

# AI Empowerment and Public Co-creation: Communication Mechanism, Characteristics and Cultural Connotation of the Viral Event Saving a Fox on Snow Mountain

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## Abstract

In the digital communication era marked by the rapid popularization of generative artificial intelligence, the viral event Saving a Fox on Snow Mountain started with an AI-generated short film in Shaw Brothers martial arts style, quickly broke through niche communication circles, and evolved into a nationwide creative carnival with a cumulative exposure of over 5 billion views. It has become a typical online viral event that integrates entertainment and cultural values. Taking this event as the research object, this paper adopts content analysis, data analysis and case study to sort out its communication context and life cycle, dissect its communication mechanism and distinctive features, and explore the technical logic, cultural psychology and social value behind it[1]. Based on risk communication theory and communication ecology theory, this paper also discusses new laws and trends of online viral communication in the AI era, providing theoretical references and practical implications for communication guidance, cultural innovation and digital governance of similar events in the future[2].

## Keywords

Saving a Fox on Snow Mountain; AI-generated content; Communication Mechanism; Public Co-Creation; Digital Culture

## 1. Analysis of the Viral Communication Event Saving a Fox on Snow Mountain

### 1.1. Event Overview

The viral event Saving a Fox on Snow Mountain originated in March 2026, when an anonymous internet user created a 30-second AI-generated short film in Shaw Brothers martial arts style. Drawing on the traditional folk tale of A Spirit Fox Repays a Kindness, the plot was thoroughly deconstructed and subverted: a

swordsman saves a dying white fox on a snow-capped mountain, leaves his braised spicy duck, and departs. Contrary to the traditional narrative where the fox fairy transforms into a human to repay kindness, the female character declares, I am not a fox—I am the abandoned braised duck, then pulls out a gun to take revenge. The iconic line quickly became a viral meme.

With its retro Shaw Brothers aesthetic and absurd plot twist, the short film first went viral on Douyin, then rapidly spread to mainstream platforms including Weibo, Bilibili and Xiaohongshu. Netizens engaged in massive secondary creation, replacing braised duck with everyday items (e.g., fermented soybean milk, Gabacai, firewood, axes) and even abstract concepts (snow mountain, air, bacteria), forming a narrative chain of Everything Can Take Revenge and building a vast Revenge Universe. As of March 30, 2026, related topics had accumulated over 5 billion views across the internet, with more than 1 million secondary creations. Participants included ordinary netizens, self-media, official accounts (public security, culture and tourism), and brands, forming a nationwide communication carnival[3].

## **1.2. Communication Context (Based on Life Cycle Theory)**

According to the life cycle theory of online viral events, the communication of Saving a Fox on Snow Mountain is divided into four stages: initiation, diffusion, peak and decline, each with distinct characteristics.

### **1.2.1. Initiation Stage (March 15–18, 2026): AI Short Film Debut and Initial Spread**

The event was triggered by the anonymous user's AI-generated short film on Douyin. Driven by its unique plot twist and visual style, the single video reached 10 million views, 500,000 shares and over 100,000 comments by March 18. Communication was limited to young Douyin users, relying on spontaneous organic spread rather than heavy algorithmic promotion.

### **1.2.2. Diffusion Stage (March 19–22, 2026): Rise of Secondary Creation and Cross-Platform Expansion**

As the original video gained traction, massive secondary creations emerged, with users modifying revenge targets and enriching plot details into a narrative chain model. Topics spread to Weibo, Bilibili and Xiaohongshu, amplified by self-media accounts. By March 22, total views exceeded 1 billion, with 200,000 secondary creations. Platforms strengthened algorithmic push, expanding reach across age and interest groups.

### **1.2.3. Peak Stage (March 23–27, 2026): Public Co-creation and Diversified Participation**

The event reached its peak as official accounts (public security, culture and tourism) joined the meme for public welfare communication—for instance, Xiamen Public Security posted: I am the 8th crooked pine by the 67th chipped stone step on the snow mountain, with a national anti-fraud QR code tied to me. Why didn't you scan

it when you passed? Brands such as Chuanwa Braised Duck also participated, converting popularity into commercial traffic. By March 27, total views exceeded 4 billion, with 800,000 secondary creations. The event repeatedly topped platform hot search lists.

#### 1.2.4. Decline Stage (March 28, 2026–Present): Cooling Down and Residual Spread

With emerging new topics, popularity gradually declined, and user participation dropped. However, official and brand accounts continued to leverage residual popularity. By March 30, cumulative views surpassed 5 billion. Ordinary netizen participation fell sharply, and the event entered its closing phase[4].

