



# How does Generation Z tell the story of the Yellow River well?

## Building a model of influencing factors of short video communication rooted in "Tik Tok" comments

Xinyue Hu, Chunran Qiu\*

School of Architecture and Urban Planning, Shandong Jianzhu University, Jinan, China

1813664199@qq.com, \*1325545405@qq.com

**Abstract.** Under the background of globalization and digitalization, the role of "Generation Z" in the international communication pattern has become more and more significant. In the Outline of the Plan for Ecological Protection and High-Quality Development of the Yellow River Basin, Xi Jinping proposed that the contemporary value of the Yellow River culture should be deeply explored and the Yellow River story should be told well. Short videos have become the microphone for "Generation Z" to tell the Yellow River story with its characteristics of fragmentation, mobility, and interactivity, which are suitable for "Generation Z".

This paper adopts the rooted theory method to study the communication status of the Yellow River story on the platform of "Jittery Voice". We extracted 5392 effective comments on the platform, refined 136 initial statements, abstracted 14 conceptual categories, and summarized 3 core concepts. Construct a model of the factors influencing the dissemination of the short video of the Yellow River story. The research results show that expression foundation, expression positioning, and expression effect are the key factors influencing the dissemination. Based on this, this paper offers suggestions from four perspectives, namely, content aggregation, intergenerational relay, "Generation Z" main force, and practical force, aiming to enhance the communication effect of the Yellow River story, promote the Yellow River culture, and strengthen the national self-confidence.

**Keywords:** Yellow River Story; Rooting Theory; Short Video Communication; "Generation Z"; Model Construction.

## 1 Introduction

### 1.1 Background of the Study

#### **The Yellow River Culture in the New Era Desperately Needs to be Disseminated**

Yellow River culture is the root and soul of the Chinese nation. On June 21, 2022, the Planning for the Protection, Inheritance and Promotion of Yellow River Culture pointed out that, striving for 2025, the excavation and research of the Yellow River culture has been increasing.<sup>1</sup> The Yellow River culture, with its rich heritage and strong

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Z. Zhan et al. (eds.), *Proceedings of the 2024 10th International Conference on Humanities and Social Science Research (ICHSSR 2024)*, Advances in Social Science, Education and Humanities Research 858,

[https://doi.org/10.2991/978-2-38476-277-4\\_42](https://doi.org/10.2991/978-2-38476-277-4_42)

diffuseness, has been deeply integrated into the blood of the society at large, but lacks the opportunity to awaken. And short video is the most explosive medium at present. Mastering the traffic code of the Yellow River story dissemination and relying on short videos to form phenomenal dissemination is a highly probable proposition.

### **Intergenerational Inheritance Gap Needs to be Broken Through Urgently**

According to data released by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs in 2020, the global Generation Z (a group born between 1995 and 2009) reached 2.4 billion people in 2019, accounting for 32% of the world's total population.<sup>2</sup> According to an in-depth survey and analysis by the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, the international outlook of Generation Z will become an important factor influencing the world and international relations in the future.<sup>3</sup> However, "Generation Z" was born in the Internet era, and its interest orientation and way of thinking are very different from the previous generation. Therefore, when the Yellow River stories passed down by word of mouth from the previous generation are passed on to Generation Z, the information is greatly reduced, and the survival space of Chinese culture represented by the Yellow River culture is squeezed in their thinking field.

### **The Narrative Perspective of the Yellow River Story Needs to be Explored Urgently**

The top-down perspective of the national grand narrative has long been unable to properly reflect people's daily lives and simple philosophical concepts, and the "fireworks" embedded in the daily lives of the general public is the key to telling China's story well to the world. Therefore, a new perspective of bottom-up narrative needs to be explored. Only in this way can the Yellow River culture cross the communication gap and connect the emotional understanding and identity in the context of the community of human destiny.

