

Generative AI and the Global Communication of Chinese Cultural Short Videos

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Abstract

With the rapid development of digital media and artificial intelligence, short videos have become an important medium for the global communication of Chinese culture. Compared with traditional forms of international communication, short videos are more visual, interactive, emotional, and platform-oriented, which makes them suitable for cross-cultural communication in the mobile media era. Meanwhile, generative artificial intelligence has begun to reshape the production, translation, editing, distribution, and evaluation of cultural content. This paper focuses on the global communication of Chinese cultural short videos and explores how generative AI empowers cultural content creation, cross-cultural adaptation, communication efficiency, and cultural value transmission. It argues that generative AI can lower the threshold of cultural content production, enrich multimodal expression, improve multilingual communication, and expand the international reach of Chinese cultural narratives. However, AI-driven cultural communication also faces challenges such as content homogenization, cultural misunderstanding, algorithmic bias, copyright uncertainty, and the weakening of cultural authenticity. Therefore, the future development of Chinese cultural short videos should not rely on technological efficiency alone. It should combine technological innovation with cultural accuracy, localized expression, human review, ethical governance, and international cooperation, so as to enhance the global communication power and cultural influence of Chinese culture in the digital intelligence era.

Keywords

generative AI, Chinese cultural short videos, global communication, cross-cultural communication

1. Introduction

1.1 Research Background

In the digital media era, short videos have become one of the most influential forms of global communication. Platforms such as TikTok, YouTube Shorts, Instagram Reels, and other social media applications have changed the way people obtain information, understand foreign societies, and participate in cultural interaction. Compared with traditional documentaries, television programs, official promotional films, and long-form cultural texts, short videos are shorter, more visual, more emotional, and easier to share. Their fragmented narrative structure matches the media habits of global audiences, especially younger generations who mainly consume information through mobile devices.

For the international communication of Chinese culture, short videos provide a new historical opportunity. Chinese cultural symbols such as traditional festivals, intangible cultural heritage, Chinese food, tea culture, calligraphy, martial arts, Chinese opera, ancient poetry, paper cutting, porcelain, and traditional architecture can be transformed into vivid audiovisual narratives. At the same time, contemporary Chinese culture, including urban lifestyles, technological innovation, sports events, youth culture, tourism, fashion, and everyday social life, can also be presented through short videos. This means that Chinese culture can move from abstract national discourse to concrete, emotional, and daily-life-based expression.

However, cultural communication is never a simple process of “sending information”. When Chinese cultural content enters overseas platforms, it faces multiple barriers, including language differences, cultural background gaps, different aesthetic preferences, different political and social contexts, and platform algorithmic mechanisms. A cultural symbol that is familiar to Chinese audiences may be strange or even confusing to foreign audiences. A traditional value that is meaningful in the Chinese context may need additional explanation before it can be understood by international viewers. Therefore, the global communication of Chinese cultural short videos requires not only visual attractiveness but also cross-cultural interpretation.

The rapid development of generative artificial intelligence has brought new possibilities to this field. Generative AI refers to artificial intelligence systems that can generate new content, including text, images, audio, video, subtitles, music, scripts, and virtual characters. In the media industry, generative AI is changing the workflow of content production. It can assist in topic selection, script writing, video editing, image generation, voice synthesis, multilingual translation, audience analysis, and platform distribution. Guzman and Lewis point out that generative AI has become a transformative force in media industries such as journalism, advertising, and public relations, because it changes not only production efficiency but also the relationship between human creators, media organizations, and technological systems [1].

In the field of Chinese cultural short videos, generative AI can reduce production costs and expand creative possibilities. A small cultural institution, an individual creator, or a local intangible cultural heritage inheritor can use AI tools to complete script writing, visual generation, subtitle translation, dubbing, and editing. This means that cultural content that previously lacked funding, technology, or professional production teams can now gain new channels of expression. At the same time, AI can help creators produce different language versions and culturally adapted versions for different audiences, which may reduce cultural discount and improve international understanding.

