



# Analysis of the Influence of Chinese Cultural Communication from a Cross-Cultural Perspective: A Case Study of Comments on Dianxi Xiaoge's YouTube Videos

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**Abstract.** This study focuses on the content of Dianxi Xiaoge's videos and their echoes among overseas audiences and explores the cross-cultural communication mechanism of Chinese culture along with its challenges and opportunities. Through the framework of media communication effects, this study systematically analyzes overseas netizens' comments and feedback on Dianxi Xiaoge's videos from the aspects of cognition, emotion, and behavior. Using the method of text analysis, it delves into the effective comments in Dianxi Xiaoge's videos and uncovers profound resonance in cognition and emotion among overseas audiences for Chinese cultural symbols, particularly for food and its preparation. These videos not only showcase the allure of Chinese rural life and traditional cooking practices but also stimulate the audience's curiosity and interest in Chinese rural lifestyle. In addition, the image aesthetics and authentic rural life scenes depicted in the videos provide the audience with immersive visual and auditory experiences and enhance their positive impression and emotional recognition of Chinese culture. From the emotional aspect, numerous positive comments reflect the audience's profound appreciation for the video content and their admiration for the protagonist's lifestyle, evoking emotional resonance regarding the harmonious relationship between humanity and nature, familial bonds, and aspirations for a better life. This underscores the significance of shared emotions in cross-cultural communication. From the behavioral aspect, the video content not only encourages the audience to delve deeper into Chinese culture but also fosters exchanges and discussions among audiences, which further expands the reach of Chinese culture. Moreover, this study proposes several suggestions for optimizing the cross-cultural communication of Chinese culture, including evoking emotional resonance through shared values, enhancing the audience's sense of recognition through effective narration of Chinese stories, and using technical means to enhance the viewing experience of videos. Through these strategies, we can effectively overcome cultural barriers, improve the efficiency and influence of international communication of Chinese culture, and promote mutual understanding and respect among different cultures.

**Keywords:** Chinese culture; intercultural communication; Telling the Chinese Story

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## 1 Introduction

With the global development of social media, the international communication landscape is undergoing significant changes and transformations. The participatory, dialogic, and community-oriented nature of social media contributes to enhancing recognition, closeness, and cohesion in international communication, making it a crucial domain for cross-cultural communication. Many Chinese official media have successfully logged on to international social platforms, emerging as fresh avenues for global understanding of China and garnering increasing attention in academic circles in recent years. However, current research reveals that most of China's international communication accounts suffer from issues such as single structure, low interaction efficiency, and closed user communities<sup>[1]</sup>, resulting in suboptimal communication outcomes. The pressing challenge lies in breaking through these limitations to achieve broader communication effects and foster cross-cultural communication and exchange.

In 2016, "Dianxi Xiaoge" (original name: Dong Meihua) continued to gain popularity globally with her high-quality videos and earned titles such as "Weibo 2019 Video Celebrity" and "Top Ten Influential Food Vloggers." By November 2023, she has amassed approximately 10.5 million followers on the YouTube platform, with the total video views surpassing 2.3 billion. She stands as an exemplary figure in effectively narrating Chinese stories and portraying China's image to the global audience. Therefore, an in-depth exploration of the success story of Dianxi Xiaoge will assist in reflecting on the current challenges in China's international communication process and exploring feasible approaches to disseminate Chinese culture worldwide.

## 2 Research Objects and Methods

The themes of Dianxi Xiaoge's videos are mainly derived from the daily life of rural Yunnan, China. But what captivates overseas audiences? How do they comment on these videos? Can they understand these Chinese cultural stories and the lifestyle in rural China? Employing the framework of media communication effects proposed by Lawrence Grossberg et al., this study systematically analyzes the netizens' comments from the cognitive, emotional, and behavioral aspects<sup>[2]</sup>, and then discusses the challenges and possible breakthroughs in cross-cultural communication of Chinese culture.

