

# Travel Narratives and the Construction of Exotic City Imaginaries in Short Videos: A Content Analysis of Nordic Travel Short Videos on Douyin

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Article History	Abstract
<b>Original Research Article</b> <b>Received: 11-05-2026</b> <b>Accepted: 14-06-2026</b> <b>Published: 07-07-2026</b>	<p><i>As short-video platforms have gradually become an important media field through which the public perceives foreign spaces, travel short videos are no longer merely records of travel experience. They have become an important textual form that participates in constructing urban and regional imaginaries. Taking Nordic travel short videos on Douyin as its research object, and combining content analysis with case study, this paper examines how short videos construct Northern Europe as an exotic lifestyle space that can be watched, desired, and shared. The study finds, first, that in terms of narrative type, Nordic travel short videos are dominated by landscape/immersive expression, while guide-oriented explanation and emotional expression occupy auxiliary positions; Northern Europe is first shaped as a “distant place to be viewed.” Second, in terms of visual presentation, natural landscapes, low-density urban space, compositions with ample negative space, and alternating cool and warm tones jointly constitute a regional aesthetic template for Northern Europe. Third, in terms of meaning frames, “natural pure land” is the most important mode of construction, while “lifestyle template” and “spiritual homeland” are further extensions on this basis. More broadly, the formation of the Nordic imaginary is not the result of any single text, but the product of the combined effects of narrative scripting, visual templating, emotional projection, and interactive reproduction. This paper argues that Northern Europe on Douyin does not primarily exist as an explained tourist destination; rather, it is gradually organized as a mediatized exotic imaginary based on natural landscapes, extended through lifestyle, and centered on emotional projection. The paper helps illuminate, from the perspective of the short-video context, the generative mechanism of exotic urban imaginaries and the logic of their platformized circulation.</i></p> <p><b>Keywords:</b> short videos; travel narrative; urban imaginary; exotic imaginary; Northern Europe; Douyin.</p>
<p><b>Copyright © 2026 The Author(s):</b> This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC BY-NC) which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium for non-commercial use provided the original author and source are credited.</p> <p><b>Citation:</b> Xie, Q. (2026). <i>Travel narratives and the construction of exotic city imaginaries in short videos: A content analysis of Nordic travel short videos on Douyin.</i> UKR Journal of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences, 2(7), 12-24.</p>	

## Chapter 1 Introduction

In recent years, short video platforms have developed rapidly and gradually become an important media environment for the public to access information, understand cities, and construct spatial imagination. Studies have pointed out that the medium is not a simple tool for reproducing reality, but an important field of meaning production and spatial imagination [1] [2]. In the field of tourism and urban studies, Urry [3] proposed the theory of "tourist gaze", emphasizing that tourism experience is highly dependent on visual expectations shaped by cultural and media frameworks. With the rise of short video

platforms, this gaze is further strengthened by algorithmic mechanisms, visual aesthetics, and emotional narratives, which gradually transform cities and exotic spaces into viewable, imaginable, and consumable image objects [4].

In this context, short travel videos have become an important form of narrative that connects urban space, cultural meaning, and individual emotions. Through the stitching of urban streetscapes, natural scenery and daily life fragments, short videos not only convey information, but also visualize and narrate exotic spaces, and participate in the construction of imagination about the "place of

### (1) Research on Tourism Communication in the Short-Video Context

There are existing studies on short videos and tourism communication, mainly focusing on how short videos can reshape the presentation of tourism destinations, user participation mechanisms and their sociocultural impact. Domestic research generally takes Douyin, Kuaishou, B station and other platforms as examples, focusing on the role of short videos in the shaping of Internet-famous cities, rural communication and local image construction. Relevant research points out that short videos promote the generation of "Internet-famous cities" and "Internet-famous spaces" by shifting tourism communication from traditional information supply to experience-oriented and emotional-oriented through fragmented narrative, immersive visual presentation and social interaction mechanisms. Taking Xi'an City Walls and other urban images as an example, the research shows that users not only participate in the production of influencer space through the media practice of combining on-site punching and remote viewing, but also form a new "media sense of place" in the process. Places are no longer just physical spaces, but become emotional objects that are continuously activated by the media [12]. At the same time, many studies have analyzed how short videos can be written from the perspective of technology and narrative through vertical screen structure, scene fragment stitching and personal perspectives to reconstruct the propagation logic of the city image, forming a "puzzle-style" urban presentation, but it may also cause a weakening of the overall understanding [15] [14].

On this basis, part of the research further reveals the platform mechanism and capital logic behind short video tourism content from the perspective of media and political economy. Changjiang and Tian Hao [11] pointed out from the meme theory that the generation of short video hotspots depends on imitation and copying, and the platform suppresses content variation to a certain extent through a technical framework to create a short-term centralized propagation effect; while high-tech capital and marketing intentions are deeply involved in the production and diffusion of tourism short videos. Similarly, research on the "Dingzhen" phenomenon and Internet-famous cities also shows that local images and individual IPs are often converted into consumable symbolic resources under the combined action of media narratives, local cultural imaginations and market mechanisms [16]. In addition, research on short video practices such as "wilderness" and "reclusive" shows that tourism and lifestyle content often constructs an idealized space through media exhibition, and is continuously reproduced in audience comments,

others". Said [5] points out that exotic spaces are often constructed as "others" opposed to the self to carry desires, imagination and power relations; Foucault [6] regards such spaces as "heterotopias", that is, other spaces that are different from the real order and carry ideals and projective functions. In the context of digital media, this "land of others" is continuously reproduced through image and platform mechanisms [2] [4].

