

Research on Optimization Strategies for the International Communication of China's Intangible Cultural Heritage from a Cross-Cultural Perspective

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Abstract: Against the backdrop of increasingly frequent cross-cultural exchanges and the rapid development of new media technologies, the channels for the international dissemination of intangible cultural heritage (ICH) continue to expand, and the forms of dissemination are constantly innovating, creating more favorable opportunities for ICH to reach the international stage. However, it also faces numerous practical challenges, such as cultural cognitive barriers and superficial dissemination models, which make it difficult for the cultural value of ICH to effectively penetrate overseas markets. Based on cross-cultural communication theory and considering the current development status of China's ICH international dissemination, this paper systematically analyzes the pain points and dilemmas in the dissemination process. It proposes optimization strategies for the international communication of ICH that are suitable for cross-cultural contexts from the aspects of cultural core exploration, dissemination model innovation, channel system construction, and international cooperation deepening. The aim is to enhance the international communication power and influence of China's ICH and help outstanding traditional Chinese culture go global and integrate into the global civilization system.

Keywords: Cross-cultural perspective; Intangible cultural heritage; International communication; Cultural communication optimization

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1. Introduction

With the development of globalization and the iterative innovation of new media technologies, promoting cross-cultural communication has entered a new stage of development, opening up a broad space for the international dissemination of China's excellent traditional culture ^[1]. Intangible cultural heritage (ICH)

embodies the humanistic spirit and life wisdom accumulated over millennia by the Chinese nation. It serves as an important vehicle for mutual learning between Chinese and foreign civilizations and is a core resource for enhancing China's cultural soft power and shaping its international cultural image. Currently, China's international channels for ICH dissemination continue to expand, and the forms of dissemination are becoming increasingly diverse. However, constrained by factors such as differences in cultural contexts between China and foreign countries, superficial dissemination models, and insufficient localization adaptation, most ICH dissemination remains at a superficial level, making it difficult to achieve in-depth cultural output and cross-cultural emotional resonance ^[2]. Based on this, this paper systematically reviews the current status and practical challenges of ICH international dissemination from the perspective of cross-cultural communication theory and proposes targeted optimization strategies to provide practical references for high-quality international dissemination of ICH in the new era.

2. The context and value of ICH international dissemination

ICH carries the historical memories, humanistic spirit, and life wisdom of a nation. It is an important component of human cultural diversity and a core medium for civilizations of different countries and ethnic groups to engage in mutual learning. Compared to traditional tangible cultural heritage, ICH is more life-oriented and emotional. Currently, global cross-cultural exchanges are becoming increasingly normalized and diversified, and the rapid development of digital new media technologies has completely restructured the global cultural dissemination landscape, providing new development opportunities for the international dissemination of ICH ^[3].

From the perspective of national development, the international dissemination of ICH is a key path to enhancing national cultural soft power and building a positive international image. In the context of increasingly fierce international cultural competition, leveraging vibrant ICH for external dissemination can break Western stereotypes of Chinese culture and present a true, multi-dimensional, and vivid image of Chinese culture to the world. At the same time, the international dissemination of ICH helps preserve global cultural diversity, breaks the monopoly of a single cultural hegemony, and promotes equal dialogue, exchanges, and mutual learning among different civilizations ^[4].

From the perspective of the communication industry, the popularization of new media and technologies has completely transformed the ecological landscape of ICH dissemination. New media platforms such as short videos, social media, and live streaming offer advantages like rapid dissemination, broad coverage, strong interactivity, and low barriers to entry, overcoming the limitations of traditional offline dissemination and geographical constraints of ICH. This allows niche and regional ICH skills to be showcased to a global audience. Meanwhile, the application of digital technologies such as VR, AR, and AI has redefined the presentation forms and experiential scenarios of ICH, injecting new vitality into its international dissemination.

