



The New Media Communication Mechanism of “China in the Classics” from the Perspective of Multimodality

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Abstract: Grounded in multimodal communication theory, this study examines CCTV’s flagship program “China in Ancient Books”. By analyzing its innovative strategies — including cross-temporal dialogues, visual storytelling that juxtaposes historical and contemporary narratives, character-driven portrayals of cultural figures, and socially interactive media outreach — this research reveals a collaborative viral communication mechanism through a multimodal lens. Utilizing platforms like TikTok and official accounts, the program achieves modernized expression and youth-oriented dissemination of traditional cultural content. The study explores the program’s new media impact, identifies operational challenges, proposes optimization strategies, and provides actionable insights for cultural programming across digital platforms.

Keywords: Multimodal communication; Variety show; New media communication

1. Introduction

In the new media era, the multimodal matrix and multi-symbol integration of information dissemination have become prominent trends, creating opportunities to enhance cultural communication and deepen audience engagement. The acclaimed cultural program “China in Ancient Books” has garnered widespread attention since its debut. Its innovative format, rich cultural depth, and successful new media strategies not only exemplify modern preservation of traditional culture and innovative approaches for established variety shows, but also achieve extensive online reach on digital platforms. This groundbreaking model provides valuable insights for developing similar cultural programs in the contemporary media landscape.

2. Overview of the Program “China in Ancient Books”

2.1 Program Content and Theme

As an original cultural program, “China in Ancient Books” focuses on the outstanding traditional Chinese cultural classics. By systematically sorting out the development of Chinese civilization and conducting in-depth interpretations of milestone ancient classics such as “The Book of Documents”, “The Analects of Confucius”, “Records of the Grand Historian” and “Commentary on the Waterways Classic”, In the program, the stories of the authors behind the classics, their ideological connotations, and the language and logical transformation in modern society are vividly presented. By explaining the era’s features in which the authors lived, the value, role, and practical significance of this classic work in today’s society are explored. Innovatively express the outstanding qualities, emotional inheritance and remarkable wisdom flowing in the blood of the nation, bring the words and spirit that have been buried in the dust of history back to life, and establish a profound connection with the value system and audience of modern society. This will inspire the audience’s love and awareness of inheriting traditional culture, and guide them to draw wisdom from classics and summarize life inspirations. And comprehensively enhance the national cultural confidence of the Chinese people [1].

2.2 Program Format and Innovation

“China in Ancient Books” boldly innovates in its program format, adopting a fusion model of “historical facts reenactment + voiceover introduction + dialogue between ancient and modern times + post-interview talk”. Through the highly tense and brilliant performances of the actors, it vividly presents ancient figures and scenes, recreating the extraordinary life stories and the unyielding spirit of the creators of the ancient books. [2] And by integrating a large number of modern VR virtual, AR augmented, holographic projection and digital animation technologies, it presents a strong visual impact, leading the audience to directly experience the arduous journey of the ancients in inheriting culture and governing the country. It enables the audience to feel as if they have traveled through time and space, personally experiencing the vicissitudes of history and the successive efforts of generations of sages. Such content design has attracted audiences of different age groups and cultural backgrounds, bringing viewers a brand-new audio-visual experience. It has successfully broken the deadlock of the sharp decline in the audience and the serious aging problem of traditional TV programs, effectively enhancing the

dissemination effect of the programs [3].

2.3 Program dissemination Goals and Audience positioning

“China in Ancient Books” has formulated a well-structured communication strategy. Its core communication objective is to combine the communication channels of the short-video audio-visual era to achieve a wide concentric circle radiation and dissemination effect of precious ancient books and their cultural cores. The program centers on the core audience group of cultural enthusiasts, gradually adjusting its approach and enhancing its differentiated attraction to audiences of different ages, educational backgrounds, and interests, enabling more people to understand and appreciate the charm of ancient classics, fully awakening the cultural wisdom dormant in ancient books, and integrating it into the contemporary social texture. Through the presentation of wonderful programs and extensive matrix dissemination, the programs have covered audiences of all ages and cultural backgrounds, gone abroad and spread far and wide, enhanced the influence of Chinese culture at home and abroad, showcased the profoundness and unique charm of Chinese culture, and built a bridge for the exchange and mutual learning of civilizations. Provide more vigorous spiritual support for the great rejuvenation of the country and the nation [4].

3. The Connection between the Multimodal Theoretical Framework and Programs

3.1 The theoretical core and application scenarios of multimodal propagation

Multimodal communication regards various symbolic resources such as language, images, audio, and body movements as interrelated systems. The theoretical core lies in the collaborative application of language and images to simultaneously achieve resonance in the dissemination of abstract concepts and concrete scenes, enhancing the audience’s sense of participation and immersion [5]. Then, adjust the modal combination ratio according to the attribute characteristics of different communication interaction platforms to maximize the communication effect. However, traditional culture, due to its long history and simple expression forms, has a cognitive gap with modern audiences. Utilizing multimodal communication methods can precisely achieve the integration of “visual translation - emotional connection - interactive participation” in content dissemination, allowing the philosophical thoughts in ancient books to be integrated. The content’s interest and engagement can be successfully enhanced through the actors’ exquisite performance, the vivid restoration of scenes, and the popular interpretation of the host, narrator, and dialogue, which can be transformed into a perceptible audio-visual experience. [6]

3.2 The natural adaptability of “China in Ancient Books” to multimodal communication

The content and form characteristics of “China in Ancient Books” itself make it highly consistent with the theory of multimodal communication, laying a foundation for subsequent new media dissemination [7]. For instance, in light of the abstruse and complex characteristics of the estimated content, multimodal dissemination and expression can lower the threshold for understanding through methods such as animation demonstrations and scholar interpretations. Meanwhile, the vivid performances of actors, stage Settings, and background music can also enliven the narrative and emotional appeal of historical figures, allowing the audience to deeply appreciate their spiritual core of “exploring the relationship between heaven and humanity and understanding the changes of ancient and modern times”. The multimodal integration of modern technology and artistic presentation forms can also help enhance the ideological depth and emotional tension of the program content. These native multimodal elements enable them to be disassembled into communication units adapted to different platforms without complex modifications in new media communication, providing a rich material basis for the subsequent construction of new media multimodal communication mechanisms [8].