From the practical level of the platform, this phenomenon has gained significant scale and visibility. Taking the Douyin platform as an example, as of March 1, 2026, the topic "#NordicTravel" had a total of 84.802 million views, "#NordicTravel" had 30.576 million views, and "#NordicTravel vlog" had 17.482 million views. It shows that "Northern Europe Travel" has become an important content gathering point in the platform travel narrative, and has representational and practical significance as a research object.

However, the presentation of Northern Europe in short videos is not a simple record of reality, but a stable and idealized narrative and visual model gradually formed under the combined action of platform algorithm preferences, visual aesthetic templates and users' emotional needs. In a large number of videos, Scandinavia is often presented as a symbol of natural purity, social peace, relaxed life and high happiness, and is constructed as an "ideal place" or "spiritual home" for emotional projection. Does this construction process obscure the complexity of reality? Through what mechanism is this idealized presentation continually replicated and reinforced? How do users engage and proliferate? These issues form the core of this article's focus.

Although existing research has explored related phenomena from the perspective of tourism economy, urban brand communication or platform mechanism, the research on how short videos can construct "urban imagination" through narrative and visual mechanisms is still relatively insufficient, especially the lack of analysis on the propagation mechanism of "Nordic", a highly idealized object in Chinese context. Therefore, it is necessary to systematically examine this phenomenon from the perspective of communication science and media research. Based on this, this paper takes the Nordic travel short video on the Douyin platform as the research object, combines the content analysis method and the case study method, and examines how the short video can be reproduced through narrative scripts, visual templates, emotional projection and interactive reproduction, constructing Nordic as a viewable, desirable and shareable exotic city imagination, and further transforming it into a mediated lifestyle space with the meaning of "spiritual home".

followers and interactions, forming a collective imagination with utopian colors [13].

Overall, the existing research has fully revealed the media mechanism and social impact of short videos in domestic tourism communication, the shaping of Internet-famous cities and the construction of local images, but still shows obvious research-oriented concentration: on the one hand, the research subjects mainly focus on the domestic urban or rural context, emphasizing the function of short videos in local governance, urban marketing or rural revitalization; on the other hand, the research has paid more attention to the communication effect and symbol mechanism, and the discussion is still relatively insufficient on how short videos continue to produce stable spatial imagination models in narrative, emotional and imitation mechanisms, especially the idealized construction of exotic destinations. This deficiency provides a space for this paper to further study the travel imagination in short videos from the perspective of content analysis and narrative mechanism.

## **(2) From Urban Image to Media City: The Mediatized Turn in Urban Imaginary Research**

The early context of urban imagination research often takes "how cities are perceived" as the starting point. Classical research understands the city as an object that can be organized into the mental picture by residents, emphasizing that paths, boundaries, regions, nodes, landmarks and other elements together constitute the "imaginability" of the city, thus affecting people's recognition, memory and mode of action of the city [19]. At the same time, human geography has further shifted spatial experience to "experience and emotion", emphasizing that place and spatial attachment are not attached to objective geography, but are generated through physical perception, daily practice and meaning assignment [20]. This path provides a basic premise for subsequent communication studies/media research to discuss the urban imagination: the city is not an object that is "truthfully reflected", but a meaning space that is continuously organized, reproduced and interpreted by different subjects in different media and practices.

After entering the tradition of "spatial steering" and critical geography, urban imagination research has further moved from "cognitive picture" to "spatial production". Lefebvre regards space as a process produced by social relations, emphasizing that we are not facing a priori space, but a social space jointly constructed by practice, representation and experience [1]. This theory was promoted by Su Jia and others in subsequent studies as a transcendence of the "real-imagined" duality: the so-called "third space" points to a "real-imagined place" that contains both material and spiritual/representational dimensions, providing a conceptual tool for understanding how cities can be "seen and imagined" at the same time in images, narratives, and

experiences [21]. Parallel to this, media city research emphasizes that the experience of modern urban space is not isolated from media: media infrastructure, urban architecture, and daily practices are mutually constructed, and media technology has become an important part of the formation and transformation of urban space [22]. Together, these classical contexts drive a shift in research focus: the urban imagination is no longer just a representation of the mind of the individual, but a "meaning production process" involving the joint participation of media texts, technological environments, and social practices.

