

The Integration Strategy of ACGN Culture and Changzhou's Patriotic Memorial Halls: A Study on Narrative, Symbolism, and Communication Pathways

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Abstract: *With the rapid development of digital media technology, the dissemination of patriotic education faces new challenges in the media environment, necessitating the exploration of innovative narrative approaches. ACGN (Anime, Comics, Games, and Novels) culture, a youth subculture, has increasingly attracted attention for its cross-cultural communication value. However, there has been little systematic methodological research on the integration of patriotic education with ACGN culture. Based on subculture theory, cultural identity theory, and post-structuralist cultural communication theory, this study constructs a fusion strategy framework centered on "articulation" and "reconstruction." Through empirical research, it proposes specific integration strategies such as cross-cultural narrative reconstruction, multifaceted character shaping, and innovative visual presentation in an interactive media environment. These strategies provide practical methodological guidance for innovative dissemination of patriotic education and aesthetic education for youth, offering significant insights into promoting cultural inheritance and innovation.*

Keywords: *ACGN Cultural Integration, Patriotic Education Dissemination, Youth Aesthetic Education, Cross-Media Narrative Innovation*

1. Introduction

ACGN culture refers to the anime, manga, and game culture rooted in Japanese two-dimensional (2D) hand-drawn animation style^[1]. Since the 1990s, with the development of digital entertainment technologies, Japanese ACGN culture has rapidly spread globally. Its unique aesthetic style, rich imagination, and spirit of free expression have garnered immense popularity among young people. In China, since the early 1980s, Japanese animated works have gradually been introduced. With successive waves of mass media expansion and transformation, this culture has evolved into a form that exerts widespread influence on Chinese youth, profoundly impacting the reception, dissemination, and creative concepts of Chinese animation in the 21st century. Since 2016, major domestic online media have begun to use the term "ACGN culture" to refer to local Japanese-style animation creations, dissemination, and cultural activities, reflecting a tendency toward localization of animation^[2].

Patriotic memorial halls, as spaces for historical memory and cultural dissemination, play an important role in passing down national history and enhancing national cohesion. Both in China and globally, patriotic memorial halls face the challenge of adapting to modern technological and cultural developments.

In China, with the rise of an information society and the emergence of younger generations, traditional memorial halls' one-dimensional narratives and over-concentration of mainstream ideological symbols are often seen as disconnected from the cultural needs of young people. Commentaries from authoritative media have pointed out that many domestic patriotic education halls and sites suffer from "monotonous and dull forms of communication, limited to sightseeing at commemorative buildings and guided tours, which no longer meet the needs of today's tourists." This perspective highlights a cognitive gap between the dissemination of patriotic education and contemporary audiences, especially the younger generation. To bridge this generational cultural gap, communication strategies must keep pace with the times. The current narrative approach limits the effectiveness of memorial halls in resonating emotionally with Gen Z audiences.

The 2016 online animation *The Legend of Rabbit* was the first attempt to present mainstream themes

using ACGN culture (Anime, Comics, Games, Novels). Its success in both commercial development and cultural dissemination has garnered significant attention and sparked multidimensional discussions among academia, industry, and official media. The cross-cultural integration of mainstream culture with ACGN, also referred to as “breaking the dimensional wall,” has gradually become a hot topic in both cultural communication and industrial research. The decentralization and diversity of the ACGN community conflict with the centralization and value-orientation of mainstream culture, driving exploration of cultural integration within the new media ecosystem^[3].

Changzhou, a cultural hub rich in historical figures and deeply rooted traditions, is home to numerous patriotic landmarks such as the former residences of the “Three Heroes of Changzhou” and the former headquarters of the New Fourth Army’s Jiangnan Command. These landmarks bear witness to China’s patriotic history and serve as important vehicles for patriotic education, playing an irreplaceable role in cultivating national consciousness and social responsibility among young people. However, in the contemporary communication ecosystem, the dissemination of patriotic education faces new challenges.

Although, as a culture born from the digital environment, ACGN culture demonstrates a high degree of compatibility with the contemporary smart media ecosystem. A comprehensive analysis of related cases in domestic media reveals that the integration of ACGN culture with patriotic education still faces obstacles in terms of the organic fusion of imagery, symbolism, and discourse systems. This is primarily because ACGN, as a non-native culture, lacks systematic methodological guidance and innovative theoretical support in its integration with Chinese patriotic education. Specifically, in recent years, the incorporation of cartoon elements in the IP design of some patriotic education tourism images may remain superficial, with the content and narrative styles failing to truly embody the characteristics of ACGN culture or fully integrate into the new media language environment. Consequently, such products lack appeal and have limited dissemination effects. This study aims to build upon the results of previous empirical research to delve deeper into the internal mechanisms of subcultural and patriotic education integration. It seeks to provide innovative solutions to the challenges of cultural representation, thereby facilitating the high-quality development and utilization of ACGN cultural resources in cross-cultural communication and youth aesthetic education.

