

Postprint: Empathetic Design and Innovation Pathways for Urban Micro-Imaging in the Context of Digital Intelligence

Authors: Yang Xuelin, Yang Yuting, Dai Jiaqi

Date: 2023-10-08T00:00:00+00:00

Abstract

[Objective] To explore, in the context of digital intelligence, how to utilize digital technologies to interpret urban spirit and promote the high-quality development of urban culture. [Methods] Based on the theoretical framework of empathic design, combined with literature review, investigation of the current status of urban micro-videos, and case study findings, this study analyzes and elaborates on the connotative value, three-dimensional guiding principles, and innovative pathways of empathic design for urban micro-videos. [Results] Urban micro-video expressions characterized by super-strong participation, dissemination, and interactivity provide opportunities for seamless connection and in-depth dialogue between cities and audiences, increasingly becoming an indispensable vehicle for expressing urban culture. The emotional attributes inherent in urban micro-video social media, represented by short videos, combined with the rapid development of digital intelligence technologies, provide new pathways for the empathic communication of city image. [Conclusion] Creators of urban micro-videos should fully recognize the important value of micro-videos in the diversified shaping of city image and the construction of new urban business models, and focus on innovatively designing the content production and dissemination of urban micro-videos from aspects such as content selection, pragmatic expression, and platform integration.

Full Text

Preamble

ChinaXiv Partner Journal | Empathetic Design and Innovative Pathways for Urban Micro-Videos in the Digital Intelligence Era

Yang Xuelin, Yang Yuting, Dai Jiaqi

(Zhejiang University of Technology Zhijiang College, Shaoxing, Zhejiang 312030)

Abstract

[Purpose] This study explores how digital technologies can be leveraged to interpret urban spirit and promote high-quality urban cultural development in the context of digital intelligence. **[Method]** Based on the theoretical framework of empathetic design, and integrating literature review, surveys of current urban micro-video practices, and case study findings, this paper analyzes and elaborates on the connotative value, three-dimensional guiding principles, and innovative pathways for empathetic design in urban micro-videos. **[Results]** Urban micro-video expressions, characterized by strong participation, dissemination capacity, and interactivity, provide cities and audiences with opportunities for seamless connection and in-depth dialogue, increasingly becoming an indispensable vehicle for expressing urban culture. The inherent emotional attributes of social media platforms for urban micro-videos, represented by short videos, combined with the rapid development of digital intelligence technologies, offer new pathways for empathetic communication of urban image. **[Conclusion]** Creators of urban micro-videos should fully recognize the significant value of micro-videos in diversifying urban image construction and establishing new urban business models, and focus on innovating the content production and dissemination of urban micro-videos through content selection, pragmatic expression, and platform integration.

Keywords: Digital Intelligence; Empathetic Design; Urban Micro-Video; Urban Image

CLC Number: P215 **Document Code:** A **Article ID:** 1671-0134(2023)04-072-06

DOI: 10.19483/j.cnki.11-4653/n.2023.04.015

Citation Format: Yang Xuelin, Yang Yuting, Dai Jiaqi. Empathetic Design and Innovative Pathways for Urban Micro-Videos in the Digital Intelligence Era [J]. China Media Technology, 2023(04): 72-77.

1. Connotation and Value of Empathetic Design in Urban Micro-Videos

Urban micro-video refers to micro-video creation that takes urban space as its subject. Currently, urban micro-videos are bringing audiences a fresh visual impact and the surprise of impression reshaping through their rich “micro-presentation,” puzzle-like fission dissemination, and dynamic, three-dimensional, immersive audio-visual effects. Their value is becoming increasingly prominent in diversifying urban image construction and establishing new urban business models, making them an important carrier of urban culture and an effective means for cities to build internal cohesion and attract global talent, capital, technology, and creativity from abroad. Particularly driven by rapidly developing 5G-related big data, VR/AR, holographic imaging, artificial intelligence, and other information technologies, urban micro-video expressions with strong participation, dissemination capacity, and interactivity are increasingly granting

cities and audiences opportunities for seamless connection and in-depth dialogue, spawning a new trend of “watching on the cloud, checking in offline.” However, due to their personalized perspective and fragmented duration, they still have many limitations in positioning height, vision breadth, and emotional warmth in urban image shaping and dissemination, which restricts the realization of greater social and economic benefits while also exposing urban governance to public opinion and regulatory risks.

