Revival of Chinoiserie
Research on the Impact of Chinese Culture Wave on Short Video Platform and Its Users

Xiya Shi[*]

New York University, New York, US
[*]Corresponding author. Email: xs2119@nyu.edu

ABSTRACT

As more and more media content contains Chinoiserie-related elements, media platforms, and digital media users realize the rise of Chinese culture in the new media era has important impacts on both of them. The ever-changing Chinese traditional culture-related media content is not solely a culture. The revitalization of Chinoiserie in digital media platforms represents a trend. Besides the impacts in platforms, Chinese media users' inward worlds have been changed as well. The research will analyze a survey's result that reflects the impacts of Chinoiserie content on both short-video platforms and media users. Douyin will be analyzed as the representative of the short-video platform. Also, the research applies in a short-video account as the case study, better verifying the results concluded from the survey. This paper holds that the audience characteristic of the wide spread of Chinese style is the young group. The creative transformation and innovative development of Chinese traditional culture, especially the communication mode in the new media era, has expanded the influence of Chinese culture. This paper will provide some perspectives and Enlightenment for the dissemination of traditional culture in the new media era.

Keywords: Chinoiserie, Short-video platforms, Douyin, Hong Lou Meng

1. INTRODUCTION

During the unexpected pandemic, COVID-19 has caused a tremendous shift in the media industry as well as the shift in consumer behavior in media consumption. In this difficult situation, there are opportunities as well as challenges. Opportunities and challenges co-exist in this severe situation, bringing more users and potential customers to be accessible to short-form video platforms, particularly Douyin. Douyin's operation is up to the trend of instant and short entertaining consumption. In recent years, the Chinese digital media environment began to place importance on traditional culture. Chinese digital media platforms all emphasize the keynote of expressing positive energy. Not only with the advocacy of healthy images, encouraging quotes, positive attitudes toward life and challenges, the positive energy movement in digital media platforms "further transcended mainstream 'Chinese nationalism' by immersing transnationalism and universalism in the sentiment and ideal of 'love of China' or 'love of country' (Aiguo)" that differs from the political idea of patriotism, fuses, and evolves to the prelude of the rise of Chinoiserie in digital media [1].

The collision between cultural content and digitized carrier inspires media platforms to be more creative. It is our responsibility to utilize our inherited culture and allow the new social and digital environment to revitalize traditional content with a fresh lens. Chinese traditional culture has become a new trend of global media producers. This research will research the following questions: How effectively does Chinese traditional culture affect short-video content? How is this new trend shape or influences users' behavior?

Chinoiserie is no longer a symbol of old-style and tradition, but a trendy cultural wave and a fresh way of life [2]. Xi Jinping, the General Secretary of the Chinese Communist Party and Chairman of the Central Military Commission, once empathized that every transmitted content and tone should carry forward the Chinese culture and raise the nation's moral accomplishment [3]. Each digital media channel should take their responsibilities to advocate the mainstream value of preserving and advancing the traditional culture and promote the spread of Chinoiserie in multi-realm. Along with the development of the Internet and the spread of mobile media, humans live under an information-booming era, in

which thousands of digital media technologies carry the messages for us to consume. Media convergence, first discovered by Henry Jenkins, reveals the phenomenon of nowadays interconnected information and communication. Through digitization and computer networking, media convergence refers to merging media technologies and platforms that transform various content into a single media. Douyin is a sign of such digital medium fusion development. One feature that sets Douyin apart from other digital media applications is its unique mission to inspire users' creativity and provide them with instant gratification through interactions and a mass of information dissemination. Users receive information and relaxation through entertained video contents, or said differently, while fingers were scrolling down, information and sense of gratification flow into individuals directly. Douyin, by congregating the responsibility of cultural advocacy and the mission of new era's media fusion, undoubtedly has been affected as Chinoiserie being its theme trend.

