

ISSN electrynico: 2172-9077

DOI: 10.48047/fjc.29.01.19

EXAMINING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF DIFFERENT NARRATIVE STRATEGIES IN SHORT VIDEOS ON SHAPING COUNTRY IMAGE: A STUDY ON CHINESE AND WESTERN SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS AND SOCIAL SPACE

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Fecha de recepciyn de la resaca: 20 February 2025

Fecha de aceptaciyn definitiva: 25 March 2025

Abstract

In today's digital era, social media platforms play a pivotal role in shaping perceptions and images of countries. Short videos, in particular, have emerged as potent tools for conveying narratives and influencing audience attitudes. Understanding the narrative strategies employed in short videos on Chinese and Western social media platforms is crucial for comprehending their impact on country image formation. This study aims to explore the effectiveness of narrative strategies in short videos on shaping country image, focusing on both Chinese and Western social media platforms. It seeks to analyze the narrative themes, techniques, and framing strategies employed, compare strategies across platforms, and investigate their influence on audience perceptions. Using a qualitative approach, this study conducts content analysis of short videos on Chinese and Western social media platforms, supplemented by in-depth interviews with 12 stakeholders. The analysis involves identifying narrative themes, techniques, and framing strategies, as well as interpreting their impact on audience perceptions. The study reveals nuanced differences in narrative strategies between Chinese and Western short videos, highlighting their

distinct cultural and contextual influences. It identifies narrative themes such as national pride, economic achievements, and social harmony, along with techniques such as visual storytelling and emotional appeals. This research contributes to the understanding of narrative construction on social media platforms and its implications for country image formation. By comparing narrative strategies across cultural contexts, it offers insights into the complexities of narrative design and its influence on audience perceptions in the digital age.

Keywords: Narrative Strategies, Social Space, Short Videos, Social Media, Country Image, Cross-cultural Comparison.

1. INTRODUCTION

Digital communication, networking, and information consumption have transformed with social media. Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and TikTok promote decentralized, dynamic, and fast communication (Neuhaus, Millemann, & Nijssen, 2022). These platforms facilitate the democratization of content creation and distribution by enabling individuals to promptly generate, publish, and engage with many forms of media. Social media has an impact on cultural matters, including the perception of a nation by the public. Country image, often called national reputation or brand, incorporates people's ideas, prejudices, and associations with a country (Cham et al., 2021). In this globalized world, a country's image affects economic decisions, diplomatic ties, tourism, investment, and global opinion. Governments, corporations, visitors, investors, and individuals value a nation's reputation (Vasist & Krishnan, 2024). Country image improves competitiveness, international investment, tourism, cultural exchange, and collaboration. Negative portrayals can hurt a country's image, hinder investment and tourism, and reinforce stereotypes. Understanding how social media shapes a nation's image is crucial in today's globalized world (Kilders, Caputo, & Liverpool-Tasie, 2021). Governments, organizations, influencers, and people can share stories, communicate, and affect public opinion on social media platforms. By facilitating worldwide connections, social media has transformed how people interact. Social media platforms have democratized content creation and dissemination by making multimedia material easy to create, share, and interact with (Griffith, Lee, & Yalcinkaya, 2023). Global talks, experience sharing, and like-minded alliances are now possible. User-generated material, live broadcasting, and visual storytelling are now possible thanks to social media. These variables have improved human information collecting authenticity, engagement, and efficiency (Chonka, 2023). Social media empowers social change, activism, and mobilization by letting users organize and coordinate their efforts. Social media removes knowledge barriers and offers diverse viewpoints (Wei et al., 2023). Spreading false information, competing narratives, and alternative narratives has harmed knowledge and comprehension. Social media influences cultural norms, public opinion, viral content, parodies, and trends.

The reputation of a country affects economic decisions, tourism, investment, and diplomatic relations in today's globalized world (Vu, Li, & Law, 2020). The success of a country is determined by its economic growth, political stability, social ideals, environmental sustainability, and cultural heritage. These traits influence people's nationalism and behavior. Positive national attitudes increase competitiveness, international investment, tourism, cultural interchange, and collaboration (Braun & Zenker, 2022). A good public image enhances governments' credibility, trustworthiness, and attraction to diplomats, investors, and trade partners. A positive perspective of a nation can boost national pride and solidarity. Poor-country impressions can weaken legitimacy, hinder

investment, deter tourists, and promote preconceived notions and biases (Vasist & Krishnan, 2024). Political upheaval, economic instability, social unrest, environmental degradation, and human rights violations can undermine a nation's reputation. Perceptions can have a significant impact on a country's investment, diplomatic relationships, and global interests.

There is minimal research on narrative strategies in Western and Chinese social media, making it impossible to measure short videos' impact on national image. Early research on story generation and framing in traditional media and online debates have ignored the narrative strategies used in brief social media videos, notably cross-cultural ones (Lang et al., 2023). Chinese and Western social media platforms' cultural, political, and regulatory settings may influence narrative endorsement, authorization, or suppression. Government regulation and surveillance may affect the acceptability of shared information and narratives on Chinese social media sites. Western social media sites like Instagram and YouTube have more flexible limits (Zhou et al., 2021). Academics, communication professionals, and politicians must comprehend Chinese and Western social media narrative tactics to navigate globalization. Comparing media narrative strategies, academics can assess how cultural, political, and ideological factors affect a country's image. By comparing storytelling strategies across countries and regions, we can find the best ways to communicate essential concepts and influence social media audience perceptions. Different storytelling tactics in short videos effect country impression on Western and Chinese social media platforms. The study aims to answer the following research questions:

- What narrative strategies are employed in the "People's Daily" short videos on Douyin?
- How do these narrative strategies influence the perception of the country's image among viewers?

