

# Research on Shenzhen's Urban Image Building in the Era of Short Videos

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## Abstract

**With the rapid development of emerging media technologies, short-video platforms have become a vital means for showcasing urban images. This study employs Python web crawling techniques to collect a total of 2,580 popular TikTok videos from Shenzhen government accounts. Through data statistics and content analysis, it elucidates the release characteristics of these trending videos and proposes strategies for content creation, dissemination, and issue resolution. Content generation strategies include not fixating on video duration, developing unique content, and innovating presentation methods. Strategies for content dissemination involve deconstruction and reconstruction, multi-dimensional creation, and leveraging modern technologies. Problem-solving strategies encompass the use of AI-generated content (AIGC), seizing key events, and establishing iconic locations. These strategies collectively aim to enhance Shenzhen's urban image portrayal in the digital era.**

## Keywords

**City image; content creation; dissemination strategies; key issues.**

## 1. Introduction

With the continuous development of mobile Internet and intelligent technology, short video websites represented by Douyin, Kuaishou, and Bilibili have provided new pathways for establishing a beautiful city image due to their open, timely, interactive, connected, and rich characteristics. According to the "CNNIC China Internet Network Development Status Statistics" report, as of June 2023, China's netizen scale has reached 1.079 billion people, with an Internet penetration rate of 76.4%, and the average weekly online time is 29.1 hours. The scale of online video (including short video) users has reached 1.044 billion [1]. Facing an audience of over 1 billion people, the use of government social media platforms holds tremendous communication value, showcasing the city image in social space. Against this backdrop, the effective use of government platform social media accounts helps to create a friendly public opinion environment, deepen cooperation and trust between cities, and enhance the willingness of overseas citizens to return to their home country for construction.

Shenzhen, as a national separate planning city, a mega-city, a special economic zone, a national economic center city, a national innovative city, and one of the four central cities of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area, achieved a regional gross domestic product of over 3238.7 billion yuan in 2022, with a per capita regional gross domestic product of more than 180,000 yuan. Shenzhen attracts global attention with its significant achievements in the economy, culture, education, and technology, and its city image has become an important topic in the field of international communication. However, existing research mainly focuses on the study of city images in the context of traditional media, and there is relatively little research specifically on Shenzhen's city image from the perspective of new social media.

## 2. Literature Review

Image is a basic understanding and evaluation of a certain subject, characterized by its externality, conceptuality, and publicness. City image is an overall abstract rational summary and evaluation of a city by its internal and external public, and it is also the external form through which cities and the public, as well as cities and cities, convey information and ideas. The concept of city image was first proposed by Kevin Lynch in his monograph "The Image of the City," referring to "any city has a public impression, which is the superposition of many individual impressions, and there is also a series of public impressions, originating from the images that most citizens share and shape. The basic attributes of city image usually include two aspects, one is the spiritual aspect of the city, such as historical development, natural features, cultural heritage, urban civilization, economic conditions, and civic quality, and the other is the material construction of the city, such as development scale, development level, development model, and quality of life [2]. Existing research on city image construction using social media mainly unfolds from three aspects: theoretical basis, communication strategy, and existing problems.

### 2.1. Theoretical Basis of City Image

The theories related to city image shaping are diverse, mainly involving theories from disciplines such as communication studies and sociology. Su et al. (2011), starting from the perspective of integrated marketing communication theory and taking Hangzhou city image as an example, proposed suggestions for city managers to strengthen the construction of city brand image connotation, carry out coordinated marketing communication activities, and effectively integrate the promotion activities of promotional activities staff [3]. Yang et al. (2019), starting from the perspective of field theory, analyzed the Xi'an International Marathon event, suggesting that through the ritual communication field, it can help individuals to understand and identify with the ritual itself, and enhance cultural memory, creating a sense of co-presence and commonality [4]. Huang et al. (2023), based on the perspective of media materiality, discussed the process of smart devices shaping urban intentions in cities, summarizing a new path for the international communication of smart city images, that is, smart devices as action subjects connect with people and objects in the city, representing and re-presenting smart city landscapes, achieving diversified re-creation of city content [5]. Luan (2023), starting from the perspective of French urban sociology theory, based on the discourse of Lefebvre and Edward Soja, believes that short videos are a "third space" that integrates subjective and objective, but its fundamental logic and operation rules are power and capital, with power leading the top-level design of city images, the shaping of city landscapes, and empowerment, creating a discourse form that connects officials and the public, and the operation and reproduction of capital are the key forces driving the development of short videos [6].