2. METHOD

Different digital media platforms will present distinctive effects on Chinese culture-related content. In my research, I examine how Chinese culture affects media content on different platforms, especially on the short-video platform. Moreover, after valuing the influence of the distinctive digital media disparities, I particularly examine how user behaviors and Chinese culture media content are mutually affected.

By studying the rippling effects on Chinese culture, media platforms, and user behaviors, I investigated the potential influences in three subsections. This research's data is collected through an online survey. The survey has been published on Sojump.com, one of China's biggest and most famous online questionnaire service providers. Then, I randomly invited friends to participate in the survey and invited their friends and family relatives to be the participants. This survey is shared through social media channels, such as Tencent QQ, WeChat, Weibo, and Baidu Forums, from October 25th, 2021, to November 5th, 2021. 212 questionnaire results are randomly collected. This survey is constructed in four sections. Section one focuses on showing users' preference of media platforms, aiming to investigate if the short-video platform, Douyin, is the most effective digital media platform to disseminate media content of Chinese culture and to cater to users' media taste. Section two investigates how users value Chinese culture-relevant short-video content and how effectively does the cultural elements shape users' behavior psychologically and physically. User-oriented feedback will reveal the reasons why Chinese culture has become a media theme trend. Questions from section three explore the future development of Chinese culture as an element in media content. The last section brings demographic information

of the participants, which allows me to explore how certain background characteristics have influenced the result of the research question. The questionnaire contains a total of 23 questions. There are various question forms, such as single and multiple-choice, and Likert scale. Proportion, ratios, and data are translated into bar graphs and pie charts.

To eliminate the invalid answers, the following step is applied to weed out the unqualified participants. My target group is those who have consumed Chinese culture-related media content in three months. The first survey question asked, "Have you watched Chinese culture-related media content recently (in three months)?". As a result, 11 participants who answered "No" to this question were removed from the sample group. Thus, 201 valid responses will be analyzed the potential impacts of Chinoiserie on media platforms and to users' behaviors. The following paragraphs explain the study results and the phenomenon of consumption of Chinese culture media contents. Among 201 respondents, 48.26% are male respondents, and 51.74% are female. Nearly half of the respondents (48.76%) are from the age group of 18-25. 95.52% of the respondents are from China, whereas the remaining 4.48% are Chinese exchange students who are currently studying in foreign countries.

3. RESULTS

3.1. Users Preference of Platforms and Chinoiserie Categories

Section one conducted four basic questions and two causal sub-questions to statistically value users' preference on platform choosing and relevant favorite Chinoiserie categories. There is no causal relationship between platforms preference and Chinoiserie contents selection. Question two asked participants about their recently browsed Chinoiserie media contents belonging to which categories. Participants can give single or multiple answers. Among seven given categories, such as clothes, game elements, food, literature relevant, etc., 56.72% chose they consumed "clothing-related Chinoiserie" media contents, followed closely by food-related (48.76%), game-related (40.8%), and talent-related (dance, painting, and etc.) (39.8%). Only one person (0.5%) responded of consuming all seven categories through digital media platforms. Participants answered no additional content category. (see Figure 1.)
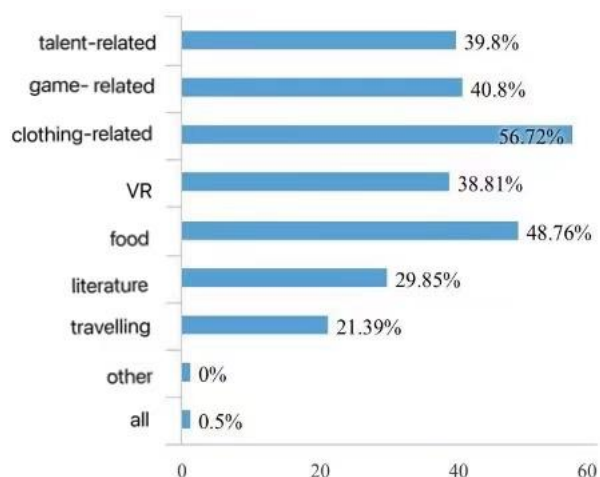
Figure 1 Recently Browsed Chinoiserie Media Contents Categories

