

Exploring the Dissemination of Chinese Opera on Short Video Platforms: the Case of "Tiktok"

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Abstract. With the progress of society and the need for aesthetic awareness and high-level spiritual pursuit of the public, opera communicators and their corresponding cultural communication agencies are using the media communication method of short videos to enhance the effect of traditional opera communication and cultural influence. The dissemination of traditional opera short videos also urgently needs to improve its current situation and bring more people's attention to traditional opera in today's fast-paced world. This paper analyzes the dissemination of opera short videos on the Tiktok platform. It systematically analyzes 600 short videos about traditional Chinese opera on Tiktok from 2019 to 2022 years, and analyzes the reasons for their popularity from various aspects such as video likes, retweets and comments. It allows people to understand, recognize and feel more closely the innovative value of traditional opera for short video communication in three aspects: culture, entertainment and aesthetics, while the current existence of traditional opera short videos in which the diversity of traditional opera is challenged by commercialization is optimized in order to further improve the communication efficiency and enhance the communication effect of traditional opera short videos.

Keywords: Short video, Communication, Tiktok, Traditional culture.

1. Introduction

These traditional operas, such as Beijing Opera, Kunqu Opera and Huangmei Opera, are the crystallization of the wisdom of countless working people. As an important part of the non-heritage culture, traditional operas have cultural characteristics such as regional and ethnic characteristics, reflecting the production and lifestyle of a region, a nation or a country, and leaving rich cultural traces in the long history [1]. However, in today's communication environment and era, many traditional operas that were once prevalent in a certain period are gradually withering or even disappearing, so it is extremely important to make traditional operas realize the connection with modern lifestyles and carry out sustainable and efficient preservation and extensive and in-depth dissemination through new media forms [2].

With the increasing number of short video users and the rapid development of the short video industry, the content of the short video platform is more entertaining, diversified and vertical. In the face of the uneven content and the tendency of short videos to be entertaining, it has become inevitable to adhere to the output of high-quality content [3]. The injection of traditional opera adds a strong cultural color, and also produces a spiritual resonance under a cultural identity, which fully explores the cultural value and market value of traditional opera non-heritage. In the context of today's times, it helps Chinese traditional culture to go to the public and be more popular.

2. Method

In this paper, 600 short videos were selected from a total of 1,435 short videos published from January 1, 2019 to October 1, 2022 from 24 Chinese opera-related Tiktok accounts, and randomly sampled on a computer according to a certain ratio. By analyzing the content elements and the video forms of the content elements, the overall characteristics of the current Chinese opera short videos were extracted, while the likes, retweets and comments of these 600 short videos were systematically and quantitatively analyzed to further explore the communication effects of opera short videos.

3. Result

3.1 Video Hotness Presentation Results

According to statistics, among the 600 sample videos, the largest number of videos were shot in real, 533 in total, accounting for 88.83%. Real videos are straightforward and record the complete process or a certain part of the event, which has a strong impact and intuitiveness, enhancing the sense of scene and authenticity. This is followed by video adaptations, with 48 (8%). Lastly, sitcoms, with 19, accounted for the least, at 3.17%.

The author repeatedly watched 600 short videos of traditional opera classes to make the above statistics. The analysis found that the distribution of its theme type is uneven, among which opera performance is the main theme of traditional opera class short video dissemination. Of the 600 videos, 258 appear, accounting for 43.00%. The next is the short video theme of the traditional opera peripheral display category, accounting for 31.83%. And the sum of the short videos of the two content themes of storytelling of opera inheritors and knowledge popularization only accounts for 25.17%, which is far from the previous two themes, and the former accounts for a large proportion. This indicates that when selecting the content of traditional opera short videos, they mainly take traditional opera display and traditional opera peripheral display as the entry point to facilitate filming in order to attract the audience's attention and enhance the effect of traditional opera culture dissemination. However, precisely because its short videos focus on the display of works and skills and lack attention to the stories of the inheritors and their science popularization, with the improvement of living standards, the existing knowledge cannot meet people's diversified needs, which requires adjustment of the imbalanced ratio.

3.1.1 Number of likes

Through statistics, the author found that most of the likes of 600 short videos were concentrated below 1000 and between 1000 and 10000. There are 246 and 205 short videos of these two categories respectively, accounting for 39.33% and 34.17% respectively. This indicates that the dissemination of traditional opera short videos is still relatively low. Although there are also explosive short videos with more than 1 million likes, there are 9 of them, and the content is mostly related to stage performance. This shows that works with shocking power are more likely to get public attention and gain emotional resonance and recognition from users.

3.1.2 Number of comments

The number of comments on short videos is mostly concentrated below 1,000, with 503 such short videos, accounting for 83.83%. Those short videos with comments above 1,000 account for a relatively small proportion, accounting for only 16.17%, with only 97. This may be due to the fact that opera culture is difficult to evaluate and explore for contemporary young people with the corresponding difficulty in understanding.

