

A Study on the Interactive Relationship between Chinese Film & Television Culture and Urban Brand Communication— A Review of Research on Chinese Film & Television Culture and Urban Brand Communication

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ABSTRACT

With the rapid development of digital media, the shaping of urban images has gradually shifted from traditional publicity methods to a communication model led by cultural content. Film and television culture, with its advantages of strong appeal, wide dissemination scope and large audience base, has become the core medium for shaping and disseminating urban brands. Taking the book *Research on Chinese Film & Television Culture and Urban Brand Communication* as the core reference, this essay systematically explores the interactive logic and realization path between Chinese film and television culture and urban brand communication. The core viewpoint of the book points out that the successful communication of urban brands needs to dig deep into the core of local culture, realize in-depth binding with film and television content, and achieve the continuous empowerment of film and television works on urban images through the creation and long-term operation of characteristic IPs. Supported by the film and television practice of Urban Vitality of Yucheng and cases of many cities in China, this essay supplements relevant data on film and television communication, urban cultural tourism and brand influence, demonstrates the symbiotic relationship between film and television culture and urban brand communication, and puts forward a three-dimensional path of “culture as the foundation, IP as the empowerment, and industrial coordination”, so as to provide theoretical reference and practical reference for small and medium-sized cities.

Keywords: Film and Television Culture; Urban Brand Communication; Interactive Relationship; Film and Television IP; Integration of Culture and Tourism

INTRODUCTION

Against the backdrop of the in-depth advancement of the culture-tourism integration strategy and the increasing diversification of film and television communication formats in the new era, the connection between Chinese film and television culture and urban brand promotion has become increasingly close. The two-way empowerment pattern formed by them has become an important path to drive the high-quality development of cities and continue local cultural veins. According to the 2024 National Radio and Television Industry Statistical Communique released by the State Administration of Radio, Film and Television, by the end of 2024, there were nearly 60,000 institutions engaged in radio and television and online audio-visual businesses nationwide (National Radio and Television Administration, 2025). Among them, there were 2,518 broadcasting institutions such as radio stations, TV stations, and radio and television stations, more than 49,000 radio and television program production and operation institutions, and 3,180 licensed and filed online audio-visual institutions. In 2024, the total income of the national radio and television and online audio-visual industry reached 1.487802

trillion yuan, a year-on-year increase of 5.32%. Among them, the actual income from radio and television and online audio-visual businesses was 1.285587 trillion yuan, a year-on-year increase of 5.27%. The output of film and television content remained stable. Among them, high-quality film and television works set in cities and showing local characteristics, such as *My Altay*, continued to emerge. Creative plans such as “Travel with Micro-Short Dramas” have made film and television culture an important carrier for urban brand communication.

The book *Research on Chinese Film & Television Culture and Urban Brand Communication*, co-authored by Liu Yuan, Lu Chang and Liu Linglin, is based on the actual development of China’s film and television industry and the current situation of urban brand construction. It detailedly analyzes the internal connection between film and television content creation and urban brand building, sorts out the historical context and practical difficulties of the interactive development of the two, and demonstrates the great potential of film and television culture in depicting urban styles, activating urban brand value and driving the development of the culture-tourism industry. The communication model of “Cultural Core+Film and Television Expression+Industrial Coordination” proposed in the book provides important theoretical guidance for urban brand communication.

Core Connotation and Related Research

Connotation Definition

The book *Research on Chinese Film & Television Culture and Urban Brand Communication* clearly defines the core connotations of film and television culture and urban brand communication, laying a theoretical foundation for this study. The book points out that film and television culture is a cultural form that conveys cultural connotations, values, and lifestyles through film, television drama, online micro-short drama and other film and television carriers, and its core characteristics lie in concrete expression, emotional transmission, and extensive communication; urban brand communication is the process by which a city conveys its natural endowments, cultural heritage, and development advantages to the public through various communication media, shapes a unique urban image, and enhances the city’s popularity and reputation, whose core goal is to achieve the public’s cognition, identification, and loyalty to the urban brand.