This study used Octopus software to capture the real-time comments in the top ten videos of Dianxi Xiaoge in July 2023 (Table 1). The video themes include "Hairy Tofu," "Oil-Based Meat," "Sour Papaya," "Red Three Chop," "Ham," "Chinese New Year's Pig Cuisine," "Lychee," "Grapes," "Stuffed Pork Tripe," "Potato Feast" (as shown in the following table). Due to platform limitations, this study obtained 11,811 comments, which were then refined to 10,936 after filtering out expressions and invalid text. The study employs word frequency and text analysis methods to examine the aspects of cognition, emotion, and behavior.

**Table 1.** The top 10 trending videos on the YouTube platform of Dianxi Xiaoge

Rank	Video title	Upload time	Viewing volume	Comment volume	Likes
1	Have you ever eaten tofu in these ways?	2018.12.19	55,388,986	21,474	360,000
2	Have you ever eaten fat but not greasy pork in oil?	2019.1.25	48,729,778	239,558	500,000
3	Sour papaya - the king of sour fruits in my mind	2019.12.18	44,548,769	9,725	290,000
4	Pick some red chili peppers and tomatoes to make a Yunnan home-style dish: red three chop	2019.4.12	38,172,343	5,645	230,000
5	Ham, the soul of Yunnan cuisine	2020.2.29	37,590,557	20,006	460,000
6	Chinese New Year's Pig Cuisine - the year is not really over until you have eaten this meal.	2022.2.23	36,219,189	9,274	340,000
7	Lychee by the Nu River	2020.6.24	34,909,182	9,645	300,000
8	Grapes - sweet jewels on the vine	2022.8.26	34,070,636	6,725	260,000
9	Stuffed Pork Tripe, a fancy cuisine used by the Yi to entertain their honored guests	2020.2.6	31,369,475	10,249	270,000
10	It's potato season again; let's have a potato feast.	2019.4.24	20,988,360	9,324	320,000

### 3 Cognitive Aspect

When discussing the cognitive aspect of cultural communication, it is imperative to clarify that cognition, as the core of human psychological activities, entails the processing, retention, recall, and utilization of information. An in-depth understanding of the target audience's cognition of specific cultural symbols is crucial to cross-cultural communication. This not only aids in identifying the widely recognized and appreciated cultural symbols but also reveals the shortcomings of current cross-cultural communication, thereby providing guidance for adjusting and innovating communication strategies<sup>[3]</sup>. Based on the research of comment text, the audience's cognition of Chinese cultural symbols is divided into two categories.

The first category is food symbols. Examples of high-frequency words in these comments include tofu, eat, food and cooking(Fig.1). The audience's cognition of food symbols can be refined into the charm of both the food and cooking techniques. Unlike other cultural symbols, food symbols are more readily perceived, and food, as the most visually impactful element, tends to elicit strong sensory attraction. In Dianxi Xiaoge's videos, regionally distinctive delicacies have attracted global attention: "Authentic Chinese cuisine is profound and looks delicious."; "It's so amazing how a single food

item can be transformed into numerous mouthwatering dishes.” In Chinese culture, food with regional characteristics becomes the focal point of interest, prompting individuals to unconsciously develop new cultural cognition. Encountering emerging items, foreign cultural groups express their curiosity: “It looks fluffy and cute. I wonder about its taste and texture. Will it attain this form in five days?”; “It looks so delicious. I am curious about how the taste changes during fermentation.”; “This is my first encounter with hairy tofu. I want to have a taste.” Chinese regional cuisine has sparked significant curiosity among foreign cultural groups, which has extended their cognitive perspective and promoted cross-cultural communication.



