A Study on the Success of Short Videos Themed on Beijing Cuisines and Its Influence on the City's Image

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Abstract. With the boom of the short video industry in recent years, cities with tremendous internet influences have witnessed rapid growth attributable to the rise of short video platforms where cuisine-themed short videos have become a new channel for the communication of a city's image. On one of the platforms, TikTok, there exists a huge gap in terms of communication performance among cuisine-themed short videos of different kinds. Taking content analysis as the tool, this paper is engaged with the quantitative analysis of the content characteristics, food types, city image, video length and language characteristics of the short videos themed on Beijing cuisines that go viral on the Internet with the coded information extracted from the top 30 related short videos with most likes published on TikTok, so as to investigate their commonalities and shared features. An in-depth analysis is provided as the result with specific cases taken into account to propose for the production and communication of similar videos and to provide certain references for the construction and communication of the image of corresponding cities.

1 Introduction

1.1. Research Background

According to the latest statistics released by China Internet Information Center, the user volume of short video products in China has reached 937 million, which can be treated as a sign that mobile short video apps have become people's common access to entertainment.

Driven by their low barrier of entry, strong universality, diversified user profile and innovation means, and a good traffic-making capacity, cuisine-themed short videos have become the first choice of massive practitioners of self-media, as the theme-specific total play of the term "cuisine" has amounted to 639.97 billion when searched with themed hashtags on TikTok.

With the boom of cuisine-themed short videos, there emerged a variety of subcategories such as cooking tutorial, restaurant hunting, food hunting, food live-streaming, rural cuisines, etc, which all attach great importance to the demonstration of cuisines' charm to satisfy people's covet for delicacies with wonderful visual experience and to the combination of food cooking, entertainment, creativity, and many other elements to pioneer a new horizon for cuisine-themed short videos.

1.2. Literature Review

Firstly, regarding the study of city image, in the article authored by Li Guangbin, Wang Yong and Yuan Zhongjin [1] published in 2006, the connotation of city image was mentioned as such, "as an important business field of city government, the objective of city image is to promote the city to the market and attract more external resources through a well-shaped city image, so as to boost the city's economic development and recruitment, expand the city's financial resources, and sharpen the supply capacity of "public goods" of the city".

City image is the external artistic expression of the inner characteristics of a city and a concentrated reflection of the quality, taste and culture of the city as a whole. Later in 2009, Chen Ying proposed a comprehensive conceptualization of city as a complex entity by taking into account both domestic and international research on the concept of city image, that is, "city image refers to the specific perception, overall view and comprehensive evaluation of the general public on the implicit integrated strength, explicit vitality and future prospect of a city, which is a manifestation of the general characteristics and features of the city." [2]

In He Guoping's article, there provides a more concise definition of city image, that is, "city image is people's subjective view and perception of the city as well as the visualized image or mirror image formed thereby, which consists of three hierarchies: mental image (beliefs, ideas, etc.), behavioral image and visual representation (image and identification system, etc.)." [3]

Secondly, in terms of food-themed short videos, a search was conducted in the database of CNKI with "food-themed short videos" as the keyword, and judging from the current state of art, there remains a scarcity of research findings on food-themed short videos in China,

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and the most of which are contributed by journal papers but not yet academic monographs, with the relevant research fields mainly focusing on short video research and food communication research separately.

Since 2015 when "food live-streaming" was introduced into China and flourished rapidly, many domestic scholars have conducted studies on this subject. According to Cao Xiran (2017), there are several reasons for the popularity of " food live-streaming": the first is its low barrier of entry which provides the general public easy access to it, the second is the diversity of content that can meet the varied needs of different audiences, and finally it is the capability of satisfying the audience's appetite in an indirect manner and serving as a companion when they feel lonely36.

And with the passage of time, cuisine-themed short videos have also been expanded and innovated into a variety of sub-categories such as restaurant hunting, popular amusement and so on.

