

# ***From the "Consumption Landscape" to the "Responsibility Landscape": A Study on the Multimodal Discourse Construction of Agri-tourism in Short Videos by Environmental NGOs***

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**Abstract.** This paper explores how environmental non-governmental organizations (NGOs) use short videos to construct environmental discourses and reshape the visual representation of agri-tourism, a field with economic and ecological dual attributes. Based on representative short videos of domestic environmental NGOs, it adopts multimodal discourse analysis and case study methods to analyze how these organizations deconstruct the traditional "pure leisure" and "pastoral romance" images of agri-tourism, and reshape it into a composite environmental issue involving ecological sustainability, community well-being and responsible consumption through the coordination of narrative strategies, linguistic frameworks, visual symbols and sound elements. The study finds that environmental NGOs have transformed agri-tourism from a "consumption landscape" to a "responsibility landscape" via constructing a "crisis-solution" narrative framework, integrating emotional and scientific rhetoric, and using contrasting visual symbols and professional audio-visual language, guiding the public from "leisure tourists" to "ecological citizens". This study reveals the innovative communication logic of environmental organizations in the digital age, and provides theoretical and practical references for environmental communication and agri-tourism sustainable development.

**Keywords:** Environmental NGOs, Short videos, Agri-tourism, Multimodal discourse analysis, Environmental communication

## **1. Introduction**

With the popularization of mobile internet and intelligent terminals, short videos have become an important medium for public information access and public issue participation, driving a prominent visual and emotional turn in environmental communication—this aligns with the core logic of multimodal discourse analysis, which breaks the limitations of single linguistic text analysis and incorporates camera language, color tones, editing rhythms and other meaning-making resources into research.

As a vital pathway for rural revitalization linking urban consumption and rural production, agri-tourism development is accompanied by ecological pressures such as excessive land development, pesticide pollution and biodiversity loss, and cultural alienation risks. The tension between economic demands and ecological ethics makes it a focal arena for environmental discourse construction. The multimodal nature of short videos enables environmental NGOs to reconstruct the cognitive landscape of agri-tourism in a three-dimensional way, endowing it with ecological and ethical connotations.

Existing research on environmental NGOs' communication mostly focuses on policy advocacy and textual reports, lacking in-depth exploration of their short video communication strategies for specific environmental issues; studies on agri-tourism visual communication are particularly scarce. This study integrates environmental communication, visual communication and multimodal discourse analysis theories to analyze the meaning production mechanism of agri-tourism short videos by environmental NGOs, enriches digital age environmental communication theories, and provides references for NGOs' short video content optimization, agri-tourism sustainable development and public environmental education.

## **2. Literature review and theoretical foundation**

### **2.1. Definition of key concepts**

#### **2.1.1. Discourse style of environmental NGOs**

Relatively stable meaning expression modes formed in communication practices, including story-based advocacy styles rooted in community practices and authoritative grand narrative-style publicity drawing on national discourses and scientific data in short video contexts.

#### **2.1.2. Agri-tourism:**

A new agricultural industry model integrating agricultural production and tourism leisure. This paper focuses on its "problematization" (revealing ecological costs) and "redefinition" (shaping as sustainable life education platform) in environmental NGOs' short video narratives.

#### **2.1.3. Short videos and visual representation**

Short videos are characterized by brief duration, mobile viewing suitability and social sharing ease. Visual representation refers to technical symbolization practices that transform real-world materials into persuasive "visual arguments" through camera language, editing logic and color management, participating in environmental meaning construction [1].

### **2.2. Review of relevant research**

Existing environmental communication research focuses on NGOs' traditional media and social media application, lacking specialized analysis of short video strategies under algorithmic recommendation and fragmented reading. Research on agricultural and food environmental discourse mostly critiques industrial agriculture and explores alternative food systems, with insufficient attention to agri-tourism's ecological connotation construction in visual narratives. Visual communication and multimodal discourse research either prioritizes textual discourse or analyzes visual elements in isolation, lacking scrutiny of short videos' "multimodal synergy"

mechanism in constructing complex environmental issues [2]. This paper fills the gap by examining how environmental NGOs' short videos coordinate discourse and visuals to define and interpret agri-tourism ecological issues.

### **2.3. Theoretical foundation**

**Environmental Education Theory:** Emphasizes breaking single "knowledge transmission" mode, integrating cognitive, emotional and behavioral dimensions to cultivate ecological literacy, providing a basis for exploring how short videos realize ecological literacy cultivation through multimodal discourse design [3,4].

**Environmental Attitude Shaping Theory:** Environmental attitude shaping relies on the synergy of emotion, judgment and appreciation [5]. It is necessary to balance positive and negative scenario presentation, strengthen ecological responsibility judgment resources, and promote emotional connection to practical action transformation, serving as an analytical criterion for short video emotional construction paths.