This study can improve policymakers' communication strategies. Politicians may use social media to boost national pride. These strategies can improve cultural diplomacy, cross-cultural understanding, and international relations. This study advises communication professionals on media campaign and story efficiency. By learning customer interaction strategies and story topics, professionals may better their content. Understanding social media narratives can help generate stakeholder engagement and online debates. Content creators looking to improve storyline and impact may benefit from this analysis. Content developers may make memorable short videos by mastering narrative strategies. By making their stories culturally aware, approachable, and real, creators can expand their audience. Use cultural knowledge and collaborate with stakeholders to achieve this. Academically, this study improves our theoretical knowledge of digital narrative construction. By analyzing media, culture, and national identity, scholars can improve narrative analysis frameworks and create new ideas. Cultural diplomacy, communication, and media studies can use this study to understand how narratives impact attitudes and perceptions.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Framing Theory in Media Studies

Entman (1993) developed framing theory from Goffman (1974). This idea states that media and communication impact information and audience perception. Frames highlight and minimize using views, perspectives, and contextual constraints. Chong and Druckman (2007) define framing as selecting and emphasizing reality components to promote a worldview. Framing can explain reasons, provide remedies, judge morality, and define a situation (Entman, 1993). Gьran and Ӗzarslan (2022) believe that framing affects public perception of political events, social

issues, and international relations. Many media studies employ framing theory to explore how news and other media affect public perception. Research reveals that political media coverage affects public opinion and policy (Aroustamian, 2020). Additionally, media coverage of social concerns including immigration, climate change, and public health may impact viewer behavior (Gibbs & Hilburn, 2021). A country's view is shaped by international media. The media may improve or hurt a country's reputation. International crisis news usually portrays governments as aggressors, victims, allies, or rivals. Public opinion and diplomatic relations are impacted by this depiction. Wise and Cullerton (2021) researched. Because of social media, user-generated material and digital platforms are increasingly included in framing theory. Social media increases the worldwide reach of popular stories. Short, captivating videos are ideal framing media (Aroustamian, 2020). Facebook, Twitter, and TikTok are social media platforms that affect politics and other concerns. Chong and Druckman (2007) say Twitter hashtags help organize public conversations on certain issues and opinions. YouTube videos and audio change political and cultural narratives, according to Goel et al. (2021).

This study employs framing theory to examine how narrative strategies impact a country's image on Western and Chinese social media, particularly short videos (Abdulai, Ibrahim, & Latif Anas, 2023). These videos' frames are examined to see how they effect viewer perception and a country's image. Cultural references, storytelling, and emotional appeals are short videos' narrative strategies. These strategies emphasize some parts of a country's image and minimize others. Brief emotive videos may demonstrate a nation's philanthropy, cultural diversity, or stunning natural vistas, creating positive feelings. Human tales and success stories may improve storytelling abilities and make the country more engaging. Cultural allusions provide authenticity and dignity since they highlight the country's traditions, ideals, and legacy (Gbran & Özarslan, 2022). The study also compares Western and Chinese social media framing strategies. Conscious videos may have different frames due to cultural and political differences. Ouribo and Douyin stress togetherness, progress, and cultural identity in line with national narratives and government aims, which can define the country's image. Western sites like Instagram and TikTok may show the country's image from different angles, sometimes negatively. This shows how diverse and controversial public conversation is in various countries. This investigation must also determine how viewers across platforms interact with material. Audience preferences, engagement, comments, and answers can assess framing strategies. Frame responses are examined to see how they alter viewers' country perceptions (Aroustamian, 2020). The study concludes by examining cultural sensitivity and framing strategies. Due of cultural differences, Western and Chinese audiences may interpret frames differently. Due to cultural norms and experiences, Chinese viewers may react differently to emotional frames than Western viewers. Effective framing strategies and cultural understanding are needed to enhance a country's social media image (Gbran & Özarslan, 2022). Framing theory explains how digital storytelling in short videos influences a nation's social media image. Analyzing these videos' frames reveals how audience perception and country image are developed. Research focuses on media framing in international relations and public diplomacy. This framing theory study educates digital policymakers and practitioners.

2.2. Narrative Construction in Media

Narrative development in media uses tools and strategies to generate media with a clear storyline and intended message. This notion holds that narratives simplify and engage information, altering our understanding of events, situations, and identities. Story, characters, setting, and themes comprise the narrative framework. These elements improve the narrative's structure and interest

the audience (Bruner, 1991). The media regularly creates narratives around prominent persons or issues to build a plot and generate emotions. Narratives shape attitudes and convey messages in media studies. Multiple fundamental aspects influence media narratives. According to Li, Ma and Xi (2021), the plot establishes the chronological order of events and activities, engaging the spectator with its exposition, rising action, peak, falling action, and conclusion. Characters, whether they are the main characters, opposing characters, or supporting characters, advance the storyline and create emotional involvement and audience interest by introducing relatable individuals who connect with the story's themes and messages (Maureen, van der Meij, & de Jong, 2020). Location, both temporal and physical, shapes the narrative's mood and ambiance and reflects cultural and socioeconomic circumstances (Melzi, Schick, & Wuest, 2023). Themes help readers understand a story's purpose and themes. They also reflect viewers' values, beliefs, and experiences. The narrative viewpoint, or point of view, affects the audience's comprehension and perception of the story (Ershadi, Nazari, & Chegenie, 2024). No matter the cause, tension and conflict are essential for story development and character growth. Symbolism, the use of symbols to convey larger concepts and themes, may also make a story more complicated and encourage thought (Melzi et al., 2023). Narratives use organized and compelling ways to convey information, thereby influencing audience views. Transportation theory states that story immersion causes cognitive and emotional engagement and transforms attitudes and beliefs (Gardner-Neblett, De Marco, & Ebright, 2023). The audience's full engagement in this narrative delivery approach increases acceptance of the story's ideas and ideals while minimizing critical investigation. Lee et al. (2022) found that deeply engrossed readers are more influenced by tale themes and characters. Transportation helps people connect emotionally with the story, making its messages more memorable and convincing. Schunk and DiBenedetto (2023) said that Bandura established the Social Cognitive Theory, emphasizing observational learning in behavior modification. These role models teach viewers, especially if they can relate to the characters or find the events relevant, as media stories illustrate conduct through character behavior. He believed tales may influence conduct by showing its repercussions. Narratives use empathy and character affinity to influence beliefs. When audiences can relate to characters, they are more likely to accept their ideas and feelings (Lee et al., 2022). Empathy lets listeners feel characters' emotions and understand their struggles, which deepens understanding and changes perspectives on story topics. Boukes and LaMarre (2021) study stresses the importance of character identification in narrative persuasion, as people who relate to characters are more likely to believe their stories and resolutions. Narratives in social media short videos impact nation perceptions. Using varied storytelling strategies, short videos create and share unique country portrayals. Videos can promote a nation's economic, cultural, or social achievements. This architectural design intends to impress local and international visitors. These stories must fascinate and persuade. Using narrative strategies like emotional appeals or compelling characters may make short videos stand out. Good public impressions depend on this connection. Western and Chinese social media narrative strategies are compared. Cultural and social circumstances are reflected in these platforms' stories. Western narratives focus on personal tales, whereas Chinese narratives stress community and patriotism. comprehending media's impact on country images requires comprehending these differences. This research examines the narrative structure of country performers' short videos. It studies how cross-cultural and social contexts see these narratives. Table 1 summarizes key concepts of framing theory and narrative, highlighting their definitions, core elements, practical applications, and seminal references. These frameworks provide insights into how media and storytelling influence audience perceptions and engagement.

