

The Impact of Social Media on Propaganda of Peking Opera

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Abstract: Peking Opera, as one of the most precious cultures in China, has been inherited for hundreds of years and used to be an important form of entertainment, but it has declined now. With the development of technology, social media become an indispensable tool in people's lives. The researcher wants to focus on both the positive and negative impact of social media on the propaganda of Peking Opera. The research is conducted through the insight of the relationship between social media and Peking Opera, the influence, and solutions based on existing data and documents. It can be seen that Social Media promotes the spreading of Peking Opera to some extent: it updates Peking Opera's propagating ways to become more interesting and attractive; it changes the performing form to a more acceptable one; It provides a broader online communicating platform for artists. Nevertheless, social media changes people's psychological expectations of entertainment and leads to boredom with art easily. The effective way of helping Peking Opera become popular again is by combining it with modern online elements, using multimedia for education, and changing its performing form with respect to originality.

Keywords: Peking Opera, Social media, influence, solution

1. Introduction

Peking Opera, the quintessence of Chinese culture, should be popular. It is a highly comprehensive art, integrating music, singing, gesture, costume, make-up, movement, words, acrobatics, and stagecraft in a way unique in the world [1]. Decades ago, this art was so prosperous that nearly everyone could hum some tones of it. People at that period considered watching Peking Opera as one of their main forms of entertainment. Peking Opera was performed on the street, in the teahouse, in the palace. However, with the development of technology, especially social media, people have started to ignore Peking Opera and are attracted by those new devices, especially teenagers and young adults. Some of them cannot accept the special tones of Peking Opera, which has vibrato rate that is considerably slower than in Western classical singing [2]; Others think that the performance duration of Peking Opera, approximately two to three hours, is so long that they do not have the patience to enjoy it. The audiences of this precious art nowadays mainly consist of elderly people who have retained the habits and enthusiasm of Peking Opera since the last century.

In the past research, some focus on the broadcast of Peking Opera. People start to find different ways to propagate it. Online video games and platforms are the main mediums for helping young people know this art. The games, like Genshin Impact, combine elements of Peking Opera with the characters' costumes [3]. The development of social media affects people's lives in different ways,

including the willingness to purchase goods, maintaining relationships with family members and friends, and gaining knowledge. In particular, social media makes the "evaluate" and "advocate" stages of the decision journey more relevant for festival marketers. People can do evaluations online and broadcast them via software like Twitter, Instagram, and WeChat, which affects people's conception. Most of the research on Peking Opera's propaganda discusses how to popularize it nationally and internationally. Digital spreading is regarded as an effective means of harnessing motion capture technology, which precisely records human body movements in three-dimensional space. This technology encompasses the capture of entire body motions and the ability to record significant movements of individual body parts. It also includes gesture capture, which can capture hand movements and facial expression capture, which can capture facial movements. Thus, people can enjoy the performance of Peking Opera in theatre and online, enhancing people's awareness of this art.

This paper will focus on social media's positive and negative impacts on Peking Opera. By collecting the previous papers on both Peking Opera and social media, the author will finally provide a thorough collection of information on the relationship between these two elements. This paper is going to discuss the relationship between Peking Opera and social media from different angles. After analyzing both the positive and negative effects, the author will finally conclude and advise on developing Peking Opera online.

2. Peking Opera and Social Media

Peking Opera, with a history spanning over two centuries, represents a unique amalgamation of various regional operatic traditions from China. During the Qing Dynasty, the ascendance of the Anhui opera troupe, alongside several other troupes, migrated to Beijing to commemorate the emperor's birthday, catalyzing the burgeoning of Peking Opera as an art form. During this era, oral traditions and posters were the primary mediums for promoting and disseminating this art. Enthusiasts of Peking Opera congregated to witness performances, fostering a sense of community through skill-sharing and artistic expression.

In 1905, the Chinese produced the first movie, *The Battle of Mountain Dingjun*, which is one of the most famous plays in Peking Opera. Since then, with the development of technology, more and more types of media have occurred, which promoted the propaganda of different kinds of art, including Peking Opera. People started to enjoy Peking Opera by watching television and listening to the radio. Consequently, at that period, this art was so prosperous that nearly everyone in Beijing understood this art.

However, this positive situation changed after 1990 -- the arrival of the Internet Age. Digital images and online platforms with different functions appeared, leading to entertainment development. Social media, like Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok, was published then. Chinese people's entertainment is not only going to the theatre to watch performances and listening to the radio, but also playing computer games, watching short videos, and listening to music. In this circumstance of a variety of entertainments, Peking Opera started fading. Social media has the characteristics of communication interactivity, social connectivity and fragmentation, which help it attract many users.

Social media do affect the propaganda of Peking Opera. For instance, on YouTube, the playback volume of videos related to Peking Opera shows that the dissemination has diversity but a clear trend of concentration, and audience feedback is relatively positive. However, overall participation is low [4], which means that social media has already affected Peking Opera, but the effect is relatively small.

