

How Short-Form Video Narratives Enable the Diffusion of Local Sports Culture: A Comparative Study of the Spread of Jiangsu “Suchao” and Guizhou “Cunchao” on TikTok

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Abstract. This study takes the short video dissemination of Jiangsu “Suchao” and Guizhou “Cunchao” as the case study on the TikTok Platform. This study was based on Fisher's narrative paradigm theory and relied on textual analysis. Thus systematically comparing the short video narrative frameworks of the two cases and their “circle-breaking” effect in international dissemination. This study focuses on the core dimensions of narrative subject, structure, and symbol system. Aiming to explore the impact of narrative differences on audience communication and mobilization effects, and explore the ways to optimize the international dissemination of local culture. The results show that “Cunchao” presents the characteristics of a decentralized narrative of pluralism and co-creation. Meanwhile it takes rural life as the core content, and arouses widespread cross-cultural resonance through life-like scenes and universal emotional symbols; “Suchao” focuses on professional and centralized narratives. It focuses on the competition event itself and builds a deep local identity with professional content and cohesive emotions. Research finds that the key to international dissemination of local cultural IPs lies in possessing “dual encoding” capability. It is necessary to balance the local “deep narrative” that condenses internal identity and balance the “breadth narrative” of common human emotions that connect international audiences. Based on this, this study proposes the strategy of combining “narrative translation” and “multiple narratives” to provide theoretical reference and practical implications for the international dissemination of Chinese sports culture.

Keywords: short video narrative, cross-cultural communication, narrative paradigm theory, Jiangsu “Suchao”, Guizhou “Cunchao”

1. Introduction

The international dissemination of sports culture is not only a manifestation of cultural soft power, but also an important way to create a positive national image [1]. The world narrative of football has long been dominated by Europe's top five leagues and the World Cup. However, China has gradually emerged two popular sports IPs that have triggered audience carnival, namely Jiangsu “Suchao” (Jiangsu Football City League) and Guizhou “cunchao”(Guizhou Village Super League). They provide an important transmission outlet for the cross-cultural dissemination of Chinese sports

culture. Just as "Cunchao" and "Suchao" caused a craze on China's local social media, they also unexpectedly entered the global digital square - TikTok. TikTok is characterized by short videos as the core, highly condensed content, fast narrative pace, and virality. It breaks the one-way communication model of traditional sports media and provides a great opportunity for local sports culture IP to "circle-breaking" internationally [2]. The excellent international communication performance of "Double Chao" provides a typical case for studying the relationship between short video narrative and cross-cultural communication of sports culture.

Existing studies have made preliminary observations on the two from the perspectives of narrative subject, content strategy, and platform logic [3,4]. However, most studies still remain at the level of phenomenon description, and lack a systematic and comparative in-depth analysis of the narrative structure, emotional mobilization mechanism and symbol system of the two.

Based on this, this study aims to systematically compare the short video narrative frameworks of "Suchao" and "Cunchao", and reveal the internal mechanism affecting the international circle breaking effect of local cultural IP. The research questions include: (1) What are the fundamental differences between the two in terms of narrative subject, narrative structure and symbol system; (2) How do these differences affect their effectiveness in communication and mobilization with international audiences; (3) How to integrate narrative strategies to synergistically enhance the international dissemination of local culture.

2. Methodology

2.1. Theoretical framework

This study adopts Fisher's narrative paradigm theory as the theoretical framework. Fisher argued that humans are essentially storyteller. The best way to understand communication is through narrative evaluation, not formal logic. Fisher believes that audiences evaluate narrative works based on two core criteria.

The first is narrative coherence. Whether the story is internally consistent, clear in structure, and easy to understand; The second is narrative fidelity. Whether the story resonates with the audience's life experiences, values, and emotional expectations [5].

2.2. Research design

This study uses text analysis. This study focuses on two local cultural cases of "Suchao" in Jiangsu Province and "Cunchao" in Guizhou, which are driven by short videos. The study was conducted through a systematic analysis of video text, visual symbols, and interaction data on the TikTok platform. The purpose of this study is to explore how narrative frameworks affect the cross-cultural communication and social mobilization effects of local cultures.