Table 1: Summary of Framing Theory and Narrative Concepts.

Concept	Definition	Key Concepts	Applications	References
Framing Theory	A theoretical framework that examines how media frames or presents information to shape audience perceptions and interpretations.	Frame: The way information is presented or contextualized. Framing Effects: The influence of frames on audience perceptions and attitudes. Frame Analysis: Identifying and analyzing frames in media content.	Understanding how media shapes public perceptions of social issues, political events, and public policies. Analyzing media coverage to identify biases and framing effects. Developing communication strategies to frame messages effectively.	Goffman (1974) Entman (1993)
	A storytelling technique that presents events, characters, and themes in a structured and cohesive manner to convey meaning and evoke emotions.	Plot: The sequence of events that form the storyline. Characters: The individuals or entities involved in the story. Themes: The underlying messages or ideas conveyed by the narrative.	Creating engaging and persuasive communication content. Enhancing audience engagement and emotional connection. Shaping perceptions and attitudes through storytelling.	
Narrative				Fisher (1984) Bruner (1991)

2.3. Country Image and Social Media

The term “Country Image” describes how someone or a group views a country’s culture, people, politics, economy, and other traits. Studies have found that individual experiences, media portrayal, and cultural relationships shape country images. Scholars agree that media shapes and spreads national images, which often reflect geopolitical processes and cultural prejudices (Kahelin, Minkkinen, & Mäntymäki, 2023). Mariutti and Giraldi (2020) stressed national branding and governments’ efforts to control their worldwide reputation through public diplomacy and marketing. Nation Brand Index evaluates countries’ international perceptions based on exports, government, culture, people, tourism, and investment. Strategic communication is crucial to improve a nation’s reputation and multifaceted image. Özdemir (2020) claims media coverage reinforces stereotypes and prejudices. She studied how foreign news media influence national views. His research showed that global media portrays conflict-ridden or economically volatile states negatively, which may affect foreign policy, tourism, and investment. Cognitive and affective characteristics like perceived safety, hospitality, and cultural attractions affected potential visitors’ views of diverse sites. Barreda et al. (2020) examined a nation’s cognitive and emotive image. They examined how product perspectives and origins affect consumer behavior. They argued that economic and cultural judgments often shape a country’s image, influencing customers’ opinions toward its products. National perceptions have changed tremendously due to social media. According to Huang et al. (2021), user-generated content, real-time communication, and viral information spread strongly affect social media discussion and viewpoints. Both official and unofficial narratives affect the image since these platforms are national representation battlegrounds. Social media links governments to the worldwide public (Teles da Mota & Pickering, 2020). Social media helps governments promote good and counter bad attitudes through targeted and efficient connections. Direct, interactive, and responsive worldwide communication can influence more sophisticated and favorable perspectives. Users’ social media posts also influence national attitudes. Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube allow people to share their thoughts and experiences, shaping public opinion. User-generated material frequently challenges preconceptions and highlights personal stories, culture, and daily life in a nation. Kahelin et al. (2023) examined how social media influences a country’s image during international sports championships and political elections. Their analysis showed that social media might accentuate both positive and negative aspects of these events, instantly influencing global

opinions. Due to media coverage of its cultural and infrastructure resources during the Olympics or World Cup, the hosting country generally gains positive opinions. However, political protests and security concerns can spread swiftly on social media, damaging the country's reputation. Digital opinion leaders and social media influencers shape a nation's image. People with many followers can influence perceptions with their posts, videos, and recommendations. Influencer-created content can boost a country's image by showcasing its positive aspects, according to Tjellander (2022). This can affect how followers view the place and their trip intentions.

2.4. Gaps in the Literature

There is little research on Western and Chinese narrative strategies in short videos, despite significant research on country image and media communication. The exact storytelling strategies utilized in short videos are not the subject of academic research (Du et al., 2023). Due to their popularity on social media platforms like TikTok, Instagram, and Snapchat, understanding narrative methods in short videos is vital. Despite substantial research on narrative progression in traditional media formats like films, TV shows, and advertising, short videos have not been studied (Jiang et al., 2024). The narrative strategies utilized in short videos can help content creators attract viewers, communicate messages, and provoke emotional responses quickly. Understanding short videos' storyline progression, character involvement, visual storytelling approaches, and thematic importance can help shape digital media content creation and audience engagement strategies (Du et al., 2020). A comparative examination of Western and Chinese narrative strategies for national image formation is lacking in the literature (Lu et al., 2020). Extensive study has been conducted on country branding, public diplomacy, and media portrayal in both Western and Chinese contexts. However, there is a lack of comparative studies that examine the narrative methods employed in each cultural domain and their impact on perceptions. Due to cultural, ideological, and structural differences between Western and Chinese media ecosystems, a comparative study could illuminate country image narratives' unique storytelling traditions, communication strategies, and value systems (Morgan & Wilk, 2021). This study can reveal culturally particular thematic emphases, visual aesthetics, audience interaction strategies, and narrative development patterns, as well as where narrative approaches converge or differ. Comparative methods can also show how tales are modified, understood, and contested across cultures, improving the understanding of cross-cultural communication (Morris et al., 2021). Comparative studies can bridge Chinese and Western studies on country image development to enhance theoretical frameworks, inform strategic communication strategies, and foster intercultural conversation in an interconnected world. Addressing these gaps in research is essential to understanding narrative strategies in short videos and their impact on national image perceptions, especially in Western and Chinese media (Peng et al., 2023). The creation of media, audience engagement, and cross-cultural communication strategies can all benefit from the practical insights, new approaches, and theoretical advancements that scholars in these fields can provide in the digital age (Tan, Chiu-Shee, & Duarte, 2022).

