

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Shaping governance through social media: A review of Chinese government strategies and public engagement (2013-2023)

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ABSTRACT

This systematic literature review employs the PRISMA framework to assess the literature of Chinese government social media (GSM) from 2013 to 2023. Utilizing a mixed-methods approach that combines bibliometric and content analysis, this review investigates the evolving use of GSM in China. The bibliometric analysis reveals significant trends in research focus and methodologies over the decade, indicating a shift towards more qualitative and mixed-method approaches as the complexity of digital governance increases. Content analysis further delineates these findings into specific themes: governance strategies and implementation, technological evolution, and the audience. Through the examination of these themes, the review highlights how Chinese GSM has been strategically used to foster a more transparent and engaging government presence online, facilitating improved public services and citizen involvement in governmental processes. This study also incorporates a brief cross-analysis to explore the interactions between different research dimensions, offering nuanced insights into the dynamics of GSM applications. This research underscores the critical role of social media in shaping modern governance, suggesting that ongoing technological adaptation and strategic communication are essential for enhancing public engagement and trust in the context of China. The findings advocate for continued research and policy development to leverage the potential of GSM fully, ensuring that digital governance strategies remain responsive to technological advancements and evolving public expectations.

Keywords: government social media; China, PRISMA; bibliometric analysis; content analysis

1. Introduction

The advent of social media has significantly transformed public communication and governance, presenting both opportunities and challenges, especially within China^[1]. This transformation has spurred a complex interplay between governance, technological evolution, and audience engagement, necessitating a thorough investigation. Accordingly, this paper aims to dissect these dynamics within Chinese government social media (GSM) from 2013 to 2023, focusing on the strategic use of social media by the Chinese government, the impact of technological advancements, and the nature of public engagement.

In China, the strategic integration of traditional and new media reflects an effort to adapt to digital

ARTICLE INFO

Received: 10 September 2024 | Accepted: 25 September 2024 | Available online: 29 September 2024

CITATION

Chi JL, Kamarudin S, Abdul Rahman SN. Shaping governance through social media: A review of Chinese government strategies and public engagement (2013-2023). *Environment and Social Psychology* 2024; 9(9):3096. doi: 10.59429/esp.v9i9.3096

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challenges while maintaining control over the narrative. For example, studies by Hsiang, et al. have

highlighted the complexities of media integration and its implications for policy dissemination and public opinion. Meanwhile, the related research on social media also reveals a dichotomy, which means that medias serving both as a tool for government propaganda and as a platform for public discourse^[2]. However, there is a notable gap in understanding the audience's active participation when exploring this field, particularly in the context of crises like the COVID-19 pandemic, which has reshaped the interaction between the government and the public on social media platforms^[3].

Employing a systematic literature review (SLR) methodology guided by the PRISMA framework, this study analyzes 22 articles from databases such as Google Scholar, Scopus, CNKI, and Airiti Library^[4]. Through bibliometric analysis and qualitative content examination, the research categorizes the findings into three themes: governance, technological evolution, and audience engagement. This comprehensive approach enables the identification of significant trends, knowledge gaps, and emerging inquiries within the realm of Chinese GSM.

The review uncovers three pivotal themes: governance, technological evolution, and audience engagement. Governance findings underscore the government's strategic use of social media to foster transparency and public trust, balancing control with engagement. Technological evolution highlights the shift towards interactive governance through platforms like Sina Weibo, Tiktok, and WeChat. Despite these advancements, a deficiency in research focusing on user satisfaction and participation underlines the need for further exploration into public interactions with GSM, especially during crises.

This SLR lays the foundation for a deeper discussion on the role of social media in the governance of the media environment of the Party-controlled media, highlighting the need for adaptive strategies, technological innovation, and meaningful audience engagement. The systematic review seeks to contribute to the broader discourse on digital governance, offering insights for policymakers, communication strategists, and scholars interested in the dynamics of government social media use in China.

2. Research methodology

This article employs a systematic literature review (SLR) research procedure. As a review method, SLR was initially used in academia as a systematic, transparent, and replicable method for synthesizing research findings^[5]. This technique provides a comprehensive overview of the existing literature related to a specific research question and presents and synthesizes research findings. Compared to traditional literature reviews, SLR is characterized by its objectivity, systematic approach, transparency, and replicability^[4].

The purpose of SLR is to study a variety of different designs and concepts using quantitative, qualitative, or mixed methods^[6]. Therefore, this procedure is particularly suitable for describing evolutionary processes. Such a scientific and statistical review can provide a systematic interpretation of research.

Following the above research method and sequence, this systematic literature review provides a thought-provoking independent assessment of the literature relevant to research on Chinese government social media. Specifically, the purpose of this study is to address the following research questions:

RQ1. What are the current research trends on Chinese government social media?

RQ2. What are the current research topics on Chinese government social media?

RQ3. What are some promising avenues for future development of government social media innovation research in China?

2.1. Systematic literature review process

Systematic literature review (SLR) comprises four distinct steps. First, it necessitates the formulation of clear and specific research questions. Second, the database must be precisely defined through well-structured inquiries. The third step involves a thorough and unbiased search for relevant articles. Finally, all collected samples should undergo examination against predetermined criteria to identify results that are pertinent to the research question^[4].

In this context, the preferred reporting items for systematic reviews and meta-analyses (PRISMA) stands out as a widely utilized method for conducting SLR across various research fields^[4]. The PRISMA procedure is delineated through four essential steps: identification, screening, qualification, and data extraction and analysis, each of which is detailed below.

