

## Article

# Research on the International Communication of Yellow River Culture under the 5W Communication Model

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**Abstract:** Based on 5W model, this research takes the communication of Yellow River culture on international platforms as the core research content, with tweets about Yellow River culture on the international social platform TikTok as the main research object, to explore the current situation of Yellow River culture in international communication and analyze its advantages and disadvantages. The study finds that the communicators of Yellow River culture cover a wide range, including tour guides, tourism practitioners, ordinary users, tourists, internet celebrities, and content creators. The communication of Yellow River culture shows the characteristics of diversification and interactivity. While the content of Yellow River culture communication is rich, the dissemination of Yellow River's history and culture is insufficient.

**Keywords:** 5W communication model; international communication; Yellow River culture

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1. Background of the Study

The importance was emphasized on sharing stories about China and its people, highlighting the rich cultural heritage and traditional values as key aspects of China's cultural soft power. As an important part of the splendid Chinese civilization, the Yellow River culture is a key link in "telling good Chinese stories" in international communication.

Meanwhile, the international communication of the Yellow River culture is facing new challenges and opportunities. Against the backdrop of globalization, how to better inherit and carry forward the Yellow River culture so that it can shine more brilliantly on the international stage has become an important issue in current research. Therefore, the research on the international communication of the Yellow River culture not only helps to deeply explore the connotation and value of the Yellow River culture but also provides strong support for promoting cultural exchanges and mutual learning between China and foreign countries.

### 1.2. Significance of the Study

This study conducts an empirical research on the communication of "Yellow River culture" on international platforms from the perspective of international communication. Through data analysis, it provides effective data support for a more authentic and comprehensive understanding of the current status of the international communication of Yellow River culture, thereby better disseminating Yellow River culture and telling Chinese stories well.

By analyzing the advantages and disadvantages of various communication elements in international communication under Lasswell's model, it provides a design basis for exploring effective and high-quality paths for the international communication of Yellow River culture, so as to improve the means and approaches of Yellow River culture communication and enhance the acceptance and effectiveness of its communication.

Published: 05 August 2025



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It helps to understand, on international social platforms, which themes attract more attention from audiences of different countries and which have achieved better communication effects and positive dissemination. This enables media and relevant departments to focus their efforts on selecting communication themes and implementing communication paths.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 5W Communication Model

The 5W communication model proposed by Lasswell in 1948 is a classic theory in the field of communication. This model systematically describes the basic framework of the communication process through five key elements: the communicator (Who), the message content (Says What), the communication channel (In Which Channel), the audience (To Whom), and the communication effect (With What Effect). These five elements not only provide a specific starting point for understanding the structure and characteristics of the communication process but also lay the foundation for the five major fields of mass communication research: control research, content analysis, media analysis, audience analysis, and effect analysis [1].

### 2.2. Researches on Overseas Communication of Yellow River Culture

As a significant part of Chinese traditional culture, Yellow River culture is characterized by its inclusiveness, which has contributed to its continuity and widespread inheritance. A search for relevant literature on CNKI using “Yellow River culture” as the keyword reveals that scholars’ research on Yellow River culture has gradually scaled up since 2019. Scholars hold roughly similar views on the definition of the concept and connotation of Yellow River culture, while their research perspectives vary. These studies have clarified the connotation of Yellow River culture, expounded its inclusiveness, and indirectly confirmed the possibility of its international communication.

Research on the communication of Yellow River culture involves innovations in the subjects of communication, content, channels, and methods. Based on the SMCR model, it is proposed that in the new era, digital means should be fully utilized to inject new vitality into Yellow River culture [2]. From the perspective of semiotics, it is suggested that methods such as cross-media conversion, deconstruction and reconstruction, and scene construction should be used to build a symbolic representation system of the Yellow River, so as to realize the IP-based creation of Yellow River stories and symbols [3].

Unlike research on the domestic communication of Yellow River culture, studies on its international communication are relatively insufficient. On CNKI and WoS, only two relevant literatures are retrieved when “Yellow River culture” and “foreign communication” are set as keywords simultaneously, and only four when “Yellow River culture” and “international communication” are used together. Scholars have discussed the value orientation, practical dilemmas, and path innovations of the international communication of Yellow River culture. Some scholars suggest that improving the international communication capacity of Yellow River culture through self-media could be approached from multiple aspects [4]; Scholar analyzed the bottlenecks of the international communication of Yellow River culture from the “memetics perspective” [5].

