

The Construction of Narratives and Images of Athletes in Short Videos

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Abstract. The construction of narratives and images of athletes in short videos is a new cultural phenomenon in the realm of new media. This article focuses on analyzing the distinct media representation and symbolic significance that this phenomenon presents, with athletes as the research subject. Athletes use self-presentation, self-expression, and self-reinforcement to construct their own sports image through short videos. These videos also associate individuals with collectives through symbolization and artistic processing. Short videos have become an important medium for constructing athlete's self-identity while achieving collective identity. Additionally, athletes' exploration of sports cultural values presented in these short videos will guide athlete image construction and promote sports spirit dissemination under the Internet environment by presenting symbols associated with era features within sports culture.

Keywords: Short Video; Athlete Narrative; Image Construction; Internal Logic.

1. Problem Statement

Short videos have become increasingly important in sports communication in recent years. They provide immediate entertainment and cater to the fragmented viewing habits of young people. Scholars Lu Wensi and Wang Sunheyi suggest that sports events are entering an era of short video, with more schedules, athlete interviews, behind-the-scenes footage, and other content being produced as short videos merge with sports events. Additionally, scholars Liu Fan and Li Yuefeng note that short videos quickly convey hot value elements in sports information transmission while also diversifying dissemination subjects and expanding content themes. From a micro perspective, scholars Chen Qi and Yan Feng argue that short videos play a crucial role in image narration for promoting sports communication and shaping athletes' images. The narrative construction of athletes' stories within the field of short video is an artistic process influenced by multiple factors such as imaging technology, media platforms, media content etc., resulting in unique narrative styles and imaging construction modes. Athletes' narratives within the field of short video focus on integrating personal values with collective values in terms of content while emphasizing individual images combined with national images through language expression. Athletes' stories are told using novel methods such as storytelling narration or scene display. Furthermore, Short Video platforms present dual innovation both on form & contents level when constructing imagery for athletes.

Short videos have become a crucial medium for the public to understand sports events due to their characteristics of fragmentation, easy dissemination, and entertainment. Internet platforms that feature short videos are injecting new vitality into sports events by providing athletes and the public with diverse and rich narrative content. In this field, athletes serve as narrative subjects who use their bodies as a medium to complete "self-narration" through actions, sounds, expressions, etc., constructing images that differ from those in traditional media eras. During the Beijing Winter Olympics Games, many Chinese athletes began personally participating on platforms like Kuaishou or TikTok by sharing stories behind their competitions through timely short videos or live streaming. They became creators of short video content showcasing a more three-dimensional image both inside and outside competition venues while promoting self-image publicity related to spreading knowledge about sports and promoting its popularity. However, even a single sentence spoken by an athlete or just one gesture or detail from their daily life can unintentionally be amplified or reinterpreted in ways that go against their true intentions causing harm to their image. Research has found that within the field of short video construction for athletes' images presents differentiated multi-levels with various

characteristics showing coexistence between empowered media authority alongside disordered media practices.

2. Short Videos and Self-identity: Self-presentation, Self-expression, and Self-reinforcement

The emergence of short video platforms has facilitated the development of athletes' self-identity. This article delves into the correlation between short video platforms and athletes' self-identity, revealing that these platforms enable athletes to showcase themselves, express their individuality, and reinforce their identity. Consequently, this process encourages athlete participation in sports activities while shaping their identity. Self-identity refers to an individual's consciousness of their own identity - a positive cognitive and emotional experience during social interaction resulting from personal life experiences or interactions with others. Short videos are one of the new media technologies characterized by fragmentation, immediacy, and personalization; thus they play a significant role in self-identity formation as a new medium technology tool. Athletes interact with users through self-expression on short video platforms while shaping and constructing their sports image through self-reinforcement. The three elements - showcasing oneself, expressing oneself, and reinforcing one's identity - form a complete chain for athletes to shape and construct their sports image on short video platforms.

(1) Self-Presentation: The Performance of Sports Stars' Personas

Self-presentation is the act of individuals displaying their thoughts, emotions, attitudes, and behaviors in a certain way to the public. It has become an important aspect of life in the digital media era as it allows for the construction of individual identity and existence while promoting autonomy and moral awareness. In short videos, athletes' self-presentation includes representing themselves as individuals, athlete representatives, and role-based representations. Athletes use various actions such as laughing or crying to create performative characteristics that go beyond language or body movements.

Athletes need to choose appropriate forms of expression based on content and personal characteristics when presenting themselves.