This paper constructs an integrated analysis chain of "text content-narrative framework-participation interaction-communication/mobilization effect" [6]. It reveals the core role of narrative framework in the process of cultural "circle-breaking" and "aggregation" through text interpretation, symbolic analysis, and audience feedback analysis.

2.3. Basis for case selection

First, the case is typical, Jiangsu "Suchao" and Guizhou "Cunchao" are both successful representatives of Chinese local culture in sports narratives; The second is the comparability of cases. Both of them are football events, and they were both born in the context of the "post-Jinyuan

era" and the "professional football dilemma". These are two different but complementary ideal types for exploring the development path of grassroots football. The third is the accessibility of case data.

Both of them have accumulated sufficient video content and interactive data on the TikTok platform. So it is suitable for systematic text collection and framework analysis; Fourth, the case is enlightening. There are differences in the communication effectiveness between these two cases. This provides a crucial case for exploring how to adjust the narrative framework according to the goals of international communication strategies.

2.4. Data sources

The data in this study is mainly derived from the TikTok platform. The research is based on the data required for analysis by systematically collecting video text, visual text, and interactive text. The data collection period was from March 2023 to October 2025. The data sources for this study include the following two categories.

(1) Video text data. Focusing on the two cases of "Cunchao" and "Suchao", manually collect relevant videos on the TikTok platform. Data collection includes information such as video titles, release copy, and cultural symbols presented in video footage. To ensure data representativeness, the study used a traversal search, using tags such as #Jiangsusuchao, #Suchao, #Jiangsu Football City League, #Cunchao, #VillageSuperLeague, #Guizhoucunchao, etc., to filter out content that was highly relevant to the case. The further screening conditions are highly interactive videos, and finally about ten groups (ten each) of core video samples are formed.

2) Interactive text data. In addition to the number of comments, the study also focuses on the number of likes, shares, and collections of video samples, and analyzes the relationship between content form, cultural element presentation and audience interaction [1].

Table 1. Samples of "Cunchao" and "Suchao" videos

	Video number	Text	Digg count	Share count	Comment count	Collect count
Cunchao	S1	I can't deny it. Playing #football in front of more than 50,000 audiences is absolutely cool!	10400	19	9	225
	S2	#china #chinese #sportsontiktok #tiktokpartner #football #soccer #village #miao #ethnicminority	5014	88	34	307
	S3	"Cunchao" is popular all over the world, has your national media reported it?	4710	1338	246	341
	S4	What is the strength of Chinese football?	3716	102	301	285
	S5	Guizhou Cunchao, the audience sang "Without the Communist Party, there would be no New China"	2920	295	213	347
	S6	#Wow# Hong Kong Star Football Team # Guizhou Village Football Tournament	2609	268	331	136
	S7	Africa's "Bao Qingtian" was infected by the atmosphere of the village super , bluntly said: I can't go back, I even forgot my mother tongue!	1866	263	78	160
	S8	#trendingnow Guizhou's "Village Super League" soccer sparks summer heat in #China! The fusion of sports, culture, and tourism is transforming one of China's rural areas. With millions of views and packed stadiums, it's a scorching sensation.	1683	15	2	8
	S9	A village super league has made people all over the world pay attention to Chinese football, can you believe it?	1588	75	149	63
	S10	The Chinese Village Super League defeated Brazil 2:3, not only the Football Association is known to the whole world! Why bother to watch the global media are confused: it turns out that the Chinese village super team is not a national football team!	1369	52	173	57

Table 1. (continued)