How to comprehensively utilize new media to shape and disseminate urban image with high quality and sustainability, and to evoke audiences’ emotional cognition, preference, identification with, and attachment to the city, has become the key for urban micro-videos to break through the circle of massive homogenized and superficial content, and has also become a current academic research hotspot. Existing research on urban micro-videos mainly involves three aspects: first, the characteristics of urban image constructed by micro-videos; second, content preferences, communication strategies, and communication effects; and third, content supervision and collaborative governance pathways. Scholars generally affirm the role of short videos in promoting urban image cognition and identification, but also point out that current urban short videos face a series of governance risks such as homogenized image presentation, erosion of historical and cultural connotations, and frequent unstable public opinion factors. The key to breaking this situation lies in regulating the output of personalized urban cultural products [1], exploring the deep integration of “technology +,” and strengthening the application of empathetic strategies in communication (such as Zhou Xiang et al. 2022 [2]; Wang Changxiao et al. 2021 [3]). Existing research provides insightful references for improving current shortcomings and enhancing the connotative communication of urban image, but profound insights on empathetic communication of urban micro-videos are only scattered throughout, and systematic design and in-depth exploration of communication remain insufficient. Based on the above research reality, the author believes that it is appropriate to ground the analysis in empathy theory, sort out the basic logic of urban micro-video content production and communication, and further optimize the new narrative of urban micro-video, in order to provide new ideas for building effective urban image communication.

1.1 Concept of Empathy and Empathetic Design

Empathy, also translated as emotional engagement, transference, sympathy, and compassion, was originally a concept in philosophy and aesthetics used to describe how individuals resonate emotionally with artistic works through feeling. In recent years, empathy has been widely used and studied, with different scholars defining the concept from various perspectives, such as recognizing empathy as an ability, an emotional response, or a cognitive and emotional state. This paper follows the definitions of scholars such as Zhong Xin and Liu Conghui, considering empathy as the process where an individual, when faced with another individual’ s emotional state, generates emotional sharing with others,

and then, under the premise of recognizing the distinction between self and others, conducts a cognitive assessment of their overall situation, resulting in an emotional response accompanied by corresponding behaviors [4]. Empathy is a psychological process mechanism in interpersonal interaction that helps satisfy people's emotional needs, form good interpersonal relationships, and stimulate prosocial behavior [5].

Empathetic design in urban micro-videos refers to the process where creators apply empathetic psychological mechanisms to the creation and dissemination of urban micro-videos on social media platforms. That is, creators put themselves in the audience's shoes to understand their situations, and through common narrative expressions, shared emotional narratives, and other methods, enable the information content of urban micro-videos to obtain audiences' aligned interpretation and emotional resonance, thereby triggering corresponding action feedback (liking, commenting, forwarding, or offline linkage). With the integration of human-computer interaction, big data analysis, and intelligent algorithms, urban micro-video creation can accurately profile audiences and understand their diverse needs, thereby using the interweaving of virtual and reality to maximize the stimulation of urban emotional resonance and value identification.

1.2 Value of Urban Micro-Video Empathetic Design

Empathetic design in urban micro-videos helps expand urban image construction and communication to audience circles, promoting information interconnection, shared dialogue, and interaction, which is conducive to promoting the deep integration of online and offline urban development. This paper argues that its value is mainly manifested in three aspects.

First, empathetic urban micro-video design in concept helps highlight the implication of a community with a shared future for urban development. The concept of a community with a shared future for mankind points out the fundamental direction for urban image communication, and empathetic design in urban micro-videos is the concretization of this concept in the communication field of the new era. Urban micro-videos, grafted onto the "common emotions" in human destiny and exploring the practice path of empathy-resonance-consensus, on the one hand help reshape the narrative mode of urban image communication, and on the other hand provide new space for excavating the unique presentation of cities.

Second, empathetic urban micro-video design in action helps highlight the implication of collaborative convergence among main actors in urban development. The subjects of current urban image communication are increasingly generalized, with different perspectives and positions forming diverse narrative modes and discourse symbols. To reduce understanding deviations in mutual interaction and obtain the "common sense" of the greatest "common denominator" among multiple subjects, it is necessary for urban micro-video design to fully excavate and integrate the publicity of each subject. In other words, empathetic design

that seeks subject publicity is the internal requirement for gathering diverse and collaborative urban subjects.

Third, empathetic urban micro-video design in effectiveness helps highlight the persistent idea of shaping audiences' continuous co-directional journey. As a design approach that focuses on context and personal experience, urban micro-video empathetic design adheres to "people-oriented, user-centered" principles, bravely confronts the diverse demands of heterogeneous audiences, and through visual enhancement and VR technology support, integration into audience life scenarios, creative interactive expression, deepening cultural connotations, and appealing to emotional resonance, provides audiences with immersive, interactive, and integrated new urban aesthetic experiences in the creation and communication of urban virtual and real scenarios, maximizing the cohesion of urban audience consensus and providing momentum for the mediated innovative development of urban industries.