Through the rigorous PRISMA procedure (**Figure 1**), this study collected 22 articles that met the criteria from four databases. To analyze the research question more comprehensively, this study adopted a mixed research method to analysis the results.

Identification. The identification process is scheduled for December 2023. During this stage, a meticulous selection process yielded 240 articles from Scopus, 17 articles from Airiti Library, 3,680 articles from Google Scholar, and 190 papers from the China National Knowledge Infrastructure (CNKI).

Screening. In the screening stage, articles were included or excluded based on preset criteria (**Table 1**). Eligibility, inclusion, and exclusion criteria were determined to select articles meeting SLR requirements.

Table 1. Criteria for article inclusion and exclusion.

Criteria	Inclusion	Exclusion
Publication timeline	January 2013–December 2023	2012 and before
Language	English & Chinese	Other languages
Document type	Journal (research articles)	Non-peer-reviewed articles Notes Preprints Conference record Working paper Book chapter

Eligibility. The eligibility stage is a process in which the authors manually exclude literature based on specific criteria based on specific research questions and research objectives. Under this premise, all articles were carefully reviewed in this study. After manually screening titles, abstracts, keywords, and full texts, a total of 1253 duplicate articles and articles unrelated to the research were deleted, and 22 relevant articles were finally selected for quality assessment.

Data abstraction and analysis. In the final stage of data extraction and analysis, all articles were assessed, reviewed, and analyzed. We selected 22 articles for this study. The SLR procedures are shown in **Figure 1**.

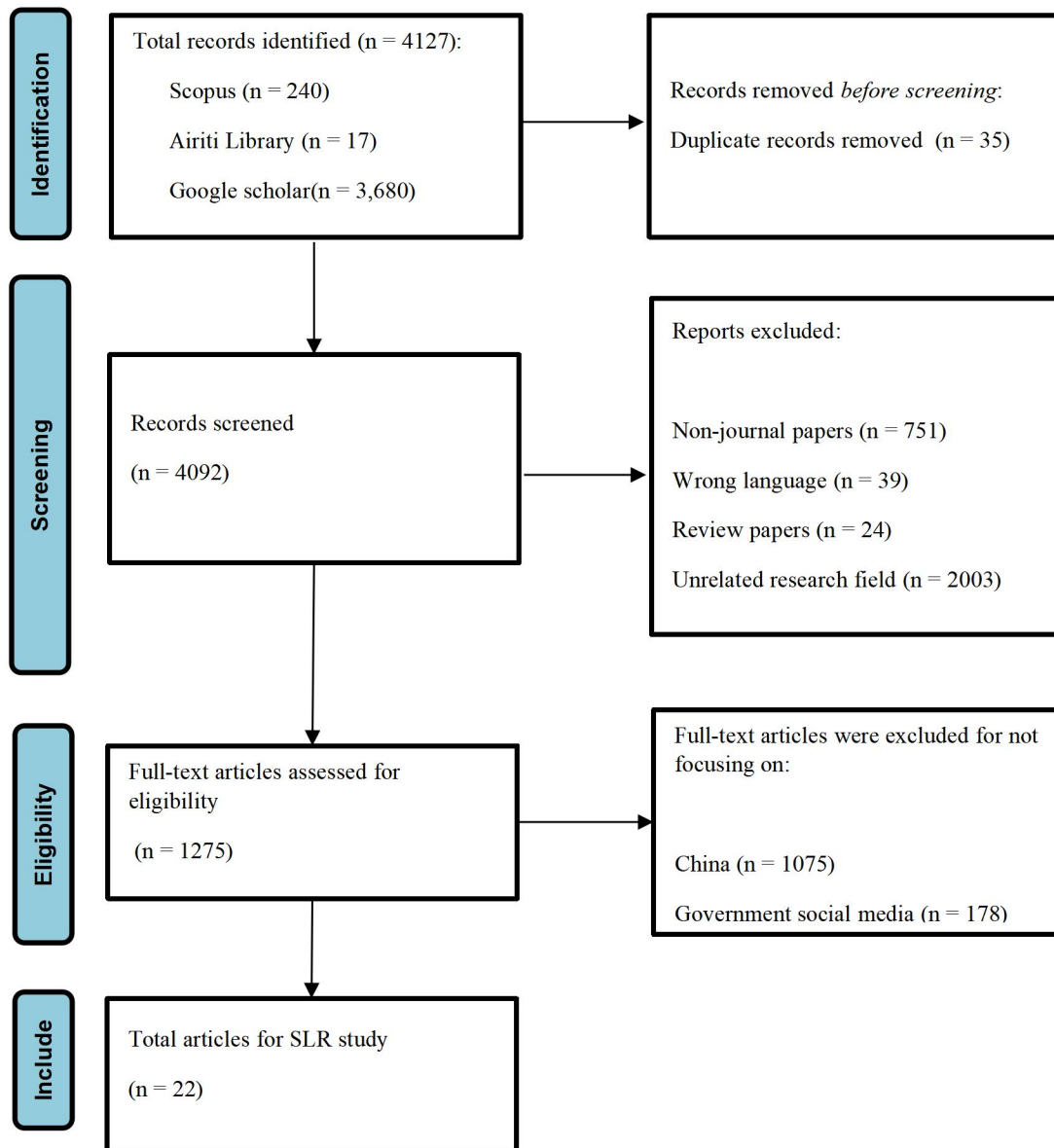


Figure 1. PRISMA steps for SLR studies (adapted from page et al., 2020).