Suchao	V1	Join international friends in experiencing the Jiangsu Football City League!	7692	99	20	224
	V2	At the Jiangsu Football City League match, the Nantong team hosted the Huai'an team.	7055	66	21	266
	V3	Ambassador of Argentina to China, Marcelo Suárez Salvia, showed up at Team Nantong's home match in the Jiangsu Football City League!	5214	47	9	149
	V4	European Fans Back O-zhou — Their New Home Team?!	5168	56	39	301
	V5	Exclusive interview with Argentina's Ambassador to China, Marcelo Suárez Salvia (Ma Zhiyuan).	3039	62	8	106
		He visited Nantong to watch the Jiangsu Football City League. Beyond his passion for football, he is committed to driving local cooperation between Argentina and China. Hear what he has to say!				
	V6	The Jiangsu Football City League is in full swing! Follow our lens to Haimen, where Nantong's training base is buzzing with energy. Meet the players hard at work and cheer for Team	2725	26	5	55
	V7	Su Chao's famous scene	2002	21	270	69
	V8	"Save Chinese football" personally thinks that the best way at present is to "dissolve the Football Association" and introduce the "Soviet Super League mechanism", what do you think about this?	1813	29	326	59
	V9	This must be quite embarrassing, huh? #Chinese National Football Team# Men's National Football Team# Scottish Premier League# Chinese Football# Suzhou Culture and Tourism	1555	7	160	53
	V10	# Jiangsu League Football # The Spirit of the Jiangsu # Jiangsu League Competition # Only time and football cannot be wasted	1367	30	226	90

As shown in Table 1, based on the analysis of the interactive data of "Cunchao" and "Suchao" on the TikTok platform's short video samples, it can be clearly seen that there are significant differences in audience feedback between the two narrative strategies.

With its cultural wonders full of local atmosphere, social topical content and strong emotional rendering, the "Cunchao" video has successfully stimulated extensive discussion among users, and the average number of comments is significantly higher than that of "Suchao", showing the advantages of its "emotional circle breaking" strategy in triggering immediacy and social interaction. The "Suchao" video has a higher average number of collections. This outcome is linked to its professional event presentation. It is further supported by its use of international communication scenes and urban image promotion. As a result, audiences perceive the content as having stronger reference value. They are more likely to retain and save it. This indicates higher audience engagement at the cognitive level. It demonstrates the effectiveness of a "professional deep cultivation" narrative. Such a narrative contributes to deeper audience identification.

2.5. Data analysis

Based on Fisher's narrative paradigm theory, the research further operationalizes its core concepts. Narrative coherence is embodied in the context of short videos, which is the stability of the narrative subject, the consistency between the narrative content and the theme, the comprehensibility, and the use of the narrative symbol system.

The narrative realism is mainly examined through the evocation of narrative emotions and the audience's interactive feedback. By transforming the abstract narrative evaluation criteria into observable analysis dimensions, the study can systematically compare the differences between "Cunchao" and "Suchao" in short video narrative strategies and their communication effects.

Table 2. Comparative analysis table of the narrative dimensions of "Cunchao" and Suchao"

Theoretical level	Operationalization dimension	Guizhou "Cunchao"	Jiangsu "Suchao"
Narrative coherence	Narrative subject	Diverse co-creation: Government guidance, villagers, tourists, media, and international participants jointly form a decentralized narrative network	Centralized dominance: clubs, players, coaches, and official media form a stable but closed narrative subject
	Narrative content	Narrative of local life: football is deeply integrated with national culture, food, festivals, and daily life	Competitive narrative: match results, tactical analysis, star performance and city confrontation
	Narrative form	Life-like, scene-based, immersive short video experience (on-site atmosphere, impromptu recording)	Professional, event-based, high-end and explanatory presentation
	Narrative sign	Local symbol system: pigs, sheep, gongs and drums, national costumes, dialect slogans	Professional sports symbology: crests, jerseys, sponsors, trophies, tactical terminology
Narrative realism	Narrative emotion	Universal emotions: happiness, simplicity, collective participation, and a sense of belonging to the community	Cohesive emotions: winning and losing, regional honor, competitive passion, controversy discussion
	Audience interaction	High emotional resonance and participatory interaction (sharing experience, emotional expression, imitation communication)	Spectator-type interaction based on comments and position expressions (support, argument, side line)

3. Research findings

3.1. Narrative subject distribution: decentralized network of multiple co-creation vs. professional-led centralized structure

