

From “TikTok Note Me” to the Communication of Traditional Culture: Cultural Negotiation and Value Reconstruction under the Logic of Entertainment

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Abstract. Taking the phenomenon of "TikTok Note Me" as a point of entry, this study examines the viability of traditional culture within the short video ecosystem and the process of its value reconstruction. Combining literature review with specific case analysis, this paper investigates how communication subjects adjust their behavioral patterns and cultural expression strategies under the dual regulation of algorithmic recommendation mechanisms and media logic. The analysis reveals that short video platforms drive the communication of traditional culture toward significant entertainment-oriented and individualized characteristics. Driven by the "laws of traffic," cultural values are undergoing a dynamic cycle of deconstruction and reorganization. Communicators must not only cater to the aesthetic preferences of the audience but also strive to maintain the core of the culture, thereby adapting to living inheritance within this new logic and field. By interpreting the tension between platform media logic and traditional cultural values, this study reveals the evolutionary trajectory of cultural communication mechanisms in the context of short videos, providing a theoretical perspective and realistic reference with greater explanatory power for understanding cultural communication practices in the new media era.

Keywords: TikTok, Traditional Culture, Cultural Communication, Value Reconstruction

1. Introduction

In an era where digital media is deeply integrated into daily life, cultural dissemination is undergoing a profound transformation. Short video platforms, exemplified by TikTok, have become crucial arenas for global cultural communication and re-creation through algorithm-driven operations, decentralized production, and highly interactive mechanisms. Particularly in China, many aspects of traditional culture have been repackaged and reinterpreted through short videos, gradually breaking through traditional dissemination frameworks and entering broader public view. Changes in platform communication logic have significantly altered the dissemination paths, reception modes, and meaning structures of traditional culture.

The phenomenon of "TikTok note me" reflects both a positive transformation of traditional cultural communication empowered by digital media, and simultaneously highlights new issues emerging in the dissemination process. In the spread of traditional cultural content, this

phenomenon illustrates how disseminators, in adapting to platform logic, adopt entertainment-oriented expression strategies. While these strategies enhance user engagement, they also pose challenges to the authenticity and value-bearing functions of cultural content [1]. Within the tension between entertainment value and cultural value, the dissemination and reception of traditional culture are experiencing a dynamic process of value negotiation and reconstruction. Current research primarily focuses on the ways new media supports cultural inheritance [2], the participatory mechanisms of short video platforms [3], and the impact of algorithmic recommendation on content visibility [4]. However, compared with macro-level discussions of technological empowerment, there is still a lack of in-depth exploration regarding how cultural values are reconstructed through the "logic of entertainment" in micro-level dissemination practices, as well as how the interactions among users, platforms, and disseminators influence the generation of cultural meanings. In response, this paper aims to address the following key question: How are the values of traditional culture negotiated and reconstructed within the "TikTok note me" context?

2. Theoretical framework

The iteration of media technology is not merely an update of communication channels; it triggers a paradigm shift in traditional culture from static display to dynamic interaction, and from centralized control to platform-based diffusion. Digital media, represented by short videos, has endowed traditional culture with new vitality by lowering entry barriers, allowing cultural content to be embedded into the micro-texture of daily life [5]. However, this digital empowerment comes at a cost. Under the coercion of "visual hegemony" and fast-paced traffic laws, traditional culture faces the risk of "lightweighting"—to cater to instantaneous sensory stimulation, deep historical heritage and profound values are often stripped away, potentially reducing culture to over-packaged entertainment symbols where deep value and historical density are simplified [6].

Although entertainment is not a unique product of the digital age, in an ecosystem dominated by algorithms, it has evolved into a dominant underlying logic. Drawing on Altheide's Media Logic theory, the attributes of media technology itself profoundly shape the organizational structure and reception methods of information [7]. Within short video fields like TikTok, this logic is further reinforced by recommendation algorithms, establishing a communication paradigm centered on visual pleasure, fragmented narrative, and emotional arousal. Under what Foucault might call the "discipline" of cultural power, the presentation of traditional cultural content is forced to align with amusement, performance, and display. This change in behavioral patterns is not only a passive adaptation to platform traffic rules but also imperceptibly reconstructs the public's cognitive expectations and reception mechanisms regarding traditional culture in the short video genre.

