

Digital Storytelling and Cultural Soft Power: A Case Study of Liziqi's YouTube Channel and Global Promotion of Chinese Culture

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Abstract

This study investigates the role of digital storytelling in the digital age, focusing on how Liziqi's content promotes a positive image of Chinese traditional culture and contributes to the enhancement of Chinese cultural soft power. As technological advancements transform global communication, digital narratives have become vital tools for cultural dissemination and international communication.

This study examines how Liziqi's digital storytelling on YouTube promotes Chinese traditional culture and enhances Chinese cultural soft power. Consequently, this study has established two research objectives: To analyse how Liziqi uses digital storytelling to promote Chinese culture globally; To evaluate the impact of her content on enhancing Chinese cultural soft power through international viewer engagement and perception. To achieve these aims, it focuses on Liziqi's digital storytelling on her YouTube channel (IV) and its five key elements: visual aesthetics, traditional cultural content, narrative techniques, emotional engagement, and platform accessibility, and explores their influence on cultural soft power (DV1) and international viewers' engagement and perception (DV2). A quantitative method was employed, using an online questionnaire to collect data from 400 international viewers. Statistical analyses, including correlation and regression, were used to test two hypotheses: Liziqi's storytelling improves international perception of Chinese culture, and Viewer engagement strengthens global cultural appreciation. Finally, the analysis results confirm both hypotheses, showing that digital storytelling significantly deepens cultural understanding and fosters cross-cultural exchange. The study highlights digital media's strategic role in promoting national image and expanding global cultural influence.

Keywords: Digital storytelling, international communication, cultural soft power, Liziqi, YouTube, Chinese culture

1.Introduction

In the era of digital globalization, cultures are increasingly interacting through online media, fostering unprecedented opportunities for cross-cultural communication. Among the many platforms facilitating these exchanges, YouTube has emerged as a vital space where creators from diverse backgrounds share cultural storytelling that transcend national boundaries. In this context, digital storytelling—characterized by its visual aesthetics, emotional resonance, and accessibility—has become a powerful tool for cultural diplomacy. As Nye (2004) proposes, cultural soft power lies in the ability to influence others through attraction rather than coercion. This concept has gained renewed significance in the digital age, particularly through grassroots creators who authentically represent their cultural heritage.

One striking example of such influence is Liziqi, a Chinese content creator known for her poetic depictions of rural life and traditional craftsmanship on her YouTube channel. Her videos, rich in cultural symbolism and serene imagery, have captured the attention of millions of international viewers. Unlike formal state campaigns that may be perceived as propagandistic, Liziqi's content offers an intimate, apolitical, and aesthetically compelling view of Chinese culture. As Kraidy (2017) notes, digital storytelling rooted in local traditions and delivered through global platforms embody the notion of "glocalization"—making local culture globally resonant.

Liziqi's storytelling combines simplicity, sustainability, and emotional depth to portray an idealized yet culturally grounded vision of rural China. Her use of ambient sound and visual storytelling, rather than spoken narration, allows her content to overcome linguistic barriers, appealing to a wide range of global viewers. This aligns with Castells' (2010) view that the digital sphere facilitates new forms of networked communication that are capable of building meaningful cultural connections.

Digital platforms like YouTube also enable interaction and participation, turning passive viewers into engaged communities. Through comments and shares, international viewers not only consume but also

respond to Liziqi's cultural representations. This interactivity supports Keane's (2016) argument that soft power is most effective when it is dialogic, fostering mutual understanding rather than one-way messaging. Furthermore, Liziqi's content intersects with global discourses on sustainability and slow living, increasing its relevance in an age of ecological awareness and digital fatigue.

However, her success also raises important questions about representation. While her work undoubtedly contributes to Chinese cultural soft power, it may also idealize rural life, potentially overlooking the complexities and struggles that lie beneath its picturesque surface (Sun, 2019). Nonetheless, the authenticity perceived by global viewers positions her as a cultural ambassador who promotes a more humanized and relatable image of China, beyond political or economic storytelling.

This study investigates how Liziqi's YouTube channel exemplifies the use of digital storytelling in enhancing Chinese cultural soft power. It explores how her content engages international viewers emotionally and aesthetically, and how these engagements influence perceptions of Chinese culture. By doing so, this research contributes to the broader understanding of digital media as a platform for non-state actors to participate in cultural diplomacy. As the world becomes increasingly interconnected through digital networks, understanding the mechanisms and impacts of such soft power strategies becomes ever more vital.

