

Multimodal Discourse Narrative of Cultural Tourism Micro-Short Dramas in the Vertical-Screen Era (Post-Print)

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Date: 2025-07-09T15:39:21+00:00

Abstract

Purpose: This study aims to investigate how cultural tourism micro-short dramas utilize multimodal discourse to achieve meaning expression. **Methodology:** This paper employs literature research, case analysis, and other methods, taking the multimodal discourse analysis framework as its theoretical foundation, and conducts discourse analysis on the “video-based” communication morphology of cultural tourism micro-short dramas from visual and auditory modalities across five dimensions: culture, context, meaning, form, and expression. **Results:** Multimodal discourse expression with visual modality as primary and auditory modality as supplementary constitutes the main discursive mode of cultural tourism micro-short dramas, which take regional characteristics as their cultural foundation, employ an accessible discourse tone, and utilize an audiovisual integration model under technology empowerment to enable audiences to experience the charm of local cultural tourism. **Conclusion:** In the future, cultural tourism micro-short dramas must still adhere to the principle of “content is king,” transform cultural tourism elements into artistic elements, deeply excavate their cultural connotations, simultaneously rely on big data to achieve precise reach of cultural tourism micro-short dramas, and build a genuine cultural-tourism integration industrial chain.

Full Text

Preamble

A Study on Multimodal Discourse Narrative in Cultural Tourism Micro-Dramas in the Vertical-Screen Era

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Abstract

[Purpose] This study aims to explore how cultural tourism micro-dramas utilize multimodal discourse to achieve meaning expression. **[Method]** Employing literature review and case analysis methods, this paper adopts the multimodal discourse analysis framework as its theoretical foundation to conduct discourse analysis on the “video-based” communication forms of cultural tourism micro-dramas across five dimensions—culture, context, meaning, form, and expression—from visual and auditory modalities. **[Results]** The study finds that multimodal discourse expression, primarily visual and secondarily auditory, constitutes the main discursive mode of cultural tourism micro-dramas. Grounded in regional characteristics as their cultural foundation and employing accessible discourse tones, these works leverage technology-enabled audio-visual integration to immerse audiences in the charm of local cultural tourism. **[Conclusion]** Moving forward, cultural tourism micro-dramas must adhere to the principle of “content is king,” transforming tourism elements into artistic elements while deeply excavating their cultural connotations. Simultaneously, they should rely on big data to achieve precise audience targeting and build a genuine cultural tourism integration industry chain.

Keywords: micro-drama; multimodal; discourse expression; visual narrative; audio-visual communication

CLC Number: G244

Document Code: A

Article ID: 1671-0134(2025)02-25-07

DOI: 10.19483/j.cnki.11-4653/n.2025.02.003

Citation Format: Gao Xianchun, Qu Jinpei, Zhao Xuesong. A Study on Multimodal Discourse Narrative in Cultural Tourism Micro-Dramas in the Vertical-Screen Era [J]. *China Media Technology*, 2025, 32(2): 25-31.

Introduction

With the advent of the vertical-screen era, micro-dramas have emerged as a novel content form, rapidly sweeping across the internet due to their lightweight volume, fast-paced narrative, and rich expressive power. Among them, cultural tourism micro-dramas have become a significant genre through the “micro-drama + cultural tourism” model. These works integrate tourism elements into their narratives, encompassing but not limited to traditional culture, intangible cultural heritage, historical cities, national sentiment, and urban civilization. Through online audio-visual platforms, they creatively intertwine plotlines with regional culture and tourism, merging visual and auditory modalities to concretely express distinctive local customs in vivid and colorful forms. This approach bridges the distance between the public and various locales, transcends temporal and spatial limitations, and evokes public attention and enthusiasm. This paper investigates, through relevant examples, how cultural tourism micro-dramas utilize interactions among different modalities to achieve holistic meaning construction in multimodal discourse from the perspectives of culture, con-

text, meaning, form, and expression.