Nevertheless, the use of generative AI in cultural communication also creates new risks. AI-generated cultural content may be visually impressive but culturally shallow. It may simplify complex Chinese culture into a few stereotyped symbols such as dragons, lanterns, ancient costumes, or kung fu. It may also produce inaccurate historical scenes, inappropriate translations, or misleading cultural explanations. UNESCO's Recommendation on the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence emphasizes that AI development should respect human dignity, cultural diversity, fairness, transparency, and human oversight [2]. UNESCO's guidance on generative AI also stresses that generative AI should be governed through appropriate regulation, human capacity building, and responsible use [3]. Therefore, the key issue is not whether Chinese cultural short videos should use AI, but how they can use AI in a culturally responsible and globally effective way.

1.2 Research Significance and Research Ideas

Theoretically, this study connects generative AI, short-video communication, cross-cultural communication, and international cultural communication. Existing research on Chinese cultural communication often focuses on national image, public diplomacy, traditional media, or overseas social media strategies. Research on generative AI often focuses on technological innovation, media production, or ethical risks. This paper brings these two areas together and examines how generative AI affects the global communication of Chinese cultural short videos.

Practically, this study can provide reference for official media, museums, cultural institutions, tourism organizations, short-video creators, MCN agencies, overseas communication teams, and platform operators. It discusses how generative AI can help them improve cultural content creation, multilingual communication, platform operation, and audience interaction. More importantly, it emphasizes that AI-assisted cultural

communication should not only pursue traffic, speed, or visual novelty. It should also maintain cultural authenticity, narrative depth, and ethical responsibility.

This paper mainly adopts literature research, case analysis, comparative analysis, and content analysis. Literature research is used to clarify the theoretical basis of generative AI, cross-cultural communication, participatory culture, and soft power. Case analysis is used to understand typical practices of Chinese cultural short videos on overseas platforms. Comparative analysis is used to examine differences among platforms, audiences, and cultural contexts. Content analysis is used to discuss how cultural symbols, narrative structures, and audience responses are formed in short-video communication.

2. Theoretical Basis and Core Concepts

2.1 Core Concepts

Generative AI refers to artificial intelligence systems that can produce new content based on large-scale data training and user prompts. Its outputs may include articles, scripts, pictures, videos, music, voices, subtitles, virtual humans, and interactive content. In media communication, generative AI is not only a tool for improving efficiency; it is also a new infrastructure of content production. It can participate in the whole process of cultural communication, from content planning to visual creation, from translation to distribution, and from audience analysis to effect evaluation.

Chinese cultural short videos refer to short-form audiovisual works that present Chinese cultural symbols, values, lifestyles, historical memory, artistic traditions, and contemporary social development. They include traditional cultural content, such as intangible cultural heritage, festivals, crafts, poetry, food, opera, calligraphy, and traditional aesthetics. They also include contemporary cultural content, such as urban life, technological innovation, education, sports, tourism, youth creativity, and social changes. Therefore, Chinese cultural short videos should not be understood only as videos about ancient China. They are also an important way to present modern China and everyday Chinese society.

The global communication of cultural short videos refers to the process by which cultural content crosses national, linguistic, and cultural boundaries through digital platforms. Its effect should not be evaluated only by views, likes, or shares. A video with high traffic does not necessarily produce deep cultural understanding. A more complete evaluation should include audience comprehension, emotional resonance, cultural acceptance, willingness to share, positive discussion, and long-term influence on cultural perception.

2.2 Theoretical Basis

Cross-cultural communication theory provides the first theoretical foundation for this study. Hofstede's cultural dimension theory shows that different societies may differ in values such as individualism, collectivism, power distance, and uncertainty avoidance [4]. Later research further points out that cultural values are dynamic and can change under globalization and social transformation [5]. This means that Chinese cultural short videos should not assume that overseas audiences share the same cultural background as Chinese audiences. Instead, they must consider how different audiences understand family, tradition, authority, community, emotion, humor, and visual symbols.