2. Objectives

- 1) To analyze how Liziqi uses digital storytelling to promote Chinese culture globally.
- 2) To evaluate the impact of her content on enhancing Chinese cultural soft power through international viewer engagement and perception.

3. Materials and Methods

In this study, 'Digital Storytelling and Cultural Soft Power: A Case Study of Liziqi's YouTube Channel and Global Promotion of Chinese Culture,' the conceptual framework (showing the relationship between independent and dependent variables) can be found in Figure 1. The research hypotheses are as follows:

Research Hypotheses 1: Liziqi's digital storytelling on her YouTube channel positively influences international viewers' perception of Chinese culture, enhancing Chinese cultural soft power.

Research Hypotheses 2: Levels of international viewer engagement with Liziqi's content; which are likes, comments, shares, lead to a stronger global appreciation of Chinese culture, contributing to the growth of Chinese cultural soft power.

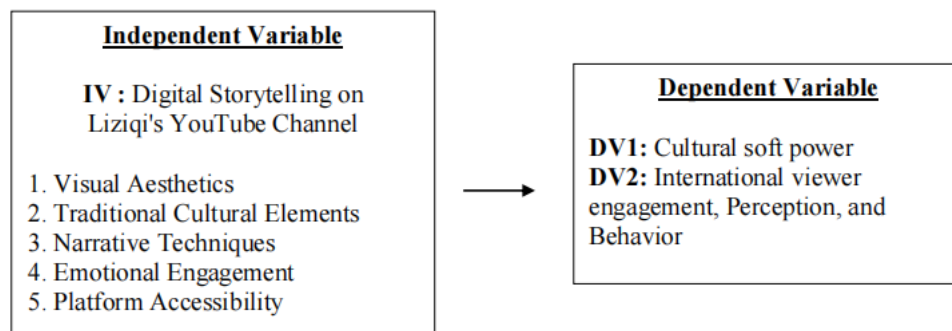


Figure 1 Conceptual Framework

This study selected the quantitative approach to examine how Liziqi's YouTube content influences international viewers' perception of Chinese culture through digital storytelling. Grounded in Nye's Cultural Soft Power Theory, Intercultural Communication Theory, and the concept of Digital Storytelling, the study was designed to explore how key storytelling elements shape foreign audience engagement and perception.

This study employs a questionnaire to collect data. In addition to basic sample information (Part 1: Demographics of the Participants), variables will be measured using Likert scale questions in the questionnaire. The Likert scale questions in the questionnaire are divided into the following sections: Part 2: Engagement with Liziqi's Content, Part 3: Perception of Chinese Culture through Liziqi's Storytelling, Part

4: Perception of Chinese Cultural Soft Power, Part 5: Viewer Engagement, and Part 6: Viewer Behaviour.

Each section contains ten questions, which international audiences answer based on their own assessment of how well they align with their views: the highest alignment is rated as 'Highest (5 points)', and the lowest alignment is rated as 'Very Low (1 point)', there are five points can select. Each variable corresponds to relevant questions, and the validity of the variables is measured by calculating the Mean score, variance, and other numerical values of the questions.

The questionnaire data were collected online using Questionnaire Star. A total of 400 valid responses were obtained from international viewers aged 18–60 who had watched Liziqi's videos. The questionnaire included demographic information and question-and-answer variables measured using the Likert scale. The key dimensions of the study included emotional appeal, aesthetic appreciation, content accessibility, cultural awareness, and participatory behavior.

From the Table 1 of variables definitions and measurement methods, it can be seen that the questionnaire design of this study has a clear structure and is targeted.

In addition, the data analysis of the study was conducted using SPSS software. The data analysis began with data cleaning and coding. Descriptive statistics were then used to summarise demographic information and audience behavior.

