

# From "Indifferent" to "Interesting" —— Red-themed Short Video: "Available" and "Accessible"

Yiting Sun<sup>1,a</sup>, Yule Shi<sup>2,b</sup>, Wei Fang<sup>3,c</sup>, Bo Zhou<sup>4,d\*</sup>

{17757007806@163.com<sup>a</sup>, 2077263735@qq.com<sup>b</sup>, 2318196055@qq.com<sup>c</sup>, zhoubo0043@126.com<sup>d\*</sup>}

College of Economics and Social Welfare, Zhejiang Shuren University, Hangzhou 312028, China<sup>1,2,3</sup>  
School of Culture and Tourism, Zhejiang International Studies University, Hangzhou 310023, China<sup>4</sup>

**Abstract:** In the context of all-media background, users have gained unprecedented trendy experiences through the use of short videos. Promoting and disseminating red culture plays a significant role in the construction of socialist core values and the enhancement of national cultural confidence. Short videos have become an important carrier for spreading red culture. Based on user experience, this article distills the communication effect and user behavior of red-themed short videos through in-depth interviews with 17 Generation Z individuals. The research found that it is conducive to focusing, guiding, and stimulating the demand of the Z-generation for red-themed short videos, creating micro paths for red-themed short videos to better enhance the positive energy of the Generation Z, and providing certain guiding value for the future development direction of red-themed short videos.

**Keywords:** Red-themed short video; Generation Z; Emotions; communication effect

## 1 Introduction

In the era of all-media, short videos serve as an important carrier for spreading red culture<sup>[1]</sup>. General Secretary Xi Jinping emphasized the need to “firmly occupy the commanding heights of online public opinion through new media, making positive energy stronger and the main theme more uplifting”<sup>[2]</sup>. Red-themed short videos play an irreplaceable role in promoting socialist core values, enhancing national cultural confidence, and inheriting red culture<sup>[3]</sup>. Enhancing the user experience of red-themed short videos to strengthen their dissemination and influence is a subject worthy of in-depth research. In the context of short video scenarios, user experience is not only about the visual presentation of videos but also involves the overall feelings and satisfaction of users during the usage process. The user experience of red-themed short videos covers multiple dimensions including attractiveness of the video, audience engagement, and dissemination effect. On one hand, in the era of self-media, the “Generation Z” serves as both content producers and consumers of short videos<sup>[4]</sup>. Their preferences for short videos tend to have obvious entertainment features. College students’ values are still forming, and they have a high dependence on short videos, and their sense of social responsibility and mission are easily affected by pan-entertainment. On the other hand, red-themed short videos face various challenges. For example, in terms of dissemination pathways, new media platforms presents the characteristics of low usage rates, small dissemination scopes, and limited application scales, lacking fully innovative dissemination forms<sup>[5]</sup>. In the content, outdated video content, uneven quality, simple recounting of historical aspects<sup>[5]</sup>, and single-minded

propaganda on spiritual levels make it difficult to capture audience's interest<sup>[6]</sup>, resulting in minimal dissemination effects. There is even the phenomenon of red-themed short videos being reinterpreted or distorted during dissemination.

In this context, revealing the experiential effects of red-themed short videos is of significant theoretical value for understanding the psychological and behavioral characteristics of the Generation Z in the new media era. It also holds considerable practical significance for guiding them to enhance their confidence in national culture. However, mainstream research on red-themed short videos mostly focuses on their development status, dissemination characteristics, creative paths, the difficulties encountered during dissemination, factors influencing the dissemination of red culture on new media platforms, and the impact of red-themed short videos on audience ideological and cultural education. Insufficient attention has been paid to the emotional characteristics of red-themed short videos and their dissemination effects. This article focuses on the Generation Z, analyzing their experience of watching red-themed short videos, revealing the relationship between short video experience effects and user behavior, with the aim of providing optimization suggestions for the operation and management of red-themed short video platforms.

## **2 Literature review**

### **2.1 Generation Z and red-themed short video**

Generation Z, also known as Gen Z, Net Generation, or Internet Generation, refers to those born roughly between the mid-1990s and around 2010. It is characterized by distinct personalities, active thinking, and diverse cultural consumption concepts, making them an active internet group in the new era. Internet communication is the primary way in which the Z-generation perceives the world, with short video socialization being part of their daily lives, indicating a high demand for new integrated media<sup>[7]</sup>. Red-themed short videos represent an effective integration of red culture and short video platforms, comprising concise and refined short videos formed by the aggregation of grand and profound revolutionary spirit, historical stories, and other red cultural resources<sup>[8]</sup>. They fully showcase the authenticity, reality, and fun of red culture.