### 2.2. Construction of City Image Communication Strategy

The communication strategies of city images are rich and fully demonstrate the city's style. Wei (2017) used literature and other methods to explore the international communication strategies of Tokyo's city image in the 2020 Olympic Games, and summarized two types of strategies: event communication and media communication, highlighting the city image of a mature society and providing relevant information about the Winter Olympics and Japanese charm for people from all walks of life [7]. Hu (2019) analyzed the communication characteristics of Guangzhou's city image, including establishing a global perspective, increasing guidance, and innovating methods, and proposed communication strategies such as improving mechanisms, expanding channels, and joint efforts by officials and civilians, both internally and externally [8]. Shao (2020) selected four influential Beijing city official accounts

on Facebook as research samples, analyzed account operations, and proposed international communication strategies for Beijing's city image on social media, including positioning the city's functional positioning and characteristic resources to create differentiated high-quality content; enriching push forms to stimulate user communication desires; and grasping the opportunity of major events to display the city image at multiple levels [9]. Ma (2021) took the official Twitter account of Nanjing as the research object, analyzed the operation status of Nanjing's official Twitter account @DiscoverNanjing, discussed the external communication characteristics of the official Twitter accounts of Seoul Tourism Bureau in South Korea, the mayor of Kumamoto City in Japan, and the tourism bureaus of Abu Dhabi in the UAE and Suzhou in China, and summarized four countermeasures for external communication, including adopting a user perspective for top-down communication; enhancing visual communication and enriching presentation methods; having an Internet mindset and enhancing interaction; and enhancing marketing awareness to create explosive products [10]. Deng et al. (2021) took the government Douyin account "Shanghai Release" as the research object, and found that the government Douyin account presents the city's appearance, character, and value, with short videos on major events as the main communication theme having the highest heat and breadth [11]. Yan (2023) comprehensively used content analysis and text analysis, and proposed communication strategies such as using multiple subjects and perspectives for narration, short video content needs to be concise and effective, using multiple narrative subject identities, and catering to audience characteristics [12]. You et al. (2023) believe that large-scale sports events play an important role in building urban cultural capital, and by integrating traditional Hangzhou cultural resources with newly constructed tangible cultural capital, higher benefits can be created for the city [13].

### 2.3. Explanation of Existing Problems in City Image

There are still key issues in the communication process of city images, such as single technical form, insufficient grasp of key events, and unclear signs of places. Li (2020) pointed out that in the process of constructing the image of a historical and cultural city with short videos, there are problems with unclear positioning and single content, including unclear city image positioning, insufficient reflection of cultural connotations, and single cultural propaganda content, which requires a composite model of new media + traditional media to do a good job in the top design of city propaganda, deeply explore historical and cultural symbols, and fully grasp the communication rules of new media [14]. Yu (2021) believes that during the new crown pneumonia crisis event, the city image information communication activities will face problems such as the breakdown of identity balance and the failure of the positive unified city image discourse model, which requires the construction of new typical city symbols, the use of micro-civil expression, the construction of a multi-subject joint communication, and the innovative use of new media carriers to reconstruct the city image identity [15]. Luan et al. (2023), starting from the perspective of the "third space" theory and taking Heilongjiang Province as the center for investigation, found that there are problems such as single short video construction of images, insufficient excavation of local cultural resources in short video creation, and insufficient quality and quantity of local content production, which requires in-depth excavation of the European culture, Beiguang culture, and red culture with distinctive Heilongjiang city characteristics, increasing the historical thickness of short video narratives, and constructing a distinctive cultural Heilongjiang city image short video propaganda matrix [16].

