

Construction of International Communication of Chinese Calligraphy Culture in the Digital Age Selecting and the Selection of the Pathways

Hongming Zhang^{1,a}

¹Dalian University of Foreign Languages, Dalian, 116044, China

^a13974393@qq.com

Abstract: Chinese calligraphy is the essence of Chinese culture, embodying rich emotions that serve as an effective carrier of the Chinese people's personalities and states of mind. The philosophical, artistic, and historical cultural elements contained within it are also treasures in the world cultural heritage. As a representative symbol for foreigners to recognize Chinese culture, Chinese calligraphy has always borne the important mission of cultural communication. In the Internet era, characterized by the extensive application of technologies such as artificial intelligence, cloud computing, 5G, and big data, a new communication environment for the dissemination of traditional Chinese culture has emerged, bringing new challenges to its international dissemination. This paper, based on the communication characteristics of the digital age, analyzes the current status of the international dissemination of Chinese calligraphy and proposes corresponding dissemination strategies from two aspects: grasping the dissemination positioning and utilizing dissemination technologies.

Keywords: Chinese calligraphy, digitalization, international communication, pathway

1. Introduction

Occupying the "highest" and "central" position in Chinese culture and embodying the "fundamental aesthetics" of the Chinese people, Chinese calligraphy, as a cultural ambassador for the international dissemination of traditional Chinese culture, has been exploring ways to overcome cultural communication barriers. The aim is to enhance the international influence of Chinese culture represented by calligraphy, allowing foreign audiences to gain artistic pleasure and feel the charm of traditional Chinese culture, thereby deepening their understanding and appreciation of Chinese culture and increasing their affinity for and acceptance of it. With the implementation of the "Belt and Road" development strategy, the international dissemination of calligraphy has ushered in new development opportunities. This requires us, based on the background of the digital age, to accurately grasp the characteristics of digital international dissemination, critically analyze the current status of international dissemination of Chinese calligraphy, and propose corresponding strategies for dissemination optimization[1-2].

2. Characteristics of International Communication in the Digital Age

Based on the research intention of "International Communication of Chinese Calligraphy Culture in the Digital Age," it is necessary to first accurately grasp the concepts and characteristics of communication, international communication, and digital international communication. This ensures that the proposed "construction and selection of communication pathways" remain within the communication framework, thereby achieving research value with precise objectives.

2.1. Communication

Since the development of human society is inseparable from mutual convergence and integration, communication, as an important tool for interaction among nations, ethnic groups, and individuals, has never ceased throughout human history, regardless of any changes that have occurred. With the evolution of the times, the role of communication has become more prominent, forming an inseparable, symbiotic, and closely related connection with national development.

Given the importance of communication, discussions on communication have existed since ancient times, including during the periods of ancient Greece and China's Spring and Autumn period. For example, relevant "communication" theories can be found in Plato's dialectics and Aristotle's rhetoric. Similarly, the Chinese classic "The Analects of Confucius" from the Spring and Autumn period contains the phrase "Of so many ways to make one a Junzi (literally gentleman), which should be prioritized in the advocacy?" In the West, the English term "communication" comes from the Latin word "communes" meaning "transmission" and "exchange." Its etymology aligns with the Latin word "communes," meaning "public" and "sharing." This indicates that communication is a public behavior based on sharing, with an inherent logical relationship that progresses from "transmission, exchange, and sharing" to "commonality, community, and ecology." In other words, the construction of social relationships is inseparable from the dissemination of social information, and information sharing is a typical feature of communication.

2.2. International Communication

International communication is a branch of communication studies. Broadly speaking, international communication refers to the exchange of information between two or more countries through various channels such as individuals, groups, political organizations by means of cultural exchanges, and mass media. Given the indispensability of information exchange, the more a country emphasizes strengthening its interactions with the international community, the more it will focus on extensively promoting its information across various fields including politics, economy, commerce, culture, and international relations. Among these, cultural communication, which embodies the unique characteristics and national ethos of a country, is particularly valued.

After Edmund Gullion (1965) made a comparison between "public diplomacy" and "cultural diplomacy", Nye Jr. conducted a deeper study on cultural communication from the perspective of international politics and proposed the concept of "cultural soft power." Nye posited that within the global political system, the extent to which a country's values are appreciated and recognized by other countries, leading to imitation and followership, largely depends on its cultural soft power. In Nye's view, "soft power" is a form of national strength expressed and conveyed primarily through culture, versus "hard power"—represented by military and economic strength—in its influence. With the accelerating process of globalization, cultural communication has become an effective means for countries to establish their national image and mitigate conflicts, frictions, and even confrontations arising from cultural differences in areas such as openness, trade investment, and regional cooperation.

