

Research on China's National Image from the Perspective of Omnimedia

-- A Case Study of China's Winter Olympics in the Eyes of Foreign Short Video Bloggers

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Abstract

In the age of omnimedia, short video plays an increasingly important role in foreign cultural communication because of the viewer-friendly length, fast communication speed, wide communication range, strong interaction and other alike characteristics. Foreign vloggers who take Chinese current events as their creating content, are of practical significance on China's communication with the rest of the world, which partly improves the cultural confidence and pride of the Chinese people. This paper analyses the image of China through the short videos produced by foreign vloggers on the content of China Winter Olympics which presents a stage to reflect the overall economic and cultural level of a country. The analysis finds the importance and influence of short videos on local culture and national image at all levels, especially helps to creative a more open and real image of China.

Keywords

Omnimedia, China's national image, Foreign blogger, Short video, Winter Olympics.

1. Introduction

National image is the expression of a country's comprehensive national strength. It is the basic cognition and overall image formed by the history and current situation, economy and politics, culture and society and other elements of a country in its citizens and the international community under certain conditions. The development process of national image in China can be divided into three stages: ancient, modern and contemporary. In ancient China, with highly developed economy, the political power was highly centralized in the central government. On the whole, China presented a unified and prosperous atmosphere. With a strong national power, the state of all states was in a state of congratulation. With the strong influential power of culture, East Asian cultural circle taken China as the core has been built. In modern times, foreign powers invaded, and the national government became weak and incompetent. Warlords sprung up, and chaos broke out in the country. A number of advanced patriots absorbed thoughts of Marxism, combined it with China's realities, and saved China from a time of crisis. They fought against Fascism and made great contributions to world peace. In the contemporary era, the Third Plenary Session of the 11th CPC Central Committee, reform and opening up policy and other measures attract worldwide attentions to China, thus China began to shine on the world stage again. The initiative of "One Belt, One Road" and "a community with a shared future for mankind" introduce the most valuable ancient classic philosophy of "harmony" to the world. China has not only achieved a qualitative leap from standing on its own

feet to becoming rich. It is committed to the common prosperity of the Chinese people, and at the same time, it is committed to the equality, prosperity and health of the people in the world. With the gradual development of globalization and the advancement of the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation, China has moved closer to the center of the world stage and presented an increasingly diverse and comprehensive image to the world in terms of politics, economy and culture. Therefore, China should gradually realize the necessity and adopt effective ways to build its own image on the world stage. Digital diplomacy, intended as a means to “amplify traditional diplomatic efforts, develop tech-based policy solutions and encourage cyber-activism” [1] can be considered as an important aspect of China’s smart power to propagate its image.

2. The Communicative Power of Short Video in the Era of Omnimedia

2.1. Omnimedia and short video

With the development of novel media technology, people are no longer satisfied with the single way of obtaining information through traditional media. Omnimedia is the product of the development of the new era, which is a new communication form based on the fusion between texts, graphics, images, animations, sounds, videos and other media means on different forms of media (print, television, broadcast media, network media, mobile media, etc.). At present, the most extensive form of omnimedia is the combination of network media and mobile media, and the typical combination form is the short video represented by Douyin short video. The reason why Short video can enter into people's daily life at a relatively fast speed, is that it not only takes advantage of the development of high-tech, but also is closely related to the characteristics of short video itself. Most video platforms not only have the function of watching videos, but also have specific social attributes and extremely powerful communication functions. When making video content, vloggers mainly choose topics closely related to their own lives and reflect the local characteristics, which can meet the viewing needs of different audiences and easily arouse the resonance of the audience. Most short videos also have interactive functions such as thumbs up and comments, which meet the desire of the audience to interact with people on the network and attract the interest of the audience to watch short videos.