## **1.2 Research Status**

With the strengthening of the governance of the Yellow River Basin, the research related to Yellow River culture is getting richer and richer. Current research mainly focuses on the historical value of Yellow River culture, such as Ge Jianxiang's *The Yellow River and Chinese Civilization*, which comprehensively combed the Yellow River cultural resources. Niu Jianqiang's *An Overview of Yellow River Culture* provides a multi-dimensional interpretation of the main content of Yellow River culture and explores the modernization and transformation of Yellow River culture. Xu Jijun categorizes the Yellow River culture with geographical subdivisions, providing a direction for future research. According to Miao Changhong, the Yellow River culture is an important carrier to enhance the cultural confidence of the Chinese nation, and the text highlights the contemporary value and historicity of the Yellow River culture. To summarize, although there is a certain research base on the historical background and resources of the Yellow River culture, the number is small and the depth of research is shallow. Most of the studies focus on the historical interpretation of the Yellow River

cultural heritage, mostly staying at the theoretical level, and lack of research on its adaptive use and innovative development.

### **1.3 Research Purpose**

This paper systematically combs through the short videos of Yellow River stories on "Shake", analyzes the influencing factors of Yellow River cultural communication, builds a model on this basis, and explores the optimization path of communication.

### **1.4 Research Significance**

The author searched in China Knowledge Network and other academic websites, and found that most of the communication research on the Yellow River story is aimed at a certain documentary and TV program, while the influence of short videos on the communication of the Yellow River story has not been paid attention to. The research results of this paper can clarify the ideas and provide reference value for the dissemination of short videos on the Yellow River in the future, and attract the attention of relevant scholars. For the audience, it can inspire a strong sense of cultural identity and feel the real, honorable and lovely image of China.

## **2 Research Design**

### **2.1 Research Object**

This paper takes the short video user comments on the Yellow River story on the platform of "Shake Voice" as the research object.

### **2.2 Research Method**

Rooted theory method. Due to the complexity of the influencing factors of the short video communication of the Yellow River story, it is difficult to explore the essence of the law through quantitative methods, so the qualitative research method of the rooting theory is chosen in the research method. Rooted theory was first proposed by sociologists Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss in 1976, using inductive methods to analyze the phenomenon to get the results, which is a kind of "bottom-up" research method.<sup>4</sup>Through the use of inductive methods, the research method of "bottom-up" is to analyze the phenomenon to get the results. By systematically collecting data and coding them to build a theoretical model, the analysis process is scientific and meticulous.

### **2.3 Data sources and Collection**

In this paper, 68 short videos of the Yellow River story on the "Shake" platform since 2022, with the number of likes ranging from 500 to 10,000 and effective comments



**Table 2.** Examples of Categorization (Self-drawn by the author)

<b>Corre- spondi- ng catego- ry</b>	<b>Initial concept</b>	<b>Original statement (partial)</b>
A1 main content	a1 Non-legacy skills	In ancient times a dragon robe dozens of craftsmen do ten years.
	a2 Folk culture	Bringing out the most down-to-earth side of the loess high slopes.
	a3 Historical Herit- age	The Book of Changes says: "The ox is like kun, kun is earth, and earth is better than water."
	a4 Oral story	It was really hard back then. Thankfully, we're getting better now.
A2 Subject Charact-eris- tics	a5 History	Traditional architecture has a long history.
	a6 Technical skills	Personally, I think Lu Ban is the Chinese Leonardo da Vinci.
	a7 Difficulty	There's a reason it's expensive, traditional craftsmanship isn't easy.
	a8 Classifications	What can I use this for?
A3 Cultural Export	a9 Native China	You can only do well if you have a vernacular.
	a10 Humanities	We have 5,000 years of human history in China.
A4 Cultural Heritage	a11 Ordeal	I am descended from Linn State immigrants and it is important to know where my roots are at all times.
	a12 Difficulties with inheritance	There was a time when the dancers in our village were famous for ten miles and eight villages!
	a13 Number of disci- ples	Can you take on more disciples to pass on the legacy?
	a14 Hometown epi- sodes	My great-grandfather took my grandfather to the east countryside to escape the famine, and my great-grandfather died of starvation on the way.
A5 Cultural Identity	a15 Emotional reso- nance	People still need to have dreams.
	a16 Spiritual identity	The spirit of their generation is worthy of our future generations.
	a17 Recommended by a friend	This author is super awesome and I've been following along!
A6 Social en- viron-ment	a18 Visibility	My grandmother's paper cuts are pretty famous in my area as well.
	a19 Personal Impressions	My grandfather used to be the most famous and prestigious lacquer maker in his hometown.
	a20 Policy and edu- cation	Don't delete it. Wait for me to play it for the students.
	a21 Big Data Push	The videos are a no-brainer, and it's all about the push!
A7 Network environment	a22 Internet dissemination ef- forts	You're the real internet sensation in Linn State!
	a23 Area familiarity	The Yellow River water passes in front of my house.
A8 Geograph- ical environ- ment	a24 population movement	My grandmother was from Xuchang, from the Yellow Panhandle.
	a25 Commercializa- tion possibilities	WOW!!! Is it available locally please?