Under this theoretical pedigree, a large number of domestic news communication research in recent years has used urban propaganda films, influencer city images, short video punch cards and citywalk as materials to further embody the "urban imagination/city image" as an analytical media mechanism and practice chain. For example, the research on urban propaganda film emphasizes that the image does not reproduce physical space, but reconstructs the sense of place through rhythm, symbolic order and "visibility generation", making the city appear as an idealized image pattern of order and the dream of inhabitation [23]. At the same time, the study of "Internet-famous cities" began to refine the generation mechanism of urban imagination into processes such as image symbol concentration, spatiotemporal construction and imaginative substitution, and tried to translate "imaginary production" into encodable empirical materials by means of computational visual analysis [24]. At a level closer to daily practice, "punch card/selfie" is interpreted as the mass image practice of cybercity: individuals gather private imprints into a public city image through concrete actions and image uploads; the city is therefore not a passive object, but a "made" existence in mass image practice [25]. In addition, Vlog and Citywalk research also pointed out that individual presence, front and backstage performances, and community aggregation mechanisms have shifted urban image communication from a grand representation to a cyclical process of physical experience and meaning sharing [26] [27].

However, it is on the basis of these results that a more precise "research distance" gradually emerges: the existing research mostly takes the domestic urban culture and tourism scene as the core context, and the discussion often focuses on the visibility of the city image, the reconstruction of the sense of place or the explanation of the mechanism of media practice, but rarely asks further - how can the city continue to be constructed as an "imaginary place" that carries emotional values and lifestyle aspirations in the platformized media environment when the city is placed in a stronger "idealization/projection" framework? In other words,

existing research has explained "how cities are seen" and "how the sense of place is made", but there is a relative lack of detailed analysis of "how the imagination is templated and stably copied": how algorithm recommendation, visual aesthetic convergence, narrative imitation and interactive reproduction work together to make certain urban images continue to strengthen, and then transform from local representations into spreadable ideal life scripts. It is in this context that this paper will further promote the urban imagination from "domestic urban communication" to "exotic urban imagination" platform generation mechanism analysis, and carry out empirical demonstration in subsequent chapters combined with content analysis and typical text reading.

### **(3) Exotic Imaginaries and the Projection of Ideal Lifestyles: From "Imagined Communities" to Platformized Emotional Scripts**

In the context of cross-cultural communication and media geography, "exotic" is not only a distant geographical fact, but also an imaginary object that is continuously organized by media texts, projected by the emotions of the audience, and ultimately shared by society. Especially under the conditions of globalization and the proliferation of digital media, people's understanding of "elsewhere" is increasingly dependent on indirect experience: through images, narratives, and platforms to form a life script that can be repeatedly called. Unlike the traditional "otherness/orientalism" interpretation path with power condensation as the core, this study focuses on another mechanism that is equally critical and more closely related to the daily context of short videos: how the imagination of exoticism as a "spiritual home" is constructed and shared among groups.

This mechanism can be explained by the idea of an "imaginary community". Anderson pointed out that community does not exist naturally, but is "imagined" by members through symbolic systems and media - people can form identity experiences in shared narratives and symbols even if they do not know each other [28]. Transplanting this perspective into the exotic imagination, "Northern Europe" is not just a collection of countries, but may be spread as a value order shared by many people: more natural, more restrained, more border-like, more "advanced" lifestyle. At this time, the core of exotic imagination is not "different", but "can aspire together": it provides a set of ideal life frameworks that can be repeated and imitated, so that individual aspirations are organized into a community imagination with group resonance.

In the study of global cultural flows, Appadurai further emphasizes how the media landscape (mediascapes) provides people with an inventory of images and narrative materials about other places, making "imagination" a social

practice [29]. When imagination is seen as practice, it means that it will be produced, consumed, and copied: exotic is not passive access to the public eye, but a repeated match between the media supply and the audience's desire structure. Therefore, the reason why "Northern Europe" is easy to become the projected object of ideal life does not necessarily depend on the actual visit of the audience, but is more likely to rely on fixed images (snow scenery, forests, minimalist buildings, cafes, slow-paced daily life, public order, etc.) and fixed narratives (escape from inner scrolls, healing, refreshing, freedom, relaxation) that together with narratives constitute a "spiritual home template" that can be shared.

Domestic cross-cultural communication research also provides a discussion tied to this mechanism: the single wave emphasizes that the "other" is not a one-way relationship between the transmission subject and the object, but a symbiotic structure that forms a mutual understanding in differences [30]. Exotic imagination is not necessarily tantamount to degradation or suppression of power, and it may also operate in an "aspirational-identical" way: reflecting on one's situation and affirming one's identity through selective imagination of the value of being there. Relatedly, some studies have discussed "other plasticity/self-molding" and subjectivity in the context of national image and cross-cultural construction [31]. Although the research object is different, its core inspiration is that the formation of cross-cultural imagination often depends on communicable narrative frameworks and symbolic resources, rather than simple factual information.

However, there are still research distances that can be clearly positioned in the direction of "exotic as an ideal lifestyle projection". First, domestic empirical research on others/exotic focuses more on the reproduction analysis of news reports, national images or major issues, and there is insufficient discussion on how "daily aspirations" can be organized into stable templates in short video scenarios. Second, although macroscopic theories (imagining communities, media landscapes, and cross-cultural dialogues) can explain "why aspirations", they still need to further answer "how aspirations are made": how short video narrative structures, visual aesthetics, and emotional expressions can transform exotic areas from "distant" into consumable, imitable, and shareable life scripts. Third, research on "Northern Europe" objects is relatively rare in communication studies, so it is more necessary to turn "Northern Europe spiritual homes" from subjective judgments into discussable textual mechanisms.

