฐบาลจีน เช่น การพัฒนาภาวะเปรียบเทียบต่างๆ การจัดการเนื้อหาให้มีประสิทธิภาพยิ่งขึ้น และการสนับสนุนการติดต่อสื่อสารกับผู้ใช้ไมโครบล็อกอย่างมีประสิทธิภาพ

**คำสำคัญ :** ไมโครบล็อกรัฐ / การทูตรัฐ / การพัฒนาไมโครบล็อก

## 1. Introduction

Micro blogs have developed beyond imagination since Twitter appeared in 2006. More and more governments pay attention to this new media. For example, the American government published Open Government Directive (2009) to promote the usage of Twitter. The UK government suggested evaluating the risk of Twitter properly and effectively using it in A Twitter Guide (2009). The government of Nanjing, a big city in China, published Further Strengthening Micro Blogs' Construction (2011) and required that related information should be announced in the government micro blogs as soon as possible when the emergency occurred. One hour is the prime time.

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In China, the year of 2011 is considered to be the first year of micro blogs. The number of government micro blogs reached as many as 50,561 at the end of 2011 according to the Reports of Chinese government Micro Blogs(2011) .

## 2. Research Review

There is much research on government micro blogs. 168 papers have been found on CNKI (CNKI is the abbreviation for China National Knowledge Infrastructure) by August 30<sup>th</sup> 2012. The 168 papers can be divided into 4 types: 1) There are 11 research reports which investigate the development of government micro blogs. 2) There are 8 papers which focus on the operation of government micro blogs. 3) There are 66 papers which study the relationship between government management and democratic system through the analysis of government micro blogs. 4) There are 83 studies which propose some useful recommendations

to improve government micro blogs. However, most of these papers study government micro blogs with the qualitative methodology rather than quantitative analysis. It is necessary to make some quantitative research to check the current status of government micro blogs and propose some practical strategies accordingly.

### 3. Methodology

This research will make a case study about the government micro blogs on sina.com. There are 1586 government micro blogs from government diplomacy at sina.com on August 30<sup>th</sup>, 2012. The first reason to select sina.com as research object is that sina.com is the most famous and popular micro blog in China. The number of its users has surpassed 300 million at the end of 2012. Moreover, sina.com widely implements the real-name authentication on micro blogs, which makes micro blogs more credible.

This research will analyze some contents of government micro blogs, such as basic information, usage of government micro blogs, interactive dissemination, etc.

#### 3.1 Basic information of government micro blogs

Three aspects of basic information on government micro blogs will be counted: geographical distributions, administrative ranks and page information.

##### 3.1.1 Geographical distributions of government micro blogs

Chinese government micro blogs have a wide range of geographical distribution around 32 provincial administrative areas except Taiwan and Macao. It is evidently shown in the following chart.

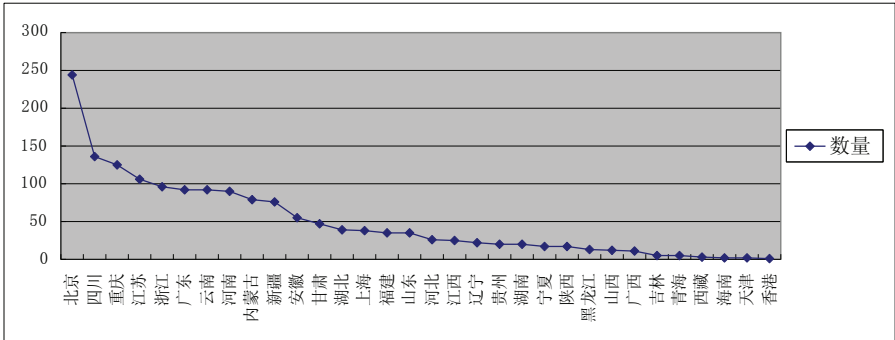
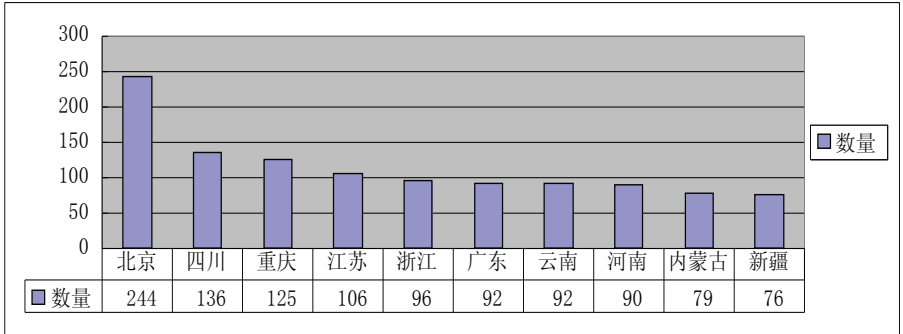


