



Research on Chongqing as a ‘Historical and Cultural City’ in Short Videos: Taking TikTok Platform as an Example

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Abstract. The city image is an important symbol for a city’s external promotion. With the arrival of the short video era, Chongqing has become a popular city on the Internet, but it is also one of the second batch of national historical and cultural cities approved by the State Council. The city image of a Historical and Cultural City can help attract talents, attract investment, attract tourists, promote the development of urban tourism and economy. Therefore, how to construct and disseminate the ‘Historical and Cultural City’ image of Chongqing in short videos has become an issue. This study will conduct a sampling survey through non-random sampling, based on the current situation of constructing and disseminating the ‘Historical and Cultural City’ image of Chongqing in TikTok short videos, analyze the existing problems in this aspect, and provide optimization strategies and recommendations.

Keywords: Short video; Chongqing; Historical and Cultural City; Image construction and dissemination; TikTok.

1 Research Background and Significance

City image is an important symbol of a city’s external publicity. Chongqing became popular on the TikTok short video platform in 2018 due to its unique geological environment and ‘Magic 8D City’ landscapes such as ‘light rail through buildings’, Hongya Cave, and Yangtze River Cableway.

However, Chongqing is not just a city famous for its internet popularity, it is also a ‘Historical and Cultural City’ with a rich historical heritage. Which refers to a city with particularly rich cultural relics that hold significant historical or revolutionary commemorative significance.^[4] Historical and cultural heritage is the lifeblood, genetic code, and spiritual sustenance of a city. Reasonable promotion and popularization of the historical and cultural heritage of a city can enhance the cohesion of the city and the sense of belonging and pride of its residents, which is conducive to retaining local talents and promoting the harmonious and stable development of the city. On the other hand, reasonable utilization of Chongqing’s image as a ‘Historical and Cultural City’ can enhance its popularity and attract more tourists from other regions. The combination

of the image of a Historical and Cultural City and the internet-famous image of the ‘Magic 8D City’ can promote the prosperity of the city’s tourism industry, stimulate the vitality of the city, promote its economic development, enhance the soft power of Chongqing’s urban development from the perspective of cultural dissemination, and play a role in enriching the connotation and expanding the extension of the city as well as attracting foreign investment and talents from other regions.^[3]

Therefore, the construction and dissemination of the image of a ‘Historical and Cultural City’ should become an important focus of Chongqing’s short video promotion.

2 Literature Review

According to the 51st Statistical Report on the Development of China's Internet, as of December 2022, the number of short video users in China has reached 1.012 billion.^[5] The huge market of short videos provides more possibilities for the construction and dissemination of urban images. In September 2016, ByteDance launched the TikTok platform, which has become the largest domestic short video platform after years of development. Therefore, conducting research based on the TikTok platform has significant reference value.

Zhao Xiaohan from Jinan University and Li Renwei from North China University have expressed that short videos can participate in the image shaping of historical and cultural cities and play a role in the dissemination of urban historical and cultural images.^[1,2] Zhao Xiaohan believes that short videos can ‘diversify and enrich urban elements, build a three-dimensional urban image’, and ‘shape urban brands and stimulate the development of tourism’.^[1] Li Renwei has also explored various methods and ways of constructing and disseminating Historical and Cultural City images through short videos.^[2] Based on previous research, many scholars have studied how different historical and cultural cities can better construct and disseminate urban historical and cultural images through short videos. For example, Wang Xiejun from Shandong Normal University studied the image construction and dissemination strategies of historical and cultural cities in Jiaodong in the short video era,^[3] while other scholars have studied historical and cultural cities such as Hangzhou and Xianyang. However, so far, no scholars have studied the Historical and Cultural City—Chongqing, but as mentioned earlier, such research is necessary for Chongqing. Therefore, this study will explore the current status of the construction and dissemination of the historical and cultural image of Chongqing in TikTok short videos, based on the present situation analysis of existing problems and deficiencies, and provide corresponding recommendations.

