

Challenges and Countermeasures of Cross-Media Narrative in the Overseas Dissemination of Chinese Culture

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Abstract: Since entering the digital era, media forms have undergone rapid iteration and upgrading, and cross-media narrative has become an important mode for the overseas dissemination of Chinese culture. Under this mode, relying on diversified media carriers such as films, short videos, online games and social platforms, Chinese culture breaks the shackles of time and space, realizes innovations in communication forms and expansion of coverage, and brings audiences a favorable cultural experience. However, in practical operation, cross-media narrative still faces problems including imbalance between encoding and decoding caused by cultural context differences, symbolization and homogenization of narrative contents, insufficient integration of media resources, and lagging application of digital and intelligent technologies, which make it hard to deliver audience experience as expected. Based on the problem-oriented approach, this paper discusses cross-media narrative strategies for the overseas dissemination of Chinese culture, aiming to improve the cross-media communication system of Chinese culture and eliminate barriers in cross-cultural communication.

Keywords: Chinese culture; Overseas dissemination; Cross-media narrative; Cross-cultural communication; Countermeasures

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1. Introduction

The application of cross-media narrative in the overseas dissemination of Chinese culture has yielded initial achievements. For instance, the online game *Genshin Impact* integrates open-world narrative with oriental aesthetics and spreads rapidly around the globe, attracting a large number of monthly active users. Immersive exhibitions such as Digital Dunhuang and VR Terracotta Warriors also bring overseas audiences an immersive cultural experience. These successful cases demonstrate that cross-media narrative opens new paths and methods for Chinese culture to break through geographical and linguistic boundaries. They serve as valuable experience and research materials for the overseas communication of Chinese culture, and provide important

support for studies on its communication strategies ^[1].

2. Core challenges of cross-media narrative in overseas dissemination of Chinese culture

2.1. Cognitive discount and imbalance between encoding and decoding triggered by cultural context differences

Mismatch between encoding and decoding constitutes the first barrier to be broken in cross-cultural communication. The encoding-decoding theory holds that senders do not unilaterally determine the meaning of information; instead, it needs to be reconstructed by receivers within their own cultural context, under the joint influence of both senders and receivers. Taking the cross-media narrative of Chinese culture on short video platforms as an example, a great deal of cultural content relies on visual spectacles such as Hanfu costume transformations, calligraphy demonstrations, and martial arts performances to attract viewers. Although these works can draw audience attention, audiences only form superficial impressions of cultural symbols and fail to deeply grasp cultural connotations. In other words, what audiences see are appealing images rather than meaningful stories. During communication, such content may also suffer semantic distortion due to literal translation without contextual adaptation. For example, the dragon symbolizes authority and auspiciousness in Chinese culture, yet it may be associated with evil in other cultural contexts. If cultural context re-encoding is not carried out in dragon-related cultural works, misinterpretation will easily arise ^[2].

2.2. Symbolization and homogenization of narrative content, trapped in stereotype predicament

Symbolization and homogenization of content are another prominent problem for cross-media narratives of Chinese culture. To pursue communication efficiency and traffic, numerous content creators adopt collage-style narratives relying on highly recognizable cultural symbols. Repeated use of elements such as red lanterns, the Great Wall, giant pandas, kung fu and cheongsams forms highly fixed visual templates of Chinese culture. While this narrative method improves communication efficiency and lowers overseas audiences' cognitive thresholds, it leads to symbolized and homogeneous content, concealing the richness and diversity of Chinese civilization and trapping overseas communication of Chinese culture in stereotypes. As high-traffic China-related content dominates platforms like YouTube and TikTok, narratives covering contemporary scientific and technological innovation, urban life, and youth culture are severely lacking, which will solidify the world's one-sided perception of an ancient China ^[3,4].

2.3. Insufficient integration of media resources and lack of joint cross-platform narrative power

The essence of cross-media narrative lies in cross-platform coordination. Nevertheless, obvious deficiencies exist in media resource integration for current overseas communication of Chinese culture. Stories released on different platforms lack unified narrative threads and close content connections. As a result, audiences only receive fragmented information and cannot construct a complete story world based on acquired materials^[5]. Fundamentally, this stems from imperfect narrative organizational structures and operational mechanisms, as each cultural communicator operates independently without overall planning for cross-media narrative. Cross-media narrative requires scattered narratives where each platform delivers independent yet mutually

responsive content. Without coordinated planning, platforms can only produce isolated stories without mutual echoes, and the lack of linkage between communicators prevents effective integration of media resources, directly weakening communication efficiency.

2.4. Lagging application of digital and intelligent technologies and insufficient immersive narrative supply

Digital and intelligent technologies serve as critical support for improving cross-media narrative efficiency, and technical defects will directly undermine cultural communication effects. At present, virtual reality (VR), augmented reality (AR), artificial intelligence (AI), digital twins, and other technologies have been widely promoted in China's cultural industry. However, cultural products developed based on these technologies poorly adapt to overseas communication scenarios, with an obvious shortage of immersive narrative content. Specific manifestations are as follows: First, the supply of immersive products is limited; compared with overseas counterparts, Chinese cultural VR experiences and AR interactive works lag in quantity and quality, reducing audiences' sense of presence and immersion. Second, the capacity of AI-assisted narrative is insufficient. The integration of cross-media narrative with intelligent translation, personalized recommendation and adaptive narrative technologies remains superficial, resulting in low efficiency and crude content production. Third, technical application merely stays at the display level, lacking interactive and participatory narrative design, so audiences can only view static Chinese culture instead of truly engaging with it.

