Short video narrative and China's national image construction from the perspective of foreigners——Take the short video of Shanghai epidemic as an example

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Abstract: With the continuous development of globalization and the rising international influence of China, more and more foreigners have started to pay attention to China, and they actively join Chinese Internet platforms to make short videos of their daily lives and anti-epidemic routines in China and post them on Internet platforms, becoming one of the important bridges for cross-cultural communication, and at the same time has enabled Chinese people to know China more objectively under the perspective of the other. Based on the theory of otherness and frame construction, this paper selects 200 short videos involving foreigners during the spring 2022 Shanghai closure and control period for the content analysis on major short video platforms, and constructs categories for the narrative perspective, narrative content, narrative characters, and narrative attitude of such short videos, puts forward four hypotheses to analyze the relationship between their narrative strategies and communication effects, and based on the above analysis, we will further discuss the international communication strategy of China and the mass communication strategy of short videos in the context of the epidemic.

Keywords: Short Video,Country Image,Otherness,Cross-cultural communication

1 Introduction

In the spring of 2022, the new crown pneumonia epidemic caused by the mutant strain of Omicron raged in Shanghai. The new virus has the characteristics of rapid spread, strong transmission and high concealment, and the entire city has been quickly involved in major public health emergencies. Affected by this, the "pause button" was pressed in the megacities with a population of 25 million, and the vast majority of citizens were locked up at home due to the epidemic. Many netizens picked up their mobile phones and took the initiative to record their life under lockdown in Shanghai and posted them on the short video platform, making an important contribution to showing the panorama of public life under the epidemic. We have observed that many of the content produced by these users have foreigners as the main body, that is, foreigners living in Shanghai also record their life in home isolation through short videos, and express their

feelings through filming of government-issued materials, nucleic acid testing, home isolation, etc. They expressed positive recognition of the Chinese government's epidemic prevention and control strategies and effects. Therefore, this article attempts to explore and analyze the narrative methods and strategies of foreigners shooting short videos during the lockdown period in Shanghai under the background of the epidemic, as well as the construction of the image of China and the dissemination effect of the short videos produced. In the background, the mass communication function of short video is further discussed.

2 Overview section

2.1 Literature review

2.1.1 Research on international image

American scholar Kenneth Boulding (1953), from the perspective of international communication, proposed that “national image is the combination of a country’s cognition of itself and the cognition of other actors in the international system. It is a series of information input and the result of the output are very clearly structured information capital". Xu Xiaoge (1996) is an early scholar who defined national image in my country. He believes that national image is the image formed by a country in the international news flow, or the image of a country in the news reports of other countries' news media presented image. Sun Youzhong (2002) believed that the national image should be differentiated according to the "external public" and the "internal public", and pointed out that different publics cognition of the national image was greatly different due to different experiences, values, knowledge and emotions. Liu Xiaoyan (2002) believes that national image refers to the projection of the objective state of the country in public opinion. Judging from the existing research, the definition of international image in academic circles mainly distinguishes from "self-image" and "other-image", and from this, two paths of national image construction are derived, namely "self-sculpting" and "other-image". He molds". This study starts from the perspective of "others" and explores the presentation of my country's national image from the perspective of others. Foreigners in China, as the "close other" who have lived in China for a long time, have played a role that cannot be ignored in the construction of international image.

2.1.2 Research on the phenomenon of foreign Internet celebrities

With the vigorous development of short video platforms and the gradual diversification of video platform users, "Yangwanghong", as a special type of video creator, has been welcomed by users at home and abroad. Starting from the "other", they recorded China's development and current situation through short video shooting, enriched China's national image, and played an important role in cross-cultural communication.