3 Research Methods and Results

3.1 Research Methods

To further understand the construction and dissemination status of Chongqing’s ‘Historical and Cultural City’ image in TikTok short videos, specific data collection and

analysis are required. After comprehensive consideration of multiple factors, a sampling survey method was adopted to understand the construction and dissemination status of Chongqing's 'Historical and Cultural City' image in TikTok short videos. The survey was conducted through non-random sampling, and the specific process is as follows:

At first, the author searched for videos using 'Chongqing history' and 'Chongqing culture' as keywords on the TikTok platform. Then after excluding search results with duplicated keywords and short videos unrelated to Chongqing's historical culture, the top 50 short videos with the highest number of likes under each keyword were selected as samples, totaling 100 TikTok short videos to analyze the construction and dissemination status of Chongqing's 'Historical and Cultural City' image.

3.2 Overview of the Construction and Dissemination Status of Chongqing's 'Historical and Cultural City' Image in TikTok

Through the organization and analysis of the 100 TikTok short videos related to Chongqing's historical culture, it was found that the video subjects covered multiple aspects, including the Anti-Japanese War, Chongqing's direct control, Ba culture, historical relics and buildings, historical figures, the migration of people from Hubei and Hunan to Sichuan, local dialects, food culture, the origin of place names, wharf culture, intangible cultural heritage and folk customs, and minority ethnic cultures. Short videos featuring historical relics and buildings and Anti-Japanese War themes accounted for a large proportion, reaching 37% and 35%, respectively. Among the historical relics and buildings themes, relics and buildings related to the Republic of China period accounted for about one-third. At the same time, the content analysis revealed a tendency towards homogeneity, with 54% of short videos related to the Liberation Monument among the relics and buildings themes of the Republic of China period. In terms of the dissemination subject, self-media bloggers accounted for the majority, while mainstream local media and official accounts of government agencies did not exceed 5%, indicating a serious lack of participation.

3.3 Analysis of Image Construction Issues of "Historical and Cultural City" in Short Videos in Chongqing

The city's positioning is not clear and distinct.

A clear and distinct historical and cultural positioning is a crucial focus in building and disseminating the image of a 'Historical and Cultural City' on short video platforms. However, due to specific historical factors, in comparison to most other cities in China, Chongqing has a vast area of 82,400 square kilometers and a large population of 32.133 million people. This has led to an excessive amount of historical and cultural richness as well as multiple categories contained within the city. On September 28, 2018, Chen Min'er, the former Secretary of the Chongqing Municipal Committee, delivered a speech at the Chongqing Municipal Publicity and Ideological Work Con-

ference, in which he systematically discussed the Chongqing cultural system and summarized Chongqing culture into six cultural forms: Bayu Culture, Three Gorges Culture, Anti-Japanese War Culture, Revolutionary Culture, United Front Culture and Immigrant Culture.^[6] This is the first relatively official summary and summarization of Chongqing's historical and cultural significance. However, there still exist several issues: this has not produced a unified urban historical culture connotation and positioning; the internal logic is confused. And the summary is not comprehensive. For example, Chongqing's minority cultures, such as the Miao and Tujia ethnic groups, have not been included.

The degree of exploration and representation of the historical and cultural connotations of cities is not sufficient.

Taking Hongya Cave as an example, as one of Chongqing's most popular ancient architectural scenic spots, short videos mainly promote the beautiful night scenery of Hongya Cave and recommend check-in spots, but they fail to introduce the original Chongqing ancient city gate 'Hongya Gate' where Hongya Cave is located, or mention the cultural symbol of Chongqing's unique local architecture 'hanging houses'. Such short video promotions are superficial and mainly serve for entertainment, making it difficult to reflect the historical and cultural significance of the city. Overly entertaining and relaxed short videos can erode the city's profound historical and cultural heritage.

Serious absence of local mainstream media and official accounts of party and government agencies.

Among the 100 sampled TikTok short videos, the dissemination by local mainstream media and party and government agencies in Chongqing has not reached 5%, indicating a serious absence. Local mainstream media and local party and government accounts have more resources, fans and professionals than general self-media, and have stronger influence, dissemination and credibility, making them a natural and valuable resource for disseminating local historical and cultural information. It is their duty to promote local history and culture, and local mainstream media and party and government accounts should make full use of their resources and become one of the main forces in the dissemination of local historical and cultural information.

Lack of top-level design and overall planning.