2. Research Objectives

This study’s primary objectives are focused on the following aspects:

(1) Expanding Theoretical Research on Cultural Integration: In the realm of ACGN culture and mainstream culture integration, current researchers primarily focus on the phenomenon of “breaking the dimensional wall” and its cultural impact, such as values and utility. But theoretical exploration on how to achieve effective integration is still insufficient. In recent years, many scholars have conducted extensive analyses of cultural identity and communication behaviors within the ACGN community. Examples include Zou Qichang and Chen’s research on self-governance among ACGN enthusiasts^[4], Zhang Lu’s analysis of aesthetic identity pathways in ACGN culture^[5], and Li Yungeng and Meng’s empirical studies on the mechanisms of ACGN immersion^[6]. These studies have delved into the aesthetic mechanisms, cultural psychology, and communication behaviors of ACGN culture.

However, cross-cultural integration research cannot be limited to researchers’ experiential perspectives. It requires a comprehensive understanding of postmodern cultural theory, as well as extensive surveys and analyses of the aesthetic acceptance of the primary subjects—cultural audiences.

(2) Cultural Integration and Visual Narrative Innovation in the Age of Smart Media: Globally, visual culture and animation are gradually being incorporated into the narrative design of museums and memorial sites, especially in the digital age, where this trend is becoming increasingly evident. In recent years, numerous scholars have explored how digital media breaks spatial and temporal boundaries, enhancing narrative effects through virtual scenes and character interactions. For example, Tan Xin’s research on virtual reality human-computer interaction methods^[7], Wang Xiuli’s analysis of VR technology’s application in historical and cultural representation have highlighted how virtual scenes and interactive characters allow audiences to actively engage in historical narratives, further enhancing cultural identity^[8].

Nonetheless, current research remains primarily focused on technological discussions, with insufficient exploration of innovative narrative strategies. Therefore, how can we explore new cultural communication paradigms to achieve value transmission and the integration of narrative structures and cultural symbols, based on contemporary youth’s cultural preferences, in the digital media narratives of

memorial sites? This holds practical significance for transforming the one-dimensional value output of patriotic memorial sites and achieving a “dual-dimensional breakthrough” between the audience and content.

3. Current Status of the Protection, Development, and Dissemination of Changzhou’s Patriotic Education Resources

(1) Status of Patriotic Education Resource Development

In terms of resource development, Changzhou has initiated the construction of the nation’s first patriotic education resource database, systematically collecting and storing data from patriotic education bases, providing strong support for the revitalization and utilization of these red resources.

The innovative display at the former residence of Qu Qiubai was selected as one of the National Cultural Heritage Administration’s exemplary cases. Additionally, the newly built Qu Qiubai Memorial Visitor Center pioneered a model where professional tourism companies are entrusted with the management and operation of red cultural venues, setting a precedent in Jiangsu Province.

(2) Channels for Disseminating Patriotic Education

The forms of dissemination of patriotic education in Changzhou include museums, memorial halls, school education, and cultural forums. In recent years, the main activities have included organizing the ‘Recording Great History: Changzhou Patriotic Memorial Historical Materials Exhibition,’ holding the ‘Changzhou Patriotic Memorial Relics Photo Exhibition,’ and offering special lectures. These exhibitions and educational activities have not only enriched the forms of patriotic education dissemination but also deepened the public’s awareness and emotional identification with patriotic education.

(3) Shortcomings in the Development and Utilization of Changzhou’s Patriotic Education Resources

Despite the progress made in the development and utilization of Changzhou’s patriotic education resources, a comprehensive analysis of existing literature reveals that current development, utilization, and dissemination methods remain relatively traditional, and there are shortcomings in the integration mechanisms. Some viewpoints suggest that the dissemination of Changzhou’s patriotic education has not fully leveraged the potential of smart media. The main issues include outdated content, single-format dissemination methods, and unsatisfactory dissemination effects^[9].

As a product of the digital age, ACGN culture exhibits an intrinsic harmony and adaptability with smart media. According to Neil Postman’s media ecology theory, different media technologies create distinct information environments, which in turn influence the production and dissemination of content^[10]. ACGN culture, born in the internet era, with its unique visual language and dissemination methods, offers new possibilities for innovative dissemination of patriotic education. By integrating ACGN culture with Changzhou’s patriotic education within the current media environment, the limitations of traditional dissemination methods can be overcome, and dissemination effectiveness can be improved. This integration is not a simple stacking of forms but requires an in-depth exploration of its theoretical foundations to ensure the rationality and effectiveness of the fusion.