As shown in Table 2, the short video narratives of "Cunchao" present a typical characteristic of "collective creation by multiple actors. The distribution of discourse power is highly decentralized. Its narrative production network is composed of the government (guide), villagers (core participants and narrators), tourists (experiencers and secondary communicators), domestic and foreign media (amplifiers), and even international friends (such as Brazilian coaches and African referees in the sample). This model transforms villagers from "displayed symbols" to "cultural subjects" with narrative autonomy. It gives the content stronger authenticity [3]. This communication logic is highly consistent with the research conclusions of Schellewald. He thought that TikTok's "community-based communication" and "documentary communication" are the core forms that resonate widely [7]. The former lowers the threshold of expression through co-creation and reuse content. Also the latter strengthens audience connection with life-oriented scenes .

The main body of the narrative of "Suchao" is "centralized". It was dominated by professional clubs, players, coaches and official media. The voice is concentrated in the professional field and commercial capital [8]. For example, the video producer accounts of samples V2, V3, V5, and V6 in Table 2 are "Discover Nantong", and V4 is "Charming Changzhou". Both accounts are official accounts of local cultural and tourism administrations in Jiangsu Province. This shows that most of Su Chao's short video narrative structure is built by official accounts. Although the "five-body linkage" model proposed by Cao Jinsong emphasizes multi-party collaboration [9]. The professional discourse (such as tactical analysis and club dynamics) still occupies the core in actual content production. This structure ensures the professionalism and brand consistency of the content. Meanwhile, it is conducive to building a deep identity and loyalty among the local fan community.

3.2. Narrative content, form and symbol system: immersive experience of local life vs. professional competitive event presentation

The core of Guizhou “Cunchao” is the “local life narrative”. It deeply integrates football competition with national culture (such as Miao and Dong songs and dances), local cuisine (such as cattle and sheep awards), folk activities (such as “10,000 people dancing doye”) and rural daily life. The narrative form of “Cunchao” is presented as a life-oriented and scene-based immersive expression. For example, the common on-site chorus of 10,000 people in short videos and humorous scenes with poultry and livestock as prizes. In the era of short videos, “Cunchao” uses stylized visual symbols and ethnic elements to create highly appealing cultural symbols that accurately evoke emotional resonance from the audience [10].

Jiangsu “Suchao” focuses on “professional competitive narrative”. In sports short videos, event highlight clips and professional-related content are the core forms of improving audience engagement, and sports communication on social medias. Such as TikTok relies on visual and professional content presentation [11]. The content of the “Suchao” short video revolves around game results, tactical analysis, star highlight moments, and club competition (such as the “Thirteen Taobao” city showdown). The narrative form of “Suchao” tends to be professional, event-oriented and data-based. It mostly be shown in the forms of highlights, professional commentary and tactical board analysis. Its narrative symbol system belongs to the category of typical professional sports. Such as team emblems, jerseys, sponsor logos, trophies, technical terms, etc.

3.3. Narrative content, form and symbol system: immersive experience of local life vs. professional competitive event presentation

The emotional source of the village super comes from daily life and local culture, and the “Cunchao” video focuses on gathering universal emotions such as happiness, simplicity, collective honor, local feelings and positive energy. For example, in the sample, 10,000 people in the audience together sing the song “Without the Communist Party, There Would Be No New China” (S10). It conveys a strong sense of collective belonging and pure joy. This emotional strategy has triggered a large number of international user feedback in the TikTok comment area. People express “touched”, “envious of this community atmosphere”, and “this is the joy of football”, achieving high-intensity emotional resonance. Its interactive mode is the “content co-creation” of the audience as a participant. Users not only consume content, but also deeply integrate into the narrative by sharing personal feelings and imitating interactive forms.

The emotional source of “Suchao” comes from professional competition and regional identity. It mainly mobilizes the sense of victory and defeat, honor, and regional pride. And is often accompanied by controversial topics (such as referee decisions, competition between cities) to stimulate heated discussions among the audience. This emotion can create a strong conversation among local audiences and form a close “internal mobilization”. For example, the slogan “Competition first, friendship fourteenth” exploded and interacted with internal banter and a sense of competition [12]. Through the competition between different regions, “Suchao” stimulates the competitive passion between players and the collective sense of honor among the audience. At the same time, the sense of regional identity caused by “Suchao” is conducive to building and deepening the identity of the fan community. Its professional competition model is conducive to the professional construction of the industry ecosystem of football event operators.