Chart 1 : Geographical distribution of government micro blogs

(Beijing, Sichuan Province, Chongqing, Jiangsu Province, Zhejiang Province, Guangdong Province, Yunnan Province, Henan Province, Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region, Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region, Anhui Province, Gansu Province, Hubei Province, Shanghai, Fujian Province, Shandong Province, Hebei Province, Jiangxi Province, Liaoning Province, Guizhou Province, Hunan Province, Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region, Shanxi Province, Heilongjiang Province, Shanxi Province, Guangxi Province, Jilin Province, Qinghai Province, Tibet, Hainan Province, Tianjin Province, Hongkong, from left to right.)

From this chart, number of opening micro blogs during different provinces in China is arranged from high to low. It is obviously that number of opening micro blogs is associated with the local economic development level. The first is Beijing, capital and center of culture in China. The last is Hongkong. The main reason is that sina.com is not recently used in Hongkong.



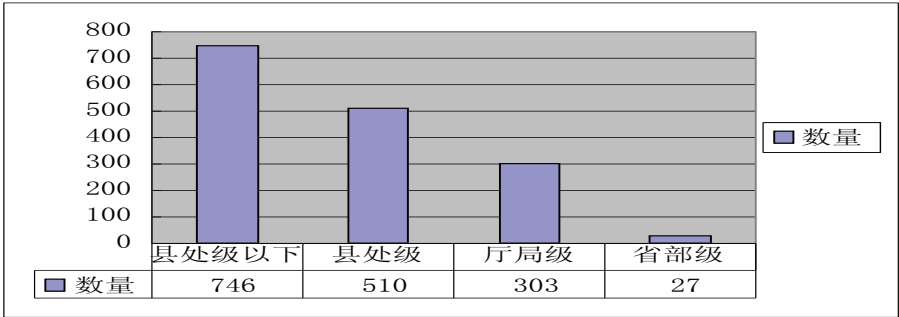
**Chart 2 :Top ten government micro blogs (number)**

(Beijing, Sichuan Province, Chongqing, Jiangsu Province, Zhejiang Province, Guangdong Province, Yunnan Province, Henan Province, Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region, Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region, from left to right.)

According to number of micro blogs, there are the top ten provinces or direct-controlled municipality in China. Economy in Beijing, Chongqing, Jiangsu province, Zhejiang province and Guangdong province are all relatively developed which is half of proportion among the top ten.

### 3.1.2 Administrative ranks of government micro blogs

The administration of Chinese government is divided into 4 levels: below the county level, the county level, the department and bureau level, the province and ministry level. According to the administrative ranks, the government micro blogs could be classified and counted as chart 3:



**Chart 3: Administrative ranks of government micro blogs**

(Below the county level, the county level, the department and bureau level, the province and ministry level, from left to right.)

From the chart, it is obviously that number of micro blogs is proportional to number of quantity and unit level in China. For an example, the first is below the county level which is grassroots units in China.