4. Theoretical Foundations and Audience Psychology of Integrating ACGN Culture with Changzhou’s Patriotic Education

(1) Theoretical Interpretation of the Integration of ACGN Culture and Patriotic Education

This study is based on three dimensions: subculture ontology, the cultural identity construction mechanism, and post-structuralist cultural communication theory. It explains the theoretical foundation for the integration of ACGN culture with Changzhou’s patriotic education. The study advocates “articulation” and “reconstruction” as two key strategies to establish pathways for this integration, achieving the organic fusion of cultural elements through cultural hybridity and symbolic reproduction.

a) Subculture Theory: The Birmingham School theorizes a historical cycle of resistance and incorporation within subcultures and mainstream society. ACGN culture, as a youth subculture, resists mainstream society through a strategy of “escapism,” creating “cultural barriers” that maintain its distance from mainstream culture in terms of discourse, symbolic communication, and social cognition. Ma Zhonghong argues that mainstream culture’s incorporation of ACGN culture requires a more inclusive and innovative approach, borrowing and utilizing the expression forms of ACGN culture to

build a bridge for intergenerational dialogue^[11].

b) Cultural Identity Theory: In *The Symbolic Construction of Community*, Anthony P. Cohen introduces the concept of “*communitas*,” emphasizing that cultural identity needs to be built upon group commonality^[12]. The ACGN culture community forms based on shared interests. Within this community, members develop a shared cultural identity through the transmission, interpretation, and sharing of anime cultural symbols, cultural experiences, and texts.

c) Post-Structuralist Cultural Communication Theory: In the context of post-structuralism, Homi K. Bhabha’s concept of “*cultural hybridity*”^[13] and Stuart Hall’s theory of “*articulation*” highlight the interaction and fusion of cultural elements, which in turn generate new cultural forms and identity recognition^[14].

(2) Audience Psychology Analysis of the Integration of ACGN Culture and Patriotic Education

The data for this section was collected and analyzed from the researcher’s previous studies^[15]. The data consists of 332 questionnaire samples from ACGN anime communities and groups, providing an in-depth analysis of ACGN anime enthusiasts’ attitudes toward patriotic-themed anime and their cultural needs. The research suggests that audiences generally hold a positive attitude toward ACGN-themed patriotic anime, with a positive correlation between educational level and recognition of such content. Additionally, the questionnaire reveals the following cultural demands among respondents:

a) Pursuit of Multicultural Symbols: Compared to centralized “*grand narrative*” cultural symbols, respondents prefer cultural forms that showcase micro-narratives and diverse differences. The acceptance of cultural symbols by the audience is closely related to their openness to cultural diversity, emphasizing the importance of respecting and incorporating different cultural elements during cultural integration.

b) Individualized Decoding of Language: Respondents do not hold preconceived judgments about mainstream values. Instead, they tend to absorb ideas that align with their personal experiences. When encountering information about historical figures and events from patriotic memorials, respondents require the mediation of symbolic language from ACGN culture to decode and understand the content. These symbols are often closely related to their daily lives, thus building a bridge between ACGN culture and patriotic education.

c) Preference for Non-Realistic Narratives: Under the influence of ACGN culture, the audience demonstrates a clear preference for non-realistic narratives, which often include time travel, fantasy elements, and surreal plots. These narratives provide an escape from reality, satisfying their pursuit of novelty. Such storytelling techniques not only enrich the expression of patriotic themes but also allow the core spirit of patriotic education to be communicated more vividly and acceptably to young audiences.

Based on the theoretical framework and audience psychology analysis above, this research suggests that when developing patriotic education resources using ACGN culture symbols, it is essential to consider the cognitive characteristics and aesthetic preferences of young audiences. The development process should explore the cultural strengths of both elements, achieving effective articulation and textual reconstruction of cultural symbols, and establishing a new system of symbolic representation and textual expression.