**Environmental Belief and Behavior Transformation Theory:** Public environmental beliefs directly affect environmental behaviors. Eliminating responsibility shirking and other obstacles and responding to cognitive differences can promote belief-to-action transformation, providing a perspective for analyzing how short videos guide the public to become "ecological citizens".

## **3. Research design**

### **3.1. Research objects**

This study adopts purposive sampling to select 2-3 formally registered Chinese environmental NGOs active in sustainable agriculture/ecological protection, excluding unrelated organizations, enterprises and government subjects. The sample size balances typicality (covering different scales and practical focuses) and analysis depth, and forms a comparison between classic and emerging practices. Selected NGOs must have mature short video communication practices with four criteria: stable production for over 6 months, systematic thematic content, professional video production and audience interaction, and certain industry influence.

### **3.2. Research samples**

The study selects thematic series short videos of selected NGOs on official platforms as analysis samples, including two types: short videos displaying national ecological governance achievements (e.g., desertification control, national park construction) and short videos conducting ecological popular science (e.g., mangroves). Though not directly mentioning agri-tourism, these videos shape the public's cognitive foundation for rural ecological practices including agri-tourism, thus being identified as key samples.

### **3.3. Research methods and analysis dimensions**

This study adopts qualitative-oriented multimodal discourse analysis with four steps: establishing an analysis archive (transcription, screenshot, basic information sorting); conducting dual-level deconstruction (discourse as core, visual and auditory as supplement); supplementary analysis of peripheral information (titles, release texts, representative comments); cross-case comparison and induction.

Analysis dimensions include two levels: Discourse Level (analyzing narrative framework, rhetorical strategies, argumentation logic and discourse style of commentary and subtitles); Visual and Auditory Level (analyzing meaning expression and emotional coding of visual elements such as frame composition and camera movements, and auditory elements such as music and sound effects, exploring multimodal synergy mechanism).

#### **4. Multimodal discourse construction paths and strategies**

##### **4.1. Establishment of narrative framework: from "landscape consumption" to "responsibility for the community of existence"**

Environmental NGOs' short videos subvert agri-tourism's leisure-oriented narrative by introducing a transcendent spatio-temporal scale, such as comparing the Earth's history to one day to elevate discourse to a species survival perspective, and defining desertification as the "cancer of the Earth" to highlight ecological crisis urgency. After presenting ecological problems, the narrative shifts to "solutions", citing authoritative statistical data of national ecological governance achievements and matching with relevant footage, implying individual sustainable choices such as eco-agri-tourism are embedded in national ecological narratives.

Ecological popular science short videos center on "revealing natural wonders" and "clarifying ecological functions", using personification and relatable metaphors to interpret ecological knowledge, and reshaping public value perception—for example, defining mangroves as "coastal guardians", providing a rational basis for conservation-based eco-tourism development.

##### **4.2. Discourse style and rhetorical strategies: the integration of authority, emotion and community**

The discourse style integrates scientific authority and emotional appeal: emphasizing accurate macro data to ensure objectivity, and using poetic metaphors to sublimate data, making discourse both scientific and literary. The frequent use of the personal pronoun "we" constructs multi-level audience identification, flexibly referring to Chinese people, humans or specific ecosystem stakeholders, guiding the audience from national to species identity, and constructing an ecological community of shared future.

Key metaphors run through the video content as value anchors: the "cancer of the Earth" metaphor emphasizes environmental problems' fatalness and governance urgency; "coastal guardians" and "blue homeland" combine mangroves' instrumental and intrinsic values, shaping the audience's ecological emotional structure and value order imperceptibly.

#### **5. Multimodal visual narrative strategies and emotional construction paths**

##### **5.1. Dramatic juxtaposition and aesthetic presentation of visual symbols**

Short videos showcasing ecological governance achievements create temporal and spatial contrasts through shot switching and color coding (e.g., grayish-yellow desert shots vs. vibrant green forest shots), and present data via dynamic infographics to transform abstract numbers into vivid visual narratives. Ecological popular science short videos shift from macro to micro, using a large number of macro shots to capture ecological details and aesthetic visual expression to present biodiversity, satisfying audience curiosity and making ecological protection concepts more acceptable.

## 5.2. Strategic application of audio-visual technology and emotional management

Aerial photography is widely used in ecological governance achievement videos to create a grand perspective and foster national identity; close-up and macro shots personalize macro ecological issues and evoke audience empathy. Colors form fixed emotional mapping: grayish-yellow and pale tones depict environmental problems, while green, blue and vibrant colors mark ecological governance achievements. Music and sound effects are matched with narrative rhythm—symphonic grand scores for achievement display, vivid warm music for popular science, and natural sound effects to build scene authenticity. Editing rhythm is adjusted according to content: fast-paced montage for ecological governance intensity, and slow long shots for natural grandeur, guiding the audience's emotional state.