To ensure that the scale has good reliability and consistency, this study used Cronbach's Alpha coefficient to conduct internal consistency tests on each dimension to verify the reliability of each variable dimension of the questionnaire in statistical analysis. According to the analysis result, the Cronbach's alpha coefficients were calculated for each measurement scale, with all coefficients exceeding 0.80 (Cronbach's alpha coefficient = 0.987). Specifically, the several sections of the Likert scale are as follows: the engagement scale (Part 2, Part 5) achieved an alpha coefficient of 0.971, demonstrating strong reliability in assessing how participants interact with Liziqi's videos. The perception scale (Part 3, Part 4) yielded an alpha of 0.965, confirming the consistency of responses regarding viewers' interpretations of Chinese culture. Similarly, the behavioral response scale (Part 6) recorded an alpha value of 0.935, indicating that participants' self-reported actions in response to Liziqi's content were measured reliably. Additionally, item-total correlations were examined to ensure that each item contributed meaningfully to its respective construct, indicating reliability. Descriptive statistics are used to analyse basic sample information in statistical questionnaires and to calculate the mean, variance, and other metrics for each question and each section of Likert scale questions. These metrics are used to evaluate the overall performance of the variables corresponding to the scale questions. Pearson correlation analysis was used to examine the strength and direction of relationships between variables, while multiple regression analysis assessed the predictive ability of narrative elements on cultural soft power outcomes. Furthermore, due to the multiple variables in this study, composite variables were generated by calculating the mean values of the items corresponding to each factor of the independent variables (IV1-IV5). Subsequently, these composite variables were used as independent variables to perform multiple linear regression analysis on DV1 and DV2.

In summary, the structured analytical approach outlined above provides evidence of acceptable reliability for the thesis and offers valuable insights into the role of digital storytelling in cultural diplomacy.

To further explain the definitions and measurement methods of the independent and dependent variables used in this study, the table 1 is presented as follows:

Table 1 Description and Measurement of Independent and Dependent Variables

Variable Type: Variable Name: Elements	Meaning/Description	Measurement methods	Likert Scale Example Items (Core dimensions corresponding to questions' number are listed.)
IV: Digital Storytelling on Liziqi's YouTube Channel: Visual Aesthetics(IV1)	The visual beauty and composition of Liziqi's videos that create an immersive cultural experience	Five point Likert-scale questionnaire; items related to visual appeal and composition	Part2-Q6 Part3-Q3,Q5,Q7 Part5-Q5,Q10
IV: Digital Storytelling on Liziqi's YouTube Channel: Traditional Cultural Elements(IV2)	Representation of Chinese traditions, crafts, and customs embedded in the content	Likert-scale items measuring perception of traditional values and heritage	Part2-Q1,Q8 Part3-Q1,Q6,Q8 Part5-Q7 Part6-Q2
IV: Digital Storytelling on Liziqi's YouTube Channel: Narrative Techniques(IV3)	Use of storytelling structure, pacing, and symbolism to convey meaning	Likert-scale items assessing coherence, creativity, and storytelling style	Part3- Q2,Q4,Q6,Q9 Part4-Q3 Part5-Q3 Part6-Q4
IV: Digital Storytelling on Liziqi's YouTube Channel: Emotional Engagement(IV4)	Viewers' emotional responses to the videos (e.g., feeling touched, inspired, or nostalgic)	Likert-scale items on emotional resonance and personal connection	Part2-Q5,Q9 Part5-Q1,Q8 Part6-Q8
IV: Digital Storytelling on Liziqi's YouTube Channel: Platform Accessibility(IV5)	Ease of accessing and understanding Liziqi's content (e.g., language-free visuals, global availability on YouTube)	Items related to availability, subtitles, and platform usability	Part2-Q2,Q4,Q7, Part4-Q5,Q6,Q8 Part5-Q3
DV1: Perception of Chinese Cultural Soft Power(DV1)	Viewers' perception of Chinese cultural appeal and influence as conveyed through the videos	Likert-scale items measuring perceived charm, influence, and attractiveness of culture	Part3-Q10 Part4- Q1-2,Q4,Q7,Q9
DV2: International Viewer Engagement, Perception and Behavior(DV2)	The extent to which viewers interact with, reflect on, and share Liziqi's content (likes, comments, shares, intention to learn more, etc.)	Behavioral and perceptual Likert-scale items on engagement and sharing behaviors	Part2-Q3,Q10 Part6- Q3,Q5,Q7,Q9,Q10

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Results

According to the gender of the sample group, there were 240 males, accounting for 60%, and 160 females, accounting for 40%. By age group, the 25-34 age group had the highest proportion, with 149 people, accounting for 37.3%. By location, it was found that the largest group was those not residing in China, with 245 people, accounting for 61.3% (The sample has excluded Chinese people living in China).

