

Role of Mainstream Media as Aligning Cultural Identity by Public Opinion: A Case Study of the Recent Theft at Louvre Museum in France

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Abstract. On October 19, 2025 there was a shocking robbery at the Louvre Museum in Paris, Four thieves used a freight lift platform to steal eight pieces of French royal jewelry with specific immeasurable historical values from the Gallery d'Apollon within seven minutes. Notably, after the incident, different media platforms have presented quite different narrative frameworks and public opinion, which has exerted a diversified influence on public cultural identity. This phenomenon presents a valuable case for the role of mainstream media in the quest of the role of cultural identity via the mechanism of public opinion. Mainstream media transcended an isolated incident into a public issue about the value of cultural heritage and succeeded in directing the public from the performance to build a value consensus about cultural protection. Through the media coverage of the Louvre theft incident and their impact, this study reveals that the mainstream media play an irreplaceable core role to the guide of cultural identity. The results show that the mainstream media take "cultural security reflection" as the core narrative framework, with negative and neutral emotional tones as the mainstay, focusing on key issues such as museum security and artifact recovery. The study finds that mainstream media play a core role in guiding public cultural identity through agenda-setting, frame construction and authoritative interpretation. This paper reveals the media's public opinion guidance mechanism in cultural heritage events, points out research limitations such as sample coverage and time dimension, and puts forward future research directions.

Keywords: mainstream media, cultural identity, public opinion guidance, cultural security.

1. Introduction

On October 19, 2025 there was a shocking robbery at the Louvre Museum in Paris, France. Four thieves used a freight lift platform to steal eight pieces of French royal jewelry with specific immeasurable historical values from the Gallery d'Apollon within seven minutes. The objects taken included precious pieces such as Empress Eugenie's diamond bow brooch, with economic losses estimated at up to 88 million Euros (\$102 million). The incident revealed major weaknesses in the Louvre's security system prior to planned upgrades - like the installation of 100 cameras and a police station - which could not be implemented quickly enough. This event had soon spread worldwide

attention to the topic of security in museums and protection of cultural heritage, leading to a joint investigation by French and Spanish police. Mainstream media also took advantage of this issue to explore into the essence of cultural value identification and public opinion guiding. Notably, after the incident, different media platforms have presented quite different narrative frameworks and public opinion, which has exerted a diversified influence on public cultural identity. This phenomenon presents a valuable case for the role of mainstream media in the quest of the role of cultural identity via the mechanism of public opinion.

Cultural identity being an individual's sense of belonging to a particular cultural group, is of particular importance in the context of globalization. Cultural heritage is not only a witness to the history of the nation but also a very important carrier for cultural transmission and identity. The Louvre, being a museum that is famous all over the world, has collections that do not belong only to France, but to the common cultural wealth of the whole humanity. Against this backdrop, the way mainstream media report and interpret such events not only has an impact on the idea of the event but can straightaway affect people's understanding of cultural value and construction of cultural identity. This study chooses this case in the role of mainstream media in determining the direction of public opinion on TGF spark and its potential effects on public cultural identity.

2. Literature review

Generally, existing literature points out that changes in the media ecology represent profound challenges to the public opinion guidance work of the mainstream media. Xintian Wang believed that social media should play an important role in information dissemination and public opinion guidance, and at the same time, it is also necessary to promote transformation and improvement [1]. Shen Zhengfu highlights in his research the need for building a mechanism where guidance of public opinions and response of the public sentiment go hand in hand, to get a strategic change from the traditional passive-response to the modern full-circle active-leaders [2]. Yang Jingda and Fu Chao further scholars this view of public events in their research exploring the public event reporting, where they argue that accurate, timely and constructive reporting of public events is a key strategy in the process of guiding public emotions and building social consensus [3]. They say the mainstream media must master the skill of defining the nature of events and putting the agenda to the people. Wu Yidan developmental thinking and what can improve the guidance pathway in the era [4].

However, the process of guidance is an area full of complexity and risk. Zheng Shuang is particularly concerned about the pitfalls of emotional expression in public opinion guidance, which he believes may lead to a loss opinion on the one hand, even triggering public reactance, resulting in the overall lack of the authority and effectiveness of public opinion guidance [5]. Simultaneously, the new media environment itself makes public opinion even more uncontrollable. The the causes of public opinion fermentation and spread based on the characteristics of new media, point out the information dissemination's immediacy, interactivity and information silos are important factors caused the rapid evolution and polarization of public opinion. Gao Ruyue takes the phenomenon of "news reversal" as an example and tries to disclose how the direct impact of lagging information verification directly damages the credibility of the media [6]. This requires the mainstream media to uphold the bottom-line of media truthfulness, at the same time, pursue timely publication [7,8].