### **2.2 Experience effect of short video**

From its initial use as a means of social sharing to its current state of diversified content creation, short videos have become a cultural phenomenon due to their concise, intuitive, and easily shareable nature<sup>[9]</sup>. In the fiercely competitive short video market, user experience is one of the crucial benchmarks for assessing video quality and a key determinant of platform success. Overall, the user experience of short videos can be understood from both a conscious and behavioral perspective.

On the conscious level, existing literature predominantly examines factors influencing user experience from the perspectives of video content and platform design. These factors include content quality, interactivity, personalized recommendations, interface design, and loading speed. According to research by Smith and Anderson, user experience on short video platforms is influenced by various factors such as video content, platform design, and social

interaction. The quality, innovation, and appeal of content are key factors affecting user experience, while platform interface design, operational flow, and social interaction functions also play significant roles. Studies indicate that content that is interesting, novel, and creative is more likely to attract user favor<sup>[10]</sup>. However, there is relatively limited research on the dimensions related to the user experience of short videos. Short videos can evoke immediate emotional and affective responses in users, such as joy, sadness, or anxiety, and may also influence users' attention<sup>[11]</sup>, memory, and decision-making processes<sup>[12]</sup>. They have the potential to trigger users' feelings of closeness, pride, and belonging. Additionally, short videos can evoke feelings of affinity, honour and identity in users<sup>[13]</sup>.

On the behavioral level, short video platforms typically possess rich interactive functionalities such as liking, commenting, sharing, etc. These interactive features not only reflect users' preferences and demands for short video content, enhancing their sense of involvement, but also contribute to building user communities and increasing user stickiness. During the viewing process, users' judgments on the usability, utility, and entertainment value of short video platforms directly affect their emotional attitudes, behavioral intentions, and actions. The enhancement of interactivity can significantly increase user satisfaction and loyalty. Users can choose to enrich and supplement the content of short videos by sending real-time bullet comments, guiding and clarifying other users who are watching by expressing their own viewpoints. On the other hand, after viewing, users are motivated by the dual influence of cognition and emotion, further driving them to form behavioral intentions and translate them into substantive actions.

In summary, existing literature on the effectiveness of red-themed short videos primarily focuses on their effects on users' cognition and emotions at the psychological level. However, there is a shortage of research regarding their effects on the behavioral level. Existing studies lack systematic and in-depth analysis in this regard.

### **3 Research methods and procedures**

This study employed in-depth interviews as a primary method. Conducted between November and December 2023, this study utilized convenience sampling and snowball sampling methods to identify interviewees, starting from the researcher's Wechat Moments. Interviews were mainly conducted face-to-face and via telephone. The interview content primarily revolved around themes such as the interviewees' willingness to watch red-themed short videos, their feelings, and factors that attracted them.

After each interview, the interviewees were asked to recommend acquaintances who regularly watch red-themed short videos, thus expanding the sample size and enriching the research data. All 17 interviewees were college students of Generation Z.

For analysis, the study primarily utilized Nvivo text analysis software to manually code all raw data records from the interviews. This involved open coding, axial coding, and selective coding, serving as initial data for further analysis, aiming to maintain the possibility of any theoretical discoveries to the fullest extent.

## 4 Conclusion

This article focuses on Generation Z, a group characterized by distinct personalities, active thinking, and diverse cultural consumption concepts. They are often referred to as “netizens” and integrate short video socialization into their daily lives. Young college students belonging to the “internet-native generation” exhibit traits of pursuing individual freedom, seeking diversification and amusement, and embracing novelty and quickness in accepting new things.

This paper studies the influence of red-themed short videos on users by examining the effect of red-themed short videos from the beginning of users watching red-themed short videos to the effect and use behavior of users, i.e., from the beginning of users' access to red-themed short videos, red-themed short videos with their high-quality content to enhance the interest of users in watching, enhance the sense of identity and trust of users, and trigger users to produce motivational effect, inspirational effect, reflective effect, recognition effect, which in turn stimulate the behavioral intention of users. In the process of watching, users are prompted to take typical communication behaviors such as liking, commenting, forwarding, etc., as well as searching and viewing behaviors of the red culture itself after watching, and the users' own visiting behaviors, consuming behaviors, and devoting behaviors. As shown in Figure 1.