As social media has gradually become an important platform for people to obtain information, some scholars have suggested using international social media to actively set agendas for Yellow River culture-related issues, and leverage the “soft” identity of folk media to improve the effectiveness of the international communication of Yellow River culture [6]. Meanwhile, in the face of the complex international communication environment, establishing and reconstructing a discourse system that integrates Chinese and foreign perspectives to showcase the spirit and essence of Yellow River culture is also a major aspect of the current international communication of Yellow River culture [7].

In general, current domestic research on Yellow River culture focuses more on theoretical and connotative aspects, with a larger number of studies on its domestic communication compared to international communication. Through sorting out research on international communication, it is found that the application of Lasswell's model in the communication theory model of Yellow River culture is relatively limited, and the research on the international communication of Yellow River culture lacks refinement and sufficient data support, requiring more empirical studies to provide effective data. Therefore, this research, with Lasswell's model as the theoretical framework and data crawled from TikTok as the main research object, aims to analyze the current status, advantages, and disadvantages of the international communication of Yellow River culture, and explore optimized paths for it. It is of great significance for serving local areas, promoting the international communication of Yellow River culture, strengthening cultural confidence, enhancing cultural identity, telling Chinese stories well, and enabling Yellow River culture and even China's excellent traditional culture to better go global.

### **3. Research Design**

#### *3.1. Research Questions*

- 1) Analyze the content related to Yellow River culture on the TikTok platform to find out the current status of the communication of Yellow River culture on international platforms.
- 2) Analyze the data on the current status of the international communication of Yellow River culture under 5W model, and identify the advantages and disadvantages of each element in communication.

#### *3.2. Source of Data*

This study uses Python programming scripts to systematically collect user-generated content on the TikTok platform, with 'Yellow River' and 'Yellow River culture' as core search terms.

At the technical implementation level, first, a data scraping script is customized according to the required fields, and then the script is executed to collect raw data. To ensure the analyzability of the data, the raw CSV format data is converted into a more intuitive Excel format, facilitating subsequent data classification and sorting.

In the data preprocessing stage, this study conducted strict quality control on 3,853 collected raw records. By deleting incomplete records, removing duplicates, and excluding content unrelated to the theme, a curated dataset of 1,945 tweets closely related to 'Yellow River' and 'Yellow River culture' was finally refined. This series of rigorous data cleaning measures ensures the accuracy and reliability of the analysis basis, laying a solid foundation for subsequent in-depth analysis.

### **4. Research Findings**

#### *4.1. Current Status of the Communication of Yellow River Culture*

##### *4.1.1. Communicators*

The main communicators are institutional entities such as research organizations and cultural bodies. These organizations dominate international communication on the TikTok platform, with content covering social economy, ecological landscapes, and other fields. At the same time, groups of TikTok users with a high interest in Yellow River culture and individuals or organizations that communicate in multiple languages such as Chinese, English, and Japanese contribute to this, promoting cross-cultural dialogue.

##### *4.1.2. Message Content*

In terms of natural landscapes, it mainly presents the clarity of the upper reaches, the grandeur of the middle reaches, and the diverse landforms of the lower reaches of the

Yellow River, showcasing its majestic appearance as a “natural river”. It also disseminates China’s ecological protection practices such as the governance of the Mu Us Desert and soil and water conservation, conveying the concept of sustainable development to the international community.

In terms of history and culture, it emphasizes the Yellow River basin’s status as the cradle of Chinese civilization, disseminates archaeological achievements like Yangshao Culture and Longshan Culture, and historical integration cases such as the Silk Road. It tells the cultural genes of the Chinese nation, such as perseverance and unity, including the family and country feelings embodied in water control and national stability. It promotes intangible cultural heritage projects in the Yellow River basin, such as paper-cutting, clay sculpture, and shadow puppetry, and displays memories of folk culture through artistic works like *The Clothes of the Yellow River*.

