

Research on International Communication of Chinese Outstanding Culture Based on TikTok

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Abstract: Nowadays, the international communication ability of Chinese outstanding culture is very limited, and the diffusion of Chinese culture has been in deficit for a long time. The emergence of TikTok has brought new opportunities for the international spread of outstanding Chinese culture. Tiktok has diversified communication subjects and vivid expression methods. However, due to the dilemma of Western discourse monopoly, malicious ban by overseas countries and rigid communication content, to improve the overseas communication ability of Chinese outstanding culture, it is necessary to improve the quality of communication content, improve the discourse power of international communication of Chinese outstanding culture and build a pattern of cross-cultural exchanges for common development.

Keywords: Tiktok, Chinese Outstanding Culture, International Communication.

1. Introduction

The general Secretary Xi Jinping pointed out that telling China's story well, spreading China's voice well, and presenting a true, three-dimensional and comprehensive China are important tasks for strengthening China's international communication ability. TikTok, an overseas version of "douyin" in China, officially launched in 2017. In 2018, TikTok reached as many as 150 countries and regions worldwide, becoming one of the most popular short video apps in Japan, Thailand, Germany and other countries, and topping the list of video products in APP stores in many countries. By 2021, TikTok had 1 billion active users worldwide and had been downloaded more than 3 billion times on the APP Store and Google Play. TikTok's overseas breakthrough has successfully broken the monopoly of Europe and the United States on international social media platforms, bringing new opportunities for the international spread of Chinese outstanding culture. It is very important to study how to use TikTok to promote the international spread of Chinese outstanding culture.

2. The Advantages of Tiktok to Spread Chinese Outstanding Culture

As a short video APP, Tiktok allows users to post self-created videos through simple clips. Compared with other apps that require high technology and strong professionalism, Tiktok is more easier and flexible for people. People can record their wonderful lives anytime and anywhere.

For years, China's main platforms for external communication -- Facebook, Twitter and YouTube -- are all owned by Western Internet giants, and they are hard to shake off the control of others in terms of communication channels. Tiktok, as a short video platform for Chinese Internet companies, has brought a lot of convenience and benefits to the spread of Chinese outstanding culture.

2.1. Diversification of Communication Subjects

In the early days, the main subjects of the external

communication of Chinese culture were propagandists of government agencies, official media, teachers of Confucius Institutes, etc. On the one hand, these official communication subjects were the main force of the international communication of Chinese culture. On the other hand, some overseas audiences were likely to reject them due to their official status. So the main body of communication tends to be official, and overseas audiences tend to reject it.

However, the production and release of videos on Tiktok are mainly by UGC. (User-created content, simply called "UGC"). UGC is a concept of content produced by professional media, which is "content created by non-professionals in non-professional production and distributed over the web, allowing the content to be publicly available". Tiktok conforms to the development trend of the new media era, where the main body of communication is gradually moving from single to multiple. The traditional international communication with the national government as the single body is shifting to the era of transnational communication dominated by the national government with the participation of multiple bodies. The study found that only four of the 164 most-liked videos on Tiktok under the hashtags "chinese" and "china" were official. The other 160 videos are produced by personal accounts. However, the author searched "china" and "chinese" as keywords on the popular foreign video platform YouTube, and the results were quite different. Among the 200 popular videos searched by the two keywords, only 26 videos were produced by personal accounts.[1] Individual users, rather than unofficial accounts, are the main force shaping China's national image on Tiktok. The national image of China created from the perspective of "the other" can attract users' attention more and penetrate into People's daily life in a specific narrative form, which will have a better communication effect.

2.2. The Communication Content's Characteristics of Visualization and Interest

The international communication of traditional Chinese culture mainly relies on Confucius Institutes and TV programs, etc., which have high requirements on the cultural

level, learning time and concentration of overseas audiences, and do not fit the popular reading habits of modern audiences, so the effect in the international communication of Chinese culture is limited. While the creative short videos on TikTok not only conform to the fragmented reading methods of modern people, but also present Chinese folk customs and customs in the form of life-style scenes or stories, making the international communication content of Chinese culture full of interest and arousing the curiosity and favorable impression of overseas audiences in exploring Chinese culture.