By arranging the relevant literature, this paper finds that the research of Yang Wanghong mainly focuses on three aspects: the phenomenon of Yang Wanghong, the construction of the country's image by Yang Wanghong, and the short video research of Yang Wanghong. Most of these studies used a case-by-case approach. For example, Wang Yanni (2022) took the Bilibili account "Crooked Nut Research Association" as an example to study the construction of the ritual chain of cross-cultural communication of foreign influencers, and believed that it realized the virtual presence of the audience, and the common focus stimulated shared emotions Experience the effect. Bai Jingyuan (2022) conducted research on the up master of Bilibili website, and analyzed the deep logic of the frequent "out of the circle" of short videos of foreign Internet celebrities from the perspective of narratology, and the homogenization of video content and cultural misinterpretation in videos, etc. The phenomenon proposed corresponding solutions.

Although these studies have adopted various theories such as narratology, their methods are limited to case analysis, and cannot analyze the current situation and dissemination effects of short videos of “Yangwanghong” from a macro perspective. From the perspective of narratology, this paper adopts the method of content analysis to study the overall narrative strategy of short videos from the perspective of foreigners, and uses other theories, the frame analysis and other theories to further study its dissemination effect.

2.2 Theoretical overview

2.2.1 Others

From the perspective of cross-cultural communication, as an academic concept, the other is often used in the analysis of image building, national identity and other issues, and has achieved many research results. From the current research, it can be divided into three aspects.

The first is to explore the national image from the perspective of the other. This type of research explores the presentation and influencing factors of China's image from the perspective of the other. In terms of national image presentation, domestic scholar Zhang Xin (2017) took a documentary filmed by the BBC as a sample, and believed that China’s image in the perspective of the other in the West has a “two-sidedness” full of contradictions; in terms of influencing factors, Hou Hong et al. (2016), starting from "Super China", argues that the attribution behind the differentiation of the "other" lies in the speaker's values, geopolitics, and audience acceptance psychology. This type of research mainly focuses on traditional media, such as documentaries, TV dramas and other cases, which has certain limitations of the times and are not applicable in the era of self-media. Therefore, this research focuses on the cross-cultural communication of foreign influencers on short video platforms. China's national image constructed in China.

The second one is to study the phenomenon of western media's "otherization" of China. This kind of research mainly explores the shaping of China’s image by Western mainstream media and self-media through content analysis. In the study of Western mainstream media, domestic scholar Liu Chun (2019) analyzed the South Korean mainstream media "Dong-A

Ilbo" and concluded that it presents a developing but dangerous image of the Oriental Other. In terms of self-media research, Wang Yuan selected 121 short videos about "anti-epidemic" from 5 highly popular foreign Internet celebrities for qualitative the content analysis, summed up their narrative characteristics, and believed that they built a positive image of China through short videos. On the basis of self-media research, this study focuses on the Shanghai epidemic in 2022, and adds research and discussion on the effect of communication, which has more theoretical and practical significance.

Thirdly, it discusses the solutions to the problem of otherization in cross-cultural communication. This type of research is primarily a reflection on othering and cross-cultural communication strategies through a combination of theory and phenomena. The research of Jia Jie et al. (2021) is based on the narratological analysis of "A Home in a Distance: The Belt and Road", and concluded that the de-othering of cross-cultural communication can be achieved through the formation of participatory and conversational narrative texts and the use of "cultural empathy" as the The narrative strategy of the aim is achieved in two ways. Zou Beilin (2022) believes that cross-cultural communication from the media can deconstruct stereotypes and solidify the misunderstandings created by differences and symbols to a certain extent, so as to achieve "de-othering" cross-cultural communication. This type of research has gradually shifted from traditional media to self-media. This research focuses on short videos, the main form of self-media, to discuss and reflect on how to achieve “de-othering”, better construct national image, and spread Chinese culture.

2.2.2 Framework Construction

Frame theory, also known as frame analysis, was first proposed by Gregory Bateson. Based on an anthropological perspective, he believed that multiple elements such as subject cognition and communication environment constitute a frame. Frame is the reference of meaning and determines the generation of meaning. It was later introduced into the category of sociological research by Goffman, who believed individuals symbolized complex social events through the framework and became "subjective cognition connected with individual internal psychology".