In the field of the cultural identity research, according to the literature, its formation mechanism has changed from the one-way instill model to the multi-dimensional, interactive build model. Luo Qinqi uses the intangible cultural heritage dissemination of Sichuan Shu brocade as an example to argue how new media can rejuvenate traditional cultural heritage by narrative transformation (e.g.,

making it more youthful, storified and contextualization), therefore creating a new, more vibrant cultural identity [9]. Zhang Yanxu furthermore a cross-cultural communication perspective, where social media is at the same time presenting the difference and commonality of cultures in society [10]. It can help to enhance internal identity within a culture, and, in ideal circumstances, also to enable understanding and identity across cultures. Furthermore, from another theoretical perspective introduced by Wang Guangriu and Liu Jie, "intersubjectivity" view, the influencing by means of cultural communication is based on the other important factor is the foundation of dialogue, understanding and shared meaning between communicator and audience, not just to be communicated in the direction of one-way [11].

Quantitative content analysis is used in this study. Data sources were chosen from three representative Chinese mainstream media source, namely People's Daily (core party media), C proposals News (national television), The paper (mainstream new media) as well as some foreign media. The research sample are all the related reports published within 30 days after the incident through official websites, official Weibo accounts and news client apps of these media outlets and a total of valid sample articles.

This research takes the unit of analysis as individual news report, and designs a systematic code scheme with the following specific dimensions: First, the reporting framework is used as the core variable, which is operationalized into the following four types: Global Empathy Framework Cultural Security/Reflection Framework Historical Association/National Narrative Framework Civilizational Mutual Learning/Confidence Display Framework. Second, the emotional tone is taken as a fundamental angle for judging the overall emotional tendency of each report and this is coded as positive, neutral or negative. Third, key issues are identified by counting the frequency of defaulting core keywords (such as "artifact recovery", "cultural confidence" etc.) in the reports.

3. Data analysis results

The data is illustrated in the figure 1.

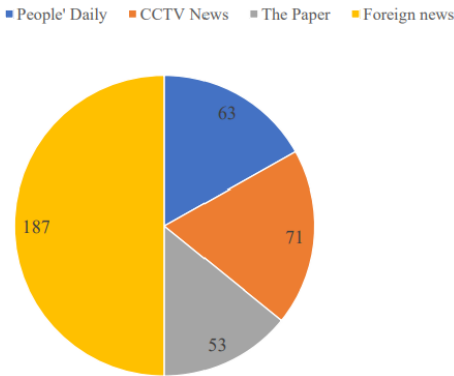


Figure 1. Pie chart of sources of data

3.1. Statistical distribution of reporting frameworks

The research focuses on distribution of reporting framework, the tendency of emotional tones, the presentation of key issues, and reporting differences between different media, with the aim of revealing the way that media construct the public narrative of this event and the cultural concepts and value orientations reflected in the media.

3.1.1. Narrative frameworks

Out of the total of 374 sample reports, the media mainly used four frames for narrative. Their distribution forms a pattern with "cultural security reflection" at the center, finished by "historical association" and "global empathy." To illustrate the type of reporting frameworks of every media, there is a chart being painting in percentage (see Figure 2). The Cultural Security/Reflection Framework with 136 reports (36.4%) ranked first, hence becoming the core most narrating perspective. Keywords given in this framework, such as "security bug", "cultural relic protection" and "security system" point out the questioning and criticism by the media of the institutional and technical flaws that were directly exposed by the event. This shows that the event was first built as a deep warning of, the obligation of domestic and international opinion about the obligations of cultural heritage management institutions especially the efficacy of emergency mechanisms faced with the universal security risks on cultural heritage sites all around the world. An additional argument for the position of this framework as the center arena to address the problem (the diagnosis process) and discuss the countermeasures (the answers process) is that most of the topic of "museum security" can be linked to it (95%).

The Historical Association/National Narrative Framework was not far behind with 104 reports (27.8%). This framework employs keywords such as "lost artifacts," "historical trauma" and "recovery rights" to put the current event in context with a larger historical flow and national memory. It is often linking to the collective memory of cultural heritage spread abroad by war, stealth, etc. in modern times, so one incident becomes the occasion to tell the national historical experience, reaffirm the cultural sovereignty and seek for the recovery justice. And the close linkage of 87% of the "artifact recovery" topic with this framework attests to this powerful emotional mobilization and historical explanatory capacity. This was the Global Empathy Framework with 24.1% (90 reports) The keywords were "common heritage of humanity," "international cooperation," and "civilizational loss." This framework goes beyond national boundaries where the damaged cultural heritage has been defined as a universal loss for all mankind emphasizing pain and the importance of teamwork. It is the universal humanistic care in which 89% of "community with a shared future for mankind" are expressed trying to achieve consensus around protection for the whole planet. The Civilizational Mutual Learning/ Confidence Display Framework have 11.8% (44 reports), quite few but also with definite direction. Through keywords such as "Chinese experience" and "protection achievements" or "cultural confidence", it tries to focus the international eyes on China's progress and contribution in field of cultural heritage protection or introduce it as a window to display the institutional advantages and increase cultural soft power. The combination of 92% of "cultural confidence" expressions with this framework manifests itself in its peculiar propaganda and image-building function.