3. Social Media's Influence on Peking Opera

3.1. Positive Influences

3.1.1. Interesting

Social media has introduced a multitude of diverse avenues for the representation of Peking Opera. In contrast to the past, when Peking Opera was exclusively showcased through live performances on theater stages, contemporary advancements in social media platforms and video production technology have spawned many novel means for dissemination.

For instance, one of the most successful and famous movies talking about Peking Opera is *Farewell My Concubine*. The interesting elements of the movie can attract more audiences and help them understand this special art. Several reasons cause the brilliant success of this film. First, the penetration of Peking Opera elements is an important factor in the success of "Farewell My Concubine" overseas. After improving China's comprehensive national strength, other countries will naturally pay attention to and understand China's traditional culture. At that time and now, other countries are curious about Chinese traditional culture and are interested in Peking Opera. This unique Eastern art has a strong desire to explore; Peking Opera, also known as Eastern Opera, has a strong Chinese flavour. Secondly, the director, Kaige Chen, used different artistic expression ways in the film. Using colour language, the director converts black and white colours to colour images and compares the main tones of red with those of yellow and grey in the later stage [5]. Thirdly, the actors' high-quality performance greatly contributed to the success. The most classical one is one of the main characters, Dieyi Cheng, performed by Leslie Cheung. Lastly, the unique drama conflicts and plots in movies attract many audiences. By adding special symbols or metaphors at the traditional story level, Kaige Chen extended the influence of history and tradition on people's souls and fully and perfectly incorporated the film into China's fifty-year historical changes, providing a deep analysis of human nature. The characters in the film always survive in an extremely difficult environment to strengthen their human weaknesses and enable the existence of paranoia in their personalities [5].

3.1.2. Acceptable

Social media promotes Peking Opera's boost via the forms people like nowadays. By combining with popular mediums, like games, music, and short videos, more people can notice Peking Opera. Its performance way is quite classical: the lasting time is so long that people nowadays can not spare much time to watch this two-to-three-hour performance. The voices of Peking Opera are bright, straight (non-vibrato), and nasal [6], so people cannot enjoy it as they enjoy pop music. Consequently, combining it with other mediums can help more people accept Peking Opera.

To illustrate this, the author has to refer to an example of the combination of Peking Opera and video games. The producing company of *Genshin Impact*, a 3D adventure game, uploaded a promotional video, "The Divine Damsel of Devastation", in 2022. This promotion video combines Divine Damsel's role in the game with Peking Opera. Her costume and voice are all Peking Opera's. The promotion video became popular: Until March 22nd, 2022, it had 5.44 million views, received over 11000 comments on YouTube and exceeded 19.8 million playback volumes on Bilibili, a Chinese video platform. People previously interested in video games started to be attracted by Peking Opera.

In the new media environment, the mass self-dissemination of traditional Chinese opera art mainly relies on digital new media platforms, and digital new media plays an important role in the dissemination of opera. The new digital media platform has expanded the artistic dissemination of traditional Chinese opera art Channels, direction, and space, strengthening the communication intensity between the dissemination subject and the audience group to adapt to the characteristics of the times, have brought many new ways for the mass self-dissemination of Chinese opera art [7].

3.1.3. Convenient and Professional

Social media provides artists a brand-new display platform, allowing them to quickly spread their works to worldwide audiences. By uploading photos or videos of their works, artists can easily interact with potential audiences and fans, increasing their visibility and exposure. This direct connection method makes artworks no longer limited to traditional galleries and museums but can be more widely disseminated through social media.

Artists can communicate and share with other creators and art enthusiasts on social media, thereby expanding the sources of creative inspiration. They can follow the works of other artists on the platform and communicate with them through comments and private messages. This interaction helps artists inspire and learn from each other, providing them with more opportunities for feedback and suggestions, improving the quality of their works and creative skills.

The rise of social media has changed the landscape of the art market. Traditionally, works of art need to be sold through channels such as galleries or auction houses, limiting the public's access to and purchase of art. Now, artists can connect directly with potential collectors and buyers through social media, facilitating the sale and trading of their work.

3.2. Negative Influences

3.2.1. Social Media Changes People's Psychological Expectations

With the development of technology, social media's functions meet the content requirements of users. Social media content is within the scope of understanding of the public, reflecting the characteristics of easy-to-understand and popular. With the improvement of the popularity of education in the whole society and the development of science and technology, people's psychological expectations of culture have also changed. The embrace of fast food culture has evolved into a widespread endeavour, necessitating a cultural form that is intricate, multifaceted, and capable of catering comprehensively to the requirements of individuals from various social strata, age groups, and professional backgrounds. The general cultural inclination of people towards seeking novelty and adaptability aligns seamlessly with the rapid and expeditious nature of media in the digital age.

3.2.2. Boredom Caused by Social Media

Social media has the function of remembering every content people have viewed and then recommending similar things automatically. This kind of function can customize personalized content. However, everything has two sides. People can easily become disinterested when encountering excessive repetition of similar content. Certain individuals may harbour aversions towards Peking Opera despite their lack of familiarity with this form of art. This aversion may be attributed to the inundation of advertisements and recommendations for Peking Opera, which can induce a reversal of their initial perceptions.