2.2. Resources

Four databases were chosen for this study: China Academic Journal Network Publishing Database (CNKI), Google Scholar, Scopus, and Airiti Library.

CNKI is a knowledge project of the People's Republic of China, encompassing the China integrated knowledge resources database. This database includes journals, doctoral and master's theses, conference papers, yearbooks, statistical data, books, standards, patents, and various other resources. Currently, CNKI has established 10 network service centers in locations such as Beijing, North America, Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and others. Its user base spans important universities, research institutions, government think tanks, enterprises, hospitals, public libraries, etc., across various countries.

Google Scholar is a free, open search engine that requires no subscription. It can index full text or metadata directly, covering a broad spectrum of publication formats and subject areas. Google Scholar incorporates academic journals, books, conference papers, abstracts, technical reports, preprints, and other

literature forms, comprising approximately 318 million documents from around the world. Therefore, it is also recognized as the most comprehensive academic search engine^[7].

Scopus, accessible only through institutional subscriptions, covers 36,377 journals and 11,678 publishers globally. It encompasses various document types, including book series, academic journals, and conference proceedings, spanning diverse subject areas. Importantly, Scopus has been one of the most widely used databases for bibliometric analysis^[8].

Airiti Library is a prominent online database that provides access to academic resources primarily focused on Chinese-language scholarly content. It serves as one of the leading sources for academic journals, theses, dissertations, and conference proceedings from Chinese Taiwan, mainland China, and other parts of Asia. The platform is particularly well-regarded for its extensive collection of materials in the humanities, arts, social sciences, and natural sciences.

The selection of these four databases for this review is driven by the exploitation of their distinct strengths. Specifically, the inclusion of CNKI is crucial for ensuring the study's comprehensive coverage, a decision pivotal to the quality of the results.

2.3. Data analysis strategy

A total of 22 articles meeting the specified criteria were gathered for this study. To conduct a more comprehensive analysis of the research problem, a mixed research method was employed. At present, it has become a trend to use bibliometric analysis and PRISMA method to review existing literature, and this trend has also begun to emerge in the field of communication studies^[9, 10], because this mixed research method is considered to be a more scientific and comprehensive review method^[11].

Primarily, this study used a quantitative research method to analyze the collected data, statistically summarizing the research trends of the related literature over the past decade and the distribution of research mediums through bibliometric methods, to describe the overall development trend of previous research.

Additionally, this study also conducted a qualitative analysis of the collected literature, categorizing the selected literature into 3 themes and 7 sub-themes through content analysis. This helps to investigate the current state of research on Chinese government social media, thereby responding to the research question of this study.

3. Results and discussion

The systematic literature review conducted on Chinese government social media (GSM) from 2013 to 2023 provides a comprehensive examination of how digital platforms are utilized within governmental contexts to enhance public engagement and governance. Through a rigorous mixed-methods approach, combining bibliometric analysis with detailed content analysis, this review reveals significant insights into the evolving dynamics of social media use in government. The findings underscore a significant shift towards more interactive and transparent government-public interfaces, facilitated by advancements in social media technologies. These methodologies enable a multifaceted exploration of the trends, themes, and impacts observed over the decade, offering a robust synthesis of how digital tools are reshaping governance practices. The results from this review not only reflect on the scholarly contributions and research trajectories within the field but also discuss the practical implications for policy-making and strategy development in governmental use of social media.

To explore the research questions, this research used mixed research method to analysis the collected literature.

3.1. Bibliometric analysis

Bibliometric analysis is a quantitative method grounded in written documents^[12]. This methodological approach enables overall generalizations to derive descriptive data, with a focus in this study on analysis by year, country, and discipline^[13].

In the context of this study, the application of bibliometric analysis to the collected literature was not a mere trend but a deliberate choice based on its ability to yield high-quality data results.