2. Three-Dimensional Principles for Urban Micro-Video Empathetic Design

Emotion is a common attribute of human beings that runs through the entire process of interpersonal communication. In the concept of empathy, "共" (commonality) is the premise, reflecting the interactive characteristics of both communication parties, while "情" (emotion) is the entry point, reflecting the medium of shared meaning between communication subjects, with dynamic situationality in its meaning. Empathetic design in urban micro-videos places "people" and "humanity" in the primary position, striving to find the meeting point between "common human emotions" and "urban characteristics," building connections with urban society, history, and culture, and thereby presenting a real, three-dimensional, and diverse urban style to obtain more effective audience identification. Since empathy typically requires the process of emotional sharing—cognitive experience—behavioral transformation, the creation of urban micro-videos should also follow three main dimensions of empathetic design principles.

2.1 Guided by Empathetic Concept, Establishing Urban Micro-Video Objectives

The creation and dissemination of urban micro-videos are essentially a form of communicative behavior, and all human communication activities are purposeful social activities that seek effects, possessing both "expressive" and "performative" functions. The communication purpose is the guide and destination of urban micro-video design behavior, and empathy should first be reflected in the meticulous cultivation of empathetic appeal concepts and their implementation in creative objectives. Rationally speaking, urban micro-video design should serve the positive shaping and dissemination of urban image to form a tremendous synergy for urban construction. However, among self-media micro-video

creators focusing on urban content, most do not have a strong subjective motivation to promote the city, but rather derive from self-entertainment or gaining others' attention, mostly using "new, strange, and risky" urban landscape images and shallow sensory stimulation and pale carnival performances to cater to or attract audiences. This approach may achieve "momentary popularity," but because it does not truly establish micro-video creative objectives from the height of "empathy" with the audience, it is difficult to achieve "long-lasting popularity" effects.

To better ground the urban empathetic concept, urban micro-video creators need to use various methods such as field observation, interviews, pre-shooting activities, questionnaire surveys, or relevant big data mining and analysis to put themselves in others' shoes in advance, experiencing the work, life, and emotional states of various characters in the city such as wanderers and residents, focusing on "urban stories and human experiences" that carry urban cultural heritage and spiritual character, to more profoundly understand and comprehend people's material and spiritual needs in the city, as well as how they perceive, understand, and interact with the surrounding world, excavate the city's unique genes, define the city's multi-dimensional image, and ultimately establish the specific creative objectives of micro-video empathetic design while highlighting the empathetic concept.

2.2 Centered on Empathetic Scenarios, Framing Urban Micro-Video Content

According to the operational mechanism of empathetic communication, empathy in urban micro-videos is externally manifested in video content and internally embedded in video creation purposes. It is an emotional closed loop completed with the creator's empathy as the starting point, the audience's empathy as the endpoint, and the video's empathetic story as the carrier. Research results from interpersonal attraction theory indicate that the main factors enhancing interpersonal attraction are similarity, proximity, and complementarity. Similarity includes both internal aspects such as life philosophy, world outlook, life experience, and conduct, as well as external aspects such as appearance, age, interests, cultivation, occupation, and ethnicity. Proximity refers to the geographical and psychological closeness between communication parties. Complementarity refers to the mutually satisfying psychological state generated during interaction. To maximize audience emotional resonance, urban micro-video creators should be user-demand-centered, social-value-oriented, and take similarity, proximity, and complementarity as entry points to frame urban micro-video content within empathetic scenarios.

First, urban empathetic scenarios can be excavated based on audience similarity. For example, short videos such as *Hangzhou Police Officer Delivers Two Lunch Boxes*, *Yellow Code Truck Driver Instantly Cries*, "Hit the Most Vulnerable Moment in My Heart" and *Hangzhou Qiantang District #Community Volunteers Hardcore Shouting for Nucleic Acid Testing "We Have No Reason to Sleep In!"*

exploded across multiple platforms upon release, becoming hot topics on the entire Douyin network. The main reason for their “virality” lies in that these two video content scenarios (underlined parts) fully awaken the audience’s “similar emotions” and current “similar experiences,” triggering emotional identification.

Second, urban empathetic scenarios can be excavated based on the accessibility of audience time-space and psychology. For instance, the Hangzhou city Facebook account “@Hangzhou, China” often reproduces the real-life scenarios of “non-Hangzhou resident” groups studying, working, starting businesses, or traveling briefly in Hangzhou. By using the “other’s voice” presence approach, it allows foreign audiences who are also strangers to the city to peek into the real life of Hangzhou groups in an accessible way, even triggering resonance with landscape tourism footprints and deepening overseas social media’s sense of closeness and connection to Hangzhou city.

