City's Visual Communication Strategy in the Digital Context:
A Case Study of Wuhan's Image Videos

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Abstract
For the generation of cultural consumers addicted to screens, it is becoming customary to believe "if there is no video, it will be ignored". On the other hand, with the development of digital technology built on the internet, electronic media recording methods increasingly rely on real scene videos, and the pattern of the video communication is largely changed. In this context, a city's visual communication strategy should conform to the diverse media era with multi-platform networked media devices.

We look at Wuhan's image videos, especially the newest one: *Wuhan, Different Every Day!* By analyzing communication content, form, and components of the videos, we will seek innovative visual communication in respect to visual form, visual thinking, visual media, etc.

Keywords: visual communication; image videos; digital context

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Introduction

The visual communication of city's image is a kind of symbol phenomenon, a kind of social phenomenon, and also a kind of cultural phenomenon. Take the city's image video as an example, it passes the most representative and the best visual elements of city to the audience; Then builds up a public space connecting the city with the audience in a certain extent, and constructs the city's image and position in the eyes of the audience; At the same time, it also a special cultural phenomenon which embodies the filmmakers' "imagination" of a city.

The city's image video has a natural connection with the visual culture as a kind of visual image. It constitutes the system of the city's image with city's slogan and logo. In recent years, with the highly development of digital technology, the internet transmission technology of videos is greatly increasing, the city's image video plays a more important role in the communication of the city's image as a kind of short concise micro video. While taking the TV media (traditional TV, outdoor TV, in-car TV) as the main channel of communication, city's image videos are spreading out through the Wechat platform of mobile phone. The newest image video of Wuhan *Wuhan, Different Every Day!* appeared in the audience's mobile phone screen just like this, diffusing between the fingers of wechat-holic and spreading out through the Wechat platform.

In addition to the newest one *Wuhan, Different Every Day!* in 2014 (also known as *The Rise of a Great City)*, there are also *The Phoenix Soaring Into The Sky* in 2008, *Great River Great Lake and Great Wuhan* in 2011 and *Love This City* in 2013, which are widely spread in the Internet in recent years. In *The Phoenix Soaring Into The Sky* from the international perspective, a blonde girl led the audience to pursue the phoenix legend in Jingchu. *Great River Great Lake and Great Wuhan* designed a situation of Time Travel in the opening, a girl in the period of the Republic of China was taken back to the prosperous metropolis of 21st century by the sound of church bells, and then a primary school student, a tour guide, a ethnic minority girl, Chinese and foreign tourists were reading Libai's poem one by one. *Love This City* is very individual, described respectively the life story about GuYin a tour guide, XiaoFeng a artist, Wang Li a Hanchu opera actor, MuWei an architect, ChenYang a radio host, and George a French chef, highlighted the relationship between people and the city. *Wuhan, Different Every Day!* stringed the history, reality and future of the city in a grand narrative way on one hand, passed the warm of the city in the image of the story on the other hand. These videos have their different tastes in visual commucation, but also showed some noteworthy common tendency.

Transmitting the Best Visual Elements in the Construction of Exclusive Space-Time

A region's cultural landscape and historical style always have their exclusive geopolitical features, which are the core to distinguish themselves and the others, and also a center of the residents for the attachment to their homes. Our most of city's image videos, often begin with a specific geographical scene, showing some visual symbols which are rich in geographical, historical and cultural characteristics. Chu People admiring phoenix in *The Phoenix Soaring Into The Sky*, people reciting the verses of the yellow crane tower in *Great River Great Lake and Great Wuhan*, tourist

attraction, snacks, and Hanchu art presenting in *Love This City,* are all encoded into the visual symbols which are represent the city's uniqueness.

Take *Wuhan, Different Every Day!* as an example. Its commentary mentioned: *Wuhan, with a population of over ten million is located in Central China, at the heart of China. Like the Tianyuan Point on a weiqi board, this city's geopolitical significance makes it an important point one definitely capable of changing the game and affecting the big picture.* Then it told vividly in a form of history story, through the visual symbols such as the han river, ships, port, railway, showing the Wuhan's geographical advantage of "inland port and thorough fares of nine provinces". This exclusiveness of the space-time constantly appeared in the film, and built a fixed space composed of city's specific elements, in which the people have a lively sentiment.