4. Discussion

In the future, the communication strategy of local cultural IP should not be to choose one of the two, but to pursue a dual model of parallel both:

4.1. Narrative translation strategy

For IPs such as "Suchao", which are mainly internal athletes, on the basis of maintaining professionalism. We can consciously package the universal emotional elements in their short video narratives. That means "realizing cultural translation".

For example, the friendly competition between cities is interpreted as a "competition between brothers". Account operators can combine the struggle stories of the players with global themes such as "growth" and "perseverance". More humane and more down-to-earth short video content can add a soft shell. So it is easier to touch international emotions to the core of competitive competition [13].

4.2. Multiple narrative strategies

For sports IPs such as "Cunchao" that have achieved international breakthroughs. It is necessary to think about how to maintain the popularity caused by international media. People should find new innovations in short video creation. For example, official accounts can produce different story series. Such as player growth, international audience interaction, star effect, national culture analysis, etc.. So as to attract different audiences, achieve diversified cultural diffusion, and achieve cultural cultivation at the same time. That is, to extend the communication life cycle through "multi-perspective narrative" and "cultural interaction reinforcement" [14].

This study shows that short video narrative is not a simple information transfer, but a deep meaning construction and relationship connection. The communication practice of Jiangsu "Suchao" and Guizhou "Cunchao" on TikTok shows that the key to the success of local cultural IP. That means lying in whether its narrative framework can effectively connect with the cognitive foundation and emotional structure of the target audience [15]. The reason why the "narrative of rural life" in "Cunchao" can arouse widespread emotional resonance is mainly because it adheres to the authenticity of national culture and rural daily life. And it is in line with the principle of "high-quality content should highlight the uniqueness of local culture" emphasized by Dahlan [2]. In the end, the most enlightening path for China's rich and diverse local cultural IP may be to have the ability to "double encode" in narrative. Not only to use the "deep narrative" rich in local passwords to unite the interior, but also to connect the world with the "breadth narrative" containing common human emotions.

5. Conclusion

Based on narrative paradigm theory, this study systematically analyzes and compares the short video narratives of "Suchao" and "Cunchao" on TikTok. The findings reveal significant differences in their cross-cultural communication effects. The study found that "Cunchao" successfully reached international audiences and aroused widespread resonance through decentralized co-creation narrative and life-oriented emotional expression. "Suchao" uses a professional and regional narrative structure to establish a deep identity in the local community. Based on this, this paper proposes that the international communication of local cultural IP needs to have "dual narrative ability". This indicates that strong grounding in the local environment is essential. Through emotional

transformation and narrative integration, content can move beyond cultural self-awareness. It can further achieve cultural empathy across audiences. At the same time, it provides theoretical references and practical paths for the external dissemination of Chinese sports culture.

This study also has some limitations. The study focuses on the explicit analysis of video text and interactive data. There is a lack of direct empirical measurement of deep cognitive and emotional processes (e.g., specific barriers to cross-cultural understanding) at the audience reception end (e.g., questionnaires, in-depth interviews). Finally, the case comparison is based on a specific temporal and spatial background (2023-2025). But the algorithm logic, fashion trends and cultural context of short video platforms continue to evolve rapidly. The long-term applicability of the conclusions of this study needs to be further observed.

Future research can be further expanded in the following directions. Firstly, future research can expand its scope to more diverse types of local cultural IP and sports events. In addition, comparisons across different social media platforms, such as YouTube and Instagram. Both of them can be conducted to test the universality and platform specificity of the narrative framework effect. Secondly, the long-term communication life cycle of cases such as "Cunchao" and "Suchao" can be tracked vertically. In addition, how the narrative strategy can be dynamically adjusted to maintain popularity and realize the transformation from "traffic explosion" to "value precipitation".

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