Due to the lack of active guidance and management from mainstream media and local government publicity departments, the construction and dissemination of the image of Chongqing as a 'Historical and Cultural City' in TikTok short videos lacks top-level design and overall planning. In the 'free-range mode', many self-media bloggers promote Chongqing's historical and cultural information randomly, resulting in fragmented dissemination and unsatisfactory results. Many self-media bloggers intentionally include a large amount of ineffective information such as 'stay tuned for the next episode' in their short videos, with the goal of increasing their collection and attention rates, while not delivering complete information. This strategy is not conducive to the

dissemination and reception of complete information, which greatly reduces the effectiveness of dissemination.

In addition, due to the lack of overall planning and appropriate guidance, fragmented short videos are prone to neglect cultural elements, making it difficult to build a full and three-dimensional image of Chongqing as a Historical and Cultural City. For example, in the 100 selected short videos about Chongqing's history and culture, only 2% of them involved the culture of Chongqing's ethnic minorities, while the ethnic minority population in Chongqing accounts for 6.77%.

4 Strategies for promoting the image of Chongqing as a 'Historical and Cultural City' in short videos

4.1 Find a clear city historical and cultural positioning.

In the construction and dissemination of urban image, a clear city positioning can allow many disseminators to have a more accurate grasp of the city's historical and cultural information, which is conducive to inspiring creators' enthusiasm for creating more excellent short videos to promote Chongqing's historical and cultural information, and form a joint force for the dissemination of historical and cultural information. Given the multiple historical and cultural lineages of Chongqing, it is more appropriate to extract the city spirit from the many historical and cultural legacies and build the main thread of the city's historical and cultural information.

4.2 Actively utilize the role of mainstream media and government publicity departments, and manage and guide appropriately.

As the benchmark for the industry in the region, the government and mainstream media, as management and professional personnel, should establish corresponding and reasonable rules to guide self-media bloggers and MCN organizations in the area to actively promote the history and culture of Chongqing and create high-quality works. It is important to establish a sense of design and planning, link offline activities with online platforms, and create hot topics to promote Chongqing's historical and cultural sites. If necessary, actively link short video platforms such as TikTok to form an "offline + online" communication loop, expand the scope of dissemination, and enhance communication effectiveness.

4.3 Create a phenomenon-level exclusive city music.

TikTok, as a music creative short video social software incubated by ByteDance, features background music, and using a popular song as the background music for a short video is like bringing its own flow.^[7] For example, in early 2017, Zhao Lei's song 'Chengdu' became popular on the Internet, and with it, the popularity of Chengdu on TikTok and other short video platforms also quickly increased. Using background music to 'assist' the dissemination of text, pictures, videos, and other visual elements has

gradually become an 'unwritten rule' in TikTok short videos. However, until today, Chongqing still doesn't have a phenomenon-level representative song like 'Chengdu', which is why it is necessary to create a unique city representative song that belongs to Chongqing based on its history, culture, customs, and other features.

4.4 KOL drives UGC, private traffic imports public traffic, and strengthens the spread of Chongqing's historical and cultural heritage in short videos as both the transmitter and the recipient.

Short video platforms such as TikTok mostly adopt the PUGC+UGC creation model, in which UGC is the core mode and PUGC plays a supplementary role and has a relatively small proportion. When constructing and disseminating the image of Chongqing as a 'Historical and Cultural City', the Chongqing government can invite KOLs to participate in the disseminating of its history and culture. For example, inviting them to historical and cultural representative sites in Chongqing such as Liberation Monument, Ciqikou, and Gele Mountain for short video filming, and showcasing Chongqing hot pot cooking methods and folk songs in short videos. Through KOL's participation and dissemination, private traffic can be converted into public traffic to a certain extent, expanding the audience group. On the other hand, KOL will stimulate UGC through secondary and even multi-level dissemination, promoting Chongqing locals, and even tourists to create and share short videos about Chongqing's history and culture, driving user participation and strengthening the group of communicators.

5 Conclusion

Although Chongqing has been approved by the State Council as the second batch of national historical and cultural cities, its image in short video platforms such as TikTok has been overshadowed by the 'Magic 8D City' online image of the city. However, the construction and communication strategy of Chongqing's image as a 'Historical and Cultural City' in short video platforms can still be optimized by finding the right historical and cultural positioning of the city, actively playing the role of mainstream media and propaganda departments, launching phenomenal and exclusive city music, and linking with KOL to stimulate UGC creation, etc.

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