5. Textual Creation Strategies for Integrating ACGN Culture with Changzhou’s Patriotic Education

Building on the theoretical framework and analysis of audience cultural needs, the practice of integrating cultural symbols and designing textual reconstruction should focus on the following areas:

(1) Narrative Strategies: Transforming Patriotic Education Resources into Engaging Narrative Materials

Experience is a core demand for contemporary audiences, particularly the youth, in their cultural consumption, which includes both emotional and perceptual experiences. To address this in the interactive exhibition design of historical figures and events in Changzhou’s numerous patriotic education sites and memorials, the following strategies could be adopted:

a) Juxtaposition of Multiple Micro-Narratives: In memorial halls focused on patriotic heroes, everyday details from the lives of these figures can be fully explored to design episodic anime-style narrative scenarios. For instance, when narrating stories centered on a particular historical figure, one could incorporate details about their living environment, personal belongings, habits, and anecdotes in

an “encyclopaedic” manner. This restores historical figures as warm, relatable individuals, which not only sparks the curiosity of modern young audiences but also brings them emotionally closer to these historical personalities.

b) Nonlinear Temporal-Spatial Narratives: In patriotic education sites that primarily commemorate historical events or meeting sites, immersive historical experiences can be created. For example, in the memorial hall at the former Jiangnan Command of the New Fourth Army in Liyang, ACGN-style narratives could be combined with VR/AR technology to create an “interactive time-travel zone,” allowing users to explore stories based on their choices. This structure provides new possibilities for narrative creation, enabling young people to “participate” in historical patriotic events through virtual technology.

(2) Character Design: Multi-Attribute Characters with Revolutionary Characteristics

In existing cases of patriotic education dissemination, many venues introduce historical figures and events in a flat, objectified manner, lacking emotional connection with the youth. To address this issue, the researcher suggests adopting Hiroki Azuma’s “database consumption” theory^[16]. Azuma argues that in a postmodern context, audiences no longer consume animated characters solely based on narrative but also through a combination of multiple attributes, such as a character’s identity, personality, temperament, and appearance. This mode of cultural acceptance provides new ideas for reshaping characters in patriotic education.

a) ACGN Attribute-Based Design of Historical Figures: When designing ACGN characters based on historical revolutionaries like Qu Qiubai and Zhang Tailei, their character attributes should be thoroughly analyzed from historical facts. Using anime-style coding, characters that are both historically accurate and attractive can be created, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Character Profile – Qu Qiubai

| | |
|------------------------|--|
| Character Name | Qu Qiubai |
| Character Role | Revolutionary |
| Temperament Attributes | Scholarly Youth (Literary Type) |
| Core Attributes | Revolutionary Pioneer, Literary Genius |
| Personality Traits | Brave, Idealistic, Compassionate |
| Skill Tags | Multilingual Proficiency, Literary Creation, Public Speaking |
| Hobbies | Reading, Writing, Music Appreciation |
| Appearance Design | Refined Scholar Look, Steadfast Gaze |

This multidimensional attribute design not only highlights Qu Qiubai’s rich personality charm, making him more relatable to youth aesthetics, but also provides numerous possibilities for character interaction and story development. Young audiences can quickly grasp and memorize character traits through these attribute tags while also exploring the character’s multifaceted nature in different narrative contexts.

b) Personification of Local Cultural Symbols: Local cultural elements from Changzhou can be personified and integrated into patriotic education narratives to enhance the regional uniqueness and appeal of the stories. For example, in the design of interactive media mini-games in the museum, the traditional Changzhou comb could be personified as a young girl character named “Bi’er,” who witnessed Changzhou’s history and introduces the city’s intangible cultural heritage from a third-person perspective.

c) Modern Youth perspective: In the narrative construction of various patriotic education exhibitions, designing from the perspective of the audience can guide viewers to gradually explore the displayed information, which is a clever narrative strategy. For instance, in the design of virtual and interactive exhibition content, modern youth anime characters could be created as protagonists of the stories, allowing audiences to explore local patriotic education through their perspective, thereby enhancing young people’s sense of immersion.

It is crucial, however, to maintain the seriousness of history in the cross-media and cross-cultural integration of patriotic education dissemination, avoiding excessive use of certain ACGN cultural elements, such as over-stereotyping characters or making narratives overly “simulacra-like.” Such practices could undermine the educational value of patriotic aesthetic education.

6. Conclusion

This study, rooted in the exploration of integrating ACGN culture with Changzhou's patriotic education, aims to provide new perspectives and practical pathways for youth aesthetic education. Through an in-depth analysis of subculture ontology, cultural identity construction mechanisms, and post-structuralist cultural communication theories, this research reveals the theoretical foundation of integrating ACGN culture with patriotic education and proposes innovative textual creation strategies.

Theoretical innovations apply post-structuralist cultural research and communication theories, viewing the integration of ACGN culture with patriotic education as a process of cultural hybridity and symbolic reproduction. Providing targeted strategies for the innovative dissemination of patriotic education.

On a practical level, this research proposes specific methods for narrative strategies, character shaping, and visual presentation, aiming to enhance the appeal and dissemination effectiveness of patriotic education by integrating digital interactive technology with ACGN visual styles. These strategies not only enrich the expression of patriotic education but also convey its core spirit in a more vivid and easily accepted manner to young audiences.

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