2.3. Characteristics of International Communication in the Digital Age

Since the beginning of the new century, the waves of globalization and digitalization have become increasingly powerful. With the application of technologies such as artificial intelligence, cloud computing, 5G, and big data, digital communication has emerged as the fundamental direction and evolutionary trend of present and future communication. Under the influence of digital technology, the barriers to communication are gradually being broken down. The previously fragmented forms of self-communication, interpersonal communication, group communication, and mass communication in traditional settings are merging under digital communication, creating a new form of information exchange that transcends geographical and national boundaries.

As the most widespread, influential, and pervasive form of information dissemination today, globalized communication dictates that in the context of digital international communication, self-isolation is undoubtedly a foolish act of self-exclusion from the world. No country or nation can seek true development while remaining aloof from the trends of digital international communication. Therefore, countries worldwide, especially the United States, the United Kingdom, and France, are accelerating their efforts to establish a presence in the field of digital international communication, vying for international discourse power. To enhance China's international communication capabilities and transform it from a major communication power to a strong one, the Central Political Bureau made an important decision during its 30th collective study session. The decision emphasized the importance and necessity of strengthening and improving international communication under the new circumstances and called for substantial efforts to build international communication capabilities to match China's comprehensive national strength and international status. Integrating various resources to address shortcomings and enhance China's digital international communication capabilities has become a contemporary imperative[3-4].

3. Status Quo of the International Communication of Chinese Calligraphy in the Digital Age

3.1. Cultural Status of Chinese Calligraphy

In the 3,000-year history of Chinese characters, Chinese calligraphy, as an art form of writing Chinese characters using brush-pens, ink, paper, and inkstone, has a long-standing cultural lineage and unique aesthetic expression. It transcends class, race, and politics, serving as an artistic expression of Chinese culture. The fluidity and variation in the interplay between void and solid spaces within calligraphy not only embody the aesthetic beauty of natural landscapes but also reflect profound philosophical emotions. Through the evolution of Chinese calligraphy, the characters have transformed from simple symbols representing concepts to expressions of life, embodying the essence of human spirit. Thus, Chinese calligraphy, with its ability to "express one's nature and emotions," has a deep history of dissemination and a rich cultural foundation within the Sinosphere, including countries like Japan and South Korea.

Since the 16th century, through the westward transmission by Western missionaries and Sinologists, Chinese calligraphy has also gained recognition in the West, becoming a representative symbol for foreigners to identify Chinese cultural art. As the famous American Sinologist, John Calvin Ferguson praised, "All Chinese art is an extension of Chinese calligraphy."

As an effective carrier that showcases the characteristics of Chinese culture and the charm of Chinese art, original Chinese calligraphy, with its unique "soft power" appeal, continuously promotes the external output of traditional Chinese culture and plays an active role in China's foreign cultural exchanges. In the context of globalization, where the "convergence theory" has become the ultimate goal of political and diplomatic relations among countries worldwide, actively promoting the international communication of Chinese calligraphy is of profound strategic and practical significance. It helps in handling the principle of "seeking common ground while reserving differences" and "common development" between China and other countries, preserving the wisdom and essence of national culture, while conveying the mainstream cultural consciousness of contemporary China to the world and telling China's story effectively.

3.2. Current Status of Contemporary Chinese Calligraphy International Communication

With the continuous enhancement of national influence globally, the international communication effect of cultural and artistic exchanges has also been strengthening. Chinese paintings, literary works, music, dance, and films, including traditional cultural arts, serve as important mediums for dialogue between China and the world, providing platforms for the world to understand and experience Chinese culture from multiple dimensions. Taking the international communication of Chinese calligraphy as an example, its dissemination began in the Han dynasty and flourished in the Tang dynasty. Throughout its journey to the world, Chinese calligraphy has continuously explored communication pathways and summarized dissemination experiences.

The Reform and Opening-Up policy provides more channels for the dissemination of Chinese calligraphy. By the end of the 20th century, numerous grassroots organizations and enthusiasts from China and abroad emerged, dedicated to spreading Chinese calligraphy overseas, sparking a wave of calligraphy promotion. Since 2000, under the policy framework of "telling China's story well," the role and significance of international communication of Chinese calligraphy have received broader attention. Overcoming the challenge of inputting high-context culture into low-context cultural settings has become a key focus.