2.3. The Deep Interaction on Tiktok

The message area in short video is the second extension of social platform. Users can not only communicate with short video producers, but also communicate with audiences.[2] Compared with other apps and communication methods, Tiktok users can leave messages in the comment section and interact and communicate with video publishers and other users. Such a method will deepen people's impression and affection on the content transmitted, rather than merely superficial cultural communication and communication. Different cultures collide with different sparks, raising the heat of related topics and thus attracting more audience's attention. In the era of new media, with the popularity of short video, Chinese culture can arouse overseas audiences to know, feel and love Chinese culture in a wider range.

3. Dilemmas of Spreading Chinese Outstanding Culture on TikTok

Although Tiktok has many advantages to spread Chinese outstanding culture, there are many dilemmas to spread it to overseas, such as Western discourse monopoly, overseas countries' malicious ban, the rigid communication contents and so on.

3.1. Western Discourse Monopoly and Overseas Countries' Malicious Ban

Even though TikTok is popular abroad and provides a new outlet for global users to learn about the real China and Chinese culture, cultural hegemony continues to worsen China's international influence in the context of media globalization. One is that some Western politicians and academics have taken to attacking TikTok, with Neil Ferguson accusing TikTok not only of being an opiate for China's revenge on the West, but also of its imperialist ambitions.

For years, the West has suppressed China's voice through its own powerful voice. Constantly distorting China's national image to weaken China's international influence leads many foreign people to hold a negative attitude towards China's image and reject Chinese culture, which is not conducive to the spread of excellent Chinese culture. In July 2020, the Indian government banned 59 Chinese apps from the Indian market, including TikTok. In the same year, the US government cracked down on TikTok in a series of actions that went beyond normal international economic rules, first by threatening to ban TikTok, and then by intimidating and forcing TikTok to complete the sale within 45 days and pay a brokerage fee to the US Treasury.

3.2. Rigid Communication Contents

At present, most of the contents of the external communication of Chinese culture stick to the traditional culture, while the modern culture is seriously missing. The selection of the content of foreign cultural exchange must be all-round, including not only traditional culture, but also contemporary culture. "Going Global" culture focuses on traditional culture, while the dissemination of modern culture and popular culture is not strong enough. In the past, many international cultural exchange activities, including Confucius Institutes, focused on promoting various forms of excellent traditional culture such as Chinese calligraphy, Chinese martial arts, and Chinese Peking Opera, but lacked content reflecting the development of contemporary China and the hard work of the Chinese people. It was difficult to fully show the profound and unique charm of Chinese culture, resulting in a lack of comprehensive understanding of Chinese culture for overseas audiences.

There is a serious problem in the content of the influence of Chinese culture, that is, the international influence of our culture is more the influence of the traditional Chinese culture, rather than the cultural influence brought by the modern Chinese culture. For example, Newsweek magazine in the United States once conducted a survey. It is well known to netizens in Western countries that Chinese language, the Imperial Palace in Beijing, the Great Wall, Suzhou Gardens, Confucius, Taoism, Sun Tzu's Art of War, Peking Opera, Shaolin Temple, Kung fu and Chinese cooking are all symbols of traditional Chinese culture, which can represent Chinese culture. This situation will inevitably lead to the fact that foreign people cannot accurately understand Chinese culture, let alone understand Chinese cultural values. [3]

Although traditional skills such as wood carving and dough making have strong Chinese characteristics, these Chinese symbols are difficult to be understood by overseas audiences due to cultural discounts, which will inevitably affect the effect of external communication. Therefore, it is also necessary to start from the content and focus on the level of cultural common themes such as scenery with visual impact or entertainment activities, supplemented by Chinese cultural connotation, so as to improve the communication power more effectively. [4]

4. Methods to Improve the Spread of Chinese Outstanding Culture on TikTok

In the new era, applying TikTok platform to promote the international communication of Chinese culture innovatively is undoubtedly a new choice to break through the dilemma of gradually intensifying blockade of Chinese cultural export by European and American media. However, at present, Chinese culture has encountered bottlenecks in the communication of TikTok platform, and it is necessary to further explore ways for TikTok to spread Chinese culture abroad.

4.1. Optimize the Content of Communication and Improve the Quality of Content

Quality content is the best way to arouse users' love for Chinese culture.

