A Comparative Study of Meaning Construction in Travel Image Promotional Videos for Heilongjiang and Jilin under Visual Narrative Framework

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Abstract: This research focuses on the multimodal comparative interpretation, within a visual narrative framework, of the interpersonal meaning, ideational meaning, and textual meaning of tourism promotional videos for Jilin and Heilongjiang provinces. In terms of focalisation, the Jilin promotional video utilizes a greater number of mediated perspectives, fostering stronger interactivity with viewers compared to Heilongiang's video. Regarding the pathos, both provinces feature a similar quantity of personalizing images, yet Heilongjiang's video excels in evoking resonance among viewers by showcasing winter scenes that evoke appreciation for ice and snow. Analyzing character manifestation and inter-event, both provinces employ metonymic character depiction, combined inter-event relationship of unfolding and projection to convey their respective tourism themes. Regarding visual-textual layout, both promotional videos employ an integrated visual-textual layout approach.

With the soaring popularity of TikTok short videos, information dissemination has entered the era of widespread self-media. Both Heilongjiang and Jilin provinces possess abundant tourism resources. Promotional videos showcasing provincial and municipal images, serving as convenient mobile short videos, stand as crucial mediums for constructing the tourism image and promotional discourse of both provinces. This research attempts to embark from a perspective of multimodal discourse analysis, employing a framework of visual narrative analysis as a theoretical guidance. Through the analysis of visual images, textual elements, and other multimodal symbols, it aims to comparatively interpret and analyze the construction of urban tourism images in the Jilin tourism promotional video 'Colorful Four Seasons, Wonderful Jilin' and the Heilongjiang tourism promotional video 'Great Scenery of the North, All in Heilongjiang'. The goal is to deepen the understanding of the distinctive tourism image features of Heilongjiang and Jilin among domestic and international audiences by studying the discursive meaning construction that attracts viewers in these promotional videos, thereby promoting the construction of regional images.

1. The Visual Narrative Framework

In 1996, Kress & Van Leeuwen introduced the theory of visual grammar, positing that images, colors, layouts, and music constitute social symbols akin to linguistic symbols. Each type of symbol

conveys meaning and interconnects, forming a comprehensive discourse.[1] Despite offering a robust analytical framework for multimodal discourse analysis, the theory of visual grammar has certain limitations.[2] In 2013, Painter, Martin, and Unsworth presented the framework of visual narratives in their seminal work, 'Reading visual narratives: image analysis of children's picture book'. This framework expanded the scope of research from singular images to multimodal narrative discourses encompassing multiple images found in mediums like picture books and videos.[3] This study chose the Jilin Tourism promotional video 'Colorful Four Seasons, Wonderful Jilin,'[4] and the Heilongjiang Tourism promotional video 'Great Scenery of the North, All in Heilongjiang'[5] as research materials. These promotional videos from the respective provinces encompass diverse visual elements such as scenes, characters, and events. Consequently, this research employs Painter et al.'s framework of visual narratives as its theoretical underpinning. Its aim is to conduct a comparative analysis of the multimodal construction of tourism images in the selected materials, concentrating on how these videos construct interpersonal meaning, conceptual meaning and textual meaning, and other components encapsulated within the three major dimensions of meaning.

2. Multimodal Comparative Interpretation of Tourism Image Construction in Promotional Videos

2.1. Interpersonal Meaning

The interpersonal meaning within visual narrative discourse encompasses two key aspects: firstly, the relationships depicted among characters within the discourse itself, and secondly, the establishment of relations between the discourse and the reader. It is evident that interpersonal meaning primarily refers to the interpersonal relationships and emotional expressions depicted within images. This study aims to comparatively explore the subsystems of interpersonal meaning, particularly the focalisation system and the pathos system in the tourism image promotional videos of Heilongjiang and Jilin provinces.

2.1.1. The focalisation system

The focalisation system primarily investigates the interaction between the characters in the promotional videos of Heilongjiang and Jilin provinces and their audience and the perspective relationships. International relationships primarily focus on whether there is eye contact between the promotional video's images and the audience. Perspective relationships primarily evaluate whether there exists an mediated perspective in the promotional video, for instance, whether there are characters guiding the audience to observe elements within the scenes. A mediated perspective can engage the audience's attention more effectively, facilitating enhanced interpersonal understanding and communication. Conversely, lacking a mediated perspective leads to a dearth of guidance for the audience, resulting in weaker interaction and making it relatively challenging for the promotional video to evoke emotional resonance among viewers.

The differences between Heilongjiang and Jilin tourism promotional videos in terms of the focal system are depicted in Table 1.