At the national level, President statement that "calligraphy and traditional Chinese painting are treasures of our culture and important means for foreigners to understand China" has set the direction for the international communication of Chinese calligraphy. The Central Office's policy to "support calligraphy, painting, folk art, acrobatics, historical and cultural documentaries, animated films, and publications, allowing foreign audiences to find joy and feel the charm in the aesthetic process" provides a policy basis for the international broadcasting of Chinese calligraphy.

In practice, multiple channels and diverse forms are utilized to integrate Chinese calligraphy's cultural elements with the global contemporary cultural environment, implementing international communication strategies and highlighting the unique cultural charm of Chinese calligraphy. For instance, in 2017, during the meeting between the top leaders of China and the United States, President presented a calligraphy work inscribed with the phrase "A high building starts from the base while a journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step," to President Trump, drawing significant international attention

to the value and connotations of Chinese calligraphy. Additionally, Confucius Institutes worldwide have actively promoted Chinese calligraphy courses with teaching components to enhance cultural experience. Moreover, Chinese calligraphy elements have been integrated into modern life, blending with clothing, films, and other media to expand its reach within the global cultural landscape[5-6].

In the digital age, leveraging the advantages of the internet, Chinese calligraphy has also made significant strides in electronic communication. A notable example is Mr. Fotao's "Peaceful World" international calligraphy touring exhibition. In 2019, during the exhibition in New York, blockchain and VR virtual technology were applied, allowing viewers to experience the entire creative process of the works through virtual reality. With the aid of digital technology, viewers could also quickly access the introduction, background, and value assessment of the works by clicking on a screen. This exhibition was praised by American philanthropist Steven Rockefeller as "three-dimensional calligraphy art."

Overall, the digital international communication of Chinese calligraphy exhibits three main characteristics:

Firstly, Multidimensional and Multilayered Communication. Leveraging internet technology, the international communication of Chinese calligraphy has become more multidimensional and comprehensive. Previously, calligraphy dissemination was confined to printed media, leading to a narrow reach. Internet technology has broken this limitation, providing wider channels and significantly enhancing the impact and influence of Chinese calligraphy. The cultural value of calligraphy has been further unleashed.

Secondly, transition to Video-Dominated Communication. The advent of short video dissemination technology has facilitated the transition from image-based to video-based communication of calligraphy. Filming technology enables the multi-perspective and multidimensional presentation of calligraphy, fully showcasing its cultural essence and artistic characteristics, thereby achieving more pronounced communication effects.

Thirdly, diverse Communication Entities. The comprehensive integration of self-communication, interpersonal communication, group communication, and mass communication through digital technology has led to a qualitative change in the forms of calligraphy dissemination. Chinese calligraphy has moved from government or organization-led dissemination modes such as calligraphy diplomacy, exhibitions, international forums, and education to a new era of public, internet, self, and intelligent communication.

Even though there have been great progress in the international communication of Chinese calligraphy, it is essential for us to realize the existing challenges. These include the limited diversity of international audiences, slow updates of dissemination media, and ideological attacks on Confucius Institutes by the West in name of cultural security, which have hindered calligraphy dissemination efforts to some extent. Addressing these issues requires a thorough analysis of the current international dissemination landscape, a comprehensive evaluation of the risks and opportunities, accurate positioning of Chinese calligraphy, and full utilization of the advantages of digital international communication to create new highlights and drive the international dissemination of Chinese calligraphy forward.

4. Strategies for Digital International Communication of Chinese Calligraphy

Currently, digital communication has become the primary channel for international information exchange. To further enhance the effectiveness of the digital international communication of Chinese calligraphy, this paper proposes optimization strategies from two aspects: accurate positioning the communication and effective utilization of communication technology.

4.1. Positioning of Communication

The basic dissemination pattern of Chinese calligraphy includes the Sino-character cultural sphere (centered around countries like Japan, South Korea, and Southeast Asia) and the non-Sino-character cultural sphere (centered around Europe and America). Therefore, different communication strategies should be employed for different target audiences to enhance the communication effect.

Based on the shared cultural background of the Sino-character cultural sphere, leveraging the overlapping advantages of Chinese character usage, the communication of Chinese calligraphy should focus on building a high degree of recognition and communicative power. The aim is to strengthen the recognition of Chinese calligraphy in these countries by focusing on both "value" and "quality." The

calligraphy community should strengthen substantial international calligraphy education and academic exchange activities with countries where Chinese culture is well-developed, such as Japan, South Korea, and Singapore. The practical value of high transmission advantages of the internet should be activated. Organized efforts should invite renowned calligraphers from various countries to conduct online teaching and observation activities. This approach will showcase the calligraphy creation activities of masters and conduct thematic discussions on different calligraphy styles, promoting intercommunication of various calligraphy types. Through activities like live-streaming and online seminars, the internal tension and vitality of Chinese calligraphy can be placed within a more open academic framework, fostering a better communication platform for calligraphy in the Sino-character cultural sphere.