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Research Design

A qualitative research methodology examined the narrative strategies used in short Douyin

videos and their potential impact on national image. This strategy enhanced understanding of the topic and varied stakeholder views. In content analysis, “People’s Daily” brief Douyin videos’ narrative strategies were examined. To understand these tales’ impact, content providers, consumers, and experts were interviewed in-depth. This two-method strategy examined the narrative’s content and reception by diverse audiences. Figure 1 illustrates the research design, employing a qualitative approach that integrates content analysis and in-depth interviews for in-depth analysis. The data collection process involves analyzing “People’s Daily” short videos on Douyin and conducting stakeholder interviews, followed by coding and thematic analysis, respectively.

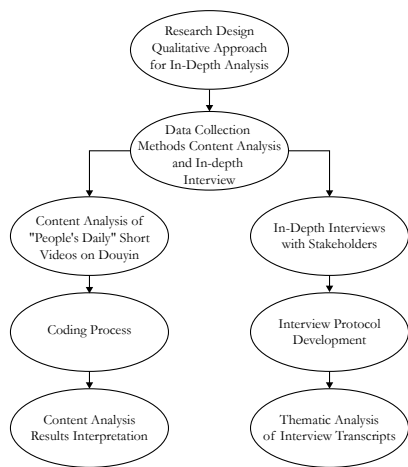


Figure 1: Research Design Diagram.

3.2. Data Collection Methods

3.2.1. Content Analysis of “People’s Daily Short Videos” on Douyin

The narrative strategies of “People’s Daily” short videos on Douyin were examined in a content analysis. This strategy allowed a complete assessment of how these videos improve China’s image. The sample included videos from January 1, 2022, to December 31, 2022, to examine current strategies and trends. The selection criterion which is given in Table 2 prioritized videos with high viewer engagement, as measured by likes, shares, and comments, to ensure audience appeal.

Table 2: Sampling Criteria for Short Videos.

Criteria	Description
Time Frame	Short videos published on “People’s Daily” and Western social media platforms within the last 6 months.
Themes	Videos covering a range of themes, including national pride, cultural heritage, economic achievements, technological advancements, social harmony, and international cooperation.
Length	Short videos with a duration of 1-3 minutes to ensure brevity and audience engagement.
Content	Videos must be officially published by “People’s Daily” for Chinese platform videos and verified Western news or media organizations for Western platform videos.
Authenticity	

3.2.2. In-Depth Interviews with Stakeholders

We interviewed 12 distinct stakeholders in-depth to improve content analysis. To understand how well the “People’s Daily” brief videos on Douyin shape the country’s image using narrative strategies.

Excellent qualitative data from the interviews helped us understand how different audiences respond to these narratives. The interviewees were selected to represent a diverse and relevant range of stakeholders to the study’s goals. According to Table 3, the first category included directors, editors, and social media administrators who created brief videos for Douyin’s “People’s Daily” platform. These four people were chosen because they directly participated in the creative and strategic processes that underpin the videos. These participants were included through media community professional networks and industry ties to ensure a complete understanding of content goals and story structure. The second group was Douyin’s “People’s Daily” viewers, who reflected the public. Four volunteers were selected from relevant social media outlets and Douyin fan clubs. The selection criteria included participants’ frequent contact with “People’s Daily” content and their willingness to provide detailed feedback on their viewing experiences and narrative interpretations. The third group included China-focused international relations, communication, and media studies experts. Four experts and professionals were contacted through academic and professional networks to critique the videos’ storytelling techniques. Their practical understanding, intellectual contributions to media strategies, and public opinion influence determined their selection.

Table 3: Demographic Profile of Interview Participants.

Participant Type	Age Range	Gender	Profession	Social Media Usage
Content Creator	25-35	Male	Journalist	Active on Twitter and YouTube, occasional use of TikTok
Content Creator	30-40	Female	Influencer	Active on Instagram and TikTok, occasional use of Facebook and Twitter
Content Creator	35-45	Male	Filmmaker	Primarily active on YouTube and Facebook, occasional use of Instagram and Twitter
Viewer	20-30	Male	Student	Active on TikTok and Instagram, occasional use of Snapchat and YouTube
Viewer	40-50	Female	Educator	Moderate use of Facebook and Twitter, occasional viewing of short videos on Instagram and YouTube
Viewer	25-35	Male	Marketing Manager	Active on LinkedIn and Twitter for professional networking, occasional use of Instagram and Facebook
Expert	45-55	Female	Diplomat	Active on Twitter for professional purposes, occasional use of LinkedIn and Weibo (Chinese platform)
Expert	35-45	Male	Academic	Active on Twitter and ResearchGate for professional networking, occasional use of Facebook
Expert	50-60	Female	Cultural Analyst	Active on Instagram and Twitter for research purposes, occasional use of Facebook and LinkedIn
Expert	40-50	Male	Media Consultant	Active on Twitter and LinkedIn for professional networking, occasional use of Instagram and Facebook
Expert	30-40	Female	Public Relations Specialist	Active on LinkedIn and Twitter for professional purposes, occasional use of Instagram and Facebook
Expert	35-45	Male	Communication Strategist	Active on Twitter and LinkedIn for professional networking, occasional use of Facebook and Instagram

Volunteers who regularly interact with “People’s Daily” material were invited to apply via social media and Douyin fan forums. Specialists received email invites to learn about the study’s goals and participate. Professionals were chosen for academic and professional connections. All participants were told of the study’s goals and provided consent before the interviews. Open-ended questions were used to get participants’ thoughts on the videos’ narrative strategies and their impact on the country’s image. Participants were interviewed in person and through phone, depending on their availability and preferences which is given in Table 4. Researchers obtained participants’ agreement to record interviews before performing them. The interviews were transcribed for analysis. After 12 stakeholder interviews, data saturation was reached. Saturation was reached when the supplemental interviews yielded no new insights or themes, indicating that the data was sufficient to answer the study questions.

Table 4: Interview Guidelines for Variables.