Based on this, this paper further embodies "exotic imagination" as a platform-based lifestyle projection mechanism on the basis of the media transformation of urban imagination: that is, how short videos can

continuously produce and stably replicate the imagination of "Northern Europe = ideal life/spiritual home" through image selection, narrative templates and emotional scripts, and promote sharing and diffusion in the interactive chain of viewing, commenting, forwarding and imitation. This research incision can both dialogue with existing theories (imagine the community/media landscape) and complement the detailed mechanism of "how short videos produce exotic aspirations" at the empirical level.

### Chapter 3 Research Design

#### (1) Conceptual Definition: What This Paper Means by "Northern Europe"

The "Northern Europe" discussed in this article encompasses both geopolitical and media-cultural dimensions. In a geopolitical sense, Northern Europe usually refers to Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, and Sweden. This paper uses these five countries and their related cities and regions as the basic basis for judging in sample screening, and requires that clear country, city or region references appear in the video text to avoid generalizing "Northern Europe" into abstract aesthetic labels. In terms of media-cultural significance, the "Northern Europe" in the Chinese Internet context often transcends geographical boundaries and is endowed with complex meanings such as natural purity, relaxed life, good order, and aesthetic restraint. Therefore, this paper does not focus on the overall face of real Northern Europe society, but focuses on the "Northern Europe imagination" that is repeatedly selected, organized and disseminated in short video texts.

In summary, the "Northern Europe" referred to in this paper refers to the mediated regional imagination with Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden as the geographical boundaries, and the idealized lifestyle and emotional space constructed in the short video text as the main research object.

#### (2) Research Methods, Sample Selection, and Analytical Path

This paper uses a combination of content analysis and case study methods to conduct research. The content analysis method is used to identify the overall characteristics of the Nordic travel short video in the narrative type, visual presentation, emotional tone and meaning framework, and the case study law is used to further analyze the specific construction mechanism of the Nordic imagination in the typical text.

This paper takes the Douyin platform as the research field, uses topics such as "#NordicTravel", "#NordicTravel" and "#NordicTravel vlog" as the main search entrance, searches for videos released between January 1, 2023 and June 1, 2026, and sorts them from high to low according to the

number of likes. After excluding videos that do not meet the inclusion criteria, select videos with high popularity as the sample. The sample selection is divided into two stages: the first stage is the precoding stage, and 10 videos are selected to verify the clarity and operability of the coding framework; the second stage is the formal analysis stage, and the sample range is expanded on the basis of precoding. Finally, 30 short videos are selected as the research object to enhance the stability and interpretability of the analysis results.

The sample inclusion criteria include: first, there must be a clear Nordic country, city or region reference in the video; second, the content must be based on the travel experience, urban space, natural landscape or lifestyle; third, in order to ensure that the sample has a relatively complete narrative and meaning expression, the video should have a certain degree of dissemination visibility, and the video duration should be not less than 1 minute; fourth, the text must have a relatively complete narrative or meaning expression. Exclusion criteria include: videos with no explicit geographical reference, purely commercials, purely landscape mixing, and apparently moving content. It should be noted that there is no mandatory quota stratification by country in this article. The reason is that the Nordic travel short video in the platform is often carried out in the form of multinational connections or regional roaming. If the machine is divided by country, it will instead segment the narrative logic of the short video itself. Therefore, this paper uses "single video" as the unit of analysis to get closer to the actual form of content production and dissemination on the platform.

Studies on urban imagination, exotic imagination and short travel videos have shown that the production of spatial meaning by media texts is usually concentrated in narrative organization, visual presentation, emotional expression and meaning projection. Based on this research context, this paper first pre-codes the pre-selected samples. On the basis of open observation, it summarizes the recurring expression patterns in the samples, and finally forms four core coding dimensions: one is the narrative type, which is divided into trip/information type, landscape/immersion type and emotion/meaning type; the other is the visual presentation, including color tone, composition and scene type; the third is the emotional tone, which is divided into healing/relaxation, romance/beauty, loneliness/quietness, excitement/pleasure and reflection/feeling; and the fourth is the meaning framework, that is, which kind of spatial image is mainly constructed in Northern Europe as "spiritual home", "natural pure land", "ideal society" or "lifestyle template".

In order to ensure the stability of the coding results, this paper precoding is performed before formal coding, and the

classification criteria are revised according to the precoding results. The formal coding phase is completed independently by two coders, and the Cohen's Kappa coefficient is calculated for the core variables such as narrative type, emotional tone, and meaning frame to verify the consistency of the coding. On the analysis path, this

paper first presents the overall characteristics of Nordic travel short videos in narrative, visual, emotional and meaning frameworks through content analysis; on this basis, combined with case studies, it further explains how Nordic countries are organized as an ideal lifestyle imagination that can be shared and projected.

