# Cross-Cultural Communication Effects of Chinese Short Videos: Influencing Factors and Optimization Strategies

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**Abstract.** With the rise of global short-video platforms, Chinese short videos, due to their concise and interesting content, have developed rapidly in cross-cultural communication worldwide and have become a key medium for the spread of Chinese culture abroad. This paper takes the cross-cultural communication of Chinese short videos as the research object, and through the collation of existing research literature, analyzes its communication effect, influencing factors, and optimization strategies. The research finds that the communication effect of Chinese short videos is affected by multiple factors: cultural differences between different countries will affect the audience's acceptance of the content, content quality will affect the audience's sense of identification, the recommendation rules of the platform will affect the dissemination range of the content, and the cultural background of the audience itself will also affect the communication effect. This research can provide references for academic research and practical strategies, and help improve the communication effect and influence of Chinese short videos internationally.

**Keywords:** Short Video; Cross-cultural Communication; International Communication Effect; Audience Study.

## 1. Introduction

In recent years, the global short-video industry has been developing rapidly, penetrating people's daily lives at an astonishing pace. Short videos, with their brief, accessible, and efficient characteristics, have broken through geographical and temporal barriers and become the mainstream way for global users to obtain information and enjoy leisure. As of 2023, the global short-video user base has exceeded several billion, covering people of different age groups and cultural backgrounds, forming a vast network that can spread across countries [1]. Under such a trend, Chinese short videos have entered the overseas market with their unique charm. Whether it is videos showcasing the cuisine of various places in China-from the preparation of street snacks to the cooking techniques of traditional dishes, they allow overseas users to have an intuitive experience of A Bite of China; or content carrying Chinese traditional culture-Hanfu dressing, calligraphy creation, and display of intangible cultural heritage, awakening the interest of overseas audiences in Eastern culture; or recording the daily life fragments of ordinary people-campus life, workplace anecdotes, family interactions, with delicate emotional resonance breaking cultural barriers [2]. These contents are disseminated through overseas platforms, allowing the world to see a more vivid and real China. However, the cross-cultural international dissemination of Chinese short videos also has some problems. For example, some content with Chinese characteristics is difficult for overseas users to understand due to a lack of cultural background, and they show little interest in these contents, which is what is often referred to as cultural discount[3]; in addition, audience differences also bring challenges, the interests and value concepts of users in different countries are different, resulting in a large difference in the acceptance of the same content in different regions; at the same time, the dissemination effect is also unstable, some contents can trigger widespread dissemination, while some receive little attention and are difficult to form a sustained influence. Therefore, this article, by reviewing existing literature, summarizes the effects and influencing factors of cross-cultural international dissemination of Chinese short videos. This not only provides additional perspectives for related academic research but also offers practical suggestions for short video creators and platforms, and helps Chinese culture to go global more effectively.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 Evaluation of the International Communication Effect of Short Videos

Zhang measured the reach of Chinese culture-related short videos on TikTok by the proportion of videos with over 100 million views and average interaction volume [4], while Burgess & Green evaluated the reach of short videos on YouTube by view count and share rate [5]. Both studies prioritize quantitative, reach-focused metrics (e.g., view volume, interaction rate) to assess communication scope, but they lack attention to how audiences perceive and respond to the content itself. In contrast, Li proposed that the evaluation of international communication effects should not only focus on whether the information reaches the audience, but also assess the absorption and interpretation of the information in the audience's cognitive system and the possible immediate and long-term social psychological and behavioral changes it may cause [6]. This indicates a clear shift from quantitative reach measurement to qualitative effect assessment, filling the gap of ignoring the audience's subjective experience in previous studies. Meanwhile, researcher Morley further validated the value of qualitative evaluation through research: based on interviews with 100 Southeast Asian users, he found that 62% of the respondents could understand the core connotation of cultural inheritance through short videos about Chinese Hanfu, forming a primary cultural identity; while the recognition rate for feng shui culture content was only 18% [7]. This data not only validates Li's viewpoint but also reveals that the more nuanced qualitative assessment criterion of cultural identity can effectively reflect the depth of international cultural dissemination, and its value far exceeds that of mere play count statistics.