Finally, urban empathetic scenarios can be excavated based on audience complementarity. This essentially returns urban micro-videos to their content service attributes, that is, creators base themselves on audiences’ existing life experiences, observe the core demands of audiences as “dynamically developing people” in society, and then satisfy these demands through video content creation. Methodologically speaking, it is possible to plan and provide targeted urban news information, life services, cultural learning, entertainment and socialization, and other urban-related content based on audiences’ “sense of lack” regarding “people, objects, and events” in the city—what they “don’t know, are uncertain about, are unclear about, and cannot do” —to satisfy audiences’ daily information acquisition needs and leisure, entertainment, and social emotional needs, helping audiences gain more “sense of acquisition.” For example, given that modern young people generally know little about traditional folk skills but have a strong sense of cultural identity, the “Xi” an Episode of *Wonderful City* specifically tells the touching story of Xiao Wu, a Qin opera helmet craftsman, and his daily work and painstaking inheritance of traditional skills [6]. Upon broadcast, it deeply resonated with audiences, who commented: “So touching, people obsessed with traditional culture are so charming,” etc. Another example is the rapid popularity of the “Litang Ding Zhen” short video, which mainly satisfies the strong longing for natural, authentic, and uncontested Litang culture represented by the “wild, sweet, and innocent” Ding Zhen among workplace people under high-intensity, fast-paced, and competitive environments.

2.3 Grounded in Empathetic Values, Developing Urban Micro-Video Narratives

Narrative mode is the expression carrier of urban micro-videos and the manifestation form of video content, including all presentation methods that help highlight video content and enhance video expression effects, such as the voice, tone, gestures, posture, psychological changes, text presentation, and multi-modal elements of video characters or narrators. In the video design process, on the one hand, attention should be paid to accommodating audience emotional

responses by selecting narrative presentation methods that are the same as or similar to the audience, forming an “emotional community” to enhance “emotional alignment” effects. On the other hand, attention should also be paid to revealing story connotations and enriching and sublimating urban spirit through “rational discourse” to promote audiences’ positive transition from emotional empathy to cognitive empathy. In other words, ultimately, the social values that can be highlighted behind empathy should be used as narrative clues to develop micro-video narratives with proper restraint and expression.

For example, in 2020, when Hangzhou faced severe flood conditions and the Xin’ anjiang Reservoir opened nine sluice gates for the first time, many self-media ignored the tremendous sacrifices and sorrow of people upstream and downstream, focusing only on the spectacular beauty of the flood discharge and conducting “scenic viewing” reports, even with ridicule and banter. To avoid deviating from the proper tone, Hangzhou Net quickly released multiple short videos from the perspective of Zhejiang Province’s flood prevention and control overall situation, avoiding the loss of focus in public opinion themes and truly playing the role of public opinion guidance that “strengthens confidence, gathers public support, warms people’s hearts, and builds consensus.” Another example is the highly-rated documentaries *My City* and *Wonderful City*, which are adept at developing empathetic narratives from the experiences and psychology of story characters, as well as from diverse elements such as visual, auditory, and subtitle texts of the videos, greatly enhancing the audio-visual impact and spiritual appeal of the images. This enables audiences to complete “deep thinking about people and city” within the “floating shadows of the city,” thereby playing a role in “influence and edification.”

3. Innovative Pathways for Urban Micro-Video Empathetic Design

The generation of empathy is the result of multiple factors. In today’s world of complex and changing situations and intricate media environments, the pursuit of personalization has led to more and more non-empathetic factors. Particularly, cultural barriers and misunderstandings formed due to differences in ideology and values can easily inhibit the generation of urban cultural empathy. Therefore, there is an urgent need to enhance urban empathetic capacity and build an urban community with a shared future, so that urban image communication can continue to “go viral” and empower the healthy and stable development of cities.

3.1 Content Selection: Excavating Immersive and Colorful Materials

The fundamental purpose of urban image communication is to enhance urban identification and empower urban development. Good urban images can inspire audiences to achieve more urban consensus at the emotional and value levels. In terms of content selection for micro-videos, creators need to pay close attention

to audience core needs, accurately find empathetic connection points, select immersive video materials, excavate profound video connotations, and make them spiritual homes that soothe urban audiences' souls.

First, it is necessary to highlight a better life. By focusing on, understanding, creating, and sharing a better life, urban micro-video content can be innovated and urban empathetic capacity enhanced. Although people from different eras and countries/regions have different definitions of a better life, the pursuit of beauty and the yearning for a happy and peaceful life are eternal human ideals. In the current complex domestic and international communication ecology with numerous voices, Li Ziqi' s videos, which transcend language limitations and have become popular at home and abroad, are typical examples of empathetic communication of better life images. Because in today' s fast-paced life, people who are generally anxious and uneasy can find harmony with "food, beauty, and beautiful people" in Li Ziqi' s daily "garden," quietly question the true meaning of a happy life, engage in "sincere dialogue and confrontation" with their inner selves, release their emotions, and rest their tired souls.