In the new media era, although there are many theoretical and practical studies on city images, there is still a need to explore research related to Shenzhen's city image, and there are fewer studies that adopt a quantitative research perspective to collect and mine data. This study comprehensively uses Python crawlers and content analysis, mainly including the following

three research contents: (1) Organize the content generation of popular Shenzhen government videos on the Douyin platform; (2) Analyze the communication strategies of popular Shenzhen government videos on the Douyin platform; (3) Discuss the key issues of popular Shenzhen government videos on the Douyin platform.

### 3. Research Design

This study selects official Shenzhen government accounts on the Douyin platform with more than one million followers and certified by enterprises for research, including "Shenzhen News Network," "First Scene," "Shenzhen Satellite TV," "Shenzhen Traffic Police," "Shenzhen Public Security," "Shenzhen Special Zone Daily," "Shenzhen Health Commission," "Shenzhen Cyber Police," "Shenzhen SWAT," "Shenzhen Satellite TV Noon 30 Minutes," "iYou Shenzhen," "Shenzhen TV News," "Shenzhen Satellite TV Military Newsroom," and 13 other official Shenzhen government accounts. The basic information is shown in Table 1. Based on this, the study selects the top 200 short videos with the most likes from each Shenzhen million-follower account as research samples, totaling 2580 videos (the Shenzhen Health Commission account has fewer than 200 videos), and uses data statistics and content analysis to explore the content generation, effective communication, and key issues of city image on social media platforms.

Table 1 Basic Information of 13 Shenzhen Government Official Accounts

Account Name	Followers (in ten thousand)	Videos (number)	Field	Account Name	Followers (in ten thousand)	Videos (number)	Field
Shenzhen News Network	100.5	Over 2700	Comprehensive	Shenzhen Health Commission	123.0	Over 180	Health
Shenzhen Health Commission	123.0	Over 180	Health	Shenzhen Cyber Police	157.7	Over 1400	Cybersecurity
First Scene	594.8	Over 4100	Comprehensive	Shenzhen SWAT	344.2	Over 350	Public Security
Shenzhen Cyber Police	157.7	Over 1400	Cybersecurity	Noon 30	285.6	Over 35000	General
Shenzhen Satellite TV	268.0	Over 5700	Comprehensive	iTour Shenzhen	115.8	Over 1160	Tourism
Shenzhen SWAT	344.2	Over 350	Public Security	Shenzhen News	117.9	Over 5660	General
Shenzhen Traffic Police	959.8	Over 1900	Traffic				

### 4. Research Results

To analyze popular Shenzhen government videos, this study used Python crawlers to collect basic information on 2580 popular videos from 13 Shenzhen government official accounts, including duration, likes, favorites, shares, and comments. Through the comprehensive use of data statistics and content analysis, the following characteristics were found.

#### 4.1. Analysis of Popular Video Publishing

The distribution of popular video publishing times shows a characteristic of being high in the middle and low at both ends. As shown in Figure 1. In the first stage, from 2017 to 2021, Shenzhen's popular government videos showed a year-by-year upward trend, which may be due to the expansion of the netizen scale and the cultivation of internet habits, providing a practical soil for strengthening short video communication. As of December 2022, China's mobile netizen scale reached 1.065 billion, an increase of 36.36 million compared to December

2021, with the proportion of netizens using mobile phones to access the internet at 99.8%. In the second stage, starting from 2021, Shenzhen's popular government videos showed a year-by-year downward trend, which may be due to the following three reasons: (1) the gradual enrichment of short video platforms, dispersing the scale of users; (2) short videos are still in the communication cycle and have not yet played a complete communication effect; (3) the data collection ends in October 2023, and the data volume is not yet complete.