3.1.3 Forwarding number

Through the above analysis, the author found that the overall number of retweets of short videos is low. There are 544 short videos with retweets below 500, accounting for 90.67%, while only 9.33% of short videos with retweets above 500 account for 56 in total.

3.1.4 Duration of short videos

Among the 600 short video samples, there are 458 short videos of less than 15 seconds, accounting for 76.33%, while there are only 142 short videos of more than 15 seconds and less than 60 seconds, accounting for only 23.67%. The overall short duration of the sample may be due to the audience's fragmented reading habits, which drive the shortening of its duration, or may be due to the selection of the theme. The short videos of opera performances and the short videos of traditional opera peripheral displays are concentrated within 15 seconds, mainly on the details of the opera stage and the pictures of the opera peripheral, which are fast-paced and compact, and relatively short in length.

But the short videos of inheritors' stories and knowledge popularization are concentrated in the length of more than 15 seconds and less than 60 seconds, which may be compared with the short videos of 15 seconds. This may be due to the fact that compared to short videos of 15 seconds or less, they can express and narrate the story of the inheritors more completely and convey more accurate knowledge of opera, which makes it easier for people to understand traditional opera.

3.2 Popularity of Different Scenes

Through the analysis of the samples, the author found that the short videos of the opera category focus on the creation of various cultural scenes, bringing viewers different emotional experiences, both traditional theaters with rich regional characteristics and cultural heritage, as well as intimate family scenes and lifelike street scenes. Statistics show that opera short videos focus on the creation of traditional theater cultural scenes, accounting for 44%, followed by family scenes, accounting for 28%, while traditional street scenes appear the least frequently. This indicates that the creation of cultural scenes still favors the continuation of stage performances with a strong cultural atmosphere, which is the main position for the inheritance and dissemination of non-heritage culture.

4. Discussion

4.1 Video Hotness Presentation Results

By comparing the videos with a high number of likes, comments and retweets, and then combining them with the overall data analysis, it is found that there is no positive correlation between the number of likes and comments. It is indicating that there is no close connection between the number of likes and comments, and the number of retweets. In addition, the author analyzed the short videos with comments above 10,000, and the themes of the videos mostly combined with hot topics, such as traffic stars, hot events, Olympic Games, ice dunks, etc. It promoted people's communication and interaction, attracting a large number of users to participate in the discussion. And at the same time, when explaining some interesting knowledge, they often could attract more audiences and satisfy their curiosity.

Chinese traditional opera short videos have been gaining audience attention since the second half of 2018, peaking in 2019, making Tiktok not only the largest opera distribution platform, but also bringing more attention to Chinese traditional opera. The interaction index is decreasing in the first half of 2020 compared to 2019 due to the impact of the new crown pneumonia epidemic, but for 2020, the overall interaction index of short videos is on the rise [4]. On the whole, the overall number of retweets of opera short videos on the Tiktok platform is low, with 544 short videos with retweets below 500, accounting for 90.67%. Only 9.33% of short videos with retweets are above 500, with a total of 56. Compared with the number of retweets of other types of short videos, this number is low, which on the one hand shows that there is still a long way to go for the dissemination of traditional opera short videos. The content dissemination of traditional opera short videos has put forward higher requirements; on the other hand, it also shows that although Tiktok has realized the joint interaction with multiple platforms, but the power is not enough, and it has not really played this linkage dissemination advantage [5]. And by analyzing the short videos of traditional operas with retweets above 5000, the author found that most of them are demonstrations of operas, and such videos have exquisite and aesthetic artistic value. At the same time, it can be seen from the titles of these videos that they are very interactive, knowledgeable and attractive, and can fully attract audiences to share and spread.

4.2 Opera Communication in Different Cultural Scenes

By comparing videos with different cultural scenes, it is found that cultural scenes are also a major factor in determining the popularity of traditional opera short videos. The following three main cultural scenes appear in many traditional opera videos, traditional theater, family scenes and life-like street scenes.

Traditional theater as the material carrier of opera culture, has a strong regional. The traditional theater in the production process shows professionalism, and hands-on characteristics. The creation of traditional theater reproduces the most original traditional opera performance scenes in a unique living atmosphere, so that the audience has a natural sense of intimacy and enhances people's memory of the place produced by the hometown customs, ethnic and religious traditions, ancestral narratives and the four levels of personal nostalgia resonate [6]. The traditional theater scene is mainly a display of traditional opera skills. In this scene space, the traditional resident style and style of the old theater is preserved or constructed, usually containing several common things, a wooden theater stage, professional costumes and other physical furnishings, restoring and reproducing the face of traditional opera people's life.