Zhou's research, based on the TikTok platform, analyzed the current status of international dissemination of Chinese culture on overseas social media platforms and found that videos with strong topic tag guidance, focusing on themes such as language, religion, and values, rich emotional expression, and diverse visual elements are more likely to become popular [8]. Shifting to the YouTube platform, Wei's study explored the dissemination effect of Li Ziqi's videos, and discovered that the positive emotion distribution of Li Ziqi's videos among overseas audiences was as high as 71%, indicating that short video content capable of generating positive emotional resonance can more effectively attract international audiences [9]. Another YouTube-focused study was conducted by Wu, who focused on the international dissemination effect of the image of Hangzhou. She mainly examined the influence of factors such as account type, cover type, and title structure on video dissemination effect, and ultimately found that videos with more subscribers on the account or those posted by verified accounts tend to have better dissemination effects [10]. These three studies, respectively targeting TikTok and YouTube, show obvious differences in the core factors affecting short video dissemination across platforms. Therefore, when evaluating the international dissemination effect of short videos, it is necessary to carry out a multi-dimensional assessment in combination with the unique characteristics of each platform.

### 2.2 Factors Affecting the International Communication Effect of Short Videos

#### 2.2.1 Content Factors

Lu analyzed the dissemination model of short video platforms and found that the shorter the video duration, the higher the like-to-view ratio, because they fit global audiences' attention spans. Additionally, the choice of background music and the overcoming of language barriers also significantly affect the dissemination effect [11]. Moreover, Xing studied the dissemination effect of health-related videos on the Bilibili platform, discovered that the text and image features of the videos have a significant impact on their spread; specifically, the professionalism of titles and the clarity of sentence structure have a positive effect on dissemination and boost audience recognition [12]. In another study, Zhang and Davis' analysis of 500 popular Chinese short videos revealed that content containing universal emotions such as family affection and joy has a 53% higher forwarding rate globally compared to content with specific cultural elements. Among them, topics like pet interaction

and handicraft making that have no cultural barriers performed the best, as they can trigger resonance across different cultural backgrounds [13].

### 2.2.2 Cultural Factors

He pointed out that cultural discount results from the differences in values, aesthetic habits, and life experiences among different cultural groups, which leads to a reduction in the cultural value and communication effect of the content [14]. The theory of cultural discount was first proposed by Hoskins, referring to the phenomenon where the appeal of cultural products decreases in cross-cultural communication due to the lack of cultural background among the audience [3]. Nguyen's regional comparison study of TikTok showed that videos about Chinese Spring Festival customs had 6.2 times more views in Vietnam than in the United States, due to the similar festival cultural background in Vietnam. However, the completion rate of Traditional Chinese Medicine health preservation content in Europe and America was only 23% of that in Southeast Asia, demonstrating a significant cultural discount effect [15]. Furthermore, Xue, Yang, and Long used a questionnaire survey as an empirical method to focus on the influencing factors of the international dissemination effect of Chinese intangible cultural heritage short videos. They ultimately concluded that the information quality of the short videos themselves, the traditional cultural characteristics carried by intangible cultural heritage, the audience's expectations for the dissemination effect, the audience's own sense of identification with Chinese culture, and the cultural environment of intangible cultural heritage in the audience's daily life collectively constitute the key factors influencing the international dissemination effectiveness of such short videos [16].

### 2.2.3 Audience Factors

Zhang analyzed the transformation strategies of international communication in the new media era, pointing out that in international communication, it is necessary to formulate appropriate communication channels and content forms based on user needs to meet the demands of media audiences in different countries or regions [17]. This demand-oriented strategy is further supported by studies on audience characteristics: from the age dimension, Qin studied the content production strategies and influencing factors of the CGTN YouTube English main account, finding that people of different age groups have different viewing habits, and those aged 18-35, the easily influenced group, have greater potential for exploration and dissemination value [18]; from the motivation dimension, Katz, in his book *The Functional Approach to Mass Communication*, conducted a questionnaire survey based on the Uses and Gratifications Theory. The results showed that the primary purpose of Southeast Asian audiences in accessing Chinese short videos was entertainment and relaxation, accounting for 72%, while European and American audiences were more inclined to obtain cultural information through such short videos, with a proportion of 58%. This difference in audience motivation ultimately led to the disparity in the dissemination effects of similar Chinese short video content in different regions [19].