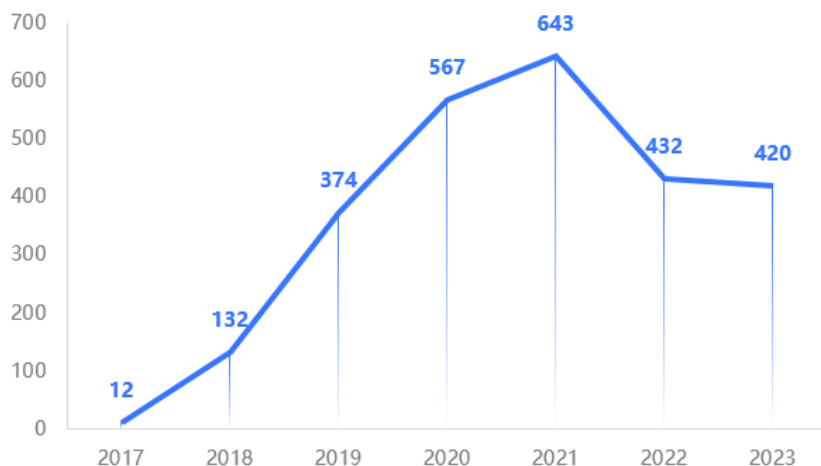


Figure 1 Statistical Distribution of Shenzhen Popular Government Video Publishing Times

### 4.2. Analysis of Popular Video Duration

The duration of popular videos is usually concentrated between 4 seconds and 20 seconds, with an average duration of 56 seconds, the shortest video is only 4 seconds, and the longest video is 640 seconds. As shown in Figure 2. This characteristic conforms to the communication rules of short video platforms, that is, pursuing the brevity and conciseness of videos to match user expectations and help them quickly understand information. At the same time, a small number of videos were published in the form of long videos, extending the functional role of short video websites, which helps users form a comprehensive understanding of news events.

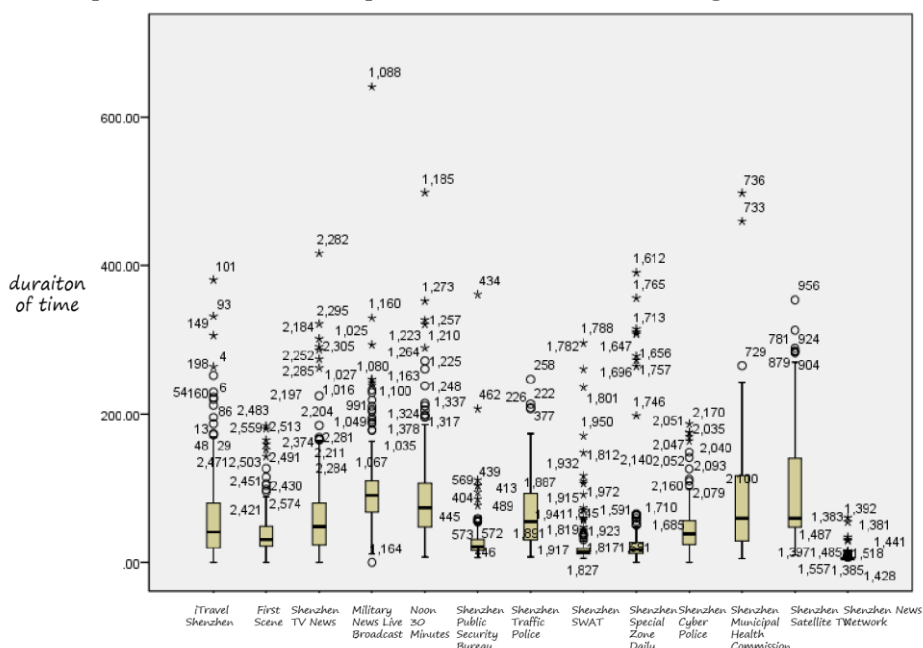


Figure 2 Boxplot of Shenzhen Popular Government Video Duration (s) (Video Number)

### 4.3. Analysis of Popular Video Likes

The average number of likes for popular videos is 116,000 times, with the lowest like count being 122 times and the highest like count being 73.45 million times. As shown in Figure 3. It can be found that compared to the sharing and commenting analyzed and discussed later, likes show a relatively average distribution pattern, and the values are usually higher, which is the most commonly used emotional expression method for users. Liking can indicate users' positive emotions towards short videos and does not involve complex interpersonal interactions, satisfying people's desire to express emotions.