2.2. Foreign short video bloggers producing China-related content

Compared with local vloggers in China, foreign friends, obviously have the innate advantage of attracting more attentions. Whether it's their foreign appearances, or the way they think and act differently from Chinese people, it can arouse the curiosity of viewers home and abroad. Most foreign vloggers focus on experiencing Chinese food and culture, while some share the differences between Chinese and Western cultures. Bilibili Animation has hundreds of foreign bloggers on its website, and most of them produce short videos. For example, Gerry Guo, a full-time blogger from New York, posts most of his videos on the Bilibili Animation site about cultural similarities and differences between China and the United States, including trying out Chinese food, social events and people's livelihood in China and the United States. From 2017 to June 2022, the blogger had 7.1 million followers and posted 471 videos, almost all of which have been viewed more than a million times. A Fu, a blogger from Germany, has settled down in Shanghai, trying to build a bridge between Chinese and German culture. From 2016 to June 2022, the blogger had a total of 431 videos posted by 1.77 million followers, almost every video receiving millions of views. Watching videos of foreigners experiencing Chinese culture has had an unexpected effect on inspiring cultural pride among Chinese people. These foreign bloggers experience things that are unknown to them, and their first reactions are naturally authentic and down-to-earth, creating a public image that is close to the people. While narrating the

content of the short video, these bloggers also bring their own feelings and reflections into the video. They share their joys and sorrows in the short video, so that the audience can better empathize with the blogger, and the blogger can get more love from the audience.

3. Taking “German Leo Le Bai Says”, “Amy’s Meal” and “Trey Silly in Italy” as Examples of Short Videos on Beijing Winter Olympics

3.1. Profiles of foreign bloggers

Blogger Leo Le Bai from Berlin, Germany, loves Chinese food, and makes videos with the content of experiencing Chinese food, sharing personal opinions on Chinese and German history and cultures, trying to set up a bridge of cultural communication between China and Germany. Amy, a blogger from Australia, taking travel videos in China, which are full of lively flavor, covering various city food, street scene, human history, social culture and other aspects, showing a full image of China. Trey’s videos are mainly about cold knowledge of Italy, interspersed with some funny videos with Italian cultural elements, also introduces the differences and similarities between Chinese and Italian cultures. When Beijing was hosting the 24th Olympic Games, the three bloggers inquired and collected the information about the Olympic Games. They presented different aspects and stories of Beijing Winter Olympics in their short videos, thus providing a relatively objective and comprehensive angle to show the contemporary China to the whole world.

3.2. Foreign Bloggers’ Short Videos about the Winter Olympics

3.2.1. China-style epidemic governance

In Trey Silly’s video released on February 17th, 2022, “The life of Milan - Beijing Olympic village | enclosed-loop”, he followed Italian delegation into the closed loop, getting to know some of the Beijing Olympics epidemic prevention measures and highly praised to these measures. The International Olympic Committee (IOC), the International Paralympic Committee (IPC) and the Organizing Committee of the Beijing Winter Olympic Games have issued the “Beijing 2022 Olympic Winter Games and Paralympic Winter Games Epidemic Prevention Manual” to guide the implementation of epidemic prevention measures for Beijing Winter Olympic Games in an all-round way. Athletes, coaches, staff, and spectators attending the Beijing Winter Olympic Games will experience policies and practices outlined in Olympic Playbooks designed to protect public health[2]. Foreign participants must have been vaccinated 14 days before entering the country, and those who have not been vaccinated will be quarantined for 21 days after entering the country. After entry, the vaccinated participants enter into the enclosed loop for unified management. The enclosed loop management provides various measures for the participants, including transportation, catering, entertainment, etc., which not only meet the various livelihood needs of the participants, but also provides participants with a certain activity zone, which is indeed necessary for epidemic prevention and control. At the same time, in order to enhance safety protection, participants and staff need to take nucleic acid tests every day and wear medical masks in accordance with the requirements guarantee athletes a health-friendly environment.

3.2.2. Mascot “Bing Dwen Dwen”

In the video “I came to Bing Dwen Dwen’s hometown to witness the growth of a baby panda?!” posted by Amy Fan on Feb 25th, 2022, she came to the hometown of the giant panda which is the prototype of Beijing Winter Olympics’ mascot: Bing Dwen Dwen, and expressed her love for Bing Dwen Dwen. Bing Dwen Dwen received a lot of favor during the Games. The cute panda represents China’s friendly and amiable national image. The waving hands express China's welcome and hospitality to the whole world, and the astronaut's outfit adds a technological element to the mascot, which innovatively combines technology with the panda as a national

treasure of modern China. The connotation of the design of Bing Dwen Dwen is profound, which is accepted, further recognized and loved by people all over the world.