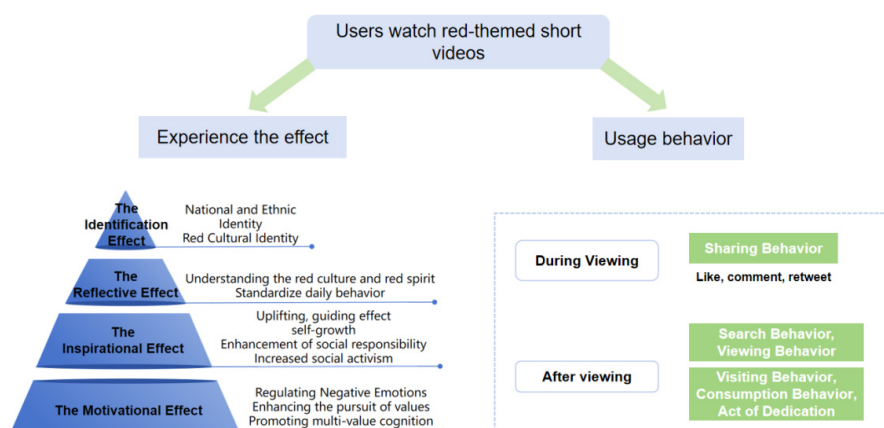


Fig. 1. Diagram of interview results.

### 4.1 Experience effect of the short red video

As a refreshing stream within the realm of short videos, red-themed short videos can instill a sense of identification and trust among users. Interview findings reveal that Generation Z tends to experience motivational, inspirational, reflective, and identification effects upon encountering red-themed short videos.

**The Motivational Effect:** The widespread dissemination of red-themed short videos among Generation Z not only broadens their horizons but also inspires them to strive for self-improvement. Firstly, watching red-themed short videos helps Generation Z regulate negative emotions. They not only showcase themselves, express opinions, and socialize on the internet but also use it as an outlet for their emotions. For instance, one interviewee mentioned,

“After watching red-themed videos, my low mood tends to alleviate a bit” (07); another stated, “When feeling down, red-themed short videos guide me to perk up and get my blood pumping” (15). Secondly, watching red-themed short videos can promote the diversification of value cognition and enhance the pursuit of values among Generation Z, guiding them to establish correct values and encouraging them to pursue a better life. For example, one respondent expressed, “I feel like we should strive for self-improvement, take studying seriously, and strive to progress” (11); another mentioned, “After watching, I feel like I may not be able to do something grand for the country, but I can do small things” (05); furthermore, “It helps us to broaden our minds beyond the comfort zone of the current peaceful era, like the saying goes, ‘never forget the national humiliation, while the mountains and rivers remain intact, we must strive for self-improvement’, we should focus on studying hard and contribute to the country’s development” (03).

**The Inspirational Effect:** Watching red-themed short videos helps Generation Z revisit revolutionary history, increase their knowledge of revolution, deepen their understanding of red culture, enhance their pursuit of values, and serve as motivation and guidance. Interviewees expressed that when they encounter setbacks in life, red-themed short videos featuring individuals or events with positive energy can provide comfort and inspiration, encouraging them to face difficulties and enhancing their sense of social responsibility and social initiative. For example, one respondent mentioned, “It makes people more spirited, feeling that what they face are all trivial matters” (02); and another stated, “Videos related to history leave a deep impression on me, especially on commemorative days, the replay of historical footage can evoke memories of history” (14). Watching red-themed short videos can also inspire self-growth, pushing individuals towards their personal development goals. For instance, “It motivates me to move forward firmly towards the dreams in my heart” (01).

**The Reflective Effect:** The depiction of historical scenes and the heroic deeds of martyrs, along with their spirit of hard work and sacrifice in red-themed short videos, helps Generation Z understand red culture and the spirit of revolution. It encourages them to cherish their current happy lives and prompts self-reflection and introspection. For example, one respondent stated, “The spirit of sacrifice displayed by the martyrs in these historical events, sacrificing their personal interests for the greater good” (04); another mentioned, “In stories like Dong Cunrui, I can feel the spirit of revolution embodied in these deeds, like the May Fourth Movement spirit and the spirit of the Long March, which can be gleaned from red-themed videos” (14); “Seeing how some predecessors sacrificed their lives for our present good life is deeply touching. Reflecting on my own time wasted, I feel very guilty” (01); “Comparing my current happy life with the past hardships, I cherish the present even more” (07). Additionally, red-themed short videos also serve as a behavioral guidance tool, regulating the daily behaviors of Generation Z and urging them to reflect on their actions, as expressed by one respondent: “After watching the clips, I felt ashamed of my previous complaints” (09).