	a26 Peripherals for sale	I'd buy this for a million dollars.
	a27 Cultural tourism market development	A Henan TV, a Quijiang Cultural Tourism, what kind of sparks will these two cooperation.
	a28 Legacy of Memory	Now it's become exclusive to the South.
A10 Technology Enablement	a29 Filming equipment	The shots are really nice.
	a30 editing technology	This video is so well edited.
	a31 Style aesthetics	Chinese style is not for the average person.
A11 Expression conditions	a32 Presentation	Beauty you are good, kudos!
	a33 Desktop quality	Great telling and quality writing!
A12 platform output	a34 Cultural innovations	Go Grandma, spread the word about your beloved hometown to all!
	a35 Communication media innovation	That's the whole point of putting videos on the platform, the more the merrier!

Then, the initial concepts were grouped together according to their correlations and analogies, and their categories were identified based on a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods. Finally, the 36 initial concepts were categorized into 12 categories (A1-A12), and an example of open coding is shown in Table 2.

### 3.2 Spindle Coding

By coding the main axes, the potential logical links between the categories can be found, and the main categories and their sub-categories can be developed, so that a total of three main categories can be summarized. The main categories and their corresponding open coded categories are shown in Table 3.

**Table 3.** Main categories formed by spindle coding (Self-drawn by the author)

Principal category	Corresponding category	Category connotation
Yellow River story short video dissemination influence internal factors	A1 main content	The main content of the user's concern for the Yellow River story dissemination video
	A2 Subject Characteristics	Video users generally believe that the Yellow River story main content characteristics
	A3 Cultural Export	Users consciously carry out the cultural export behavior of telling the story of the Yellow River
Yellow River story short video dissemination influence external factors	A4 Cultural Heritage	Users assume the cultural heritage responsibility of telling the Yellow River story
	A5 Cultural Identity	Users generate the cultural identity psychology of telling the Yellow River story well

	A6 Social environment	The social context in which users tell the story of the Yellow River
	A7 Network environment	The online environment in which users tell the Yellow River story
	A8 Geographical environment	Users tell the story of the Yellow River in its geographical context
	A9 Business potential	The commercial potential of the Yellow River story in communication
Yellow River Story Short Video Communication Expression Factors	A10 Technology Enablement	Technologies that can empower the Yellow River story in communication
	A11 Expression conditions	The forms of expression that the Yellow River story has in its dissemination
	A12 platform output	Content Output of Yellow River Story in Communication Platforms

### 3.3 Selective Coding

The "story line" around the core category of "subject→factor→dissemination" can be summarized as follows: the Yellow River story, under the influence of different short video dissemination factors, will affect the dissemination behavior to different degrees. Detailed explanation can have three aspects, as shown in Table 4.

**Table 4.** Typical relationship structure of main categories (Self-drawn by the author)

Typical relational structure	Connotation of typical relationship
Subjects → Factors → Diffusion	Generation Z tells the story of the Yellow River well at different stages of development, which will determine its different communication behavior.
Main content and characteristics → internal factors → basis for the expression of the Yellow River story	The main content and characteristics of the Yellow River story are the basis of the expression of the Yellow River story, which are the internal factors affecting the dissemination of short videos.
Human environment → external factors → Yellow River story expression orientation	The human environment where the Yellow River story is located determines the expression orientation of the Yellow River story, which is an external factor affecting the dissemination of short videos.
Platform Placement→Expression Factors→Yellow River Story Expression Effect	In the process of placing the Yellow River story on the platform, with the help of short video communication expression factors, in order to achieve a better expression effect

### 3.4 Theoretical Saturation Test

The remaining 1/4 of the original corpus was subjected to the same process of coding analysis and inductive extraction, and no new categories and important relations were

found, thus it was inferred that the theoretical model had reached saturation. Finally, the theoretical model formed is shown in Fig.2.