4. The New Media Multimodal Dissemination Mechanism of “China in Ancient Books

4.1 Cross-temporal and multi-modal integration of dialogue between ancient and modern times

In the multi-modal dissemination of new media, “China in Ancient Books” has innovatively utilized cross-temporal and spatial dialogues between ancient people and the host to successfully break through the circle. This form achieves a deep integration of language modality, visual modality and emotional modality, envisioning the ideological collision and emotional exchange between the ancients and contemporary Chinese people. And through ingenious stage design and scene construction based on modern technology, it showcases the visual confrontation between the ancient and the modern in terms of image, clothing and living environment, creating a visual wonder of “time and space folding”. It sets the tone of the program through deeper emotional resonance, forming an emotional closed loop with the joy of witnessing the country’s strength

from the perspective of the ancients and the gratitude and admiration of the host. This cross-temporal and spatial empathy, through the fragmented dissemination of short videos, transforms abstract cultural inheritance into concrete emotional experiences. It made the audience have a strong sense of identification with the ancients and ancient classics, triggering an immersive “cultural time travel” experience and heated discussions among the audience.

4.2 Visual symbol Narrative through the comparison of Ancient and modern technologies

The segments in the program that showcase modern life and technological achievements to the ancients have constructed a multimodal visual symbol system and a narrative paradigm for dialogue with ancient and modern civilizations. The program takes the central axis and the stage light and shadow as the gateway to time and space, juxtaposing traditional cultural symbol tools such as wide-sleeved robes, flickering candlelight, bamboo slips, ink and brush, chariots, horses and farm tools with modern high-tech tools and the brand-new look of contemporary China, presenting a contrast. Through close-up shots with a cinematic texture, the program details are strengthened, conveying the core meaning and sensory resonance of “civilization inheritance and progress”. It presents the development of history and its long history. This multimodal visual communication and combination of visual symbols transform the abstract “cultural continuation” into a vivid audio-visual experience that can be perceived, further demonstrating the country’s outstanding development in various fields such as science and technology, healthcare, and agriculture. It brings a strong sensory impact to the audience, gradually making the deep connection and continuous inheritance between traditional culture and modern civilization deeply rooted in people’s hearts.

4.3 The construction of identity recognition for the dual image of the performer

In addition, the program has added in-mirror eye contact dialogue content between the performer’s own image and their costume image, establishing a unique identity recognition dissemination mechanism. The picture takes the mirror as the core visual communication and temporal and spatial separation symbol. Through the interweaving construction of visual and emotional modalities, it captures the changes in the actor’s eyes and emotions under two different role identities, forming a visual dialogue and soul exchange between “self and character”. Such artistic expression and innovative communication mechanisms further strengthen the visual metaphor of “the encounter of souls from ancient and modern times”, while conveying to the audience a brand-new cognitive transformation that “historical figures are also flesh-and-blood individuals”. This completely eliminates the sense of temporal and spatial disconnection and distance caused by time, enhances the audience’s identification and desire to get close to the figures in the classics, and successfully constructs the audience’s identification effect on the content. It has also sparked a large-scale wave of audience imitation on the Internet, enhancing the program’s dissemination effect while strengthening the contemporary Chinese people’s profound recognition of the responsibility and historical mission of cultural inheritance in this era.

4.4 Socialized dissemination design of highly interactive content

In addition, the program has successfully established a rich and complete interactive communication system, fully leveraging the interactive social attributes of promotional accounts on various platforms. For instance, on the official wechat public account of “China in Ancient Books”, articles such as “How to Post on Moments during the National Day Holiday? Travel blogger Xu Xiake Teaches you” and popular science interactive articles on ancient military intelligence transmission and clinical treatment have been successively launched. Meanwhile, the official accounts on multiple platforms such as Douyin and Weibo have also created a wealth of popular science knowledge for the public, achieving interesting dissemination through the integration of text, images and social modalities. And create derivative content for the “Ancient People’s Circle of Friends” series, encouraging people across the country to participate in secondary creation and discussion, so as to endow ancient books and traditional culture with practical social functions through scenarios and expressions close to the real life of Chinese people. By integrating interactive comments, it provides readers with an immersive experience of ancient people. Through participating in public welfare activities and reading interactions and other forms of activities, it leads the audience to effectively transform from passive recipients of cultural content to active disseminators, expanding the social influence of the program and achieving a long-tail effect in program dissemination.

5. Conclusion

To sum up, this paper studies the new media dissemination mechanism of the “China in Ancient Books” column from a multimodal perspective. The program takes cultural inheritance as its core. Through meticulous and multi-dimensional content design, it breaks the dimensional barrier between history and reality, creating a beautiful visual stage and content narrative, and building a cultural feast with strong visual impact and immersive experience. Furthermore, through the com-

plementary synergy of various communication modalities and carriers, a rich and diverse range of communication content for “China in Ancient Books” has been jointly constructed, successfully achieving the communication goals of inheriting China’s fine traditional culture, enhancing cultural influence, and strengthening national cultural confidence. A three-dimensional cultural dissemination ecosystem has been formed.

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