Question3 conducted the question "what is/are the digital media platforms you used to consume the content that involved in Chinoiserie." The questionnaire provides four categories: short-video platforms (Douyin, TikTok, Little Red Book, etc.), video platforms (Bilibili, YouTube, Tencent, etc.), game platforms (Arena of Valor, Chengguang, etc.), and social media platforms (WeChat, QQ, Weibo, etc.). Among 201 answers, 63.75% of participants chose short-video platforms, and 69.65% chose video platforms, showing prominent disparities than the other platforms (game 37.31%, social media 30.35%) (see Figure 2.).
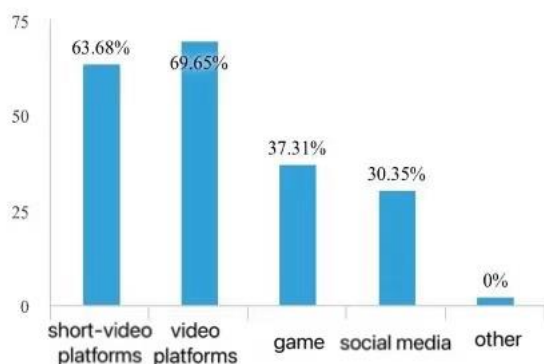

Figure 2 What is/are the Digital Media Platforms you Used to Consume the Content that Involved in Chinoiserie

Then, questions 4 and 5 will be exclusively shown for participants who chose short-video platforms and video platforms. These two questions asked the reason for choosing corresponding platforms. As the research is preparing to analyze the impacts in short-video platforms, we collect that 59.38% of participants chose short-video platforms because of their content richness (62.5%), the presence of distinct features of Chinoiserie contents (59.38), and the popularity of Chinoiserie as media theme trend (52.34%). Therefore, section one presents that video platforms are the most influential media carriers for

disseminating Chinese culture and catering to users' media preferences. The result also shows short-video platforms' characteristics and advantages, which content richness is the most prominent one.

3.2. The Impacts of Chinoiserie Short-Video Content on Users Psychologically

In Section Two, questions 8 and 9 measure users' self-evaluation of the degree that Chinoiserie's short-video content has positive effects on users. For this section's measurement, a Likert 10-point scale was used from 1 (strongly disagree) to 10 (strongly agree) to investigate the impacts of Chinoiserie's short-video content on users psychologically. As a result, question 8, "watching Chinoiserie content will increase my self-sense of identity to the Chinese culture," got a mean of 7.05 (>5.5); question 9, "watching Chinoiserie content will increase my love to Chinese culture," got a mean of 6.95 (>5.5). As a matter of fact, combined with the other four questions shown in this section, section 2 reveals that short-video consumers have been effectively impacted by Chinoiserie media content, and they favor the presence of Chinese-style and the spirits brought by the revitalization of traditional culture.

3.3. Present and Future: Chinoiserie Media Content's Development

Section three mainly explores Chinoiserie's development and present existence. By asking participants' attitudes toward the development of Chinoiserie in the short-video platform, the data shows how human behavior is going to be shifted and shaped by this culturally relevant media trend. 88.56% answered they had once watched the short video that was curated based on the idea or scenarios of Chinese classical novels (see Figure 3).
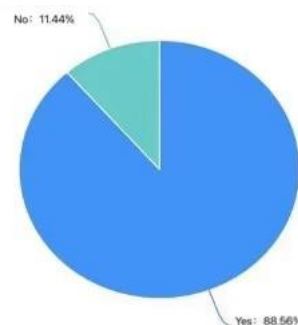

Figure 3 People Had Once Watched the Short Video that was Curated Based on the Idea or Scenarios of Chinese Classical Novels

As shown in Figure 3, 86.57% of people believe that Chinese style content should be disseminated and expanded to foreign markets; 77.61% of the participants

consumed short videos related to Chinese culture because of creativity, design and content.