4. Solutions

4.1. Respecting and Following the Artistic Characteristics of Peking Opera

Peking Opera is a traditional art genre with a complete system and rigorous style, which requires a relatively complete dissemination system and philosophy. In the process of improving the dissemination ability of Peking Opera, it is necessary to respect the dissemination laws of Peking Opera as a prerequisite and balance the relationship between integrity and innovation. Firstly, the researcher must adhere to the long-term goal of inheriting the art of Peking Opera and promoting its culture, understand and respect its development and dissemination laws, and maintain the integrity of

its artistic dissemination. Secondly, when carrying out content innovation that adapts to the internet communication environment, attention should be paid to the artistic production level of Peking Opera content, ensuring that any cross-border cooperation is guided by professionals who understand both opera and communication [8].

4.2. Social Media Assists in the Spread of Peking Opera

Nowadays, in the era of information explosion, WeChat, Instagram, various video apps, and social media are active in people's lives, and the dissemination of culture has become increasingly diverse. In order to better integrate into today's high-intensity and fast-paced social life, Peking Opera should also adapt to the times and make some changes. Moderate promotion, diversion, and promotion are necessary. Otherwise, it will only gradually be forgotten.

Communication technology and means are important factors in the existence and development of traditional culture. Compared to word of mouth, street posters, and radio several decades ago, Beijing Opera can now be disseminated through various channels, such as film and television works, electronic games, and video software. Beijing Opera can keep up with the trends of the times and develop its position on social platforms. On Instagram, the interaction frequency between artists and followers has a positive relationship with the amount of likes and comments. By sharing their own life experience, artists are able to attract more viewers and followers since people are generally curious about artists' lives [9].

The diversified dissemination methods and the addition of innovative elements have narrowed the distance between young people and Peking Opera, achieving the goal of spreading knowledge of Peking Opera and promoting traditional Chinese opera culture through education and entertainment.

4.3. Multimedia Technology in the Teaching of Peking Opera

The singing and performance of Peking Opera require a certain level of proficiency. It is not as easy to learn and sing as popular songs, and its stylized performance can easily make students who have just come into contact feel bored. If only the inherent music teaching mode is adopted in the classroom and students learn to sing sentence by sentence after the teacher, it is easy to cause students to feel afraid of difficulties.

The intuitive and interesting nature of multimedia teaching precisely caters to the psychological characteristics of students and can better stimulate their interest in learning. Therefore, in the process of teaching Peking Opera, teachers should fully utilize modern multimedia technology and design appropriate classroom teaching content. Through courseware, various forms such as audio and video are used to create dynamic teaching scenarios and comprehensively display character images and story backgrounds. When selecting tracks, attention should also be paid to selecting some slightly faster-paced and easier-to-learn classic arias to make students more willing to accept them. In addition, some singing passages can also be designed into the courseware and played repeatedly in the form of videos. After students become familiar with them, they can share the role simulation performance. This helps students to intuitively experience the portrayal of opera characters, deepen their understanding of the plot, and achieve twice the result with half the effort in teaching.

4.4. The Change of Performing Form

After people develop the desire to enter the theatre to watch Peking Opera performances, how to immerse the audience in the performance and stick to their hearts becomes the top priority. At this time, the theatre must exert the charm of the stage and keep the audience nostalgic for the stage performance. This requires the charm of a Peking Opera's artistic essence, the stunning performance of actors, and the perfect coordination of lighting, sound, and props on stage. Nowadays, the aesthetic

psychology of the public has changed, and the traditional abstract stage presentation cannot meet the aesthetic taste of the public. The audience has put forward higher requirements for audio-visual sensory experience, and modern stages are particularly important [10].

5. Conclusion

This paper explores social media's positive and negative impact on Peking Opera. The relationship between social media and Peking Opera is close. Similar to other new technologies, social media has two sides. For advantages, it helps Peking Opera become more interesting and acceptable. More and more people have started to understand Peking Opera through social platforms, which is a good opportunity for them to comprehend this special art form. Furthermore, social media is a good platform for professional artists to communicate with each other. They do not have to get together at a specific place to discuss since social media has replaced in-person talking, which is much more convenient. For disadvantages, social media changes people's psychological expectations via short videos and current news, which leads to impatience. The function of remembering viewed contents may sometimes cause boredom.

According to the impacts social media has on Peking Opera, the author proposes four suggestions that can promote the prosperity of Peking Opera. During the process of propaganda, people should respect Peking Opera and make sure the teaching is professional. Multimedia can be used both in spreading and teaching. On the other side, Peking Opera has some deficiencies too, so some of its performing methods should be changed to a form that people of the new generation can accept.

This research still has some deficiencies. In future endeavours, the author intends to employ research methodologies such as formulating questionnaires or conducting interviews. These approaches are poised to facilitate the acquisition of more precise and comprehensive data and information. Consequently, the ensuing conclusions are expected to exhibit greater depth and detail.

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