*Table 1 Coding Framework and Variable Descriptions*

<b>Dim.</b>	<b>Variable</b>	<b>Category/Value</b>	<b>Description</b>
Basic info	Video no.	1-30	Sample sequence
	Title	Text record	Original video title
	Author	Text record	Account name
	Date	Text record	Posting date
	Likes/comments/reposts	Number	Visibility indicator
Geo. ref.	Nordic ref.	1=yes; 0=no	Explicit Nordic country, city, or regional reference
Narrative	Type	1=itinerary/info; 2=landscape/immersive; 3=emotion/meaning	Judged by main narrative function
Visual	Tone	1=cool; 2=warm; 3=neutral	Dominant image tone
	Composition	1=more negative space; 2=information-dense	Spatial sense and information density
	Scene type	A=natural landscape; B=urban space; C=everyday life; D=mobility	Multiple choices allowed
Emotion	Dominant emotion	1=healing/relaxing; 2=romantic/beautiful; 3=lone/quiet; 4=excited/pleasant; 5=reflective/emotional	Overall emotional tone
Meaning	Nordic frame	1=spiritual homeland; 2=natural pure land; 3=ideal society; 4=lifestyle template	Main meaning-space constructed
Interaction	Comment tendency	1=longing/identification; 2=neutral; 3=questioning/contrast	Overall tendency of highly liked comments
	Reinforces imaginary	1=yes; 0=no	Whether comments reinforce idealized Northern Europe

## Chapter 4 Content Characteristics and Presentation Patterns of Nordic Travel Short Videos

### (1) Sample Overview and General Characteristics

In this article, a total of 30 short Nordic travel videos on the Douyin platform were selected as formal analysis samples. The sample release time was distributed between January 1, 2023 and June 1, 2026. The number of likes ranged from 15,000 to 4.637 million, with an average of about 723,000, and the overall platform visibility was high. The sample mainly covers the Nordic countries or regions such as

Norway, Iceland, Finland, and the Faroe Islands, of which Norway and Iceland are the most concentrated. Overall, the sample contains both strategic content centered on routes, expenses, and accommodations, as well as immersive videos centered on landscape presentation, life display, and emotional expression, indicating that the "Nordic Travel" in the Douyin platform is not a single tourist information dissemination, but operates together at multiple levels such as landscape viewing, lifestyle display, and emotional projection.

*Table 2 Basic Statistics of the Sample*

Indicator	Value
Total sample size	30 videos
Posting period	January 1, 2023-June 1, 2026
Minimum likes	15,000
Maximum likes	4.637 million
Average likes	723,000
Main regions involved	Norway, Iceland, Finland, the Faroe Islands, etc.
Main platform entries	#NordicTravel, #NordicTourism, #NordicTravelVlog

From the overall situation of the sample, "Northern Europe" is no longer a scattered travel object in the platform, but shows strong regional transmission characteristics. Creators often do not strictly distinguish between the Northern Europe countries, but are more inclined to organize it as a holistic experience with a unified temperament. This means that the Northern Europe communication unit in the short video platform has gradually shifted from a specific country or city to a more abstract regional image and emotional space.

### (2) Distribution of Narrative Types: From Guide Information to Immersive Viewing

From the perspective of narrative type, 18 landscape/immersive videos out of 30 samples, accounting for 60.0%; 9 itinerary/informational videos, accounting for 30.0%; and 3 emotional/meaning videos, accounting for 10.0%.

*Table 3 Distribution of Narrative Types*

Narrative type	Number	Percentage
Landscape/immersive	18	60.0%
Itinerary/information	9	30.0%
Emotion/meaning	3	10.0%
Total	30	100.0%

This result shows that the main expression of the Nordic travel short video is not the guide description, but through the landscape display and atmosphere creation to guide the audience into a "watch-immersion" experience process. While itinerary/informational videos also account for a certain percentage, they are more likely to cover useful features like budgeting, transportation, accommodations, and directions. In contrast, landscape/immersive videos shape Northern Europe into a space worthy of repeated viewing and emotional input through images such as snowy mountains, fjords, auroras, coasts, and low-density streets. While the number of sentimental/semantic videos is small, they are the most direct, often elevating Northern Europe into an idealized space with value judgments through titles, subtitles, or voiceovers.

Therefore, Northern Europe in the Douyin platform is first the "viewed space", followed by the "interpreted

destination". Instead of prioritizing it as an information resource for efficient consumption, the platform is more inclined to shape it into an exotic landscape worthy of immersion and imagination.

### (3) Visual Presentation Characteristics: Natural Landscapes, Negative-Space Composition, and Regional Aesthetic Templates

At the visual presentation level, Nordic travel short videos show a more obvious tendency to templaticization. First of all, from the perspective of color tones, cool and warm tones each accounted for 15, with a similar proportion; from the perspective of composition, 17 videos with more white space accounted for 56.7%, slightly higher than 13 videos with information-intensive content, accounting for 43.3%. In terms of scene types, natural landscapes appeared in all 30 samples, 25 in urban spaces, and 13 in everyday living spaces and traffic movement scenarios.