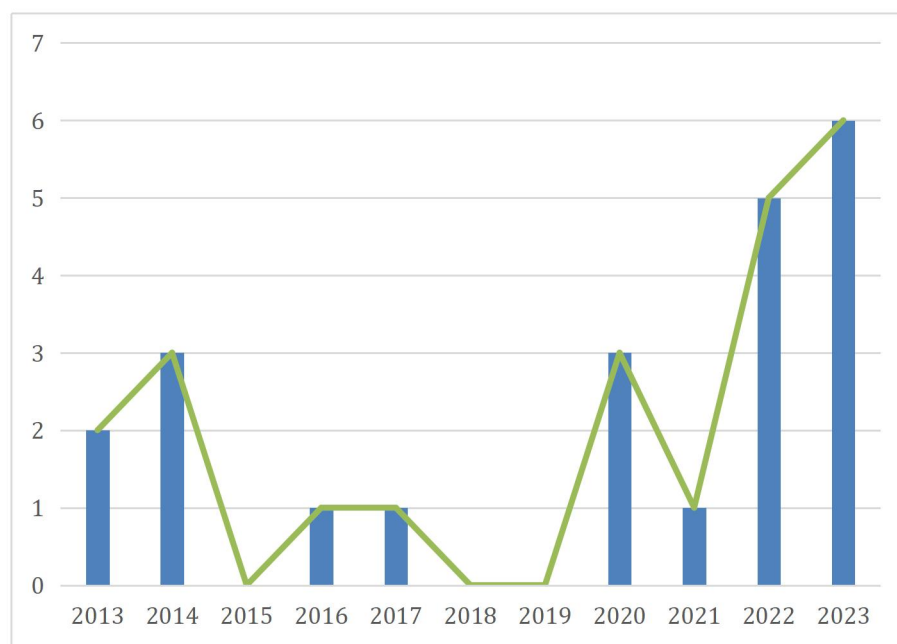


Figure 2. Distribution of Publication Year

Publication year and trends. **Figure 2** illustrates the publication year trend of selected documents over the past ten years, spanning from January 2013 to December 2023. The bibliometric analysis of publications concerning GSM from 2013 to 2023 reveals a fluctuating interest in the topic, characterized by periods of growth, stagnation, and resurgence. As per **Figure 2**, the papers reviewed will be cited by number. There are 2 selected papers in 2013 (8,18), followed by a modest increase in activity in 2014 with three papers (14,16,19). The subsequent years saw a stabilization with one publication each in 2016 and 2017 (22,10), and a notable absence of research in 2015, 2018, and 2019. A significant resurgence of interest occurred in 2020, coinciding with the COVID-19 pandemic, evidenced by the publication of three papers (11,13,17). This upward trend continued, culminating in 2022 and 2023 with five and six publications, respectively, indicating a strong and growing research interest in the implications and utilization of GSM for governance and public engagement (5,9,15,20,21,1,2,3,4,6,7).

This pattern suggests that external events, notably the global COVID-19 pandemic, may have a significantly influenced the focus and intensity of GSM research.

Research subjects and trend. In examining the landscape of research subjects within the corpus of studies on Chinese government social media (GSM) from 2013 to 2023, a discernible trend emerges regarding the platforms under investigation. The analysis delineates a clear preference among researchers for focusing on specific social media platforms, with Sina Weibo receiving the most attention, represented in 12 of the papers (2,4,6,8,10,12,14,16,17,18,19). This is followed by WeChat, with 4 papers dedicated to exploring its use and implications in the context of GSM (7,9,11,20). TikTok, despite its rapid ascendance as a global social media powerhouse, has been the central subject of investigation in only 2 papers (1,21).

Interestingly, 4 papers in the dataset did not specify a particular platform, opting instead for a broader examination of GSM or addressing multiple platforms without a clear focus on one (3,5,13,15). This distribution underscores the differentiated academic interest and possibly reflects the varying roles these platforms play in China's digital governance and public engagement ecosystem (**Table 2**).

This trend in research subjects highlights the evolving nature of social media's role in governance and public communication in China. It suggests that while newer platforms like TikTok have begun to draw academic interest, established platforms like Sina Weibo and WeChat continue to dominate scholarly investigations, reflecting their entrenched role in Chinese digital culture and governance.

Table 2. Sample type distribution.

Sample type platform	n
Tiktok	2
Sina Weibo	12
Wechat	4
Not mentioned	4

Research design and trends. In the systematic literature review focusing on Chinese government social media (GSM) from 2013 to 2023, an analysis of the research designs employed across the collected papers reveals significant trends in methodological approaches. A substantial number of studies, totaling 13, have adopted qualitative methods to explore the nuances of GSM usage, interaction patterns, and the qualitative impact of social media on governance and public engagement (1,2,6,7,12,13,14,16,17,18,20,21,22). This preference for qualitative research underscores the complexity of social media dynamics and the value of in-depth analysis in understanding the intricate ways in which GSM shapes public discourse and governance practices (**Table 3**).

Meanwhile, 8 papers have utilized quantitative methods, highlighting a robust interest in empirically measuring and analyzing the usage, reach, and effectiveness of GSM platforms like TikTok, WeChat, and Sina Weibo (3,4,5,8,9,15,19). These studies typically focus on user engagement metrics, content analysis, and the quantifiable aspects of government communication strategies on social media.

Remarkably, only 1 paper in the dataset employed a mixed-methods approach, combining both qualitative and quantitative analyses to provide a comprehensive understanding of GSM phenomena (11). This singular adoption of mixed methods indicates a potential gap in the literature, suggesting that future research could benefit from leveraging the strengths of both methodological approaches to offer richer insights into the multifaceted nature of GSM.

This trend in research design not only reflects the diverse nature of GSM studies but also points to the evolving methodological landscape in social media research. It suggests a continuing need for both detailed qualitative explorations of social media's role in governance and empirical quantitative analyses of its impacts and uses.

Table 3. Sample type distribution.

Sample type method	n
Quantitative	8
Qualitative	13
Mixed	1

Themes distribution and trends. The thematic distribution of studies on Chinese GSM from 2013 to 2023 highlights significant scholarly interest across three primary areas: governance, technological evolution, and audience engagement. The bibliometric analysis reveals that the majority of the research, with 12 papers, is concentrated on governance (**Table 4**). This significant focus reflects a deep scholarly interest in how social media platforms are utilized by government entities to enhance policy dissemination, public service delivery, and to increase government transparency and public participation in governance processes.

Technological Evolution, with 9 papers, also receives considerable attention, underscoring a keen interest in the dynamic nature of social media platforms. This includes the development of new features and algorithms, and how these innovations are integrated into public administration and communication strategies. The focus on technological advancements highlights the academic curiosity about how these evolutions are reshaping the interactions between government entities and the public, particularly in the context of digital governance.