In competitions, athletes may choose sports stars as image representatives to pay tribute or reflect some part of their personality virtually constructed by users online. In short video platforms like TikTok or Instagram Reels, gaining user recognition requires leveraging specific contexts that resonate with viewers' experiences from their own lives. Athletes establish virtual social interaction scenarios through communication, interaction sharing with users; they can improve their influence by interacting with other athletes within the platform or competing against each other. For example two Chinese divers Quan Hongchan & Chen Yuxi posted interactive dance videos on their social media platforms creating greater traffic and attention through their interaction; they also share interesting clips about emotional stories from training sessions or competitions which help them connect better with fans online.

(2) Self-expression: The Symbolization Process of Athlete Identity

Symbolization is a means of constructing identity, and the "athlete" symbol displayed by Olympic athletes not only contributes to their identity construction but also serves as a form of self-expression. The "athlete" symbol exhibited on the Olympic stage embodies timely, diverse, and interactive characteristics that are indicative of the self-expression involved in athlete identity formation. Athletes express themselves through both individualistic ("I") and collective ("we") forms of expression, with symbolic symbols playing an important role in this process. At Olympics events, athletes engage in interactive displays of their bodies and skills to compete against audiences, media outlets, referees, and others for competitive advantages while simultaneously achieving self-expression. These displays take various forms such as physical movements or postures that showcase their abilities or skills before cameras. Athletes' bodies have been trained into works of art on the Olympic stage where every part has been carefully designed according to specific sport rules for

optimal performance. As they constantly express themselves during competitions through these performances before cameras, they demonstrate what abilities or skills they possess physically.

Self-expression involves a dialogue between the body and culture, as well as mutual influence and promotion between self-construction and cultural construction. Athletes imitate techniques and rules while also constantly adjusting them to adapt to the competitive environment. In the short video field, athletes gain recognition for their sports image by publishing videos that fit their own image. For instance, Yang Shuyu, a female basketball player, posted a video titled "What does my ugly face have to do with you after work?" on her social media account. This showcased her symbol diversity while enriching audiences' understanding of Yang Shuyu as an athlete. Users can evaluate athletes' personal images through this symbolization process, find similarities with themselves, and generate emotional resonance towards themselves. These contents can make users emotionally resonate when evaluating athletes so as to produce emotional identification.

(3) Self reinforcement: athletes' reproduction of short video content

Short videos offer athletes a unique platform to showcase themselves through their distinctive form and content production. Athletes use these platforms for self-expression, shaping their image on social networks by publishing short videos related to their sports-related daily life, competition experience, training skills, etc. This reproduction of short video content is a manifestation of self-reinforcement as it enables athletes to achieve personal growth and development by recognizing their strengths and potential. Self-reinforcement has significant importance in daily life as it encourages individuals towards behavior that promotes achieving goals. It helps them gain a sense of achievement and confidence which further encourages them towards behavioral control adjustment or change. Additionally, individuals actively seek new targets or stimuli during this process which stimulates positive reinforcement leading them towards maintaining good images while adapting better within society. Athletes can also achieve self-reinforcement via short videos where they showcase their athletic skills & daily training routines etc. Short Video Platforms provide an opportunity for athletes to showcase themselves as producers of such contents as social media continues its rapid expansion & popularity among more & more athletes who see it as an important channel for showcasing oneself interacting with netizens getting fans & attention. On Short Video Platforms, Athletes can publish contents related to everyday life, competition experiences, training techniques etc., attracting potential users thus reinforcing existing ones.

3. The Inner Logic of Athlete Narration and Image Construction in the Short Video Field

Under the influence of mobile internet technology, short videos are becoming an important channel for sports communication as a new form of media. When disseminating sports event content and images, the narrative style and image construction of short videos differ from traditional sports communication methods. The athlete's narration in the short video field is a process in which athletes record their own growth through video while completing self-identification and realizing self-worth in virtual space. Athlete image construction is also an important means of disseminating athlete images, which not only presents the athlete's daily life truthfully but also includes multiple meanings such as shaping the athlete's identity and constructing their image. Under the influence of multiple factors such as media technology, audience demand, star effect, and commercial interests, there is an interactive relationship between athlete narration and image construction within the short video field. Athlete narration on short video platforms has distinct characteristics: dual reconstruction of athletes' identity with consumer symbols; diverse and fragmented narrative styles; homogenization of narrative content with symbolized visual presentation. These features are mainly determined by how society constructs athletes' images within the short video field and reflect a mismatch between audience emotional identification with this special group of athletes and cultural cognition.

