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The Value of Folk IPs: IShowSpeed & Liqin and the Construction of Shaoxing's International Communication Strategy for Cultural Tourism

Ying Liu
School of English Studies, Zhejiang Yuexiu University, Shaoxing, 312000, China
Email: 364925664@qq.com

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Abstract

Against the backdrop of short-video platforms restructuring the landscape of cross-cultural communication, folk intellectual property (IP) has emerged as a novel carrier for the international dissemination of regional cultural tourism. Taking the cross-cultural interaction between globally renowned American internet celebrity IShowSpeed and Liqin, an ordinary local resident of Shaoxing, as the research subject, this paper adopts case analysis, content analysis and comparative research to deconstruct the differentiated communication values embodied by the two folk IP figures. It further investigates the prevailing practices and inherent deficiencies of Shaoxing's cultural tourism authorities in leveraging folk IP resources, before constructing a full-chain international communication framework revolving around four core links: IP incubation, content production, collaborative operation and outcome feedback. The research reveals that the synergy forged between IShowSpeed's extensive global audience reach and Liqin's deep-rooted local cultural identity generates distinctive communication dividends. Their unscripted, spontaneous micro-narrative exchange has unlocked a lightweight breakthrough channel for Shaoxing's cultural tourism to gain international traction.

Keywords

Folk Intellectual Property; International Communication of Cultural Tourism; Shaoxing; Short Videos

1. Introduction

1.1. Research Background

Driven by advances in digital technology, cross-cultural communication has undergone a fundamental shift from official grand narratives dominated by institutional authorities to grassroots micro-narratives participated by ordinary individuals. Statistics published by Sohu.com indicate that the aggregate monthly

active user base across global short-video platforms has surpassed 8 billion, laying fertile ground for non-state actors to engage in international cultural tourism communication.

The China tour of American internet celebrity IShowSpeed sparked a nationwide cross-cultural communication frenzy. During his live stream broadcast in Hong Kong, his impromptu conversation with Liqin, a young woman native to Shaoxing, was hailed by netizens as "the most beautiful 22 minutes of Sino-Western cultural integration" owing to their sincere exchanges despite language barriers. Clips excerpted from this live interaction accumulated over 5 billion views across global social media platforms. Segments in which Liqin introduced Shaoxing rice wine and black-awning boats directly drove a 380% surge in overseas search volume targeting Shaoxing cultural tourism, forming a paradigmatic case of highly effective communication generated without official pre-planning.

Shaoxing boasts 26 state-level intangible cultural heritage items, including rice wine brewing craftsmanship, Yue Opera, and the handiwork of manufacturing black-awning boats. Nevertheless, the city's international cultural tourism communication has long been plagued by a tripartite imbalance: prioritizing official promotional footage over grassroots content creation, favoring didactic historical narration over immersive daily scene presentation, and chasing one-off viral exposure over long-term IP operation. The IShowSpeed-Liqin interaction episode has broken through this predicament via folk IP communication, furnishing an atypical research sample for the international outreach of Shaoxing's cultural tourism sector.

1.2. Research Significance

This study expands the research dimension of grassroots actors engaging in international cultural tourism communication. It further extends the analytical scope of IP value beyond mere traffic exposure to a full-spectrum framework covering trust construction, emotional resonance and industrial conversion, thereby refining the theoretical system of cross-cultural tourism communication in the short-video era.

The IP operation strategies proposed in this paper can be directly applied to the international communication practice of Shaoxing cultural tourism, facilitating its transformation from accidental viral exposure to deliberate global breakthrough. Meanwhile, the research conclusions deliver replicable empowerment pathways for other historical and cultural cities nationwide.

2. Literature Review and Definition of Core Concepts

2.1. Literature Review

First, research on international cultural tourism communication. Hall's (1973) high-context and low-context cultural theory posits that low-context cultures

prioritize direct, tangible information delivery, while communication within high-context cultures relies heavily on situational cues and emotional resonance. Wang and Yang (2025) proposed multi-pronged approaches to elevate the communication efficiency of short-video content themed on cultural tourism for global audiences: refining differentiated tourism labels to avoid homogenization, so as to deepen overseas audiences' recognition and identification with Chinese cultural tourism.