**The Identification Effect:** On one hand, cultural identity and cultural dissemination complement each other. The vibrant characters and story scenes in red-themed short videos provide an excellent platform for the dissemination and popularization of red culture, helping to enhance Generation Z’s understanding of revolutionary education knowledge and the spirit of red culture, strengthening their identification with red culture. For instance, one respondent stated, “From those red-themed videos, I can feel the spirit of the Chinese people, such as the Yan’an Spirit, the Zunyi Conference Spirit, the Jinggangshan Spirit, the Long March Spirit,

the Red Boat Spirit, and the spirit in War to Resist US Aggression and Aid Korea” (04); another mentioned, “You can obtain spirit from red-themed characters, such as the spirit of unity in groups” (03). On the other hand, watching red-themed short videos can guide Generation Z to engage in positive behaviors conducive to social development and harmony, thereby enhancing their sense of national and ethnic identity and pride. For example, one respondent shared, “Certain videos that resonate with me will subtly influence my behavior and beliefs” (13); another stated, “You can feel the hardships endured by our predecessors, deepen your sense of national identity, and feel proud of being Chinese” (17); “All the heroic deeds tell us one thing: I want to make China better” (14); “Our predecessors have sacrificed a lot of blood and sweat for the prosperity and development of the motherland, so we should also strive for the glory of the nation” (16).

#### 4.2 Use behavior of red-themed short videos

Interview results indicate that upon encountering red-themed short videos, Generation Z not only engages in sharing and searching behaviors but also in viewing, visiting, consuming, and contributing behaviors.

**Sharing Behavior:** Red-themed short videos create an immersive “cloud experience” for users, deepening Generation Z’s understanding of red culture and sparking their engagement in comments, reposts, and saves, among other sharing behaviors. Interview results demonstrate that Generation Z holds a positive attitude towards sharing red-themed short videos and spreading red culture. After watching red-themed short videos, they engage in sharing and discussing behaviors, as evidenced by statements such as: “I will share it with my family and friends so they can also see the videos I like” (02); “If I see a red-themed short video that I like, I am happy to repost it to my social media” (12); “I think this type of red-themed short video is meaningful, and sharing it with friends can better spread and promote this red spirit” (17); “I also like to share these videos I like with friends, so we can have better topics to discuss and exchange each other’s opinions” (03).

**Search Behavior:** Red-themed short videos not only trigger respondents’ sharing behaviors regarding the videos themselves but also prompt audiences to engage in exploration behavior. Respondents, intrigued by red-themed short videos, are willing to learn more about red culture, indicating the attractiveness of red culture to users. Interview results show that respondents, after watching red-themed short videos, search for related information to further understand the relevant red culture and knowledge, leading to a deeper appreciation of the red spirit. For example, “Especially when a person appears in multiple videos, I will be particularly impressed by this person and want to search to find out who they are, what achievements they have had before... I want to have a better understanding of red history” (14). Red-themed cultural short videos, by spreading positive red energy, inspire viewers to participate in video production and immerse themselves in the context. For instance, “Sometimes after watching, I will also edit some videos myself, participate in topic activities, and show the heroic images in my heart to everyone” (05); “Sometimes I will edit clips or images that deeply resonate with me into videos” (06).

**Viewing Behavior:** The red-themed stories presented in red-themed short videos unfold with successive climaxes, captivating viewers and instilling a sense of patriotism and perseverance among college students, quickly igniting positive energy<sup>[14]</sup>. After watching red-themed short

videos, viewers often develop a strong curiosity about related films and engage in the behavior of watching these films. For example, “The videos with hopeful yet tragic atmospheres easily immerse me into the stories they tell. The brief clips aroused my desire to explore the entire movie. After watching the movie, I was moved by their unwavering faith even after experiencing darkness” (03); “I came across a video explaining the movie *The Eight Hundred* on Douyin. The scene of reading family letters in the video brought tears to my eyes, and I couldn’t calm down for a long time. Later, I took my sister to the cinema to watch the movie” (04). Respondents also immerse themselves in the spirits and sentiments conveyed by related films to experience them more fully. For instance, “After watching some previews of red-themed movies on Douyin, I feel overwhelmed with emotions, and I go find the corresponding films to watch, experiencing the patriotism conveyed in them” (06).

