

A Brief Discussion on Internet Empowerment to Strengthen Cultural Identity and Bonds

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Abstract: To strengthen cultural identity and bonds is an integral part of the Party's governance strategy for Xinjiang in the new era, serving as a long-term and foundational approach to achieving social stability and enduring peace in the region. The advancement of internet technology has provided unprecedented historical opportunities for implementing the "To strengthen cultural identity and bonds" initiative. Grounded in Xinjiang's multi-ethnic, multicultural, multi-religious, and multilingual context, this paper explores pathways for the internet to construct a cross-temporal and spatial cultural dissemination matrix, adopting multifaceted measures to promote interaction, exchange, and integration among ethnic groups, enhance the efficacy of "To strengthen cultural identity and bonds," and solidify the sense of the Chinese national community.

Keywords: internet, digitalization, to strengthen cultural identity and bonds, sense of the chinese national community

1. Introduction

Since ancient times, Xinjiang has been a region where multiple ethnic groups coexist, diverse cultures interact, and various religions thrive, forming an inseparable part of China's sacred territory. Currently, Xinjiang's work faces new circumstances and tasks. The proposal and implementation of the "To strengthen cultural identity and bonds" initiative represent a scientific conclusion drawn from examining Xinjiang's work from a long-term and strategic perspective. Its essence lies in subtly strengthening cultural identity and solidifying the sense of the Chinese national community. "Cultural identity is the deepest form of identity, the root of ethnic unity, and the soul of ethnic harmony"^[1]. According to the 56th Statistical Report on China's Internet Development, as of June 2025, China's internet user base reached 1.123 billion, with an internet penetration rate of 79.7%.

In Xinjiang, the internet has become deeply embedded in the daily lives of people from all ethnic groups, serving as a vital channel for accessing information, exchanging ideas, preserving culture, and engaging in entertainment and consumption. Aligning with the trends of the times and leveraging the advantages of the internet to advance the "To strengthen cultural identity and bonds" initiative and tangibly, perceptibly, and effectively solidify the sense of the Chinese national community has become a subject of both theoretical value and practical significance^[2].

2. The Internal Logic and Multidimensional Aspects of Internet Empowerment for To strengthen cultural identity and bonds

On September 27, 2019, General Secretary Xi Jinping stated at the National Conference on Ethnic Unity and Progress, "We must firmly grasp the initiative and dominance in public opinion, making the internet the greatest catalyst for building a shared spiritual home among all ethnic groups and solidifying the sense of the Chinese national community"^[3]. Internet empowerment for To strengthen cultural identity and bonds is a systematic innovative practice guided by the Party's governance strategy for Xinjiang in the new era, rooted in the inherent compatibility between modern internet technology

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and China's outstanding traditional culture. The goal is to achieve a fundamental shift from instrumental empowerment to value-based empowerment. Theoretically, the internet not only redefines the temporal and spatial dimensions of cultural dissemination but also reshapes the pathways of cultural identity formation at the cognitive level.

2.1 Building a cross-spatiotemporal cultural dissemination matrix to overcome geographical barriers

"The dissemination of China's outstanding traditional culture in the internet era is a profound dialogue between cultural heritage and the digital age."^[4] Xinjiang's vast territory, with significant distances between urban and rural areas as well as farming and pastoral regions, once posed a major obstacle to cultural exchange. The internet, with its immediacy, wide reach, and low cost, has completely shattered this physical limitation. Through digital networks covering Xinjiang and mobile devices like smartphones, people of all ethnic groups can access high-quality cultural content from across the country via multimedia formats such as audio, video, and graphics. Various digital projects can be fully opened to Xinjiang's communities via online platforms. At the same time, local cultural resources—such as the art of the "Twelve Muqam," the Kirgiz epic "Manas," and Kazakh Aitys—can be preserved, revitalized, and shared nationwide or globally through digital technology, which itself reflects cultural confidence.

2.2 Innovating the narrative approach to Chinese culture to enhance appeal and resonance

For younger generations, traditional, didactic cultural promotion methods often lack appeal. The internet, especially social media and short-video platforms, has given rise to entirely new paradigms of cultural expression and storytelling. Emphasizing visual impact, emotional resonance, interactive participation, and community-driven dissemination, it offers fresh possibilities for sharing China's outstanding traditional culture. In practice, many successful examples can be observed. On platforms like Douyin and Kuaishou, content creators focusing on guofeng music, Hanfu fashion, and traditional crafts have gained massive followings by interpreting and reinventing cultural heritage in ways that resonate with youth. This highly "internet-savvy" approach can also be applied in the "cultural enrichment of Xinjiang" initiative. Local cultural workers and influencers can be encouraged to produce microfilms, short videos, and other online content blending Chinese cultural elements with Xinjiang's regional and ethnic characteristics. Such dynamic, immersive cultural experiences can effectively bridge divides, allowing Chinese culture to touch hearts effortlessly.