(1) Media Empowerment: Technological Empowerment and Release of Discourse Power

Media empowerment refers to empowering the subject with greater discourse power in social interactions through technological empowerment. The implementation of technological empowerment extends 'empowerment 'from individuals to society, promoting society from' decentralization 'to' centralization '. In the process of media empowerment, the individual subject is reshaped, achieving a transformation from an "ordinary individual" to a "public individual", thereby promoting the transformation of society from an "atomic individual" to a "socialized collective". In the context of technological empowerment, the production of sports images has broken the limitations of time and space, allowing individuals to express themselves anytime and anywhere on short video platforms, enabling the inheritance and promotion of sports culture and competitive spirit from multiple perspectives, all directions, and in multiple forms. Short videos, as a new medium of communication, not only subvert the traditional way of audience understanding of event content, but also transform the single reporting method in the traditional media era into diverse reporting methods. Sports image production can break away from the traditional single focus on information such as competition results and athlete performance, and shift towards comprehensive and in-depth exploration of sports processes, individual and team athletes, and the entire sports industry. In the era of new media, the "top-down" model of traditional media has gradually transformed into a "bottom-up" model, which focuses on public communication. This communication model has greatly changed the way athletes' performance and results were reported in traditional sports events, and is also a manifestation of the impact of technological empowerment on the communication model.

(2) Consumer Culture: Athletes' Identity Identification and Identity Construction

Saussure regarded symbols as tools for human expression and communication. Symbols were utilized by humans and disseminated through certain media. The disseminators used encoding to send information, while the audience obtained information through decoding, thus achieving mutual communication. Both the communicator and the audience live in an established world, which is maintained by specific language "codes". People act under rules and exchange meanings by encoding and decoding information. Meaning is the interpretation of one symbol to another. The body is an individual's way of existence, a unique "symbol" of humans, and "the body is also our most expressive existence".? For athletes, their bodies are not only an objective material existence, but also a symbol that can be recorded, expressed, and disseminated through visual means.

The emergence of individuals as atomic individuals in modern society has forced people to transform themselves to some extent into atomized individuals. Athletes are also atomized individuals who need to engage in sports training, competitions, and other activities in their daily lives, which makes their physical narratives present a trend of "daily life". And. The "daily" narrative of athletes' bodies is also an important component of the current construction of athletes' "identity". Viewers in the short video field recombine existing motion images through selection, processing, and reconstruction. Not only is it reflected in the fragmentation of information dissemination, but also in the fragmentation of individual experience, and the fragmentation of individual experience presents a fragmentation of physical experience. In a competition, athletes need to constantly make physical and psychological adjustments in the face of rapidly changing sports environments, complex and ever-changing technical conditions, and complex and diverse opponents. This article analyzes the topics related to athletes on short video platforms and finds that athletes present a unique physical experience in these short videos. The topic content of athletes on the short video platform is fragmentation, and the physical experience is also fragmentation. In sprint competitions, athletes need to complete a series of actions such as starting, jumping, accelerating, surpassing, and sprinting, which are condensed into just a few tens of seconds to complete. The effort and dedication behind an athlete's competition cannot be fully reflected in a very short period of time. Therefore, we can understand the whole of athletes through the fragmentation performance of their physical experience on the short video platform

(3) Spiritual satisfaction: dual satisfaction of viewing experience and emotional value

The consistency displayed by short video users in their personal interests and cognition of things expresses their common needs in receiving information and attention points. In the exploration of

user resonance points in short video dissemination, emotional resonance is the most likely to be reflected and causes the greatest response, Emotional resonance mainly refers to the integration of daily feelings and inner emotions into a core content, which is then expressed through videos. When users watch short videos, they are usually inspired by this core content to have the same feelings and inner emotions, which is called emotional resonance. Nowadays, the low threshold of short video platforms greatly reduces the cost of content production, leading to serious homogenization in the same field. However, at the same time, the diversification of content also brings about the diversification of video symbols. Athletes produce a large number of distinctive symbols when engaging in emotional resonance with the audience, and use these personalized language and nonverbal symbols with recognition for dissemination, allowing users to develop a sense of belonging when receiving blogger information. If a symbol is widely recognized and interacts with the audience, its influence will rapidly expand and become popular, rapidly achieving dissemination and upgrading. 12 iconic lines and content, personalized fan tags, are important content for athletes to showcase themselves. These symbolic symbols enable audience users to achieve self presentation and identity recognition.

4. Conclusion

With the fragmentation, interactive, social and other characteristics, short videos have successfully transformed from information dissemination to social interaction in the Internet era. Athletes, as an important social group, unfold their narratives in a level up manner in the short video field, actively expressing themselves and identifying themselves. Short videos achieve the dual construction of athlete identity and narrative discourse by constructing typical character images and symbol systems, as well as immersive content production models. The short video has visualized the construction of the athlete group. Through text analysis of a large number of athlete short video works, it was found that athletes as individuals possess multiple identities within the short video field. In different fields, athletes construct their images using different narrative strategies and present themselves through visual expression. This article believes that in the context of new media, short videos are not only a carrier for athlete narrative and image construction, but also a medium for communication and communication with the audience. As an emerging medium, the narrative of athletes in the short video field is of great significance in enhancing the affinity of sports reporting, constructing collective memory, and meeting audience needs.

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