Table 2 Descriptive statistics of the five parts of the Likert scale

Descriptive statistics of the five parts of the Likert scale	Mean	S.D	Meaning
Engagement with Liziqi's Content	3.51	1.110	High
Perception of Chinese Culture through Liziqi's Storytelling	3.50	1.112	Medium
Perception of Chinese Cultural Soft Power	3.52	1.105	High
Viewer Engagement	3.50	1.111	Medium
Viewer Behavior	3.50	1.108	Medium
Total	3.51	1.109	High

Table 2 summarises the results of descriptive statistics of the five parts of the Likert scale in the questionnaire. It shows international viewers' perceptions of the digital storytelling on Liziqi's YouTube channel. It covers five key dimensions: Engagement with Liziqi's Content, Perception of Chinese Culture through Liziqi's Storytelling, Perception of Chinese Cultural Soft Power, Viewer Engagement, and Viewer Behavior. The overall Mean score of 3.51 falls within the high range. Perception of Chinese Cultural Soft Power received the highest score of 3.52. The high scores in this section also indicate that the audience is not only interested in Liziqi's videos themselves but also has a positive association with Chinese culture through content extension. This recognition of the transition from 'individual content' to 'national cultural image' reflects the implicit influence of cultural soft power. The second-highest Mean score was for Engagement with Liziqi's Content, with an Mean score of 3.51, which is also in the High range. It indicates that most participants were highly satisfied with their experience of interacting with Liziqi's content. Among these, the Mean scores for 'Perception of Chinese Culture through Liziqi's Storytelling,' 'Viewer Engagement,' and 'Viewer Behavior' are moderate. Although these sections did not receive high scores, the results indicate that moderate engagement and audience behavior lay a solid foundation for the dissemination of digital stories. Liziqi's digital stories focus more on depicting warm and idyllic rural life rather than comprehensively and multifacetedly presenting Chinese culture.

The research results not only indicate the international audience's recognition of Liziqi's digital storytelling (Engagement with Liziqi's Content=3.51), but also show that international viewers have the most obvious perception of cultural soft power (Perception of Chinese Cultural Soft Power=3.52). These results reflect that international viewers not only appreciate the content of Liziqi's digital storytelling, but also feel the charm and influence of Chinese culture through the content, playing a positive role in cultural communication and enhancing cultural soft power.

The research results shows that "Perception of Chinese Culture through Liziqi's Storytelling," "Viewer Engagement, and Viewer Behavior" are at an intermediate level (The Mean scores is 3.50). These results confirms that while the content of Liziqi's digital video storytelling is acknowledged, it has not yet sparked active engagement. Although not high scores, the moderate scores still indicate a certain degree of positive influence. This suggests that Liziqi's digital narrative possesses the potential for international dissemination and a viewer base, particularly targeting non-specialist viewers, by first capturing their attention through emotion and visuals, and then guiding them to achieve deeper cultural identification.

The research results confirm that Liziqi's digital storytelling conveys cultural appeal by presenting a warm, idealises the image of traditional rural life, rather than promoting culture in a comprehensive and diverse manner. Although Liziqi's content currently has a significant positive impact on viewers' perceptions, there is still room for improvement in terms of promoting cultural practices. Overall, Liziqi has a solid viewer

base, which provides a fundamental foundation for cultural dissemination, but there is still potential for further development.

Table 3 Correlation analysis results

	IV1	IV2	IV3	IV4	IV5	DV1	IV2
IV1	1						
IV2	0.912**	1					
IV3	0.910**	0.916**	1				
IV4	0.909**	0.915**	0.920**	1			
IV5	0.910**	0.923**	0.924**	0.922**	1		
DV1	0.922**	0.918**	0.921**	0.921**	0.919**	1	
DV2	0.912**	0.918**	0.918**	0.911**	0.916**	0.922**	1

IV.Digital Storytelling on Liziqi's YouTube Channel: IV1. Visual Aesthetics, IV2. Traditional Cultural Elements, IV3. Narrative Techniques, IV4. Emotional Engagement, IV5. Platform Accessibility, DV1. Cultural soft power, DV2. International viewer engagement, Perception, and Behavior