3. Current status of China's ICH international dissemination from a cross-cultural perspective

In recent years, China has placed great emphasis on the protection and international dissemination of ICH. Various regions have deeply explored local ICH resources and created a series of high-quality ICH

dissemination works through integrated media platforms, steadily improving the overall scale and quality of ICH international dissemination. According to public data from the Ministry of Culture and Tourism and industry statistics on ICH dissemination, China has over 100,000 ICH items at all levels, including 43 world-class ICH items, ranking among the highest in the world. These rich ICH resources provide solid content support for international dissemination. With the popularity of domestic and international social platforms such as Douyin, YouTube, and Facebook, China's ICH international dissemination has formed a multi-channel, multi-form, and wide-coverage dissemination pattern, breaking away from the single model of traditional offline exhibitions and academic exchanges and gradually moving toward popularization, digitization, and regularization ^[5].

In terms of content dissemination, the current materials for ICH international dissemination are extremely rich, with widespread dissemination of various ICH items such as traditional embroidery, ceramic firing, traditional martial arts, folk dances, and tea-making techniques. Various new media platforms focus on the visual aesthetics and technical characteristics of ICH, producing a large amount of short videos, graphics, and live streaming content that can quickly capture the attention of overseas audiences.

In terms of dissemination platforms, China has established a three-dimensional dissemination system consisting of "official media + overseas social media + civilian platforms + offline events." Official mainstream media continuously produce high-quality ICH dissemination works for external audiences, while international social platforms such as YouTube and Instagram have become core arenas for ICH to go global. Various regions regularly organize overseas exhibitions, cultural festivals, and expos for ICH, initially forming an online-offline integrated dissemination pattern ^[6].

In terms of dissemination subjects, the dissemination forces have expanded from traditional government and professional media to diverse groups such as ICH inheritors, civilian self-media bloggers, overseas experience seekers, and foreign enthusiasts. The perspectives of civilian dissemination subjects are more grounded, and their content is more life-oriented, effectively compensating for the rigidity of official narratives and narrowing the distance with overseas audiences. However, civilian dissemination subjects lack professional cross-cultural communication thinking, and their content creation is often arbitrary, leading to issues such as over-entertainment and one-sided interpretation of ICH, which can easily trigger cultural misunderstandings.

4. Problems and challenges in China's ICH international dissemination from a cross-cultural perspective

4.1. Cross-cultural cognitive differences and risks of cultural barriers and misinterpretations

According to Edward T. Hall's high-context and low-context culture theory, Chinese ICH is rooted in a high-context cultural system, where cultural connotations are implicitly conveyed through national history, collective memory, and folk symbols, requiring audiences to deeply understand them in the context of cultural backgrounds. However, audiences in most overseas countries are more accustomed to straightforward, concrete, and structured information expression, making it difficult for them to understand the subtle and reserved Eastern culture. This cultural difference has become a core barrier to ICH international dissemination. For example, traditional folk ICH items such as sacrificial ceremonies, festival customs, and traditional patterns carry cultural connotations of blessings, reunion, and the pursuit of virtue and kindness.

However, overseas audiences often view them merely as characteristic performances or decorative patterns, unable to perceive the underlying humanistic values. The philosophical concepts in some ICH skills, such as “overcoming hardness with softness” in traditional martial arts and “craftsmanship perseverance” in traditional crafts, are difficult to convey to overseas audiences through superficial displays, resulting in ICH dissemination being superficial and its cultural values not effectively landing ^[7].

4.2. Superficial dissemination ecology and uneven content quality

The current mainstream short video dissemination model, with its generally short duration, can only showcase the highlights of ICH skills and cannot fully present the production process, historical origins, and cultural system of ICH, resulting in fragmented and one-sided information received by audiences. Overseas audiences can only see the visual appearance of ICH and find it difficult to form a systematic cultural cognition or deeply understand the core values of ICH. At the same time, some dissemination subjects, in pursuit of traffic and popularity, excessively cater to the trend of entertainment-oriented dissemination and adapt ICH content in a vulgar and entertaining way. Some creations deliberately exaggerate the novelty of ICH, weaken its cultural seriousness and historical significance, and even distort the connotations of ICH and misinterpret traditional skills. In addition, most ICH dissemination works adopt a fixed model of “skill display + simple explanation”, with monotonous narrative techniques and a lack of innovation, making it difficult to form differentiated competitiveness amid the vast amount of global cultural content.

