



The Construction of Shanghai's Image through "Other-Narrative" from a Cross-Cultural Perspective: A Content Analysis of Foreigners' Travel VLOGs on YouTube

Yiran Chen

Communication University of China, Beijing 100024, China

Email: 2476699134@qq.com

Abstract. Existing research on the application of the Cognition-Affect-Behavior (CAB) model in cross-cultural communication has largely focused on outcome-oriented quantitative analyses, lacking in-depth exploration of the generative mechanisms of "Other-Narrative" in the communication of Shanghai's image. To fill this research gap, this study takes "Shanghai travel VLOGs" as samples and employs Python-based text analysis tools and TextBlob sentiment analysis technology to systematically examine the narrative construction logic of Shanghai's city image by foreign vloggers. The findings reveal: (1) At the cognitive dimension, foreign vloggers' narratives exhibit significant "de-landmarking" and "everyday-life orientation" characteristics; (2) At the affective dimension, while their evaluations of Shanghai show notable "positive polarization", there also exist genuine emotional pain points; (3) At the behavioral dimension, they demonstrate strong recommendation intentions and a desire for deep immersion, with the narrative logic shifting from "other observation" to "embodied proof". This study dissects the dynamic psychological pathway "cognitive trigger → affective resonance/conflict → behavioral expression" and its narrative threads within personalized VLOGs, offering new insights for the international communication of Shanghai's image.

Keywords: Other-Narrative; Cross-cultural communication; Cognition-Affect-Behavior (CAB) model; Content analysis; Shanghai city image; VLOG

1 Introduction

Against the backdrop of digital globalization, the subjects and channels of city image communication are undergoing structural reconstruction. On platforms such as YouTube, content tagged with labels like "Shanghai Vlog" and "China Travel"^{[1][2]} has seen continuously rising viewership. Foreign vloggers, through first-person recordings of their travel experiences in China, have become an undeniable narrative

force in cross-cultural communication. In this context, personalized media forms represented by VLOG are reshaping the international image of global cities such as Shanghai via "Other-Narrative".

However, existing research has largely focused on domestic media communication or macro-level national image, lacking systematic analysis of "Other-Narrative" for global cities like Shanghai^[3] that offer visa-free transit policies. Meanwhile, prior studies tend to remain at the level of "communication effects" such as audience comments and attitude feedback^{[4][5]}, with relatively insufficient process-oriented investigation into how the "Other" concretely constructs city image through camera language, narrative structure, and other means. Based on the above background and research gaps, this study adopts the Cognition-Affect-Behavior (CAB) model as its theoretical framework, analyzing from a narrative production perspective how foreign vloggers construct Shanghai's image through VLOGs, and discussing implications for the international communication of Chinese cities.

2 Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

2.1 "Other-Narrative" and Cross-Cultural City Image Communication

"The Other", as a concept opposed to the "Self"^{[6][7]}, is fundamental to the study of cross-cultural communication. Existing research has generally followed this theoretical tradition and applied it to international communication analysis. Some studies point out that in the digital age, the subjects of China story communication have expanded from national media to the digital narratives of foreign "Others"^{[8][9]}. Such narratives are seen as an effective way to break the discursive monopoly of Western media, reduce cultural discount, and shape an objective national image^{[4][10]}.

City image is an important object of "Other-Narrative". Its research paradigm has shifted from effect measurement^[11] to user-generated content (UGC)^{[12][13][14][15]} construction in the social media era, and further deepened into "mediatization" and "actor-network theory"^{[16][17]}.

Existing research has laid a solid foundation for "Other-Narrative" and international communication, city image and mediatized construction. However, several shortcomings remain regarding "the construction of global city image through Other-Narrative from a cross-cultural perspective". First, most existing studies focus on "communication effects"^{[4][5]}, neglecting the psychological-behavioral process of narrative production and failing to reveal the complete chain from cultural contact to behavioral expression. Second, some studies explore the overall image of China narrated by the "Other"^{[4][8]}, while others focus on "rural China", "targeted poverty alleviation"^[10], or domestic "internet-famous cities"^{[11][18][19]}, but there is a lack of specialized, systematic research on Shanghai as a "global city" with extremely complex image composition. Third, few studies have delved deep into the internal narrative texts of personal, impromptu travel VLOGs to summarize successful elements of "Other-Narrative". Fourth, research tends to analyze internal communication network self-organization and emotional resonance mechanisms^[18],

lacking discussion of practical dilemmas faced by "Other-Narrative" such as "cultural discount"^{[4][19][20]} in cross-cultural visual translation and identity dilemmas^[5].