Second, research on Folk IP. Jenkins (2006) argued that grassroots creators can generate communication influence surpassing official institutional outputs through secondary creation of cultural symbols. Chen and Liu (2025) believed that mainstream influencer IP incubated by media institutions under new media ecosystems cater to the demands of three stakeholder groups, featuring clustered and differentiated development characteristics. However, extant literature mostly examines standalone folk IP figures, with scarce systematic research on hybrid IP combinations consisting of international influencers and local grassroots amateurs.

Third, research on Shaoxing cultural tourism communication. Xi Haiyu (2023) proposed cross-media dissemination channels including literary works, commercial advertisements and film and television productions, affirming the profound significance of rice wine cultural communication for promoting fine traditional Chinese culture. While mainstream media outlets have extensively covered the IShowSpeed-Liqin incident, systematic academic analysis of this case remains sparse.

2.2. Definition of Core Concepts

Folk intellectual property refers to culturally symbolic carriers with communication influence and audience appeal, forged by individuals based on personal charisma, authentic cross-cultural interactions and life-oriented expression without official institutional backing. Within this paper, IShowSpeed represents an international traffic IP with global fan coverage, while Liqin stands for a local cultural IP embedded with indigenous Jiangnan cultural genes. Value synergy is realized through cross-cultural dialogue between the two entities.

International communication strategy for cultural tourism is a systematic scheme covering communication actors, content production, channel operation and outcome feedback, formulated to enhance global recognition of regional culture and drive conversion of cultural tourism consumption. The strategic framework constructed herein centers on folk IP empowerment, and aims to bridge Shaoxing culture and overseas audiences via the inherent strengths of grassroots IP figures.

Cross-cultural interaction refers to information exchange and emotional bonding between actors from disparate cultural backgrounds via verbal and non-verbal behaviors. This paper narrows the concept to the spontaneous live-stream dialogue between Western-culture influencer IShowSpeed and Jiangnan-native Liqin, whose

core value lies in unscripted, non-performative exchanges that effectively mitigate cultural discount in cross-cultural communication.

3. Research Methodology and Design

3.1. Research Subjects

The full communication chain stemming from the cross-cultural interaction between IShowSpeed and Liqin, including: raw 22-minute footage of their live-stream exchange; three official promotional clips commissioned by Shaoxing cultural tourism authorities featuring Liqin, with a total runtime of 15 minutes; user comments attached to Shaoxing cultural tourism content released on overseas social platforms including Twitter, Instagram, YouTube and Facebook. Official international communication outputs released by Shaoxing cultural tourism authorities, covering: video content published via Shaoxing's official overseas social media account *Shaoxing: A Gateway to China's History*; promotional materials deployed by authorities at international tourism expositions.

3.2. Research Methods

First, case analysis method. This method sorts out key communication nodes of the incident, including initial live-stream viral dissemination, secondary derivative creation and subsequent official intervention. It analyzes pathways through which folk IP value is unlocked at each node, summarizing replicable experiences and structural deficiencies in Shaoxing cultural tourism's IP deployment.

Second, content analysis method. A four-dimensional coding framework spanning communication actors, cultural symbols, narrative modes and audience feedback is established (see Table 1) to conduct quantitative coding of content produced by folk IP figures and official institutional outputs. The framework enables comparative analysis of disparities in cultural symbol presentation, narrative stylization and overseas audience reception metrics between two content categories.

Table 1. "Communication subjects-cultural symbols-narrative methods-audience feedback" Coding Frame-work

Coding Dimension	Coding Indicators	Folk IP-generated Content	Official Institutional Content
Communication Actor	Actor category, professional standard, interpersonal affinity	Grassroots amateurs / international influencers; low professional production threshold; high interpersonal affinity	Government cultural tourism authorities; high professional production standard; low interpersonal affinity
Cultural Symbols	Symbol typology, presentation modality	Rice wine (daily drinking scenarios); black-awning boats (on-board experiential participation)	Rice wine (historical contextual narration); black-awning boats (static photographic exhibition)
Narrative Mode	Narrative perspective, linguistic register	First-person perspective; colloquial diction; story-driven	Third-person omniscient perspective; formal written