**Visiting Behavior:** Generation Z has become the main force in red tourism, preferring personalized and immersive travel experiences, which better satisfy their needs<sup>[14]</sup>. After watching red-themed short videos, users often develop a willingness and behavior of visiting red-themed tourist attractions. Respondents expressed that after watching red-themed short videos, they are more eager to experience the charm of red culture firsthand by visiting red-themed attractions. For example, “If I am very interested, I would want to experience it firsthand by visiting red-themed attractions” (02); “After learning about the stories of the Communist Party of China, I would go to red-themed attractions to experience the hardships of our predecessors, such as visiting the Bayi Square to feel the passion when the first shot of armed resistance was fired” (05); “After watching short videos about the Awakening Era, I went to visit the Longhua Martyrs Cemetery in Shanghai. It was very touching” (07). Visiting these attractions allows Generation Z to better receive practical education from red culture, helping them absorb richer red cultural connotations, inherit the red genes, and establish a closer connection with red history.

**Consumption Behavior:** The integration of red tourism with popular IP-related products tends to be favored by Generation Z. Short videos serve as a bridge between cultural and creative products and Generation Z. Consumption becomes a form of identity expression. When users’ identification with red culture reaches a certain level, their willingness to consume red cultural and creative products also increases. After watching red-themed short videos, users’ interest in red culture further translates into consumption behavior. For example, “Cultural and creative products represent red culture, which is very touching and can be considered as a way of understanding and inheriting culture” (13); “If the price is not too high, I would still consider purchasing because red cultural and creative products are unique, collectible, and have innovative designs, which are quite appealing” (01).

**Dedication Behavior:** The deeper impact of red-themed short videos lies in guiding Generation Z to engage in positive behaviors that benefit social development, harmony, and stability. Interview results indicate that red-themed short videos have a behavior-guiding function, with the heroic figures serving as role models, they are subtly restrained in their behavior and inspired to strive for self-improvement, and make more contributions to society. For example, “I am inspired by the selfless dedication of the heroic predecessors, especially right after watching, I feel a strong sense of responsibility and am very willing to help those in need around me with whatever I can” (03); “Previously, I felt like I couldn’t contribute to society, but after watching red-themed videos, I realized that even the smallest details may require my help, and I can contribute to society within my capacity” (13). The spirit of

dedication and bravery conveyed in red-themed short videos subtly guides the daily behavior of Generation Z. Interviewees internalize the red spirit and actively practice virtues such as helping others, for example, “It makes me actively help others, including some small things around me, such as volunteering during the pandemic” (02).

In summary, enhancing the user experience of red-themed short videos requires comprehensive consideration and optimization from various aspects such as attractiveness, engagement, and dissemination effects. By accurately grasping audience needs, innovating content production, designing interactive elements, and formulating personalized dissemination strategies, the user experience of red-themed short videos can be effectively improved, further enhancing their dissemination and influence.

## **5 Discussion, contribution, and outlook**

This study establishes four aspects of user experience effects for red-themed short videos and draws the following conclusions regarding user behavior through qualitative research methods: Firstly, red-themed short videos have viewing effects of motivation, inspiration, reflection, accompanied by national identity and identification with red culture. Red-themed short videos not only bring about the aforementioned effects but also promote users' diversification of value cognition, enhancement of value pursuit, and regulation of negative emotions. Secondly, red-themed short videos can trigger typical behaviors such as forwarding and discussing in terms of dissemination, sincere and voluntary dedication behavior, autonomous exploration behavior, viewing related movies and TV shows as typical viewing behaviors, visiting red scenic spots as typical visiting behaviors, and purchasing cultural and creative products as the main consumption behavior. Among them, the forwarding and discussing behaviors in dissemination and the on-site experience of visiting red scenic spots in visiting behaviors are consistent with the research of Huiyue, Liu and Minjun, Yan<sup>[15]</sup> as well as Mengyao, Yan and Fengxian, Wang<sup>[5]</sup>. Interview conclusions indicate that after watching red-themed short videos, although the feelings and behaviors vary, they all revolve around cultivating correct values and fostering patriotism, specifically by promoting positive energy through behaviors such as imitation participation and spontaneous organization.