Fig. 1. Top 100 high-frequency words in the comments

In addition, the cooking methods presented by Dianxi Xiaoge in the video have also gained positive recognition. Many viewers noted that the videos fully showcase the essence and unique charm of traditional Chinese cooking, evoking a profound sense of appreciation and artistry. For instance, netizen leaermimo4095 remarked: “I appreciate Chinese food for its obvious deliciousness. But what is admirable is the meticulous and masterful cooking process.” Netizen abhisheksharma761 said: “I’ve never seen such exquisite cooking skills. Everything is handmade, without the aid of modern appliances or even a conventional gas stove. Salute to them.” Moreover, due to their global universality and strong regional characteristics, the selected ingredients have aroused the audience’s discussion on the cooking methods and lifestyles in their motherlands. Netizen jessica5222 shared: “I am from Myanmar. Sour papaya is a taste I deeply miss. We shred a papaya and marinate it with sugar and nectar. Every morning, we eat the sweet and sour papaya.” Similarly, netizen roberthollmann2513 from Australia said: “When watching these videos, I recall the much simpler life on the farm in my childhood. We had gardens and raised our own livestock for meat, so we know where everything came from... Oh, how I yearn to return to the farm.” Netizen RashmiSingh-ox9ox said: “I am from the Assam tribe in India. After watching all your

recipes, I found that some of them are similar to our traditions. Whenever I see them, I feel like watching our traditional recipes again.” These videos convey the charm and connotation of Chinese culture to the world through the display of traditional Chinese cooking techniques, underscoring their profound significance.

Samovar, an American communication scholar, emphasized the essence of cross-cultural communication: a kind of communication between individuals involving different cultural concepts and symbol systems<sup>[4]</sup>. Meanwhile, food, as a cross-cultural symbol, exhibits its strong communication power, especially on the short video platform, which can arouse the audience’s resonance and overcome cultural barriers. Currently, the widespread popularity of eating broadcasts and the extensive dissemination of food documentaries underscore the pivotal role of food symbols in cultural communication.

The second category is the attraction of image aesthetics to the audience. Through meticulous photography and editing, video makers can show the color and texture of food in close-up shots, bridging the gap between the audience and the cook while providing visual enjoyment. Netizen woodkey remarked: “Has anyone else noticed the excellent photography and editing? Thanks to the team behind these wonderful videos.” At the auditory level, the interplay between cooking sounds and human voices creates a real-life cooking scene. Notably, the use of dialects and the protagonist’s shouting of “Time to eat!” imbue the videos with a vibrant sense of life, fostering a strong sense of immersion for viewers. The word frequency analysis and word cloud mapping reveal that words like “happy” and “joy” dominate, allowing the audience to sense the rustic charm of rural life portrayed in the videos despite language barriers. Netizen ys7hy5rw3v commented: “I think this is the essence of escaping the city’s hustle and bustle and embracing a fulfilling life... I believe the air and food there must be refreshing...” Netizen tl2ri8od8i said: “Wow... These videos are truly therapeutic, offering solace to those burdened by work or study stress.”

This comprehensive display of food and the cooking process not only bridges cultural disparities but also fosters the global dissemination of Chinese culture. High-quality video narration strengthens the communication effect of cultural symbols and demonstrates the unique charm of Chinese culture. Through such communication strategies, we can share the richness and diversity of Chinese culture and promote mutual understanding and respect among different cultures.

#### 4 Emotional Aspect

Emotion refers to the reaction that follows the processing of cognitive information by individuals<sup>[5]</sup>. These reactions encompass comments that express likes or dislikes, as well as experiences that are either pleasant or unpleasant, among others. Upon crawling the comments and counting the word frequency, it can be noticed that positive words overwhelmingly prevail. Examples of high-frequency words in these comments include love, like, beautiful, nice, great, wonderful, wow, amazing, happy, and delicious(Fig.1). In general, many comments convey the audiences’ fondness for Chinese cuisine and their yearning and admiration for the life of Dianxi Xiaoge. Through the

traceability of word frequency, it turns out that the audiences' appreciation for these videos is preliminarily reflected in the following values.