### 1.3. Core Communication Data Analysis

This paper uses multi-dimensional data collection covering Douyin, Weibo, Bilibili, Xiaohongshu and Video Account from March 15 to 30, 2026.

Platform	Related Topics	Cumulative Views (100 million)	Cumulative Shares (10,000)	Cumulative Comments (10,000)	Secondary Creations (10,000)	Hot Searches
Douyin	12	32.6	860	420	75	18
Weibo	8	10.8	320	180	15	12
Bilibili	5	6.6	80	50	10	5
Xiaohongshu	6	4.2	45	95	8	3
Video Account	4	3.8	55	65	7	2
Total	35	58.0	1360	810	115	40

Four quantitative features stand out:

1. High platform concentration: Douyin accounts for 56.2% of total views, favored for short-video fragmentation and precise algorithms.
2. Large-scale communication: 5.8 billion views, 13.6 million shares, 8.1 million comments and 1.15 million secondary creations.
3. Unbalanced cross-platform spread: Douyin, Weibo and Bilibili contribute 91.4% of views; Xiaohongshu and Video Account are weaker due to audience mismatch.
4. Fast outbreak, fast decay: 12 days from initiation to peak, followed by rapid decline, consistent with the short, flat, fast pattern of online virality.

## 2. Analysis of the Communication Mechanism

The virality of Saving a Fox on Snow Mountain resulted from the synergy of technology, content, platforms and audiences, forming a complete mechanism: Technology Initiation → Content Attraction → Platform Promotion → Audience Participation.

### 2.1. Initiation Mechanism: AIGC Lowers the Creation Threshold

AIGC technology broke professional barriers in traditional content creation, providing ordinary users with low-cost, high-efficiency tools[5].

It drastically reduced creation difficulty: users only needed simple prompts to generate videos without professional shooting or editing.

It enabled mass production of stylized content: the highly formulaic Shaw Brothers style provided a clear template for AI, generating recognizable retro visuals that aligned with current trends[6].

## **2.2. Diffusion Mechanism**

The event spread via Content Drainage → Channel Diffusion → Circle Penetration.

Content innovation: Deconstruction of the traditional fox repaying kindness narrative created strong comedic tension through subversion and expectation violation. Symbol reconstruction supported massive secondary creation.

Channel diffusion: Douyin's fast spread, Weibo's topic amplification and Bilibili's creative community together enabled full-scope cross-platform coverage.

Circle penetration: From young Douyin users to the general public, boosted by official and brand participation, the event achieved full societal breakthrough.

## **2.3. Maintenance Mechanism: Public Co-creation Extends Lifespan**

Open co-creation: As an open-source IP with no traditional copyright restrictions, the event encouraged free adaptation and sustained content renewal.

Diversified empowerment: Official accounts integrated memes with public welfare; brands converted popularity into traffic, enriching communication connotations.

Emotional resonance: The absurd, relatable narrative became an outlet for young people's real-life stress, strengthening participation stickiness[7].

## **3. Communication Characteristics and Cultural Connotation**

### **3.1. Communication Characteristics**

Civilian creators & creative equality: Ordinary users dominated production enabled by AIGC; 72% of secondary creators were first-time AI users.

Co-creative communication & open-source IP: Users were both recipients and producers, forming a self-sustaining Everything Can Take Revenge ecosystem.

Absurd style & strong contrast: Retro martial arts aesthetics paired with modern absurdity generated superior communicative power.

Diversified participants & cross-border integration: Netizens, self-media, officials and brands collaborated, elevating social and commercial value.

Fast speed & short lifecycle: Rapid algorithmic diffusion and fleeting audience attention led to quick rise and decline.

### **3.2. Cultural Connotation**

Tech-enabled cultural innovation: Youth used AI to reinterpret traditional culture in a contemporary, playful way, driving cultural modernization.

Emotional release & value deconstruction: The subversive narrative reflected young people's pressure and skepticism toward traditional effort equals reward logic.  
Public co-creation & cultural equality: AIGC and platforms democratized cultural production, shifting from elite-led to mass-driven creation.

#### 4. Research Conclusions and Implications

The event's virality was driven by AIGC initiation, content innovation, platform promotion and public co-creation, forming a complete and replicable communication mechanism.

It displayed distinctive features of the AIGC era: civilian creation, open IP, absurd style, diversified participation and rapid lifecycle.

Culturally, it embodied tech-driven innovation, youth emotional expression and the democratization of digital culture.

Challenges included content homogenization (38% of secondary creations lacked innovation), vague value guidance (4% vulgar), short lifecycle and unbalanced cross-platform spread, posing governance tasks for future events.

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