By introducing the CAB model, this study examines the audiovisual narratives generated by foreign vloggers traveling in Shanghai as a specific global city, revealing the micro-level generative mechanisms of Shanghai's image from an "Other" perspective. It aims to construct an interpretive framework suitable for analyzing the cross-cultural "narrative production" of global cities, providing theoretical and practical references for the international communication of city images.

2.2 Theoretical Framework: The Cognition-Affect-Behavior Model

This study employs the Cognition-Affect-Behavior(CAB) model as its analytical framework^[21]. Through the cognitive dimension (word frequency statistics to extract city elements), the affective dimension (sentiment analysis to interpret emotions and narrative strategies), and the behavioral dimension (behavioral verb statistics to determine recommendation and revisit intentions), it systematically analyzes the narrative construction logic of the "Other". On this basis, it traces the dynamic transformation of these three dimensions within narrative segments, revealing the complete pathway from cognitive trigger to affective resonance and finally to behavioral intention. The model serves a dual function in this study: both as a classification framework and as a tool for parsing narrative logic.

3 Research Design

3.1 Data Sources and Processing Methods

This study screened samples with rich content and an average duration of over 30 minutes. Duplicate, invalid, purely scenic (without narrative), reposted, and commercial advertising content were excluded. Finally, 50 foreign vloggers' Shanghai travel VLOGs were selected. The corpus was primarily in English. After word segmentation and cleaning, a video text database containing 1,012,452 characters was constructed.

Content analysis is an important method in narrative research. By converting non-systematized media symbols (text, images, video, etc.) into quantitative indicators, it enables quantitative analysis and logical inference of research objects. In the big data context, using online text data to explore narratives has become a classic approach^[22]. Based on Python's TextBlob natural language processing library, this study collected VLOG texts in full, using its text processing modules for cleaning, preprocessing, word frequency statistics, and semantic analysis. Semantic network diagrams and high-frequency word lists were generated to deconstruct foreign tourists' cognitive focus on narrative elements and to analyze their affective narratives and overall perceptual characteristics.

3.2 Analytical Framework

Based on the CAB model, this study constructs the following analytical framework.

Cognitive narrative: Analyzes high-frequency word distribution and semantic networks to reveal vloggers' objective cognitive focus on Shanghai's city image.

Affective narrative: Through sentiment polarity calculation and typical case analysis, interprets emotional expression strategies and authenticity construction mechanisms.

Behavioral narrative: Counts behavioral verb frequencies to explore vloggers' behavioral intentions and identity transformation logic.

Interaction mechanism: Through case tracing, reveals the dynamic interrelationships among cognition, affect, and behavior.

4 Findings

4.1 Cognitive Narrative: De-landmarking and Everyday-life Orientation

Table 1. High-frequency characteristic words in VLOGs perceiving Shanghai's city image

No.	Word	Frequency	Category	No.	Word	Frequency	Category
1	shanghai	611	Place noun	26	money	51	Economic noun
2	china	355	Place noun	27	shop	50	Space noun
3	food	245	Food noun	28	different	49	Attribute adjective
4	good	233	Evaluative adjective	29	fun	46	Evaluative adjective
5	street	198	Space noun	30	world	46	Abstract noun
6	place	158	Space noun	31	convenient	43	Attribute adjective
7	building	157	Space noun	32	coffee	41	Food noun
8	walk	126	Action verb	33	life	38	Abstract noun
9	great	122	Evaluative adjective	34	order	37	Action verb
10	look	117	Perception verb	35	tea	35	Food noun
11	eat	110	Action verb	36	crazy	32	Evaluative adjective
12	see	109	Perception verb	37	love	32	Psychological verb
13	area	103	Space noun	38	airport	30	Transportation noun
14	day	103	Time noun	39	beautiful	30	Evaluative adjective
15	city	101	Space noun	40	safe	29	Attribute adjective
16	restaurant	73	Space noun	41	everything	29	Pronoun
17	pay	69	Economic verb	42	taste	26	Sensory noun
18	try	66	Action verb	43	cheap	24	Attribute adjective
19	feel	65	Perception verb	44	efficient	19	Attribute adjective
20	big	61	Attribute adjective	45	clean	18	Attribute adjective
21	metro	58	Transportation noun	46	dumpling	17	Food noun
22	road	58	Space noun	47	expensive	16	Attribute adjective
23	station	56	Transportation noun	48	skyline	15	Space noun
24	modern	53	Attribute adjective	49	futuristic	12	Attribute adjective
25	amazing	53	Evaluative adjective				

Based on TextBlob library analysis of YouTube video texts, using a stopword list and custom dictionary to filter meaningless words, 50 high-frequency keywords characterizing the perception of Shanghai's city image were extracted (Table 1).