This video concised out the best visual elements, through integrating the light art of Oil Painting and the color art of traditional Chinese Painting into a visual art approach. There are some pictures of very long shots of grand Wuhan, which consists of three towns and divided by two rivers, East Lake known as "the most beautiful track", Wuhan Yangtze River Bridge, Wuhan Optical Valley, Yellow Crane Tower, GuQinTai, and so on. Of course, not all scenarios are equal time, Yellow crane tower is just a quick glance in this video. From the point of view " Symbols are a result of the signifier and the signified in connection of the whole " (Liang, 2012), we form a table to analyze these visual elements.

Picture	Signifier	Signified	Shot
	Jianghan Customs、 Clock Tower 、 modern street、 the traffic	History vicissitudes	Long Shot- left panning、 zoom out
	Yangtze River、 Han River 、 Great Bridge、 three towns	Grand Wuhan, consists of three towns which are divided by two rivers	Very Long Shot – aerial shot
	East Lake 、 Lake Road	The largest urban lake in Asia、 "the most beautiful track"	Very Long Shot – aerial shot

	Skyscraper in Wuhan Optical Valley	Representation of the highest level of optoelectronics research and production in China	Long Shot - down panning
	Yellow Crane Tower	One of the three major scenic spots in Wuhan、Historical and cultural city	Long Shot(low angle) – right moving shot
	Qinchuan pavilion	Yu the Great's merit of flood control	Medium shot- right moving shot
	GuQinTai	The hometown of Zhiyin、Chinese view of friendship	Medium shot – up moving shot
	The site of Panlong city、the flying bird	A long history、The rise of the future	Long Shot – fixed shot

Stimulating the Emotional Experience in the Structure of Visual Storytelling

The filmmakers transmit the good visual elements through the technology layer with the light, color, composition and so on, and convey the discourse outside the visual symbols, which is called the expression layer. The narrative layer is the most logical and important part of a visual structure, which can draw audience's attention to the video and stimulate the emotional experience through visual storytelling. "Letting the audience experience that moment" is just the effect of the visual storytelling.

Love This City is the right video using the method of visual storytelling effectively in these cases mentioned above. It recorded the original life scenes (family life, work, dialogue), letting the audience experience that moment. This strategy has the advantage of internet communication of micro videos, benefited from the detail description and the inner world of the figures. Of course, we also should not deny the importance of the sound which is indispensable for a video, despite we emphasize the picture's visual function.

In *Wuhan, Different Every Day!*, the visual commentary lasts from the beginning to the end, which covers the inexpressive shortage of the unnarrative scenes sequence, strengthens the logic and integrity of the video's narrative, and also inspired the audience's emotional experience. In this case, the important figures connect fragment series of the historical image, and a number of stories in series complete a visual narrative layer.

The first story with the core of zhang zhidong, actually tells the four historical events of building Beijing-Hankou Railway, establishing Hanyang Arsenal, "Made in Hanyang" rifles firing the first shot, toppling the Qing Dynasty in the 1911 revolution. The main 15 scenes consist of historical pictures, after effects shots and the real scenes. "Zhang Zhidong might never imagine" in the commentary links up these historical events, during which the causal connection is industrial salvation - the development of modern industry – grasp of the modern military technology - uprising revolting. The digital after effects shots draws the historical outline of establishing Hanyang Arsenal and uprising revolting, to make up the vacancies of the real historical image.

The second story with the historical image record of chairman swimming in Yangtze river, shows the Mao Zedong's unique love for Wuhan. The picture of misty rain on the shore expresses the artistic conception of Mao Zedong 's poem.

The third story with six shots, which bring the audience back to Moving China Awards Ceremony, represents the story of "Faithful Brother" Sun Donglin, and connects the Chu People's cultural tradition of " take our promises seriously ".
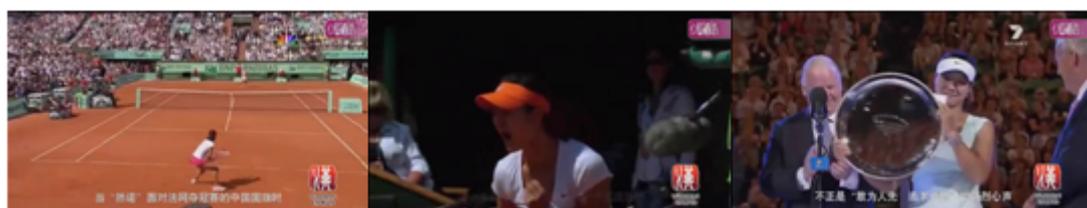
The fourth story with the pictures of Li Na's shouting on the court, explains the Chu People's f traditional spiritual character from a different point of view.