Table 4 Distribution of Visual Presentation Characteristics

Dimension	Category	Number	Percentage
Tone	Cool	15	50.0%
	Warm	15	50.0%
Composition	More negative space	17	56.7%
	Information-dense	13	43.3%
Scene type	Natural landscape	30	100.0%
	Urban space	25	83.3%
	Every day-life space	13	43.3%
	Transportation/mobility scene	13	43.3%

Among them, the frequency of natural landscapes reaches 100%, indicating that natural imagery is the core foundation of Northern Europe visual construction. Snowy mountains, auroras, fjords, forests, glaciers, coasts and other elements make up the most recognizable spatial representation of Northern Europe. Although urban spaces are also frequent, they often appear in the form of quiet streets, low-rise buildings, small towns, etc., often serving the expression of natural landscape and lifestyle, rather than being highlighted as modern urban wonders.

In composition, images with more white space are more inclined to create a sense of vastness, quietness and low density, so that the audience can visually create an experience of "away from daily life"; information-intensive images appear more in strategy and Vlog videos, which are

used to quickly explain strokes, switch scenes and supplement details of life. Although the cold and warm colors are comparable in quantity, they have different functions: the cold colors strengthen the sense of coolness, purity and distance in northern Europe, while the warm colors give the daily life scenes such as B&Bs, restaurants, shops, and friends a familiar living temperature. Together, they form the two-sensory logic of the Northern Europe short video: on the one hand, it is distant and pure; on the other hand, it is accessible, aspirational and imaginable.

In general, Nordic travel short videos have gradually formed a relatively stable regional aesthetic template, that is, with natural landscapes as the core, with low-density urban spaces and daily life scenes as auxiliaries, with white

composition and alternating cold and warm tones to create a "clean, quiet, vast, breathable" visual atmosphere.

**(4) Emotional Tone and Meaning Frames: From “Natural Pure Land” to “Spiritual Homeland”**

From the perspective of emotional tone, 13 of the 30 samples were "excitement/pleasure" and

"loneliness/quietness", accounting for 43.3%; 3 of "healing/relaxation", accounting for 10.0%; and 1 of "reflection/emotion", accounting for 3.3%.

*Table 5 Distribution of Emotional Tone*

Emotional tone	Number	Percentage
Lonely/quiet	13	43.3%
Excited/pleasant	13	43.3%
Healing/relaxing	3	10.0%
Reflective/emotional	1	3.3%
Romantic/beautiful	0	0
Total	30	100.0%

This distribution shows that the emotional expression in the Northern Europe short video is not a single "healing narrative", but presents two parallel emotional logic: one is shock, excitement and pleasure in the face of magnificent landscapes and exotic experiences; the other is loneliness, quietness and alienation in the face of empty, quiet, low-density spaces. In particular, the high frequency of "loneliness/quietness" means that Northern Europe is not mainly photographed as a lively and social travel

destination in Douyin, but is more often organized as a space suitable for solitude, immersion and self-projection.

From the perspective of the meaning framework, "natural pure land" accounted for 22, accounting for 73.3%; "lifestyle template" accounted for 5, accounting for 16.7%; "spiritual home" accounted for 3, accounting for 10.0%; "ideal society" did not appear.

*Table 6 Distribution of Meaning Frames*

Meaning frame	Number	Percentage
Natural pure land	22	73.3%
Lifestyle template	5	16.7%
Spiritual homeland	3	10.0%
Ideal society	0	0
Total	30	100.0%

This result shows that the dominant meaning frame of Northern Europe Douyin is "natural pure land", that is, pure, vast, low density, close to nature, away from daily pressure. In contrast, the Northern Europe system imagination of "high welfare", "high order" and "high civilization", which is common in broader social cognition,

has not become the main communication content in short video platforms. Northern Europe in the platform is more watched, felt and desired than demonstrated and explained.

At the same time, the “Lifestyle Template” and the “Spiritual Home” are a further extension of the “Pure Land

of Nature". Through daily details such as B&Bs, supermarkets, cafes, shops, gifts, travel methods, etc., the "lifestyle template" video transforms Northern Europe scenery from a pure landscape into an orderly "if I live like this"; the "spiritual home" video further uses subtitles, copywriting, and emotional expression to elevate this spatial experience into psychological belonging and emotional projection. Therefore, if the "natural pure land" constitutes the most basic spatial imagination of the Northern Europe short video, then the "lifestyle template" provides the daily path into the imagination, and the "spiritual home" is the sublimation of the meaning of this set of visual and emotional mechanisms after completion in the hearts of the audience.

### **(5) Summary**

Through the content analysis of 30 samples, it can be found that the Nordic travel short videos in the Douyin platform show high consistency in narrative, visual, emotional and meaning frames. First, landscape/immersive video dominates the narrative genre, illustrating that Northern Europe is first and foremost organized as a space worth watching and immersing itself in, rather than as a mere strategy object. Secondly, in terms of visual presentation, the natural landscape is the most core element, and the white composition, low-density urban space, and alternating tones of heat and cold together constitute the regional aesthetic template of Northern Europe. Again, in terms of emotional expression, excitement/pleasure goes hand in hand with solitude/quietness, suggesting that Northern Europe is both a stunning landscape space and a quiet space for solitude and immersion. Finally, in the meaning framework, "natural pure land" occupies an absolute dominant position, and "lifestyle template" and "spiritual home" form a further meaning extension on this basis.

This means that Northern Europe in Douyin does not exist primarily as an "illustrated tourist destination", but is gradually organized into an exotic imaginary space based on natural landscapes, extended by lifestyles, and centered on emotional projection. Nordic travel short videos produce not only travel information, but also a set of ideal life scenes that can be watched, longed for, and shared.