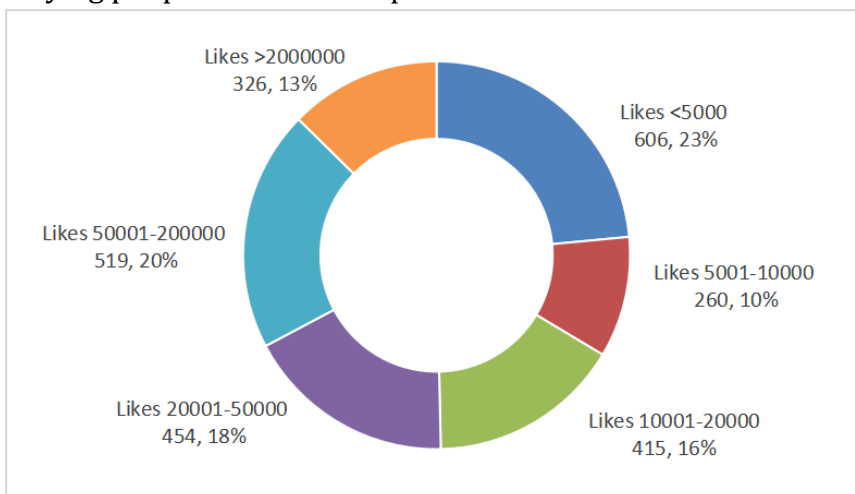


Figure 3 Distribution of Likes for Shenzhen Popular Government Videos

### 4.4. Analysis of Popular Video Favorites

The average number of favorites for popular videos is 989 times, with the lowest favorite count being 0 times and the highest favorite count being 108,000 times. As shown in Figure 4. It can be found that favorites are also an important way for users to express positive emotions, meaning that users have a strong recognition and affirmation of the value of short video content. Data statistics show that the number of videos with fewer than 500 favorites is 1647 times, accounting for 63.8%, indicating that users' favorites are more selective compared to likes.

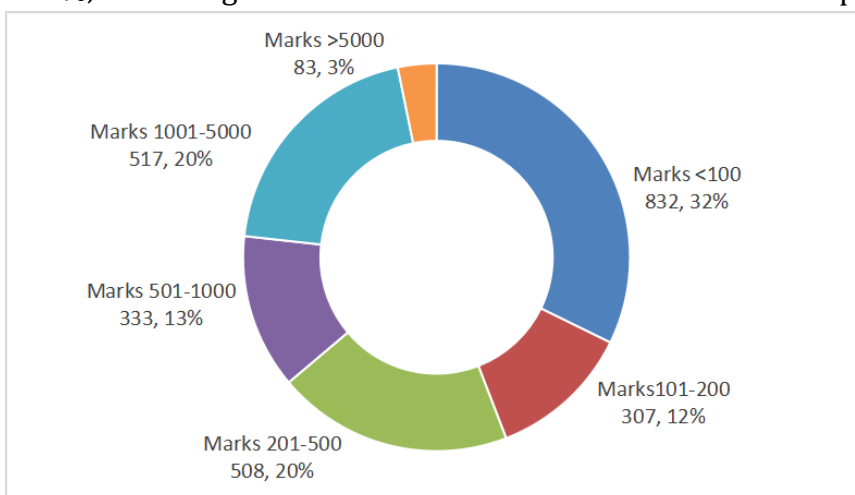


Figure 4 Distribution of Favorites for Shenzhen Popular Government Videos

### 4.5. Analysis of Popular Video Shares

The average number of shares for popular videos is 6552 times, with the lowest share count being 0 times and the highest share count being 385,000 times. As shown in Figure 5. Sharing involves users' social relationships and complex emotional behaviors, indicating that users have a strong willingness to convey and share the values of short videos with friends and

relatives who have similar values, obtaining emotional identification and value recognition. By comparing likes, favorites, it can be found that although users will selectively share, compared to self-collection, users are more willing to share and convey short video content to obtain emotional resonance.

