

A Study on the Propaganda Function of Official Media on Chinese Culture from the Perspective of Modern Communication

Chuer Lu^{1,a,*}

¹*College of Humanities and Sciences, National University of Singapore, Singapore*

a. e0907415@u.nus.edu

**corresponding author*

Abstract: China has a lengthy history, and its culture is also incredibly rich and distinct. With the rise of New Media, China is utilizing a variety of methods to promote Chinese culture through new media not just in China but also throughout the world. This study will investigate how new media is used to promote Chinese culture to people in China and abroad by analysing what official media posts and uploads and how they help to spread Chinese culture, as well as evaluating the differences between China's report and other reports on Chinese culture, news, and events, and determining how other media outside of China views Chinese culture. It will be feasible to determine what China performed successfully and poorly in terms of promoting and exporting Chinese culture by doing this research. China has effectively provided official websites and platforms for people all over the world to access Chinese Spring Festival Gala, films, and people, allowing Chinese culture to be widely distributed and discussed.

Keywords: communication, new media, official media, Chinese culture

1. Introduction

Chinese culture, as one of the world's oldest and most influential ancient civilizations has left an indelible mark on various aspects of Asian philosophy, moral values, etiquette, and traditions. Rotted in a vast and diverse geographical landscape, it boasts a rich and profound cultural heritage. This encompasses wide range of elements, including traditions art festivals, language, cuisine, world-renowned heritage sites, iconic celebrations like China's Spring Festival, martial arts such as Kung Fu, and traditional performing arts like Beijing opera, among others. This cultural tapestry is characterised by its uniqueness and diversity. In recent years, with the advent and rap8dgrowth of New Media, Chinese culture has been introduced to a global audience like never before. This newfound accessibility has facilitated the promotion and sharing of various aspects of Chinese culture with and increasing y broad and international audience.

New Media is also known as digital media, in contrast to traditional media such as print newspapers or television [1]. In the 1990s, China got full access to the international Internet. With the rapid development of new media in China, relying on Internet communication and new media arose at a historic juncture. Short videos hit the market in 2013 China, with the launch of the Sina Weibo Application and Weishi (short video platforms), ushering in the era of short videos. 2017 was

a year of significant development for short videos, and an increasing number of individuals began to use and watch video clips [2]. Official media refers to media outlets that are directly or indirectly under the financial and/or editorial authority of the state or government. Official websites, official social media account on social media platforms, and official media will be discussed in this research.

This research objective is to explore how Chinese official media utilize the new media to promote the Chinese culture in China and to the rest of the world in order to pass on the culture and even promote the culture all over the world. It will also demonstrate the distinction between the foreign report and China's report on news and events in China. The research will first introduce how Chinese official media promote Chinese Culture through the new media in China and overseas, and then showing how medias in other countries promote Chinese culture and comparing the difference between Chinese official media.

2. How Chinese Official Media Promote Chinese Culture

2.1. Spring Festival Gala

With the rise of new media, China is making use of these platforms to increase knowledge of and access to Chinese culture among more people, particularly young people. The government can reach more individuals and use more strategies to promote Chinese culture thanks to social media. People can readily learn about and express cultural ideas at the same time. China used social media to advertise the Chinese Spring Festival Gala, a production that incorporates both traditional and contemporary aspects of Chinese culture. Additionally, China Central Television (CCTV) created shows for films to enable viewers to go deeper into the films and learn about the cultural and historical significance of the films and dramas.

The Chinese Spring Festival Gala, also known as Chunwan in Chinese, is an annual TV show that broadcast on the eve of the Chinese New Year [3]. The gala which produced by China Central Television (CCTV) was ongoing from the 1983 to the present. It had become a tradition that family gather together on the eve of the Chinese New Year after dinner and watch the gala together. Throughout the history, the Spring Festival gala integrate modern aspects while maintain traditional essences, which plays an important role in promoting Chinese culture and showing a sense of unity and belonging.

