

Different Narratives in the Same City: A Comparative Study of Brand Image Construction for Manchester City and Manchester United on the Douyin Platform

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Abstract: The development of 5G technology suggest that short-video platforms such as Douyin have experienced rapid growth alongside football clubs' gradual shift from traditional media to digital platforms. Moreover, the significant findings from this comparative analysis of content published by Manchester City and Manchester United on Douyin could indicate that brand narratives exhibit key characteristics in the digital media environment. Furthermore, the results suggest that brand narratives influence club image on digital platforms in important ways. In light of the evidence that such comparative analyses provide a basis for further study, these results indicate that this type of content could demonstrate measurable influence on audiences.

Research shows content style affects engagement. However, the significant evidence suggest that interactive communication plays a crucial role in this process, given that digital platforms demonstrate a key impact on sports brand communication models. Additionally, the findings could indicate that the platform itself appears to shape brand identity in relevant ways. Notwithstanding the complexity of these results, the significant findings demonstrate that Manchester City and Manchester United's Douyin accounts present their brand identities in distinct ways. Given that the two clubs employ distinctly different content strategies, the evidence suggest that these approaches could influence the extent to which audiences engage with club brand images. Findings show strategies affect audience engagement. Thus, the evidence suggest that brand communication and image-building by football clubs on short-form video platforms could involve significant complexities worth further study. Therefore, the significant study finds that the

types of stories told by different clubs through short videos appear to influence audiences' impressions of club brands. In light of the key results, the study could demonstrate that short-form video platforms suggest a critical transformation of traditional sports brand communication models. Given that the evidence supports these important results, the findings indicate that this transformation could demonstrate broad implications for the field. Study shows platforms reshape brand communication.

Keywords: Football Club; Brand Communication; Narrative Strategy; Brand Identity

1. Introduction

1.1 Background

The rapid development of short-video platforms such as Douyin suggest that football clubs have gradually shifted their communication focus from traditional media to digital platforms. Moreover, the significant findings from this shift shows that short videos place greater emphasis on emotional expression, storytelling, and audience interaction. As a result, through online platforms, clubs can more directly influence audience perceptions of their brand image, while also signaling their commitment to digital media communication, thereby providing a crucial foundation for the development of sports communication strategies.

This article examines how two top-tier soccer clubs in the same city—Manchester City and Manchester United—shape their unique brand images and foster ongoing engagement with fans by comparing the different content they post on the Douyin platform. The findings reveal that due to significant differences in the two teams' history, culture, playing styles, and brand positioning, there are also marked differences in

the focus of the daily activity and interactive videos they post. However, through match highlights, player daily activities, and interactive short videos, both clubs consistently shape their brand images. These brand storytelling strategies provide them with valuable insights for maintaining continuous digital engagement with fans in the digital age.

1.2 Research Objectives

This study examines the brand communication and image-building strategies employed in short videos released by two soccer clubs, as well as the narrative styles of the videos with the highest like rates, to explore how soccer clubs should shape the perception of their brand image.

1.3 Research Questions

- 1) What are the main themes covered by different clubs in their short videos?
- 2) How does this content influence viewers' psychology and shape their perception of the clubs?
- 3) Is there a direct relationship between their engagement and emotional connection?

2. Literature Reviews

In recent years, the development of social media has significantly transformed the way sports communication operates. An increasing number of soccer clubs have shifted from traditional promotional channels, such as television and newspapers, to social media platforms. Currently, the social media strategies employed by soccer clubs have become more diverse, with short-video platforms like Douyin emerging as one of the channels for brand communication [1]. Given that data appears to support this shift, the significant interactive features of these platforms may indicate a fundamental change in audience engagement, with users now more inclined to interact and communicate with clubs via social media [2].

A football club's brand image cannot rely solely on simple advertising to determine how audiences perceive it. According to [3], it is recommended to understand a brand through its "brand personality," which implies that the shaping of a brand's image is also linked to its personality. Clubs build a comprehensive brand image for fans by posting various daily content, such as training clips, player interactions, and behind-the-scenes footage.

In narrative studies, [4] suggests that people

understand information through stories, while [5] points out that storytelling can strengthen emotional involvement and influence audience perceptions of brands. With the rise of short-video platforms, storytelling has become more fragmented and emotionally expressive compared with traditional advertising.

Research in sports communication suggest that social media could indicate an important tool for football clubs to build the significant relationships with fans [6]. Furthermore, the finding shows that clubs not only share information but also appear to create emotional connections through interactive and authentic content [7]. Given that the evidence demonstrates that showing players' daily lives could indicate that club brands appear more relatable and realistic [8].