In the future development of red-themed short videos, on one hand, it is crucial to uphold the principle of “content is king” while innovating the expression of red-themed short video content. By enhancing emotional factors and starting from sensory imagery such as visual and auditory aspects, emphasis should be placed on rendering colors, music, and other elements to provide viewers with an immersive experience. On the other hand, diversifying the creation methods of red-themed short videos, empowering red-themed short videos with new technologies, and enabling red-themed short videos to develop in a more diversified manner, such as comics, videos, performances, TV dramas, movies, etc. Currently, the types of red-themed short videos are mainly focused on film and television editing and promotional films. New creative methods that package red-themed short videos through popular forms are more likely to be favored by Generation Z.

This study also has the following limitations: Firstly, the limitation of sample selection. The interviewees in this study were only focused on Generation Z, studying their specific experiences of watching red-themed short videos, while neglecting the experiences of other



groups watching red-themed short videos. In the future, it may be beneficial to include other demographics in the sampling scope for further research. Secondly, this study is descriptive and relies on qualitative methods for concept extraction and theoretical construction. It lacks quantitative validation of the dissemination effects and user behaviors of red-themed short videos. This is also one of the key directions for future research.

**Project Source:** Zhejiang University Students' Science and Technology Innovation Program and New Talent Program Project: Pollinate "Generation Z" and Promote Positive Energy - A Study on the Path of Red-themed Short Video to Enhance the National Identity of Generation Z (No. 2023R420022)

## References

- [1] Meiling, Zhang: Exploration of Red Culture Communication Path in Shake Shack Short Video. *China Economist*. pp. 35-36 (2021)
- [2] NCNA New China News Agency: Xi Jinping emphasized at the 12th collective study of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China Central Committee that the promotion of media integration will lead to deeper development and consolidate the common ideological foundation of the whole party and the whole nation. *Ideological and Political Work Research*. Pp. 4-5 (2019)
- [3] Zhihui, Zhang: The Significance, Problems and Paths of Red Culture Marketing and Communication in the Context of New Media - Taking 15 First Batch of Pilot Units of Red Gene Pool of Chinese National Culture Gene Pool (Phase I) as an Example. *Marketing Management Garden*. pp. 160-161 (2021)
- [4] Xinbei, Bi, Siyi, Tan, Yuhou, Zhong: Study on the Path of Constructing New Format of Red Culture Communication in the Era of Short Video. *West China Broadcasting TV*. pp. 14-16 (2023)
- [5] Mengyao, Yan, Fengxian, Wang: De-formalization and re-contextualization: short video communication of red culture. *Youth Journalist*. pp.83-84 (2021)
- [6] Martinez J R ,Brammer E S ,Carter P M N : 'I Can Spend Forever on It Without Getting Bored': Analyzing What College Students Like and Dislike About TikTok. *Media Watch*. pp. 113-130 (2024)
- [7] Xiaojuan, Li, Ying, Li: Constructing Short Video Communication Strategies for National Style Culture of Generation Z. *All-media Explorations*. pp.80-81 (2023)
- [8] Shiyu, Qi: Cultivation of Red Culture Online Short Video Creators. *Movie Literature*. pp.72-74 (2019)
- [9] Maya A ,Zwannda K ,Mithilesh D , et al: Effect of Short, Animated Video Storytelling on Maternal Knowledge and Satisfaction in the Perinatal Period in South Africa: Randomized Controlled Trial. *Journal of medical Internet research*. pp. 25e47266-e47266 (2023)
- [10] Smith, J., & Anderson, M: The impact of video content quality on user engagement with short-form video platforms. *Journal of Media Psychology*. pp.1-14 (2018)
- [11] Gamze B ,Atiye K ,Sönmez D D , et al: Effect of short film video and video-based education on fear, pain, and satisfaction of children undergoing day surgery. *Journal of Pediatric Nursing*. pp. 7549-56 (2024)
- [12] Jones, C., & Taylor, D.: Emotional responses to short-form video content: A psychological analysis. *New Media & Society*. pp. 999-1014 (2019)
- [13] Mallipeddi S ,Dickter L C ,Burk A J: The Impact of an Autistic Character Media Portrayal on Autistic Stereotypes : MEDIA PORTRAYAL. *Journal of autism and developmental disorders*. (2024)

- [14] Bonong Tang: Why “Generation Z” loves red tourism. CHINA TOURISM NEWS. (2022)
- [15] Huiyue, Liu, Minjun, Yan. A study on the impact of mobile short video usage on travelers' behavioral intention. Journal of Tourism. pp.62-73 (2021)