

How to Narrate China's Stories Overseas Via Social Media - Take the Dissemination of "Tang Palace Night Banquet" as an Example

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ABSTRACT

Domestically, telling Chinese stories and exporting Chinese culture through social media can enhance people's political and cultural identity internally. Externally, it is conducive to establishing foreign exchange position and making Chinese voice heard. The "Tang Palace Night Banquet" of 2021 Henan TV Spring Festival Gala has been widely disseminated on domestic social media and highly praised by the public and media, and has even gone abroad and attracted overseas netizens. Therefore, the article takes the dissemination process and effect of "Tang Palace Night Banquet" on domestic and foreign social media as the research object, and selects Bilibili, Weibo, YouTube and Twitter as platforms to compare the difference in feedback on this program on domestic and foreign social media. The study finds that users' feedback on "Tang Palace Night Banquet" differs significantly on different social media platforms at home and abroad. Based on this, several suggestions were given. To tell Chinese stories better, narrators themselves should fully accept and affirm Chinese culture; they should pay more attention to the influence of individuals as communicators; adjust language expression to the characteristics of different platforms; and uphold consistency in interpretation on social media at home and abroad.

Keywords: *Tang Palace Night Banquet, Social Media, Chinese Story, Communication Effect*

1. INTRODUCTION

The Chinese story is a record form of events and processes in the life of the Chinese nation, a multi-ethnic community. To tell Chinese stories is beneficial to the shaping of China's national image and the cultivation and promotion of Chinese national spirit [1]. In the era of new media, as a content production and exchange platform based on user relationships, social media has broken the international communication pattern consistently dominated by Western media to some extent because of its instant information, multiple interactions and decentralized communication mode [2]. Although Henan TV has a weaker cast, media influence and commercial value compared to other TV Spring Festival Gala, the program "Tang Palace Night Banquet" of 2021 Henan TV Spring Festival Gala was highly praised by domestic netizens and even spread on overseas social media because of its combination of traditional Chinese cultural and modern technology of 5G and AR [3]. Therefore, this paper will take the dissemination process and communication effect of "Tang Palace Night Banquet" on

social media at home and abroad as the research object, mainly focusing on the overseas dissemination. By analyzing the identity of users, comments, likes, retweets, page views, the author will compare the differences in feedback on stories about Chinese traditional culture on domestic and foreign social media, and discuss how to tell Chinese stories well on social media in different language systems. This paper uses the case of "Tang Palace Night Banquet" as a relatively new material to demonstrate the care for the community of human destiny and the search for cultural identity in order to improve China's cultural soft power and international influence [4].

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND DATA SOURCE

The paper uses Octopus Collector to collect data related to "Tang Palace Night Banquet" from February 10, 2021 (the broadcast date of the program) to February 10, 2022 on domestic and foreign social media. For the domestic part, views of Weibo hot search, and videos, comments, and bullet comments on Bilibili were

collected. For the foreign part, content type, comments, and identity of Twitter and YouTube users were collected.

Laswell's 5W model is a classic communication process model which arranges the five components of communicator, content, channel, target and effect in a certain order, illustrating a process of purposeful behavior [5]. In this paper, this model is used to analyze "Tang Palace Night Banquet" on social media at home and abroad from the perspective of the communicator, content and effect.

3. THE DISSEMINATION OF "TANG PALACE NIGHT BANQUET" ON DOMESTIC SOCIAL MEDIA

On February 10, 2021, Henan TV Spring Festival Gala program "Tang Palace Night Banquet" was uploaded to Weibo, and the multi-step flow of netizens and opinion leaders led to a rapid rise in network clicks. The original video was re-edited due to copyright restrictions before being spread in clips on video platforms, such as Tiktok and Bilibili. Then, Henan TV opened up the copyright and a new round of dissemination began.

3.1. Communicators' Identity

UGC (User Generated Content) and media coverage account for most of the content, and identities of communicators are as follows. Among the 10 hot search topics of "Tang Palace Night Banquet" on Weibo, 6 topics are initiated by official media accounts, such as People's Daily and Weibo Variety; and among the 1001 videos related to "Tang Palace Night Banquet" on Bilibili, 90 videos are from official media accounts.

3.2. Communication Effect

"Tang Palace Night Banquet" has formed a phenomenal spread on Weibo and Bilibili. On Weibo, there are 3 topics related to "Tang Palace Night Banquet" with more than 200 million page views; on Bilibili, there are 1001 relevant videos and the hottest one is played more than 7 million times, with 32,000 bullet comments and 18,290 comments.