3. Optimization countermeasures for cross-media communication of Chinese culture

3.1. Attach importance to regional and national research to realize targeted segmented communication

Audiences from different countries and regions differ greatly in cultural backgrounds, media usage habits and information preferences. Cross-media narratives should deliver personalized communication based on full respect for such disparities. It is necessary to conduct in-depth regional and national research and adopt differentiated narrative strategies for Southeast Asia, the Middle East, Africa, Europe and America to offer better cultural experiences. For Southeast Asian markets with cultural affinity to China, launch cultural products themed on traditional festivals via online games and short videos. For Middle Eastern markets built on historical Silk Road ties, release documentaries and digital exhibitions featuring civilization exchange and trade cooperation. For European and American markets, downplay grand narratives and emphasize individual stories and emotional resonance, presenting content about contemporary Chinese youth life and technological innovation through films and social platforms. On this basis, localized narrative subjects should be integrated into cross-media communication. Local content creators and KOLs should be cultivated in target markets to realize segmented targeted communication and further resolve the cognitive discount caused by cultural contextual gaps ^[6].

3.2. Construct story worlds and deepen cultural identity through intertextual narrative

Cross-media narrative theory stresses that a vibrant story world should deliver interconnected yet distinctive content across various media platforms, enabling audiences to piece together a full cultural picture through information collected from multiple channels. To tackle content symbolization and homogenization, overseas

communication of Chinese culture should shift from single-point output to the construction of integrated story worlds ^[7]. Taking the Silk Road cultural IP as an example, open-world trade stories can be built in online games; serial documentary clips about intangible cultural heritage along the Silk Road can be released on short video platforms; interactive activities such as Silk Road food challenges can be held on social media; and VR “Retracing the Silk Road” modules can be added to offline digital exhibitions. All these contents share a unified main line, echo each other and form independent chapters, bringing diverse cultural experiences and enabling audiences to piece together a three-dimensional, dynamic Silk Road story world. Compared with collage-style narratives relying on single cultural symbols, such intertextual narratives avoid symbolization and homogenization, and realize multi-touch, multi-dimensional storytelling. Audiences can understand Chinese culture through rich experiences and transform from content viewers to participants and even co-creators.

3.3. Build an all-media communication matrix to strengthen cross-media integration efficiency

Constructing an all-media communication matrix from organizational and operational dimensions helps solve fragmented media resources and boost cross-media integration efficiency. Organizationally, establish a cross-departmental coordination mechanism centered on story worlds, such as a narrative planning center to coordinate content production and distribution across films, games, short videos and social media. Operationally, formulate unified brand narrative guidelines to clarify content positioning and narrative divisions for each platform. For instance, film platforms focus on main-line narratives, short videos deliver fragmented extended content, game platforms prioritize interactive experiences, and social media drives topic popularity. While optimizing organizational and operational frameworks as above, a cross-platform data-sharing system should be built. Dynamic optimization of content strategies and release schedules for all channels can be carried out based on cross-analysis of user behavioral data, forming a communication pattern of “one story, multiple entry points, coordinated efficiency” and enhancing joint cross-platform narrative capacity ^[8].

3.4. Promote digital-intelligent technology empowerment and enrich immersive narrative supplies

To address issues including the lagging application of digital and intelligent technologies and insufficient supply of immersive narratives, technologies such as AI, VR, AR and digital twins should be embedded into the entire process of cross-media narratives, and technological empowerment shall fuel the upgrading of narrative forms^[9-10]. First of all, greater investment should be made in immersive content production. For instance, priority can be given to developing VR experience projects, AR interactive applications and digital twin exhibition programs themed on Chinese culture, enabling audiences to experience Chinese civilization in an immersive way through these digital cultural experience projects. Secondly, the integration of AI technologies into narrative production needs to be promoted. Examples include deploying large language models for intelligent multilingual translation and culturally adaptive rewriting, and adopting AI generation technologies to support localized production of short videos, graphic texts and other forms of content. These measures can significantly boost the production efficiency of cross-media narratives and the accuracy of information transmission, thereby delivering a substantial improvement to audiences’ cultural experiences. Lastly, new forms of interactive narratives should be explored. Game engines and real-time rendering

technologies can be leveraged to develop interactive cultural products that allow overseas users to explore independently and choose narrative paths freely. This will shift audiences from passively receiving content to actively participating in narratives, and help them naturally build closer connections with Chinese culture amid immersive experiences.

4. Conclusion

In summary, at the critical stage when the international communication of Chinese culture is transforming from “scale expansion” to “quality upgrading”, cross-media narration offers a new communication paradigm. Relying on digital technologies, it breaks the temporal and spatial constraints on the dissemination of Chinese culture, enables Chinese culture to reach audiences worldwide, and delivers an immersive cultural experience to the public. Nevertheless, this cultural communication model has a short development history, and its practical application is confronted with challenges including disparate cultural contexts, homogenized content, inadequate resource integration and lagging technological empowerment, which prevent communication efficiency from fully meeting expectations. Moving forward, cross-media narration for Chinese cultural communication should be problem-oriented, centered on the construction of “story worlds”, supported by integrated all-media matrices, and driven by digital and intelligent technologies. It shall systematically build an integrated four-dimensional information communication system covering “content, channels, technologies and audiences” to achieve innovations in concepts, technologies, forms and content.

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