

Cultural Construction of National Image in China Mosaic

Ruiming Yang¹

¹College of Film, Television & Media, Guangxi Arts University, Nanning, 530022, China

2493700715@qq.com

ABSTRACT

In a world of increasing globalization, the cultural image is having a more and more prominent influence on national interests and the pattern of international relations. After analyzing the content of the short video news program China Mosaic, it is found that it has constructed a culture mosaic of displaying the China national image from four layers of “traditional culture”, “modern culture”, “future China” and “real society”, promoted the dialogue between China and the international community, formed a consensus on values, and finally outlined the cultural image of China on the international stage.

Keywords: China Mosaic, National Image, External Communication, Cross-culture

1. INTRODUCTION

In the external communication system of China, foreign media is an important power and it plays an important role in shaping the national image, safeguarding the national interest, and communicating the Chinese culture. In the new century, with the rapid development of new media technology, Chinese media have voiced out relying on the international new media platforms. Domestic mainstream media represented by Xinhua News Agency, People's Daily, China Network, CGTV and so on have successively registered accounts on Facebook, YouTube and other platforms to publish Chinese news, and try to present a more authentic and diverse image of China to overseas users in a more infectious and targeted manner.

For a country, the national image is the overall presentation of its soft and hard power in the global field. Because of its intangible identification and appeal, culture can often break through the cognitive barrier formed by ideological differences, break the cognitive barriers of international communication in an imperceptible manner, so as to present a real, three-dimensional and comprehensive image of China. In the process, a series of overseas-oriented news programs represented by China Network China Mosaic actively innovated the discourse expression of foreign cultural communication, relied on the international new media platform, adopted the value concepts and expression means integrating both China and overseas countries to carry out multi-directional and multi-layer image construction to the Chinese culture and modern life, with an expectation of changing the present situation that the overseas society is having misunderstanding on the Chinese image and value.

2. ANNOTATE THE IMAGE OF CHINA FROM “MOSAIC”

The scholars Dan Nimmo and R.L. Savage believe that, image is exactly “the understanding and attitude of the people to the targeted object, event or other structures” [1] and the brain extracts the image of the thing once again. What is acquired is not the cognition of things in the brain, instead it is the characteristics of fragmented images. Therefore, the “national image” can be considered as the overall impression and evaluation of a country to the public in other countries, and it is “the perception or projection of the characteristics and attributes of the public in other countries to the country”[2].

China Mosaic is an English current affair brief comment program produced by China Network. Its English name is China Mosaic, namely, the mosaic of China. This research takes the 235 programs released from the very beginning in 2015 to September 26, 2019 as the research object, discussing the characteristics and strategies of the program by using Chinese cultural symbols to construct the national image. Each program is broadcast for more than 100,000 times on overseas online platforms, and its contents involve several topics such as politics, economics, military, diplomacy, culture, and society. It tells Chinese stories to audiences through short videos, responding to international concerns, and expressing Chinese views, and displaying the diversified images of China.

Mosaic means to use many colored materials in small squares to create a large image or picture. China Mosaic exactly gets this name because of this. It means to “tell Chinese stories, express Chinese viewpoints through small mosaics, and finally piece them into an entire China”. [3] Compared to the documentary-type grand narration and full-view description, China Mosaic separates the Chinese viewpoints and features into characteristic fragments, enabling the outside world to accumulate the previous cognition and present representations, thus forming the

overall viewpoint on China. "China Mosaic" vividly shows the characteristics of China Mosaic, which is a network news short video to communicate to the outside: The program presents the different aspects of Chinese society from multiple angles, showing the differences and characteristics between the different elements that make up an overall image, reflecting the vitality and energy of modern China. The program adopts the western languages to tell small stories in the development process of China, pursues the overall richness and identity, weakens the "direct" propaganda logic, highlights the cultural dialogue, and enables audiences to participate in the observation and thinking of the overall image. The program emphasizes the time effectiveness, tells stories and accomplishes series. Each episode has a complete story, straightforward and clear viewpoints, which can visually display the characteristics of the specific elements and distinct styles of the program, show the overall images of Chinese culture and society in a macroscopic manner, thus forming the lasting influential force.