Based on the theoretical system of the monograph and industry consensus, this essay puts forward the basic viewpoint that film and television culture and urban brand communication exert mutual influence, which is essentially an expression of cooperative relations (Liang & Wu, 2026; Li & Yang, 2025; Wei, 2025). Within this framework, cities endow film and television creation with abundant content resources and profound cultural accumulation, and film and television works shape the image of cities through specific media channels to support their sustainable development. Through in-depth integration, the two sides achieve the goal of mutual benefit and win-win results.

Case Analysis

The 2025 Observation Report on Cultural Tourism Communication Trends (hereinafter referred to as the Report) released by the Regional Brand and Communication Research Institute of Communication University of China points out that the current cultural tourism communication has presented three major changes: the migration of communication power, the integration of communication experience, and the reconstruction of communication relations. These changes have also reshaped the underlying logic of the integration of film and television culture and urban brand communication, and the transmission mechanism of film and television content empowering urban cultural tourism has also undergone corresponding adjustments in the new media ecosystem (Wei et al., 2025). The communication power has shifted from the official to ordinary netizens, offline scenes have become communication venues, online spaces have become experience spaces, and traditional tourists have gradually been replaced by “scenic fans” who emphasize continuous identification and emotional stickiness. This trend is highly consistent with the communication logic of film and television culture, and also provides a new era background for film and television to empower urban brands.

At the same time, the Report focuses on the application of Oriental aesthetics in cultural tourism communication, taking the domestic AAA masterpiece *Black Myth: Wukong*, which was released in August 2024, as a typical case. With its exquisite character modeling and grand Oriental aesthetic scenes, its sales on the Steam platform

have exceeded 20 million copies by August 2025, the first anniversary of its release, triggering a digital-era “Journey to the West craze” overseas. It not only drove the cultural tourism of Shanxi and other places to become popular, but also confirmed the strong communication power of the combination of regional culture with film and television and digital expression, providing a new reference for the interaction between film and television culture and urban brands.

In the beautiful Ya’an, Sichuan Province, with the launch of the micro-short drama *Urban Vitality of Yucheng*, the food culture of this city has officially entered the public's vision. Premiered on major micro-short drama platforms nationwide in February 2026, the drama has become another important display window for Ya’an’s local culture and tourism promotion. Taking Ya’an’s unique natural scenery and profound cultural heritage as the background, the whole drama tells the experience of the protagonist Chu Xia in inheriting Ya’an’s food culture through her story. In the drama, the rich urban life and human warmth are intertwined.

To present the real Ya’an, the film crew went deep into many iconic scenic spots, such as Shangli Ancient Town, Zhougong Mountain Hot Spring, Yucheng District Old Street and Qingyi River Bank, and collected a lot of vivid materials. Through delicate lens language and compelling dramatic expression, the drama deeply integrates Ya’an’s characteristic food culture with urban folk customs, vividly showing the city’s cultural customs and life charm.

The Report emphasizes that food has become the top of the six elements of tourism “food, accommodation, transportation, travel, shopping and entertainment”. Tourists are willing to travel to a city for a meal, and “traveling for food” has become a new trend of cultural tourism consumption, which is highly consistent with the creative logic of *Urban Vitality of Yucheng* taking local food as the communication entry point. As shown in the data of the Report (China Communication University Institute of Regional Brand and Communication, 2025), the number of reviews on Gansu spicy hot pot increased by 441 times year-on-year in 2024, the number of reviews related to Jiangxi cuisine increased by 212% year-on-year, and the number of notes related to “local flavors” increased by 215% year-on-year. It fully shows that the combination of local food and film and television content can make urban culture more approachable and communicative, which is one of the core reasons why *Urban Vitality of Yucheng* can drive Ya’an’s food and cultural tourism to become popular.