Modality refers to symbolic systems interpreted through specific perceptual processes, including images, written and oral symbols, gestures, sounds, and odors [2]. Discourse represents communication methods within particular contexts, influenced by ideological concepts, value orientations, and cultural modes of thinking [3]. Its manifestations are diverse, encompassing not only linguistic modalities such as sound and text but also non-linguistic modalities like expressions, actions, and melodies. Through the combination of linguistic and non-linguistic modalities, discourse constructs holistic meaning collectively, thereby enriching and dimensionalizing transmitted information and influencing audience reception and comprehension.

R. Barthes pioneered multimodal discourse research in his 1977 essay “Rhetoric of the Image,” where he first explored the mutual influence between visual images and language in meaning transmission, laying the theoretical foundation for subsequent multimodal discourse analysis [4]. Since the inaugural International Conference on Multimodal Discourse Communication in 2002, multimodal discourse analysis has evolved over more than four decades from a single research field into a comprehensive model integrating diverse theories. Academic circles have categorized multimodal discourse analysis theoretical frameworks into “three major schools”: first, the social semiotics perspective of “systemic functional semiotics” advocated by Kress and van Leeuwen, which focuses on the interaction between images and text; second, Norris’s “multimodal interaction analysis,” which emphasizes the synergistic effects of language, posture, movement, and proximity in human communication; and third, the “corpus linguistics multimodal discourse analysis” represented by Gu, which stresses the interaction between senses and external media environments [5].

Since 2003, domestic academia has begun focusing on multimodal discourse analysis. Li Zhanzi provided an in-depth interpretation of the multimodal discourse analysis framework proposed by Kress et al., emphasizing its significance for linguistics and language education [6]. Subsequently, domestic scholars have conducted extensive research on multimodal discourse. For instance, Zhang Delu proposed a new multimodal discourse analysis framework based on overseas scholars’ research, dividing the constituent elements of discourse expression into four main aspects—cultural level, contextual level, content level, and expression level—while highlighting the importance of understanding formal features of different modalities and their interrelationships in multimodal discourse research, thus offering new perspectives for language education and communication practice [7]. Pan Yanyan, from a cognitive linguistics perspective, proposed a “cognitive-functional” analytical method, drawing on concepts of metaphor and metonymy from cognitive linguistics. She argued that symbolic features, potential forms of symbolic meaning, and the cognitive mechanisms of discourse are key elements in multimodal discourse analysis, emphasizing that metaphor and metonymy, as fundamental human cognitive mechanisms, exist not only in linguistic modalities but also extensively in non-linguistic modalities [8].

Building upon these relatively mature theoretical frameworks and models for multimodal discourse analysis, this study takes Norris's "multimodal interaction analysis" as its starting point. Within the interaction among linguistic modalities (images, text, background music) and non-linguistic modalities, it conducts multimodal discourse analysis of cultural tourism micro-dramas within the main framework of cultural, contextual, meaning, formal, and expressive levels.

2. Multimodal Discourse Analysis of Cultural Tourism Micro-Dramas

2.1 Cultural Level: Regional Characteristics and Storylines Co-shape Local Culture

The cultural level is the crucial dimension enabling multimodal communication. It not only determines communication traditions, patterns, and technologies but also directly influences the ability to interpret situational contexts [9]. Symbols serve as important carriers of cultural connotation and value. Cultural tourism micro-dramas directly present cultural elements through image modalities or skillfully integrate them with storylines, thereby highlighting the historical and cultural narratives they carry. This approach subtly reveals the latent regional cultural charm and humanistic sentiments, establishing the narrative tone of cultural tourism micro-dramas with profound cultural heritage and achieving a "soul collision and sublimation" between audiences and regions.

For example, the cultural tourism micro-drama *A Dream on the Starry River*, produced by Suzhou Radio and Television, ingeniously combines Suzhou's regional characteristics with intangible cultural heritage. The inheritance of intangible cultural heritage inevitably relies on specific symbolic signs, with image modalities being their most direct presentation form in cultural tourism micro-dramas. Image modalities, as visual symbols encompassing both dynamic and static images, achieve discursive purposes through visual effects. In micro-dramas, elements such as the well-arranged ancient city, gardens with changing scenery at every step, fashionable and trendy parks, exquisite and elegant Suzhou embroidery, profound Suzhou fans, and classic and tempting traditional cuisine collectively showcase Suzhou's scenic beauty, craftsmanship beauty, and lifestyle beauty from a visual perspective. Through different shot scales and camera movements, these image modalities almost make the "Suzhou flavor" overflow from the screen. This cultural tourism micro-drama concretizes intangible cultural heritage elements through figurative image expression, allowing audiences to experience Suzhou's charm within the fusion of intangible cultural heritage and Suzhou gardens, making traditional culture "come alive" and enabling audiences to sense its cultural essence visually.