4. THE DISSEMINATION OF "TANG PALACE NIGHT BANQUET" ON SOCIAL MEDIA ABROAD

The dissemination cycle of "Tang Palace Night Banquet" on social media abroad can be divided into three stages. In the first stage, the number and heat of relevant contents spurt, and the main content is video reprint, discussion on the program and media coverage of Chinese official media; in the second stage, the heat decreases compared with the first stage, and the main

content is re-creation and reaction of the program; in the third stage, the heat decreases significantly and tends to be flat on the whole, but it lasts for a longer time.

4.1. Communicator's Identity

On both Twitter and YouTube, the main communicators of "Tang Palace Night Banquet"-related content are Chinese users. It shows that the overseas dissemination of "Tang Palace Night Banquet" is still limited to the Chinese cultural circle and has not been widely known by foreigners. Among the foreign communicators, users from Japan and Thailand account for more, while relatively few users come from Brazil, Greece, the Netherlands and Arabia, indicating that Tang culture is better accepted in countries with cultural similarities with China than in other countries.

The main communicators of both platforms are individual users, rather than organizational users, showing a decentralized character. Individual users on Twitter who spread contents about "Tang Palace Night Banquet" are mainly Chinese public figures in the entertainment industry and Chinese state agencies, while organizational users are Chinese official media, with attribute of political propaganda. Individual users on YouTube are mainly cultural and entertainment video producers, while organizational users are mainly TV stations, video websites official, and opera companies official, with attribute of pop culture.

4.2. Communication Content

The contents related to "Tang Palace Night Banquet" on Twitter is mostly for the purpose of political propaganda, while the ones on YouTube is pop culture oriented. It's due to that Twitter has the function of political propaganda, so that China's official media and Chinese government staffs choose to be on the site as a way to "follow the local customs" and better communicate with foreign people [6]. YouTube, on the other hand, requires a higher level of media production skills, and its content is mainly pop-culture, which does not fit well with the political and cultural propaganda of Chinese officials.

There are differences in the types of content about "Tang Palace Night Banquet" on Twitter and YouTube. The related contents on Twitter are mainly hand-drawing and clay, and the ones on YouTube focus on music, dancing and makeup imitation. This is because YouTube, as a video website, is more able to deliver comprehensive information with both audio and visual experience, and is more suitable for presenting the whole process of the event, while Twitter, as an information platform, is suitable for presenting the visual results of the event.

4.3. Communication Effect

Among the comments sampled from YouTube and Twitter, positive feedback accounts for 88.60%, but there are also 8.43% negative feedback and 2.97% neutral feedback. The word cloud analysis of positive feedback shows that: Henan, Luoyang, culture, Tang, and China are top 5 in Twitter comments; dance, Tang Dynasty, great, Chinese, and dancer are top 5 in YouTube comments. It can be seen that the feedback on Twitter mainly expresses national pride of Chinese people, and the feedback in YouTube entertainment videos mainly expresses people's appreciation for the performance. The negative feedback is as follows: lack of film and television production capacity; the exaggerative costumes and makeup; lack of rhythm in the soundtrack; emphasizing Tang Dynasty 's beauty of fat is disrespect for the slim body. Neutral feedback consists of some suggestions: improving the video quality; improving aesthetics of the dance; Chinese opinion should leaders introduce Chinese traditional culture more on overseas social media.

Table 1. Comments on "Tang Palace Night Banquet" abroad

Comments	Quantity	Ratio
Positive	124	88.60%
Netural	3	2.97%
Negative	6	8.43%

5. CHARACTERISTICS OF THE DISSEMINATION OF "TANG PALACE NIGHT BANQUET" AT HOME AND ABROAD

5.1. The Decentralized Communication Subject and the Communication Process of Strong Interactivity

The main communicators of the "Tang Palace Banquet" on social media at home and abroad are both individual users, showing decentralized characteristics. Each person or group has the ability to become the "center" of the social network, playing the roles of both sender and receiver [7]. The information related to "Tang Palace Night Banquet" was adopted and distributed rapidly by decentralized social media, and the asymmetry of information was accelerated, which also enabled "Tang Palace Night Banquet" to spread more efficiently from home to abroad.

5.2. The Greater Influence of Overseas Individual Users than Organizational Users

In overseas social media, influential individual users, such as well-known video producers on YouTube and public figures in the entertainment industry on Twitter, and practitioners in Chinese state agencies are more influential than organizational users, such as China Daily and China News, and the influence of individuals as opinion leaders has been able to compete with organizations. While on domestic social media, media-based organization users such as People's Daily and Henan TV official are more influential.