3.2.3. Dining environment and Chinese cuisine

“A foreign girl moved to a hutong and cooked a Winter Olympics Feast for her friend!” was a video released by Amy Fan on February 1st, 2022. In the video, she cooked a Winter Olympics dinner for her friends, while mentioning the dining environment of the athletes. In the enclosed loop, there is a special canteen for athletes, with specific chefs in charge of the meals. Since athletes are strict with their weights, chefs deliberately improve the food preparation methods according to different participation situations, so as to ensure that the food can meet their need. The athletes' restaurant also sets up 12 different kinds of dining tables, both western food and Chinese food, to cater to various tastes, so that athletes can not only eat the familiar hometown dishes, but also feel the unique style of Chinese dishes. The main media restaurant of the Beijing Winter Olympic Games has realized system automation and 24-hour operation. Journalists can enjoy intelligent services such as machine cooking and machine intelligent food delivery in this restaurant. In order to implement the quarantine measures, the dining area of the restaurant is separated by a partition and equipped with disinfectants and other anti-epidemic items.

3.3. Image of China Delivered by Foreign Bloggers' Short Videos of the Winter Olympics

3.3.1. Warm and enthusiastic humanistic environment

The video “Opening Ceremony and the Lovely Volunteers” released by Trey Silly on Feb 27th, 2022 and the video “Everyone loves Bing Dwen Dwen! Crazy exchange of pins and badges with volunteers!” on Feb 19th, 2022 both mentioned the ubiquitous Chinese elements of the Winter Olympics and the volunteers' efforts for the Games. During the Olympic Games, Chinese New Year decorations, such as paper-cuts for window decoration and Chinese knots, are decorated in the closed-loop environment of the venues, so that foreign athletes can also blend into the atmosphere of the Chinese New Year. On the New Year's Eve, the canteen prepared traditional dishes and snacks with Chinese characteristics, so that athletes from all over the world can fully feel the charm of China's warm hospitality and Chinese food culture. At the opening ceremony of the Olympic Games, the ink painting of the Yellow River, the welcoming pine, the Chinese characteristic doors and Windows showed the rich and colorful Chinese characteristics, and expressed a warm welcome to the friends from all over the world. From the “Ruyi” and “ribbon” inspired “snow Ruyi” and “ice ribbon” to the “Chinese Dragon” and “A Picture of a Thousand Rivers and Mountains” costumes, Chinese elements were everywhere on and off the field. The volunteers during the Games were widely praised. At the closing ceremony of the Beijing Olympic Games, International Olympic Committee President Thomas Bach said, “The smiles in your eyes warmed our hearts, and your goodwill will live on in our hearts forever.” With their warm attitude and considerate service, the volunteers have won praise from athletes all over the world.

3.3.2. Facilities with advanced technology

On February 28th, 2022, Le Bai released a video titled “Germans Praise the Winter Olympics technology!” The video discusses the importance of technology to the games and points out some technological innovations for the Beijing Winter Olympics. Compared with the 2008 Beijing Olympics, the level of science and technology of the 2022 Beijing Winter Olympics has also improved significantly. The torch relay on the cloud ensures the safety and smooth operation of the torch relay under the pandemic, and the high-freedom view of the games allows the audience to enjoy the Olympic events in an immersive way. The six-degree-of-freedom electric-simulated sports training system enables athletes to carry out a more realistic special sports training environment indoors, which can guarantee the participation status of

competitors. The system not only uploads the athletes' information and results to the cloud, but also uploads the Olympic management system to the cloud, which greatly reduces the complexity of management procedures. Artificial snow making technology provides more suitable snow for the competition venues and reduces the impact of snow on the athletes. Carbon-dioxide-ice-making provides high quality ice surface for athletes to have better performance. The emergence of auxiliary judgment methods such as video assistant referee and high-definition photography technology reduces the probability of judges' misjudgment, improves the fairness of the arena, and embodies the sportsmanship and competitive spirit. High-definition photography technology also provides a good sense of atmosphere for the game. The combination of slow motion and original speed makes the audience see the key actions more clearly and experience the beauty of the game more intuitively. The special train for the Beijing Winter Olympics is the country's first 5G intelligent high-speed train, which has achieved automatic high-speed driving. All kinds of advanced diagnosis and treatment equipment, such as portable smart cardiac resuscitation and ECG monitor, are equipped inside the smart mobile cabins to guarantee the safety of athletes.