Beyond expressing meaning through concrete symbolic imagery, cultural tourism micro-dramas can also endow characters with metaphorical significance. By assigning character traits that symbolize the image characteristics of a particular era or group, they achieve implicit meaning expression. For

instance, in the cultural tourism micro-drama *Princess, Please Return Home*, the narrative employs a dual-temporal structure interweaving ancient and modern times, running two parallel storylines of “princess returning home” from completely different eras, thus creating a new perspective for cultural narrative. The male protagonist is a soldier from Shuofang who accidentally travels to modern times while escorting a princess back to Chang’an; the female protagonist is a self-media anchor dedicated to fulfilling her grandfather’s lifelong wish of welcoming the panda “Princess” back to China. The story dreams back to Chang’an through the ancient tale of escorting a princess for a marriage alliance, and revisits Xi’an through the live-streaming story of the panda “Princess’s” return. This unique narrative perspective showcases the same responsibility and commitment across different time and space dimensions for audiences. The male protagonist symbolizes countless soldiers who silently dedicated themselves to national stability and border security—far from their homeland, steadfast in their posts, they guarded national dignity and glory with their lives and blood without seeking reward or recognition. The female protagonist symbolizes the new generation’s inheritance of traditional culture and cherishing of family bonds. Through the representation of characters from ancient and modern times, the drama enriches plot layers through temporal reshaping of ancient and modern elements while displaying the millennia-old cultural heritage and humanistic sentiments of the ancient city of Xi’an.

2.2 Contextual Level: Discourse Scope and Discourse Mode Jointly Construct Situational Context

The contextual level in multimodal discourse analysis refers to the environment where multimodal symbolic resources interact—a comprehensive set of environmental factors influencing the entire discourse [10]. Linguist Halliday posited that context includes both situational context and cultural context, noting that situational context comprises three components: discourse scope, discourse tenor, and discourse mode.

Discourse scope refers to the content of the text, including the venue of actions, participants, and the identities of communicative parties. It runs throughout cultural tourism micro-dramas, forming the foundation for plot construction and character interaction. It determines how characters communicate, how images are shaped, and how connections with audiences are established. For example, the cultural tourism micro-drama *Take You to the Moon* is primarily set in Sangzhi County, Zhangjiajie City, Hunan Province. The narrative follows a male and female protagonist who adhere to non-marriage principles as they flee from a marriage banquet arranged by their parents, encountering people, emotions, and objects along the way. Through the protagonists’ experiences, the drama paints a poetic and leisurely pastoral landscape, showcasing the region’s colorful and rich folk customs. Centered on the theme of “young people bravely pursuing love and freedom,” the drama connects Sangzhi’s scenic landscapes, humanities, and folk characteristics. From the presentation of scenic shots and

intangible cultural heritage like Sangzhi folk songs to the authentic performances by local residents, all elements serve to comprehensively display the beauty of Sangzhi's scenery, cuisine, music, and people, ultimately creating a healing "cyber dreamland" for contemporary youth. Consequently, Sangzhi County has been nicknamed by netizens as Hunan's version of "Altay."

Discourse tenor refers to the social role relationship between sender and receiver during communication, which in cultural tourism micro-dramas is mainly manifested in character dialogue. Since cultural tourism micro-dramas primarily aim to shape city images and disseminate characteristic culture through the fusion of regional features and storylines, communicators typically adopt approachable, accessible, and easy-to-understand narrative tones—either straightforward or humorously witty—to shorten the distance with audiences and facilitate social interaction in an equal and harmonious atmosphere. For instance, in *Take You to the Moon*, aside from the two protagonists, most actors are local Sangzhi residents. From folk song inheritors and intangible cultural heritage successors to local internet celebrities, tour guides, and shop assistants, all communicate directly in the Sangzhi dialect. This discourse tenor not only immerses audiences directly into the scene but also vividly demonstrates the warmth, hospitality, sincerity, and simplicity of Sangzhi people.