Review of Related Research and Cutting-Edge Trends

Sorting out domestic related research shows that the current academic research on film and television culture and urban brand communication mainly focuses on two aspects: case analysis and path exploration. However, most studies lack data support and systematic sorting, and pay insufficient attention to small and medium-sized cities. The book *Research on Chinese Film & Television Culture and Urban Brand Communication* makes up for this shortcoming, and its core views can be summarized into three points: first, local culture is the foundation for film and television to empower urban brand communication, and film and television creation divorced from local culture is difficult to achieve long-term communication; second, film and television IP is the key link connecting film and television traffic and urban brand value, and long-term IP operation is the core path to realize traffic conversion; third, industrial coordination is an important guarantee to improve the effect of film and television communication, and only the in-depth integration of film and television with cultural tourism, cultural and creative industries can realize the sustainable improvement of urban brand value.

According to the report published by the Institute of Brand and Communication Studies, Communication University of China (2025), there is a complete communication and production chain behind the popularity of cities. Being an internet celebrity is only a marketing method, and only by moving towards branding can a city both gain popularity and make profits. The popularity of *Black Myth: Wukong* is a vivid proof of this view. Shanxi Cultural Tourism keenly captured the game's popularity, carried out in-depth cooperation with *Black Myth: Wukong*, launched the video collection “Travel Shanxi with Wukong”, themed tourist routes, and created an ancient architecture digital art exhibition, realizing the two-way empowerment of “virtual IP + physical landscape”. It not only made Shanxi’s ancient architecture a popular check-in spot, but also promoted the transformation of Shanxi’s cultural tourism from “traffic” to “sales volume”, which also provided a vivid practical case for film and television IP to empower urban brand communication. In addition, the Report also puts forward that oriental aesthetics, emotion-driven, county-level communication, IP cross-border, technology

immersion and other factors have become the core trends of cultural tourism communication in 2025, further enriching the research dimension of the interaction between film and television culture and urban brands.

Current Situation of Interaction Between Chinese Film & Television Culture and Urban Brand Communication

Overall Trend of Interactive Development

From the perspective of data, according to the data released by the National Film Administration, the national film box office in 2024 reached 42.502 billion yuan, of which the box office of domestic films was 33.439 billion yuan, accounting for 78.68%, and the number of moviegoers in urban cinemas was 1.01 billion (Liu & Ren, 2025; Chen et al., 2024). In terms of online micro-short dramas, according to the data jointly released by iQiyi, Tencent Video and other platforms, with the announcement of the State Administration of Radio and Television's creation plans such as "Travel with Micro-Short Dramas" and "Learn the Law with Micro-Short Dramas" in 2024, as a positive response to the country's favorable policies, micro-short dramas have also actively responded to mainstream ideology. "Micro-short drama+cultural tourism" organically combines local cultural tourism construction with micro-short drama creation, indicating that the film and television market's attention to urban themes continues to rise.

From the urban perspective, most of the top 100 cities in China have incorporated film and television culture into their urban brand communication systems, promoting urban brand communication by customizing film and television content and building film and television shooting locations. For example, cities such as Qingdao, Ningbo and Xiamen have not only enhanced their urban popularity but also driven the development of local cultural tourism industry by building film and television bases and attracting film crews to shoot, forming a distinctive "film and television+city" development model. Among them, Ningbo has formed a systematic path for urban film and television brand building through the layout of film and television industry bases, customized urban-themed film and television content creation, and the in-depth integration of film and television IP with local cultural tourism resources, which has become a typical sample of the "film and television + city" development model in China (Li, 2025).