Given the cultural differences resulting from different cultural backgrounds, a rational approach should be taken to address these differences. The primary focus should be on overcoming the informational blind spots of non-Sino-character audiences by emphasizing "form" and "style" in the westward dissemination of calligraphy.

Due to the interpretative nature of Chinese calligraphy, its profoundness should be appropriately reduced to bridge the cultural gap between high-context and low-context cultures. On online platforms, abstract descriptions like "each character has its own structure, and the structure has its own momentum," and "barriers between schools or isolation from others" should be avoided. Instead, straightforward expressions highlighting the visual beauty of calligraphy, such as the rise and fall of lines, the joy of brushstrokes, and the transformation of ink, should be used. This approach will better cater to the preferences of audiences influenced by Western culture, promoting the widespread acceptance and appreciation of calligraphy.

In the dissemination of calligraphy blindness should be reduced to its minimum as required by blindness theory so that its value is recognized and accepted by international audiences. In terms of "style," more freedom should be given to the integration of Chinese calligraphy with other cultural elements, such as embedding calligraphy in fashion shows and films, to showcase its beauty in a broader cultural context. Create a relaxed, natural acceptance atmosphere by combining various elements to enhance the calligraphy's appeal.

In terms of dissemination on digital platforms and mobile apps, some elements like different scripts, biographies of calligraphers and analysis of works should be attached to meet the basic learning needs of calligraphy enthusiasts[7-9].

4.2. Utilizing Digital Communication Technologies

Focusing on the forefront of cultural digitization, exploring the diverse trends in cultural digitization development, and addressing the dissemination of calligraphy in the context of contemporary electronic technology are inevitable choices for the international dissemination of Chinese calligraphy. With strong support from the internet and digital technology for the global dissemination of Chinese calligraphy, it is crucial to firmly grasp the various changes brought about by digital technology advancements, accelerate the integration of calligraphy with the digital industry, and promote the transformation and upgrading of international calligraphy dissemination. The proposals are given as follows:

Firstly, strategic cooperation should be considered and explored with national media overseas dissemination websites led by Xinhua News Agency, CGTN, and CCTV, as well as commercial platform websites represented by TikTok, to build advantages in international calligraphy dissemination cooperation, promote calligraphy dissemination focusing on traffic, data resources, and capital strength platforms, and be proactive in promoting new media international dissemination layouts.

Secondly, digital technology should be utilized to transform physical calligraphy works into digitized shared information resources, categorize them into databases, and utilize the internet for information architecture. For example, providing audiences with the ability to gently scan a QR code to gradually unfold an ancient Chinese calligraphy scroll, with the characters dancing gracefully and accompanied by serene explanations; furthermore, viewers can even use technologies like virtual avatars to enter virtual calligraphy creation scenes, immersing themselves in the charm of Chinese calligraphy. Trends like these accelerate the reshaping of calligraphy dissemination through cultural digitization, sparking enthusiasm among overseas calligraphy enthusiasts, and promising greater dissemination effects for future development directions.

Thirdly, the relationship between innovation and tradition should be well-balanced. Chinese calligraphy represents and symbolizes Chinese culture, and regardless of changes in its dissemination

forms, its essence remains rooted in bone, blood, tendons, and vitality that forever support calligraphy art. Surveying Chinese calligraphy art over thousands of years of evolution and tempering has resulted in strict rules. The freedom of expression in writing techniques requires proficiency in calligraphic art rules and vocabulary structure arrangements as a prerequisite comprehensive mastery skill. For instance, such as the so-called "artistic innovation" is essentially a deviation from the root of Chinese calligraphy, and largely has been far removed from the aesthetic subjects of calligraphy art. "Only national, is the world," has always emphasized the cultural and subjectivity of Chinese calligraphy in international dissemination, and is the key to China's steady development in international calligraphy.

5. Conclusion

To sum up, the international dissemination of Chinese calligraphy is not only an inevitable choice to tell Chinese stories, promote Chinese culture, and establish China's image, but also a practical need for self-renewal and self-development of Chinese calligraphy. In response to the current problems of single audience in international dissemination of Chinese calligraphy that have not been well solved, the phenomenon of slow updates in dissemination media still exists, and the dilemma of Chinese calligraphy facing the world, it is necessary to optimize the international dissemination strategy of Chinese calligraphy from the perspective of grasping dissemination positioning and using dissemination technologies.

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