De-landmarking characteristic of foreign vloggers' Shanghai narratives. They construct an immersive sense of authenticity through concrete urban scenes. Table 1 shows that both the number of nouns (32, 64%) and their frequencies highlight that foreign vloggers prefer to construct narratives through "concrete urban spaces" and "life scenarios". Notably, words such as "street", "building", "area", "road" rank high among these frequencies. This also indicates a "de-landmarking" tendency. Through concrete descriptions of specific urban scenes (such as streets and buildings), they transform abstract city image into perceptible life situations, thereby enhancing narrative authenticity and immersion. Vloggers tend to organize narrative structure through the action of "walk" (126 occurrences), using first-person city strolling to turn Shanghai from a mere tourist attraction into a livable and narratable living space. This walking-as-narrative-thread allows audiences to follow the vlogger's perspective into the city's daily life, constructing a more authentic urban cognition. For instance, when a vlogger enters Jing'an District, he says, "Guys, we're in this area called Jing'an." This precise labeling of specific administrative divisions and living neighborhoods exemplifies the concretization of spatial cognition in "Other-Narrative".

Infrastructure and digital technology infrastructure become prominent labels. Words such as "pay", "metro", "station", "money", "airport", "safe", "convenient" rank high, revealing vloggers' high sensitivity to Shanghai's digital payment and efficient public transportation. "Metro" appears 58 times (rank 21), indicating that QR-code payment and developed rail transit have become "technology business cards" in the perception of Shanghai's city image; geographic location and travel convenience deeply influence vloggers' first impressions. In this narrative structure, foreign vloggers are not only consumers of technology but also "reviewers" for overseas audiences. The high frequency of "pay" records not only transactional behavior but also, through embodied narration of mobile payment convenience, demonstrates the reality of China's modernization process to global viewers. One vlogger shows strong curiosity about QR-code payment: "Is that like a QR code? Meet me! Okay, I have no idea." This "surprise" is also a sophisticated narrative strategy: through this "sense of surprise arising from technological backwardness", the vlogger successfully packages Shanghai's daily infrastructure as a futuristic wonder for overseas audiences. This cognition extends to green infrastructure, as seen in an observation about "electric car". "All the cars here are electric so the car noise isn't too bad." The quietness and order brought by technology constitute a unique cognitive label distinguishing Shanghai from other international metropolises, shaping a city image that transcends conventional Western understanding.

Food culture becomes a symbol of cross-cultural integration. "Food" ranks 3rd with 245 occurrences, accounting for a significant proportion; "coffee", "tea", "restaurant" also rank high (32nd, 35th, 16th respectively). Coffee consumption scenes, as travel rest points, become important symbols for vloggers to understand Shanghai's international lifestyle. While exploring the exotic characteristics of "street food", vloggers frequently consume coffee to confirm the city's life texture and

Foreign vloggers' evaluations of Shanghai exhibit significant "positive polarization". The frequency of positive sentiment words centered on "like" (2354 occurrences), "good" (562), "wow" (303), "love" (225), and "super" (190) is overwhelmingly dominant.

Although the overall sentiment is positive, deep mining of negative emotion words and backtracking to textual contexts reveal that foreign vloggers still encounter genuine, non-rhetorical emotional pain points during their embodied experiences in Shanghai. These are mainly concentrated in three dimension.

First, access anxiety in digital survival. Upon first arrival in Shanghai, digital payment and language barriers pose substantial obstacles. "Difficult" (11 occurrences) and "mess" (11) mostly refer to frustrations in communication and payment binding. Second, psychological pressure from extreme spatial scale. "Scary" (6) and "chaos" (5) are associated with crowded areas such as Nanjing Road during peak hours. Third, negative evaluations of facility details and service quality. "Suck" (9) and "fake" (7) are directly linked to specific consumption scenarios, causing sentiment to slide from positive to disappointment. These blunt and authentic lexical expressions are key to foreign vloggers gaining audience trust in the competition for cross-cultural discursive power, proving that they are not passive recipients of city image but narrative subjects with independent judgment capable of engaging in equal dialogue with the destination.