The Report further points out that small and medium-sized cities and counties represented by Rongjiang, Tianshui, Altay, Shijiazhuang and other places have quickly become popular with the help of short videos, micro-short dramas and hot topics. Data from the National Bureau of Statistics shows that the proportion of retail sales of consumer goods in counties and townships in the total retail sales of consumer goods in the first half of this year increased by 0.4 percentage points compared with the same period last year (National Bureau of Statistics, 2024; Yu, 2024). The 2024 Report on Young People's County Sojourn recently released by Meituan shows that during this summer vacation, Dali, Pingtan, Rongcheng, Dunhuang and Yanji were the favorite counties for young people to visit (Li, 2025). These young people are keen to search for keywords such as "digital nomad" and "sojourn", and the search volume of "digital nomad commune" on Dianping increased by 17 times compared with the same period last year. Many county-level "treasure" tourist destinations have stood out, such as Pingtan in Fujian, Wuyuan in Jiangxi and Xichang in Sichuan, all of which have become new popular check-in spots.

Specific Performance of the Interactive Relationship

"Natural Material Library" for Film and Television Creation

Cities are the "natural material library" and source of spiritual core for film and television creation. The natural scenery, cultural heritage and urban life of cities are the core sources of materials for film and television creation, while the spiritual core of cities endows film and television content with a unique soul. The book *Research on Chinese Film & Television Culture and Urban Brand Communication* points out that excellent film and television content must be an in-depth excavation and vivid presentation of urban characteristics. Taking Yucheng District of Ya'an as an example, Yucheng District has unique natural landscapes such as Shangli Ancient Town, Zhougong Mountain Hot Spring and Qingyi River, as well as rich cultural resources such as tea

culture, western Sichuan folk customs and intangible cultural heritage (ICH) food. These resources have provided sufficient materials for the creation of the micro-short drama *Urban Vitality of Yucheng*.

According to the statistics from the Culture and Tourism Bureau of Yucheng District, during the creation of *Urban Vitality of Yucheng*, a total of 12 local ICH projects, 8 characteristic foods and 6 natural landscapes were explored. All shooting locations were from Yucheng District. The in-depth use of local materials not only endows the drama with distinct regional characteristics but also conveys the spiritual core of Yucheng District, making it a vivid epitome of Yucheng District's urban brand.

There are many similar cases, among which the linkage between *Black Myth: Wukong* and Shanxi, which is highlighted in the Report, is the most typical (China Communication University Institute of Regional Brand and Communication, 2025). The game selected 36 scenic spots in China as scenes, 27 of which are representative ancient buildings in Shanxi Province, spanning 9 cities and prefectures in Shanxi, including iconic landscapes such as Yungang Grottoes, Yingxian Wooden Pagoda and Hanging Temple. The cultural heritage and oriental aesthetic characteristics of these ancient buildings in Shanxi have become the core creative materials of the game, and also made Shanxi's urban label of "Hometown of Ancient Architecture" concretely presented.

In addition, Xi'an, relying on its historical and cultural resources such as the ancient city wall and Terracotta Army, has become an important shooting location for costume films and television dramas. Hangzhou, relying on its natural and cultural resources such as West Lake and Lingyin Temple, has become a popular shooting location for modern urban dramas and costume dramas. These fully show that the characteristic resources of cities are an important support for film and television creation, and film and television creation has become a carrier for the "dynamic presentation" of urban resources.

"Core Medium" for Urban Brand Communication

Film and television works are the "core medium" and value amplifier for urban brand communication. With their extensive communication channels and strong emotional appeal, film and television works can quickly enhance the popularity and reputation of cities, promote the wide dissemination of urban brands, and even drive the development of related industries such as cultural tourism and cultural and creative industries in cities, realizing the amplification of urban brand value. This complete transmission chain from on-screen narrative to real-world urban brand empowerment has also been systematically verified in the research on the communication mechanism of film and television cultural tourism integration under the new media ecosystem (Wei et al., 2025). Taking *Urban Vitality of Yucheng* as an example, the cumulative playback volume of the drama has reached 860 million times since it was launched on all platforms in 2024. Among them, it has gained extensive dissemination and attention on short video platforms such as Douyin and Kuaishou, becoming a work with both cultural connotation and market influence.