### 3.1.3 The page information of government micro blogs

This study uses a random sampling from the 1586 government micro blogs on sina.com and selects 160 samples to analyze the page information. The result is shown as the table 1 below:



Item	Real name	The authentication in Sina.com	Brief introduction	Label	Notice board	Links to other websites	Micro blogs' Group (in
The number of government micro blogs	160	160	105	110	75	100	11
Percentage (%)	100	100	65.63		46.88	62.5	0.3

Table 1: The integrity of government micro blogs' page information

From the table, real name of micro blogs is 100% and the authentication in sina.com is 100% which means China's government is creating a platform to communicate with netizens in order to solving their difficulties as soon as possible in the shortest time.

### 3.2 The usage of government micro blogs

This research measures the usage of government micro blogs from three aspects: time of micro blog's establishment, login days within one year and the degree of activity.

#### 3.2.1 The time of government micro blogs' establishment

The number of government micro blogs has kept increasing quickly since the micro blog function of Sina. com was opened in 2009. According to 160 selected samples of government micro blogs, the number of government micro blogs in 2011 increased 700% compared

to 2010. Moreover, the number of government micro blogs in 2012 increased 1750% compared to 2011. It shows that government micro blogs have been attached more and more importance by Chinese governments. Government micro blogs have become an important channel of interaction and communication with publics. The statistical results are as below:

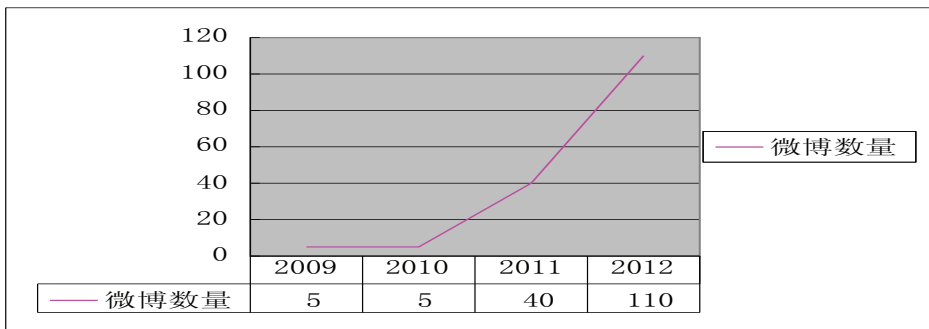


Chart 4: The number of government micro blogs from 2009 to 2012

### 3.2.2 Login days within one year

There are about a half of government micro blogs whose login days are less than 100 within one year. It shows that some government micro blogs do not renew frequently. There are about one fifth of government micro blogs whose login days are more than 300 within one year, which means that they nearly login government micro blogs every day. The result is shown as the chart 5 below:

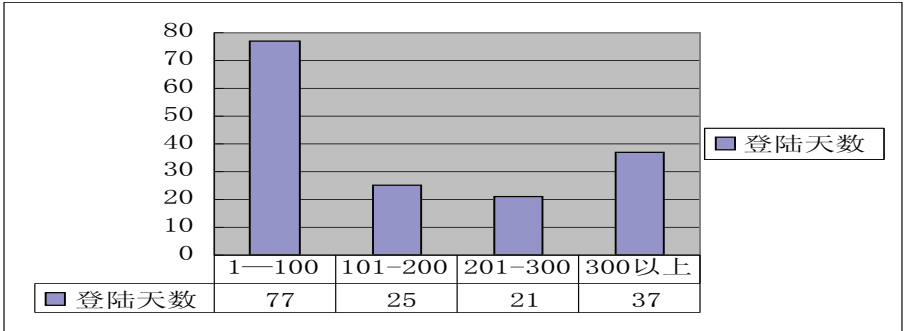


Chart 5: Login times within one year (login days)

### 3.2.3 Active degree of government micro blogs

According to 160 selected samples of government micro blogs, there are 70 government micro blogs which released more than 2,000 micro blog posts. And there are 40 government micro blogs which released less than 500 micro blog posts. It is evidently shown in the following chart 6.