Conversely, audience engagement is the least explored theme, with only one paper dedicated to this area. This under representation points to a significant gap in the literature, suggesting an opportunity for future studies to delve deeper into the public's reception, perceptions, and interactions with GSM. Understanding audience engagement is crucial for assessing the effectiveness of GSM strategies and for developing approaches that resonate with and meet the needs of the audience.

The observed trends in thematic distribution indicate a landscape where governance and technological evolution are heavily emphasized, suggesting that while technological and administrative aspects of GSM are well-explored, the direct impact on and engagement with the citizenry is not as thoroughly examined. This calls for a more balanced research agenda that not only continues to investigate the technological and governance aspects but also significantly enhances the focus on audience engagement. Such an approach is essential for developing comprehensive and effective GSM strategies that leverage technological advancements while ensuring that these strategies align with public expectations and effectively engage the audience.

Table 4. Sample type distribution.

Sample type theme	n
Governance	12
Technological Evolution	9
Audience	1

Cross-analysis. The bibliometric analysis of studies on Chinese GSM from 2013 to 2023 reveals a nuanced exploration of the domain, marked by evolving research priorities, methodological diversification, and thematic breadth. Initially, research was primarily quantitative and focused on Sina Weibo, aiming to empirically assess user engagement and the efficacy of governance communication. This phase highlighted themes of governance and technological evolution, indicating a foundational interest in the operational capabilities of social media platforms and their governance applications (**Table 5**).

As the field developed, a notable shift toward qualitative methodologies became apparent, especially in studies from 2014 onwards. This transition signifies a deeper academic inquiry into the nuanced dynamics of GSM, extending beyond quantitative metrics to explore the qualitative aspects of government-public interactions on these platforms. Concurrently, the diversity of platforms under study expanded, with investigations including TikTok and WeChat by 2020, alongside sustained attention to Sina Weibo. This

expansion reflects the changing landscape of social media in China and its escalating role in public discourse and governance.

The incorporation of mixed-methods approaches in 2020 further highlights the methodological evolution within GSM research, acknowledging the complexity of social media's governance role. These comprehensive strategies enable a more detailed understanding of the intricate interactions between government entities and the public across various social media platforms.

By 2023, the thematic focus of research had broadened to encompass governance, technological evolution, and audience engagement, employing a balanced mix of quantitative and qualitative methods. This development suggests a research field that appreciates empirical analysis as much as in-depth exploration of GSM phenomena. An increased emphasis on audience engagement, although still emerging, emphasizes the importance of understanding the public's perspective in designing and implementing effective GSM strategies.

Contrary to notions of maturation, the current state of GSM research and practice in China is characterized by a complex and rapidly evolving landscape. The subtopics of current research remain relatively scattered, reflecting the fast-paced development of China's information and communication technology (ICT) and the yet-to-be-achieved cohesive collaboration among various platforms in e-government. This scenario underscores a field that is dynamically adjusting to the technological and societal context it aims to understand, suggesting that while progress has been made, the integration of social media into public administration and engagement is an ongoing endeavor amidst the challenges posed by rapid ICT developments.

This bibliometric analysis, thus, portrays a dynamic and evolving field of study, reflecting the swift advancements in social media technology and its growing significance in public governance and engagement strategies. The observed trends through this cross-analysis underscore the progression of GSM research from foundational explorations to an encompassing examination of the complexities of digital governance in the social media era.

Table 5. Sample type distribution.

Year	Subjects				Methods			Themes		
	Weibo	Wechat	Tiktok	Not Mention	Quantitative	Qualitative	Mixed Method	Governance	Technological Evolution	Audience
2013	2				2			1	1	
2014	3				1	2		3		
2015										
2016	1				1				1	
2017	1				1				1	
2018										
2019										
2020	1	1		1		2	1	1	2	
2021	1					1			1	
2022		2	1	2	3	2		3	2	
2023	3	1	1	1	2	4		4	1	1

The bibliometric analysis of this systematic literature review on Chinese GSM from 2013 to 2023 has elucidated significant trends and shifts within the field, demonstrating how scholarly attention has evolved in response to technological advancements and societal needs. The temporal analysis revealed that the fluctuation in publication volumes over the years closely aligns with socio-political events and technological innovations, with notable peaks in research activity during significant periods such as the COVID-19 pandemic. This underscores the role of GSM in crisis management and information dissemination. Additionally, a methodological evolution was observed, with an early dominance of quantitative approaches giving way to a richer mix of qualitative and mixed methods, reflecting a maturing research field that seeks to understand the complex dynamics of government-public interactions on social media more deeply.

The focus on major platforms like Sina Weibo, WeChat, and the emerging TikTok indicates their critical roles within China's social media ecosystem, providing insights into the varied uses of these tools for governance and public engagement. The integration of cross-analysis—examining the interplay between publication years, methodologies, and research subjects—highlights how these elements collectively influence the trajectory of GSM research, suggesting that methodological choices and platform focuses are shaped by both the internal dynamics of the research community and external developments.

In conclusion, this bibliometric analysis has offered clarity on how academic interest in this area has diversified and evolved. As the field continues to advance, future research should leverage these insights to explore underrepresented areas, especially focusing on audience engagement and integrating new social media platforms that may influence the digital governance landscape. This approach underscores the necessity of adaptive research strategies to keep pace with rapid technological changes and the complex interplay between digital tools and public governance, thereby enhancing the understanding and efficacy of digital governance and public engagement strategies.