At present, the research on the frame theory in my country mainly focuses on empirical analysis, and the most representative is the research of Taiwan scholar Zang Guoren, who proposed the cross-family three-level analysis method, which consists of high-level, middle-level and low-level news framework atmosphere. Hierarchical structure analysis of the theme, usually analyzes the subject and attitude of the video; middle-level structure analysis of narrative, specific analysis of narrative strategies, perspectives, methods; low-level structure analysis of discourse, specific analysis of typical symbols and picture presentation. Based on the three-level analysis method, this research focuses on the short video of Shanghai's anti-epidemic, and explores how foreigners can select the themes and hotspots that they think can represent China's anti-epidemic under their own framework, symbolize them, and present their own Understanding China's national image.

3 Research methods

3.1 Content Analysis

Content analysis is a scientific research method based on quantitative analysis. Based on the questions to be answered in this article: What narrative strategies were used in the short videos shot by foreigners during the lockdown in Shanghai? What kind of images of China do these short videos build? How well do these short videos spread? This paper will use the content analysis method to explore.

In order to obtain a sufficient sample size, the sample can fully represent the population and the research results are more accurate, this article uses the three video platforms of Douyin, Kuaishou,Youtube, Xiaohongshu and Bilibili to analyze the epidemic-related incidents involving foreigners during the closure and control of Shanghai in the spring of 2022. 200 short videos are analyzed for content, and the categories of narrative perspective, narrative content, narrative characters, narrative attitudes, etc. of such short videos are constructed, and their narrative strategies and communication effects are analyzed.

3.1.1 Assumption establishment

Based on the above questions, this paper proposes the following four hypotheses:

H1: The more individual perspectives in the narrative perspective, the better the short video dissemination effect.

H2: The more footage related to epidemic prevention in the narrative scene, the better the short video dissemination effect.

H3: The more positive the narrative attitude, the better the short video communication effect.

H4: The more positive the image of China presented in the short video, the better the communication effect.

4 Research findings and discussion points

4.1 Research Findings

The independent sample t-test was used to statistically analyze the dissemination effects of short videos from different narrative perspectives. Among them, there is no significant difference in the number of likes for short videos from different narrative perspectives (t=0.729, P=0.467), and the number of likes for videos released from the perspective of the parties is higher than that of videos released from the perspective of non-participants. The corresponding averages of likes are 5472 and 3231, respectively. There is also no significant difference in the amount of comments for short videos from different narrative perspectives (t=-1.238, P=0.217, and the

amount of comments for videos released from the perspective of the parties is lower than that of videos released from the perspective of non-participants, and the corresponding comments The mean values are 281 and 446, respectively. Therefore, it can be concluded that in the short videos related to the Shanghai epidemic shot by foreigners, using an individual perspective or not using an individual perspective will not affect the transmission effect of the short video. The research hypothesis H1 is not supported.

One-way analysis of variance was used to analyze the correlation between the length of the epidemic prevention footage in the video and the video communication effect. 0.082; F=0.572, P=0.001), indicating that in the videos self-recorded by foreigners, the longer the footage of Shanghai epidemic prevention and control, the higher the number of likes and comments on the video, and the research hypothesis H2 is supported.

One-way analysis of variance was used to analyze the relationship between the narrative attitude of the video and the video communication effect. It was found that there was no significant relationship between the narrative attitude of the Shanghai epidemic prevention and control policy and the number of likes of the video (F=0.832, P=0.478). There is a significant relationship between the narrative attitude of the Shanghai epidemic prevention and control policy in the video and the amount of comments in the video (F=2.431, P=0.066), and the research hypothesis H3 is partially supported.

One-way analysis of variance was used to analyze the relationship between the presentation of China's national image in videos and the effect of video communication. (F=0.459, P=0.633; F=1.338, P=0.265). Research hypothesis H4 is not supported.