Variable	Interview Questions
Narrative Strategies	- What narrative strategies do you typically employ in creating short videos?
	- Can you provide examples of storytelling techniques that you find effective in conveying messages?
	- How do you perceive the storytelling in the videos (for viewers)?
	- What makes a narrative effective in shaping perceptions (for experts)?
Themes and Messages	- How do you decide on the themes and messages for your videos?
	- Can you recall any video themes that resonated with you and explain why (for viewers)?
	- How do these themes align with broader media strategies for shaping perceptions (for experts)?
	- What impact do you aim to achieve with your videos in shaping China's image (for creators)?
Impact on Country Image	- How have these videos influenced your perception of China (for viewers)?
	- How effective are these videos in shaping perceptions of a country (for experts)?
	- How do narrative strategies differ between Chinese and Western social media platforms?
Comparative Analysis	- What are the unique challenges and opportunities of using short videos for shaping country image?

3.3. Data Analysis

This study used thematic analysis of interview transcripts and content analysis of brief videos. This dual approach allowed for a thorough evaluation of the videos’ storytelling methods and several stakeholders’ perspectives.

3.3.1. Content Analysis Results Interpretation

Douyin’s “People’s Daily” short videos were analyzed narratively using Nvivo12. After transcribing and capturing visuals, videos were grouped. The open coding phase determined the videos’ plot, characters, settings, and themes. Analyzing the initial classifications, axial coding classified them into “national progress” and “cultural pride.” Selective coding revealed narrative strategies. The study included cultural symbols, hero’s journey frameworks, and technological innovation stories. These modernity, cultural pride, international cooperation, and social cohesiveness strategies were evaluated for their influence on China’s reputation.

3.3.2. Thematic Analysis of Interview Transcripts

The interview transcripts were thematically analyzed for patterns and insights. Finding key statements and repeated patterns in the transcripts started the process. Open coding highlighted key ideas, which were subsequently categorized by axial coding. The data was categorized and managed using Nvivo12. Classifying and categorizing revealed several trends. Content creators stressed authenticity, emotional connection, and cultural inclusion in their stories. Viewers noted the videos’ ability to generate strong emotions and inspire national pride and enthusiasm for China’s achievements. Experts challenged these stories’ potential to counter unfavorable views and improve China’s diplomatic influence. These themes and patterns helped academics understand short video storytelling. This thorough research yielded strong, comprehensive results that accurately represented stakeholders’ diverse viewpoints.

4. FINDINGS

20 short videos from “People’s Daily” on Douyin were chosen for their topic relevance and A selection of 20 brief films from “People’s Daily” on Douyin were chosen based on their topic relevancy and engagement metrics for the purpose of content analysis. The selection of these films from January 1 to December 31, 2022 was based on popularity indicators such

as views, shares, and comments. Each short video, ranging from 15 seconds to 1 minute in length, centers with China's national identity, cultural history, economic success, and global relationships in order to captivate the audience. The examination of the data from these samples was conducted in a methodical and organized manner. Thematic content, narrative structures, and visual attributes were observed throughout the transcription of each video. The research started with open coding, utilizing Nvivo12 software to dissect data into narrative structures, character depictions, and significant themes. The objective of this phase was to identify patterns in video narratives. The relationships of the original codes were examined by axial coding. Those depicting economic prosperity were categorized as "national progress," while those representing social harmony were classified as "community solidarity." Selective coding broadened the primary categories to encompass narrative techniques such as "cultural pride" and "technological innovation." This approach guaranteed a comprehensive examination of techniques used in video storytelling.

4.1. Content Analysis Results

4.1.1. Overview of Narrative Strategies in Chinese Short Videos

The "People's Daily" short videos on Douyin use complex and diverse story structure, according to this study. A variety of "People's Daily" Douyin short videos provide light on China's image and identity. Promotion of cultural diversity, economic growth, technological advancement, and international relations were all included in the videos. Each film showcased China's rich story environment and employed many storytelling strategies to engage viewers. Current narrative developments are examined in videos broadcast between January 1 and December 31, 2022. Choose videos with strong viewer engagement using likes, shares, and comments. Videos were chosen based on their connection with China's national character, which was another crucial consideration in the selection process. The inquiry covers January 1–31, 2022, to understand narrative strategies. This period allowed for a focused study of tale themes and strategies, revealing year-long tendencies. Detailed short videos highlighted narrative topics and strategies to shape China viewpoints.

Cross the videos to appreciate China's cultural treasures and historical achievements. These stories promoted national pride by including festivals, famous landmarks, and historical figures. These tales promoted Chinese unification by highlighting China's cultural and historical richness. China's strong economic growth and technological advances were another topic. China was portrayed as a global leader in innovation and growth, with advanced infrastructure, science, and enterprises. These narratives sought to improve China's image as a dynamic, forward-thinking country capable of influencing the global economic and technical environment by showcasing the country's modernization and progress. Many Chinese videos emphasized social cohesion, societal resilience, and ethnic harmony. China was depicted as a peaceful, welcoming society where varied individuals served the common good. By stressing teamwork, mutual support, and cultural diversity, these stories tried to convey an image of social stability and cohesion, presenting a positive image of China's internal harmony. China's diplomatic initiatives, international partnerships, and global prosperity were highlighted. These narratives portrayed China as a responsible, productive global actor promoting peace, collaboration, and mutual benefit. These narratives emphasized China's global engagement and concerns to promote its image as a recognized and significant global actor capable of contributing to global governance and development. Visual storytelling helps short videos convey. The stunning visuals, captivating images, and

dynamic animations in these videos provoked emotions. These videos used visuals to make the stories more engaging. Storytelling strategies were utilized to personalize and communicate stories. The storyline was strengthened by testimonials, stories, and history. These stories created empathy and compassion by depicting actual people and their situations. Emotions were used to inspire pride, admiration, and solidarity. Key themes were highlighted with metaphor, symbolism, and persuasion. These stories touched the audience’s emotions and ideas, shaping their perceptions of China. The videos emphasized wins, milestones, and accomplishments while downplaying or omitting problems. This positive portrayal gave the stories credence and boosted China’s image. These storylines highlighted China’s successes to improve viewers’ confidence and support for the government and its policies. Instead of negative or confrontational themes, they were optimistic and inspiring. This careful framing kept the story on track and reduced criticism. To boost China’s public image, these stories avoided difficult topics. Metaphors and analogies simplified, explained, and made connections. These rhetorical devices clarified and enlivened stories. These stories delivered important ideas with familiar visuals, ensuring audience engagement. Douyin’s “People’s Daily” short videos employ rich and diversified storytelling, according to content analysis. These videos helped to convey China’s image and identity using thematic, narrative, and framing strategies, influencing opinions and attitudes across large audiences. Highlighting China’s cultural history, economic success, social harmony, and global engagement established a dynamic, affluent, and peaceful image worldwide. The one-month sample period’s concentrated investigation indicated these story strategies’ year-round use and effect.