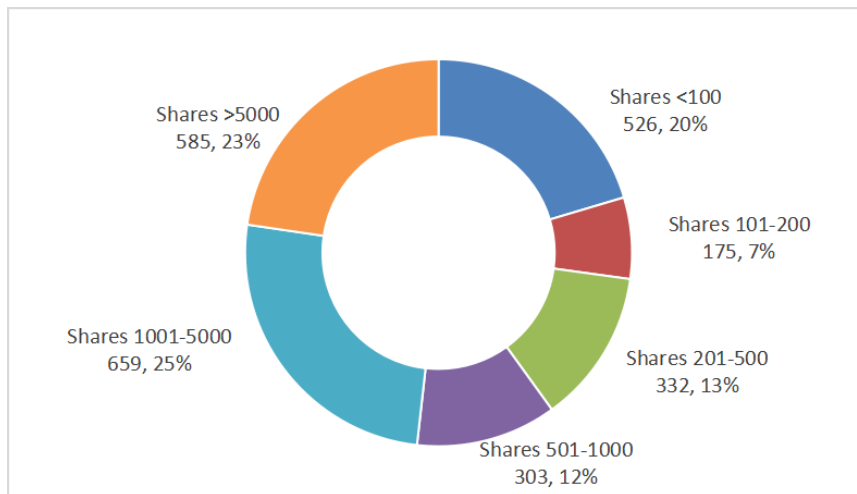


Figure 5 Distribution of Shares for Shenzhen Popular Government Videos

#### 4.6. Analysis of Popular Video Comments

The average number of comments for popular videos is 8103 times, with the lowest comment count being 0 times and the highest comment count being 714,000 times. As shown in Figure 6. Comments mean that users express their own subjective or objective impressions about things, express their thoughts and feelings, and even put forward critical opinions, even forming viewpoint conflicts and intense discussions. Since comments are different from sharing, they shift from private intimate interpersonal communication to a communication method with fast publishing speed, wide dissemination range, and strong real-time interaction, which also leads to the poor quality of information, difficulty in verifying information accuracy, and easy to cause false dissemination, cyber violence, and personal information leakage. Therefore, compared with likes, favorites, and shares, such comments facing the entire network are relatively fewer, with the number of videos with fewer than 500 comments being 1560, accounting for 60.4%.

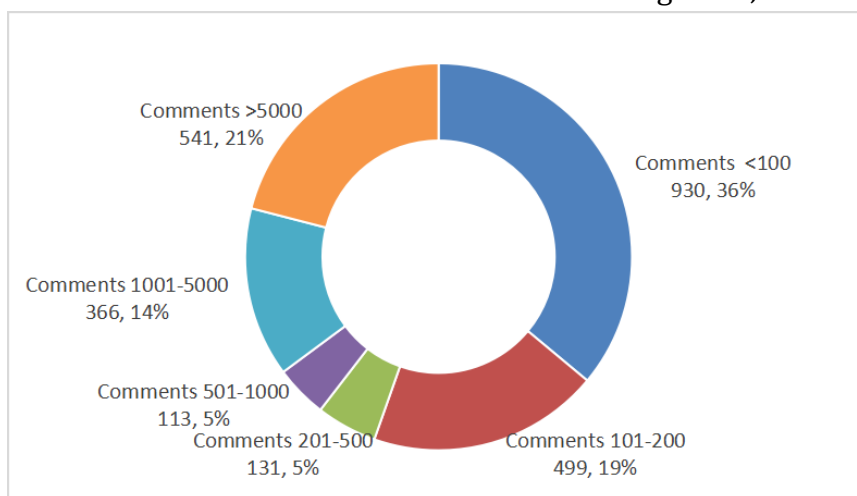


Figure 6 Distribution of Comments for Shenzhen Popular Government Videos

#### 4.7. Content Coding Analysis of Popular Videos

Using the city image segmentation theory as the research framework, the analysis of the collected popular Shenzhen government videos shows that various official government

accounts show different advantages and work together to build a high-quality Shenzhen city image, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2 Analysis of Shenzhen Popular Government Videos Based on City Image Segmentation Theory