2.1.1. Innovation of the Spring Festival Gala

However, as time passes, viewers have seen that the Gala has become uninteresting and no longer attractive and intriguing for a variety of reasons [3]. Over the years, the organizer of the gala had made many attempts to incorporate tradition and new trends to attract more young people to watch the Spring Festival Gala. With the rise of the new media, it is easier for the official social media to promote the gala. For instance, take Weibo, a highly popular social media platform in China often referred to as the “Chinese Twitter”. This platform enables users to post images, videos, and articles. To pique people's interest in the Spring Festival Gala, the official CCTV Weibo account regularly posts lists of the scheduled performances and the celebrities who will be attending. The Spring Festival Gala, with its broadcast duration exceeding four hours, often incorporates engaging activities on social media to prevent viewers from becoming bored. For instance, the official social media accounts on platforms like TikTok and Kuaishou (another short-video social media platform) frequently post quizzes and conduct votes related to the gala's performances. These quizzes and votes offer small rewards to participants who answer correctly. As a result, the audience becomes more engrossed in the performances and actively engages with the gala content. This interactivity enhances the overall viewing experience.

In 2022, the CCTV provided vertical screen viewing of the Spring Festival Gala on social media, such as TikTok, Kuaishou, and YouTube. It is both an invention and a highlight of the CCTV Spring Festival Gala. It highlights the fact that CCTV Spring Festival Gala takes the initiative to seek changes, innovates communication methods, unblocks all-media communication channels. Due to the emergence of the new coronavirus pandemic, many people are unable to gather with their families to watch the Spring Festival Gala on television. CCTV released the vertical screen to watch the Spring Festival Gala, allowing young people who are unable to travel home to watch the Spring Festival Gala on their mobile phones. Seeing the Spring Festival Gala live compensates for homesickness and adds to the celebratory atmosphere. Thus, the vertical screen viewing of the Spring Festival Gala satisfies the needs of individuals viewing videos on the Internet, and to provide full scene coverage for the crowd beside the giant screen, adding a fresh experience for everyone watching the Spring Festival Gala.

2.2. Chinese Films & Dramas

China has a 5,000-year history and cultural tradition, and its national culture has a significant influence. In the construction of film and television dramas, the ambiance of the eras should be combined with modern life situations to showcase the qualities of national cultural life [4]. All ethnic components, such as food, clothes, tourist attractions, natural sceneries, and even traditional Chinese festivals, cultural practices, music, tales, and folk stories, can be shown in movies and dramas, demonstrating the features of Chinese traditional culture to the rest of the world. While selling cultural products to the rest of the globe, it also distributes Chinese traditional culture to other parts of the world, making it more familiar and recognized [4].

The Chinese Film Market is successive in 2002, Chinese films are being seen by more and more people [5]. The advancement of film media will undoubtedly accelerate the dissemination of Chinese culture. Movies inherit and condense national culture and soul, which is a significant tool for increasing national soft power and influence. It is a visual culture that can improve cultural exchanges between countries and regions, as well as understanding, cooperation, and peaceful cohabitation among them [6]. With the rise of the New Media, the official media utilised social media platforms to promote and appreciate to certain good films and dramas. The official media account will post some articles which are the comments and impression after watching the film on the social media platform, that praises the film and discuss what it accomplished well, as well as how effectively it depicted and conveyed Chinese culture. Thus, this not only explains and popularizes the cultural knowledge in the films and dramas to the public, but it also motivates more media workers to actively participate in spreading Chinese culture and integrate more components of Chinese culture into their work. Moreover, the China Central Television (CCTV) also created a TV shows—"Love Movies" that give chances to the audience to talk about the films they like, which has achieved in-depth interaction between the media and the audience [7]. "Love Movies" is currently the most popular promotion platform for domestic films in TV media. It absorbs public comments and opinions on films in a dynamic interactive format, and so has become an essential position for promoting domestic mainstream films. The show will conduct in-depth analyses of the most recent films to be produced, invite film creators to visit the studio, recommend new domestic films with the goal of uncovering the tales behind the creators and conveying the emotions of the characters, and broadcast them on television [7]. Thus, the director and actor would discuss their perspectives on the characters in the films, as well as explain the historical and cultural connotations of specific settings and costumes, allowing audiences to better comprehend the films and the Chinese culture that was portrayed, and audience will also share their impression of the film in person or while watching on the official website, which brings cultural interaction between producers and audiences to fruition.