Discourse mode refers to the communication forms and channels in social interaction, manifested in visual, auditory, and audio-visual integration aspects. Visually, it conveys emotions and intentions through body language, facial expressions, and eye contact; auditorily, it involves using pitch, volume, rhythm, and speed to express joy, anger, sorrow, and happiness; linguistically, it includes oral and written language, with oral language being primary. The Fujian cultural tourism micro-drama *Come to Fujian, Be Happy* exemplifies this through the story of grandparents who reunite, fall in love, and stay together in Fujian after decades of separation. The drama incorporates internet memes such as "twilight romance," "straightforward romance," and "moving-house camping," using the distinctive Fujian accent as its primary discourse expression mode. Continuous creative ideas and plot twists maintain audience curiosity and engagement, making the micro-drama go viral immediately upon release. The grandparents' humorous yet profound expressions constantly resonate with audiences, creating an immersive experience that makes viewers feel as if they are truly experiencing the 烟火气 (human touch) of Fujian life. Beyond linguistic expression, the characterization of the grandparents is also cleverly crafted. Their trendy outfits, bright and warm smiles, and playful, lively body movements deeply infect audiences, allowing them to genuinely feel the elders' happy love and Fujian people's optimistic and positive life attitude, thereby stimulating viewers' desire to travel to Fujian. Audiences frequently comment in the danmu (real-time comments), "I want to check in at every scenic spot!"

2.3 Meaning Level: Modal Symbols and Symbolic Metaphor Jointly Compose Meaningful Chapters

The meaning level in multimodal discourse refers to the meanings and information jointly constructed by various modal symbols, encompassing understanding of symbols, concepts, cultural backgrounds, and application rules in discourse expression, including both literal and metaphorical meanings. Multimodal metaphor refers to metaphorical forms that transcend single images or symbols, involving various levels from association and comprehension to reception, and can be expressed through multiple symbols [11]. Metaphor is not only a fundamental mode of semantic expression but also a crucial technique for human meaning expression and value transmission in multimodal discourse.

For instance, the Hunan cultural tourism micro-drama *Your Island Has Arrived* primarily employs metaphorical techniques for discourse narrative. Centered on the light-hearted daily life of male and female protagonists in Taohuayuan Scenic Area, it presents an idyllic pastoral lifestyle. The natural landscapes of Taohuayuan's Qin Valley, Qin Street, and Peach Blossom Valley are presented frame by frame through camera language, with their natural filters and rich pastoral atmosphere vividly displayed. This pastoral narrative not only indicates the story's location but also serves as a metaphor for a lifestyle and spiritual pursuit. According to legend, Qin Valley in Taohuayuan Scenic Area was the path taken by the Wuling fisherman who accidentally discovered the utopia in *The Peach Blossom Spring*. Today, through the protagonists' night tour of Qin Creek, walking along the stream, watching fireflies dance, and enjoying flower shadows, the drama metaphorically expresses people's pursuit of the natural, tranquil life embodied by the classical spiritual culture of "Peach Blossom Spring." The picturesque natural scenery provides an excellent visual backdrop for the plot, which together with historical, cultural, and folk heritage constructs the cultural context for the story and the emotional foundation for characters. From visuals to plotlines, from emotions to culture, these elements jointly shape the "new Peach Blossom Spring" cultural imagery under modern semantic deconstruction, implicitly expressing contemporary people's pursuit of an ideal life akin to a "utopia."

2.4 Formal Level: Technological Transformation and AI Empowerment Jointly Create Innovative Expression

In the traditional media era, horizontally oriented videos with width greater than height remained the default standard format. Even when screens transitioned from large television sets to mobile phone screens, horizontal videos continued to dominate. However, with the popularization of smartphones and the rapid development of mobile internet, media consumption habits have undergone tremendous changes, bringing more vertically oriented videos (height greater than width) into public view. Content creators and users on platforms like Douyin and Kuaishou have begun to accept and adapt to the production and dissemination of vertical videos. From a technical perspective, the preva-

lence of vertical formats across major media platforms is not accidental but rather an inevitable result of continuous adaptation to mobile internet usage scenarios, reflecting keen awareness of audience viewing preferences in the on-line audio-visual era [12].