2.3 Promoting interaction, exchange, and integration among ethnic groups to strengthen emotional bonds

The deeper goal of "cultural enrichment in Xinjiang" is to foster mutual respect and appreciation among all ethnic groups psychologically, culturally, and emotionally. Social media, live streaming, online education, and similar platforms have created numerous cross-regional and cross-ethnic daily interaction scenarios for youth in Xinjiang and inland China. In these virtual communities, connections based on shared interests can transcend ethnic labels, building purer and stronger friendships. Sociological research has long proven that intergroup contact—even indirect or virtual—can effectively reduce prejudice when conducted under specific conditions. The internet precisely provides the scalable and normalization conditions for such "contact."

2.4 Empowering regional cultural industries to solidify the material foundation of identity

The consolidation of cultural identity requires not only spiritual immersion but also material support. The thriving development of Xinjiang's cultural industries, transforming cultural resources into economic advantages, allows people of all ethnic groups to tangibly experience the charm of China's excellent traditional culture, thereby strengthening their endogenous drive for identification. The internet is a crucial engine driving the transformation of cultural industries. Emerging formats like "digital cultural tourism," through live streaming and virtual reality, have further enhanced the experiential appeal of Xinjiang's tourism. The online buzz around *My Altay* and its derived topics is clear evidence of the "internet + cultural tourism" effect. The prosperity of cultural industries not only generates economic benefits but also subtly disseminates the vibrant stories of cultural exchange and shared development among Xinjiang's ethnic groups through product circulation and service experiences, anchoring cultural identity in the fruits of shared development.

3. Challenges Facing Internet-Empowered Cultural Enrichment in Xinjiang

While fully acknowledging the internet's empowering potential, we must soberly recognize the challenges its complexity poses to "cultural enrichment in Xinjiang." These challenges stem both from the dual nature of technology itself and reflect structural contradictions in the current network ecological construction. Philosophically, they manifest as contradictions between content and form, technical rationality and value rationality, universality and particularity in cyberspace. To effectively leverage the internet for cultural enrichment in Xinjiang, we must confront the realities of its technological development.

3.1 Inaccurate content expression: The gap between dissemination methods and audience reception

"The accuracy of information transmission is particularly crucial in the process of interaction, exchange, and integration among ethnic groups."^[5] Some online content retains traditional propaganda thinking, with rigid language and formulaic formats, making it difficult to resonate with audiences. Over-reliance on one-way dissemination, lacking interaction and emotional connection, leads to poor communication outcomes. Inaccurate expressions risk reducing Xinjiang's cultural representation to a stereotypical cycle of "song and dance, cuisine, and scenery," overlooking its deeper significance as an organic part of Chinese culture and undermining the foundation for building cultural identity.

3.2 Uneven Digital Infrastructure: The Dual Challenges of Access and Capability in Achieving Inclusivity

There remains a significant "digital divide" between urban and rural areas and across regions in Xinjiang, reflected in internet coverage, bandwidth stability, and usage costs. "The 'digital divide' primarily manifests as an 'access divide' (caused by whether one has internet access), a 'usage divide' (resulting from disparities in information technology utilization), and a 'capability divide' (stemming from inequalities in internet usage skills)."^[6] Some individuals lack sufficient digital literacy and media competence, hindering their ability to effectively utilize online information and placing them at a disadvantage in digital cultural dissemination. This affects the breadth and depth of "To strengthen cultural identity and bonds."

3.3 Rigid Cognitive Structures: The Hidden Risks of Information Cocoons and Cultural Barriers

While algorithmic recommendation systems improve information retrieval efficiency, they can also trap users in "information cocoons." "Information cocoons' have negative effects, such as hindering ethnic interaction, exchange, and integration, weakening the online dissemination of the Chinese national community consciousness, and challenging existing ethnic affairs governance systems and capabilities."^[7] Long-term exposure only to content from one's own ethnic group or specific types reinforces cultural insularity and weakens perception and identification with shared Chinese culture. The "digital divide" exacerbates this trend, marginalizing some groups in cultural participation and obstructing interethnic exchange and deep integration.

3.4 Misguided Communication: Over-Specialization and Commercialization of Cultural Expression

In promoting the online dissemination of traditional ethnic cultures, two problematic tendencies emerge: First, overemphasizing the uniqueness of a particular ethnic culture while neglecting its intrinsic connection to Chinese culture, potentially leading to identity distortion. Second, driven by commercial logic, packaging ethnic culture in sensationalized or vulgarized ways, damaging its authenticity and seriousness. Both tendencies disrupt mainstream cultural guidance and hinder the effective advancement of "To strengthen cultural identity and bonds."