4.2 Discussion

4.2.1 The bridge of cross-cultural communication

Foreigners in China released short videos on major media platforms, showing their real and personal life and expressing their real personal feelings during the epidemic in Shanghai. In this process, foreigners in China have played a bridge role in cross-cultural communication, providing a window for foreigners to understand China.

Before the advent of the new media era, foreigners mostly obtained information about China through their own traditional media, such as newspapers, radio, television and other channels. However, due to the obvious ideological tendencies of some traditional medias, the output content may be harmful to Chinese demons. This makes it difficult for some foreign audiences to view China's culture, policies, and social life objectively and rationally. Even under the instigation of the media, they have a hostile and refusal attitude towards China. With the emergence of various new Internet platforms, a large number of foreigners in China have created short videos to record the bits and pieces of their lives in China and introduce all aspects of Chinese culture, effectively reducing foreigners' prejudice against China. After the outbreak in Shanghai, strict quarantine, nucleic acid, health codes and other anti-epidemic measures

have caused uproar abroad, and some foreigners have difficulty understanding the significance of China's anti-epidemic policies. In China's Zero Covid-19 Policy, it starts from the negative news about Shanghai's blockade and control by Western media, and points out that Chinese and Western ways of thinking are different. Chinese people value the collective while Westerners are more concerned about the individual. Therefore, the prevention and control measures are criticized from a Western perspective. It is unreasonable; at the same time, he cited authoritative investigation reports to explain from various aspects why Shanghai needs to be closed and controlled, and China needs to adhere to the zero-clearing policy. The rational discussion has aroused the approval of many netizens at home and abroad, which will help deepen foreigners' understanding of China's understanding of epidemic prevention and control.

With the opening of "self-media" channels, overseas bloggers, as others in China, have more discourse power and are playing an increasingly important role in cross-cultural communication. Therefore, it is necessary to give full play to the cross-cultural communication of overseas bloggers in China in the cross-cultural communication of Chinese stories. It is of great significance to tell Chinese stories well and show the development of contemporary Chinese society.

4.2.2 "Humanity" narrative attitude

Compared with traditional media, mobile-based short videos pay more attention to the sense of immersion and interaction, which determines that the narrative content and perspective of short videos are more microscopic than traditional media.

Most of the epidemic-related videos released by foreigners in China are based on their own lives, with a "grassroots" standpoint and a civilian perspective, so they can use an equal and interactive communication voice to express their emotional identity with multicultural values. Thomas Afu, a German blogger who lives in Shanghai, posted a video titled "Shanghai Epidemic | Quarantine for a month, how is my life now? ", filmed and recorded his isolation life, whether it was ordinary life details such as exercising, cooking, and bringing a baby during home isolation, or emotional expressions such as depression, worry, ridicule, or touching, all of which were recorded by him and uploaded to the online platform. . Foreigners in China, as "others", lived the same life as ordinary Chinese during the lockdown in Shanghai. What they saw, heard, thought and thought could make Chinese netizens truly feel the impact of the epidemic. The common emotions of human beings regardless of national borders, thus achieving "de-othering" in the sense of cross-cultural communication.

The positive performance of short videos on epidemic-related topics by foreigners in China in cross-cultural communication also provides inspiration for my country’s international communication: when turning to global social platforms for cross-cultural communication practice, we should focus on micro-narratives. Pay attention to the authenticity and intimacy of expression, dig deep into the common parts between China and other countries in the world, arouse the empathy of domestic and foreign audiences, and create a "humane" national image.

5 Summary and reflection

5.1 Collaborate to build a discourse field and build a three-dimensional national image

As a product of the rapid development of media technology, short videos about the epidemic with foreigners as the main body provide users at home and abroad with a new cross-cultural communication experience.

