



# Strategy of Chinese Medicine Animation in TCM Culture Communication

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**Abstract.** In the context of new media, animation provides a new direction and perspective for the dissemination of Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) culture, but the current situation of the dissemination of TCM animation is not satisfactory. Based on Laswell's "5W" communication theory, this paper analyzes the dilemma of the current communication of TCM animation from the five elements of communication subject, communication content, communication channel, communication audience and communication effect, in order to provide reference for the communication mode of TCM culture.

**Keywords:** TCM animation · TCM · TCM culture dissemination · strategy

## 1 Introduction

As the most important part of Chinese excellent culture, TCM culture has supported the reproduction and survival of the Chinese nation for thousands of years. Carrying out the dissemination of TCM culture and strengthening the construction of TCM culture have become the primary strategy for the development of TCM in the new era. In 2021, the State Administration of Traditional Chinese Medicine, the Publicity Department of the CPC Central Committee, the Ministry of Education and other departments jointly formulated the Implementation Plan for the Communication of Traditional Chinese Medicine Culture (2021–2025), making it one of the key tasks to create a number of TCM themed documentaries, animations, short videos and other literary and artistic works carrying the cultural connotation of TCM [1]. The aim is to open up a new way of TCM culture communication by using all kinds of current hot communication methods. At present, the communication of TCM culture has ushered in the perfect opportunity of the right time, the right place and the right people. The combination of modern technology and TCM will become the best tool for TCM culture to go out. Through the combination of animation and TCM elements, in an easy to understand way presenting obscure TCM theories and traditional Chinese classical prescriptions, it has created a new model for inheriting TCM culture.

## 2 The Communication Status of TCM Animation

For a long time, TCM communication has been mainly carried out in traditional forms, and there are many problems, such as the single communication channel of TCM, the lack of publicity, and the narrow range of audience groups. The dissemination of TCM culture in China is not ideal, and TCM animation can be a powerful supplement to the dissemination mode of TCM culture. Animation integrates visual and auditory forms of expression, integrates sound and image, and has powerful interactive functions. In addition, the creation of animation can break through the limitations, everything can be drawn, can travel through time, can also cross space, abstract into concrete, boring into vivid. Therefore, animation technology can make the professional terms and knowledge of TCM accessible and visualized, which is more popular among the public. However, from the perspective of the current situation of TCM animation communication, although there has been improvement, fruitful results have not been seen, and there is still a great space and potential for development to be explored.

First of all, TCM animation works are not large in quantity and good in quality. A search for “TCM” on the online platform iQIYI reveals only 88 animation videos related to TCM, with only a handful of comments per video. On Bilibili, an online platform that focuses on diversified animation videos, TCM animation videos have a low number of clicks compared with other popular animation videos, most of which range from dozens to thousands. The most popular is the Chinese medicine enlightenment animation Calabash Jingle Bell, directed and produced by Qicheng Zhang, which contains the theoretical knowledge of Chinese medicine and the inheritance of TCM culture. The first season has been played more than 5 million times, and the second season has also attracted the attention of parents and children. When the children are happy and relaxed, they learn the cultural knowledge of TCM and become interested in TCM [2].

Secondly, the feedback effect of TCM animation is not ideal. In contrast, the feedback of TCM cartoons suitable for teenagers and adults is not good. For example, the first TCM health program “*Taiyi Talk*” opened in the form of animation, the first 3D TCM animation “*Herbal Spirit*”, the large-scale animation project “*How to Say Materia Medica*”, the TCM animation game “*The Legend of the World: Traditional Chinese Medicine*” and “*The Road of Famous Old Traditional Chinese Medicine*” have all been launched, opening a new situation of TCM animation creation, but the response is not warm enough. The animation documentaries “*TCM Stories*” and “*Cognition is Treasure*” series are TCM cartoons suitable for people of all ages. They use Chinese style effects to tell stories about doctors and TCM stories. The production team is committed to letting animation lovers around the world understand the culture of TCM [3]. However, these works, no matter from the design ideas, the use of technology, or from the promotion efforts, there are different problems.

In short, no matter children’s animation or adult animation, due to the constraints of different factors, the number of works is small and there is no widely known works, can not form a perfect Chinese medicine animation system, the dissemination effect is not satisfactory.

### 3 The Dilemma of TCM Animation Communication

American scholar Lasswell published the article “*The Structure and Function of Social Communication*”. He proposed the “5W” communication mode for the study of communication, that is, to analyze the whole communication process from the perspectives of communicators, communication content, communication media, communication audience and communication effect. This paper will analyze the deficiencies of the current TCM animation communication from the following five aspects, and try to explore some effective strategies for the further communication of TCM animation.

#### 3.1 The Professional Capacity of Communicators is Limited

First of all, it is difficult for TCM population to create TCM animation. There are two reasons: first, lack of creative motivation. TCM doctors focus on clinical, teaching and scientific research, while TCM researchers focus on laboratory scientific research. They have too much work to do and do not have enough time and energy for animation creation. Secondly, they lack creative ability. Most TCM population have been learning professional skills for years, and there are few TCM doctors and herbalists with artistic foundation. And as far as animation creators are concerned, their understanding of complex TCM knowledge is not accurate, professional and meticulous, and their cognition of TCM culture is superficial. The TCM animation works they created are prone to misrepresentation of knowledge, superficial and entertaining content, and easy to trigger controversy.