Table 1: Statistics of Intermediary Images in Heilongjiang and Jilin Tourism Promotional Videos

Region	Total number of images	Number of mediated images	The percentage of mediated images
Heilongjiang	250	12	4.8%
Jilin	330	35	10.6%

The promotional video of Heilongjiang Province showcases the natural landscapes, music city,

Sino-Russian exchanges, ethnic minorities, agricultural characteristics, and the culture of ice and snow, following the four seasons of spring, summer, autumn, and winter. The entire film does not feature a fixed protagonist. During the spring and autumn segments, the video predominantly employs a non-mediated perspective to introduce the magnificent landscapes and agricultural development of Heilongjiang. However, in the summer and winter seasons, the video emphasizes interaction with viewers while enjoying music and the fun of ice and snow. Table 2 shows in Heilongjiang, visitors engage intimately with playful penguins at the Ice and Snow World, following a direct, immersive perspective presented in the film. Viewers seem to immerse themselves, extending their arms to interact with the penguins, thus perceiving the joy and delight of the visitors and triggering an emotional resonance among the audience.

Table 2: Examples of focalisation Systems in Heilongjiang and Jilin Tourism Promotional Videos

Heilongjiang	Jilin

The tourism promotional video of Jilin Province revolves around a foreign couple touring Jilin. Viewers follow this foreign pair to appreciate the natural beauty of Jilin, experience Sino-Korean cultures, Jilin cuisine, automotive culture, film culture, and the fun of ice and snow.

Table 2 illustrates a foreign couple enjoying a traditional local performance art of Northeast China called "Errenzhuan" at a theater. Following the perspective of the couple, viewers can feel the strong regional characteristics of "Errenzhuan" in Northeast China—a lively and humorous performance vividly expressing the straightforwardness, boldness, and genuine emotions of the people in the region.

2.1.2. Pathos

The pathos system explores viewers' emotional responses to different images, categorizing them based on the level of emotional involvement into individual, empathetic, and appreciative categories. Individual images portray characters in the most realistic and specific manner, much like identifiable portraits, making it easier to resonate with viewers and foster emotional connections between individuals. Empathetic images may lack facial details or other specifics, displaying only partial representations that still convey a holistic sense. Appreciative images depict characters in the form of emoticons or simple drawings, having the lowest capacity to evoke emotions in viewers.

Table 3: Personalizing Image Statistics in Tourism Promotional Videos of Heilongjiang and Jilin

region	Total number of	Number of personalizing images	The percentage of personalizing images
Heilongjiang	250	37	14.8%(of which winter images accounts for 10%)
Jilin	330	49	14.85%

From Tables 3 and 4, it's evident that both promotional videos extensively utilize personalizing images, accurately portraying facial expressions of the characters, showcasing positive emotions like joy, novelty, and enjoyment. This approach achieves emotional interaction between the promotional videos and the viewers. When depicting lively scenes, both provincial promotional videos employ empathic images to enhance the atmosphere and do not use appreciative images.

Table 4: Examples of Pathos in Tourism Promotional Videos of Heilongjiang and Jilin

Region	Personalizing Images	Empathic Images
Heilongjiang		
Jilin		

The promotional video of Heilongjiang Province extensively employs personalizing images in the winter ice and snow section, which accounts for 10% of all the personalizing images, vividly showcasing the joyful, thrilling, and delightful experiences of tourists in ice and snow activities. In Table 4, a father and son from Heilongjiang slide down a snow slide with smiles on their faces. These individual images bridge the emotional gap with the viewers, making them appreciate the excitement and fun of the Ice and Snow World project, fostering a sense of anticipation. Meanwhile, empathetic images depict the night scene of the Snow Village. Although facial expressions of individual figures cannot be distinguished, the silhouettes of numerous people create an enchanting and bustling ambiance of the Snow Village night scene.

The promotional video of Jilin Province consistently features individual images, evoking emotional resonance among viewers. In Table 4, Jilin's tourists are seated together, joyfully admiring Changbai Mountain ginseng, sharing their own stories, and smiling brightly. Their joyful emotions infect the audience. Meanwhile, empathetic images showcase performances held at the Changchun Movie Wonderland, where people, dressed in performance costumes, enthusiastically display smiling face patterns.

2.2. Ideational Meaning

The ideational meaning of visual narrative discourse focuses on the construction of visual processes, primarily involving three subsystems: character manifestation, inter-event relationships, and inter-circumstance relationships. This study primarily explores two aspects: character manifestation and inter-event relationships.

2.2.1. Character Manifestation

Table 5: Examples of metonymic character depiction in Tourism Promotional Videos of Heilongjiang and Jilin

Heilongjiang	Jilin

Painter divides image character manifestation into two categories: complete and metonymic.

Complete includes facial features of characters, enabling viewers to clearly identify the characters. Metonymic, on the other hand, uses other parts of the body or silhouette and other partial features of the character to represent their identity.