In terms of promoting cultural tourism belts, multilingual tourism routes along the Yellow River are launched, covering iconic attractions such as the Sanjiangyuan in Qinghai, the Longmen Grottoes in Henan, and the Yellow River estuary in Shandong. It showcases real scenes of the Yellow River through slow live broadcasts and VR technology, attracting overseas tourists to participate in the themed activity “Discover the Beauty of the Yellow River”.

#### 4.1.3. Communication Channels

The communication channels of Yellow River culture on TikTok demonstrate characteristics of diversification and interactivity. Combining platform features and user behaviors, the communication is mainly realized through the following forms:

##### 1) Professional content production by official accounts and institutional media

Relevant cultural and tourism organizations release promotional content through official TikTok accounts, such as scenic spot landscapes, cultural and historical explanations, and travel guides. Such content usually emphasizes professionalism and authority, and leverages the audio-visual advantages of short videos to attract users' attention.

##### 2) User-Generated Content (UGC) and PUGC models

Spontaneous creation by ordinary tourists and users: Short videos shot by tourists during their visits to the Yellow River are considered UGC, which is more authentic and appealing, easily resonating with the audience. In-depth participation of professional users: The PUGC (Professional User-Generated Content) model combines the flexibility of UGC with the professionalism of PGC (Professionally Generated Content). For example, tour guides or cultural bloggers release in-depth explanatory videos on TikTok, integrating the Yellow River's history and Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism cultures into short dramas or animations to attract young users.

##### 3) Platform functions and algorithm-driven communication

Subtle integration of visual elements: Using TikTok’s functions such as stickers, filters, and special effects, Yellow River cultural symbols (such as stone carvings, ancient buildings, and traditional costumes) are integrated into videos. For instance, a “Yellow River sunrise” dynamic filter is designed, allowing users to generate creative videos with Yellow River elements with one click.

Algorithm recommendation and topic operation: By guiding users to participate in creation through hashtag challenges and popular topics, TikTok’s algorithm accurately reaches user groups interested in tourism and culture. For example, the official initiates a “Yellow River story collection” activity, and users' contributed content gains secondary exposure through algorithms.

#### 4.1.4. Audience

The audience of Yellow River-related content on TikTok mainly consists of young users, especially Generation Z (digital natives born between 1995 and 2009) and groups with an open attitude towards multiculturalism.

- 1) Young users as the main body: TikTok's user base is concentrated among those under 30, with a significant proportion of young users aged 18-24. This group is keen on exploring various subcultural circles and holds an open attitude towards new things and multiculturalism. Therefore, content related to the Yellow River, which has rich cultural connotations and characteristics, easily attracts their attention and interest.
- 2) Generation Z users: As digital natives, Generation Z pursues individuality, pays attention to personal image and reputation, and is enthusiastic about showcasing themselves on social media. The Yellow River, as a classic cultural symbol, is presented on TikTok in various forms such as dance, pranks, and comedy. These creative and entertaining expressions fully align with Generation Z's entertainment preferences and social needs. While enjoying the fun brought by Yellow River content, they also shape and display their personal images through sharing and interaction.
- 3) Groups interested in multiculturalism: The Yellow River is not only a classic cultural symbol but also carries rich historical and cultural connotations. On TikTok, content about the Yellow River may involve cultural interpretation and historical background, attracting groups interested in multiculturalism. They broaden their cultural horizons and cognitive boundaries by watching and sharing Yellow River content, satisfying their needs for exploring and learning about multiculturalism.

In summary, the audience of Yellow River-related content on TikTok is mainly young users, especially Generation Z and groups open to multiculturalism. These user groups have a high interest and attention in cultural content like the Yellow River, and they enjoy the fun and value brought by such content through watching, sharing, and interacting.

#### 4.1.5. Communication Effect

- 1) Significant improvement in international recognition

Regional breakthrough: Luoyang, with its Yellow River cultural elements, has gained international recognition, indicating that its cultural symbols have formed positive recognition and emotional resonance among overseas audiences.

Expanded audience coverage: TikTok platform communication effects show that countries such as Italy, Brazil, and Ireland have the highest attention to Yellow River culture, with content preferences focusing on historical culture, ecological governance, and other fields.