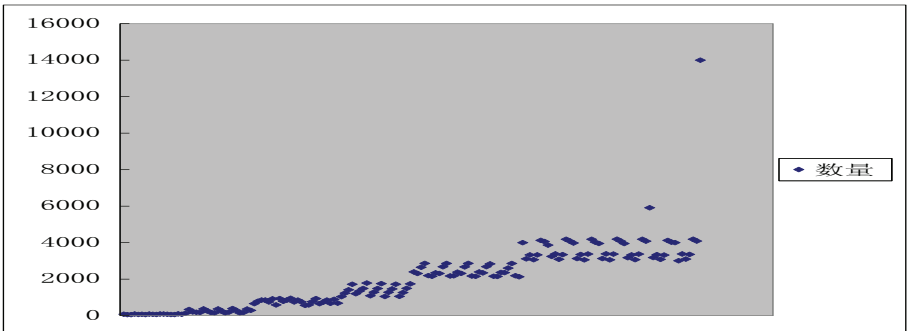


chart 6:Micro blogs' active degree (number of micro blog posts)

### 3.3 Government micro blogs' interactive dissemination

This study examines the government micro blogs' interactive dissemination through three dimensions: attracted attention, fans, degree of public response.

#### 3.3.1 Attracted attention

There are about 54 government micro blogs which receive less than 100 attentions. It means that some government micro blogs get very limited attention from netizens. And there are about one tenth of government micro blogs which attract more than 1,000 attentions. The related result is shown as table 2.

Attracted attentions	Number of micro blogs	Percentage (%)
1-100	54	33.75
101-200	20	12.5
201-300	15	9.38
301-400	10	6.25
401-500	5	3.13
501-600	13	8.1
601-700	9	5.63
701-800	10	6.25
801-900	4	2.5
901-1000	5	3.13
1000 <del>0</del>	15	9.38

Table 2: Attracted attentions of government micro blogs

### 3.3.2 Fans of government micro blogs

According to fans' number of 160 selected samples of government micro blogs, this research makes a statistics as below:

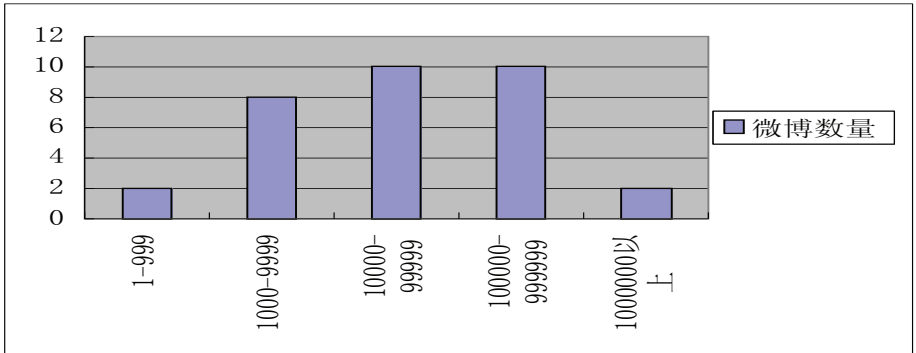


Chart 7: The number of government micro blogs' fans

As is shown in chart 7, the horizontal axis represents number of fans and the vertical axis represents number of government micro blogs. According to principle of the Internet, the micro blogs, which have more than 100,000 fans, could always work as opinion leaders. It shows that some government micro blogs play an important role on the Internet.

### 3.3.3 Users' response degree

This research especially checks the usage of video function on government micro blogs and finds that there are 120 government micro blogs which make use of the video function in the 160 selected samples. Furthermore, this research counts the Internet users' comments on the 120 government micro blogs and finds that there are about 60 government micro blogs which have less than 50 comments.

#### 4. Conclusion

Status quo of China's micro blogs is that number is high, content is authority but timeliness is not very strong. With the development of new media, micro blogs is quick and easy. It is an important platform of public opinion field and connects to netizens and government agencies. It specifically includes three aspects:

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Firstly, geographical distribution and administrative ranks of government micro blogs show a structural imbalance. Comparing to the large number of Chinese government departments, 1586 government micro blogs are far from enough, which is like a drop in the ocean. It shows a structural imbalance. There are mainly two aspects. One is the imbalance of geographical distribution. The top ten government micro blogs are opened by developed provinces. And almost three fifths of government micro blogs are opened by Beijing, Chongqing, Jiangsu Province, Zhejiang Province and Guangdong Province. It is because of their advanced economy, open social environment, which makes it easy for the local governments to accept new things. The other imbalance is the administrative ranks. It seems that the grass-root governments have more micro blogs because the number of grass-root governments is very large in China.

