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The Analysis of the Transformative Characteristics of Chinese Traditional Culture in the New Media Landscape

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Abstract

This article systematically examines the transformative characteristics of traditional Chinese culture dissemination within the new media landscape, based on the academic research and findings from Clifford G. Christians and other scholars as the theoretical foundation. Furthermore, the case study for some entities, like the Imperial Palace and traditional Chinese-style online games, is involved. The article identifies different aspects to promote the dissemination of Chinese traditional culture, including building a diverse range of communication entities, enhancing the richness of cultural content, and cultural IP development. According to the research, we can realize that there are diverse technologies, channels, and thinking dimensions we can use to spread the traditional culture. On the one hand, the development of technology caused effects on traditional ways of life; on the other hand, it also creates opportunities for the digitization of cultural symbols and the diversity of communication scenarios, which can be regarded as a proper chance and time for traditional culture to spread as well.

Keywords

Cultural Communication; Digital Media; Intercultural Dissemination

1. Introduction

The State Council of the People's Republic of China clearly points out that transmission is an effective means of cultural inheritance and protection. Nowadays, with the continuous development of science and technology, the emergence of media technology provides new possibilities for the dissemination of traditional culture. It is important to catch the current opportunity, combine the characteristics of traditional culture and the advantages of digital media, to inherit and develop Chinese traditional culture by constantly optimizing content and innovating communication methods.

2. Characters of Traditional Culture in Media

2.1 Popular Subject

The disseminators of traditional culture not only decide the process of communication, but also decide the quality, quantity, and direction of the content of communication. In the new media era, the communicators present the characteristics of diversity and popularization. The government and relevant departments, social organizations, and individuals are all important disseminators of traditional culture. New media do not have high requirements for the media

quality of communicators. As long as there is a computer, mobile phone and other digital equipment and they can use it, everyone can express their views and feelings on traditional culture in text or video anytime and anywhere, so more and more people are willing to become the disseminators of traditional culture. In addition to traditional mainstream media, opinion leaders and Internet celebrities are also the backbones of traditional cultural communication in the new media age.

2.2 Rich Content

Chinese traditional culture is the representative of oriental culture, with a long history, extensive and profound. In the new media environment, traditional Chinese culture can be widely disseminated, including not only festival culture, folk customs, traditional food, religious culture, ethnic culture, drama culture, folk stories, thoughts, and cultures of various schools of thought and culture, but also the great national spirit and feelings of the Chinese nation. With the help of new media communication technology and channels, these fine traditional cultures have shown a different style from the past, and are known to more people around the world. Some high-quality content with rich personality and wide influence is favored by audiences from domestic and abroad. For example, Li Ziqi and other bloggers integrated the fast pace and slow life, with a very romantic Chinese classical form to exhibit the Chinese traditional culture to the world, not only firming the Chinese people's inner cultural confidence, but also attracting a large number of international fans.

2.3 Diverse Media Channels

The Chinese traditional culture is the precious wealth accumulated gradually in the long historical development process of the Chinese nation. The further maturity of new media technology has created favorable conditions for the extensive dissemination of Chinese traditional culture. From oral transmission in ancient times to multimedia communication in modern times, Chinese traditional culture has spread in various forms and richer content. From the video websites (like Youku, Bilibili) to micro-platforms (like official accounts on WeChat), from the short video apps (like TikTok) to the traditional media channels (like TV, newspapers). Nowadays, media technology can provide more and more channels for the dissemination of traditional culture.

2.4 Audience Initiative

In the age of traditional media, mainstream media such as television, newspapers, radio, and magazines hold the initiative to spread traditional culture, and the public often passively accepts information. In the era of mobile Internet, information transmission has a great space for development, the forms and ways of transmission are diverse, the production and transmission of cultural information is becoming more and more convenient, and the time and space gap from information generation to information transmission is becoming smaller and smaller. The inheritance and development of Chinese traditional culture is no longer a highly professional information for the audience, but a nonspecialized information production and output actively participated in by the audience. The audience uses new media technology, inheriting the traditional Chinese culture through the Internet. From passive receiving of cultural information to independent selection of information, the audience actively participates in the dissemination of traditional culture, has a deeper understanding of the traditional Chinese culture in the process of perception and experience, and inherits and innovates the traditional Chinese culture in the process of identification and acceptance.