2 METHOD

2.1. Research Contents

By searching with the hashtags "Beijing" and "cuisine" on TikTok, this paper gathers the top 30 cuisine-themed short videos with the most likes as the research objects. And taking the research results as an entry, solutions are proposed for the possible problems that may emerge in the development course of cuisine-themed short videos, so as to provide certain references for the future growth of cuisine-themed short videos and the short video industry as a whole. Finally, based on the research data, relevant suggestions and strategies are proposed for the construction and communication of Beijing's city image from the perspective of cuisine-themed short videos.

2.2. Research Methodology

Content analysis method is intended to be adopted in this thesis. A quantitative analysis is proposed to be made to provide a quantitative and accurate description of the communication content of short videos themed on Beijing cuisines published on TikTok, which will be sampled and taken into the construction of a category system based on the elements presented in the videos (content characteristics, food types, city image, video length and language characteristics), where they will be further coded and exported into valid data, with which the communication performance of these videos will be analyzed and summarized.

2.3. Research Design

2.3.1. Research Methods and Sampling Methods

This paper adopts the content analysis method and selects 30 short videos themed on Beijing cuisines published on the short video platform "TikTok" as the research object through "simple random sampling". In

the same vein, content analysis method will be adopted in this study to screen out 30 cuisine-themed short videos out of all the videos collected from TikTok with different posting times, number of likes, individuals and video lengths, which will be further coded for subsequent analysis. A simple random sampling will be conducted with the random number table by searching with the keyword "Beijing cuisine" to collect related short videos published on TikTok between January 2022 and July 2022, with 30 sampled videos selected as the final research objects. A series of multi-dimensional content indicators covering all forms of video information will be introduced in this study, and video information will contain content characteristics, food types, city image, video length and language characteristics.

2.3.2. Coding and Data Presentation

2.3.2.1. Specification of Multi-dimensional Indicators

a. content characteristics: relaxing, funny, popularization
  b. food types: traditional Beijing snacks, Beijing specialties, foreign cuisines, other regional cuisines
  c. city image: with rich cultural heritage, modernity, diversity
  d. video length: within 1 min, above 1 min
  e. language characteristics: Beijing dialect, Mandarin

Table 1. Multidimensional Information Coding Table

	Relationship indicators (code serial number)
content characteristics	relaxing0, funny1, popularization2
food types	traditional Beijing snacks0, Beijing specialties1, foreign cuisines2, other regional cuisines3
city image	with rich cultural heritage0, modernity1, diversity2
video length	within 1 min0, above 1 min1
language characteristics	Beijing dialect0, Mandarin1

Form Source: Self Drawn

Table 2. Table of Coded Video Information

	Relationship indicators (code serial number)	Number of videos (N=30)	Effective percentage
content characteristics	relaxing0, funny1, popularization2	relaxing14, funny2, popularization 14	relaxing 46.67%, funny 6.66%, popularization 46.67%
food types	traditional Beijing snacks0, Beijing specialties1, foreign cuisines2, other regional	traditional Beijing snacks16, Beijing specialties8, foreign cuisines4, other regional cuisines2	traditional Beijing snacks53.33%, Beijing specialties26.67 %, foreign cuisines13.33%, other regional cuisines6.67%

	cuisines3		
city image	with rich cultural heritage0, modernity1, diversity2	with rich cultural heritage11, modernity4, diversity15	with rich cultural heritage36.67%, modernity13.33%, diversity50%
video length	within 1 min0, above 1 min1	within 1 min 12, above 1 min 18	within 1 min 40%, above 1 min 60%
language characteristics	Beijing dialect0, Mandarin1	Beijing dialect5, Mandarin25	Beijing dialect16.67%, Mandarin86.33%

Form Source: Self Drawn

3 ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Data Analysis

The above coding statistics indicate that the content of short videos themed on Beijing cuisines is characterized by a light-hearted atmosphere and a focus on the popularization of Beijing cuisine. The city's image embodied in these short videos is mainly linked to the cultural diversity and rich cultural heritage of Beijing. The descriptions of food in these videos mainly concentrate on the introduction of traditional Beijing snacks and Beijing's specialties. In terms of video length, 40% of the short food videos are limited within one minute, while 60% others are longer than one minute. Meanwhile, some videos are dubbed in Beijing dialect to enhance the attractiveness of the videos and help viewers understand Beijing culture better.