## 5.3. Audience feedback on multimodal discourse construction

Representative comments reflect high audience recognition of the videos: the contrast of ecological scenes and the combination of data and footage arouse the audience's sense of participation in ecological governance; the exquisite visual presentation of popular science videos enhances the audience's ecological knowledge acquisition and protection awareness. The multimodal discourse construction initially achieves the expected effect, making ecological knowledge more acceptable and arousing the audience's ecological identity and responsibility awareness.

## 6. Construction of a new Agri-tourism landscape based on multimodal discourse

Environmental NGOs' short videos construct a new agri-tourism landscape transcending traditional leisure definition, with two core connotations:

1. A Microcosm of the National Ecological Narrative: The grand national ecological governance narrative provides legitimacy for agri-tourism development. Agri-tourism sites in ecological governance areas become a microcosm of national "green miracle", and visiting such sites is no longer mere leisure consumption, but a form of witnessing national ecological rejuvenation, endowing agri-tourism with national ecological narrative practice attributes.

2. An Experience Field of Ecological Wisdom and Literacy Cultivation: Ecological knowledge and concepts imparted by short videos inject scientific connotations into agri-tourism. Ideal eco-agri-tourism sites show ecological wisdom through on-site display and experience, transforming tourism into an immersive ecological education process, consistent with environmental education theory's emphasis on cognitive, emotional and behavioral integration.

This new landscape is an "ecological citizen classroom" connecting national narrative and individual practice, and a "sustainable development demonstration zone" transforming abstract ecological knowledge into tangible experiences, guiding the public from "landscape consumers" to "ecological value recognizers and co-responsibility bearers".

## 7. Practical implications, research limitations and future research directions

### 7.1. Practical implications

For Environmental NGOs: Draw on national achievement narrative and ecological popular science narrative in short video communication, connect specific agri-tourism ecological practices with regional ecological restoration stories, and transform ecological agriculture technical details into visual highlights to realize "soft communication of hardcore knowledge".

For Agri-tourism Operators: Recognize the importance of ecological story authenticity and communication power, learn to tell ecological practice stories in line with visual communication laws, and position themselves as ecological value translators and educators to meet the public's ecological experience and literacy cultivation needs.

For Environmental Communication Research and Education: Attach importance to short videos' role in environmental cognition construction, conduct in-depth critical analysis of multimodal discourse, help the public improve media literacy, and assist practitioners in creating influential visual content.

## 7.2. Research limitations and future directions

This study has four limitations: lack of empirical data on audience reception and interpretation with different backgrounds; incomplete sample coverage (only achievement display and popular science videos); no in-depth discussion on platform algorithm recommendation mechanisms' impact on communication scope; no dynamic tracking of agri-tourism discourse narrative evolution on short video platforms.

Subsequent research can be carried out from four aspects: conducting in-depth research on audience's multimodal interpretation and emotional responses via in-depth interview and eye-tracking methods; expanding sample scope to include different types of environmental NGO short videos and comparing their discourse strategies; comparing communication strategy adaptation of the same content on different platforms; conducting long-term dynamic tracking of a specific NGO's short video practice to analyze its narrative strategy adjustment in response to policy and social changes.

## 8. Conclusion

This study deconstructs environmental NGOs' agri-tourism-related short videos and finds that their construction of agri-tourism ecological issues is a highly refined multimodal discourse practice. Through the "macro crisis/achievements-micro revelation/solutions" narrative framework, the integration of data authority and poetic emotion rhetoric, and dramatic visual juxtaposition, environmental NGOs realize the systematic reconstruction of the value coordinate system of agriculture, land and nature, rather than isolated environmental information transmission.

This multimodal discourse practice reshapes the public's cognitive perception of agri-tourism, transforming it from a consumerist landscape and romantic pastoral into a responsibility ethical landscape and scientific cognitive landscape under the ecological civilization narrative. It also promotes the materialization of the "ecological citizen" theory, proving that contemporary ecological citizen identity is a composite of national identity, scientific rationality, ecological care and action awareness, providing empirical support for the theory's development in the digital age.

In summary, this study decodes the multimodal communication code of agri-tourism ecological issues in the short video era, enriches the application of multimodal discourse analysis in environmental communication, and connects environmental education theory with short video multimodal discourse analysis. It provides a new analytical framework for understanding digital media's role in ecological civilization construction, and offers operable references for environmental communication practice, agri-tourism industrial upgrading and public ecological education.

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