After correlation analysis, the results (Table 3) show that the five elements of the independent variables of digital storytelling in Liziqi's YouTube channel (Visual Aesthetics, Traditional Cultural Elements, Narrative Techniques, Emotional Both Engagement and Platform Accessibility are related to "Cultural soft power" and "International viewer engagement, Perception". and "Behavior" was significantly positively correlated ($r = 0.911-0.924$, $p < 0.05$). Among them, the correlation coefficients of Visual Aesthetics, Traditional Cultural Elements and Platform Accessibility with the two dependent variables were generally higher than 0.918. It indicates that these elements are particularly crucial for enhancing Chinese cultural soft power and increasing the participation of international audiences. Narrative Techniques and Emotional Engagement also show a strong positive correlation ($r \approx 0.920$). In conclusion, under the combined influence of aesthetics, Chinese cultural symbols, narrative methods and emotional resonance, Liziqi's content has effectively promoted positive cognitive and interactive behaviors towards Chinese culture among international audiences.

In addition, the research used the regression analysis to verify the research hypotheses.

Table 4 Hypothesis Testing on the Impact of Digital Storytelling on Liziqi's YouTube Channel and Cultural soft power

	B	Standard error	Beta	t	p
Constant	0.060	0.058	-	1.034	0.302
Digital Storytelling on Liziqi's YouTube Channel and Cultural soft power	0.197	0.003	0.952	62.365	0.000
R ²			0.907		
Adjusted R ²			0.907		
F			F=(1,398)=3889.408,p=0.000		
D-W			1.999		

* $p < 0.05$ * $p < 0.01$

Hypothesis 1: Liziqi's digital storytelling on her YouTube channel positively influences international viewers' perception of Chinese culture, enhancing Chinese cultural soft power.

The data provided evidence in support of Hypothesis 1. According to Table 4, the regression analysis results shows a significant positive relationship between Liziqi's digital storytelling and cultural soft power. The regression coefficient (B) is 0.197, with a p-value of 0.000 ($p < 0.01$), indicating that Liziqi's digital storytelling significantly influences international viewers' perception of Chinese culture. The R² value of

0.907 suggests that approximately 90.7% of the variation in cultural soft power can be explained by Liziqi's digital storytelling perceptions among global viewers, contributing to a more positive and nuanced understanding of Chinese culture. In doing so, her content functions as a cultural bridge, promoting cross-cultural appreciation and strengthening the international image of Chinese soft power.

Table 5 Hypothesis Testing on the Impact of Digital Storytelling on Liziqi's YouTube Channel and International viewer engagement, Perception, and Behavior

	B	Standard error	Beta	t	p
Constant	0.095	0.061	-	1.568	0.118
Digital Storytelling on Liziqi's YouTube Channel and International viewer engagement, Perception, and Behavior	0.195	0.003	0.947	59.045	0.000
R ²			0.898		
Adjusted R ²			0.897		
F			F=(1,398)=3486.324,p=0.000		
D-W			1.855		

*p<0.05 *p<0.01

Hypothesis 2: Levels of international viewer engagement with Liziqi's content; which are likes, comments, shares, lead to a stronger global appreciation of Chinese culture, contributing to the growth of Chinese cultural soft power.

Hypothesis 2 was validated by the results. The regression analysis results of Table 5 show that there is a significant positive correlation between audience participation and Chinese cultural appreciation. The non-standardized regression coefficient (B) is 0.195 and the p value is 0.000 ($p < 0.01$), indicating a strong and statistically significant influence. The R² value is 0.898, indicating that about 89.8% of the cognitive and behavioral changes of the international audience can be explained by Liziqi's digital storytelling. This high explanatory power reflects the important role of interactive participation (likes, comments, sharing) in expanding cultural influence.

In conclusion, the findings suggest that Liziqi's digital storytelling not only deepen viewers' understanding of Chinese culture but also facilitate global cultural communication through audience interaction. These outcomes highlight the strategic potential of digital media as a tool for cultural exchange and soft power development. As digital platforms continue to evolve, the role of individual content creators in fostering international cultural dialogue and projecting national soft power is expected to grow increasingly significant.