The video also has a full narrative field of visual storytelling, which made up of many small stories, in addition to the four main story mentioned above. Its structure is as follows:
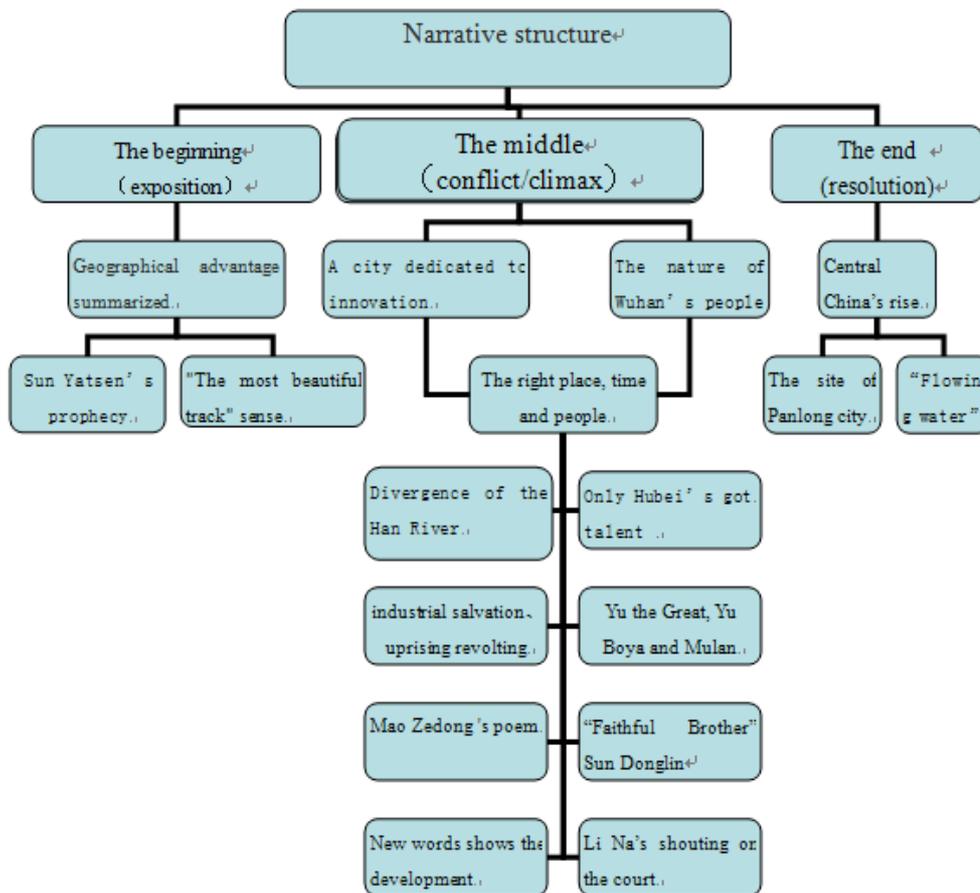
Thinking about: Visual Communication Strategy in the Digital Context

Today's communication channel of *Wuhan, Different Every Day!* is very different from the past's. After the premiere in Wuhan TV, domestic well-known video sites such as Tencent, Youku, LeTV, Ku6, 56 net, as well as Wuhan news media sites such as Yangtze river net, yellow crane TV, "Wuhan Publishing" microblog and Wechat also released the video, more than 1 million people click on it within a month(*Fantastic*, 2014). In the digital communication context, the way of sending and receiving information is gradually changing, promoting the innovation of visual communication strategy objectively. We put forward some thought of those strategies in respect to visual form, visual thinking, visual media, etc.

From the point of visual form, the method of video creation is more and more diversified. For example, *Wuhan, Different Every Day!* is in a stark contrast to *Love This City*. The former holds a grand narrative mode of landscapes on the whole, and the landscape symbols such as Jianghan Customs, East Lake, Yangtze River Bridge, Wuhan Optical Valley, Yellow Crane Tower, Wuhan university, and GuQinTai, are more than figure symbols such as Zhang Zhidong, Mao Zedong, Sun Donglin, Li Na; There are more panoramic photography in the whole video image, with enclosed composition and saturated color which gives a person the feeling of grand and

majestic; The visual rhythm is relatively uniform with three seconds asl. *Love This City* is better at close-ups, in which details are paid more attention: the holding hands of couples, decorations in room, blinking eyes and clever fingers in performances. The video is full of small scene pictures, expressing the intimacy to people with a medium angle and open composition method.