5.3. The Impact of Communication Framework set by Opinion Leaders on the way Audiences Process and Store Information

Take Hua Chunying's tweets as an example, the English text is long and full of subordinate clauses, metaphorical rhetoric and adjectives, which is not in line with the "short writing and quick release" communication characteristics of Twitter and the habit of foreigners to use simple sentences in daily communication. This kind of subtle and convoluted phrases will affect foreigners' understanding to a certain extent, resulting in words that do not make sense and aggravating the "noise" in the process of communication. However, on domestic social media, such expressions are regarded as "connotative and romantic" by Chinese people.

5.4. Differences in the Communication Effect of "Tang Palace Night Banquet" on Different Overseas Social Media Platforms

The content on Twitter is of official seriousness, while the content on YouTube is inclined to pop culture. And as a TV program with video as its communication carrier, "Tang Palace Night Banquet" spreads better on YouTube where videos are more popular than pictures and text. In addition, Twitter users often retweet videos from YouTube, which attracts heat indirectly for YouTube.

6. ADVICE ON TELLING CHINA'S STORY TO THE OUTSIDE WORLD VIA SOCIAL MEDIA

6.1. Adopting Innovative Communication Methods

The promotion of Chinese traditional culture stories lacks innovative communication paradigms that can truly move people. "Tang Palace Night Banquet" is an excellent attempt to combine the interesting life scenes of ancient times with modern technology, integrating the excellent Chinese traditional culture into the life of

contemporary people and making traditional culture truly come alive. In the digital era, supported by digital technology, traditional culture should break the barriers between it and popular culture and effectively realize the transformation of traditional culture into modernity [8].

6.2. Focusing on the Influence of Individuals as Communication Subjects

As social media is naturally decentralized and the boundary between senders and receivers is gradually dissolving, the influence of individuals has surpassed that of organizations and become the communication subject of public opinion on China. Therefore, when telling China stories through social media, attention should be paid to the power of individuals as communication subjects, especially using the influence of opinion leaders in different fields trusted by overseas users to produce content such as pictures, texts and videos that match the stories. Compared with serious and political organizations, individual opinion leaders are more approachable, having more sticky followers, and are more likely to be trusted by other individuals, so that the content they disseminate can reach more target audiences.

6.3. Producing Fragmented and Personalized Entertainment Information

In the age of social media, the dissemination of information tends to be more fragmented and personalized, and users can get the information they want according to their preferences and use the least amount of time to understand them. Under such communication characteristics, serious and lengthy political and cultural propaganda content will be directly ignored by foreign users, and preaching will turn off the audience as well. Therefore, as the propagating subject of Chinese culture, China's official media should consider appropriately weaken the political color and homiletic tone with entertainment when exporting Chinese stories via overseas social media, so that it is easier for the audiences to accept the information.

6.4. Debugging Language Accuracy for Different Platforms

In the dissemination of Chinese culture and Chinese stories through social media, it should be based on the attention of users of different platforms to make it better adapted to the communication characteristics of the platform. Moreover, it is important to pay attention to the differences between Chinese and foreign language systems, and use localized expressions and original English translations that foreigners can adapt to [9]. In addition, pushing mechanisms of different social media platforms should be figured out, such as posting a tweet with hot hashtags to increased attention and also make the content clearer more explicit.

6.5. Upholding Consistency in Internal and External Interpretations when Multiple Discourse Systems Interact

First of all, cultural confidence should not rely on others' evaluations, and true cultural confidence should first achieve the solidity of the framework of our own cultural system. That is to say, people should fully believe in and develop their own culture, and regard the development results of their culture as the first criterion for evaluating culture. Secondly, in the face of the understanding gap arising from the interaction between foreign and domestic cultures, people should be more tolerant and open-minded to understand and respond to various. Finally, foreign evaluations should be treated dialectically and objectively; individual behavior and group tendencies should be distinguished; and causing group conflicts is not advocated [10].

7. CONCLUSION

To sum up, the paper finds that the communication effect of "Tang Palace Night Banquet" on domestic social media is better than abroad, and the program doesn't achieve large-scale cross-cultural communication on overseas social media. The similarities between the domestic and foreign communication processes are that the communication subjects are decentralized; fragmented and personalized entertainment information is more effective. The differences are that the influence of individual users is greater than that of organizational users in the process of overseas communication; the expression of Chinese opinion leaders may cause problems for the understanding of foreign audiences; and the communication effect varies according to the characteristics of different platforms. Based on these differences, suggestions are made on how to tell the Chinese story well abroad. To tell Chinese stories well, innovative communication methods should be adopted; attention should be paid to the influence of individuals as communication subjects; language expressions should be adjusted for different platforms; and the consistency of internal and external interpretations should be upheld. The shortcoming of this study is that the sample size of the data and the accuracy of the analysis need to be improved. The future plan is to further study how to conduct cross-cultural communication effectively among different discourse systems.

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