Second, it is necessary to highlight life supremacy. Like humans, every flower, grass, bird, and beast pursues growth and blossoming of life. Respecting life, cherishing life, and appreciating and praising life are eternal common themes of humanity. Therefore, love, kinship, and friendship that foster life, as well as the joys and sorrows of life, can all become content foundations for empathetic design in urban micro-videos. From April to June 2022, Beijing Satellite TV' s *Life Destiny* column launched a "special anti-epidemic program," which documented people' s survival and life, difficulties and choices during the epidemic from a documentary perspective, depicting frontline workers shining with life brilliance on the anti-epidemic road, medical staff guarding the joy of life, and colorful groups of communities, masses, medical professionals, and patients showing life warmth, gathering the powerful force of the capital' s united determination to fight the epidemic, which was well-received by audiences. Short video hits by young creators such as Li Wawa, He Yiyi, and Xiao Huiting, which focus on ordinary people' s daily lives and showcase the world' s various conditions, often receiving millions of likes, represent the maximum resonance of the broad audience with the human power and life value behind them.

Third, it is necessary to devote effort to ecological construction. A good ecological environment is the "home" for human survival. Building a beautiful world of harmonious coexistence is the common responsibility of all humanity. Especially with the acceleration of urbanization, it is evident that climate and public health are no longer merely scientific and policy issues, but are also evolving into diplomatic and national security issues [7]. General Secretary Xi Jinping emphasized that lucid waters and lush mountains are invaluable assets. Therefore, urban micro-video creators should focus on urban ecological consciousness, ecological emotions, ecological behaviors, and ecological legal systems, using lenses to capture urban ecological beauty, recording urban ecological changes with penstrokes, and promoting the dissemination of urban ecological culture

through “powerful, profound, and warm” urban ecological news images, so that ecological responsibility consciousness can penetrate deeply into people’s hearts and become a value pursuit commonly followed globally.

For example, in 2021, when a wild elephant herd migrated northward in Xishuangbanna, Yunnan Province, China, it was widely followed and reported by domestic news media, triggering global discussion. The natural and humanities documentary *Walking with Elephants*, which focused on this event with the short-nosed family as the “protagonist,” also triggered a nationwide and worldwide “cloud elephant chasing” craze under social media’s fission dissemination and topic creation. Other short videos recording authentic rural life, such as “Zhang Tongxue,” have also mostly gained large numbers of fans. These cases all demonstrate that people are increasingly concerned about the relationship between humans and nature, reconsidering humanity’s role positioning in nature, and seeking solutions from theoretical and practical levels [8]. The demand for environmental news has reached unprecedented heights, making it feasible for urban micro-videos to strengthen ecological commonality and trigger nationwide environmental empathy.

3.2 Focus on Pragmatics: Pursuing Multiple Expressions Full of Presence

Urban micro-video creation and design requires not only continuous deep cultivation in subject matter content but also innovation and expansion in discourse expression. According to Fairclough’s text analysis theory, video texts include verbal language, sound language, and visual language. Consequently, empathetic discourse design in urban micro-videos can also focus on innovative excavation from these three aspects.

3.2.1 Creating “Finishing Touch” Textual Discourse Textual discourse in urban micro-videos includes title discourse and body text discourse. Good title discourse can convey the core content of the video, attract audiences to watch, and stimulate audience interaction and dissemination behavior.

First, from the perspective of visual emotional appeal of title text, Cheng Zheng’s (2021) research conclusions show that under vertical screen mode, the weight of factors affecting the appeal of text titles from largest to smallest is: font, color, size, position, layout, and dynamic special effects [9]. Wang Lei et al.’s (2019) research also points out that font design with different characteristics can trigger audience emotions such as liking, attraction, and reassurance, and that rounded fonts can effectively stimulate consumers’ psychological simulation of hedonic products [10]. This also enlightens us that fonts and colors have strong emotional arousal effects, and appropriate title fonts and colors that match video content can enable urban micro-videos to grasp audience emotional pulse and generate spiritual interaction at the first moment.