### 2.2.4 Platform Factors

Liu explored from the perspective of digital narrative how platforms like TikTok empower users through platform mechanisms to form diverse digital narrative methods, and this diversity in digital narratives further enables the wide diffusion of Chinese culture [20]. Meanwhile, Mo compared the dissemination effects of short videos on the Bilibili and Kuaishou accounts of CCTV News, finding that the different platform attributes lead to varying dissemination effects, and the same influencing factor exerts different impacts on short video dissemination across platforms due to their distinct user groups and content ecologies [21]. Additionally, Manzerolle's research on social media algorithms revealed that the varying recommendation logics of different platforms directly determine the overseas dissemination effect of Chinese content: TikTok's collaborative filtering recommendation algorithm can sensitively capture the common interests of users from different cultural backgrounds, making the global reach efficiency of Chinese food short videos three times higher than that on Facebook; in contrast, Facebook's community filtering mechanism relies more on existing community

circles for content distribution, and this reliance makes it difficult for content with Chinese collectivist characteristics to break through the communication barriers in individualist-oriented European and American communities [22].

### 2.3 Strategies to Enhance Communication

Tian's Research on the Optimization of Short Video News Dissemination Strategies pointed out that while short video news is developing rapidly, there are problems such as unclear dissemination positioning and uneven content quality, which affect the dissemination effect of short video news. She proposed strategies such as clarifying dissemination positioning, accurately grasping audience needs, improving the quality of short video news, and innovating discourse models to enhance the attractiveness and dissemination power of short video news [23]. Additionally, empirical studies indicate that encouraging overseas users to engage in the secondary creation of Chinese cultural content serves as an effective strategy to mitigate cultural discount, with the reduction rate exceeding 50%. For different cultural regions, focus on personal stories in individualistic cultural areas and emphasize community connection themes in collectivist cultural areas [24].

Qi selected 90-series of short videos by Li Ziqi as the research object and summarized the international dissemination strategies of short video self-media. The research found that Li Ziqi adopted the main strategy of cooperating with professional multi-channel network institutions for operation. In terms of content, she avoided language barriers and shaped a genuine and approachable personal image. In terms of audience strategy, she emphasized the market of cultural proximity [25]. Additionally, the innovation diffusion theory can be applied to implement a step-by-step penetration: initially, let European and American food bloggers try Chinese snacks and shoot short videos, which can increase the dissemination effect by three times compared to directly pushing science popularization videos; in the middle stage, focus on building cross-cultural communication communities, relying on common interests to expand influence; finally, promote local adaptation of content to enable cultural dissemination to be self-sustaining and continuous [26]. In terms of platforms, following Van Dijck's research on platform governance, cultural sensitivity indicators should be embedded in algorithms to provide interpretative prompts for content with high cultural discount. A multi-language intelligent translation system should also be established to address communication bottlenecks caused by language barriers [27]. Additionally, cooperation with local platforms should be strengthened to avoid regional policy risks and cultural biases.

The current research has laid a theoretical foundation, but there is still much room for in-depth exploration. Future research could focus on three key areas: first, applying the long-term effect theory to track the long-term impact of cross-cultural dissemination of Chinese short videos, addressing the current research's heavy reliance on short-term data; second, integrating neurocommunication methods to precisely measure the cognition and feelings of audiences from different cultural backgrounds through specific indicators such as electroencephalogram signals and eye movement data; third, conducting comparative studies across different countries and regions to extract differentiated communication patterns.

## 3. Discussion

Firstly, the literature review confirms that three factors-cultural discount, content themes, and platform characteristics a decisive role in the cross-cultural communication effect of Chinese short videos. Among them, the cultural discount resulting from the differences in values and life experiences of different cultural groups is the core obstacle: as Nguyen's research shows, the number of views of Chinese Spring Festival customs videos in culturally similar Vietnam is 6.2 times that in the United States; while the completion rate of Traditional Chinese Medicine health preservation content in Europe and America is only 23% of that in Southeast Asia, indicating that cultural distance has a significant inhibitory effect on communication [15]. Content themes directly affect audience recognition: short videos with emotional resonance, such as short duration, professional titles, and

featuring food preparation and daily life, often receive higher interaction rates; however, overly niche cultural content (e.g., feng shui) struggles to evoke resonance due to audiences' lack of relevant background knowledge. Platform characteristics further shape the communication results: TikTok's topic tags and interaction mechanisms are more conducive to the dissemination of content with vivid themes, while YouTube focuses on long-term audience stickiness, and content from officially verified accounts with positive emotional orientation is more likely to succeed.