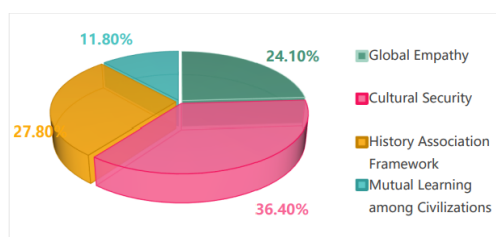


Figure 2. Example chart of reporting framework percentages

3.1.2. Emotional tone analysis

The general emotional tone of the reports was largely negative, but at the same time, neutral and positive emotions also represented a significant share and there was a complex emotional spectrum. In order to represent the emotional tone, a bar chart on negative feelings is plotted as shown in Figure 3. Negative emotional reports were at 178 (47.6%) for almost half. Expressions which were characterized by "shock," "distress" and "warning" correspond directly to the loss due to the event which occurred. This widespread feeling of distress is an instinctive response by the public and media to the irreparable damage to the cultural heritage, at the same time it is also the foundation of a social psychological knowledge for in-depth reflection.

Neutral emotion reports were 130 (34.8%), and were centered on making objective statements of fact and rationally analyzing cause/reasonings and countermeasures. These reports strip out robust emotions but are mainly focused on investigating and analytical contents which forms an indispensable rational voice in the public opinion arena.

Positive emotional reports 66 (17.6%), Even though these are the smallest in terms of share, are unique significance. These reports were often combined with the "Civilizational Mutual Learning Framework" or optimistic prospects of future improvements to bring a sort of constructive tone in the overall atmosphere.

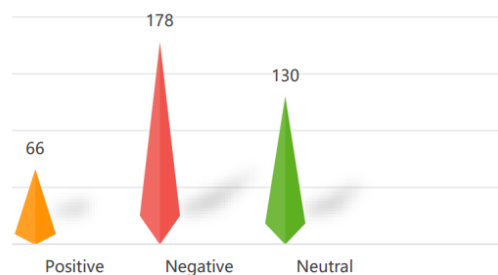


Figure 3. Bar chart emotional tones

3.1.3. Focus on key issues

Word frequency statistics of key issues showed the core focal point of media discussion of:

Among them, "Museum Security" (198 occurrences) showed a high frequency and a high concentration in the framework of Cultural Security, showing that this was the most direct and urgent public concern triggered by the event. Next, "Artifact Recovery" (156 occurrences) was primarily linked to the framework of the Historical Association, demonstrating the ways that the event had stirred up the ongoing problem of historical justice and artifact return. Subsequently, "Cultural Confidence" (134 occurrences) nearly became the mark of the Civilizational Mutual Learning framework to express the value orientation that a particular narrative tries to guide. "Community with a Shared Future for Mankind" (67 occurrences) was deeply associated with the Global Empathy framework, to which it is an important vehicle for the Chinese media to express their stand in the international situation. Meanwhile, "Cultural Heritage Protection" (178 occurrences), as the most fundamental and inclusive issue, is an agenda that is superimposed on multiple frameworks and serves as that final destination of all discussions.

3.2. Media differences

There is a definite discrimination in the reporting emphasis of the three major domestic media outlets serving the whole level of public opinion guidance. People's Daily, being the central party media, has the most balanced and steady report strategy. While addressing on the central element of "Cultural Security" (38.1%), which substantially raised the quantile of the "Civilizational Mutual Learning/Confidence Display" framework (19.0%), which retained a largely neutral emotional sound (52.4%). This reporting strategy is highly consistent with People's Daily's role location, as the official mouthpiece, which shows that although responding to social concerns, it also tends to lead the public opinion to a positive direction of development so as to shape the image of a responsible big country.

CCTV News has the most warning and mobilization characteristics. Most important is the "Cultural Security Framework" (42.3%) and often use the "Historical Association Framework" (31.0%) to inspire collective memory. Its percentage of negative emotional tone (56.3%) is also the highest percentage.

The paper as a market-oriented new media media, have a more diverse and balanced framework selection, paid equal attention to the "Historical Association" (35.8%) and "Global Empathy" (32.1%) frameworks, with a relatively even emotional distribution. This reveals that it puts more focus on the provision of a three-dimensional narration (both historical depth and international outlook) to satisfy the audience for information depth and range in line with the balance between professionalism and public interest in market-oriented media.

