



Visualized Communication of Chinese Culture on Transnational Social Media Platforms: A Literature Review and Conceptual Framework

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Abstract. The rapid digitalization of global media has shifted the paradigm of cultural dissemination from text-heavy discourse to sophisticated visual storytelling. Rather than offering an exhaustive review, this paper deliberately focuses on how visual strategies of Chinese culture are discussed across platforms, a dimension that existing reviews tend to fragment. By synthesizing contemporary scholarship, the review identifies three primary thematic dimensions: the aesthetic framing of traditional and modern "Chineseness," the influence of platform affordances on content visibility, and the complex dynamics of cross-cultural reception among global audiences and diaspora communities. Despite the proliferation of empirical studies, the review reveals significant research gaps, including an over-reliance on individual case studies of "super-influencers" and a relative neglect of algorithmic logic and integrated analytical models. This paper will remedy shortcomings by introducing a new conceptual framework of Visual-Platform-Reception (VPR) concepts. This framework combines aesthetic narratives, technical platform mechanisms and decoding processes in order to give a comprehensive view into the digital age spread of cultural symbols. The research finishes by recommending that upcoming studies need to shift the content analysis approach to critical examination of algorithmic mediation of culture resonance and interactive culture resonance.

Keywords: Visual Representation, Transnational Social Media, Cross-cultural Communication, Cultural Identity, Platform Affordances.

1 Introduction

Under the modern conditions of global communication, the culture identity is distributed far beyond the traditional diplomatic network, and the image expressions of transnational social media are becoming more and more important. The video streaming platform YouTube, video and image-sharing app Tik Tok, and image-sharing platform Instagram have become the main spaces where the Chinese culture is performed, negotiated, and consumed by the global crowd. Such a change in the context of telling stories by a text to depicting life by high-definition images and short videos is a major shift in the soft power approaches of the culture.

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Nevertheless, the success of this visualised communication is a topic of strong academic discussion. Although grassroots movement influencers and media related to state agencies have managed to exploit digital aesthetics to attract millions of followers globally, the task is hindered by varying platform logic and cultural diversities among receivers. The key issue is the conflict between a desired framing of creators, namely their attention to the cultural realm, and the real one, which is the process of decoding by global netizens. The purpose of this paper is to review the existing literature to trace the history of development of the Chinese cultural visualization, outline the structural limitations of the digital platforms, and develop a conceptual model that will help to fill the gap between the visual creation and cross-cultural interpretation.

2 Visual Representation and Aesthetics of Chinese Culture

Aesthetics are a strategic emphasis on the aesthetics, which have a domineering presence in visualizing the Chinese culture on transnational platforms that include aspects of Chinese traditional heritage and modern life-style. Academic literature focuses on the importance of such so-called micro-narratives in creating a familiar and attractive image of Chineseness. "

2.1 Traditional Symbols and Rural Micro-narratives

The main visual anchors are traditional aesthetics especially food, Hanfu (traditional clothing) and pastoral life. Zou illustrates that the aesthetic art of the visual representation of Hanfu on YouTube serves as an effective tool of cultural revival, which enables international visitors to experience Chinese history on a tangible, aesthetic experience [1]. The articles by Li and Adnan and Whyke et al. likewise emphasize the ideology of idealizing the rural life through a pastoral prism where the work-based activities of the traditional craftsmanship become degraded into a high-quality visual representation [2, 3]. The language barrier is often overcome by these narratives, which would apply the universal language of aesthetics to create a feeling of so-called cultural nostalgia and so-called aesthetic pleasure [4].

2.2 Influencer-Driven Storytelling and Modernity and Everyday Life

The appearance of the non-state actors as the key mediators of cultures is a subject of a considerable part of the literature. Such influencers as Li Ziqi have changed cultural communication, which rotates around macro-political messages and subjects to everyday storytelling [5]. The resulting effect of this influencer-based strategy is a hybrid national image comprising of the traditional values (especially filial piety and harmonic relationship with nature) and the contemporary standards of digital production [3]. According to Highhouse, in many cases such visual frames are more productive than the conventional propaganda since they are more natural and more authentic, they create less psychological distance between the Chinese author and the foreign audience [5].

In addition to traditionalism, there has been a recent trend to investigate how modern Chinese urbanity can be visualized as well as the investigation of warm everyday stories. As noted by Zhao and Zhang, local media content on such a platform as Douyin (as well as its international equivalent Tik Tok) is slowly becoming more focused on

the theme of everyday warmth and social development [6]. This change attempts to even out the monolithic stereotypes, and it offers a complex picture of china that brings about both its ancient history and its high speed technology [7].

3 Platform Dynamics and Transnational Dissemination

Chinese culture communication is not a process or phenomenon that takes place neutrally; it is heavily influenced by the technical affordances and visibility logics of the platforms they apply.

3.1 Platform Affordances and Visibility

Various platforms have various limitations to visualization of culture. In the case of TikTok and Douyin, the short-video form that the site supports promotes high-intensity visual impressions and trend-following by the nature of the participation form, contrary to the long-term, narrative participation common on YouTube [8]. The guidelines of the technology behind such platforms do underpin the difference between these cultural signs receiving global attention and those that are marginalized; YouTube with its recommendation algorithms and TikTok with its "For You" feed are all about the technical architecture of it [9].