In short, in order to spread TCM culture with the help of modern animation technology, it is the primary problem to cultivate compound talents who both understand TCM and can create animation. The absent of talents leads to the two fields of TCM culture communication and animation creation acting independently, which cannot achieve mutual development and seek common development, leading to the stagnation of the effect of TCM culture communication.

#### 3.2 The Quality of the Content is Poor

In essence, animation works are visual arts with animation image as the core. In recent years, domestic animation has frequently created high-quality IP, presenting high-quality domestic animation works for the audience. Take the original IP “*Tang Niu*” from Shaanxi Province History Museum as an example. She retains the classic features and makeup of Tang Dynasty women, but uses techniques that are more in line with the preferences of contemporary young people, both traditional and modern, complex and simple [4]. The Tang culture was spread through this cute image, and a series of derivatives were developed to attract people to explore more Tang stories. It can be seen that representative animation images are more likely to be successful, popular, and achieve twice the result with half the effort.

However, there is still a lack of classic IP image in the visual design of TCM animation. For example, there is no lack of well-known TCM doctors throughout the ages, but there is no memorable iconic image, and it is difficult to remember without recognition. In addition, most of the TCM animation story structure is relatively stuffy, is a simple

pile of TCM elements, as the animation design ontology of music, dubbing also failed to make people refreshing. In short, TCM animations lacking classic IP images and fluid story lines need to be improved.

### **3.3 The Channels of Communications is Insufficient**

At present, the form of TCM animation communication is mainly online communication channels, including text and video. On the contrary, the lack of corresponding offline publicity activities, the failure to develop more derivative products, and the failure to broaden more communication channels lead to the annihilation of works with real value and connotation. All these factors restrict the rapid spread of TCM animation.

The main reason is that the sponsor of TCM animation obviously does not invest enough in the communication, and the types of promotion activities are too few to arouse the enthusiasm of the audience, which leads to low attention. Especially in the current era of traffic, if no one knows about a work, it is bound to sink under the tide of information. How to stand out in the mixed cultural environment of TCM animation works, TCM animation organizers should comply with the pace of the development of the time, doing a good job of positive publicity and increasing promotion efforts to become the top priority of TCM cultural communication.

### **3.4 The Communication Audience is Single**

Most of the current TCM animation design style is aimed at young children, the story is not ups and downs, visual impact is not strong, so it is difficult to attract the attention of teenagers and adults. In recent years, the development of online animation and animation films has made the audience of animation more and more all-aged, but compared with the young animation, the censorship mechanism of all-aged animation is more strict [5]. Once the approval is not passed, the whole creation effort will be wasted, and the investment of funds and energy will be wasted. As a result, the number of creators of full-age animation of TCM is small, and the audience group is further narrowed. Therefore, they fall into a vicious circle. In order to break this vicious circle, the transformation and upgrading for different audience groups is the key to the development of TCM animation.

### **3.5 The Information Feedback is Poor**

As an important link of communication, feedback plays a unique regulating role in the process of communication. It provides timely and appropriate feedback to the communicator to form efficient two-way interaction. In the communication process of TCM animation, due to the lack of timely and effective feedback mechanism, the audience's feedback on the content, style and significance of TCM animation is indirect and incomplete. It is difficult for the creators to adjust or change the TCM animation works according to the feedback of the audience, which makes the quality of TCM animation unsatisfactory.

## **4 The Strategies for the Application of TCM Animation in Cultural Communication**

### **4.1 Adhere to Integrity and Innovation, and Cultivate Compound Talents**

The spread of TCM culture is coming to the right time, location, and good time for people, digging deep into the cultural connotation of Chinese medicine and era value, promoting the creative transformation of TCM culture, innovative development. It is the responsibility and mission of TCM people for Chinese medicine to train talents.

The design of animation is created by human beings, and the construction of talent team is of great importance [6]. Each big colleges and universities is a rendezvous for talents of TCM, so the doctor of TCM colleges should take on task of training compound talents, cultivating innovative and skilled talents, attaches great importance to the discipline of cross combination, set up relevant courses, fully stimulate students' interest, leading students' thinking, on the basis of the theory of perspective and thinking for development of innovative and creative transformation of Chinese medicine animation. For example, the elective course of TCM animation should be set up. To attract students to sign up for the course, the animation that students are interested in is used as the course material, and the TCM knowledge designed in the animation is expanded and supplemented, so as to stimulate students' interest in learning and transform passive learning into active research. In this way, they not only learn the knowledge of TCM, but also improve their aesthetic and artistic appreciation, so as to have the potential to engage in the creation and dissemination of TCM animation.