Effective targeted communication: By investigating the cognitive differences of international audiences towards Yellow River culture, targeted strategies have been developed (e.g., emphasizing artistic aesthetics for Italy, focusing on ecological governance for Brazil) to enhance communication effectiveness.

- 2) Innovation in communication models activates youth participation

Empowerment through digital technology: Online activities like "Discover the Beauty of the Yellow River" are created using VR and slow live broadcast technologies, attracting overseas young groups to participate in immersive experiences.

Cross-border integration of cultural intellectual properties (IPs): Drawing on the successful experience of IPs such as 'Wukong', Yellow River-themed animations and films are developed to promote the youth expression of traditional culture.

Multilingual content customization: Differentiated content is produced in languages such as English and Japanese to cover different cultural circles and improve communication precision.

#### *4.2. Advantages and Disadvantages of the Current Status of the Communication of Yellow River Culture*

##### *4.2.1. The communicators of Yellow River culture cover a wide range*

The communicators of Yellow River culture include media such as @ChinaDaily, as well as tour guides, tourism practitioners, ordinary users, tourists, internet celebrities, and content creators. Content from media like @ChinaDaily accounts for approximately 12.35%, while the remainder is mainly from ordinary users and content creators. Among ordinary users, those with research backgrounds in Yellow River culture account for only 3.32%. This makes the communication of the connotation and depth of Yellow River culture superficial and insufficient due to the lack of explanations from professional researchers.

##### *4.2.2. The Content of Yellow River Culture Communication is Rich, but the Communication of Yellow River's History and Culture is Insufficient*

The content of Yellow River culture communication mainly covers matters related to visiting the Yellow River, promotional content for visiting the Yellow River, natural landscapes of the Yellow River, history and culture of the Yellow River, and experiences of visiting Yellow River attractions. Among them, natural landscapes and visiting experiences of the Yellow River are the main content, while the communication of Yellow River's history and culture and official promotional content account for a low proportion.

Moreover, in the existing communication of Yellow River's history and culture, the focus is on explaining intangible cultural heritage and other contents of the Yellow River, with insufficient coverage of content such as the historical development of the Yellow River. The insufficient communication of Yellow River's history and culture is mainly because it requires professional knowledge and professionals, while social platforms are mainly dominated by ordinary users such as tourists and visitors, who do not have such professional knowledge. Professionals studying Yellow River culture rarely popularize and explain history and culture on such social platforms. Therefore, the content related to the communication of Yellow River's history and culture is relatively scarce, and its professionalism is insufficient.

##### *4.2.3. The Communication of Yellow River Culture Shows the Characteristics of Diversification and Interactivity*

In the communication of Yellow River culture, it combines professional content production by official accounts and institutional media, participation of mainstream media, user-generated content (UGC) and PUGC models, in-depth participation of professional users in the PUGC model, as well as platform functions and algorithm-driven communication, and cross-platform integration and cooperation with internet celebrities.

In these communication processes, modern technologies are integrated alongside traditional methods. The natural and cultural landscapes of the Yellow River are displayed through VR and AR technologies or 360-degree panoramic videos. Interactive features such as Q&A and voting are used to guide users to explore Yellow River culture. However, cultural discount leads to an insufficient understanding of the deep connotation of Yellow River culture by international users. Communicators are mainly official institutions, supplemented by multilingual individuals, with limited involvement of professional researchers.

## **5. Conclusion**

Based on Lasswell's 5W model, this paper analyzes the current status of international communication of Yellow River culture on TikTok. Communicators are mainly official institutions, supplemented by multilingual individuals, but with few professional researchers involved. Content covers natural landscapes, history, and culture, with natural

landscapes and travel experiences accounting for a high proportion, while the dissemination of historical culture is insufficient. Media combines official accounts, UGC and PUGC, using VR and other technologies. The audience is mainly young people under 30 and multicultural enthusiasts, with high attention in Italy, Brazil and other countries. The study shows that the communication has advantages such as a wide range of subjects and diverse forms, but there are issues like insufficient professional content and cultural discount, so it is necessary to strengthen professional participation and in-depth creation.

**Funding:** Funded by Taishan University Teaching Reform Research Program; Project No. JG202432.

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