## **Chapter 5 The Platformized Production of a "Spiritual Homeland": Media Construction Mechanisms of the Nordic Imaginary**

### **(1) Narrative Scripting: From Travel Record to Ideal-Life Story**

In the Nordic travel short video, travel is not just a record of routes and attractions, but is organized into a narrative script with a stable structure. From the sample, although there are differences in video length, creator identity and

shooting style, its narrative logic shows a high degree of consistency: one category of videos uses the basic structure of "departure — arrival — experience — feeling" to describe Nordic travel as an experience out of daily life; the other category makes Nordic a high-quality destination worth visiting by "choosing a destination — comparative advantages and disadvantages — giving suggestions"; and another category further weakens the strategy information, directly describing Nordic as an ideal place where "one day will go" and "does not want to leave".

The most important role of this scripted narrative is not to provide information, but to presuppose a way for viewers to enter northern Europe. That is to say, the audience is not watching an objective introduction to an unfamiliar area, but is entering a story that has been organized: there is a natural landscape like the end of the world, there are quiet moments away from the pressure of reality, and there are slow life daily life for imitation. Northern Europe is no longer just an exotic destination here, but is told as a story framework for an ideal life. It is in this narrative presupposition that the travel experience is transformed into a living imagination with demonstrative meaning.

From the perspective of propagation effects, scripted narratives also improve the imitability of content. Whether it's a playbook template for "How Much Do You Spend?", a sentiment template for "Someday You'll Be Here?", or high-frequency expressions such as "End of the World," "Paradise for i," and "Like a Dream," it's actually constantly providing replicable discourse structures for subsequent creators. This makes Nordic travel short videos not isolated texts, but gradually form a set of narrative patterns with stable grammar.

### **(2) Visual Templating: From Concrete Scenery to Regional Aesthetic Symbol**

The formation of the Northern Europe imagination depends first and foremost on a high degree of visual templating. Chapter 4 has shown that natural landscapes appear in all samples, and cold tones, blank compositions, and low-density urban spaces appear repeatedly. In other words, Northern Europe in the platform is no longer a simple collection of several specific countries or cities, but is compressed into a set of highly recognizable regional aesthetic symbols: snowy mountains, fjords, auroras, forests, ice fields, ports, towns, quiet streets, homestays and cafes. These elements are repeatedly arranged and combined in different videos, transforming Northern Europe from a specific geographical context into a stylized space.

The key to visual templating is "selective presentation". Although there are daily scenarios in the sample such as urban areas, shops, transportation, catering, etc., these

scenarios are often not unfolded as an integral part of complex social life, but are cut into auxiliary lifestyle symbols. In other words, the short video does not attempt to present the whole picture of Northern Europe society, but constantly extracts from it those images that are best suited to make up the ideal imagination: quiet, clean, orderly, sparse, natural, restrained. Visual selection itself is part of the construction of meaning. What Northern Europe is repeatedly photographed like, it is easier for the audience to recognize it as what it is.

More importantly, templated vision gives Northern Europe a communication advantage that can be quickly identified and replicated sustainably. For short video platforms, images with high recognition, uniform style, and clear emotions are more likely to be remembered by users, and are more likely to lead to imitation and re-creation. Therefore, the Northern Europe visual template is not only the result of the creator's aesthetic choice, but also the result of the continuous strengthening under the influence of the platform communication logic.

### **(3) Emotional Projection: From “Natural Pure Land” to “Spiritual Homeland”**

In this study, the most noteworthy is not the result of the construction of northern Europe as a "natural pure land" itself, but how the "natural pure land" is further transformed into emotional belonging and lifestyle projection. The sample shows that "natural pure land" is the most basic and universal meaning framework, while "spiritual home" and "lifestyle template" are further sublimation above this. Scandinavia was first perceived as pure, expansive, and remote from the pressures of reality through the landscape, spatial density, and visual atmosphere before gradually being understood as an imaginary object “if only we could live here”.

The key to this transformation is that short videos do not just present the landscape, but rather connect the landscape to the familiar emotional vocabulary of contemporary youth. The headings "The End of the World", "Someday You Will Come Here", "The Paradise of Man", "Like a Dream", and "I Want to Live There", "This Is Life" and "So Relaxing" in the comment area are all transforming Northern Europe from "a beautiful place" to "a desirable state of life". Northern Europe became a "spiritual home" not because the audience really understood its social reality, but because it carried the emotional compensation of real life in the platform: the escape from the high pressure rhythm, the yearning for low-density life, the identification with order and boundaries, the preference for solitude and quiet.

That's why the Northern Europe imagination in short videos is essentially an emotional projection. It meets not only the

desire to travel, but also the need for lifestyle imagination and psychological belonging. Viewers look at Northern Europe not only to know what is there, but also to confirm that it represents a life I yearn for. The exotic world is no longer just another person here, but is transformed into a place where the ideal self can be placed.