4.1.2. Comparative Analysis with Western Short Videos

For the comparison, Western short videos from Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube were selected. These platforms allow comparisons of vlogger and media material. Western topics like technology, globalization, culture, and economic success were chosen. Western short videos reflected social media content. Western festivals, customs, and traditions are in cultural videos (see Table 4). There were also videos on social issues, environmental projects, and politics, providing valuable perspectives on Western nations’ current challenges. Table 5 presents themes related to the country image in Western short videos, highlighting the representation of key values. The most frequent themes include freedom, cultural diversity, and innovation, while environmental sustainability and economic prosperity are represented moderately.

Table 5: Themes Related to Country Image in Western Short Videos.

Theme	Representation in Western Platform Videos	Frequency
Freedom	High	22
Innovation	High	18
Cultural diversity	High	22
Environmental sustainability	Moderate	12
Economic prosperity	Moderate	10

Western short videos captivate and draw viewers with a variety of narrative strategies and storytelling approaches. Western videos focus on individual tales, whereas Chinese videos emphasize group achievements and social togetherness (see Tabel 5). Personal video blogs were common for Western video makers to document their daily struggles and successes. Firsthand contacts, honest ideas, and

spontaneous debates made the vlogs fascinating and relevant. Western videos generally featured personal vlogs and interviews with varied people who presented their thoughts on Western culture and society. These interviews encouraged participants to share their thoughts, dreams, and experiences, extending Western narratives. User-generated content dominates Western short videos because viewers participate in social media debates, trends, and current events. Western videos emphasized individualism, innovation, and self-assertion, representing Western values. The videos showed Western nations' vibrancy, autonomy, variety, and inclusivity. Several videos stressed the importance of social change, particularly justice, equality, and diversity. Brief videos about Western living show its diversity, opulence, and vibrancy. Table 6 outlines themes in Chinese short videos from "People's Daily," emphasizing frequent representations of economic progress, cultural heritage, and national pride. Historical significance and technological innovation appear moderately but remain impactful.

Table 6: Themes Related to Country Image in Chinese Short Videos.

Theme	Representation in "People's Daily" Videos	Frequency
Economic progress	High	25
Historical significance	Moderate	15
Cultural heritage	High	20
Technological innovation	Moderate	15
National pride	High	25

Despite different story substance and subjects, Chinese and Western brief videos used many narrative tactics and framing strategies (see Table 6). Western and Chinese videos used visual narrative, emotional appeals, and persuasive language to engage audiences. High-quality images, fascinating tales, and emotive storytelling in Chinese and Western videos established the success of the approaches employed to attract viewer attention and provoke emotional responses. Framing strategies were also used in Western and Chinese videos to affect national opinions. Chinese videos generally glorify national events and people, emphasizing successes, major moments, and positives. Western videos also celebrated inventiveness, variety, and growth while constructively tackling social issues. However, Western and Chinese videos differed in cultural references, storytelling style, and content. Use traditional cultural symbols and historical narratives to promote China's image and identity in Chinese videos. Western videos emphasized human stories and cultural values including autonomy, independence, and self-expression. Table 7 compares narrative strategies in Chinese and Western short videos, highlighting differences in focus areas. Chinese videos emphasize national pride and economic achievements, while Western videos lean toward cultural heritage and technological advancements.

Table 7: Comparative Analysis of Narrative Strategies (Chinese vs. Western).

Narrative Strategy	Chinese Short Videos	Western Short Videos
National pride	25	15
Cultural heritage	18	20
Economic achievements	20	10
Technological advancements	15	18
Social harmony	12	15
International cooperation	10	8

4.2. In-depth Interview Findings

In-depth interviews with various stakeholders provided useful information on the narrative design of

short social media videos, audience reactions and perceptions of country image, and expert insights on social media narratives.

4.2.1. *Perspectives of Content Creators on Narrative Design*

Short social media videos are heavily influenced by content creators. Through thorough interviews, the creators revealed their creative processes, aspirations, and narrative-telling strategies. Respondent 1, a content developer, stressed the importance of story design in communicating and capturing attention. “Narrative design serves as the fundamental basis for our videos,” said. It distinguishes a boring video from an engaging story. We spend a lot of work on narrative progression, graphics, and story structure. Content makers also stressed emotional resonance and authenticity in narrative design. Respondent 2 said they want to make videos that educate, inspire, and evoke emotion. Our stories, whether they celebrate cultural heritage or inspire resilience in the face of adversity, aim to connect with our audience. Respondent 3, who stressed narrative ways to capture viewers, concurred. They use testimonies, personal anecdotes, and historical recollections to humanize the stories and connect with the audience. Content creators also stressed the importance of graphics and editing in storytelling. Respondent 4 said visual storytelling is as important as narrative in a video. We carefully choose music, editing, and images to captivate visitors. Respondent 5 agreed, saying “Visuals possess the ability to evoke emotions and convey messages in a way that cannot be accomplished solely through the use of words.” We use visuals to enhance storytelling and leave a lasting impression.” Table 8 highlights content creators’ perspectives, emphasizing their focus on promoting national pride, using visual storytelling, and incorporating emotional appeals. Their intent is to convey positive messages and deeply engage audiences.

Table 8: Summary of Interview Findings from Content Creators.

Key Insights	Number of Responses
Emphasis on promoting national pride	9
Use of visual storytelling techniques	8
Incorporation of emotional appeals	7
Intention to convey positive messages	10
Desire to engage and resonate with audience	8

4.2.2. *Audience Reactions and Perceptions of Country Image*

Short social media videos strongly influence audience perceptions of a country’s image. Participants deeply debated how these videos affected their sense of China’s identity and depiction (see Table 8). Audience member 6 applauded the videos’ accurate depiction of China. He said, “Observing these videos instills in me a sense of pride and enthusiasm for my country.” Their depiction of China’s culture, magnificence, and achievements makes me feel connected and happy to be Chinese. These videos also affected audience members’ feelings about China’s image. Respondent seven said these videos make them feel proud, excited, nostalgic, and longing. Since they eloquently depict Chinese culture’s complex and multifaceted nature, they inspire me to seek and cherish my ancestral history. Respondent 8 further stressed how these videos shaped their views of China. The person said the videos show China as a positive and ambitious nation, which affects their view of their own country and its global stature. They foster optimism and eagerness for the future. The audience also explored how social media affects their storytelling consumption and

exposure. Respondent 9 said social media has become a great tool for public discourse and information gathering. These videos help me understand Chinese culture and society by presenting multiple perspectives. Respondent 10 agreed: “Short videos provide a convenient and easily accessible means of acquiring knowledge about China and its people.” They enrich my understanding and enjoyment of Chinese culture with new viewpoints and anecdotes.”