4.2 Discussion

The results of this research correspond to several foundational theories in intercultural communication and media scholarship. The results strongly support the application of cultural soft power, which emphasises appeal rather than forced indoctrination (Nye, 2004). By depicting rural life, traditional crafts, and cooking in China, Liziqi's video content transcends language barriers, presenting a quiet, culturally rich image of China that resonates emotionally. The positive audience feedback identified in the data analysis confirms Nye's perspective that soft power stems from cultural appeal rather than forced compliance. Additionally, survey data indicates that Liziqi's video narrative structure facilitates international viewers' resonance and interest in content with cultural and linguistic differences. It is confirmed that digital storytelling is a communication practice that integrates multimedia elements and employs an emotionally engaging narrative style (Robin, 2008; Lambert, 2013). Many respondents actively stated, 'I felt emotionally moved while watching her videos,' which demonstrates the effectiveness of this narrative method in promoting cross-cultural understanding. Therefore, digital storytelling is not only a tool for disseminating content but also a powerful medium for emotional and cultural exchange, aligning with Lambert's principles of personal narrative and authenticity. Additionally, the success of Liziqi's content reflects the principle of global localization, which involves presenting local cultural elements from a global perspective (Robertson, 1995). Liziqi's content focuses on traditional life in Sichuan and has chosen the global YouTube platform,

thereby attracting an international audience. Research indicates that viewers from diverse cultural backgrounds respond positively to this hybrid content format, which helps enhance cultural soft power without undermining cultural identity. For example, international viewers have expressed a desire to 'further explore Chinese culture' in surveys, confirming that Liziqi's narrative style fosters cross-cultural sensitivity, bridges cultural differences, and aligns with theories of cross-cultural communication and dialogue (Gudykunst, 2004; Deardorff, 2009).

Reviewing previous research, the findings of this study are highly consistent with many theories. In this study, Liziqi's videos successfully demonstrate how digital storytelling transcends language and geographical boundaries through its narrative and traditional elements, highlighting the potential of digital storytelling as a medium for cultural preservation and identity expression (Couldry, 2008). In related research, it has been emphasised that soft power is not achieved through coercive means (Nye, 2004). This aligns with the findings of this study. In this study, digital storytelling resonates with a global audience, thereby enhancing the appeal of soft power. Additionally, Liziqi's digital storytelling portrays traditional Sichuan rural life and chooses global platforms for dissemination, confirming the integration of global authenticity and local authenticity as emphasised by the localisation theory (Robertson, 1995). Liziqi also creates a universally accessible cultural experience through the visual effects and ambient soundscapes in her videos, evoking emotional resonance among viewers. This aligns with theories that emotional and visual storytelling can foster empathy and strengthen cross-cultural dialogue (Chung, 2017; Rose, 2016). This study also reflects that Liziqi's channel offers grassroots and authentic cultural displays, demonstrating that non-state actors play a crucial role in the development of soft power in the digital age (Keane, 2016).

The conceptual framework proposed in this study effectively summarises the connections between digital storytelling, cultural soft power, and international audience engagement, cognition, and behavior on Liziqi's YouTube channel. The research results also partially support the conceptual assumptions regarding audience cognition and its influencing factors. Although the five elements of visual aesthetics, traditional cultural elements, narrative techniques, emotional engagement, and platform accessibility have strong individual correlations with cultural soft power and audience engagement. Among them, DV2 International viewer engagement has the strongest correlation with IV2 Traditional Cultural Elements and IV3 Narrative Techniques, and DV1 has the strongest correlation with IV3 Narrative Techniques and IV4 Emotional Engagement, which indicates that they strongly influence each other.

5. Conclusion

This study through content analysis of selected videos and quantitative analysis of international viewers' engagement patterns, investigates two key aspects: the impact of Liziqi's YouTube video techniques on global viewers' perceptions of Chinese culture, and the extent to which viewer engagement (likes, comments, shares) reflects the influence on cultural soft power.

The data from Table 2 indicates that a significant Mean of Engagement with Liziqi's Content (Mean=3.51), and Perception of Chinese Cultural Soft Power (Mean=3.52) as highly engaging, informative, and culturally meaningful. It shows that it is consistent to conceptualize digital story telling into a participatory and emotional medium that can convey profound cultural values (Lambert, 2013). In addition, Liziqi's content embodies the "national brand through nostalgic aesthetics" (Guo, L., & Chan, J. M. 2021), in which the well-planned traditional image of life shapes the international community's understanding of a country's cultural identity. Importantly, the non-verbal story-teller model enables global viewers to have a high degree of access to her content regardless of language, that is, digital narrative can digitize the democracy of communication by creating empathy through stories rather than elaborating (Chittenden, D., & Land, M. 2010). In addition, the Mean score for Perception of Chinese Culture through Liziqi's Storytelling falls within the range of Medium (Mean=3.50), indicating that international viewers perceive her content as lacking diversity. This supports the critique that highly stylized representations, while powerful, may contribute to a narrow or idealized image of culture (Guo & Chan, J. M. 2021). These results validate the research objective 1 by confirming that Liziqi's digital storytelling serves as an effective medium for promoting Chinese culture internationally.