In light of the above data analysis, the research results are: 1) Chinese traditional culture will affect short-video platforms to a certain extent but is not as effective as video platforms. In various aspects, Chinoiserie's media contents aim to echo the mainstream value with the "culture and entertainment" scheme. 2) Chinese culture trends in media will bring and promote users' cultural confidence, moral accomplishment, and recognition of cultural identity.

4. DISCUSSION

The collected data and findings provide insights for looking at the links between culture and digital media, especially beneficial in investigating digital media consumption and correspondent users' behaviors. Our research has certain contributions in exploring the development and outlooks for Douyin. This research evaluates the influence of short-video platforms meant to users in China, and also reveals users' expectations of advocating Chinoiserie worldwide. As the carrier of this burgeoning "cultural-relevant" media culture, Douyin will face entirely different audience groups and preferences. The international version of Douyin, known as TikTok, both are owned by Chinese tech giant ByteDance. Without the mainstream of advocating patriotism, those content aims to promote a sort of propaganda known as "playful patriotism" [4], which takes advantage of users' sense of cultural identity may not be effectively popularized in the TikTok platform [5].

When analyzing the shifts brought by the Chinoiserie booming media content on Chinese users, the age group of the participants is worth our attention. Generation Zs (people born in the mid-late 90s- early 2010s) live in a world that blends a lifestyle of online and offline living, mixed with high levels of educational attainment; Gen Z has new cultural demands. On account of Gen Z's cultural confidence, higher appreciation ability, and humanistic attainment, as the digital media's target consumers, Gen Z consumers want to see a variety of media embracing traditional cultures inclusively.

When analyzing mediums, in expectation, it is important to remember that human behaviors and media development have mutually influenced each other, both breaking through barriers and advancing. In Donna Haraway's "Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late 20th Century", Haraway argues that there were three boundaries broken in the historical relationships between human and machine that have impacted human nature culturally and naturally [6]. Haraway also theorizes the concept of cybernetics. She argued that cybernetics allows women to reconstruct their identities rather than restricting them to "natural gender roles" [6]. In short, Haraway theorizes

that there is the possibility for humans to become less human and more machine-like, which might be a new advancement towards erasing gender boundaries [6]. By looking at Donna Haraway's insights, it gives us a rough outlook on digital media's future developments. Douyin, as one of the most fast-developing popular social media, might be the possible social media that reach Haraway's portrayed future.

The digital environment has different characteristics to other mediums that have cultures embedded within them. Dream of the Red Chamber also called The Story of the Stone, written by Cao Xueqin, is one of China's Four Great Classical Novels. Dream of the Red Chamber portrays the rise and fall of four powerful families [7]. It mirrors the Qing dynasty's decline. Aside from its metaphoric description of the destinies of family and government, the novel shows the tragic love affairs of Jia Baoyu and Lin Daiyu. It reveals the beauties of both human nature and tragedy. Dream of the Red Chamber has various values outside the sphere of love affairs, such as food, tea culture, and media. Below, I will share my insights on how a classical Chinese novel has influenced and can benefit the 21st Century's marketing communication and digital media environment. One short-video account called "The Feast of Hong Lou" reproduced 186 cuisines once described in the novel by Cao Xueqin. This account is one of the most creative short-video media accounts that best express how does Chinoiserie's content has been revitalized in media-based production. "The Feast of Hong Lou" better appreciate the beauty of the collision of culture and media. Combined with the questionnaire's result, food-related Chinoiserie content really fit into short-video users' taste. Also, this case study re-proves the short-video platforms' content richness and diversity.

"The Feast of Hong Lou" chose to publish their curated video on two short-video platforms: Little Red Book (Xiao Hongshu) and Douyin. In their account's profile, their aim of "using cooking skills tribute to the classic and revitalizing the heyday of Red Chamber" echo with the mainstream value of "Chinese culture renaissance".