3.2 Cross-Platform Comparative Analysis

The broadcasting of cultural messages to a variety of digital spaces is a burning theme. As elaborated by Zhang et al., effective communication demands the concept of cultural agility, wherein the content is modified to suit the expectation of dissimilar communities employing the various platforms [10]. An example is that communication work on X (previously Twitter) tends to be more direct and memeified in order to connect with the cultures of the youth worldwide, and Instagram is more high-aesthetic and curated image to promote brand-like cultural identities [11, 12].

3.3 Digital Transnationalism and Diaspora

Another important space of the Chinese diaspora is transnational social media. Sun and Nussbaum and Yu and Sun examine the ways in which the overseas Chinese communities are able to keep their culture alive through the use of platforms such as WeChat and YouTube as they negotiate their identity in the new country [9, 13]. This transnationalism in digital form generates a bi-directional cultural flow where the con-users are the diaspora and secondary transmitters of the visualized Chinese culture [14].

4 Cross-Cultural Reception and Interpretation

The ultimate success of visualized communication depends on how international audiences decode the visual symbols presented to them.

4.1 Encoding/Decoding and Cultural Resonance

The studies based on the encoding/decoding model by Hall demonstrate a range of the reactions of the audience. Although a very likely number of viewers worldwide allows

cultural resonance and empathy with a visual word of the visual content due to shared human values, the process of oppositional decoding can be perceived by another type of audience; they may misinterpret the cultural symbols or perceive them with skepticism [4, 15]. Park et al. demonstrate that the viewership preferences remain highly dependent on the intra-cultural values of the audience, including individualism and collectivism, although the platform has a global audience. [15].

4.2 Combating Stereotypes and Fostering Empathy

Visualized communication has shown potential in deconstructing prejudices. Nugroho et al. find that grassroots visual storytelling on Instagram can effectively combat anti-Chinese sentiment by humanizing the "other" and showcasing the diversity of the Chinese experience [12]. Similarly, foreign influencers operating within the Chinese digital ecosystem act as cultural bridges, translating Chinese cultural nuances for their home audiences and fostering intercultural understanding [16].

4.3 Negotiation of Cultural Identity

For many viewers, especially those in immigrant communities, social media provides a platform for nuanced self-representation. Chen et al. argue that visual self-presentation allows individuals to foreground their Chinese heritage as a primary identity while navigating the complexities of living in a Western context [17]. This process of identity negotiation is often mediated through the sharing of cultural festivals, traditional aesthetics, and personal vlogs [18].

5 Identification of Research Gaps

Even though the available source volume is rather rich, there are also a number of critical gaps:

Over-reliance upon Case Studies: most of the current scholarship revolves around several super-influencers (e.g., Li Ziqi). Research on the ecosystem of mid-tier and grassroots creators who help to make the culture more diversified is deficient.

Descriptive vs. Analytical Approaches: There are numerous researches which offer descriptive descriptions of what is presented, but not analytical evaluations of how visual grammar works as a symbolic system.

The Black Box of Algorithms: The Rush to go Research: There is a pressing necessity to explore how the creation of recommendation algorithms and platform politics contributes to the creation of a global regime of visibility of Chinese cultural content.

Combined, all of these loopholes imply that few studies focus on visual production, mediation by platform and reception by viewers through a relational prism. It is through this drawback that the VPR model is attained.

6 Proposed Conceptual Framework

In order to cover the gaps mentioned above, this paper suggests the Visual-Platform-Reception (VPR) Model. This framework assumes that Chinese culture transmission is a three-fold process:

Visual Layer (Aesthetics & Narrative): It is concerned with the process of encoding, studying the particular visual tropes, narrative patterns, aesthetic styles employed to encode culture.

Platform Layer (Affordances & Algorithms): Studies the mediation level, including the impact of technical characteristics, censorship systems, and ranking of algorithms on content access and interaction.

Reception Layer (Decoding and Context): Interpretation of the reception layer looks at the decoding stage where cultural background, geopolitical environment and personal predispositions of the audience decide on the final meaning of the visual text.

The combination of these three layers allows the scientists to shift their attention to more critical, systemic description of the digital cultural flows than to its simple content de-scription.

7 Conclusion

This literature review has united the liquid nature of transnational social media visualized Chinese cul-tural communications. The findings show that there has been a radical shift to the trend of soft visual storytelling led by the influencers, grassroots actors which employ digital aesthetics to bypass the old borders. Even though platforms have provided unprecedented avenues of culture dissemination, it carries structural limitations that inform how they are seen and interpreted.

The suggested VPR paradigm offers a solid theoretical background of the future studies. It is suggested that future researchers should exploit mixed methodology in the form of the integration of the computational visual analysis with ethnographic reception studies, in order to continue studying the issue of the influence of algorithmic logic and AI-created content on the perception of Chinese culture by the rest of the world. Further studies would be valuable by abandoning the recurrent use of case research on a small number of high-profile influencers.

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