The exhibition space of such intangible cultural heritage as traditional opera needs to provide living forms and cultural items from the folk, and traditional opera is inherently close to the material and spiritual world of the viewers. In the selection of the display space, it is necessary to avoid the spatial environment, which will widen the psychological distance with the viewers and lose the original appearance of the intangible cultural heritage and the best context for display and dissemination. It is necessary to choose an environment close to public life, such as a family space with closeness.

When watching the short video, the audience can feel the traditional atmosphere and nostalgic atmosphere of opera culture in the home space, and see the exhibits with regional flavor and familiarity at the same time. In the process of disseminating them, popularizing opera does not mean that the value of non-heritage is "low", traditional opera items originally come from people's daily life. One of the purposes of displaying them in family space is to let them continue to exist in people's hearts and lives or to be known, so that viewers can understand the value of their existence and enter millions of households. Their existence value and go into thousands of households [7]. As long as the content of the display can make the viewers like, support or share a certain action, the purpose of the dissemination of NRM is achieved.

The living street opera performance has gradually formed a street culture with historical background and profound cultural connotation after thousands of years of wind and rain. As a product of the development of civil society, street culture represents the locality of a city and has a certain humanistic style. Most of the streets appearing in traditional opera short videos have historical and cultural significance. An opera performance living in the streets will reflect the cultural progress of the city, preserving people's memory of culture and becoming the main position of urban culture and national culture.

4.3 Problems and Development Strategies of Opera-based Short Video Communication

In recent years, short videos have seen a spurt of development, with content covering all aspects of social life, political, economic, cultural, social, ecological, etc., showing the advantages of wide coverage, strong communication power and influence [8]. However, the development of any medium has two sides, the favorable side and the unfavorable side. By exploring the overall characteristics and values of traditional opera short videos, the author found some problems among them and put forward corresponding suggestions to make traditional opera short videos achieve long-term development.

With the rise of short video platforms and people's fragmented reading habits, more and more cell phone users are acquiring information through fragmented time, and the trend of fragmentation of content dissemination is becoming more and more obvious. Under such circumstances, the intensification of fragmentation may easily lead to a one-sided public perception of traditional opera. It stems from the fact that traditional opera has profound cultural connotations and consists of a combination of various cultural elements with a high degree of close connection between various elements, which may lead to incomplete reproduction of its inherent cultural values if these elements are fragmented and disseminated.

Although traditional opera has gained high attention and good communication effect on short video platforms, some of the content also show a certain trend of sensationalization. First, the overall survival of traditional opera is difficult. The description of suffering to gain sympathy becomes a major hot spot in the dissemination of opera today. Second, due to the cultural characteristics of opera, culture and deep history are more likely to trigger the affection of audiences with a certain level of cultural literacy to operator. Third, in line with the overall content ecology of the Tiktok short video platform. The essential feature of a short video is short and flat and in just a few dozen seconds, it is difficult to tell a complete traditional opera-related content. To solve this problem, people can release it in the form of a series of short films, which can take the production of traditional opera as the center, and carry out a series of production and dissemination of relevant contents. This not only improves the quantity and quality of the content, but also deepens the audience's impression through the repetition and extension of the theme, spreading local symbols and cultivating loyal users, taking care to prevent serious sensationalism.

Short videos need to pay attention to the visual means of expression. On the one hand, the application of footage should be more flexible and versatile, inserting pictures, subtitles, rich video materials. The short video integrates the extra-visual sound and background music into the video, and at the same time cleverly and innovatively uses short video technology such as screen rotation, clip and splice, segmentation and movement to spread the story behind the traditional opera or the cultural connotation it carries, so as to arouse people's love and attention to the traditional opera and traditional culture [9]. In addition, on the basis of audiovisual feeling, it can awaken, stimulate and reproduce people's memory and inheritance of traditional culture from the perspective of emotion, establish a close emotional connection between traditional culture and people, and enhance people's identification with their own culture [10].

5. Conclusion

Traditional opera is a treasure of Chinese culture and has a profound cultural connotation. It is an effective way to disseminate traditional opera culture through a short video, providing the possibility of commercializing traditional handicraft works, and at the same time realizing the precise poverty alleviation in some places through traditional opera. Of course, there are also some problems in the process of short video transmission of traditional opera. People's fragmented reading does not adapt to the rhythm of traditional opera. The output of excessively sensationalistic content also limits the spread of the video to a wider range, so traditional opera can be used as the center to produce and disseminate its related content in series. This not only improves the quantity and quality of content, but hopefully has implications for its future development. Besides, the dissemination and development of traditional opera have a long way to go. Whether short video dissemination will become a means to revitalize traditional opera culture and a lever to promote intangible cultural heritage requires further practice, exploration, and deserves further discussion and research.

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