Entering the 5G era, internet development has shifted from competing for traffic to competing for user engagement. Beyond solving the distribution channel issue—“making users visible”—it must further address the problem of “making users keep watching,” matching specific content with particular user habits, mindsets, and interests [13]. Consequently, major social media platforms have actively responded to vertical videos based on differentiated development strategies, driving technological innovation and upgrades. These advancements span content production, distribution channels, user interaction, data analysis, and information flow placement, collectively creating development opportunities for vertical-screen cultural tourism micro-dramas. The vividness and interactivity of vertical videos generate a sense of presence for users, which not only caters to their media usage habits but also influences media usage value, making it more suitable for the current era of mobile media scenarios.

Beyond upgraded usage forms accompanying technological transformation, the accelerated development of artificial intelligence algorithms, along with concepts like metaverse and Web3.0 impacting traditional network forms, have made AI-Generated Content (AIGC) a significant trend in digital-era online audio-visual resource development. In the digital age, single-dimensional narrative models struggle to meet public demands. Immersive content output combining audio and visual elements disseminates content from an in-situ perspective, further expanding cultural communication effects. Driven by industrial development, AIGC’s advantages—large-scale corpus characteristics, multimodal fusion and conversion, and cross-scenario generation and application—have collectively propelled its explosive growth. Both AIGC and cultural tourism micro-dramas present booming development trends, and their powerful combination has added new dimensions to the micro-drama market, bringing more innovation and possibilities. Works such as *Chinese Mythology*, *AI China*, *Handan Dream: AI in Warring States*, and *Encounter Chang’an* present new multimodal cultural experiences in cultural tourism micro-dramas through AI empowerment.

Taking *Sanxingdui: Future Apocalypse* as an example, AI technology permeates the entire process from creative conception to production presentation. Large language models provide continuous inspiration for plot creation, while text-to-image generation transforms designers’ imaginations into reality. In this micro-drama, AIGC not only assists in script creation but also participates in character design, scene rendering, and multiple other stages. It generates script frameworks and character settings that meet plot requirements, and through AI empowerment, each scene becomes lifelike, making audiences feel as if they are in a real and stunning future world. This embodied communication, enhanced by future technology, brings a realistic sense of presence, greatly satisfying audiences’ visual and auditory senses and enabling them to feel more immersed.

This further enhances the appeal and viewability of cultural tourism micro-dramas, allowing audiences to more intuitively experience the charm of ancient Shu civilization. Vision is humans' most direct and important sense; through visual stimulation, people perceive objects' size, brightness, color, and movement, obtaining various information vital for survival. At least 80% of external information is obtained through vision [14]. AI empowerment transforms abstract imagination into reality, helping micro-dramas present scenes and effects difficult to achieve through traditional filming, thereby "reviving" historical and cultural heritage and enhancing visual expressiveness and impact. This deep exploration not only strengthens audience interest in historical culture but also provides new pathways for traditional cultural inheritance and innovation.

2.5 Expression Level: Visual Primacy and Auditory Supplementation Jointly Guide User Resonance

In the multimodal discourse analysis framework, the expression level represents the crucial interface for direct contact and interaction with audiences, encompassing both linguistic and non-linguistic media. Linguistic media can be further divided into pure language and paralanguage forms. Pure language media, which primarily convey information directly to ensure effective message delivery, can be subdivided into two categories: sound and written symbols. Paralinguistic media includes elements such as intonation strength, volume level, font, and font size, whose main function is to assist and enhance language information transmission. Non-linguistic media encompasses broader domains, including communicators' body movements, facial expressions, eye contact, and tools used during communication. These can transmit additional information, expand linguistic expressiveness, and convey emotions and attitudes that language alone cannot fully express. Linguistic and non-linguistic media complement each other, collaboratively promoting a complete communication system and jointly accomplishing meaning construction and dissemination in multimodal discourse.