3. PRESENT THE CHINESE CULTURE FROM "MULTIPLE LAYERS"

Culture is the sum of spiritual activities and products relative to politics and economy, and is the support that cannot be ignored in shaping the image of a country. At present, the national image of China shows obvious structural inconsistency, and "rapid economic development" has become the mainstream impression of various countries in the world to China. However, it is a common occurrence that they tend to have misunderstanding and defaming of the Chinese culture and value. In order to gain the understanding and recognition of the whole world in the process of modernization, China has to take the initiative to promote the construction of cultural image, find cultural positioning in the space of diversified culture in the world, builds the culture utterance right, and changes the cognition of the international society to the Chinese tradition and future development from different layers.

3.1. Present Chinese Connotation from the Traditional Culture

As the cultural accumulation of a country and a nation, traditional culture is an important basis for explaining the culture and values of a country and nation. Nowadays, as Chinese and Western civilizations are mutually exchanging and infiltrating, the cognition of the Chinese society on the traditional cultural image is gradually blurred, and the connotation of the entire Chinese culture is reduced to the single cultural images, such as the Spring Festival, dumplings, couplets and so on, catering the imagination of the outside world to mysterious, backward but flirtatious countryside of China consciously or unconsciously.

Constructing and presenting the image of China with the traditional cultural values can not only provide value support for the Chinese modernization process and promote the cohesion and vitality of the Chinese nation, but also enrich the common cultural ecology of the international society. 36 episodes of China Mosaic involve the traditional cultural topics, such as the traditional festivals, as well as the traditional Chinese living means and dining habits. For instance, in episode 156 Mourn the Ancestors on "Qingming": Communicating the Departed and Empowering the Living, it compares the Mexico Day of the Dead in the animation Coco with the China Qingming Festival at the very beginning, introduces the source and sacrificial traditions of the Qingming Festival, points out that the Qingming Festival is the only festival which is both the custom festival and one of the twenty-four solar terms, and extends to the family sense and culture ascription of the Chinese people.

Traditional culture has its specific historical background. In the process of external communication, it is required not only to accurately express the cultural connotation of the nation, but also combine with the language context of the other party, so as to form a culture connection. The program usually starts with a recent event to introduce comparison or interpretation of traditional Chinese culture, help foreign audiences understand Chinese culture, use expressions with Chinese characteristics to make news with Chinese style and increase cultural appeal, strive to realize the modern reconstruction of traditional cultural symbols in the process of integrating the traditional cultural values into the international disclosure, thereby enhancing the understanding of the international society on the Chinese traditional values, and constructing the image of a "modernized ancient civilization".

3.2. Have Interflow of Mankind Value Through Modern Life

In the background of rapid economic development, there is a great difference between the understanding of the western word on China and the practical condition of China. On the one hand, the West is suspicious of China's development, and is confused about China's social lifestyle and cultural value orientation; on the other hand, the international community also requires the Chinese culture to participate in the transformation process of the global society, so as to provide the "Chinese experience" for constructing the modern social system, life practice and even system reform. The western world needs to understand what is happening in China today in a simple way.

In the programs of China Mosaic, there are 35 episodes presenting the modern life status and living style of China, involving physical exercise, modern art, mobile consumption, social status and so on. For instance, in episode 155 Live Video Streaming in Mountains(March 29, 2018) introduces a primary school having only three students in a remote mountainous area in Gansu, and the

means of using the internet to accept better education. Education is an important issue for sustainable development. As one of the countries with the best poverty reduction effect, the experience in poverty alleviation and fair education can help change the impression of the outside world on the poverty and backwardness of China. In the meanwhile, it is conducive for constructing the modern image of the Chinese society of attaching social fairness in seeking for development, helping the outside world have a new understanding on the present status and policies of China.