First of all, foreign "Internet celebrities" and Chinese users are intertwined to participate in the narrative of the epidemic in China, which can jointly build a discourse field about the Shanghai epidemic, so that opinions can be expressed in a variety of ways. In the process of information dissemination, through the media agenda setting of the official and the platform, and through multi-level communication in the public discourse space, the relevant epidemic prevention experience, psychological support, attitude towards the epidemic prevention policy and the effect of the epidemic prevention policy can be conveyed to the audience, which can enhance the cultural cohesion.

Secondly, the participation of multiple subjects from Chinese and foreign backgrounds in the discussion of public health events is conducive to showing a three dimensional and comprehensive China, and eliminating the haze similar to the "China threat theory". Against the background of international public opinion in which the West holds the vast majority of control over world public opinion, theories such as "China threat" and "China collapse" are endless. During the COVID-19 period, the Western media constructed topics such as the "Wuhan virus" to shift the responsibility for the spread of the epidemic to China and tried to discredit China. In addition, the West used the advantages of communication technology to carry out ideological intrusions and deliberately discredited China in various ways. The decline of national cohesion has come; at home, our country is entering a new journey of building a powerful modern socialist country, and it is necessary to gather the strength of the people and jointly realize the Chinese dream of the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation. The repeated spread of the epidemic in many places and the large-scale outbreak of the epidemic in Shanghai is a fact that we do not want to see, but it should never become a sword for some Western countries to smear China's image. At this time, the epidemic-related short videos participated by foreigners have made great contributions to comprehensively and truthfully reflecting the real state of China and the effective measures of the Chinese government. Due to the particularity of its subject, it has achieved good dissemination effects on domestic and foreign platforms, which is conducive to the construction of a "network of shared destiny" and the promotion of people-to-people bonds between China and foreign countries. In general, the cross-cultural communication strategy of foreigners participating in short videos related to the epidemic can provide inspiration for us to explore the feasible path of how to improve the affinity of China's image and the guiding force of international public opinion in the social era.

5.2 The Diverse Perspectives of We Media and the Media Form Innovation of Mainstream Media

Epidemic-related short videos with foreigners as the main body have achieved good dissemination effects on mainstream short video platforms, which can provide certain inspiration for the current domestic self-media dissemination strategies and the transformation of mainstream media.

From the perspective of individual communication, under the narrative background of the epidemic, isolation has become the norm of life. Foreign bloggers have relatively limited narrative themes, but they can express themselves intuitively and three dimensionally in short videos and demonstrate their personalized lifestyles. Close the psychological distance of audiences from different cultural backgrounds. As mentioned above, diverse individual perspectives also contribute to the dissemination effect of the video, expressing diverse values and avoiding the stereotyped presentation of specific cultural groups. In addition, diverse national backgrounds and personalized expressions endow information with richer emotional value, which is conducive to the formation of emotional resonance through equal two-way interaction between senders and audiences, and promotes cross-cultural dialogue and negotiation. Domestic self-media can learn from its narrative strategy, and through diversified perspectives, individual differences and background diversification, thus, it can have a good interactive relationship with the audience to achieve the purpose of communication.

From the perspective of mainstream media, in the era of social media, short videos based on mobile terminals bring a more immersive and interactive experience than mass media products, which can further establish a stable and active interactive relationship, so as to better provide information and the ability to guide public opinion. When reporting major public health emergencies, it is even more necessary to adhere to the principle of party spirit and the policy of focusing on positive publicity, and at the same time adhere to the news professionalism of the authenticity and objectivity of news, and provide the public with information on the epidemic through a proactive narrative attitude and strategy. The trend of change and development of short video, which is equipped with short video, meets the needs of the audience and reflects the changes in the objective world, and promotes the stability and development of society.