Faced with a platform logic-dominated communication reality, the dissemination of traditional culture demonstrates the phenomenon of cultural negotiation. Hall posits that communication is not a one-way transmission but a process fraught with power relations and reception differences [8]. This negotiation process may lead to the "dilution" or "alienation" of cultural meanings, but under specific creative strategies, it may also achieve value "reconstruction" and re-identification. This study thus constructs a three-fold analytical framework integrating media logic of entertainment, platform mechanisms, and cultural negotiation mechanisms, aiming to analyze the behavioral logic and value reconstruction processes of traditional culture dissemination within the "TikTok note me" phenomenon. It uses the logic of entertainment to explain the formal transformation of cultural expressions and examines how cultural meanings are deconstructed and reconstructed through interaction under the mechanism of cultural negotiation. From the perspective of the artistic field, the reconstruction of cultural value in short video platforms is also an exploratory action in the construction of cultural subjectivity in the digital intelligence era [9].

3. Methodology

This paper selected 100 short videos related to traditional culture on the TikTok platform as analysis samples. The timeframe ranges from January 2023 to December 2024, covering common traditional cultures such as opera, intangible cultural heritage skills, folk festivals, traditional instruments, and calligraphy. The video content focuses on traditional culture and contains guiding phrases such as "Follow me"; the videos have over 10,000 likes, indicating a certain level of communication influence; publishers include official accounts, folk artists, and ordinary users to ensure diversity. To deeply understand the relationship between entertainment logic and cultural value reconstruction, drawing on Krippendorff's content analysis method, the following analysis dimensions were constructed [10].

Table 1. Sample research dimensions and indicators

Dimension	Indicators
Expression Form	Video editing style, visual effects, background music, camera language, etc.
Entertainment Characteristics	Humor, exaggeration, emotional performance, interaction guidance (e.g., "Note me," "Hit like")
Content Depth	Whether it includes cultural explanation, historical origins, technical principles, etc.
Communicator Role	Official institutions, individual users, content creators (KOLs)
User Interaction	Number of likes, comment types, forwarding volume, value recognition or questioning in user feedback

4. Analysis and discovery

4.1. The reshaping of traditional cultural content by entertainment expression

The primary finding is that the logic of expression has shifted from ritualistic presentation to visual attraction, whereby traditional culture has transformed from solemn displays to short-term sensory presentations, emphasizing the appeal of "being seen." We found that the majority of sample videos employed highly entertaining modes of expression. Firstly, there is a trend of fragmented presentation: traditional crafts such as paper-cutting, sugar painting, or calligraphy often showcase only the most spectacular moments or final products, with little depiction of the production process or cultural context, leading to the compression of cultural depth into brief, consumable visual moments. Secondly, mocking or humorous tones are frequently adopted. For example, a Peking Opera performer singing a segment from The Drunken Beauty (Guifei Zuijiu) might exaggerate facial expressions with emoji overlays to create humorous effects and encourage user engagement. Moreover, the use of background music and special effects further packages the content: performances of traditional instruments like the guzheng or pipa are often accompanied by trendy pop music, pushing cultural expression toward backgroundization and emotional consumption. While such content significantly enhances viewer appeal and interaction rates, it simultaneously transforms traditional cultural materials into sensory stimulation products, thereby weakening the intrinsic semantic systems and knowledge structures of traditional culture.

4.2. Changes in communication behavior driven by platform logic

The communication logic of short video content has shifted from content-centered to platform-driven, meaning creators' behavioral patterns are deeply constrained by algorithms, and

their content output is highly coupled with user data. Analysis of the communication behaviors of different subjects shows that all participants exhibit extremely high sensitivity and adaptability to the platform's recommendation mechanisms. This adaptability is mainly reflected in several strategic dimensions: First, creators adopt active traffic guidance mechanisms; almost all samples featured appeals for users to "add a follow" using humorous, colloquial, or rhyming phrases. Second, they actively participate in platform-led topic challenges, such as the "Intangible Cultural Heritage Style Outfit Challenge" or "Chinese Style Dance Covers," utilizing trending tags to systematically increase content exposure. More critically, creators have thoroughly adjusted video pacing and editing styles, generally controlling the duration between 15 and 30 seconds, using high-speed editing fused with effects, filters, and background music to strictly cater to core algorithmic metrics like "completion rate" and "interaction rate," thereby satisfying the platform's "unspoken rules".