Notably, Shanghai's complex city image gives rise to a special expression strategy: "using negative words positively". In the corpus, words typically marked as negative, such as "insane" and "crazy", are often used to describe low-cost shared bike fares ("Which is like... Insane.") or the grand scale of the city ("30 million people. Crazy."), essentially conveying strong cultural shock. These blunt and authentic expressions are key to foreign vloggers gaining audience trust in the competition for cross-cultural discursive power, proving that they are not passive recipients of city image but narrative subjects with independent judgment capable of equal dialogue with the destination. The presence of genuine negative emotions does not weaken the credibility of the videos; on the contrary, through the construction of "authenticity", they present overseas audiences with a vibrant yet cross-culturally challenged, three-dimensional Shanghai.

4.3 Behavioral Narrative: From Observation to Embodied Participation

Table 3. Frequency statistics of behavioral verbs in foreign vloggers' Shanghai VLOGs

No.	Word	Frequency	No.	Word	Frequency
1	go	1214	9	show	145
2	come	987	10	walk	126
3	look	774	11	feel	65
4	see	563	12	live	52
5	back	342	13	recommend	45
6	stay	268	14	pay	38
7	tell	182	15	try	27

Behavioral intention is the result of the joint action of cognition and affect. Through counting verb frequencies (Table 3), we find that vloggers show strong recommendation intentions and revisit tendencies toward Shanghai.

In terms of behavioral narrative, foreign vloggers exhibit strong willingness to recommend, revisit, and deeply engage with Shanghai, with the core logic shifting from "other observation" to "embodied proof". Verbs such as "tell" (182), "show" (145), and "recommend" (45) appear frequently. Vloggers often use expressions like "Seeing is believing" to actively correct Western media stereotypes, constructing an objective "Other-Narrative" window. "Back" appears 342 times; vloggers regard Shanghai as a continuously updating sample of "living in 2050", generating a sense of "ever-new upon each visit" due to technological iteration, forming a special brand loyalty. Words like "stay" (268) and "live" (52) indicate a shift from tourist mentality to embodied participant. Combined with deep exploration behaviors such as "walk" (126), vloggers, through the dissemination of real-life scenes, portray Shanghai as a world-class city benchmark suitable for both tourism and living. This sublimation of behavioral intention reflects the deep cognitive transformation effect that Shanghai's city image produces on international audiences.

4.4 Interaction Mechanism of Cognition, Affect, and Behavior

In cross-cultural communication, an individual's acceptance of a foreign culture is not an instantaneous process but a dynamic evolution from surface to depth. Through case tracing, this study finds that vloggers undergo a complete psychological pathway: cognitive trigger → affective resonance/conflict → behavioral intention/change.

Cognition is the basis for affect generation and behavior driving. In VLOGs, vloggers' first impressions of Shanghai often originate from certain "triggers" of cultural phenomena. These triggers are typically objective realities that differ significantly from their home culture and quickly elicit strong emotional reactions, the most common being "culture shock".

Take the mobile payment scenario as an example. Vlogger first encounters Alipay (cognitive trigger) → experiences the convenience of payment and feels "shock" (affective resonance) → strongly recommends and demonstrates the operation in the video (behavioral intention). Negative experiences also drive behavioral adjustment. For instance, after a payment failure, the vlogger strongly recommends that viewers set up payment apps in advance, promoting behavioral deepening.

There is another example. While crossing a street, a vlogger's pre-existing cognition about urban noise is subverted. The vlogger thought "cars should be noisy", but Shanghai's streets are "dead quiet". This strong contrast surprises him, and he immediately shares this emotion with the audience through the camera. This instant emotion triggered by the environment reinforces his cognitive construction of Shanghai as "modern and environmentally friendly".

When the initial "culture shock" is digested, vloggers' emotions deepen further, from simple sensory stimulation to more complex cultural identification or cultural reflection, and subsequently generate more specific, long-term behavioral intentions,

such as the desire to revisit or comparative reflection on their own culture. One vlogger, after experiencing a visa hiccup and payment difficulties, is ultimately won over by Shanghai's food and urban charm. His emotions undergo complex twists and turns before condensing into a deep fondness: "I'm really genuinely so sad to be leaving China. I have had the best time here..."