3.2. Content analysis

Following the bibliometric analysis, content analysis serves as a crucial methodological counterpart in this systematic literature review of Chinese GSM from 2013 to 2023. Whereas bibliometric analysis provided a quantitative overview of research trends, platforms, and methodologies, content analysis delves deeper into the qualitative aspects of the collected studies^[14,15]. This method allows for an intricate examination of the themes, narratives, and discourse patterns within the research corpus^[16].

In this study, content analysis is specifically employed to dissect the textual data from the selected articles, facilitating a nuanced understanding of how GSM is conceptualized, implemented, and received by the public. Through this approach, we aim to identify and categorize key themes such as governance, technological evolution, and audience engagement, thereby uncovering underlying trends and gaps in the current research landscape. This detailed exploration helps to construct a more comprehensive picture of the dynamics at play in the realm of digital governance and public interaction on Chinese social media platforms, emphasizing the critical interplay between technological advancements and policy implementation.

This method summarizes the main themes and strategies of relevant research from 2013 to 2023 through longitudinal mining of the literature, which is a supplement to the bibliometric method (**Figure 3**).

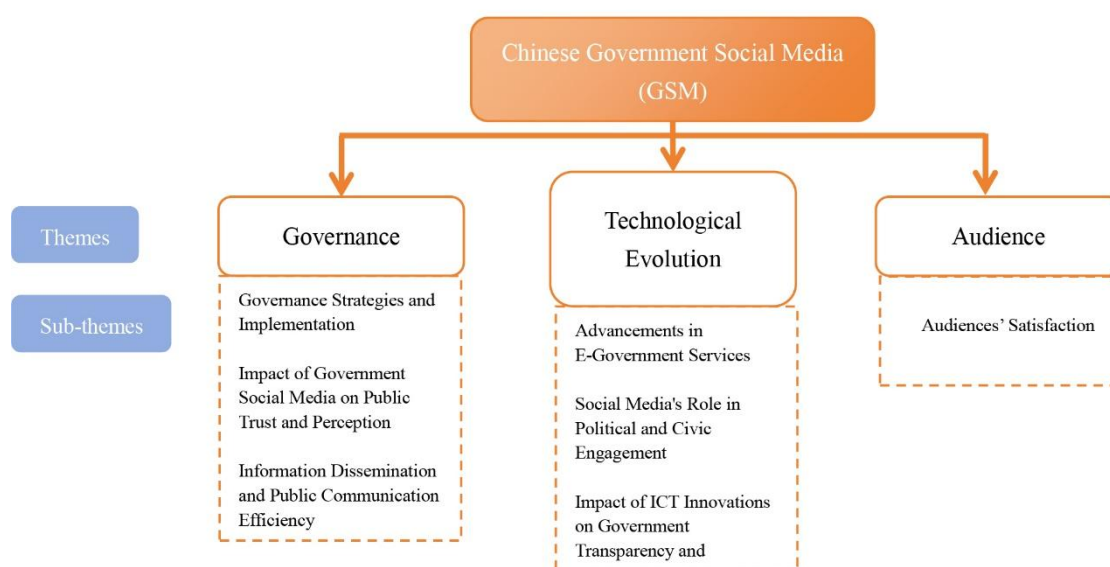


Figure 3. Distribution of the themes and sub-themes.

Governance. The analysis identified a multifaceted approach to digital governance, emphasizing efforts to enhance transparency and foster trust. The government's strategic use of social media for information dissemination and emergency response was highlighted as a key driver of increased citizen engagement (**Table 6**).

In systematically reviewing governance strategies and their implementation through social media, several studies provide insights into strategies and effective practices for increasing public engagement and trust^[17-20]. Collectively, these studies demonstrate that the strategic use of social media by governments can not only inform and educate the public but also significantly enhance engagement and trust. Each study contributes to a broader understanding of how transparency, interaction, and targeted communication via social media can be optimized to improve governance and public satisfaction. These insights are invaluable for policymakers and government communication strategists aiming to leverage social media platforms to foster a more informed and engaged citizenry.

Besides, the four papers highlight how the government's use of social media has a significant impact on public trust and perception. Huang and Hu^[21] reveals a positive correlation between the government's active presence on social media platforms and increased public trust through the evidence from Taiwan China. Meanwhile, the evidence from Wang and Liu^[22] identifies that higher levels of transparency in social media communications lead to greater public trust. This research mainly focuses on local governments in China. Besides, one research^[23] indicates that proactive and positive social media engagement by the government improves public perception through surveys and sentiment analysis of Chinese provincial government social media content. Last but not least, Liu, Zhou and Liu^[24] uses the Shanghai Municipal Government Weibo account @Shanghaicity as an example and draws positive conclusions about Weibo management.

In the last, information dissemination and public communication efficiency are also important aspects of government governance^[25-28]. From the perspective of government management efficiency, the above studies provide an empirical perspective on the topic. These studies focus on the relationship between information timeliness and interaction on Chinese government social media. These studies focus on the relationship

between "cooperative rhetoric" [25], communication effectiveness[26], attention competition in digital media[27], and communication laws in public emergencies[28] and communication efficiency.

Table 6. The distribution of sub-themes within the governance category.