Culture roots in life; culture nurtures life [8]. The Feast of Hong Lou fused Hong Lou stories into a cooking process that transmits classic literature close to people's lives. As the data are shown above, Chinoiserie's audience characteristics are in young age groups. The creative fusion of literature, culture, and short-video not only is an innovation of the literature dissemination channels but also is an expansion of Chinese culture's impact. Meanwhile, it also proves that without patriotism and advocacy of socialism, content and creativity can embody the beauty of traditional culture to a greater extent. With short video's unique characteristics, while disseminating literature-related elements, the

fragmentation of long story-telling cultures can convey more easy-to-consume content to users [9][115].

The advancement of the media environment always builds upon the past experiences we had, or, as Marshall McLuhan puts it "We look at the present through a rearview mirror. We march backward into the future" [10]. By looking at the media changes in cultural and historical contexts, we weave our perspectives horizontally and vertically and therefore have the chance to catch "glitterings" to make a better cyber world for humanity's future.

5. CONCLUSION

Given the scope and diversification of the 21st century's digital media environment, there are multiple ways to discuss the presence and developments of Chinese culture in the digital media environment. What this paper do is merely raise interesting perspectives on how culture might be integrated within the digitization period. It is worth considering how to express cultural "treasures" in new communication channels, and how to preserve them. The above is our exploration of results after we think about the relationship between the burgeoning short-video platform, Chinese culture, and consumer behavior. A cyclical chain from the medium, cultural awareness, to the action of receivers, is worth our attention.

Although this research offers a comprehensive analysis of Chinoiserie's impact on short-video platforms and on users' behaviors through the survey results, it still contains several limitations. First of all, the survey questions are designed to let participants give their self-evaluations, which made the results too subjective. Secondly, these unexpected environmental factors may influence and restrict people's real media consumption behavior due to the pandemic. Though short-video platforms are one of the predicted and popular digital media trends, the research cannot rule out the potential influence affected by the pandemic.

REFERENCES

[1] Du, S., Social media and the transformation of "Chinese nationalism": "Igniting positive energy" in China since the 2012 London Olympics, Anthropology Today, 2014, 30, pp.5-8. https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-8322.12083

[2] Tong, J., Yang, Y., Deeply Researching in the Cultural Implication of National Style and the Youthful Temperament of the City, Luoyang Daily News, 2021-10-18(006).

[3] Zhang, Y., Qin, Z., Research on Mobile Short-Video Promoting Traditional Culture Communication Strategy in the Context of Media Convergence: Li Ziqi's Case Study, Journalism Studies Journal, 2020, 11(11), pp.203-205.

[4] Chen, X., Kaye, D. B. V., Zeng, J., PositiveEnergy Douyin: Constructing "playful patriotism" in a Chinese short-video application, Chinese Journal of Communication, 2020. https://doi.org/10.1080/17544750.2020.1761848

[5] Kaye, D. B. V., Chen, X., & Zeng, J., The co-evolution of two Chinese mobile short video apps: Parallel platformization of Douyin and TikTok, Mobile Media & Communication, 2021, 9(2), pp.229-253. https://doi.org/10.1177/2050157920952120

[6] Haraway, D., A cyborg manifesto: Science, technology, and socialist-feminism in the late 20th century, The International Handbook of Virtual Learning Environments, 1991, pp.117-158. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4020-3803-7_4

[7] Cao, X., Hong Lou Meng: dream of red chamber. C.S. Publish, 2017.

[8] Cao, Y., The Rise of Chinese Cultural Style: Let Traditional Culture Shine Again, 2021.Blog Article. https://m.sohu.com/a/474338359_121061328?ivk_sa=1024320u.

[9] Liu, J., Niu, Y., Current situation and prospect of new media communication of "Dream of Red Chamber", Journal of Dream of red Mansions, 2020(03), pp.103-120.

[10] McLuhan, M., The medium is the message, Gingko Press, 2005.