4. Pathways for the Internet to Empower To strengthen cultural identity and bonds

"Cultural enrichment in Xinjiang is comprehensive. We must adhere to a systematic approach to coordinate the overall situation, harmonize all parties, and holistically plan and advance the cultural enrichment project."^[8] In the process of empowering cultural enrichment through the internet, it is necessary to deepen the transition from "accessible" to "user-friendly." Specifically, efforts should be synergized across four dimensions: content development, technological

application, cyber governance, and digital literacy.

4.1 Strengthening content development to build a digital resource repository bridging ancient and modern times

Content development is the foundational project for cultural enrichment in Xinjiang. First, systematically implement the digitization of Chinese cultural resources, comprehensively catalog Xinjiang's cultural heritage, and construct an authoritative and abundant "Cloud Chinese Culture Museum" through digital collection and storage. Second, vigorously innovate online cultural content production by establishing special support funds, such as fostering blockbuster cultural products themed around "Chinese Stories Along the Silk Road," including web documentaries and animated series, and exploring online live-streaming activities like "Discover Xinjiang, Experience China." Additionally, emphasis should be placed on enhancing translation and localization capabilities for cultural content. Professional translation teams should be formed to accurately adapt high-quality content into minority languages, ensuring cultural imagery is localized to align with the cognitive habits and aesthetic preferences of ethnic minority communities.

4.2 Deepening technological application to build smart platforms for precise outreach

Technological application is key to improving the effectiveness of cultural dissemination. Big data technology should be fully utilized to analyze user interests and preferences—while ensuring data security—to enable intelligent matching and precise push of Chinese cultural content, effectively breaking the "information cocoon." Immersive cultural experience scenarios should be actively developed, leveraging VR/AR technologies to create virtual exhibitions, allowing users to "tour" cloud, with digital panoramic displays of key historical sites like the Ruins of Jiaohe and the Kizil Thousand-Buddha Caves. Furthermore, accelerating the development of an "intelligent converged media" spread system is essential, promoting deep integration of media integration centers at all levels to construct a mainstream public opinion matrix that covers the entire region and operates collaboratively, ensuring Chinese cultural dissemination can "trigger with one click and resonate across the network."

4.3 Improving cyber governance to foster a clean and wholesome online space

A healthy online ecosystem is a vital safeguard for cultural enrichment in Xinjiang. It is imperative to strengthen cyberspace regulation in accordance with the law, resolutely crack down on the spread of illegal content, and firmly secure the ideological safety defense of the internet. A robust review mechanism for online cultural products must be established to prevent the vulgarization of ethnic cultures and ensure the correct guide of online cultural dissemination. Simultaneously, proactive engagement in international cyberspace dialogue is necessary, actively setting agendas to counter misinformation and showcasing Xinjiang's real picture of social stability, ethnic unity, and cultural prosperity to the world through multilingual platforms, effectively dispelling misunderstandings and biases.

4.4 Enhancing Digital Literacy and Cultivating Digital Citizens for the New Era

Improving digital literacy is a long-term strategy for "To strengthen cultural identity and bonds." It is essential to fully integrate digital literacy education into school and community education systems, focusing on enhancing young people's ability to discern information and guiding people of all ethnic groups to consciously resist harmful content while actively disseminating China's outstanding traditional culture. Emphasis should be placed on nurturing grassroots "digital culture leaders"—selecting key individuals who understand both ethnic culture and digital communication to serve as bridges connecting mainstream culture with grassroots communities. Simultaneously, intellectuals, artists, and professionals from all ethnic groups should be encouraged to voice their perspectives in cyberspace, leveraging their expertise to positively interpret Chinese culture and effectively guide public opinion.

5. Conclusion

The deep development of the internet has injected new momentum into the "To strengthen cultural identity and bonds" initiative. This process embodies a dialectical unity of content and form, technology and values, universality and specificity. As an advanced productive force, the internet not only provides new platforms and paradigms for cultural dissemination but also fundamentally serves as a crucial arena for promoting interaction, exchange, and integration among ethnic groups, thereby strengthening the sense of community for the Chinese nation. Methodologically, a systematic approach must be

upheld to balance three key relationships: (1) cultural heritage versus innovative development—adhering to the stance of Chinese culture while revitalizing traditional culture through digital technology; (2) technological empowerment versus value guidance—leveraging the internet’s communicative strengths while ensuring it serves the fundamental goal of enhancing the "Five Identifications"; (3) universal dissemination versus targeted reach—expanding the breadth of Chinese culture’s influence while addressing the diverse reception habits of different groups. In this new era and journey, internet-enabled To strengthen cultural identity and bonds will help forge a new pattern of cultural dissemination that integrates online and offline, traditional and modern. This will provide robust support for Xinjiang’s social stability and long-term peace at the cultural level, writing a new chapter in building the Chinese national community in the digital age.

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