In cultural tourism micro-dramas, pure linguistic media is mainly manifested through character dialogue and narration, using specific written symbols to facilitate audience perception and comprehension. Paralinguistic media forms include background music, sound effects, voice timbre, and intonation. Different scenarios, accompanied by characters' emotional changes, exhibit variations in tone expression. The integration of appropriate background music further enhances audience immersion and deepens their audiovisual experience. Non-linguistic media includes characters' gestures, movements, expressions, and visual presentations empowered by AR, XR, CG, and holographic projection technologies. For example, the cultural tourism micro-drama *AI Monkey King*, centered on Huaguo Mountain and Liandao Scenic Area, utilizes AI technology to visually recreate iconic landscapes such as the Great Sage Temple, Nine-Dragon Bridge, and thousand-year-old ginkgo trees. Under AI rendering, these characteristic scenic areas transform into the fantastical wonders of Huaguo Mountain, closely connecting with the Monkey King's story and deeply exploring cultural

connotations by combining AI technology with the essence of Chinese classical literature. Beyond pursuing aesthetic representation of environmental scenes, the drama also refines character imagery, storytelling, and emotional transmission. To provide audiences with a more immersive experience, it diversifies the pairing of visual elements with different sound effects. The entire drama's background music and dubbing are "personalized and customized," achieving strong associations between sound and visuals through situational sound adaptability, presenting a perfect audio-visual aesthetic feast.

3. Multimodal Discourse Narrative Communication Strategies for Cultural Tourism Micro-Dramas

3.1 Discourse Foundation: Grounded in Regional Culture to Awaken Cultural Identity

One criterion for measuring the quality of a cultural tourism micro-drama is its cultural value—whether the presented local cultural characteristics can form distinct cultural memory points and awaken audience cultural identity. Cultural value constitutes the soul of cultural tourism micro-dramas. As a new carrier for cultural dissemination, cultural tourism micro-dramas' accessibility and broad-spectrum appeal in audience reception endow them with tremendous vitality for extending people's cultural experience space [15]. These works organically integrate tourism elements with micro-drama scenes, plots, and characters to showcase unique regional characteristics and cultural connotations. As new convergence points for traditional culture and mainstream values, they display regional cultural depth through unique narrative charm, successfully connecting regional features with audience cultural identity, ultimately achieving conversion from online story "planting grass" (generating interest) to offline tourism "drainage" (attracting visitors). The "micro-drama + cultural tourism" model, as an emerging cultural communication paradigm, effectively drives the popularity of actual filming locations and related classic cultural tourism scenes through creative micro-drama content, bringing new 客流 (tourist flow) and attention to tourism destinations while providing rich materials and backgrounds for micro-drama creation.

Cultural tourism integration represents the phenomenon and process where cultural and tourism industries transcend traditional boundaries, mutually penetrate, and synergistically develop to jointly build a "development community" [16]. Culture is the soul of tourism, while tourism is the vehicle for culture; the two complement and promote each other. Culture endows tourism with profound connotations and unique charm, while tourism serves as an important pathway for cultural dissemination and experience. Cultural tourism micro-dramas not only integrate cultural elements in content creation but also incorporate regional cultural elements into IP design, achieving IP 落地 (grounded implementation) transformation for cultural tourism micro-dramas. This attracts audiences to explore the cultural value behind the works and delivers

deep-level cultural experiences. Regional cultural IPs inject profound cultural connotations into the tourism industry through unique cultural symbols and imagery, which not only awaken audience cultural identity but also strengthen emotional connections between users and destinations [17]. Through new content, models, and business formats, cultural tourism micro-dramas create new consumption scenarios, fully utilizing local resources for IP-based operations to assist in developing related cultural tourism products and services. This truly achieves the vision of using cultural tourism micro-dramas to disseminate regional culture, expand cultural tourism consumption, and empower cultural tourism development.