Coding Dimension	Coding Indicators	Folk IP-generated Content	Official Institutional Content
		narration	register; expository narration
Audience Feedback	Interaction rate, emotional inclination, cultural memorability	35% interaction rate; 77% positive emotional feedback; deep situational memorization	8% interaction rate; 54% positive emotional feedback; shallow symbolic memorization

Third, comparative research method. A three-dimensional comparative analysis is conducted across communication efficacy, cultural transmission depth and consumption conversion capacity to quantify the core competitive edges of folk IP communication relative to official institutional outreach.

3.3. Data Sources

Operational metrics including view counts, likes and comment volumes extracted from overseas social platforms for all IShowSpeed-Liqin related content; questionnaire survey data collected from 104 overseas respondents across nine countries including the United States, the United Kingdom and France, measuring tourism consumption intentions toward Shaoxing. Moreover, *2024 China Urban Overseas Social Media Communication Competitiveness Index*, jointly released by the *Reference News* Think Tank and China-Foreign Communication Think Tank.

4. Deconstruction of Folk IP Value Embodied by IShowSpeed and Liqin

4.1. Global Traffic IP with Credibility Endorsement Value

As of July 2026, IShowSpeed boasts a subscriber base of 57 million on YouTube and over 53 million followers on TikTok. The core feature of his live stream content lies in unretouched, single-take live recording that faithfully captures real-life scenarios. In his dialogue with Liqin, he avoided vague inquiries surrounding Shaoxing's cultural legacies and instead put forward a down-to-earth question: "What is the most popular local beverage from your hometown?" This conversational angle enabled Liqin to talk about Shaoxing rice wine in a spontaneous manner. In addition, his status as an untrained amateur content creator weakens the psychological barriers held by overseas viewers. A large number of commenters from the United States noted that IShowSpeed comes across as an ordinary peer, and his sincere curiosity drives global audiences to take the initiative to learn about Shaoxing's local culture.

4.2. Local Cultural IP with Emotional Resonance Value

Liqin contextualizes abstract cultural markers through concrete, everyday scenes. After the live stream, she captured intimate domestic moments, including family reunions built around Shaoxing rice wine in the official tourism videos. This reshapes global viewers' understanding of rice wine, and becomes a cultural medium that carries family affection. Survey statistics show 73% of overseas

participants could picture themselves sampling rice wine in Shaoxing after watching Liqin's clips, while only 34% of respondents generated comparable immersive mental pictures from official videos.

Previously, Liqin lacked accurate English terms for black-awning boats and relied on hand movements to illustrate these foot-powered covered vessels. Her unrefined but heartfelt delivery resonated emotionally with foreign viewers. Many online commentators pointed out that her awkward behaviors reminded them of their own clumsy efforts to present their hometowns to outsiders.

4.3. Synergistic Value of the Composite IP Collaboration

IShowSpeed and Liqin's collaboration delivers amplified communication value by integrating global influencer reach and native local cultural context, with collaborative effects outperforming individual IP outputs by a notable margin. Three tiers of synergistic mechanisms can be summarized as follows:

IShowSpeed makes up for Shaoxing cultural tourism's lack of overseas visibility with a combined global fanbase of more than 110 million, while Liqin's perspective avoids superficial cultural delivery. The two build a complete communication chain consisting of public exposure, cultural recognition and emotional recognition. In addition, IShowSpeed puts forward casual questions linked to global viewers' daily concerns, while Liqin responds by sharing genuine life tales rooted in Shaoxing's lifestyle. This makes the story flow more naturally and lets foreign audiences engage more deeply with the content. Moreover, IShowSpeed's unfamiliar outside gaze easily highlights local folk customs rarely seen in Western societies. Liqin further explains the cultural origins hidden behind these traditions. Hence, these two distinct perspectives enable international viewers to form a complete, rounded understanding of Shaoxing's overall cultural landscape.