Cultural discount theory is also important. Hoskins and Mirus argue that cultural products may lose part of their value when they enter foreign markets because audiences lack the necessary cultural background or cannot fully identify with unfamiliar cultural meanings [6]. In the global communication of Chinese culture, this problem is very common. For example, Chinese poetry, filial piety, traditional rituals, and historical legends often contain rich cultural connotations, but foreign audiences may only see beautiful images without understanding the deeper meaning. Generative AI can help reduce cultural discount by providing multilingual explanations, background information, localized examples, and audience-oriented narrative structures.

Participatory culture theory helps explain the interactive nature of short-video platforms. Jenkins argues that in the new media environment, audiences are not passive receivers but active participants who can comment, remix, imitate, translate, and redistribute content [7]. In the short-video ecosystem, this feature is especially obvious. A Chinese cultural video may inspire foreign audiences to ask questions, produce reaction videos, imitate a dance, try Chinese food, learn Chinese words, or share the video with their own interpretation.

Jenkins, Ford, and Green further explain that media content becomes “spreadable” when users find it meaningful and actively circulate it through social networks [8]. Therefore, the success of Chinese cultural short videos depends not only on content production but also on audience participation.

Soft power theory provides another important perspective. Nye defines soft power as the ability to attract and persuade others through culture, values, and policies rather than coercion or payment [9]. The global communication of Chinese cultural short videos is closely related to cultural soft power. If Chinese cultural content is presented in an attractive, credible, and understandable way, it can improve international audiences’ knowledge of China and enhance the global influence of Chinese culture. However, soft power cannot be built through one-way propaganda alone. It requires trust, emotional resonance, and meaningful cultural dialogue.

3. Current Situation of Generative AI Empowering Chinese Cultural Short Videos

3.1 Application in Content Creation and Optimization

At present, generative AI has been applied to Chinese cultural short videos in several major ways. First, it supports creative planning and script generation. When creators produce a video about the Dragon Boat Festival, the Mid-Autumn Festival, Chinese tea culture, or an intangible cultural heritage craft, AI tools can quickly generate topic angles, narrative structures, subtitles, titles, and platform descriptions. This helps creators overcome the early-stage difficulty of planning and improves production efficiency.

Second, generative AI supports visual generation and scene restoration. Many cultural topics involve historical scenes, ancient costumes, traditional streets, old workshops, or museum artifacts that are difficult to shoot directly. AI image and video generation tools can help reconstruct these visual scenes and make cultural content more vivid. For example, AI can animate ancient paintings, restore the working process of traditional craftsmen, or create immersive scenes based on classical poetry. UNESCO’s report on artificial intelligence and culture points out that AI is increasingly influencing cultural creation, cultural heritage presentation, and creative industries [10]. This trend is directly related to the production of cultural short videos.

Third, AI supports multilingual communication. Language is one of the biggest barriers to global cultural communication. Traditional translation and dubbing require high costs and long production cycles. AI translation, automatic subtitle generation, and AI dubbing make it possible for one Chinese cultural video to be quickly transformed into several language versions. This allows Chinese cultural content to reach English-speaking, Spanish-speaking, Arabic-speaking, Japanese-speaking, Korean-speaking, and other audiences more efficiently.

Fourth, AI supports content optimization. Different platforms and audiences prefer different video rhythms, titles, subtitles, and emotional tones. AI can help creators produce multiple versions of a video and adjust the narrative style according to audience preferences. For example, a video about Chinese calligraphy can be made into a calm aesthetic version for art lovers, a short explanatory version for general audiences, or a humorous version for younger viewers. This does not mean changing the core meaning of culture, but finding more suitable ways of expression.

3.2 Communication Achievements and Existing Limitations

The communication subjects of Chinese cultural short videos have become increasingly diverse. Official media, museums, tourism departments, universities, cultural institutions, overseas Chinese communities, self-media creators, and foreign influencers are all participating in the global dissemination of Chinese culture. This diversity is valuable because global audiences are not a single group. Some audiences prefer historical explanation, some prefer food and lifestyle, some prefer visual aesthetics, and some prefer personal stories. A multi-subject communication system can provide different cultural entry points.