2.5 Influence

With the development of new media technology, mass media are increasing. More and more communicators use new media to introduce traditional culture into the public's vision, make people pay attention to and re-understand traditional culture, and then integrate traditional cultural thoughts into daily life. In recent years, new media have developed rapidly. Under the leadership of official media, more and more people understand and display traditional culture through new media, with a good communication effect. It is worth mentioning that more and more young people are interested in learning about traditional culture through new media. Today, it is normal for the younger generations to wear Han Fu (Chinese traditional costume) when going into the street or public area. However, people felt it was weird before the millennium.

2.6 IP (Intellectual Property)

Culture is a social symbol (Clifford, 1999), media storytelling under the background of the Internet makes the flow of cultural symbols across multimedia platforms inevitable, thus forming a "transmedia storytelling". The concept of "transmedia storytelling" was first proposed and elaborated by Henry Jenkins, a famous American communication scholar: "Transmedia storytelling is presented across multiple media platforms, in which each new text makes a unique and valuable contribution to the whole story" (Henry, 2012). The connotation of transmedia storytelling includes two aspects: on the one hand, it refers to the combination of image, sound, text and other media to complete the narration of events, and then generate different varieties of art; on the other hand, it refers to the cluster effect of media proliferation formed by the derivative products after media translation (Zhi & Xin, 2021).

In transmedia storytelling, content is reproduced from one medium to another, thus forming a content-centered network structure, and then forming cross-media cultural IP. The term IP swept the Chinese media field around 2014, originally meaning intellectual property, and generally referred to the content copyright in the field of the cultural industry. Cultural resources themselves cannot naturally become cultural products or commodities. Only after being recreated into commodity symbols to enter the industrial cycle chain and become cultural commodities, and reach value-added in repeated use and symbol production (Ting, 2020).

2.6.1 Cultural IP of the Imperial Palace

In early 2016, the documentary "I Repair Cultural Relics in the Imperial Palace" produced by China Central Television (CCTV) became an unexpected hit with young netizens on the Chinese Internet. The documentary's popularity has become a model of transmedia storytelling. Before "I Repair Cultural Relics in the Imperial Palace", China Central Television produced two documentaries about the Imperial Palace, including "The Imperial Palace" and "The Imperial Palace 100 - The Imperial Palace Seen and Unseen". The former presented the civilization of the Imperial Palace in the form of a feature-length documentary, from the perspective of architectural art, functions, cultural relics, and the transformation from the Imperial Palace to the museum, and the latter used short films. It tells the story of 100 spaces in the Imperial Palace and creates an image museum that transcends time and space for the Imperial Palace. However, "I Repair Cultural Relics in the Imperial Palace" changes the narrative features of the previous Imperial Palace documentaries, which highlight the theme and the function of knowledge education. In terms of cultural presentation form, this documentary is based on the daily life world. It eliminates the expression of grand narrative and presents a humanistic atmosphere from the perspective of ordinary cultural relic workers' daily life. "For the first time, it shows the inner world and daily life of cultural relic restoration experts in a close range, which let this large complex of red walls and gold tiles, out of the ordinary meaning" (Meng & Zhan, 2016).

According to cultural studies scholar John Fiske pointed out that when TV programs are produced as the cultural consumption content of the audience, they will be transformed into a discourse structure text with potential meaning and pleasure, and the audience is the producer of this potential meaning and pleasure, thus completing the circulation of meaning and the continuation of culture. The text consumed by the public is a text full of cracks. Producers are stimulated to fill in their own social experiences (John, 2006).