According to the statistics from the Culture and Tourism Bureau of Yucheng District, after the drama was broadcast, the popularity of the cultural tourism market in Yucheng District increased significantly, with the number of tourists received increasing by 78.3% year-on-year, among which Shangli Ancient Town and Zhougong Mountain Hot Spring became the core growth points. From a national perspective, the empowering effect of film and television on urban brand communication is also remarkable. According to the 2024 Research Report on Chinese Film & Television and Urban Brand Communication, 36 cities in China became "popular" due to popular film and television works from 2023 to 2024, among which small and medium-sized cities accounted for 61.1%. The popularity of these cities increased by an average of 45.8%, and their cultural tourism income increased by an average of 62.3% (China Communication University Institute of Regional Brand and Communication, 2025). Among them, *Black Myth: Wukong* has the most prominent empowering effect on Shanxi. According to statistics, after the launch of the "Travel Shanxi with Wukong" activity, the number of tourists received by major scenic spots in Shanxi increased rapidly. As of August 22, 2024, the Yingxian Wooden Pagoda Scenic Area has received a total of 1.4576 million tourists this year, an increase of 178.21% year-on-year; the Yungang Grottoes ushered in a peak tourist season, receiving 3 million tourists in the third week of August, which has exceeded the total number of tourists received last year (China Communication University Institute of Regional Brand and Communication, 2025). Among them, the number of tourists received on August 23 and 24 exceeded 40,000 per day, an increase of 40% compared with the same period last year. The Hanging

Temple received about 800 foreign tourists from August 20 to September 2. After the game was released on August 20, the number of foreign tourists coming to Datong increased significantly.

Optimization Paths for Film & Television Culture to Empower Urban Brand Communication

Creating Differentiated Communication Content

The book *Research on Chinese Film & Television Culture and Urban Brand Communication* repeatedly emphasizes that local culture is the foundation for film and television to empower urban brand communication. From the perspective of data, those urban film and television works that can achieve long-term communication are all in-depth excavation and innovative expression of local culture. For example, the success of *Urban Vitality of Yucheng* lies in its in-depth exploration of the tea culture, western Sichuan folk customs and urban life in Yucheng District, forming distinctive content features.

In this regard, small and medium-sized cities should base themselves on their own cultural endowments and do a good job in three aspects. First, carry out a census of local cultural resources and establish a cultural resource database. Second, strengthen cooperation with local cultural scholars and intangible cultural heritage (ICH) inheritors, integrate local culture, folk customs and historical stories into film and television creation, and avoid the stacking of cultural labels. Third, combine the urban brand positioning to create differentiated film and television themes. For example, industrial cities can create industrial-themed film and television content, and tourist cities can create cultural tourism-themed film and television content to enhance the recognition and appeal of the works.

Relying on the success of *Black Myth: Wukong*, Shanxi Cultural Tourism has in-depth explored local ancient architecture culture and Oriental aesthetics, and launched the themed activity “Travel Shanxi with Wukong”. Through innovative forms such as “real scene + game” comparison, offline check-in devices and free customs clearance documents, it has triggered 10 billion-level topic communication. Its differentiated communication method also provides a reference for small and medium-sized cities.

Building Characteristic Film & Television IP

Film and television IP is the key link connecting film and television traffic and urban brand value, and also the core path to realize the long-term communication of film and television empowering urban brands. According to the *China Cultural Industry IP Influence Report (2024)*, the retail sales of China’s IP licensing market reached 13.77 billion US dollars in 2023, ranking fourth in the world (Song, 2024). Characteristic urban film and television IP can achieve long-term precipitation of traffic.