3. How Chinese Official Media Promote Chinese Culture Through the New Media to Other Countries

China has also made tremendous efforts to spread Chinese culture throughout the world. The official account on the foreign social media platforms and the official website contributes a lot on promoting Chinese culture. To begin, the official media will broadcast the gala live on their official website with subtitles and translation, as well as give subtitles and translation on an online video platform of films and dramas for overseas audiences. Foreigners can find English version and Russian version of the gala, and Chinese news and affairs on the CCTV official website (CCTV.com). This successfully gives a platform for foreigners to understand more about Chinese culture by watching Chinese gala and news. In addition, the local TV media—Mango TV, is an online video platform that offers numerous films and dramas with English and other language subtitles and translation for international audiences, so that overseas audiences were able to easily access these films and dramas. Second, Chinese influencers partner with international brands to convey Chinese culture to the globe through their customs and posts. Collaboration with Chinese influencers not only increases a brand's influence in China, but the entire globe can see how Chinese influencers appear, and many influencers will opt to wear garments that contain elements of Chinese culture, resulting in cultural export. Third, social media platforms enable individuals all over the world to engage with Chinese culture by allowing them to share photographs and videos on the platform, which allowing others to observe components of Chinese culture more directly, and express and comment on their opinions about Chinese culture regardless of where they are from. As an example, Li Ziqi, a Chinese video blogger, is known for making food and preparing handcraft [8]. She first time uploaded her video on YouTube in 2017, which has received a lot of favour from people all throughout the world. Through her video, it conveyed that Chinese culture encompasses more than something like embroidery or traditional opera, the pastoral creative notion depicted in Li Ziqi's video is a form of Chinese culture as well [8]. According to the response on YouTube, foreigners appreciate and accept this type of Chinese culture as well, and they comment their thought and their view of China, and also sharing the things from their own countries, resulting in cross-cultural exchange.

4. How Chinese Culture Is Described and Promoted by the Media in Other Countries

4.1. Media in Other Countries

Reports of affairs in China in other countries will affect foreigners' views of Chinese culture. Foreign media will interpret a certain event from different aspects, including negatively, and will report on some issues that Chinese media will not. For example, the comedy sketches (xiaopin) on Spring Festival Gala are perhaps the most popular performances in the most-watched show on China's television channel in the reform era [9]. These performances let the audience relax tensions acquired in a fast-changing society through the clever satire of developing social problems [9]. However, at the 2018 Spring Festival Gala, there were some disagreements concerning a comedy sketch titled "The same joy, the same happiness", in which blackface was utilized [10]. People argued that this behaviour amounted to discrimination. As a result, some of them are researching the historical and cultural contexts that impact thinking of race in China [10], which is another opportunity for individuals from other countries to learn about Chinese culture. Another example is when a multinational news channel: Cable News Network (CNN) reports on uncivilized behaviour in China. It was about a rock singer who dropped shorts on stage and was imprisoned by officials after the show [11]. In China, such incidents are rarely reported on news channels, although they can be found on social media. These two examples demonstrate that the international reports on China are often negative, which is very different from China's reporting on its own country.

4.2. Travelling Vlogs

With the proliferation of vlogging and its subsequent uploads on various social media platforms, individuals globally can now easily and conveniently gain insight into the lives and appearances of people from different countries. For instance, on YouTube, there is an abundance of travel vlogs dedicated to China. These vlogs serve as windows through which people worldwide can explore diverse facets of China, including its culture, landmarks, and language, some of which may be unfamiliar even to the Chinese themselves. Additionally, these vlogs expose international audiences to the beauty of Chinese cities beyond the well-known ones like Beijing or Shanghai. Thus, vlogs play a crucial role in bridging cultural gaps and promoting cross-cultural understanding.