Sub-themes	The Authors	n
Governance Strategies and Implementation	Jiang, Y., 2023; Liu, Zhao, Liang & Zhang, 2023; Noesselt, N., 2014; Schlæger & Jiang, 2014	4
Impact of Government Social Media on Public Trust and Perception	Huang & Hu, 2022; Wang & Liu, 2023; Gu, Harrison & Zhu, 2020; Liu, Zhou & Liu, 2013	4
Information Dissemination and Public Communication Efficiency	Zhang, H. Y., 2023; Zheng & Zheng, 2014; Lu & Pan, 2022; Li, Wang, Zhong & Ren, 2022	4

Technological evolution. The review highlighted significant technological advancements and their impact on government communication strategies. The evolution of social media platforms, especially the integration of mobile services, has transformed public engagement practices (**Table 7**).

The papers under the first sub-theme Advancements in E-Government Services highlights significant insights into how digital innovations are revolutionizing government-public interactions. These studies collectively explore the integration of social media and other digital technologies into e-government frameworks, emphasizing their impact on public engagement, service delivery, and administrative efficiency.

Sullivan, Zhao and Wang^[29] investigated how social media platforms enhance the reach and responsiveness of e-government services, finding that these tools significantly increase government accessibility and public satisfaction. Another paper^[30] focuses on the evolution of e-government frameworks to include social media, which not only improves communication efficiency but also fosters a greater sense of community involvement in governance processes.

Further analysis from Shao, et al.^[31] delves into the adoption and effectiveness of digital government services, highlighting how technological enhancements facilitate better citizen-government interaction. The findings suggest that advancements in digital technologies enable more tailored and user-friendly government services, leading to increased public uptake and satisfaction. This likely involves a comparative analysis before and after implementing new technologies to gauge improvements in service delivery and public response. Additionally, Medaglia and Zhu^[32] discussed the impact of implementing advanced e-government systems on administrative efficiency and public accessibility. It shows that sophisticated e-government systems significantly reduce processing times and increase transparency in governmental procedures, likely measured through metrics such as time-to-resolution, user satisfaction scores, and usage rates.

Collectively, these studies underscore the transformative potential of digital technologies in enhancing how government services are delivered and perceived by the public. They advocate for continued investment in digital infrastructure as a means to enhance governmental efficiency, transparency, and public engagement, emphasizing the need for a strategic approach to digital integration that aligns technological advancements with user needs and accessibility standards.

Additionally, The exploration of social media's role in political and civic engagement, as detailed in some studies^[33-35], provides valuable insights into how digital platforms are reshaping interactions between governments and citizens, particularly in the context of political processes. These papers collectively address the use of social media as a tool for political engagement, highlighting the ways in which these platforms influence political participation and shape public trust among younger demographics.

Lu and Pan^[33] focused on the utilization of social media platforms by government entities to engage with younger citizens, revealing that these digital tools have become integral in mobilizing political participation among youth. The research suggests that social media not only facilitates more frequent interactions between politicians and young voters but also allows governments to tailor their messages in ways that resonate more effectively with this demographic. This tailored communication strategy appears to significantly enhance the political awareness and engagement of younger individuals, which is crucial for fostering a politically active society.

Chen, et al.^[34] build upon this by examining the impact of social media on enhancing public participation in the political process. This research notes that the interactive capabilities of social media allow for a more dynamic exchange of ideas, which can lead to greater civic participation and a more informed citizenry.

Meanwhile, Banghui, et al.^[35] explored the role of social media in influencing young people's trust in government. The study finds that regular and transparent communication via social media can significantly improve trust among this group, particularly when governments use these platforms to provide timely and accurate information. The research highlights that the perceived responsiveness of government officials on social media plays a crucial role in shaping public perceptions of trustworthiness and reliability.

Together, these papers underscore the transformative potential of social media in political and civic engagement. They demonstrate that effective use of these platforms can lead to increased political participation, especially among the youth, and can enhance the transparency and responsiveness of governments. This set of studies provides compelling evidence of the need for strategic social media engagement strategies that are responsive to the needs and behaviors of younger populations, aiming to foster a more engaged and informed electorate. As governments continue to refine their digital strategies, the insights from these papers can guide efforts to enhance civic engagement and political participation through targeted, interactive, and transparent social media communications.

Last but not least, there are 2 papers concentrate on the theme of the impact of ICT innovations. The papers provide in-depth analysis on how information and communication technology innovations, including social media, are being utilized to enhance governmental operations. Two studies^[36,37] in particular examine the broader implications of ICT advancements on enhancing transparency and public access to government information.

Chen, et al.^[37] explored the overarching effects of innovation of ICT on government operations, specifically focusing on how these technologies facilitate a better connection between citizens and their government. This study elaborates on the ways ICT tools can streamline processes and make government operations more efficient, while also enhancing the transparency of these operations. In contrast, Fu, et al.^[36] analyzed the direct impact of ICT on increasing government transparency and accountability. The research highlights how social media and other digital tools are essential in creating an open government framework that allows for greater public scrutiny and oversight. By leveraging these technologies, governments are able to provide real-time updates and comprehensive access to information that previously might have been difficult to obtain.

Collectively, these studies reveal how ICT innovations have become integral to promoting transparency and accountability in government. They provide evidence that technological advancements are key to modernizing government interactions with the public, ensuring that operations are not only more transparent but also more responsive to citizen needs. This synthesis of findings emphasizes the necessity for ongoing investment in ICT to maintain and enhance the openness and efficiency of government, highlighting the

crucial role of digital tools in fostering an accountable and transparent public sector. As such, these insights offer valuable guidance for policymakers aiming to leverage technology to reinforce good governance practices.

Table 7. The distribution of sub-themes within the technological evolution category.