3.3.3. Low-carbon and environment-friendly stadium

A video released by Le Bai on February 18th, 2022, adopted technology as a starting point to talk about the environment protecting measures in the Beijing Winter Olympics. During recent years, the Olympic Games have increasingly been used by host nations to manifest their own green visions and sustainability strategy [3]. More and more host countries have recognized the role of the Olympic Games as catalysts on their path to sustainability [4]. The Beijing Winter Olympic Games is the first truly "carbon neutral" green Olympics. Beijing and Zhangjiakou promoted the smart city to help the successful hosting of the Beijing 2022 [5]. During the relay of the Olympic flame, the lighting of the flame was carried out by using hydrogen fuel, which minimized the damage to the environment. As one of the competition venues, the National Speed Skating Hall uses carbon dioxide transcritical direct cooling technology to make ice and realize the circulation of carbon dioxide gas. The torchbearers' uniforms and the clothes of the Beijing Winter Olympic stadium waste disposal team are also carefully made. High-tech processes such as 3D printing technology are used. Most of the materials used are from recycled resources, which not only improve the performance of the clothes, but also truly implement the idea of green environmental protection. Wind power from Zhangjiakou is being used at all the venues for the Beijing Olympics, which is less polluting than conventional coal-fired power. The use of hydrogen fuel cell vehicles in the Zhangjiakou area of the Beijing Winter Olympics reduces carbon dioxide emissions to the environment thus creating no pollution. The ingredients used in the athletes' restaurant are processed and distributed through the central kitchen. The clean ingredients are used to save a lot of kitchen waste and reduce the space occupied by the venues. The athletes' restaurants use biodegradable green tableware, which could reduce the harm to the environment.

3.4. Influence of foreign bloggers' short videos of the Winter Olympics

Mega-events play an important role in drawing media coverage, and the Olympics is the thing that cannot be beaten [6]. The information about events, athletes, and facilities is frequently broadcasted during the Olympics. The short videos have illustrated the Beijing Winter Olympic Games in various aspects, in different forms including pictures and texts, so that masses of people can have a deeper and more specific understanding of Beijing Winter Olympic Games as well as understand the efforts made by the Central government and its people for the Beijing Winter Olympic Games. The short videos made by foreign vloggers based on their own understandings and views provide a new angle of view, more real and accessible, easier to make the audience empathy, thus arouse the Chinese audience's sense of national pride and self-confidence. The diversified, inclusive humanistic environment in Beijing Olympics makes

China's national image stands higher to the people home and abroad. The short videos of the Beijing Winter Olympic Games shot from the perspective of foreigners are in-depth and practical. Objectively, they can show the ideas of green environment protection, peaceful coexistence and seeking common ground while shelving differences that China has injected into the Beijing Winter Olympic Games, so that the world can view and understand China from an objective perspective and better communicate with China.

4. Strategies for Building China's image in the Omnimedia Era

The dissemination of the short video of the Winter Olympics provides a case for building up a positive and real image of China in the era of Omnimedia. President Xi pays particular attention to the issue of international image, evident in his remarks on the importance of explaining China's story well to the international audience [7]. From the macroscopic view, the country should shape its national image as a whole, combine various means of communication, and actively follow the trend of all media, so as to lay a solid foundation for shaping a vivid and multi-dimensional national image. The government should leverage the power of short videos, make short videos coordinate with national policies, and effectively contribute to shaping a plump national image. The government also needs to cultivate a group of high-quality short video creators, raise the threshold of short video creation through leading and training, and improve the overall quality of short videos. From the micro point of view, first of all, the network short video media should develop into a positive and healthy network ecosystem. Short video platform managers need to strengthen the supervision and review of short video content, found a bright short video creation platform, and provide a favorable creation environment for short video creators. Secondly, short video platform can set up a reward mechanism to encourage and guide short video creators to create real content on current events leading people to have a full understanding of the society and world. Short video platforms can also set up specific sections to help shaping the national image. Then, short video creators also need to improve their moral and skill levels, thus deepening the depth of short videos. Finally, short video creators should not be prejudicial when telling Chinese stories and shaping the image of China. They should start from actual details and explore the truth hidden in Chinese mountains and rivers. Therefore, full attention to the communication power and influence of short videos on local culture and national image at all levels should be paid and a more open and inclusive attitude towards short videos should be embraced.

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