4.3. Cultural Exchange

China holds Cultural exhibitions, art festivals, book fairs, and other activities to showcase Chinese traditional culture, modern culture and artistic achievements to other countries. Sino-foreign cultural exchange projects, such as artist exchanges, cultural lectures, which promote the interaction between Chinese culture and the cultures of other countries. These events can be publicized and streamed via the official accounts on social media, which help to promote Chinese culture, also allowing people all over the world to watch. Promoting Chinese culture around the world will contribute to expanding the international appeal and influence of Chinese culture, boost China's cultural competitiveness, and strengthen the nation's total national strength, as well as foster goodwill and mutual understanding among countries and peoples.

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, China strives hard and to innovate and maintain traditional culture in order to promote Chinese culture through new media not only in China but also around the world. China propagates the Spring Festival Gala on Weibo, offer many interesting activities while watching the gala, and provide vertical screen viewing, making it easier and more convenient for Chinese people all around the world to enjoy the Spring Festival Gala. Also, for overseas audiences, the official websites would provide subtitle and translation for them to watch the gala and film easily, thereby promoting Chinese culture. People across the world use social media to share images, videos, and articles about Chinese and other cultures, resulting in cultural exchange. With the advent of the New Media, Chinese culture was seen by more and more people. International reports about China are frequently negative, which contrasts sharply with Chinese reporting on its own country.

However, this study admits its limitations. This study only focusses on the official media, and there are many other medias that had not been discussed. In future study, it could research not only official media but also corporate media, social media application, like Instagram and WeChat, and public accounts written by people. Also, a survey or questionnaire about people's views on Chinese culture can be conducted, in order to achieve more personalized content about the evaluation of the country.

References

- [1] Lister, M., Dovey, J., Giddings, S., Grant, I., & Kelly, K. (2008). *New Media: A Critical Introduction* (2nd ed.): Vol. Routledge.
- [2] Zhou, K., & Jin, L. (2018). *The advent of the vertical screen era: Research on the frontiers and trends of integrated media short video types*. cnki:SUN:DSYI.0.2018-06-008
- [3] Liang, Y. Y. (2016). *Is Social Media the Savior of The Spring Festival Evening Gala?*
- [4] Zhao, Y. (2011). *On the cross-cultural communication of film and television dramas and the improvement of China's cultural soft power*. cnki:SUN:XDCB.0.2011-01-041

- [5] Qian Ying. (2015). *CHINA, HOLLYWOOD AND SPLIT SCREENS*. In G. R. Barmé, L. Jaivin, & J. Goldkorn (Eds.), *Shared Destiny* (pp. 186–193). ANU Press. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt19893k8.24>
- [6] Liu, Y. (2014). The role of Chinese film and television works in spreading Chinese culture. <https://doi.org/10.16583/j.cnki.52-1014/j.2014.22.028>
- [7] Zou, J. (2008). The interaction of art and technology ——Taking the “Love Movie” column of CCTV’s six movie channels as an example. <https://doi.org/10.15997/j.cnki.qnjz.2008.14.001>
- [8] Xin, J., & Ye, Q. (2020). Analysis and reflection on the cross-cultural communication of Chinese culture on international social media platforms—taking Li Ziqi’s video comments on YouTube as an example. *cnki:SUN:XWXZ.0.2020-03-006*
- [9] Wang, H. (2022). From Court Fools to Stage Puppets: Country Bumpkins in the Skits on CCTV’s Spring Festival Gala, 1983–2022. *The China Quarterly*, 250, 552–571. doi:10.1017/S0305741022000091
- [10] Zhang, C. (2018). *Racism and the Belt and Road in CCTV’s Spring Festival Gala Article*.
- [11] Magramo, B. W. (2023, July 29). Singer detained for dropping shorts on stage at festival in China’s “City of Rock.” CNN. <https://edition.cnn.com/2023/07/28/asia/shijiazhuang-rock-singer-detained-china-intl-hnk/index.html>