Combined with the viewpoints of the book *Research on Chinese Film & Television Culture and Urban Brand Communication*, small and medium-sized cities should focus on two aspects when building film and television IP. First, base themselves on local culture to create unique and sustainable film and television IP, abandon simple scene implantation, and integrate local characteristics and humanistic connotation into the story core and visual symbol of IP. For example, Yucheng District can rely on *Urban Vitality of Yucheng* to build the IP, and develop a series of film and television content and short video works around Ya’an food and western Sichuan folk customs to continue the IP popularity. Second, do a good job in the long-term operation of IP, take film and television works as the starting point, connect related industries such as cultural tourism, cultural and creative industries and commerce, develop immersive experience projects, characteristic cultural and creative products and IP derivative content, and realize the conversion of traffic into brand value. The practical experience of Ningbo in building an urban film and television brand also shows that only by taking root in local cultural characteristics and completing the closed loop of IP creation, operation and industrial linkage can we realize the long-term empowerment of film and television IP to urban brand value (Li, 2025).

Improving Supporting Guarantees

The empowerment of film and television to urban brands is never a single film and television promotion, but a project that requires the coordinated efforts and systematic promotion of multiple industries such as film and

television, cultural tourism and cultural and creative industries. Combined with the viewpoints in the book and practical experience, small and medium-sized cities should improve supporting guarantees from three aspects to promote industrial coordination. One is to optimize film and television shooting support services, establish film and television shooting service centers, provide convenient conditions such as venue connection, policy support, and logistical support for film and television production teams, and attract more film and television production teams to settle in. The second is to integrate cultural and tourism resources, create a “film and television check-in route” based on filming locations, launch immersive experience projects, and transform audiences from “watching the show” to “entering to the city”. The third is to strengthen policy support, introduce relevant support policies for film and television creation, intellectual property development, cultural tourism integration, etc., encourage enterprises to participate in the integrated development of film and television and urban brand communication, and form a good pattern of “government guidance, enterprise leadership, and market operation”.

The Report points out that technology + integrated creativity has become an important trend in cultural tourism communication (China Communication University Institute of Regional Brand and Communication, 2025). Small and medium-sized cities can learn from the experience of Shanxi Cultural Tourism, and use technological means such as VR, AR and digital humans to create immersive film and television cultural tourism experiences. For example, the Black Myth: Wukong ancient architecture digital art exhibition held in Taiyuan Ancient County restored the game scenes at a ratio of 1:8 and set up interactive mural devices, allowing tourists to immerse themselves in the integration of ancient architecture culture and game IP. During the Spring Festival, it received a total of about 10,000 visitors, and the passenger flow increased nearly 5 times compared with usual, fully reflecting the effect of technology empowering the integration of film and television and cultural tourism.

CONCLUSION

In summary, there is a close interaction and symbiotic relationship between Chinese film and television culture and urban brand communication. Cities provide rich creative materials and unique spiritual cores for film and television culture, and are the “natural material library” for film and television creation. Film and television culture provides a wide range of communication carriers and powerful empowerment paths for urban brands, and is the core amplifier for urban brand communication. The sound interaction between the two can not only promote the innovative development of film and television culture, but also enhance the influence of urban brands, drive the development of urban cultural tourism industry, and continue local cultural context, which is an important support for promoting high-quality urban development and enhancing the core competitiveness of cities.

The book *Research on Chinese Film & Television Culture and Urban Brand Communication* systematically sorts out the theories and practices of the interactive development of the two, and the proposed communication model of “cultural core+film and television expression+industrial coordination” provides important theoretical guidance for China’s urban brand communication. Combined with relevant data and cases, remarkable achievements have been made in the interaction between Chinese film and television culture and urban brand communication, but there are still problems such as insufficient excavation of local culture, inadequate IP operation, and insufficient industrial coordination, which need further optimization and improvement.

With the continuous development of digital media and the continuous upgrading of the film and television industry, the interaction between film and television culture and urban brand communication will become more in-depth. Small and medium-sized cities should base themselves on their own characteristics, take the viewpoints in the book *Research on Chinese Film & Television Culture and Urban Brand Communication* as the guide, adhere to the development path of “culture as the foundation, IP as the empowerment, and industrial coordination”, dig deep into the connotation of local culture, build characteristic film and television IP, promote the in-depth integration of film and television with cultural tourism, cultural and creative industries, and realize the two-way empowerment and common development of film and television culture and urban brand communication.

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