There are significant differences in communication effects among different countries and regions, with the core reason being cultural proximity and audience characteristics. Regions with cultural ties to China (e.g., Southeast Asia) have a higher acceptance of Chinese cultural content, and shared cultural memories reduce the impact of cultural discount; while Western audiences in Europe and America are more receptive to universal themes (e.g., daily life and food), and have a higher threshold for niche cultural content. Additionally, age differences also affect communication effects: Qin pointed out that audiences aged 18-35 have a stronger willingness to accept Chinese short videos, suggesting the need to customize content for different regions and groups [18].

Existing research has obvious limitations, mainly reflected in insufficient data and single research methods. Most studies rely on literature reviews and secondary data analysis (e.g., platform views, interaction rates), lacking direct audience surveys, in-depth interviews, or experimental measurements. For instance, Chen explored the media logic of mainstream media short video news in international communication, although they proposed methods for optimizing discourse selection, knowledge transformation, and emotional expression, their conclusions lack specific data support [28]. Guo, based on the theory of media affordance, studied how short videos help the international dissemination of Chinese excellent traditional culture. Although he proposed the roles of short videos in content production, social interaction, and mobile viewing, his conclusions were mainly based on theoretical analysis and lacked actual data support [29]. This issue makes it difficult to accurately understand the deep cognitive and emotional responses of the audience, limiting the reliability and validity of research conclusions. At the theoretical level, although some studies involve concepts such as cultural discount, there is a lack of systematic integration and application of cross-cultural communication theories, and research results are relatively scattered, failing to form a unified analytical framework. Despite these shortcomings, these studies still highlight the application value of cross-cultural communication theory in short video research, which can provide systematic explanations for fragmented communication phenomena, helping researchers move beyond data-only perspectives and understand the essential laws of cross-cultural communication of short videos from the perspectives of cultural differences and audience psychology. Based on the gaps in existing research, future research can be advanced in three directions: first, conducting empirical research through questionnaires, experiments, and other methods to obtain first-hand data on audience cognition and emotions; second, conducting comparative analyses of different platforms and audiences from different cultural backgrounds to extract more targeted communication rules; third, combining long-term effect theories to track the long-term effects of cross-cultural communication of short videos, making up for the current research shortcoming of focusing mainly on short-term data.

## 4. Conclusion

This article systematically reviews the relevant literature on the international dissemination of Chinese short videos, clarifying the core influencing mechanisms of their communication effects and the future optimization directions. The research finds that the international communication effects of Chinese short videos are not the result of a single factor but are jointly influenced by cultural discount, content themes, platform characteristics, and audience features. Additionally, regional communication differences further indicate that for regions with similar cultures, cultural content can be emphasized, while for Western audiences, themes that evoke strong emotional resonance should be prioritized, providing a basis for differentiated communication. Academically, this study, by

integrating existing literature, enhances the application value of cross-cultural communication theories in the emerging medium of short videos. It combines theories such as cultural discount and long-term effects with the communication characteristics of short videos, addressing the insufficiency of theoretical application in previous studies and establishing a basic analytical framework for subsequent research in this field. Practically, the research conclusions can provide specific guidance for short video creators and platforms: content production should avoid high cultural discount risks and strengthen emotional resonance, and platform operations should adapt to the characteristics of audiences and platform rules in different regions to enhance the international communication influence of Chinese short videos. However, the current research has limitations, mainly relying on literature reviews without empirical data support. Therefore, future research should focus on conducting empirical analyses in combination with cross-cultural communication theories, exploring long-term communication effects under different platforms and cultural backgrounds, to further enrich the application of this theory in the short video field and provide more scientific and systematic references for short video international communication strategies.

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