Primary Category	Secondary Category	Government Video Case (Summary)	Douyin Account
City Main Image	Construction Entity	On the afternoon of November 1, at the third "Shenzhen Entrepreneurs' Day" symposium, many entrepreneurs offered suggestions on how Shenzhen can expand its private economy in the future.	Shenzhen News
	Organizational Entity	On April 11, the second session of the 7th Shenzhen Municipal People's Congress opened, with Mayor Qin Weizhong delivering the government work report.	Shenzhen News
	Citizen Entity	On congested roads, citizens spontaneously make way for fire trucks.	Shenzhen Traffic Police
City Functional Image	General and Core	Shenzhen's new traffic regulations—what's the penalty for not yielding to pedestrians at crosswalks?	Shenzhen Traffic Police
	Overall and Regional	Shenzhen lights up the city for them! Paying tribute to the most beautiful reverse travelers	Shenzhen Special Zone Daily
	Connotation and Extension	Shenzhen draws its sword to guard peace!	Shenzhen SWAT
City Environmental Image	Natural Environment	Visit Meisha Peak in Yantian to see mountains and the sea.	iTour Shenzhen
	Cultural Environment	1000 drones light up Shenzhen's night sky! Paying tribute to the amazing Shenzhen doctors.	Shenzhen Health Commission
	Economic Environment	The 40th anniversary of the establishment of Shenzhen Special Economic Zone.	Shenzhen TV
City Cultural Image	Modern and Ancient	In 2022, visit 100 exhibitions in Shenzhen—top-tier cultural relics "Sanxingdui" come to Shenzhen!	iTour Shenzhen

Primary Category	Secondary Category	Government Video Case (Summary)	Douyin Account
	Ethnic	"Ultimate Ethnic Style" is newly launched!	Shenzhen TV
	Secular and Religious	On the first day of the college entrance exam, a candidate encounters a traffic jam and seeks help in a critical moment.	First Scene
	Local and Foreign	Shenzhen's Legoland will open next year—the largest in the world!	Shenzhen News Network
	Conceptual Image	Shenzhen police firmly defend national security and social stability, protecting the safety of the people.	Shenzhen Public Security
City Identification Image	Behavioral Image	Racing against time! Police carry out emergency rescue at sea in the first instance.	First Scene
	Visual Image	"Made in Shenzhen" business card! From "world's factory" to "design capital".	iTour Shenzhen

## 5. Research Discussion

Urban image, as a "public imagination," can help create a higher quality urban image, enhance the visibility of the urban image, and create a differentiated urban image positioning through effective media communication. To strengthen the communication of the urban image, this study proposes three types of strategies: content generation, effective communication, and problem-solving, through data statistics and content analysis.

### 5.1. Content Generation Strategy

Mumford believes that the source of urban image comes from two aspects: first, from the shaping of mass media, and second, from the personal feelings obtained by the audience without the intervention of mass media[17]. It can be seen that the generation of short video content plays a crucial role in shaping the image of Shenzhen. By collecting popular videos from 13 Shenzhen government TikTok accounts with millions of followers and conducting data statistics and content analysis, it is found that high-quality content is still the core of strong communication power, and the following content generation strategies are summarized.

First, the integration of history and modernity. By excavating the urban development process of Shenzhen Special Zone from its establishment to the present, emphasizing the "transformation from a fishing village to a modern city" and showcasing its spirit of innovation and enterprise. Emphasize Shenzhen's position as a center for scientific and technological innovation, highlight the global impact of high-tech industries and unicorn companies, and its core role in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area.

Second, the emphasis on both humanity and ecology. Advocate for a diverse and inclusive humanistic environment, including rich cultural and artistic activities, international

educational resources, and talent introduction policies. Promote the achievements of green ecological city construction, such as sponge city projects, increased coverage of park green spaces, and improvements in air quality and other environmental measures.