Secondly, the basic information from government micro blogs is not enough. Effective communication is the most important goal of government diplomacy, so governments need to introduce themselves sufficiently. However, as to the basic information, few governments provide enough information except government's name. About login days within one year, half of governments do not pay much attention

to the frequent usage of micro blogs. It must damage the image of the government micro blogs. Meanwhile, some government micro blogs do not get enough attention because of their inactivity. In general, the more government micro blog posts appear, the easier users pay attention to them. However, within the 160 selected samples of government micro blogs, about one fourth of government micro blogs don't publish enough information timely.

Thirdly, some government micro blogs don't get too much attention. Communication between government micro blogs and netizens is not sufficient. There are mainly two results. Firstly, according to the statistical result, some netizens do not pay much attention to government micro blogs. One of the most important reasons is the failure of agenda setting on government micro blogs. Some unattractive political information, such as leaders' activities, the Party's meetings, becomes the basic contents of some government micro blogs. It is hard to attract too much attention. The other one is about the connection between video function and users' response. This research finds that it is very helpful to attract netizens' attention if government micro blogs attach more importance to the usage of video function. On the contrary, the little usage of video function has a negative impact on the response from netizens.

## 5. Recommendation

It is necessary and helpful for Chinese governments to effectively make use of government micro blogs in this digital era. There are some suggestions for government micro blogs to improve.

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Firstly, to improve laws and regulations, enhance the management of government micro blogs are very important. In China, the government has done a lot in order to improve laws and regulations for micro blogs. For examples, the government information disclosure regulation of People's Republic of China was put into effect on May 1<sup>st</sup> 2008. The Announcement of Strengthening to Manage Internet came into effect on April 21<sup>st</sup> 2011. It requires all levels of Chinese governments to pay attention to the daily management, maintenance and update of the Internet. The government of Nanjing published Further Strengthening Micro Blogs' Construction on June 27<sup>th</sup> 2011, which requires its government departments to release important news, such as disaster information or emergency reports within one hour through the government micro blogs. The government of Beijing published Regulation of Government Micro Blogs' Developmental Management on December 16<sup>th</sup> 2011, which prescribes that any organization or individual should register real name before they want to release micro blog posts. The government of Shanghai put forward Administrative Measures of Managing E-Governmental Affairs on May 28<sup>th</sup> 2012, which is supposed to transform governmental functions.

Secondly, government micro blogs should improve the quality of contents and try to attract more attention. At present, government micro blogs indeed have many problems. For examples, some contents are obsolete and of low quality which are unwelcome. If government micro blogs have enough fresh information, netizens would be attracted. Meanwhile, government should pay attention to the key opinion leaders' micro blogs and communicate with them as much as possible. However,



government should identify the information because of the emotional expression on the Internet. For example, the micro blog of Guangdong Public Security Bureau is considered as one of the most influential government micro blogs in China according to Fudan University's Reports of China's Government Micro Blogs in April 24<sup>th</sup> 2011. Its micro blog has many advantages, such as nice self-introduction, timely updated contents, effective and sufficient communication with netizens, and so on.

Thirdly, government departments should lay low to interact with netizens effectively. Government micro blog should be a rational space to express voices from public, government and media. The network promotes netizens to communicate and share information equally. Government should pay more attention to the communication with netizens through government micro blogs. It will be very useful for government's social management. On September 27<sup>th</sup> 2011, 295 people went to hospital after a metro accident in Shanghai. The official micro blog of Shanghai metro identified and released related news 40 minutes after the accident. And the information of apology came out on the micro blog of Shanghai metro 5 hours later.

In conclusion, although government micro blogs have many problems and shortcomings, it is necessary and important to improve and promote their development for Chinese society.