5. Current Practice and Deficiencies of Folk IP Utilization by Shaoxing Cultural Tourism Authorities

5.1. Current Practice

Once the live conversation between IShowSpeed and Liqin went viral online, Shaoxing's cultural tourism department took immediate action and carried out three targeted promotion schemes.

Local officials reached out to Liqin within three days after the live stream attracted massive attention, and filmed three promotional shorts showcasing representative local attractions: Rice Wine Town, Lu Xun Native Place and East Lake's black-awning boat scenic zones. The team posted all footage on the city's overseas official account Meet Shaoxing and tagged IShowSpeed's social media pages. This method directed organic online audience flow to official tourism outlets, and the three videos together hit 5 million views worldwide.

While creating these promotional materials, local tourism departments chose not to overwrite Liqin's genuine amateur traits but let her act as a regular local resident introducing her own childhood experiences, for instance her long-time habit of boating at East Lake and her fond memories of the lake's clean water. This unpolished, personal presentation maintained the genuine appeal unique to grassroots creators and won positive feedback from international viewers.

5.2. Structural Deficiencies

Despite initial progress in folk IP deployment, systemic gaps persist that prevent Shaoxing cultural tourism from converting one-off accidental exposure into long-term sustainable communication momentum: 1) Shaoxing's grassroots IP discovery remains event-driven, without standardized incubation frameworks. No dedicated resource repositories have been established for local grassroots IP figures or international influencer collaborators; 2) Authorities' management of Liqin is confined to short-video content dissemination, with zero extension toward industrial consumption conversion. No themed cultural tourism packages centered on Liqin have been developed, nor has licensing of her personal image for cultural and creative derivatives been implemented; 3) No multi-dimensional evaluation framework has been constructed to quantify communication outcomes of grassroots IP content. Authorities cannot accurately map overseas audience preferences for cultural symbols and narrative styles, nor quantify the causal correlation between IP dissemination and tourism consumption growth.

6. Full-chain Strategies Empowering Shaoxing's International Cultural Tourism Communication via Folk IP

This paper constructs a four-stage full-cycle strategic system: IP Incubation → Content Production → Collaborative Operation → Outcome Feedback. The framework is designed to transform ephemeral grassroots IP viral influence into enduring competitive strengths for Shaoxing's global cultural tourism outreach.

6.1. IP Incubation

(1) Build a Talent Pool of Local Grassroots IP Creators

Local authorities may partner with regional universities, tourism operators and community committees to roll out the "Shaoxing Cultural Ambassador" recruitment scheme. Three types of grassroots creators are the core targets: intangible cultural heritage craftsmen who can weave their professional skills into short-video content; lifestyle creators focusing on authentic daily local scenes; and bilingual young residents able to conduct direct cross-cultural exchanges with overseas viewers. Recruited participants will receive two-tier mentoring support: cultural researchers offer systematic training covering intangible cultural heritage background, and new media tutors give targeted

instruction on short-video production.

(2) Develop Tiered Cooperation Resources for Global Content Creators

The cooperation pool targets creators whose fan bases mainly consist of young middle-class groups from Europe and North America, with video content centered on genuine cultural exploration and unscripted travel experiences. A tiered cooperation system will be set up to distribute supporting resources. Creators who sign cooperation agreements get customized Shaoxing cultural support packs, which contain explanatory files introducing traditional intangible heritage crafts and underrated local scenic sites, making it easier for them to finish original videos independently.

6.2. Content Production

(1) Narrative Optimization

This paper proposes a three-dimensional storytelling mode for local cultural dissemination. It combines individual life recollections, real daily scene presentation and simplified cultural explanation. For rice wine video creators, they may record every step of the three-day brewing workflow, and the footage can capture early morning rice soaking and hand-sealed fermentation pots handed down within families. This helps international viewers feel the human warmth carried by this time-honored craft. In addition, Yue Opera performers can film their daily backstage routines, covering makeup application and traditional costume arrangements. These scenes can help foreign audiences grasp the subtle aesthetic values behind Yue Opera art.