Sub-themes	The Authors	n
Advancements in E-Government Services	Sullivan, Zhao & Wang, 2023; Zhou, M., 2013; Shao, Guan, Sun, Cole & Liu, 2022; Medaglia & Zhu, 2017	4
Social Media's Role in Political and Civic Engagement	Lu & Pan, 2021; Chen, Zhang, Evans & Min, 2021; Banghui, Yonghann & Guitao, 2020	3
Impact of ICT Innovations on Government Transparency and Accountability	Chen, Xu, Cao & Zhang, 2016; Fu, Mensah, Wang, Gui, Wang & Xiao, 2022	2

Audience engagement. Despite the scarcity of focused studies, this review pointed to a critical examination of user satisfaction, suggesting a gap in understanding the audience's perspective and interaction with government social media (**Table 8**).

This research^[38] offers a perspective in understanding how the public perceives the quality of information provided through government Weibo accounts. Specifically, the study emphasizes the importance of audience perspective through exploring perceived information quality as a significant predictor of public satisfaction.

Table 8. The distribution of sub-themes within the audience engagement category.

Sub-themes	The Authors	n
Audiences' Satisfaction	Cai & Zhao, 2023	1

The findings from this systematic review underscore the strategic utilization of social media by the Chinese government as a multifaceted tool for governance, marked by an ongoing adaptation to technological advancements and a nuanced approach to engaging with the citizenry. However, the evident scarcity of research focusing on audience engagement highlights a significant gap in the literature, suggesting an urgent need for studies that delve into user satisfaction and interaction with government social media platforms.

4. Conclusion

In concluding the systematic literature review on Chinese government social media (GSM) from 2013 to 2023, conducted in accordance with PRISMA guidelines, the mixed-methods approach combining bibliometric and content analysis offers a thorough exploration of the digital governance landscape. This methodological rigor ensured that the review was comprehensive, systematically tracing the evolution of GSM and highlighting key trends in publication, methodologies, and thematic emphases over a decade.

The integration of bibliometric analysis provided a quantitative overview of publication patterns, revealing shifts that correspond with technological advancements and changes in policy. Within this part, a cross-analysis was briefly conducted to overlay these findings as well, providing nuanced insights into how different research dimensions interact. This aspect of the review, while not the primary focus, contributed to a deeper understanding of the dynamics at play, reinforcing the benefits of a mixed-methods approach in capturing the multifaceted impacts of social media on governance.

Additionally, content analysis complemented this by offering qualitative insights into specific themes such as governance strategies, technological evolution, and public trust and engagement. Together, these

methods painted a special and complex picture of the development of Chinese government social media about how social media has been harnessed for governance, emphasizing its role in enhancing transparency, public participation, and administrative efficiency.

These insights are invaluable to policymakers and government communication strategists. In a world characterized by continued instability and frequent public health emergencies, the increased interest in studying Chinese government social media underscores the need to develop adaptive strategies that align social media use with current technological capabilities and public expectations to lead the people in the face of emergencies. The findings of this study encourage future research to continue exploring underrepresented areas, such as the impact of emerging technologies on public participation and governance, and to apply similar mixed methods to enhance the breadth and depth of understanding in this evolving field.

In sum, this systematic literature review not only documents the current state of Chinese government social media research but also serves as a foundational resource for developing informed, responsive, and effective digital governance strategies. It underscores the importance of ongoing investment in digital infrastructure and strategic communication to ensure that government initiatives are effectively communicated and that they resonate with an increasingly connected public.

5. Limitations

While this study has yielded novel findings, it is imperative to acknowledge certain limitations. First, the data on publications in Chinese GSM field were obtained exclusively from the CNKI, Scopus, Google scholar, and Airiti Library databases. Therefore, data from other relevant search sources such as WoS, ACM, or IEEE Xplore were omitted. Despite this limitation, it is worth noting that Scopus is widely considered to be a suitable database for conducting bibliometric analysis and systematic reviews^[39], and Google scholar is considered to be the most comprehensive academic search engine^[7]. In addition, CNKI and Airiti Library, as Chinese academic paper databases, play an important complementary role in literature searches on this topic. Second, the selection of only 22 articles for the systematic review may be considered modest, and therefore, the results obtained may not provide a truly comprehensive assessment of GSM-related issues. A wider selection of articles in future reviews will help to understand the topic more thoroughly. Despite these limitations, we believe the results of this study add to the existing body of knowledge in the field of Chinese GSM.

Conflict of interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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Appexi A: All articles for review.

No	Year	Author(s)	Title
1	2023	Sullivan, J., Zhao, Y., & Wang, W.	China's Livestreaming Local Officials: An Experiment in Popular Digital Communications
2	2023	Cai, Q. M., & Zhao, Y.	Empirical research on public satisfaction with government Weibo
3	2023	Jiang, Y.	Public use of social media, government transparency, and government trust: An empirical study based on the survey of netizens' social consciousness.
4	2023	Liu, B. F., Zhao, Y. L., Liang, P. H., & Zhang, J.	New media in government affairs and local government trust: Evidence from the launch of government Weibo accounts
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15	2022	Fu, H., Mensah, I. K., Wang, R., Gui, L., Wang, J., & Xiao, Z.	The predictors of mobile government services adoption through social media: A case of Chinese citizens
16	2014	Schlæger, J., & Jiang, M.	Official microblogging and social management by local governments in China
17	2020	Gu, T., Harrison, T. M., & Zhu, Y.	Municipal government use of social media: an analysis of three Chinese cities.
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