The content of Chinese cultural short videos has also become richer. In the past, overseas communication of Chinese culture often focused on traditional symbols such as the Great Wall, pandas, kung fu, and festivals. Today, more short videos also present contemporary Chinese culture, including smart cities, high-speed rail, sports events, youth lifestyles, modern design, technological innovation, and urban tourism. This helps international audiences understand that Chinese culture is not only ancient and traditional, but also modern and dynamic.

However, current practices still have limitations. Some videos overemphasize visual beauty but do not explain cultural meaning. Some videos repeatedly use stereotyped symbols, which may reinforce simplified impressions of China. Some AI-generated videos are aesthetically impressive but historically inaccurate. Some creators simply translate domestic content into English without adjusting cultural context, so overseas audiences may still find it difficult to understand. Therefore, AI-assisted Chinese cultural short videos have achieved initial progress, but they still need deeper cultural planning, better localization, and more careful review.

4. Mechanisms of Generative AI in Global Communication

4.1 Technical Empowerment and Production Transformation

The first mechanism is technical empowerment. Traditional cultural video production usually requires professional equipment, filming teams, editors, translators, researchers, and platform operators. This makes international cultural communication expensive and slow. Generative AI reduces this threshold. Local cultural institutions, museums, schools, and individual creators can use AI tools to complete tasks that previously required large teams. In this sense, AI democratizes cultural content production and allows more cultural resources to enter global communication.

AI also improves production efficiency. It can quickly generate scripts, translate subtitles, synthesize voices, edit materials, and design visual effects. For cultural communication, speed is important because online trends change quickly. When a Chinese festival, sports event, cultural exhibition, or international topic becomes popular, creators can use AI tools to produce timely content and connect Chinese cultural narratives with global conversations.

More importantly, AI enriches multimodal expression. Chinese culture often contains abstract concepts, historical references, and symbolic meanings. Pure text explanation may be difficult for foreign audiences, but AI can transform cultural meanings into images, animation, sound, and short stories. Manovich argues that software has become a key force shaping contemporary cultural production [11]. From this perspective, generative AI is a new stage of software-based cultural production. It allows creators to combine text, image, sound, motion, and data into integrated cultural narratives.

4.2 Cross-Cultural Adaptation and Audience Connection

The second mechanism is cross-cultural adaptation. Language translation is only the first step. The deeper challenge is whether audiences can understand the emotional logic, symbolic meaning, and social context behind the content. For example, when a video introduces the concept of “family reunion” during the Spring Festival, foreign audiences may understand the basic meaning, but they may not fully understand its emotional weight in Chinese society. When a video introduces filial piety, foreign audiences may interpret it differently depending on their cultural values. Therefore, cultural communication requires contextual translation, not only linguistic translation.

Generative AI can support this process by helping creators rewrite cultural explanations for different audiences. A video about the Mid-Autumn Festival can emphasize mythology and moon imagery for Western audiences, family reunion for East Asian audiences, food and lifestyle for younger viewers, and traditional poetry for audiences interested in literature. This kind of audience-oriented adaptation can reduce cultural discount and improve acceptance.

AI can also help creators analyze comments and audience responses. If many viewers ask similar questions, the creator can produce follow-up videos to explain the cultural background. If comments show misunderstanding, creators can adjust the narrative in future videos. Rogers’ diffusion of innovations theory suggests that the spread of new ideas depends on communication channels, social systems, and audience acceptance [12]. Therefore, Chinese cultural short videos should not be a one-time output, but a continuous process of explanation, feedback, adjustment, and dialogue.

5. Dilemmas and Challenges

5.1 Technical and Content Challenges

Although generative AI provides new possibilities, it also creates technical and content-level problems. The first problem is insufficient cultural depth. AI models generate content based on existing data patterns. If training data are incomplete, biased, or superficial, AI-generated cultural content may also be superficial. It may reproduce familiar symbols without explaining their deeper meaning. For example, AI may repeatedly use dragons, lanterns, red colors, ancient clothing, and palace architecture to represent China, while ignoring regional diversity, ethnic diversity, historical complexity, and contemporary life.