3.2 Discourse Narrative: Emotionally Oriented to Evoke Emotional Resonance

Empathy is an important concept in psychology, also known as transference or compassion, describing how individuals perceive or imagine others' emotions and experience them to some extent [18]. This process can be divided into three levels: first, emotional contagion, the most basic form of empathy; second, perspective-taking, the ability to understand and perceive situations from others' viewpoints; and third, empathetic concern, which builds upon the first two levels and involves altruistic psychological motivation and “pro-social behavior” [19]. There exists a natural connection between empathy and communication. Empathetic communication refers to the formation and transmission or diffusion of shared or similar emotions among individuals or groups [20]. Cultural tourism micro-dramas primarily evoke audience emotional empathy and form attitudinal identification through the integration of multiple modalities such as storylines, character development, and regional characteristics, thereby generating supportive behaviors.

The public constitutes an emotional community—a networked public form connected or disconnected through emotional expression in the internet technology environment [21], with various media platforms acting as drivers for “public emotion” formation. The scenographic, musical, and participatory nature of cultural tourism micro-dramas amplifies audience emotional empathy, while technological empowerment from media transformation enables realistic scene representation that concretizes abstract regional cultural imagery. This not only enhances the viewability of cultural tourism micro-dramas but also significantly strengthens emotional resonance between audiences and the works. Emotional resonance is not merely an impulse driven by emotion but also involves rational consciousness participation and represents the result of audience self-cognitive processing. This means that cultural tourism micro-dramas can only make audiences spontaneously accept their transmitted cultural tourism value orientation through empathetic narrative approaches that interweave story scenarios with cultural atmospheres, thereby evoking emotional resonance.

Compared to written language, the audio-visual sensory stimulation in cultural tourism micro-dramas more directly affects audiences, providing intuitive ex-

periential feelings. Through reasonable arrangement of audio-visual language, these works create scenarios for empathetic communication, becoming the primary element for awakening audience emotional resonance. First, in terms of visual symbol construction, cultural tourism micro-dramas deliver soul-stirring aesthetic experiences through representative regional element features, scenographic aesthetic presentations, and ingenious shot scale variations, laying the foundation for emotional empathy. Second, in character development, rich emotional changes, voice intonation, facial expressions, and body movements provide audiences with a sense of presence, placing them in characters' scenarios and empathizing with their emotional fluctuations. Finally, with the assistance of auditory modalities, empathy is formed. Background music functions to render atmosphere and heighten emotions; in specific scenes, its introduction can deepen feelings of joy or sorrow, and with the aid of close-up shots and other camera languages, audience emotional empathy reaches its climax. In the mobile internet era, the public is an emotional community connected through emotional expression, and various media platforms have become drivers for forming "public emotion."

3.3 Discourse Expression: Media Convergence as Guidance to Link Diverse Platforms

Since media convergence was elevated to a national strategy, it has accelerated its transition from "addition" to "integration." Against the backdrop of rapidly changing technological, economic, and social environments, advances in artificial intelligence technology have seen AI large models like ChatGPT and Sora expand from generating text and images to generating video content, signaling our entry into a video-centered society [22]. New communication forms such as "short video +" and "micro-drama +" are emerging, while broadcasting media actively construct strategic frameworks for "future television" and "grand audio-visual 格局 (patterns)," heralding the arrival of a "video-based" society. "Video-based" communication is a product of digital age development and an innovative form of media convergence, with technology empowerment reshaping media 业态 (formats) and audience viewing habits. Short videos represent a new media form and new method of content presentation. As an emerging audio-visual media form, micro-dramas' emergence and development are inseparable from digital technology promotion. Micro-dramas enable short videos to continuously play their role in media convergence, facilitating deep media integration development through new media forms.

With the intervention of "permanently online" and "permanently present" mobile devices, the 9:16 vertical-screen ratio vertically elongates audiences' visual focus points. Changes in frame dimensions endow videos with revitalized capabilities. On one hand, vertical frames more prominently highlight characters and themes, creating more three-dimensional character images that allow audiences to observe characters' detailed changes clearly and directly. On the other hand, frame space changes create a "I am the center" gaze pleasure and scenographic

experience for audiences, stimulating their curiosity for deep interaction with characters and shortening the distance between characters and audiences, making them feel as if they are physically present. Moreover, in fast-paced lifestyles, fragmented communication is highly favored. Micro-dramas leverage social media platforms' advantages of wide coverage, deep penetration, and strong 引流 (traffic attraction) capabilities, launching in fragmented forms across major platforms to create comprehensive, multi-layered communication matrices. Cultural tourism micro-dramas are no exception, establishing accounts on platforms such as Douyin, Kuaishou, Bilibili, and WeChat to build momentum for dissemination and form chain-like network communication.