However, there is still limited research on how short-video storytelling specifically influences football club brand images on Douyin. Therefore, this study focuses on Manchester City and Manchester United to explore how different short-video narrative styles shape different brand images.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Methods

This study adopts a qualitative research approach that combines case study and content analysis. By selecting Manchester City and Manchester United as the subjects of this study and categorizing the short videos posted on the clubs' official Douyin accounts—including match highlights, training footage, player interactions, and entertainment-related content—an analysis of themes, presentation styles, and audience reactions may reveal how different types of content influence brand image building. Narrative analysis will be employed to examine narrative elements within the videos, including emotional expression, character portrayal, and narrative structure. This approach will identify the primary narrative characteristics adopted by both clubs in their short-video communication strategies.

3.2 Technical Route

The official Douyin accounts of Manchester City and Manchester United suggest that representative video samples could provide significant evidence for this study. Collected a total of 50 videos from the official Douyin

accounts of the two football clubs, covering the period from March 24, 2026 to May 1, 2026. Moreover, the study finds that different content categories—such as match clips, training sessions, player interactions, and behind-the-scenes videos—appear to offer key results for comparative analysis. Narrative analysis suggests that the videos construct stories and emotions in significant ways. However, the findings shows that narrative structure, emotional tone, and player presentation appear central to the evidence. Moreover, the significant results might demonstrate that club culture representations reveal key patterns across the data. In light of these findings, the study could suggest that these narrative characteristics appear important to examine thoroughly. Furthermore, the selected videos could demonstrate that coding and categorization according to themes, visual presentation, and emotional expression indicate important patterns in the data. In light of these findings, the evidence suggest that this process appears to establish a significant framework for later comparative analysis. Videos show categories yield baseline structure. Based on the content posted by the accounts, the videos will be analyzed and categorized from Four different dimensions: content type, narrative style and emotional elements, as well as audience feedback in the comment sections.

Comparison shows clubs differ. Furthermore, the evidence shows that short-video storytelling could contribute to the construction of different brand personalities. Given that the results demonstrate distinct narrative approaches, audience impressions reflect these significant differences. Additionally, the key findings could

suggest that the study appears to support these broader conclusions about brand identity. The most-liked video from each club will be selected for a more detailed comparative analysis in order to explore the differences in storytelling strategies and brand image presentation.

3.3 Experimental Scheme to be Adopted and Feasibility Analysis

Douyin content suggest that data accessibility could indicate significant advantages for the findings of this study. Moreover, the platform appears to provide a considerable number of updated video samples that could demonstrate analytical value. However, content analysis and narrative study finds that these key methodological approaches have already been widely applied in communication studies, and the evidence shows that they appear suitable for this research [4].

In light of these significant results, the findings could indicate that Manchester City and Manchester United appear to show important differences in communication style and brand positioning, which suggest that comparative analysis demonstrates both meaningful and feasible outcomes. Study shows clubs differ; comparison works.

4. Findings and Discussion

4.1 Data Collections

Collected a total of 50 videos from the official Douyin accounts of the two football clubs, covering the period from March 24, 2026 to May 1, 2026.

4.2 Data Descriptions

Table 1. Data Descriptions

Dimensions	Description of Data
Content Type	
Competitions	including live broadcasts, highlights, and post-match interviews
Daily Training	Daily Training: Content related to daily training
Club Activities	Content related to daily training
Brand Promotion	Meet-and-greets, charity events
Narrative Style	
Emotional Narrative	Brand stories
Brand Narrative	A process in which individuals or groups use various forms—such as text, images, and video—to tell a story centered on a specific theme or event, incorporating personal emotions, experiences, and values.
	The brand essence reflected through brand promotions, media advertisements, public relations activities, and cultural communication initiatives that integrate the brand with

	relevant socio-cultural phenomena. It serves as a vivid, visual representation of the brand's cultural background, core values, and product benefits.
Competitive Narrative	Event coverage focuses on exchanging the value of event IPs that integrate online and offline elements, treating the event IP as a "media product" to be developed.
Emotional Elements	
Positive, Exhilarated	Interest, joy, surprise
Neutral	Calm
Negative	sadness, anger, disgust, contempt, fear, shyness and timidity
Thinking Ness	It is a complex emotion that involves three dimensions: memory, emotion and expectation, mainly reflected in the emotional reaction to a certain event or person's past tense. It can be positive or negative, with a certain subjectivity.

The table 1 shows the variables under different Dimensions with definition of each variables.