4.3. Shortcomings in dissemination elements and insufficient localization adaptation capabilities

ICH culture contains a large number of exclusive technical terms, folk vocabulary, and cultural metaphors, which have strong local cultural attributes and are difficult to find precise corresponding vocabulary in foreign language translations, easily leading to information distortion and semantic deviations. For example, the exclusive technique names and folk implications of various traditional operas and traditional crafts cannot convey their deep connotations through simple literal translations, resulting in a vague understanding by overseas audiences and greatly affecting the dissemination effects. The foreign language explanations in some ICH dissemination works are rigid and stereotypical, not conforming to the language expression habits of overseas audiences, further widening the cultural distance. In addition, most current ICH international dissemination content adopts a domestic creation model and is directly released on overseas platforms without being localized according to the cultural habits, aesthetic preferences, and cognitive characteristics of the target audiences. This one-size-fits-all dissemination model lacks targeted localization planning and adaptation, making it difficult to evoke emotional resonance from overseas audiences and resulting in limited dissemination effects and influence ^[8].

4.4. Fragmented dissemination system and insufficient synergistic dissemination effects

Currently, China’s ICH international dissemination has not yet formed a systematic and integrated dissemination system. Various dissemination subjects and channels operate independently, with scattered resources and insufficient synergy. Official media dissemination is authoritative but has a rigid narrative model and formal style, lacking young and life-oriented content, and has limited attraction to overseas young audiences. Civilian self-media content is flexible and vivid but lacks professionalism and standardization, with weak dissemination credibility. Overseas social platform dissemination has broad coverage but

lacks precise operational planning, with fragmented content delivery and difficulty in forming sustained dissemination heat. At the same time, ICH dissemination has the problem of “emphasizing output over interaction”, with most dissemination remaining at the level of one-way content delivery and lacking two-way interaction and in-depth exchanges with overseas audiences. There is also no closed-loop mechanism for audience feedback and content optimization.

5. Optimization strategies for the international dissemination of China’s intangible cultural heritage from a cross-cultural perspective

5.1. Delving deep into the cultural core

To completely overcome cross-cultural cognitive barriers, the key lies in transcending the limitations of local cultural narratives, extracting universal and shared cultural values of intangible cultural heritage (ICH), and effectively transforming high-context cultural connotations into low-context dissemination scenarios. Firstly, it is essential to deeply dissect the cultural core of ICH, strip away overly niche and region-specific cultural symbols, and uncover common emotions and values pursued by all humanity, thereby weakening dissemination barriers caused by cultural differences. Secondly, it is necessary to completely abandon rigid, scientific, and didactic narratives and adopt a life-oriented narrative model that combines “individual stories + skill demonstrations + value elevation.” Taking real stories of ordinary people, overseas experience seekers, and ICH inheritors as entry points, abstract cultural connotations can be carried through vivid character stories. Meanwhile, considering differences between high-context and low-context cultures, obscure cultural interpretations should be simplified, and straightforward, concrete, and structured expressions should be adopted to enable overseas audiences to quickly understand the cultural connotations of ICH. Thirdly, lightweight and interesting ICH clips should be output through short video platforms to attract the attention of mass audiences. Additionally, in-depth and systematic ICH content should be created through documentaries, long videos, and special columns to interpret the historical origins, craftsmanship details, and cultural values of ICH, enabling overseas audiences to achieve in-depth cultural cognition while browsing casually ^[9].