### **(4) Interactive Reproduction: From Individual Viewing to Collective Sharing**

The Northern Europe imagination is not a one-way production by creators, but is further confirmed and amplified in the interactive chain of comments, likes, favorites, and retweets. Frequent expressions such as "want to go", "want to live there", "like a dream", "this is life" and "northern Europe is indeed a paradise for i people" in the sample comment area show that users do not passively accept the meaning in the video, but actively participate in meaning reproduction in the interaction. The creator provides the initial text, and the audience translates individual aspirations into group consensus through emotional identification, value judgments, and repetitive expression.

This reproduction manifests itself on at least two levels. First, the comments section reinforces the original meaning framework of the video. A video that originally featured a snowy landscape or aurora may be renamed "Paradise", "Fairy World", "Most Wanted Place to Migrate" in the comment area, further elevating the natural landscape meaning of the video to the meaning of lifestyle. Second, the interaction mechanism has gradually shared the object of "Northern Europe". Viewers may not have been to Northern Europe, but through watching and commenting, they can still participate in the construction of the "Northern Europe Imagination Community" in the platform. In other words, the yearning for Northern Europe does not require physical presence, but can be accomplished through emotional resonance and repetitive expression in the platform.

This process also shows that the exotic imagination in the platform is not static image cognition, but a social production that is constantly being spoken, confirmed, and imitated. Creators provide a visual entrance, while the comment area provides collective naming and meaning reinforcement, which together promote the transformation of Northern Europe from an individual travel experience into a shared imaginary space.

### **(5) Mechanism Model: The Fourfold Production of Exotic Lifestyle Imaginaries**

Taken together, Nordic platform production as a "spiritual home" is not the result of a single factor, but is driven by the four levels of narrative, vision, emotion and interaction. Narrative scripting organizes Nordic travel into stories with

a fixed structure, transforming it from a specific trip into an ideal life story that can be told over and over again. Secondly, visual templating gives a highly stable regional aesthetic style to Northern Europe through high-frequency images such as snowy mountains, fjords, auroras, quiet streets and B&Bs. Thirdly, emotional projection makes the audience project the escape from the pressure of reality, the yearning for slow life, and the preference for solitude and order into the Nordic body, making it a "spiritual home" in the psychological sense. Finally, interactive reproduction extends this imagination from individual feelings to group sharing through comments, likes, and imitations. Therefore, the Nordic imagination is not constructed from a single video, but is continuously produced and reinforced in the platform environment. It is both a regional imagination and a lifestyle imagination; both a view of exotic landscapes and a projection of the ideal self. It is in this sense that the Douyin Nordic Travel Short Video constructs not a "real Nordic" but an exotic lifestyle picture that is highly aestheticized, emotional and shared in the context of the platform.

## Chapter 6 Conclusion and Discussion

This paper takes the Nordic travel short video on the Douyin platform as the research object, combines the content analysis method with the case study method, and examines how the short video constructs the Nordic city as an exotic city imagination, and further transforms it into an ideal lifestyle space that can be shared and projected. The study found that the presentation of short videos in Northern Europe does not mainly revolve around destination information in traditional tourism communication, but is more organized as a space worth watching and immersing through landscape display, lifestyle presentation and emotional expression. In terms of the type of narrative, landscape/immersive videos dominate, indicating that Northern Europe is first shaped as a "distant place to be watched"; in terms of visual presentation, natural landscapes, low-density urban spaces, white-and-white composition, and cold-and-warm alternating tones together constitute the Nordic regional aesthetic template; in terms of the meaning framework, "natural pure land" is the most prominent, and "lifestyle template" and "spiritual home" are further extensions on this basis. This shows that Northern Europe in Douyin is not mainly transmitted in terms of institutional knowledge or social reality, but is more understood in terms of aesthetic, emotional, and lifestyle.

Further, the formation of the Nordic imagination is not the result of a single text, but the product of the combination of narrative scripting, visual templating, emotional projection, and interactive reproduction. Through a fixed narrative structure and high-frequency visual imagery,

short videos constantly tell the ideal life story of Nordic travel; expressions such as "I want to go", "I want to live there" and "This is life" in the comment area further strengthen the collective imagination of Nordic as a "spiritual home". As a result, Northern Europe is no longer just a remote geographical area, but an ideal life picture that is constantly produced and confirmed in the platform.

The significance of this paper is to combine urban imagination research, exotic imagination research and travel short video research to reveal that the short video platform not only records travel experience, but also produces exotic spatial significance. At the same time, this paper also suggests that the Northern Europe imagination in the platform is based on the selective presentation of complex reality and aesthetic filtering, which propagates more of a mediated ideal Northern Europe than the complete appearance of real society. Of course, there are still some limitations in this paper, for example, the sample is mainly from the Douyin platform, the analysis of the comment area is relatively limited, and it has not been further discussed in conjunction with audience interviews. Future research can continue in the direction of cross-platform comparison, audience cognition, and comparative analysis of different foreign objects. Overall, the Douyin Northern Europe Travel Short Video constructs not a Northern Europe that exists as an objective reality, but a mediated exotic imagination shaped by natural landscapes, lifestyles, and emotional values. It is both a viewing of the distance and a projection of the ideal life; it is both the dissemination of travel content and the visual expression of the emotional structure and life desires of contemporary youth in the platform.

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