4.2.3. *Expert Insights on the Impact of Narratives on Social Media*

Professionals discussed the strategic implications of narrative construction in public diplomacy and soft power on social media. These findings show that brief videos can affect a nation’s reputation and self-perception internally and internationally. Respondent 11, an international relations expert, stressed the need of a consistent story in shaping public opinion. The authors argue that narratives shape public opinion and international perceptions of a nation’s image and reputation in the linked globe. Short videos are dynamic and compelling, making them excellent for information and public debate. Public diplomacy relies on storytelling, especially on social media. Experts stressed the importance of brief videos in cultural diplomacy and global understanding. Communication researcher Respondent 12 stressed the importance of storytelling in building emotional and cultural relationships. They believe succinct videos can break down linguistic and cultural barriers and create a universal language. Narrating shared beliefs, goals, and experiences fosters global empathy and understanding. Experts are also studying story design’s soft power and global effect strategic ramifications. Digital media strategist Respondent 13 stressed the importance of relatable and real content for storytelling. In this age of information and skepticism, authenticity is crucial to audience trust. Compact, realistic videos about a nation’s culture, customs, and ideas are more likely to captivate and amaze. Experts also stressed the pros and cons of social media narrative design. Respondent 14, a public relations expert, underlined that governments must adapt their stories to the digital age. Short videos allow countries to communicate with audiences and quickly respond to trends and themes, they say. In a decentralized media landscape, news dissemination and public opinion management are difficult.” Table 9 presents a summary of interview findings, showcasing audience and expert insights on the impact of narrative strategies in videos. Key themes include positive reception, influence on country image, and the importance of authenticity and cultural context.

Table 9: Summary of Interview Findings from Audience and Experts.

Insights	Number of Responses
Positive reception of videos promoting national pride	6
Influence of videos on shaping perceptions of country image	7
Recognition of narrative techniques employed in videos	5
Awareness of cultural nuances and contextual factors	6
Importance of authenticity and credibility in narrative construction	7

5. DISCUSSION

The comparison of narrative strategies employed in short videos on Chinese and Western social media platforms reveals intriguing insights into how countries use storytelling techniques to shape perceptions of their image and identity. Chinese short videos predominantly focus on collective achievements, cultural heritage, and national pride. These videos often celebrate

China's economic growth, technological advancements, and social stability, projecting an image of a modern and prosperous nation. The narratives frequently emphasize themes of unity, patriotism, and progress, reinforcing the Chinese government's narrative of national rejuvenation and the Chinese Dream (Cao et al., 2021). By showcasing China's achievements, these videos aim to foster a sense of pride and belonging among the Chinese people and enhance the country's standing on the global stage. In contrast, Western short videos tend to prioritize individual stories, personal experiences, and social issues. These videos often explore themes of freedom, creativity, and self-expression, reflecting Western cultural values of individualism and diversity. Western narratives may delve into topics such as identity, social justice, and environmental sustainability, offering a nuanced and multifaceted portrayal of Western societies (Alhaffar, Joury, & Eriksson, 2023). By highlighting diverse perspectives and experiences, Western videos aim to engage audiences on a personal level and foster empathy and understanding. One notable difference between Chinese and Western narratives lies in their framing of national events and figures. Chinese videos typically employ positive framing, emphasizing achievements and milestones while downplaying negative aspects. These videos often present a curated view of China's development, focusing on success stories and achievements to bolster the country's image (Freel et al., 2022). In contrast, Western videos may adopt a more critical or introspective approach, acknowledging both the successes and challenges faced by Western societies. This difference in framing reflects broader cultural and political differences between China and Western countries, as well as varying perceptions of national identity and pride. Despite these differences, both Chinese and Western narratives share common elements such as visual storytelling, emotional appeals, and persuasive language. Visuals play a crucial role in capturing audience attention and conveying messages effectively, whether through stunning imagery, dynamic animations, or compelling cinematography. Emotional appeals are used to evoke specific feelings and responses from the audience, such as pride, empathy, or inspiration. Persuasive language is employed to reinforce key messages and shape audience perceptions, whether through rhetorical devices, persuasive arguments, or calls to action (Williamson et al., 2022). These narrative techniques are universal in nature and are employed by countries around the world to engage audiences and influence public opinion.

Furthermore, Narratives help construct a coherent and compelling storyline that resonates with audiences, highlighting the unique attributes and strengths of a nation while downplaying or omitting negative aspects. For example, Chinese short videos often emphasize themes of national pride, economic prosperity, and cultural heritage, portraying China as a modern and dynamic nation (Freel et al., 2022). These narratives contribute to the construction of a positive and aspirational image of China, fostering a sense of pride and admiration among viewers. Moreover, narratives evoke emotional responses from audiences, eliciting feelings of pride, admiration, empathy, or inspiration. Emotional appeals are particularly effective in shaping audience perceptions and attitudes towards a country's image, as they create a personal connection and resonate with individuals on a deeper level. For example, Western short videos may highlight themes of social justice, environmental sustainability, or human rights, eliciting emotional responses and prompting viewers to reflect on these issues (Alhaffar et al., 2023). These narratives contribute to the construction of a socially conscious and progressive image of Western countries, appealing to audiences' values and beliefs. Furthermore, narratives influence cognitive associations and mental schemas,

shaping how individuals perceive and interpret information about a country. By presenting a coherent and consistent narrative, countries can reinforce key messages and associations in the minds of audiences, influencing their attitudes and behaviors towards the nation. For example, Chinese short videos often portray China as a global leader in technology and innovation, reinforcing the perception of China as a modern and advanced society (Cao et al., 2021). These narratives contribute to the construction of a positive and forward-thinking image of China, positioning the nation as a competitive player on the world stage. In conclusion, narratives play a crucial role in shaping audience perceptions of a country's image, contributing to the formation of cognitive, emotional, and associative associations. Audience interpretation of narratives is influenced by a variety of factors, including individual characteristics, cultural backgrounds, and contextual cues, which shape how individuals perceive and respond to information about a country's identity. Understanding these factors is essential for effectively conveying messages and shaping audience attitudes and beliefs towards a nation.