5.3 Integrate grand narrative and micro narrative to find the optimal communication strategy

The grand narrative and the micro narrative are two relative narrative techniques in narratology. The academic community defines grand narratology as a narrative that is opposed to detailed analysis, difference, and diversity; a grand, comprehensive, and perfect narrative; a narrative with consistency and unity [Wu Yujun & Gu Haomai. (2018). National The Problem of Historical Memory in Identity Construction. Research on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics

(03), 69-76+2.]. On March 22, 2021, "Hello Yinchuan" produced by the Foreign Affairs Office of the Yinchuan Municipal People's Government was officially unveiled. This video is a comprehensive introduction of Yinchuan City's historical civilization, humanistic characteristics, living environment, natural environment and opening achievements under the background of the Belt and Road Initiative, and has achieved remarkable results in the process of external communication. In the video, a large panoramic lens is used for many times to show Yinchuan style. With the bilingual explanatory commentary in both Chinese and English, the characteristic landscape and cultural heritage of Yinchuan are highlighted in a grand narrative. Under this grand narrative, the external public can fully experience the overall situation of Yinchuan City, and can learn a wealth of content in a short period of time. But in the space of folk discourse that emphasizes individual values, comprehensiveness has also become one of the disadvantages of grand narratives. Although grand narrative can display video content in all aspects, it cannot introduce a certain field in detail, so it is slightly inferior in audience empathy.

On the contrary, micro-narratives have a small and focused perspective, and can use details and situations to render emotionally, often resonating with the audience. During the epidemic in Shanghai, most of the short videos shot by foreigners in China adopted micro-narrative techniques. From some small perspectives in life, they recorded the real protests, the living conditions of the people, and the mutual assistance between neighbors. From the perspective of the experience of others, these short videos with micro-narratives about the daily life around them have aroused the strong curiosity and empathy of the external public, and not only successfully conveyed the image of the kind, hard-working and tenacious Chinese nationals, but also the greatly space presents the positive aspects of China's epidemic prevention measures, and debunks some false reports by foreign media.

Micro-narratives and grand-narratives have their own advantages, and the best communication effect can be achieved by the organic combination of the two methods in the process of communication. In the construction of communication content, the macro narrative can be used to elicit the background of the times, and then the concrete Chinese stories can be displayed by the micro narrative; the daily stories around the masses can also be used to empathize with the external public, interspersed with Chinese politics, economy, culture, etc. The objective facts of science and technology can eliminate the stereotype of the external public about China, thereby narrowing the psychological distance.

5.4 Pay attention to the communication advantages of foreigners in China, and actively strengthen content guidance

On the one hand, foreigners in China have the special identity of "the other", and on the other hand, they have the experience of living in China. Such "dual attributes" play a huge role in the dissemination of Chinese stories to the outside world. By using the identity of the "other", the short video content of foreigners in China can better shorten the psychological distance with the external audience, and the symbolic meaning implied in the content is also subtly transmitted

to the audience. At the same time, the special identity also avoids the suspicion of "self-selling and boasting" when spreading Chinese stories. In the context of cross-cultural communication, when foreigners in China encode content, they have a strong perspective of the other, and to some extent, they have avoided cultural discounts in the process of symbol conversion. In internal communication, the identity of the "other" can stimulate the curiosity of domestic audiences, and the large amount of positive content contained in it also enhances national self-confidence and pride.

There are a large number of video accounts operated by foreigners in China on domestic and foreign platforms, but when analyzing the content, the author found that the content is highly homogenized. Most of the videos are follow-up descriptions of hot events, and lack issues that reflect the spiritual core and culture of China. The fundamental reason is that most of the cultural experiences of foreigners in China stay on the surface of life and cannot touch the core of Chinese culture, so they cannot express deeper meanings through various codes.

In the process of carrying out the practice of cross-cultural communication of Chinese stories, we should actively take advantage of the identity and communication advantages of foreigners in China, pay attention to many issues such as the content ecology of foreigners' self-media content, and stimulate their content productivity. Guidance should be given in the setting of content and topics to help foreigners in China tell Chinese stories, convey the spirit of the Chinese nation, and break the stereotype of China from external audiences

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