First, the harmonious coexistence between humans and nature. Organic ingredients and a healthy rural life constitute the main features of the video of Dianxi Xiaoge. Netizen hasiktak1544 remarked: "An adorable garden with fresh and healthy food. I like them so much." Similarly, netizen bhesimple995 praised: "Living a happy life with the whole family every day, eating natural and fresh food. That's just amazing." Moreover, there is an abundance of comments focusing on the protagonist's family dog named "Dawang," like "Dawang is so cute... I think he is the star of this show," "I can't believe how respectful Dawang is!" "Dawang is big and handsome! He makes the perfect pet companion."

Second, family affection that all humans share in common. Family members of the protagonist who often appear in videos also captivate the audiences' attention. Such comments as "The whole family is extremely happy when they are dining together" and "I enjoy watching your family engage in activities together" are prevalent. Netizen laamidoloria9364 mentioned: "I've witnessed your younger brother's growth from an adorable, shy little boy into an excellent young teenager... How time flies. You have a big happy family... with delicious food, delighted laughter, delightful moments... It feels like I am right there in your kitchen, sharing your domestic bliss." In another comment, netizen amritabanerjee2787 added: "I really like her grandmother. She seems to be a very simple and kind-hearted person, always wearing a smile on her face. Despite her age, she remains active and strong, which is quite distinctive and endearing." Emotions serve as a bond that connects audiences from across the globe. Chinese stories flowing with true sentiments are conducive to breaking cultural differences and barriers between people.

Third, the aspiration for a better life and the shared vision of peace. For instance, netizen caibra88 concluded with feelings: "I come from the United States. I really hope that the two countries can be allies rather than rivals. I like Chinese culture, its beautiful language, and amazing art and music. Although our world inclines conflicts to peace, I still hold love and respect for the people. I believe ordinary people also desire to build a good relationship and learn from each other!" Netizen Gemma-Joikhun pointed out that: "I long for a life like this. This must be the most peaceful place at present. I sincerely wish for a world where people do not compete with each other but instead love, share, and aspire to live in a beautiful world." In international communication, China tends to present issues concerning peace in policies, reports, and documents; thus, the effect of "breaking the circle" is not always pronounced<sup>[6]</sup>. In comparison, videos produced by Dianxi Xiaoge, rooted in daily life, depict the beauty of life in peacetime through family life and arouse people's love and pursuit of a quiet and stable life from the bottom of their hearts. Such a subtle and genuine representation of life can evoke people's deeper understanding of peace and realize spiritual resonance with global audiences through personal and warm narratives. This way of spreading the message of peace from the micro level yields substantial influences over enhancing the soft power of Chinese culture.

## 5 Behavioral Aspect

The process from cognition, through emotion, to behavior is often regarded as a gradual accumulation, deepening, and amplification of the effects of cross-cultural communication<sup>[7]</sup>. In these comments, many audiences express their behavioral intentions of onsite visits, such as going on a trip to Yunnan, learning cooking techniques from the video content, and trying the food featured in the videos. There are many comments similar to the following: “I am captivated by the scenery of Yunnan and have already made plans to visit next year.” “After watching your video, I’ve decided to spend some time living in Yunnan and enjoying local food.” “I never thought ly-chee could be cooked; your video inspired me to give it a try.” Inspired by traditional culture from the video, netizen sojakambakkaran6100 exclaimed: “After watching her video, I decided to dust off the idea of transforming my new kitchen into a modern kitchen island. Instead, we are planning to build a traditional Indian kitchen. Blindly following the fashion trend is meaningless; it might look good, but it doesn’t feel right. I need a traditional kitchen like this to record my origin, as well as my great family and recipes... Thank you so much.” On new media platforms, liking, forwarding, and commenting have become normalized for online interactions among netizens. Online interactions often provoke more offline, face-to-face communications, which are considered effective proof of successful online communication. Relevant studies show that direct experiences such as visiting China or interacting with Chinese people are positively correlated with people’s attitudes toward China and substantially enhance their understanding of China.