In both provincial promotional videos, character manifestation primarily utilizes complete depiction, yet metonymic can still be observed. As shown in Table 5, in Heilongjiang's promotional video, the ice sculptor doesn't reveal facial features; the image only includes hand movements and side-profile visuals. Viewers deduce the identity through the sculptor's hands gripping a cutter and the splashes of ice and snow. Metonymic shifts the focus from the character's image to the artistry of ice sculpting, allowing viewers more room for imagination. In Jilin's portrayal in Table 5, the imagery depicts "Puyi" traversing the pseudo-Manchukuo Imperial Palace. As each door opens, he walks with a cane, leaving viewers with an incomplete silhouette. This triggers the audience's thoughts to that historical period. Metonymic highlights the focal content, drawing greater attention from viewers to these key aspects.

2.2.2. Inter-event relationship

In visual narrative discourse, inter-event relationships consist of two types: unfolding and projection. Unfolding relationships examine the temporal connection between two events, whether they occur sequentially or simultaneously. Projection relationships, on the other hand, investigate whether an event in one image is what a character in another image sees or thinks about.

Table 6: Examples of Unfolding and Projection for Inter- event Relationships in Tourism Promotional Videos of Heilongjiang

Unfolding and Projection for Inter- event Relationships in Tourism Promotional Videos of Heilongjiang		
Picture (1)	Picture (2)	Picture (3)

Both provincial promotional videos employ unfolding and projection in their narrative discourse. When depicting natural landscapes, the videos follow a sequential order of events in visual storytelling. However, when focusing on specific themes, they combine both unfolding and projection approaches. As demonstrated in Table 6, in Heilongjiang's video, a tourist initially arrives at the Heihe Port on the China-Russia border and then reaches Blagoveshchensk city. Standing by the railing on the Russian side of the boundary river, Picture (1) and (2) depict a clear sequence of events, showcasing the unfolding aspect of inter-event relationships. Picture (3) presents the church the woman sees in Russia, illustrating a projection relationship.

2.3. Textual Meaning

At the level of textual meaning, Painter proposed two layouts: integrated and complementary, combining visual and textual analysis in narrative discourse to connect interpersonal and ideational meanings. Integrated layout refers to the fusion of images and text, working together to construct meaning, involving both unfolding and projecting semantic relationships. Unfolding implies that images and text are independently coherent yet interconnected, collectively conveying meaning. Projection refers to text representing the language or thoughts of characters within the images. The

other layout is complementary, where images and text each occupy separate spaces without merging into a unified whole.

Textual meaning is constructed in the respective tourism promotional videos of Heilongjiang and Jilin. In the Heilongjiang video, there exists an image showcasing stone carvings displaying 'China's northernmost point.' Through the text, viewers gain an understanding of the geographical context of the narrative. Meanwhile, the central focus of the image captures a man performing 'splashing water to ice.' Both text and image hold independent meanings, yet they are closely linked. This act, 'splashing water to ice,' is only possible in places as extreme as China's northernmost point, where temperatures drop to minus 40 degrees Celsius. The integrated relationship between text and image expands, revealing the wonders of China's Arctic to the audience.

In Jilin's tourism promotional video, a diverse group of people gathers inside a small tram, embodying a shared belief reflected in the slogan 'Beautiful Jilin.' The text 'Beautiful Jilin' represents the collective thoughts of the characters in the image, exemplifying a typical projection relationship within the textual meaning. Both provincial promotional videos primarily employ the integrated layout of images and text, mainly emphasizing the expanded relationship. However, Jilin's promotional video uniquely utilizes projection relationships, as the characters' remarks about Jilin deepen the audience's impression.

3. Conclusion

The theory of visual narrative framework can guide the production of promotional videos, exploring the construction of multimodal discourse meaning that attracts audiences is crucial for promoting the image of urban tourism. The promotional videos of Heilongjiang and Jilin have similarities and differences in the construction of interpersonal meaning, ideational meaning, and textual meaning. Regarding the focus on the subsystem of interpersonal meaning—focalisation, Jilin's promotional video employs characters to guide viewers in observing things, and the number of mediated images is more than twice that of Heilongjiang's video, which can better help viewers immerse themselves in the story. In terms of pathos systems, although both provinces use a similar proportion of personalizing images, Heilongjiang's video mostly concentrates these images in winter, reflecting the richness of Heilongjiang's winter tourism resources and the traditional enjoyment of ice and snow, leaving potential for further exploration of interpersonal meaning construction in other seasons. In constructing ideational meaning, both provinces use complete manifestation of characters and metonymic to highlight focal points and evoke resonance among viewers, employing unfolding and projection inter-event relationships in the narrative process. In constructing textual meaning, both provinces utilize integrated expanded image-text layouts, while Jilin's promotional video also employs projection image-text layouts. Through these promotional videos, both provinces have constructed the thematic meanings of "Jilin's attractions are not just about landscapes" and "Heilongjiang offers hospitality in all four seasons." This study does not delve into the ambiance systems of interpersonal meaning and the inter-circumstance relationships of ideational meaning, presenting certain limitations.

Acknowledgment

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