### **4.2 Create Characteristic Business Cards and Classify Communication Content**

With a history of more than 2,000 years, TCM culture is a whole with many systems and complex knowledge. Animation, as a mass media, is difficult to spread the whole culture of TCM, which requires the dissemination of TCM animation in a classified, fragmented and systematic way, so as to gradually establish a knowledge system of TCM. On the other hand, creating excellent TCM animation IP image is the key link to the successful communication of TCM culture. Encouraging and supporting high-quality TCM animation IP and mining the connotation of medicine culture, and designing excellent TCM animation IP similar to materia medica and doctors is the basic project of the linkage between TCM culture and animation.

In the context of the combination of TCM and animation, in addition to the design of characteristic TCM animation IP, animation technology can also be used to show abstract concepts of TCM, such as interpretation of TCM theory knowledge in the form of animation to produce a series of TCM theory animation with characteristics. In a word, to expand the biggest advantage of TCM combined with animation, the development of the Chinese medicine culture will break the shackles of the traditional text and gradually transform a single animation works in isolation into diverse collection of anime series, form a scale, increase public awareness of Chinese medicine anime, let more people to participate in the study of TCM and spread.

### 4.3 Expand Communication Channels and Establish Marketing Strategies

The development of new media technology has had a huge impact on the marketing communication of China's animation industry. At present, the online-based communication method can no longer meet the pace of the development of TCM animation. Therefore, it is necessary to expand the communication channel and combine both online and offline methods to inject fresh vitality into the communication of TCM animation. At the same time, the animation industry chain continues to promote and is gradually derived into toys, games, novels and other fields, [7] showing a diversified cross-border integrated development model, and make good use of the advantages of cross-border integrated development to further improve the marketing strategy of TCM animation communication.

First of all, in the initial stage of the animation release, TCM animation organizers should increase investment and do a good job in publicity and promotion, not only to do a good job in the shooting of online propaganda films, but also to carry out corresponding offline publicity activities. For example, cooperating with major media platforms to increase the release time and broadcast volume; carrying out corresponding cosplay activities in offline to provide immersive experience for TCM animation lovers and increase the influence of TCM culture [8]. Secondly, in the mature stage of TCM animation development, TCM animation related groups can also cooperate with game developers to design relevant TCM animation game characters based on TCM culture. Users can choose their favorite characters according to their own interests, and make adventures by doing tasks. The knowledge or culture of TCM will be presented and displayed in the leaderboard to arouse the enthusiasm of users.

### 4.4 Transform and Upgrade to Meet the Needs of Different Audiences

At present, the overall style of TCM animation tends to be young, so its design and creation still has a lot of room for development. Transformation and upgrading is the key. First, classifying the audience is an important part of the long-term development of TCM animation. Aiming at different audience groups, such as age, gender, industry and region, the profound culture of TCM is exported according to different levels and needs [9].

For example, from the age level: for young children, simple interesting and educational content should be given priority to; for teenagers and adults, TCM animation creation needs to improve artistic taste, content should have a clear theme, complete story structure, rigorous knowledge of TCM, compelling visual experience. From the industry level: for the audience in the medical industry, animation is used to explain the obscure cultural knowledge of TCM, so that the TCM group will love the TCM culture more, and the Western medicine groups will improve the cognition of the cultural connotation of TCM. Only by conducting research on the preferences of different social public for the cultural needs of TCM can we expand the audience scope and promote the prosperity and development of TCM animation.

### 4.5 Establish a Feedback System and Improve the Supervision Mechanism

The effect of animation communication is an important link to evaluate the excellence of animation. It is the basic step and important link of communication activities to ensure

that the concept, culture and values conveyed by animation can be conveyed to the audiovisual range of the audience, so as to attract and maintain their attention [10]. On the one hand, it is necessary to establish a set of evaluation criteria for the communication effect of TCM animation. For example, the communication effect of TCM animation can be analyzed through a series of indicators such as score, popularity, collection number and topic number. It is also possible to understand the feedback of the audience by conducting questionnaires, setting up feedback information columns, opening convenient messages and other ways, so as to form a two-way interactive communication mode, so that the development of TCM animation can become increasingly mature. Secondly, there is a lot of medical and health information in TCM culture, and the communication of medical and health information is risky. Therefore, the state should strengthen the quality supervision of TCM related animation, establish a perfect supervision and management mechanism, ensure the reliability and safety of relevant information, and promote the benign communication of TCM culture.

## 5 Conclusion

The culture of TCM is extensive and profound, with a long history and rich and profound ideological and cultural connotations, and has played an indispensable role in disease prevention. TCM cultural communicators should take TCM cultural resources as the cornerstone and combine with the new media era background of creative use of TCM plus animation form, designing the beautiful cartoon works of TCM. The dissemination of works that is artistic and scientific TCM animation works will be more conducive to understand, develop and protect TCM culture.

## 6 Foundation Project

Research on the Inheritance and Development of Traditional Chinese Medicine Characteristic Culture of Philosophy and Social Sciences Characteristic Discipline Project in Shaanxi Universities (Shaanxi Jiaowei [2009] No. 6);

The key discipline of the State Administration of Traditional Chinese Medicine “Traditional Chinese Medicine Culture” (transferred from Shaanxi University of Traditional Chinese Medicine: Science of Shaanxi Academy of Chinese Medicine [2012] No. 29).

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