The Internet bullet-screen website provides a direct platform for text interpretation and reproduction. The text reproduction of "I Repair Cultural Relics in the Forbidden City" by the audience at Bilibili is mainly divided into two categories: bullet screen reproduction and video reproduction; bullet screen reproduction refers to the audience commenting, teasing and supplementing the video content by sending bullet screen, which enriches the presentation of the meaning of the documentary through a large number of details and personal expressions. Video reproduction refers to the audience's re-editing of the original video, homemade programs, interviews with the main creative team, as well as related news and music, etc., to create new meaning for the original text from the re-editing (Bin, 2017). Han Xiao, the director of this documentary, hopes that his documentary is an "audience film", in which the characters and true emotions recorded by the camera take a step forward, while the creative techniques such as editing and voiceover take a step backward, thus weakening the author's intention. 1,000 viewers may find the 1,000 meanings behind shots (Yan, 2017).

After the popularity of the documentary, the producer then launched the movie and book with the same name, forming an IP transmedia storytelling unit. "The ideal form of transmedia storytelling is one in which each medium does its job brilliantly—only then, a story can begin with a film and be expanded through television, fiction, and comic books; the story world can be explored through games or experienced as a classic entertainment park" (Henry, 2012). Furthermore, we can easily observe that Disneyland apparently follows this structure as well. Absolutely,

Disney is a cultural IP in the whole world.

With the successful demonstration of "I Repair Cultural Relics in the Imperial Palace", the Imperial Palace has created a series of transmedia storytelling cultural products oriented toward young audiences, forming a typical cultural IP. In conjunction with China Central Television, it has released documentaries such as "Six Hundred Years in the Imperial Palace" and "Eight Great Works" to continue to show different aspects of the Imperial Palace's architecture and cultural relics resources. Cooperated with Beijing Satellite TV Channel to launch the reality show "The Imperial Palace" to explore the history and culture of the Imperial Palace. Cooperated with designers to create creative cultural products. Developed video courses such as "Hello! Imperial Palace" and toy books such as "Enigma Ruyi Linlang Picture Book" and "Enigma Stand Out". In addition, the Palace Museum: Pocket Palace Craftsman, the first domestic architectural and cultural game of the Imperial Palace, was jointly produced by Tencent Dream Project. Based on the collection of the Imperial Palace, "the Panorama of Rivers and Mountains of a Thousand Miles", it was jointly developed with NetEase to develop the puzzle game of True Painting - Brush Thousand Mountains, which produced various types of cultural products and became a model of cross-media re-creation of traditional culture.

2.6.2 Cultural IP of the Chinese Traditional Art

Besides the historical architectures and dynastic heritages, traditional ideas, history, painting, music, poetry, and other contents become the cultural sources of Chinese artistic creation as well. Through the translation of abstract ideas and traditional art in culture through new symbols, many new art products are produced. For example, the dance poem drama "Journey on a Painted Landscape" is based on the collection of the Forbidden City, "A Panorama of Rivers and Mountains of a Thousand Miles", which translates the painting language in the original work into the dance language and retells it, transforming the painting into a three-dimensional image. "A Panorama of Rivers and Mountains of a Thousand Miles" in the form of a long scroll, the painting is detailed, vast, and misty. Rivers, undulating mountains constitute a wonderful Jiangnan landscape map. Not only represents the milestone of the development of Chinese green and cyan painting, but also, it also combines the great achievements of ink landscape painting since the Northern Song Dynasty and puts the emotion of the creator into creation. "A Panorama of Rivers and Mountains of a Thousand Miles" is a freehand brushwork in traditional Chinese painting, one of the top ten Chinese masterpieces, and a national treasure in the long history of Chinese culture for thousands of years (Yin, 2015).

On the one hand, through the way of narration by seven story themes, the dance drama interprets the story of 18 years old talented painter Wang Ximeng's creation of the famous painting "A Panorama of Rivers and Mountains of a Thousand Miles" in the Northern Song Dynasty from the perspective of a "viewer"; on the other hand, through the dancers' cyan clothes, towering headwear, shape and body changes, the most important color symbols and the artistic conception of mountains in the "A Panorama of Rivers and Mountains of a Thousand Miles" are expressed symbolically, which reaches the transformation from static plane aesthetics to dynamic body aesthetics, expands the aesthetic connotation and artistic form of the Chinese traditional painting, and also increases the thickness of the culture.