These strategic adjustments clearly reveal a fact: the communication of traditional culture on platforms is no longer a pure content activity but is deeply embedded in the algorithmic visibility rules set by the platform. Therefore, creators must continuously fine-tune their strategies to gain systematic support from the platform in the game of traffic. This is also a behavioral innovation actively seeking a dynamic balance between "faithful restoration" and "media innovation"²¹.

4.3. Negotiation and reconstruction of cultural value

The logic of cultural value is shifting from one-dimensional static inheritance to a negotiation and reconstruction participated in jointly by communicators and users, thereby generating elastic and diversified expression paths. Although there is an obvious trend toward entertainment overall, some high-interaction videos have successfully achieved the re-dissemination of traditional cultural values. This reflects a complex mechanism of value negotiation, the core of which lies in the collaborative construction of cultural identity by users.

In these communication practices, the user comment section is no longer just a place for simple feedback but has become a vital field for the generation of cultural meaning and dialogue. Notably, this "lightweighting" of value has not led to the complete dissolution of culture. Many contents packaged in a humorous style aim not merely for entertainment but use a relaxed context to guide users closer to traditional culture. Taking a folk festival video as an example, it used dance mimicry and role-playing for ridicule, yet fully preserved the authenticity of costumes, props, and scenes. The comment section even sparked cultural curiosity among teenagers, who expressed a desire to "go to the scene and see it." These phenomena fully indicate that platform users are not passive cultural recipients; rather, they actively engage in value judgment, emotional connection, and identity projection between platform logic and communicated content, thereby driving a multi-level negotiation of cultural meaning. Therefore, "TikTok Note Me" is not just an individual communication behavior striving for traffic attention; it is a typical microcosm of how traditional culture is re-interpreted, accepted, and revitalized within the new digital structure of a platformized context.

5. Conclusion

The analysis of traditional culture short video communication practices in the context of "TikTok Note Me" reveals the complex interaction between "entertainment logic" and "cultural value" in digital platforms. Although entertainment-oriented forms of expression have diluted the depth of traditional culture to some extent, this lightweighting is not purely a process of cultural devaluation but a strategic negotiation and reconstruction under platform logic. On one hand, entertainment styles significantly enhance the accessibility and spreadability of traditional culture. Cultural forms

that were originally relatively heavy and distant have been transformed into content types closer to users' daily lives, achieving widespread dissemination, especially among younger groups. On the other hand, the presentation of cultural content in an entertainment context inevitably faces the risk of knowledge stripping and symbolic simplification.

While "entertainment" and "culturality" exist in tension, they are not naturally opposed. On the contrary, many successful cases of traditional cultural communication do not blindly reject entertainment but achieve value reconstruction through creative transformation. This coincides with the theory of "Cultural Self-awareness" proposed by the renowned Chinese cultural scholar Fei Xiaotong—the vitality of culture lies in its connection with real life, not in static preservation. These strategies imply that the entertainment logic of the short video field is not only a challenge but can also be an opportunity structure for the transformation and communication of traditional culture.

Although this study takes TikTok as an example, its findings possess certain universal significance. On global platforms such as Instagram Reels and YouTube Shorts, traditional cultures and local knowledge likewise face challenges of expression and dissemination under algorithmic logic. Maintaining cultural diversity and depth of value within entertainment-driven structures has already become a core issue in the global governance of digital culture. This study offers a framework for understanding the mechanisms of cultural negotiation and provides an analytical pathway for cross-cultural comparative research.

6. Discussion

"TikTok Note Me" is more than just a tactical behavior by users competing for traffic and visibility; it reflects the deep adaptation logic and reconstruction paths of traditional culture in a platform-based survival environment. Given that this study focuses mainly on a single platform and does not deeply involve the psychological mechanisms of the audience, future academic exploration could further expand to cross-platform comparisons and the examination of user cognitive dimensions to more comprehensively depict the complex landscape of cultural communication in a global digital background. Ultimately, digital platforms are not "enemies" standing in opposition to traditional culture, but a mirror of contemporary cultural negotiation. The key to the problem lies not in denying the entertainment path brought by platforms, but in how communicators can strictly adhere to the cultural standard while deeply understanding and adapting to platform logic, finding that crucial point of dynamic balance between the pursuit of traffic and the persistence of value.

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