In contrast, the online reports of foreigners paint a different story with a different logic. Their frameworks are dominated by "Global Empathy" (35.8%) and "Historical Association" (34.8%) whereas emphasis on "Cultural Security" accountability on addressing specific operators (21.4%) was lower than average. They pay little attention to "Civilizational Mutual Learning/Confidence Display" 8%. Emotionally speaking, they are mostly neutral (58.6%). This means that foreign media are more inclined to put the event in the context of transnational "common heritage of humanity" loss or history retrospective for rational discussion. Their reporting paradigm is deeply affected by the western journalistic professionalism, emphasizing on the universal care of human and objective analysis, creating a comparison with the domestic media's point of view focusing on security reflection, institutional response and domestic achievements.

3.3. Role and influence of mainstream media in forging cultural identity

Through the media coverage of the Louvre theft incident and their impact, this study reveals that the mainstream media play an irreplaceable core role to the guide of cultural identity. In the face of the great cultural heritage events, the mainstream media such as authoritative, comprehensive, and in-depth, in the process of authoritative professional reporting, form a serious treatment of cultural heritage protection, effectively guided the public to pay attention to the historical value and cultural significance of the artifact, effectively stimulated the construction of public good cultural identity. Specifically, the core role of mainstream media mainly shows in the following three aspects:

First, mainstream media, through the agenda setting function, decide which issues of cultural heritage come into the sight of the public and how they get viewed. In the case of the Louvre theft, not only did the mainstream media timely report the event itself, but follow-up reports also construed the dilemmas faced by museum security, the challenges of cultural heritage protection, they also made the public to reflect on the importance of cultural heritage protection from a macroscopic perspective. At the emotional expression level, the tone was mostly neutral and

negative focusing more on the warning function. For example, CCTV News's sort out of French museums as a repeat of security failures, in addition, foreign media also disclosed negative emotions, such as The Guardian, analyze the widespread budget cuts, which result in the cultural heritage security problems in western museums, and all in all, it has effectively expanded the public domain of cultural heritage protection, help to form comprehensive cultural identity.

Second, framing effects through mainstream media after interpreting cultural heritage events among the public. Following the above data analysis, frameworks of the Cultural Security and Historical Association are generally core. In reporting the theft at the Louvre, the Cultural Security and Historical Association frameworks used repeatedly by the mainstream media focused not on the fact that the theft of artifacts was a loss to France, but that the theft of artifacts was a lost to the common cultural heritage of humanity. This reporting framework contributes to developing public cultural identity across national frontiers, with a stance on the heritage of all heading before the globe, thus building a stronger awareness of the protection of the cultural heritage in the world. At the same time, the in-depth analysis of the security vulnerabilities and management issues by the mainstream media also promoted the substantive improvement measures, such as the Louvre's announcement to add 100 surveillance cameras, set up a police station, and construct the position of security coordinator.

Third, mainstream media, authoritative media information and professional interpretation provide reliable information basis, which can help the public form accurate understanding of the value of cultural heritage. In the era of information boom, professionalism and authority of mainstream media make them an important consult for the public at the times of facing complex culture heritage events. For example, in the Louvre theft incident, the mainstream media introduced the opinions of professional people like museum directors, ministers of culture, and professors of art crime, and in-depth analysis of the background, impact and response measures of this event. This professional content helps the public to look beyond the surface and understand the complexity and the importance of the protection of cultural heritage.

4. Conclusion

In summary, the incident of the Louvre theft serves as a kind of prism refracting the complex spectrum of the construction of cultural identity through the lens of a view. Mainstream media transcended an isolated incident into a public issue about the value of cultural heritage and succeeded in directing the public from the performance to build a value consensus about cultural protection. However, the study still has some limitations: the sample is concentrated on mainstream media failing to fully cover social media, self-media and other platform, which takes the structure of public opinion; in terms of time dimension, the study focuses on the outbreak time of the event, lacking the tracking of the long-term evolution trajectory of public sentiment; in terms of cross-cultural comparison, treating "foreign news" as a homogeneous whole, failing to identify the internal differences. In view of the above-mentioned issues, there are some prospects in the future for the research: it should increase the data sources to include multi-platform and multi-language samples for comparison; it should extend the time of observation to analyze the dynamic change in media narratives as the event is happening and policy responses to it, and combine such audience research to explore the actual impact of different narrative frameworks on the public's cognition and emotions in order to reveal the multidimensional mechanism of interaction between media, public, and policy in major cultural events to a more complete extent. Confronted with the difficulties of entertainment-oriented communication, the mainstream media should further consolidate their communication purpose of cultural leadership - they not only need to strictly maintain the position

of authoritative interpreter of cultural value, but also need to innovate the communication pattern to express cultural spirit in more attractive forms. Only in this way we can solidify the value of coordinates of national culture in the era of fragmented information and cultural heritage can really become the spiritual bond of the formation of a social identity.

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