The construction of modern life for the image of Chinese culture lies in increasing the appeal of local popular culture and the international resonance of Chinese values. Different countries have different development models and paths. National conditions differ in thousands of ways, but the desire for a better life is universal. With the help of the common cultural experience and mature cultural language of human beings, the era change of Chinese culture can be presented, thus being tally with the overall goal of constructing the image of Chinese culture.

3.3. Integrate Future China into Global Prospect

The image construction of the "future China" requires to seek the unity between Chinese culture and other cultures in terms of value and emotion, so that Chinese culture will contribute to the common interests of mankind, thus realizing the trust of the international community to China, and accumulating global understanding of China. How much Chinese culture can contribute to human progress and global governance will affect the status of the image of China in the international community. Therefore, shaping the development prospects of "future China", establishing a comparative reference between Chinese culture and world values, and motivating the value integration between the Chinese culture and world reform will be helpful for displaying the positive strength of China in changing the global life.

There are 17 episodes in China Mosaic introducing the contributions made by China in international issue and mankind progress, presenting the positive, vital and responsible image of China as one member of the human destiny. In episode 144 Comprehensive Ban of Ivory Trade in China: "A New-Year Gift to Mankind"(January 11, 2018), the activity of comprehensively stopping the commercial processing and sales of ivory and ivory products and listing China into the ivory trade ban countries will have the significance be expanded to the protection of the world wild animals and maintenance of the mankind living environment. The program shows that China has made numerous contributions in protecting the ecological environment, reflecting the "constantly increasing care and responsibility of China to the mankind living environment".

The image construction of "future China" in China Mosaic demonstrates the localization of utterance expression and

the otherization of frame structure. The program actively uses the expressions that are consistent with the characteristics of the country and represents the own reality to convey the image of China, avoids using others' words to launch the own meaning, explores to create China's new identity and role in the international community, shapes the human destiny image of peaceful development and peaceful contribution, and transforms the Chinese experience into world contribution.

3.4. Increase International Mutual Trust from the Real Society

In order to construct a more genuine and believable image of China and change the existing perception of China by the outside world, it is required to fully present the social culture and display the moral concepts in modern society. The program shall not only insist on providing positive reports and showing China's achievements since the reform and opening up, but also not avoid mentioning the contradictions and problems in development, respond positively to the query of the outside world and reflect the confidence of China.

Compared with some western countries, the report on social negative news made by the foreign countries in China lags in timeliness or the report is made in a selective manner. Since it cannot respond to external concerns timely, the best time to dominate the discourse and present the truth is usually missed. In the program of China Mosaic, there are many news that actively "uncovers the shortcomings" in social issues. As a reflection and response to China's development, such "self-disclosure" reports grasp the common interests and values of mankind, and enable audiences to perceive the willingness and ability of China to take responsibility and correct mistakes, thereby alleviating negative attitudes towards China and enhancing mutual trust.

There are concerns, suspicions, misreadings and misleading of the international society to the development of China, therefore, it is required to build confidence, relieve suspicion and expand consensus in the process of building the national image. In episode 148 Why can China Maintain a Safe and Stable Society? (February 7, 2018), it starts with "In China, you can go outside for a late snack, introduces the achievements of China 40 years after the reform and opening-up policy, combines the "rational construction" of logic demonstration and "value resonance" of emotional exchange, actively presents the Chinese society and national proposition, sets topics to eliminate misunderstandings, and builds a sound national image and public opinion atmosphere for economic development and cultural exchange.