Beyond attracting traffic on media platforms, more importantly, cultural tourism micro-dramas conduct vertical exploration and in-depth cultivation in cultural tourism. They customize story content based on user viewing habits, using high-quality regional characteristic resources and cultural historical materials as textual support. Employing a creative strategy of “strong plot + strong empathy + fast pace + minimal 铺垫 (foreshadowing),” they rapidly engage audiences and deliver refined, mainstream content output. “Content is king” has always been regarded as the golden rule in communication. Only through continuous content innovation, telling stories close to life, and moving audiences with content can cultural tourism micro-dramas evoke audience resonance and ultimately achieve the goal of driving cultural tourism development through micro-dramas.

In summary, visual and auditory modalities constitute the primary discursive expression methods in cultural tourism micro-dramas. From the five discourse levels of culture, context, meaning, form, and expression, these works innovate the communication models of local cultural tourism industries. Through audio-visual multimodal presentation and dramatic interpretation, they showcase local natural landscapes and social patterns, interpreting regional cultural characteristics. The logical strategy by which multimodal discourse narrative in cultural tourism micro-dramas assists local cultural tourism development is as follows: grounded in regional characteristic elements as the cultural foundation, employing accessible, easy-to-understand discourse tones, and utilizing multimodal expression methods involving people, scenery, objects, and emotions, these works help audiences intuitively and clearly experience the charm of local cultural tourism and comprehend regional cultural features through audio-visual integration and embodied communication enhanced by technology. This activates audience interest in exploring regional traditional culture and truly realizes the concept of “traveling with micro-dramas.”

Cultural tourism micro-dramas not only showcase regional cultural characteristics but also successfully bring localities into the public eye through the integration of ancient and modern elements and distinctive cultural symbols, achieving “breakout” effects and leading the “new trend” of “checking in with micro-dramas.” They serve as both new carriers for local promotion and innovative models for multi-format transformation and marketing 裂变 (fission).

Their narrative form, which integrates technology and art, constructs visualized 掌上 (palm-held) life, bringing “poetry and distant places” right before our eyes. This represents the audio-visual discourse form in the deeply developed mediated society.

Meanwhile, with the widespread application of AIGC technology, the refined development of cultural tourism micro-dramas holds more possibilities. AI large models’ text-to-script, text-to-image, and image-to-video technologies deeply participate in various stages of micro-drama production, including screenwriting, art design, dubbing, and music composition, achieving the pursuit of grand scenes at low cost and greatly expanding the creative boundaries of cultural tourism micro-dramas.

Therefore, cultural tourism micro-dramas must, on one hand, adhere to the principle of “content is king,” persist in continuous content innovation, and creatively transform local characteristic tourism resources into artistic elements that are skillfully integrated into plots rather than simply 植入 (inserted). They must deeply excavate the cultural connotations, historical 底蕴 (heritage), and emotional values behind tourism resources, enabling audiences to broaden their horizons while forming emotional resonance and strengthening their desire to explore tourism destinations. On the other hand, they should rationally utilize technological empowerment to improve production efficiency, injecting digital intelligence elements such as AI animation, AI video, and virtual digital humans to enrich content forms. Simultaneously, relying on big data analysis and algorithmic recommendation technology to conduct in-depth 挖掘 (excavation) of user behavior, they can achieve precise targeting of cultural tourism micro-dramas to target users, improving content dissemination effectiveness and conversion rates. In terms of commercial monetization of cultural tourism micro-dramas, relying on multimodal narratives at specific cultural, contextual, meaning, formal, and expressive levels, they can design corresponding cultural and creative products around plotlines and create derivatives based on characters and tourist attractions, building a complete industry chain from cultural tourism content production and product development to cultural consumption.

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(Executive Editor: Li Jing)

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

Source: ChinaXiv — Machine translation. Verify with original.