Additionally, the Mean score of Perception of Chinese Cultural Soft Power (Mean score=3.52) which is classified as High, indicating that international viewers see her content as a strong reflection of Chinese cultural appeal. Furthermore, engagement with Liziqi's content (M = 3.51) is also High, while both viewer engagement and viewer behavior score Medium (M = 3.50), suggesting meaningful but varied levels

of audience interaction. These findings align with Nye's (2004) theory that soft power arises from attraction, not coercion. Liziqi's content resonates emotionally and immerses viewers in traditional Chinese lifestyles through narrative storytelling, which is one of the core forms through which digital storytelling can effectively convey messages (Lambert, 2013). The above confirms the view that digital storytelling can democratise communication and help reduce language barriers to resonance (Chittenden & Land, 2010). Moreover, the participatory behaviors reflected in the data—such as sharing or recommending videos—mirror what Castells (2010) calls the logic of the network society, where cultural influence is sustained through engagement, interaction, and global digital flows.

Therefore, the integration of perceived influence and behavioral engagement in this study demonstrates that Liziqi's digital storytelling not only promotes a positive perception of Chinese culture but also activates viewers engagement, illustrating how strategic narratives and digital platforms can enhance soft power (Research Objective2) .

6. Suggestions

6.1 Suggestions from this study

Research findings indicate that aesthetic visual effects, emotionally resonant storytelling, and the integration of traditional elements are key factors in enhancing international viewers' understanding of Chinese culture. Content creators should strive to strike a balance between cultural authenticity and emotional resonance to enhance viewers' cultural understanding and accessibility.

At the same time, in the digital media era, government departments and cultural institutions should recognise the communicative value of digital storytelling in enhancing cultural soft power. When public departments collaborate with individual creators, they can pool more resources and expertise to ensure that the works of authentic individual creators like Liziqi receive more attention worldwide.

In addition, the role of digital platforms in cultural exchange should be emphasised. The widespread dissemination of various types of digital platforms should be encouraged to promote diverse cultural content to a wider audience. The accessibility of platforms and other related platforms should be optimised to realise more possibilities for cross-cultural communication. For example, functions such as multilingual subtitles and cultural themes can help improve the accessibility of content. Platforms can carry out global activities or collaborate with cultural creators to enhance the international influence of high-quality cultural storytelling.

Finally, establishing two-way interaction with international viewers, and two-way communication is a key way to build cultural identity. Creators can engage in two-way interaction with international viewers through comments or suggestions, co-creating activities, producing fan subtitles, and more. This participatory model enhances audience emotional engagement and promotes deeper connections with cultural content. Encouraging global audience participation makes it easier to generate emotional resonance, thereby helping to spread and enhance positive cultural soft power.

6.2 Suggestions for Further Study

Future research can combine qualitative interviews, content analysis, text interpretation and other methods to gain a deeper understanding of the audience's emotional response and cultural understanding process. Therefore, future research suggests the use of qualitative methods such as interviews, focus groups, and even online photography to explore how different groups accept cultural narrative emotionally and cognitively. This will help to better understand the mechanism of digital storytelling to promote cultural attraction, cultural soft power and participation.

Due to the rapid development of digital media platforms, future research could explore the impact of specific platforms on the dissemination of cultural soft power. In addition, cross-platform case comparison studies can be conducted to study how they affect audience engagement, perception and behavioral outcomes by studying platform characteristics and user interaction styles.

Finally, in addition to considering demographic variables, future research can also start with psychological and behavioral factors at the individual level to explore whether changes in these factors will have an impact on the role of cultural communication in digital storytelling. In addition, participation behavior and usage habits in digital platforms, such as media usage ratings, media reliance, how expression styles play a role in the perception, participation and sharing of international viewers. This survey will not only enrich theoretical understanding, but also provide new ideas for cultural diplomacy and provide personalized communication strategies for international exchanges.

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