In the Internet age, the diversification of visual form can actually meet the needs of different audiences. In fact, the filmmaker can shot from multiple angles and sizes, and then edit different versions to adapt to the needs of different media forms. The close-ups are more suitable for the small screen of mobile media which need more details or features, while landscapes are more useful for TV or movies, which need grand scenes and wide shots with great visual power.

From the perspective of the level of visual thinking, the rise of digital technology has redefined visual design, which differs on the performance, communication, skills, tools, and involves internet use, information transfer, virtual space, image synthesis, etc. Digital media technology has enriched the video communication's connotation, from a single and static state to a dynamic, interactive and multidimensional characteristics. The visual effects technology is common used. Such as ink animation effects performing revolution history in *Wuhan, Different Every Day!*, and animation design of phoenix in *The Phoenix Soaring Into The Sky* .

on the other hand, the visual thinking of a video should not be exclusive auditory art, because a video is a combination of visual art and auditory art. If you don't consider audio, and make it a silent film, backing to the silent era of film history, it doesn't make any sense. In the digital age of fragmentation, the voice appears like more meaningful. Ideography and lyrical narrative of pictures should be combined with audio. The audio includes sound, commentary and music, which are all important for visual communication. *Great River Great Lake and Great Wuhan* has a good beginning of visual storytelling, but not throughout the video, even more the latter part is piled up with fragmental pictures because commentary's absence. *Wuhan, Different Every Day!*, if the commentary is removed, the visual expression ability is greatly reduced, because grand scenes combined with the magnificent music, can easily be a form of symbolic accumulation. Just the storytelling's commentary brings the ornament by introducing the details into the very long shots of landscapes.

From the perspective of the development of visual media, digital visual communication contains the traditional relationship between sender and receiver, and also contains the intersubjectivity in a new technology era. It not only changes the way of information communication, also promotes the differentiation of the audience and the development of individual communication.

On the one hand, a good video communication platform, at the same time, should be a good social media. For example, Gangnam Style's popular is inseparable from Youtube, Small Apple's viral online can't do without Youku. The communication of city's image video through Wechat triggers netizens to push the "like" button, forward and review in the Internet, this would be a result of a whole. Many netizens sighed: *Wuhan is such a beautiful masterpiece*(*Fantastic*, 2014). Netizen "cmadmin" : *well, exciting*(*Fantastic*, 2014). Some netizens wrote: *Need to be translated into English for international communication*(*Fantastic*, 2014). In Sina Microblog, the

number of forward comments are more than 10000 times in two days. In fact, the English version of *Wuhan, Different Every Day!* is created in less than a month and released to the place where users keep in touch easily, to meet the desire of Internet users and the public.

On the other hand, the characteristic of visual media's interaction changes the role of audiences, who also can be the role of selective double characters of the sender and receiver. Art consumers in internet not only can freely choose art objects, and express their views freely, also can download the works of art to a personal computer, even can change it subjectively. From this Angle, the receiver's appreciation of art is the second creation. There was a student-edited version of Wuhan's video from China University of Geosciences communicating in the internet, and the none-color mixed version uploaded by one of the filmmakers appeared in the web before *Love This City*'s official release. Whatever good or bad, this is a kind of challenge to the authority in the mode of transmission.

Conclusion

In the digital context, the basic idea of city image video communication has not changed: the filmmaker expresses one's imagination of a city through transmitting the best visual elements , to set up the connection between the city and the audience. Under this goal, whether it is a magnificent landscape scene, or a close-up with the emotional life picture, both can be acceptable. The key is communication content should be consistent with the communication channel.

The change of the communication mode, is bound to bring visual form, visual thinking and visual media diversified and optional increasingly. What's more important, the visual communication should use a strong platform and get enough discourse power in the new media, then it can be spread out extensively and effectively.

Notes

2 The original videos may be found at:
http://video.ahwang.cn/information/2012/0315/1128697.shtml (*Wuhan, Different Every Day!)*
http://v.youku.com/v_show/id_XNjg1NDc3ODQw.html (*Love This City*)
http://v.youku.com/v_show/id_XMzg4NDMzMjYw.html (*Great River Great Lake and Great Wuhan)*
http://v.youku.com/v_show/id_XMTk1NzQ1MTM2.html *(The Phoenix Soaring Into The Sky)*
http://v.youku.com/v_show/id_XMjIzNDgzMTY0.html (*China University of Geosciences student's edition*)

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