(2) Cultural Symbol Presentation

Local grassroots cultural influencers are guided to show regional cultural symbols by three types of interactive content. Firstly, hands-on participation. When foreign creators film on-location material in Shaoxing, clips showing them struggling to steer pedal-powered black-awning boats show the lighthearted charm of local folk traditions. Secondly, cross-cultural comparison. Organizing tastings of Shaoxing rice wine and Western red wine draws clear differences between their flavors and drinking manners, making Shaoxing's cultural traits stand out. Thirdly, creative fusion. Mixing Shaoxing rice wine into Western food recipes bridges cultural understanding gaps, letting overseas audiences better connect with local culture.

6.3. Collaborative Operation

(1) Content Coordination

Cultural tourism authorities can establish standardized content collaboration rules. Grassroots creators finish original cultural content creation and then submit works for review. Relevant departments will check the works and provide supplementary publicity resources. Official tourism social media platforms can

leverage the high online attention to release professional, standardized cultural popular science content. This can form a rational and efficient operation system. Grassroots creators deliver experiential cultural stories with personal characteristics, while official platforms supplement standardized and authoritative cultural background interpretation. For practical application, when foreign content creators release short videos recording their experience of riding black-awning boats in Shaoxing, official media can release practical scenic booking strategies and travel guides. This can convert online public attention and traffic into real offline tourism passenger flow.

(2) Industrial Coordination

Launch a one-day offline themed activity "Follow Liqin to Explore Shaoxing" with on-site fan engagement arrangements, as well as tailor-made travel routes referencing IShowSpeed's authentic Shaoxing tour experience. Meanwhile, cultural souvenirs such as postcards and keychains can be developed with Liqin's black-awning boat experience and IShowSpeed's rice wine tasting scenes. They can be distributed at scenic shops and overseas tourism sales platforms to extend local cultural influence. Partner with local catering enterprises to launch IP-themed dining sets to reinforce IP memorability across travel, accommodation, sightseeing, shopping and entertainment touchpoints. Convene grassroots local IP figures and contracted international influencers for on-site performances and interactive activities, forming a virtuous cycle of festival-driven tourism consumption generating secondary derivative content for global dissemination.

(3) Cross-cultural Long-term Coordination

This paper proposes three interactive modalities: monthly live-streamed virtual forums pairing international influencers and local grassroots IPs to discuss Shaoxing intangible cultural heritage, e.g., foreign influencers posing questions about Shaoxing's Winter Solstice traditions while local creators demonstrate tangyuan preparation live on camera; organize selected local IPs to conduct Shaoxing cultural pop-up events overseas, while inviting contracted international influencers for recurring immersive residencies in Shaoxing to realize cross-cultural dissemination; co-produce short videos contrasting Shaoxing and Western cultural customs, stimulating cross-cultural discussion via identification of cultural differences.

6.4 Outcome Feedback

This study develops a three-dimensional evaluation framework covering cognitive, emotional and behavioral dimensions. It adopts overseas questionnaires to assess international audiences' recognition and understanding of Shaoxing's cultural symbols. Online comment analysis and interviews can be used to measure audience emotional identification with local culture. Besides, overseas tourism reservations and cross-border cultural product sales can be tracked to reflect the actual

transformation effect of cultural communication. Local tourism departments can build a data feedback mechanism to optimize promotion strategies. Local officials can conduct monthly data analysis on grassroots IP operations and adjust promotional plans accordingly. If theoretical introductions to Yue Opera gain poor online engagement, creators can produce more backstage footage.

7. Research Conclusions and Future Outlook

This four-stage operational framework provides a feasible approach for grassroots cultural IPs to boost Shaoxing's overseas tourism communication. To addresses the shortage of professional cross-cultural communicators, Shaoxing need to cultivate both local and foreign content creators. Collaboration between individual creators and local tourism institutions helps convert the symbolic value of cultural IPs into tangible tourism benefits. In addition, data-based outcome assessment can enable continuous iteration and fine-tuning of external promotion strategies.

The analysis here draws only from one typical case, so the research results cannot be directly copied to all similar regions. Subsequent scholars may collect more city cases to compare grassroots IP promotion methods used by Shaoxing and other time-honored cultural cities. Besides, studying the combination of new digital tools and grassroots IP management will provide worthy topics for follow-up academic exploration.

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