Second, from the perspective of narrative emotional appeal of title text, cur-

rently many urban short video title narrative modes are homogeneous and reveal insufficient urban spiritual connotations, while highly-praised urban short videos commonly use eight main title modes: 1. Situation-setting type, such as “If you’ re in a bad mood, you must go see the person you want to see, go to the city you want to go to! Go out, the moment you step out, you’ re already happy” ; 2. Contrast-conflict type, such as “The benefactor I’ ve sponsored for 7 years blocked me, is a Hangzhou pilot…” ; 3. Emotional resonance type, such as “Days in Guiyang made me understand: when you’ re tired of a familiar city, someone is falling in love with your city…” ; 4. Value-benefit type, such as “A city that can give you the beauty of 7 countries, what reason is there not to go see Dalian?” ; 5. Question-guiding type, such as “Magic City · Shanghai, with what charm does it attract people to compete to come?” ; 6. Hotspot-tracking type, such as “The blue symbolizing loneliness, cool and also warm’ Yesterday was the 15th World Autism Day, Qianjiang New City lit up a special blue light show, illuminating the way forward for all autism patients…”; 7. Straightforward narrative type, such as “China’ s city GDP ranking first. China’ s Magic City. Shanghai” ; and 8. Rhetoric-employing type, such as “Academician Zhong Nanshan’ s choked voice and tears make people tear up in one second…Yes, Wuhan has always been a heroic city! Like and cheer!” and “Mianyang Anzhou is a foreign land that even spring breeze cannot bear to pass by quickly.” All eight types of titles are adept at adopting strategic interactive expressions from the audience’ s standpoint based on specific urban connotations and contexts, and are worth learning from.

Finally, from the perspective of body text discourse, urban micro-videos are video creations that present and interpret cities around urban connotations and stories. Their narratives can guide public opinion on social urban public topics or express social care, and can also combine personal emotions and self-identity needs to develop discourse expression. However, facing the current widespread “shallow” urban video situation, there is an urgent need for “interesting” yet “meaningful” urban content production and expression, transforming from a single value that only satisfies their own “emotional” needs to multiple values such as urban information dissemination and cultural inheritance. Therefore, urban micro-videos need to not only use emotional narrative techniques to maximize urban empathetic communication but also consider the multiple “value content” of videos, excavating, refining, and enriching the “finishing touch” textual narration of urban video connotation value from multi-dimensional perspectives such as humanities, aesthetics, and philosophy. For example, Guangzhou photographer Luo Yiwei uses aerial photography and heartfelt copywriting to interpret his favorite city on his self-media account “Rogue Rabbit Vision.” Under his pen and lens, an image of Guangzhou emerges as an international millennium commercial capital that is “fast-paced, responsible, warm,” inclusive, atmospheric, and full of life, winning numerous netizens’ likes with deep resonance. Another example is a short video under the “#Encounter Beautiful Hangzhou” topic on Douyin that records a Hangzhou West Lake boatman’ s open-minded views on life and love, which received 323,000 likes and 24,000 comments, with netizens

expressing one after another that “Hangzhou West Lake boatmen not only ferry boats but also ferry people.” This once again proves the powerful charm of video discourse in image communication.

3.2.2 Creating “Immersive” Audio Discourse American psychologist and communication scholar Albert Mehrabian, through extensive experiments, proposed that in human communication, total information effect = 7% words + 38% voice + 55% facial expressions and other body language. Therefore, when designing urban micro-videos, it is necessary to skillfully use audio and visual images to convey information. Moreover, today’s technological innovations provide technical guarantees for stimulating and awakening users’ real emotions in different scenarios and engaging in multimodal emotional interaction with audiences through auditory elements. Background music that matches the video theme or images can quickly immerse audiences in the scenes constructed by the video, playing a role in enhancing, rendering, and strengthening emotions. For example, in the *People’s Daily* Douyin account, the video *Wuhan’s Latest Promotional Video Really Makes You Cry Wuhan Don’t Panic We Are Waiting for You* uses soft background music throughout, with simple, calm, and slow narration that forms a sharp contrast with the “in full swing” actions of Wuhan people, medical staff, and police officers fighting on the front line of the epidemic, effectively presenting the touching scene of “the anti-epidemic site is orderly, Wuhan is not panicking,” “the epidemic is ruthless but people are affectionate, and there is great love in overcoming difficulties together,” invisibly reducing audience anxiety, stimulating audience thinking, and effectively playing the role of positive emotional guidance and spiritual value construction in image-based public opinion guidance.

Generally speaking, simultaneous sound has the function of objective and authentic recording, which can enhance viewers’ sense of reality and immersion; narration is like a tour guide that can help audiences quickly establish the overall atmosphere and tone of the video, clarify the plot context, comprehend video connotations, and add interest; and the “local accent” of dialects can often instantly make “distant places” “relatable” through highly iconic charm such as “homophonic puns,” “sense of humor,” and “regional style.” Sometimes, well-timed silence is more powerful than a thousand words. In short, creators can boost video plot development at important time nodes and image nodes through background music, narration, simultaneous sound, “local accents,” silence, and various combinations, enhancing viewers’ “immersive” experience and influencing audience cognition and emotional orientation.