Furthermore, an online community is formed based on these videos for answering questions and exchanges, creating multi-layered conversations<sup>[8]</sup>. On the one hand, foreign audiences express curiosity about the protagonist’s past experiences. Netizen changyingshu2675 explained, “I just watched an interview and learned that Dianxi Xiaoge used to be a female police officer. Unfortunately, her father fell ill, and she decided to return to the village to take care of her family. As it was impossible to find a job in her village, she started making videos for a living. The first year presented challenges without any income generated. Luckily, she didn’t give up, and her following has since grown steadily.” On the other hand, there are interactions among overseas audiences. For example, some audiences identified their nationality to find compatriots: “Are there any Indians? I come from Karnataka, and I love her cooking style.” Someone replies soon afterward: “I come from Manipur, and I love all her videos.” When someone inquired about the manufacturing process and scientific principles of producing hairy tofu, others answered, “The process of making this kind of tofu is similar to that of making blue cheese or yellow bean sauce; both involve zymogens.” Through online and offline interactions in digital and physical spaces, more overseas audiences are connected, shifting their understanding of Chinese culture from surface symbols to deep cultural connotations.

## 6 Conclusions

The three-dimensional framework of culture is instrumental in understanding its multidimensionality: the material dimension encompasses the material fruits of human life, the social dimension places interactions and organizations among people in crosshairs, and the spiritual dimension delves into individual inner worlds and values. The case of Dianxi Xiaoge represents a vivid embodiment of the theory. Harnessing local delicacies as a material carrier, she builds a social bridge across geographical boundaries, which squarely hits the audiences and facilitates deep conversations between different cultures. Based on the detailed analysis of cognition, emotion, and behavior aspects, this paper introduces four optimized paths for the cross-cultural communication of Chinese culture from different perspectives.

### 6.1 Breaking Language Barriers Through Audience-centric Approach

From Dianxi Xiaoge's case of cross-cultural communication, it is not hard to find that language barriers pose a major challenge for Chinese culture to spread to the rest of the world. While these videos are widely circulated, misinterpretation of verbal signs often undermines the transmission of cultural information. In word frequency statistics, the term "subtitles" appears frequently. The tracing of its origins demonstrates that early comments related to this term suggest adding subtitles in English or other languages. After Dianxi Xiaoge adds foreign subtitles, comments related to "subtitles" turn positive, such as "English subtitles added, wise decision" and "We finally got Korean subtitles." In light of this, communication strategies should be tailored to promote Chinese culture to the world. First and foremost, it is essential to consider the issue from the audiences' standpoint. As audiences today have broader choices and a higher degree of engagement, their demands for cultural content are continually evolving. Hence, communicators must keenly observe these shifts, dive into overseas audiences' preferences and needs, and integrate and update cultural content accordingly. In addition, providing targeted verbal signs is also crucial. Content creators must enhance their capacity for storytelling and factor in the acceptability of the target audiences. This involves providing appropriate subtitles based on language habits in different regions and countries to facilitate more accurate and effective cultural communication. Furthermore, apart from refining verbal signs, emphasis should be placed on using non-verbal signs. In addition to the use of verbal signs to overcome language barriers, it is also critical to employ symbolic non-verbal visual signs to convey the essence of Chinese culture in cross-cultural communication. Examples include displaying natural landscapes, harmonious relationships between humans and nature, and a great rapport between people to visualize the charm of Chinese culture, compensate for language barriers, and strengthen overseas audiences' identification with Chinese culture.



## 6.2 Evoking Emotional Resonance Through Shared Values

The Cultural Proximity Theory proposed by Straubhaar plays an instructive role in cross-cultural communication. The familiarity of the target audiences with the content has a direct bearing on the degree of acceptance and understanding of information. Consequently, it becomes pivotal to select themes that carry universal values during communication activities to overcome cultural barriers and improve the efficiency and accuracy of information transmission. In the meantime, understanding and respecting local languages, cultures, customs, etc., is also a substantial factor in cross-cultural communication, which helps garner more attention from audiences and thus increases the impact of information transmission<sup>[9]</sup>.