Firstly, TikTok can introduce domestic mainstream media and professional cultural content producers through

cooperation mechanism, so as to build a professional production team to spread Chinese culture. In China, a large number of professional media such as People's Daily Online have entered the short video APP platform represented by Tiktok to guide public opinion. The total number of followers of China Daily and People's Daily on overseas official social media platforms is far higher than that of western mainstream media such as the New York Times and CNN. It can be seen that the introduction of TikTok platform into domestic mainstream media will not cause resentment among overseas audiences. At the same time, special discussions on China will be set up to deepen overseas audiences' understanding of Chinese culture. For example, in the case of hot cotton events in Xinjiang, the platform sets up discussion topics to arouse in-depth discussions on Chinese culture among overseas audiences. The communicators can not only make short videos about Xinjiang ethnic customs, Xinjiang culture and other hot topics to show the real Xinjiang to overseas audiences, but also use the short video comment area to guide the audience to understand the real China and Chinese culture. As for the distorted news about China's epidemic prevention and control that foreign people get from foreign media, Tiktok can show the real China to overseas audiences by photographing the real prevention and control measures of Chinese grassroots people.

Secondly, to innovate the content of our foreign cultural communication. One of the reasons why the effectiveness of our foreign cultural communication needs to be improved is that our cultural content is too simple, mostly staying in some cultural symbols, cultural ideas of blunt communication, such cultural communication can not really into the heart of the audience.

Thirdly, for excellent traditional culture, we should spread it in innovative ways, instead of just staying in the traditional transmission mode solidified in the past. As a content production subject with high-quality resources and professional authority, it keeps the bottom line of traditional cultural values, guarantees the quality of cultural content, creates short video quality programs, and enables cultural relics hidden in the forbidden palace and classics stored in the shelf to have an equal dialogue with audiences through friendly, interesting and modern expression, so as to achieve high-quality supply of cultural content. [5]

4.2. Enhance Discourse Power in International Communication of Chinese Outstanding Culture

Although TikTok promotes the innovation and advancement of the international communication of Chinese culture, the international discourse situation still exists, which is strong in the west and weak in the east, bringing numerous obstacles to the international communication of Chinese culture. Hinder. Therefore, to promote the international discourse of our country needs to do the following two aspects.

First, accelerate technological and innovation, and seize the initiative of international discourse in cyberspace. Only by strengthening technological research and development can we grasp the window of external communication, use social media to spread Chinese culture and enhance its international influence. Second, we should make good use of international rules and order to protect our legitimate rights and interests. In the face of the extortion and usurpation of TikTok by the US government, Chinese overseas social media should be good at using international rules and order to safeguard their

legitimate rights and interests, and maintain the international image of Chinese enterprises in the global communication, rather than handing over the right to speak in the international communication of Chinese culture.

4.3. Build a Pattern of Cross-cultural Exchanges for Common Development

The fact that TikTok has been repeatedly "rounded up" by other countries is the result of the contradiction between international communication and geopolitics. The development of information globalization brings opportunities for international communication and the possibility for the realization of united geopolitics. However, with the expansion of geopolitics to the Internet, information has become a strategic resource, information dissemination is easy to form "asymmetric interdependence", increasing the power of the dominant party, deepening the information geopolitical pattern dominated by conflict. Therefore, faced with this complex contradiction, China should join hands with other countries to actively build a pattern of cross-cultural communication for common development. Only by building a cross-cultural exchange pattern of common development can Chinese culture be spread more widely and for longer on TikTok. Specifically, the concept of unity of justice and interests in Chinese culture and the thinking mode of seeking common ground while putting aside differences should be strengthened to make overseas audiences realize that China does not agree that a strong country must be hegemonic and does not approve of cultural hegemonism, so as to promote the formation of a cultural exchange pattern of mutual respect and common development among international audiences. We should also rely on the global partnership network woven by major-country diplomacy with Chinese characteristics, especially with countries along the Belt and Road as the strategic focus, and work together with them to build a pattern of cross-cultural exchanges for common development, so as to spread Chinese culture in a quiet way.

5. Conclusion

Tiktok has many advantages to spread Chinese outstanding culture. We should make better use of the opportunity brought by the platform to spread Chinese outstanding culture. However, Tiktok also has certain limitations. We should make use of the opportunities provided by TikTok to correct them, break through the difficulties and limitations of the platform, improve the quality of content, and make the dissemination of content more vivid and interesting. Besides, we should not only stay in excellent traditional culture, but also create and spread excellent modern Chinese culture, so as to break cultural hegemony. Constructing the pattern of cross-cultural communication, thus enhancing the international image of our country and the power of discourse.

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