5.2. Accelerating innovation in dissemination models

To truly realize the value of the international dissemination of ICH, relevant entities and institutions should leverage digital technologies to break through traditional dissemination limitations and construct intelligent, immersive, and precise new dissemination models. On one hand, immersive technologies such as VR, AR, and 3D modeling should be actively utilized to create virtual ICH experience scenarios. For example, for highly practical ICH items such as ceramic firing, traditional embroidery, and ancient architectural construction, virtual experience platforms can be built to allow overseas audiences to experience the production processes of ICH through online interactions, breaking through temporal and spatial limitations and directly feeling the exquisite skills of ICH, thereby significantly enhancing audience participation and memory points. On the other hand, AI technology should be actively employed to achieve precise and localized dissemination. Intelligent translation technologies should be used to optimize the translation effects of professional terms and cultural metaphors in ICH, and annotations and interpretations should be added to characteristic cultural vocabulary to solve the problem of language distortion. Meanwhile, big data and machine learning technologies should be relied upon to analyze the aesthetic preferences, content needs, and browsing habits of overseas audiences in different countries and regions, precisely divide audience segments,

and achieve customized content delivery.

5.3. Improving the dissemination system

To overcome the problem of fragmented dissemination, it is necessary to integrate various dissemination resources and build a three-dimensional dissemination system featuring “official leadership, media collaboration, civilian participation, and overseas empowerment.” Firstly, the construction of official dissemination platforms should be strengthened. Relying on local international dissemination centers and overseas social media matrices, ICH dissemination brands with Chinese and local characteristics should be created. Consistent and systematic content output should be adhered to ensure the professionalism, authority, and uniqueness of content dissemination, and firmly grasp the discourse power of ICH international dissemination. Secondly, cross-border collaboration among mainstream media should be deepened. Cooperation and collaboration with overseas mainstream media, overseas social platforms, and international cultural institutions should be strengthened. Through content reposting, joint creation, special program broadcasts, TV weeks, cultural festivals, and other forms, ICH content should be promoted to enter overseas mainstream dissemination channels, leveraging overseas mature dissemination resources to expand the international influence of ICH.

5.4. Deepening international cooperation

The core of cross-cultural dissemination lies in localization adaptation. Only by fitting into the cultural contexts, aesthetic habits, and life scenarios of target audiences can effective cultural landing be achieved. Therefore, relevant entities should establish localized content creation mechanisms and customize differentiated dissemination content for overseas audiences in different regions. Considering the cultural taboos, aesthetic preferences, and value concepts of different countries, ICH dissemination content, narrative techniques, and presentation forms should be locally adapted to avoid cultural conflicts, fit into local dissemination contexts, and enable ICH culture to truly integrate into the cognitive systems of local audiences. Meanwhile, transnational cultural cooperation should be deepened, and a regular exchange mechanism should be constructed. A diversified cooperation model of “media alliances + cultural festivals + academic exchanges” should be adopted to establish long-term cooperative relationships with cultural institutions, universities, and media in various countries and carry out joint ICH exhibitions, skill exchanges, and academic discussion activities^[10]. For example, overseas craftsmen and cultural scholars can be invited to exchange ICH culture in China, while Chinese ICH inheritors can be organized to go abroad to conduct offline skill demonstrations and teachings, achieving two-way cultural exchanges and reducing cultural misunderstandings. Finally, the cross-border integrated dissemination of ICH should be actively promoted. ICH should be deeply integrated with tourism, cultural and creative industries, film and television, fashion, and other fields to create diversified ICH dissemination carriers. Through forms such as overseas cultural and creative exhibitions with ICH themes, ICH fashion shows, and the incorporation of ICH elements in film and television, ICH culture can step out of single cultural dissemination scenarios and integrate into the daily lives of overseas audiences, promoting the truly international and regular dissemination of excellent traditional Chinese culture.

6. Conclusion

In conclusion, the international dissemination of ICH is not simply cultural output but an equal dialogue and

emotional resonance based on cross-cultural contexts. In the new era of deep integration of globalization and digitalization, the international dissemination of ICH should be based on cross-cultural dissemination laws, abandon a single output mindset, and be supported by digital technologies, with localization adaptation as the key and multi-faceted collaboration as the path. It should continuously delve deep into the cultural core of ICH, innovate dissemination models, improve the dissemination system, and deepen international cooperation to continuously break through cultural barriers between China and foreign countries. This will enable Chinese ICH to transcend geographical and cultural limitations and truly go global, injecting Chinese strength into the development of world cultural diversity.

Disclosure statement

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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