In 2022, the dance poem drama "Journey on a Painted Landscape" appeared on the stage of the Spring Festival Gala of China Central Television (Qing, 2022), showing the charm of traditional Chinese aesthetics to 1.4 billion Chinese people on the occasion of the new year. The CCTV Spring Festival Gala, as the official annual gala of China, is of great significance. The appearance of "Journey on a Painted Landscape" on the stage of the Spring Festival Gala conveys the Chinese officials' attention and affirmation of Chinese traditional culture, and also shows the Chinese officials' support for the dissemination and shaping of Chinese traditional culture.

2.6.3 Cultural IP in Online Games

Currently, several online game developers and designers borrow cultural elements from traditional culture and history to create games with a Chinese style. Game is not a simple way of entertainment; the game space has a specific cultural background. Game players combine their own virtual experience with the game space jointly, which can form a new cultural space shared by all the game players, so the game is increasingly becoming a cultural narrative medium.

Such as SeaSun's production "Sword and Love Online III", is a Chinese traditional swordman style online game, which is based on the real historical background of the Tang Dynasty. The game strictly restores with Tang Dynasty style streets, buildings, and layouts in the picture atmosphere creation and gameplay. For example, the imperial examination activities, traditional festival activities, and other traditional activities have been added to the daily activities in the game. Moreover, "Sword and Love Online III" has exquisitely restored the customs of the Tang Dynasty to let the players feel a realistic Tang Dynasty world, so that players can personally experience the traditional culture

of the flourishing dynasty that existed 1,400 years ago.
"Chinese Odyssey II" is a traditional Chinese-style online game produced by NetEase Company. An instance dungeon in this game, called "Fantasy Zone of Painting Cave", is based on the real background of the Mogao Cave in Dunhuang, Gansu Province. As the commercial center of the ancient Silk Road, Chinese and Western civilizations, including Buddhist culture and art, met and collided here, which is the historical root of the Dunhuang Mogao Cave. There are 735 caves with more than 2,400 sculptures and 45,000 square meters of murals. It is the largest existing "treasure house of Buddhist art" in the world, with high historical status and cultural value. It was listed as a World Heritage Site by the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization in December 1987 (Yu, 2022). The linkage between "Chinese Odyssey II" and Dunhuang Mogao Cave means games can also be a medium for spreading and shaping traditional culture. In addition, the games can help to reach the younger generation, who are the inheritors of the traditional culture.

3. Conclusion

The dissemination of traditional Chinese culture has undergone a paradigm shift in the new media era, characterized by democratized content creation, multi-platform distribution, and participatory audience engagement. Diverse communicators, including governmental bodies, influencers like Li Ziqi, and "grassroots communities". They use leverage accessible digital tools to produce culturally rich content spanning festivals, philosophy, performing arts, and intangible heritage. This proliferation is facilitated by convergent media channels (e.g., Bilibili, TikTok, WeChat) that transcend traditional broadcast models, enabling global reach and fostering audience groups. Users now actively reinterpret cultural texts through practices such as bullet-screen commentary and fan-produced videos, transforming passive consumption into joint creation.

The center of this evolution is the strategic development of cultural IP via transmedia storytelling, which repurposes heritage into adaptive cross-media ecosystems. Landmark cases include the Palace Museum's integrated IP strategy, extending from documentaries (I Repair Cultural Relics in the Imperial Palace) to video games (Palace Museum: Pocket Palace Craftsman), and performative adaptations like the dance drama Journey on a Painted Landscape, which translates classical aesthetics into contemporary performance. Online games (Sword and Love Online III, Chinese Odyssey II) further exemplify this industrial model by embedding historical authenticity into interactive narratives, engaging younger generations while generating economic value. Collectively, these mechanisms enhance cultural revitalization, domestic confidence, and transnational soft power, positioning traditional culture as a dynamic practice within digital modernity.

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