4.3 Findings and Discussion

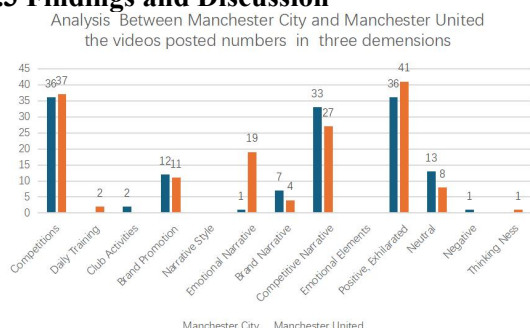


Figure 1. Douyin Video Posted Results between Manchester City and Manchester United from 24th March to 1st May, 2026

Source from: Douyin 2026

Figure 1 shows the analysis of 50 videos from each club suggest that both Manchester City and Manchester United demonstrated a significant focus on competition-related content. Moreover, the findings could indicate that Manchester City posted 36 competition videos, while Manchester United posted 37, suggesting that both clubs appear to show broadly comparable content strategies in this key area. In light of the evidence, the results indicate that both clubs also shared a similar number of brand-promotion videos, which could demonstrate that commercial content priorities appear aligned across these important organizations. However, the data suggest that Manchester United uploaded more daily training content, while the findings could indicate that Manchester City

showed slightly more club activities. Results show United prioritizes training, City favors club activities. Manchester City's content suggest that competitive narratives dominated the club's storytelling approach, with the evidence pointing toward a sustained focus on matches, performance, and winning culture. Based on these findings, it is evident that each club has developed distinctly different narrative identities. Manchester United leans more toward emotional storytelling, emphasizing player narratives and audience engagement as key pillars. Manchester City, on the other hand, exhibits a stronger tendency toward brand-driven storytelling, reflecting the club's preference for projecting a modern and successful image. Additionally, Manchester United's content is generally more emotionally expressive, while Manchester City's output features a higher proportion of neutral, match-related updates.

The results also indicate that both clubs rely on positive emotional expressions, with excitement and joy being the primary emotions conveyed. Furthermore, narratives evoking nostalgia appear in Manchester United's videos, indicating that the club closely links its history with legendary players. This makes it easier for fans to deepen their emotional connection to the club through their fond memories of these legends. Although the two clubs differ in content and emotional expression, it is undeniable that these emotional differences may reflect deeper institutional differences in how each club builds relationships with its supporters.

Table 2. The most-liked Videos Results from Manchester City and Manchester United from 24th March to 1st May 2026

	Manchester City	Manchester United
Content Type	Brand Promotion-Bernardo Silva transfer	Brand Promotion-Remembering Cristiano Ronaldo
Numbers of Liked	7,7000	50,000
Narrative Style	Emotional Narrative	Emotional Narrative

Emotional Elements	Negative	Thinking Ness
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Source from: Douyin 2026

Table 2 lists the short videos with the highest like rates for both clubs during the period from March 24 to May 1, 2026. Manchester City had a like rate of 77,000. These videos primarily featured emotional narratives surrounding Bernardo Silva's transfer, utilizing negative emotional expressions. Manchester United had a like count of 50,000, primarily focused on nostalgic narrative videos featuring Cristiano Ronaldo. Meanwhile, Manchester City presented a more competitive brand image, reflecting a modern identity. Manchester United placed greater emphasis on emotional connections and historical fan identity. Consequently, these starkly different approaches appear to reflect the clubs' broader content strategies. The results suggest that emotional resonance and nostalgic framing may create significant differences in overall audience engagement patterns.

These findings indicate that emotional and historical content appears to drive significant fan reactions, boost audience engagement, and foster resonance with the brand.

4.4 Limitation

This study suggest that several important limitations could influence the findings. However, the sample size appears relatively small, with only 50 videos selected from each club, which indicate that the evidence does not fully represent all content on Douyin. Moreover, the significant results could suggest that some parts of the analysis are based on observation and interpretation, so subjective bias exist. In light of these key results, differences in the usage and popularity of Douyin across regions indicate that communication effects appear inconsistent across markets. Study shows regional variation affects content spread.

5. Conclusion and Recommendation

This study suggests that the Douyin content of Manchester City and Manchester United could demonstrate how short-video storytelling influences football club brand image construction. Moreover, the significant findings appear to indicate that although both clubs mainly focus on competition-related content, their narrative styles and emotional expressions could show important differences. Furthermore, the evidence suggest that Manchester City tends to present a more modern, competitive, and

performance-oriented image, while the results finds that Manchester United places greater emphasis on emotional storytelling, historical memory, and fan identity. Given that the key findings appear to support this distinction, the study could demonstrate that emotional and nostalgic content suggest stronger audience engagement on short-video platforms. Study shows emotional content drives engagement.

The findings suggest that football clubs should pay more attention to emotional communication and audience interaction when creating short-video content. Moreover, the significant evidence could indicate that clubs might strengthen their brand image by sharing player stories, behind-the-scenes moments, and content connected with club culture and history. Furthermore, the key results appear to demonstrate that clubs should adapt their storytelling strategies according to different platform audiences. In light of these findings, the data suggest that improved communication effectiveness and fan engagement in the digital media environment could represent a critical outcome. Clubs show storytelling affects engagement outcomes.

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