#### 4 "Z Generation" Tells The Story of the Yellow River Well, and Analyzes the Model Construction of Influencing Factors

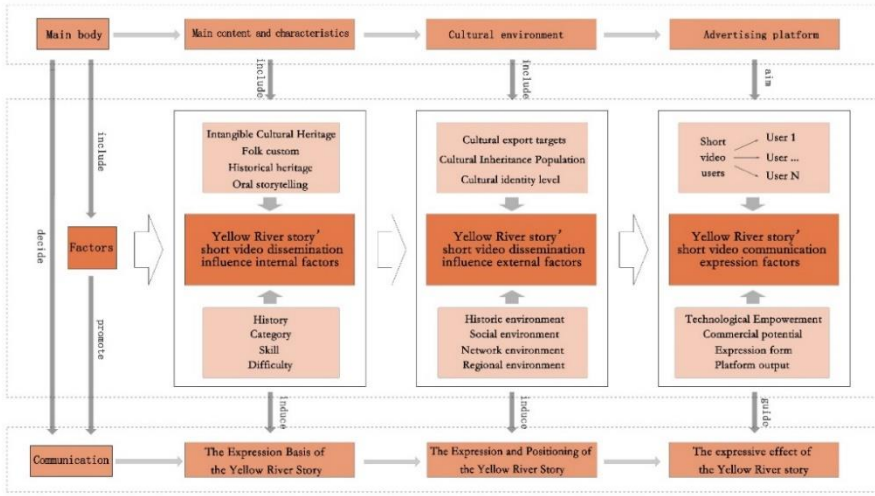


Fig. 2. "subject → stage → communication" integration model (Self-drawn by the author)

The main content and characteristics of the Yellow River stories are the basis of the expression of the Yellow River stories, which are the intrinsic factors affecting the dissemination of short videos. The Yellow River stories include four categories of non-heritage skills, folk culture, historical heritage and oral stories, and their characteristics include four aspects: historical origin, usage category, technical skills and difficulty of workmanship. To a certain extent, these determine the resource threshold for the innovative expression of the Yellow River stories in the new era.

##### 4.1 Basis of Expression: Intrinsic Factors Affecting the Communication of the Short Video of the Yellow River Story

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#### **4.2 Expression Positioning: External Factors Affecting the Dissemination Of the Short Video Of The Yellow River Story**

The cultural environment in which the Yellow River Story exists determines its expression positioning, which is an external factor affecting the spread of short videos. Influenced by the historical environment, social environment, network environment and regional environment, different cultural export objects, cultural inheritance groups and different people's cultural identity degrees have a decisive impact on the expression positioning of the Yellow River Story, which also makes the innovative expression of the Yellow River Story more targeted.

#### **4.3 Expression Effect: the Expression Factor of the Short Video Communication of the Yellow River Story**

With the support of technological empowerment, commercialization element implantation, expression form innovation, and delivery of multiple social media platforms, the Yellow River story can realize the communication form of "one passes on to many" on the short video platform, and play an excellent expression effect. The important output form of short video communication of the Yellow River story will be implemented to optimize the platform of multi-resource development, multi-content editing and multi-media delivery to realize the innovation of communication path.

### **5 "Generation Z" Contribute to Tell the Yellow River Story Well**

#### **5.1 Content Focus: Refine the High-quality Yellow River Stories and Create Thematic Interest Circles**

Dismantle the grandiose Yellow River story, abandon the previous macroscopic introduction of the Yellow River, and form vertically subdivided and thematic interest circles in the communication and interaction of users. For example, under the four first-level themes of the Yellow River story, the second-level interest circles are further subdivided into non-heritage experience, food tasting, national heritage, flood resistance, ecological recreation and so on. By deconstructing the Yellow River story, a wide-ranging and fine-cut interest network is laid out. In the interest circles, different participants overcome their initial purely subjective concepts, and at the same time, establish the unity of the objective world and the intersubjectivity of their life contexts for the sake of a common belief in rationality.<sup>5</sup>

#### **5.2 Intergenerational Relay: Building Intergenerational Mutual Aid Bridges and Empowering "Generation Z" with Technology**

According to statistics, the creators of Yellow River-themed videos are mostly middle-aged and old-aged groups, who have deep feelings for the Yellow River due to their

experiences since childhood, and hope to arouse the homeland sentiment of the audience. However, due to the lack of shooting and editing techniques, the short videos are not well received. On the other hand, "Generation Z" has a low sense of identification with the Yellow River culture, and there are very few creators. However, as Generation Z has more editing and platform operation skills, it is important to promote intergenerational cooperation. In this way, Generation Z can deepen their understanding of the Yellow River culture through intergenerational contact, and thus carry the torch of the Yellow River civilization from generation to generation.