3.2.3 Creating “Authentic and Three-Dimensional” Visual Discourse Hegel once pointed out: “The task of art is to present ideas through perceptual images...” Visual discourse in urban micro-videos mainly refers to shot language such as images, light and shadow, and color in the video. Shot images have both realistic and symbolic qualities, with natural emotional evocation functions, and are important elements constituting empathetic discourse in urban micro-videos,

playing significant roles in visual impact, artistic appeal, and creating poetic space [11]. Compared with other short videos, urban micro-videos pursue the inheritance of excellent urban traditional culture and characteristic culture in conception, highlighting the “harmonious beauty” between Oriental traditional artistic conception and modern urban space. Therefore, in the use of shot language, it is necessary to focus on integrating Oriental traditional aesthetic wisdom with modern aesthetic taste, taking documentary aesthetics as the basic pursuit, adapting to audiences’ mobile phone vertical screen viewing habits, combining auditory elements, and innovating visual dialogue methods through image composition, camera movement, and post-production to highlight human values, demonstrate the meaning of life, showcase original urban styles, and provide audiences with authentic on-site aesthetic experiences. For example, Li Ziqi focuses on rural pastoral life, carefully arranging shot sizes and composition, light and shadow and color tones, camera movement and sound, successfully creating one after another “poetry and distance” that audiences at home and abroad yearn for, providing a referenceable perspective for the grand narrative of showcasing “Chinese charm” to the world [12].

3.3 Platform Integration: Building Multi-Dimensional Channels Full of Reach

In the new media era, “good wine also fears a deep alley,” and the value of high-quality content requires strong platform support. A platform is “an open business ecosystem built on an equal basis by multiple subjects through co-construction and resource sharing to achieve win-win results” [13]. From an empathetic perspective, high-quality urban micro-video platforms can provide users with sufficient technical support, resource support, and value guidance for in-depth interaction with video content, effectively achieving urban online public opinion guidance and gathering urban consensus. Therefore, current urban micro-video communication platform innovation can be developed from both internal and external aspects.

First, conduct integrated media communication between platforms to strengthen the depth and breadth of media linkage. One aspect is to strengthen integrated communication between new and old media while promoting linked communication among new media. For example, through integration models such as “borrowing a boat to go to sea” and “cooperating to build a boat,” build a full-coverage integrated media matrix of “print media + television + radio + website + client + official We-media + self-media” to disseminate urban images in all directions and through multiple channels. Another aspect is to strengthen online-offline integrated interactive communication design and develop an interactive business model of “urban micro-video +,” that is, in addition to online integrated communication, offline activities such as urban micro-film festivals, micro-documentary competitions, short video competitions, and urban folk experience activities based on diverse urban IP video themes can be organized. Additionally, composite business forms such as themed catering,

performance theaters, immersive entertainment projects, new retail spaces, and IP exhibitions can be created around video scene forms to continuously promote cross-platform and cross-cultural communication of urban micro-video works while expanding new urban business models and promoting the virtuous cycle of urban communication development. For example, to meet urban literati' s life ritual needs at every node, Taizhou Qingyue City independently innovated and successfully launched over 10 national style series IP theme exhibitions including “Good Luck Temple X Prayer Space,” “Misty Rain Jiangnan X Suzhou Garden,” “Joy in the City X Tang Dynasty Street Scene,” and “Carp Leaping Over Dragon Gate X Wanderer Space.” Each event triggered consumers to voluntarily post on social media platforms, receiving over 10 million exposures across the entire network.

Second, expand and innovate interactive methods within platforms to form inter-user interaction mechanisms. As the primary link in the communication process, urban micro-video communication platforms play an important leading role in information content control, flow direction, and public opinion guidance. Therefore, they should actively adopt various flexible methods to strengthen interactive connections with users. One method is to actively set topics to guide user participation in content production, making the construction and dissemination of urban images more free, timely, and creative. For example, the Ningbo Daily “Crowd-funded News” App case, launched in early 2018, shows people the many possibilities of urban image communication under the coexistence of “professionalization” and “participation” through interactive dialogue. Another method is to provide users with high-quality encounter spaces, emotional exchanges, and capital realization environments through appropriate multiple theme tags, like counts, comment counts, share counts, hot searches, popularity lists, today' s hottest topics, and other “decentralized” communication effect evaluation mechanisms, triggering new users to join and enhancing old users' stickiness, laying a solid foundation for the sustained dissemination of urban image. A third method is to implement precise urban micro-video pushes based on user basic information and interest graphs, actively responding to user comments and inner concerns.