The second problem is content homogenization. When many creators use similar AI tools, prompts, templates, and visual styles, their videos may become similar. This is dangerous for cultural communication because culture should be diverse, specific, and historically grounded. If Chinese cultural short videos become visually beautiful but narratively similar, audiences may feel aesthetic fatigue, and the unique charm of Chinese culture may be weakened.

The third problem is cultural misunderstanding. AI-generated translations may be grammatically correct but culturally inappropriate. Some Chinese concepts cannot be directly translated into English or other languages. For example, terms related to Confucian ethics, traditional aesthetics, family relationships, and historical allusions often require explanation. If AI translation ignores context, it may produce misunderstanding or even negative interpretation.

The fourth problem is the weakening of originality. AI can help creators produce content quickly, but overreliance on AI may reduce human creativity. Cultural communication depends on lived experience, emotional memory, historical understanding, and human judgment. AI can assist creators, but it cannot replace cultural sensitivity. A video created only for algorithmic traffic may gain short-term views but fail to build long-term cultural trust.

5.2 Communication, Ethical, and Legal Challenges

At the communication level, one major challenge is uneven platform distribution. Chinese cultural short videos may perform well on some platforms but have limited visibility on others. TikTok, YouTube Shorts, Instagram Reels, and Facebook have different user groups, algorithmic mechanisms, cultural environments, and content norms. A video that works on one platform may not work on another. Therefore, creators cannot rely on a single platform strategy.

Another challenge is the lack of localized communication. Some Chinese cultural short videos simply translate Chinese scripts into English without adjusting narrative logic. This often reduces communication effectiveness. Overseas audiences may not understand the background, emotional tone, or symbolic meaning of the content. Localized communication should include not only language but also rhythm, examples, emotional appeal, cultural comparison, and visual habits.

The evaluation system is also incomplete. Many creators still use views, likes, and shares as the main indicators of success. However, cultural communication should not only pursue traffic. A video may receive many views because of visual novelty, but viewers may not truly understand the culture. A more meaningful evaluation should include comment quality, audience questions, emotional resonance, positive interpretation, cross-cultural dialogue, and long-term changes in cultural perception.

Ethical and legal challenges are equally important. UNESCO's AI ethics framework emphasizes fairness, transparency, accountability, human oversight, and respect for cultural diversity [13]. These principles are highly relevant to AI-assisted cultural communication. If AI-generated cultural content is based on biased data, it may reproduce stereotypes. If AI tools use copyrighted cultural images, music, voices, or artworks without authorization, they may create copyright disputes. The German Commission for UNESCO has noted that AI in cultural and creative industries raises issues related to copyright, cultural diversity, labor rights, and human creativity [14].

There is also a contradiction between technological efficiency and cultural authenticity. AI makes production faster, but cultural communication requires accuracy, respect, and patience. If creators treat AI only as a tool for traffic, Chinese culture may be simplified into eye-catching images and emotional slogans. This may increase exposure in the short term but weaken credibility in the long term.

6. Optimization Paths

6.1 Improving Technology and Content Quality

The first optimization path is to improve AI's cultural understanding. Professional Chinese cultural databases should be built to support AI-assisted creation. These databases should include cultural terminology, historical materials, museum resources, intangible cultural heritage archives, regional cultural materials, multilingual explanations, pronunciation guides, image resources, and copyright information. With reliable cultural data, AI tools can produce more accurate and meaningful content.

Second, expert review should be introduced. AI-generated cultural content should not be published directly without human checking. Historians, cultural scholars, translators, heritage inheritors, and communication specialists should review important content to avoid factual errors, cultural stereotypes, and inappropriate expressions. This is especially important for topics involving history, religion, ethnic culture, traditional rituals, and intangible cultural heritage.