Therefore, in the cross-cultural communication of short videos, understanding the audiences' recognized value orientations by exploring their cultural backgrounds and posting content with shared values can be an effective approach. Selecting themes with universal values means searching for the most suitable content from the daily lives of ordinary Chinese people, such as the harmony between humans and nature, the aspiration for friendship and love, and a positive life philosophy<sup>[10]</sup>. Only by choosing content that carries shared values of humanity can emotional resonance be generated with audiences from different cultural backgrounds, ultimately achieving the desired effects of cross-cultural communication.

## 6.3 Enhancing Audiences' Identification Through Effective Chinese Narratives

On the stage of international cultural communication, it is indisputable that China shows a huge advantage with its profound historical and cultural heritage. Since everything presented in videos promoting Chinese culture has its origin, introducing stories behind each act and object during video production is a feasible scheme to foster an invisible identification with Chinese culture. Although facts and figures are convincing, people are more likely to be attracted by stories filled with facts, which reflect the emotions of storytellers.

During the storytelling process, content creators can also incorporate representative elements of traditional Chinese culture, such as traditional festivals, folk arts, traditional diets, traditional Chinese medicine, and martial arts. Appropriate cultural elements that fit different contexts and target audiences can be selected for presentation and interpretation. When opting for various cultural elements, the following two points should be taken into account: first, creators should have a thorough understanding of the historical and cultural background of these elements, grasping their deeper meanings and impacts and transforming them into modern short videos<sup>[11]</sup>; second, they should integrate traditional cultural elements with modern society, laying equal stress on the preservation and innovation of cultural elements, thus revitalizing the value of traditional Chinese culture in contemporary society. By effectively integrating these elements, we not only add more cultural depth to the videos but also subtly convey Chinese culture to the audiences.

## 6.4 Elevating Viewing Experience Using Technical Means

Regarding the technical side of video production, emphasis is placed on expressive titles and fast-paced yet informative transitions. It is recommended to present intertwined content and images within a minimized video duration and create a lively atmosphere through montage-style quick cuts and scene transitions, as well as theme-based transitions. Additionally, the emotions of audiences can be mobilized through visual and auditory stimulation. Auditorily, music that matches the rhythm of the video offers an immersive experience for audiences; the inclusion of dialects in the video also helps overseas audiences to feel closer to the cultural atmosphere portrayed in the video. Visually, light, shadow, color, composition, and other techniques should be given adequate thought. This brings the perspective of the observer to the physical level, enabling audiences to observe textures and qualitative changes that are invisible to the naked eye through the lens. Beyond that, technologies such as macro photography and thermography can be leveraged to create fresh audiovisual experiences for audiences.

In terms of video content creation, plain subtitles can be used to emphasize key points and highlight keywords. The text presented in the video should be tailored to the audiences by leveraging the multilingual translation feature of the platform, so that audiences from various countries, even non-English-speaking nations, can easily grasp the video content through subtitles. As Naisbitt predicted, the future of the world lies in the East. In an era of increasing anxiety and turbulence, the harmony, peace, and resilience of Eastern civilizations, especially the naturalness valued by Daoism, the emptiness and peacefulness embraced by Buddhism, and the spirit and culture of Confucianism, have a profound calming effect on people around the world. Lightness should not be interpreted as standing still or indulging in pleasures until death; rather, it should be understood as transcendence and harmony between humans and nature. Therefore, the portrayal of a quiet life and a detached attitude in videos makes viewers feel pleased and relaxed. The “lightness” inherent in Chinese culture must be fully embodied to inspire the world through the dissemination of Chinese civilization.

In the conclusion, in the international communication of Chinese culture, it is important to value the power of non-governmental exchanges, build a path that strengthens people-to-people ties, and establish a discourse system that facilitates exchanges with overseas users<sup>[12]</sup>. Simultaneously, we should focus on exploring cultural elements with universal appeal, promote cross-cultural communication through shared experiences and empathic communication, and enhance the effectiveness of international communication of Chinese culture that values harmony and esteems cooperation.

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