3.2. Characteristics of Successful Short Videos Themed on Beijing Cuisines

3.2.1. With a Short and Flexible Length

According to the analysis of the data from the 30 selected videos, the average length is around 1.5 minutes, which can well retain the attractiveness to users until the end of the video, excluding poor experience from inappropriate length. A length less than 5 minutes but with strong flexibility is the first characteristics of successful short videos themed on Beijing cuisines.

3.2.2. With Diversified Content and Unique Characteristics of Beijing

All 30 videos are fully representative in promoting Beijing's local characteristics and international diversity. The percentage of "short videos themed on finding special cuisines" (traditional Beijing cuisines) exceeds 50%, which is a phenomenon unique to this kind of short videos. It presents the distinctive Beijing characteristics in full Beijing style.

3.2.3. Synergy of Multiple Elements in Enhancing the Visual Experience

Among the selected videos, there is a re-occurrence of Beijing dialect in sound and Beijing's hutongs and courtyards in sight, which is relaxing and refreshing, thus enhancing the viewing experience of the videos, facilitating the expression of emotions and reflecting the image of Beijing as the ancient cultural capital of China.

3.3. Communication Problems and Governance of Beijing's City Image in Cuisine-themed Short Videos

3.3.1. Problems in Shaping and Communicating Beijing's City Image as a Center of Cuisines

The video content presents a serious homogenization and a one-sided image of the city. Through the analysis of the 30 short videos themed on Beijing cuisines, a high degree of homogeneity is found between the Beijing specialties introduced and the commercial spots featured in the videos, and there is a tendency of content imitating, resulting in a large body of short videos with similar video styles, similar content themes, and even similar soundtrack and copy.

3.3.2. Inadequate Government Involvement

Among the 30 highly acclaimed short videos themed on Beijing cuisines extracted from TikTok, the production and publishing subjects only involve personal accounts and TikTok KOLs, with no government accounts or local media accounts included. Among the 30 highly acclaimed short videos themed on Beijing cuisines extracted from TikTok, the production and publishing subjects only involve personal accounts and TikTok KOLs, with no government accounts or local media accounts included. The official government accounts failed to give full play to their role in communication given their magnificent says.

3.4. Governance of the Shaping and Communication of Beijing's City Image as a Center of Cuisines

3.4.1. Enhance the quality of content creation and explore the cultural heritage of the city

Video creators should give full play to Beijing's unique resource advantages as a center of cuisines by tapping into the city's culture, improving the quality of creation, innovating the expression and content, and uncovering more cultural symbols of food to shape and communicate the image of the city. Meanwhile, TikTok officials should enhance their supervision efforts, limit the incentive to create homogeneous contents, and support and encourage creations with cultural profoundness to guide the city image short videos along the right direction.

3.4.2. *Strengthen government involvement and clarify development orientation*

Government video accounts should give full play to their great influence in shaping and communicating the image of the city, transform the outdated traditional concepts, and actively cooperate with major platforms to deliver quality short video content. When with sound planning of new media communication, the interaction with the audience should also be strengthened to fully heed the opinions of the people, respect the communication rules of the new media and clarify the orientation of the development of the city.

4 CONCLUSION

Through the study of short videos themed on Beijing cuisines published on TikTok, this paper analyzed the reasons behind their success as well as their deficiencies in the communication and construction of Beijing's city image, thereby proposing corresponding governance solutions. The following conclusions are drawn from the study: First, in terms of content presentation, successful short videos themed on Beijing cuisines are short in length but with adequate flexibility and unique Beijing characteristics, as well as a strong coordination of all these elements.

Secondly, in terms of the communication of city image, it manifests a series of problems that still need to be addressed, such as serious homogenization of video content, one-sided city image and inadequate government involvement.

Finally, solutions to the existing problems are proposed such as enhancing the quality of content creation, exploring the cultural heritage of the city, strengthening government involvement and clarifying development orientation.

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