Third, creators should balance authenticity and creativity. Cultural authenticity means respecting historical facts, cultural meanings, and community values. Creativity means using forms that global audiences can understand and enjoy. For example, a video about calligraphy should not only show beautiful brush movements but also explain the relationship between calligraphy, personality, rhythm, discipline, and Chinese aesthetics. A video about Chinese food should not only show taste but also explain family memory, regional identity, and social connection.

Fourth, Chinese cultural short videos should combine tradition and modernity. Traditional culture is important, but contemporary Chinese culture should not be ignored. Videos about Chinese youth, sports, technology, urban life, environmental action, and creative industries can help global audiences see China as a living and changing society. This broader cultural presentation can reduce stereotypes and build a more complete image of Chinese culture.

6.2 Building a Responsible Global Communication System

The second optimization path is to build a multi-dimensional global communication system. Different platforms require different strategies. TikTok may emphasize rhythm, music, and emotional hooks. YouTube Shorts may allow more explanation and storytelling. Instagram Reels may emphasize aesthetics and lifestyle identity. Creators should design content according to platform characteristics rather than publishing the same video everywhere.

Different regions also require different localization strategies. Southeast Asian audiences, European audiences, North American audiences, Middle Eastern audiences, and African audiences may respond differently to the same cultural topic. Localization does not mean changing the core meaning of Chinese culture. It means finding suitable entry points. For example, when introducing Chinese tea culture, one version may emphasize health and lifestyle, another may emphasize philosophy and aesthetics, and another may emphasize social rituals and hospitality.

Cross-cultural co-creation is also important. Chinese creators can cooperate with overseas influencers, museums, universities, cultural organizations, and local communities. When foreign creators participate in telling Chinese cultural stories, the content may become more relatable to local audiences. Co-creation can also reduce the impression of one-way cultural export and create a more equal dialogue.

Governance mechanisms must also be strengthened. AI-generated cultural short videos should be reviewed for cultural accuracy, language quality, copyright status, ethical risks, and possible misunderstanding. Creators should clearly understand whether AI-generated images, music, voices, and video materials can be used commercially. They should respect original artists, cultural communities, and heritage inheritors. UNESCO's

guidance on generative AI emphasizes human capacity building, policy development, and responsible governance [15]. These principles should also guide the global communication of Chinese cultural short videos.

Finally, interdisciplinary talent cultivation is necessary. Future cultural communication teams should include not only video editors and marketing staff, but also AI engineers, translators, cultural researchers, overseas platform specialists, legal advisors, and data analysts. Only interdisciplinary teams can make AI-assisted Chinese cultural communication both efficient and responsible.

7. Conclusion and Prospect

Generative AI is reshaping the global communication of Chinese cultural short videos. It can improve content production efficiency, reduce production costs, support multilingual communication, enrich visual expression, optimize platform dissemination, and strengthen audience interaction. More importantly, it provides new possibilities for transforming Chinese cultural resources into globally understandable digital narratives.

However, generative AI is not a simple solution. AI-assisted Chinese cultural short videos still face problems such as insufficient cultural depth, content homogenization, cultural misunderstanding, algorithmic bias, copyright uncertainty, and the weakening of cultural authenticity. Therefore, the future development of this field should not be technology-centered only. It should be culture-centered, audience-oriented, ethically governed, and internationally cooperative.

In the digital intelligence era, Chinese cultural short videos can become an important bridge for international cultural dialogue. Generative AI can help build this bridge faster and more efficiently, but the direction of the bridge must still be guided by human cultural understanding, creativity, and responsibility. Only by combining technological innovation with cultural authenticity can Chinese culture move from being seen to being understood, from being displayed to being discussed, and from short-term traffic to long-term global influence.

Future research can further conduct empirical analysis of Chinese cultural short videos on TikTok, YouTube Shorts, Instagram Reels, and other overseas platforms. It can compare audience responses in different regions and examine how AI-generated cultural content influences cultural understanding, emotional resonance, and national image. In addition, more attention should be paid to the ethical governance of AI-generated cultural content, especially copyright, cultural authenticity, cultural diversity, and algorithmic transparency.

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Funding

This research received no external funding.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Acknowledgment

This paper is an output of the science project.

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