6. CONCLUSION

Short videos are used in this study to evaluate how narrative methods impact Western and Chinese social media nation portrayals. This research enhances knowledge of how tales influence international audiences. Extensive interviews and qualitative analysis do this. Social media influences country image, media framing, and narratives. This study reveals how narrative affects national identity and image. China uses short movies to show community achievements, cultural legacy, and national pride in a modern, colorful way. Western short movies celebrate cultural variety and creativity by highlighting people, social challenges, and unique tales. Visual narrative, emotive appeals, and persuasive language are used in Western and Chinese storytelling despite cultural differences. These traits are needed to influence audiences. Environmental, cultural, and personal factors affect tale understanding, according to the research. Political speech, ideals, beliefs, cultural norms, stereotypes, and personality impact national perspective. Understand these elements to impact national opinion and communicate effectively. Short social media videos can form an image nation's narrative strategies. Through visual narrative, evocative appeals, and persuasive rhetoric, governments can influence public opinion on cultural, economic, and political issues. Proper storytelling requires cultural background, audience attributes, and media presentation. In the ever-changing digital media ecosystem, relatability and authenticity are crucial. Long-term effects of storytelling on audience attitudes and impressions of foreign nations need further study. Country and region comparisons highlight how cultural and political forces have affected storytelling and audience understanding. Explore how narratives shape a nation's image to understand the complex interplay between media, culture, and national identity in the digital age. This study expands national imagery stories. Governments seeking social media fame and impact are affected. Countries may transform their image and identity by sharing their beliefs, aspirations, and achievements with the world by understanding how narratives effect viewers.

6.1. Implications

6.1.1. Practical Implications

This research concerns policymakers, communication specialists, and content creators who seek to improve their country's social media influence. The study may assist lawmakers

improve their nation's image-building strategies. Respecting demographic preferences and cultural sensitivities, officials can tell a unified and good national story. Cultural diplomacy, collaborating with significant content providers, and employing data analytics to evaluate communication strategies may be required. This data can help communicators better media campaigns and storylines. Eye-catching, emotive, and visual communication strategies boost audience response. Social media lets professionals connect with stakeholders and share their stories, building trust, responsibility, and openness. This study demonstrates content creators how to employ narrative strategies to make engaging social media brief videos. Narrative framing, emotive appeals, and visual storytelling are strategies for content creators. Working with stakeholders to develop real, inclusive, and culturally sensitive tales can boost content creators' influence and viewership.

6.1.2. Theoretical Implications

This study impacts media studies, communication research, and cultural diplomacy. This study examines how narratives shape nation portraits on social media. This study uses media studies narrative structure and framing theory to explain digital tale development, distribution, and interpretation. This technique improves our theoretical understanding of media, culture, and national identity by investigating how stories alter audience sentiments about other nations. This research also shows how personal attributes, culture, and context affect story comprehension. This study examines listeners' cognitive, emotional, and associative responses to stories to better understand information processing and decision-making. This helps communication studies by explaining how people interpret and respond to media in a globalized society. Finally, narrative design's strategic implications for cultural diplomacy and impact are discussed. This study shows how countries can improve their worldwide standing and effect by examining their social media communication. These findings affect lawmakers, communication specialists, and cultural leaders who utilize stories to promote their countries' agendas. Politician, communication professional, content creator, and scholar interested in narratives' impact on a nation's social media reputation should also consider the study's findings. This study can help stakeholders improve communication, engage audiences, and create a positive national narrative in a digital and interconnected world.

6.2. Limitations

Although insightful, this research has significant drawbacks. The study first focused on brief videos shared on Western and Chinese social media platforms, limiting its applicability to other cultures and media. Evaluating storytelling strategies should include interactive resources, literature, and extended videos from many cultures and languages. Qualitative methods like content analysis and in-depth interviews limited the study's scope. Qualitative methods can reveal audience viewpoints, but not all. Future research could use mixed-methods to better understand how narratives affect a nation's social media reputation. Instead of authorities, diplomats, and media experts, the study examined content providers and audiences. Subsequent investigations should study diverse parties' perspectives to better comprehend narrative design's strategic effects on cultural diplomacy and soft power projection. The study did not address ethical issues related to social media narratives, such as misinformation, public emotion manipulation, and privacy violations. Next studies should examine the ethical implications of narrative design on social media and how to mitigate its risks and shortcomings. Since the study was done in a specific temporal and cultural

setting, its conclusions may not be applicable to other situations. Cultural and political dynamics change quickly, and narratives can adapt to social, economic, and technological advances. Next studies could study storytelling strategies' evolution and divergence over time and socio-politics.

4.3. Future Directions

Expanding on the study's findings and limits may provide new directions. Future research could examine how narrative strategies affect public perceptions of a nation's image on more social media platforms, including TikTok, Instagram, and Snapchat. The features and user demographics of different platforms might alter how storytelling engages and changes listeners. Future research could examine how storytelling affects audience behavior and travel, investment, and consumption decisions. By studying how story design affects audience perceptions and behaviors, scholars can analyze how narrative strategies can improve a nation's social media influence and reputation. Further research should examine how algorithmic recommendation systems and filter chambers affect social media users' narrative content exposure. Technology can alter user narratives, perpetuating biases. To understand how platform design affects cultural diplomacy and soft power projection, academics might research how algorithmic curation affects audience opinions of foreign powers. Study how cultural intermediaries like influencers, personalities, and opinion leaders affect a nation's social media image. Intermediaries select and share narratives to shape public opinion and culture. By evaluating cultural media and audience views, researchers can better understand digital narrative development and diffusion. Finally, future studies may investigate social media stories' ethics and give responsible narrative principles. Narratives' ethical implications—responsibility, truthfulness, and openness—must be considered as they influence public conversation. Academics may advise ethical tale design to reduce social media narrative dangers.

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