In the final stage of cross-cultural interaction, the individual's behavioral outcomes reinforce or modify their initial cognitions, forming a more stable and complex "cultural schema" of the target culture in their mind. In VLOGs documenting Shanghai travels, many vloggers complete a reshaping of the city's image upon departure. For example, one vlogger says at the end of a video: "China is one of the countries I misunderstood the most... but discovering that our image of a country is at best incomplete, but more often completely wrong." His cognition of Shanghai shifts from a stereotype shaped by Western media to a personable, humane city image based on personal experience.

In summary, by tracing the complete chain of "cognition → affect → behavior" in VLOGs, we can clearly see that vloggers' impressions of Shanghai are not static. They start from concrete cultural details, undergo genuine feelings and attitude changes, and finally incorporate these personal experiences into their video narratives. This process not only changes the vloggers' own perceptions of Shanghai but also enables more overseas audiences to see a more vivid and diverse Shanghai through these concrete stories.

5 Conclusion

5.1 Research Conclusions

This study takes foreign vloggers' Shanghai travel VLOGs as research objects, uses Python and TextBlob for content analysis, and based on the CAB theoretical framework, analyzes the narrative construction of Shanghai by foreign vloggers from a cross-cultural perspective. The conclusions are as follows. (1) Foreign vloggers' cognitive narratives of Shanghai revolve around urban spatial landscapes, digital infrastructure, cross-cultural cuisine, and daily experiences, showing obvious "de-landmarking" characteristics. (2) Foreign vloggers' affective expressions exhibit significant positive polarization, with positive emotions absolutely dominant. Negative emotions are concentrated at micro levels such as service details, and there exists a strategy of "using negative words positively", making the narratives more authentic and three-dimensional. (3) Foreign vloggers' behavioral narratives show strong recommendation intentions, revisit tendencies, and a desire for deep immersion. (4) Foreign vloggers' narratives of Shanghai fully follow the dynamic psychological pathway of "cognitive trigger → affective resonance/conflict → behavioral intention/change". Personalized VLOG narratives transform the abstract Shanghai into concrete, perceptible life situations, effectively dissolving the cultural alienation of Western audiences and becoming an important narrative vehicle for the international communication of Shanghai's and even China's city image.

5.2 Discussion

Theoretical Contributions.

First, this study extends the application of the Cognition-Affect-Behavior (CAB) model in cross-cultural communication contexts. Existing research has largely focused on outcome-oriented quantitative analysis, whereas this study attends to the process of narrative production rather than outcome evaluation. The findings show that foreign vloggers' VLOGs do not simply present three independent dimensions of cognition, affect, and behavior; rather, they weave them into a traceable narrative thread. This shift in perspective extends the CAB model from an "analytical framework" to an interpretive tool for "narrative logic", providing a new entry point for understanding how the "Other" accomplishes meaning construction through narrative in cross-cultural communication.

Second, this study supplements the research perspective on "Other-Narrative". While existing studies have mostly focused on macro-level issues, this study takes personal VLOGs as its object, replacing panoramic description with fragmented life scenes, impromptu emotional expressions, and embodied experience sharing. It reveals the dual role of the "Other" in cross-cultural communication: they are both experiencers and narrators. They undertake cultural translation functions and also gain audience trust through the construction of "authenticity". This perspective helps deepen understanding of the narrative logic of the "Other" and provides referential analytical dimensions for future research.

Practical Implication.

At the practical level, this study offers three implications for the international communication of global cities such as Shanghai. First, personalized narrative is an effective path to break stereotypes. Using the "Other" as witness to convey "seeing-is-believing" information can effectively dilute Western media stereotypes. Second, everyday life scenes are important carriers for city image communication. City image construction can focus on details of local life, daily consumption, and the like. Third, "authenticity" is key to gaining recognition in cross-cultural narratives. Vloggers' honest records of difficulties adapting to digital systems, spatial crowding, and other issues actually enhance credibility through "imperfect" narratives, indicating that city image shaping should embrace complexity and win deep recognition by confronting problems.

Limitations and Future Research.

This study only collected video texts from the YouTube platform as its analysis object, failing to incorporate the video images themselves into the analytical framework. As an audiovisual medium, VLOG's meaning is conveyed not only through language but also through visual elements such as camera language, picture composition, light and color, and editing rhythm. Future research could introduce multimodal analysis methods, combining image recognition, camera analysis, and

other techniques with text mining to more comprehensively reconstruct the construction process of "Other-Narrative".

Furthermore, "Other-Narrative" is a dynamic process that evolves with policy environments, platform rules, and international public opinion. How these external factors influence vloggers' narrative strategies and content choices deserves follow-up research from a diachronic perspective.

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