Third, smart cities and public services. By showcasing the achievements of Shenzhen's smart city construction, such as efficient government service systems, the convenience of "cashless" city life, and intelligent transportation systems, it reflects the level of urban modern governance. Highlight the welfare of people's livelihoods and social justice, and publicize the quality of public services and reform measures in education, healthcare, housing, and other aspects.

## 5.2. Effective Communication Strategy

The physical landscape of urban appearance needs to be gradually deepened into the internal cultural spirit of the city, and the focus on the sensory shaping of the urban image should be elevated to the construction of the urban image[19]. Therefore, it is urgent to enrich the creative techniques and consciously create short video content that users are willing to collect, share, and comment on, to enhance the communication power of the content.

First, deconstruction and reconstruction. Starting from the life of the market, entering the real life of ordinary citizens, and conveying grand intentions through specific and vivid trivial matters, deconstructing grand subjects in multiple dimensions, and then reconstructing them through a series of short videos to fully and comprehensively display the image of urban citizens.

Second, multi-dimensional creation. In the creative process, pay attention to the flexible use of self-narrative and other-narrative to promote urban image identification. Self-identification is the foundation of urban image identification construction, and other-identification is an important method for extending the construction of urban image. In short video social media, by switching between different perspectives of the two, it promotes people's understanding of themselves in the relationship between people and others to be realized and expressed[20], which helps users to obtain a richer emotional experience in social relationships, engage in short video social activities, and promote social investment.

Third, the use of intelligent technology. With the continuous development of machine learning and deep learning, the use of intelligent digital humans, voice recognition, and face recognition for creation has become a cutting-edge hotspot in the field of short videos[21]. Further combined with virtual reality, augmented reality, 3D modeling, and other technical means, it can further extend the virtual and real space of short videos and create a more realistic video experience.

## 5.3. Optimization Communication Strategy

"To adopt precise communication methods that are close to different regions, different countries, and different groups of audiences, to promote the global expression, regional expression, and mass expression of Chinese stories and Chinese voices, and to enhance the affinity and effectiveness of international communication"[22]. As a national urban business card, Shenzhen needs to pay more attention to enhancing the precision and effectiveness of communication.

First, use AIGC (Generative AI). With the rise of generative AI, it has greatly expanded the depth and breadth of human information communication[23]. Using large language models for training to automatically generate multilingual short video content has become possible. With the cooperation of automatically generated bilingual subtitles, it is helpful to accurately push and communicate to users in different countries. However, to get close to the expression habits of users in different countries, it is still necessary for communicators to conduct relevant cultural research, respect each other, and create suitable short video content; to achieve the

enhanced effect of human-computer collaboration, it is also necessary to resist the risk of machines weakening human abilities and obtain accurate self-awareness[24].

Second, grasp key events. Existing research has conducted urban image communication strategy research on major sports events such as the Hangzhou Asian Games, Tokyo Olympics, and Xi'an International Marathon[25][26][27], proposing that sports events not only help promote the development of urban culture, economy, and ecology but are also an important way to convey urban images, spread urban culture, and enhance urban soft power.

Third, create landmark places[28]. Although short videos can create urban images, urban images are not only spread through short videos, and the actual experience of citizens and tourists is an important source for constructing urban images. By creating landmark cultural places, it helps to focus on establishing a high-quality urban image in a centralized manner, and after key events, it establishes a long-term beautiful urban business card. At the same time, real experience is an important factor that transcends the atmosphere created by short videos. By integrating online and offline, it enhances the precision and accuracy of communication.

## 6. Conclusion

The urban image constructed through short video platforms mainly comes from the imagination of media narrative and sensory experience, and media operations have become a key force in generating and maintaining the establishment of urban images. However, the urban images seen by people with different positions, institutions, and perspectives are quite different, and intelligent technology has increased the complexity of urban image shaping. Visual communication provides huge productivity and imagination for urban images, promoting the continuous evolution of communication paradigms[29], but at the same time, the construction of urban images based on short videos still needs to respect cultural differences, use technology cautiously, and accurately build a beautiful city image with affinity.

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