Urban image is an important component of national image. In the context of globalization, effective urban image construction and communication are conducive to shaping dynamic and diverse urban business cards, enhancing cities' discourse power and attractiveness in domestic and international development competition [14]. In the digital era, how to effectively interpret urban images that audiences love to see and hear has become a current academic hotspot and practical key point. Against the background of heterogeneous audiences' demands for experiential, personalized, rich, and humanistic diversity in urban cognition, universal human emotions are the core that transcends geopolitical influences, bridges cultural differences, and attracts audiences. The inherent emotional attributes of social media platforms for urban micro-videos, represented by short videos, combined with the rapid development of digital technologies, provide new pathways for empathetic communication of urban image. Based on

empathy theory, this paper proposes innovative strategies for urban micro-video content production and communication, hoping to provide references for urban micro-video creation to break away from superficiality, secularity, and personalization, so as to give full play to the role of urban micro-videos in enhancing audiences' urban aesthetic levels and promoting urban cultural development and prosperity.

References

- [1] Liu Wei. How Do Emerging Media Influence Urban Image Construction?—Based on the Logic and Path Analysis of Short Video Platforms[J]. *Journal of Yangzhou University (Humanities and Social Sciences Edition)*, 2022(3): 116-128.
- [2] Zhou Xiang, Fu Yinghong. The “Narrative-Empathy-Cross-cultural” Interactive Mechanism Model of Chinese Visual Stories—Based on an Analysis of Documentaries on the “Belt and Road” Theme[J]. *Modern Communication: Journal of Communication University of China*, 2022(6): 108-115.
- [3] Wang Changxiao, Sun Yuzhu. The Tension Between Technology and Culture: Cross-cultural Empathetic Communication of Creative Short Videos[J]. *Contemporary Communication*, 2021(1): 27-31.
- [4] Zhong Xin, Jiang Xiancheng, Wang Yamo. Cross-cultural Empathetic Communication of National Image: Analysis of International Communication Strategies and Effects of the Beijing Winter Olympics[J]. *News and Writing*, 2022(5): 25-34.
- [5] Yu Aijing. Analysis of Public Art Under the Guidance of “Empathy” Concept[D]. Jinan: Shandong University of Art and Design, 2021.
- [6] Zhang Long, Zhao Ziyu. Touching the Temperature of Nostalgia Through Character Empathy—On Empathetic Communication of Urban-themed Documentaries[J]. *China Television*, 2022(6): 6-13.
- [7] Wang Peinan, Shi Anbin. New Trends in Global Journalism and Communication in 2022—Based on an Analysis of Six Hot Issues[J]. *Shanghai Journalism Review*, 2022(1): 57-65.
- [8] Li Shishu. Views on Nature, Ecological Crisis and Ecological Marxism[J]. *Journal of Chongqing University of Posts and Telecommunications (Social Sciences Edition)*, 2011(3): 71-74.
- [9] Cheng Zheng. Design of Text Titles for Online Short Videos in Vertical Screen Mode—Taking Douyin as an Example[J]. *Journal of News Research*, 2021(9): 13-16.
- [10] Female Professor from Zhejiang University Makes a Heartbreaking Discovery: The Font on Coke Packaging May Be Calculating How to Get Your Money[EB/OL]. https://m.thepaper.cn/baijiahao_{5459573}, 2020-01-08/2023-02-23.

- [11] Li Feixue, Fan Chaohui. Audiovisual Imagery: Short Video Communication of Excellent Traditional Chinese Culture[J]. China Television, 2021(8): 63-68.
- [12] Liu Zhaoxia. Modernity Rebellion and Pastoral Imagination in the Fourth Consumer Era—An Analysis of Li Ziqi' s Overseas Popularity[J]. Modern Communication (Journal of Communication University of China), 2020(9): 60-67.
- [13] Lu Xueke. Transforming Talent Management in Traditional Media with Internet Thinking[J]. Modern Audio-Visual Media, 2014(12): 70-72.
- [14] Liu Guoqiang. The Theoretical Connotation and Practical Path of Telling China' s Stories Well[J]. News Front, 2021(22): 10-13.

Author Biographies

Yang Xuelin (1981-), female, from Guigang, Guangxi, holds a master' s degree and is a lecturer. Her research focuses on pragmatics, discourse, and communication.

Yang Yuting (2001-), female, from Taizhou, Zhejiang, is a student at Zhejiang University of Technology Zhijiang College. Her research focuses on language and culture.

Dai Jiaqi (2000-), female, from Jiangshan, Zhejiang, is a student at Zhejiang University of Technology Zhijiang College. Her research focuses on language and culture.

(Editor: Zhang Xiaojing)

Note: Figure translations are in progress. See original paper for figures.

Source: ChinaXiv –Machine translation. Verify with original.