### **5.3 The main force of "Generation Z": creating the narrative of "Generation Z" and building the discourse system of short videos**

Short video is the microphone of "Generation Z". Through the skillful use of various online media, "Generation Z" actively participates in the governance of social life.

#### **Micro-narratives Focusing on Individualized Differences**

"Micro-narrative" is the opposite of "macro-narrative", which contains small cuts and big backgrounds, small characters and big themes, small details and big emotions, and penetrates the barriers between history and modernity, races and countries, ideologies and languages and cultures with the common emotions of human beings. Adopting "micro-narrative", the grand story of the Yellow River is deconstructed into the individual stories of the people along the Yellow River. This kind of individual-centered node communication fits the pursuit of individual differentiation and self-worth realization of "Generation Z".

#### **Interesting Language that Closely Follows the Interest-oriented Approach**

Because Generation Z has been in an entertainment environment for a long time, they are resistant to serious and authoritative language, and prefer light and lively or even playful expressions. Therefore, the use of creative, animated audio-visual techniques to tell the Yellow River story with more youthful colors has become a key step to promote the cultural value of the Yellow River.

#### **Self-respecting and Confident Equal Dialogue Position**

As witnesses, participants and contributors to China's rapid development in the 21st century, Generation Z has gone from "catching up with the times" to "leading the times". From "catching up with the times" to "leading the times", "Generation Z" is different from other generations who look up to the world, and is characterized by self-respect and confidence. Therefore, when telling the story of the Yellow River, they are more confident in dialoguing with the world on an equal footing.

## 5.4 Practical Efforts: Expanding Multiple Application Scenarios and Utilizing Youth Creativity

### Create "Operation Group" for Yellow River Cultural Branding

Generation "Z" can build diversified operation modes, such as live broadcasting with goods, implanting merchandise advertisements, multi-party linkage, and traffic dividends. In addition, a number of MCN organizations focusing on building bridges between video personalities and platforms and advertisers have also been created, realizing economic benefits with the business model of order sharing, live broadcasting plus knowledge payment, and the development of industry chain such as offline handcraft experience classes.<sup>6</sup> As a result, the non-physical Yellow River culture can be transformed into physical commodity assets, the sustainable creation of cultural commodities, the formation of cultural brands, and the promotion of living protection.

### Forming a short video "production team"

There is often a professional team behind the short videos with high broadcast volume. Before the video is released, it needs to go through various processes such as planning, shooting, editing and packaging. Combined with the incentive mechanism of short video platforms, "Generation Z" can start from their hometowns to dig out the Yellow River story, and form a video operation team for video creation.

### Establish a Youth Yellow River Story Troupe

Encourage Generation Z to select typical stories for offline preaching, so that the Yellow River story can enter schools and society. Take the Yellow River Museum as a platform to show the stories behind the cultural relics and specimens of the museum, so that more people can realize the spirit of the Yellow River that has been inherited from the past.

### Establish a "think tank" for the dissemination of the Yellow River story

Encourage young people to approach the Yellow River for study activities and offer suggestions for the cultural protection of the Yellow River Basin. Utilize professional knowledge to plan Yellow River cultural experience routes, design cultural creations, provide forward-looking suggestions for the rescue of Yellow River culture, and help the international dissemination of the Yellow River story.

## 6 Conclusion

This paper adopts the method of grounded theory to gradually code and systematically analyze 5,392 effective comments related to the short video content of the Yellow River Story in Douyin APP, and constructs the influencing factor model of the short video spread of the Yellow River Story based on the grounded theory. The three influencing factor modules in the model are interdependent and affect each other, which together constitute the logical closed loop of the innovative expression of the Yellow River Story

in the context of social media. With the help of the short video spread model of the Yellow River Story, the expression methods and strategies of the Yellow River Story are innovated, and the creativity of "Generation Z" is given full play, so that the massive and grand Yellow River Story is more vibrant and energetic.

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