4. CONSTRUCT VALUE CONSENSUS IN DIALOGUE

Dialogue is a kind of meaning stream flowing among

people. [4] In dialogue, the mankind society completes the mutual exchange, cognition and knowledge sharing, seeks for understanding difference and reaches the value consensus with different civilizations. Bakhtin proposes that the subject construction of mankind must be realized in the dialogue between self and others, and one's own thought can only be formed after communicating with others' thoughts. Therefore, the meaning does not exist in the writing and presentation of the news, but completes the construction of the shared significance in communicating the common understanding of the two parties on the news. The construction of the national image of China is to utilize its own cultural attraction and influence to endow richer connotations to national interests, promote the two parties to participate in dialogue, and form a value consensus. The ultimate goal is not to shape the thin image of the country, but to try to outline the significance of China on the international stage. In this process, it is required to avoid the self-distortion and deliberate simplification of "Orientalism", instead it is necessary to create an environment of mutual understanding based on its own standpoints and cultural soil, and use "authenticity" and "accuracy" to realize the exchange of views and ideas.

It is required to confront the cultural difference of the outside world in constructing the national image, discuss the topics with disputes and directly face different voices. In the latest episode of China Mosaic, the topic is directly led to the internet management policies of China. In the program, the presenter explains that: "Internet policies must promote development and ensure safety, guarantee the freedom of the netizens and maintain the network order. This is exactly the doctrine of internet governance in line with its own practical condition". Although there is still a strong "diplomatic rhetoric" in terms, it is an active dialogue explaining the viewpoints of China to the outside world, providing some possibility for seeking value consensus and accepting mutual values.

5. CONCLUSION

The success of China Mosaic has the reference significance for the overseas communication of China. It not only introduces the cultural resources and lifestyles of China, shows the cultural characteristics of China, but also is good at using contrasts to seek for the connection and commonality between Chinese culture and Western civilization at the same time. In addition, it takes the presence of the Chinese style and features as the intermediate for the mediation and dialogue of the international society, and ultimately realizes the mutual understanding. If we only emphasize the value and rationality of "universal commonality", ignore the particularity of the culture of the country, and overemphasize commonality, we will abandon the objective reality of cultural differences and lose the impetus of cultural dialogue.

The cultural construction of the national image depends on its own cultural resources and the effective overseas

communication mechanism. In terms of overseas communication, the purpose is not only to offer information, but to provide analysis and interpretation of information for audiences in the specific cultural environment. Compared with the "monologicistic propaganda" of assessing others by itself, it is more necessary to preserve the uniqueness of the two parties on the basis of mutual respect, form an equal and free dialogue and communication relationship. It should fit the cultural value and social life of the Chinese, accord with China's own development achievements and international contributions, and rejuvenate the modern vitality of ancient China. At the same time, it should also actively respond to the queries of the international community, gain respect and understanding, and pave the dialogue basis for the joint world development.

At present, the program of China Mosaic still has the problems of undefined positioning and rigid expression, unsophisticated audience division, and level difference in the emotional expression of the Chinese and English texts. China has a rich and splendid traditional culture, as well as an innovative and vital modern style. In the production of similar programs, in addition to the oral text broadcasting, richer acoustics, lens language and animation effect can be coordinated, the means of "a picture says a thousand words" can be also used to enrich the language presentation, thus enabling the viewpoint expression to be more acceptable, helping construct the real, rich, sincere and responsible national image.

REFERENCES

- [1] Nimmo Dan, Savage Robert Candidates and their images: Concepts, methods, and findings. Pacific Palisades, Goodyear Pub.co,CA, 1976.
- [2] Feng Huiling, Hu Baijing, Beijing Olympics and the Construction of Cultural Chinese National Imag, Journal of Renmin University of China, 141(04) 2008 16-25.
- [3] Liu Qinjuan, China Mosaic, Tell Stories from Small Entry Points and Establish Brands in Big Pattern, in: Network Communication, 164(7) (2017) 66-67.
- [4] David Boume, Lee Nichol, Dialogue, Education Science Publishing House, Beijing, China, 2009, pp. 6.