

Analysis of the Aesthetic Value of Short Videos Featuring Ethnic Apparel

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Abstract: China is a multi-ethnic country with a large land area and a huge population. The ethnic minorities in China reside both in large and mixed cities as well as in smaller, minority-majority settlements. Different cultures have long been influencing and intermingling with each other in history while retaining their original characteristics and charm. Thanks to the rise of online short video platforms, short videos featuring characteristics of ethnic minorities are becoming more mainstream. By focusing on ethnic dress-up short videos, we demonstrate the quality of the content of such videos and analyze their aesthetic values to study the dissemination of ethnic-themed short videos and their publicity effect on ethnic cultures.

Keywords: ethnic minorities; ethnic culture; ethnic image

1. Introduction

The emergence of short videos is born out of the flourishing development of the internet and connected smart devices, allowing everyone to become a *vlog* creator and showcase themselves publicly on short video platforms. The core of video distribution on online short video platforms is "decentralization"^[1], where all users to fully participate in the process, whether they are creating or receiving information. This forms the background on which ethnic short videos facilitate the propagation and development of ethnic cultures in modern society.

2. Main Dissemination Channels of Short Videos Featuring Ethnic Minority Culture

When it comes to the publicity of ethnic customs and cultures, online short videos, a novel form of imagery media, hold great potential for their mobility, flexibility, and concentration of fragmented images.^[2] It is more vivid and straightforward to use video images, as if it is a written language, to disseminate the special elements in the cultures of ethnic minority groups to the general public. The emergence of mobile short videos has modernized the way in which people receive information, facilitated the evolution of some traditional concepts, and changed how people communicate. Everyone's opinions and propositions, and the information available only to him/her, can reach everyone through the internet, effectively serving the purpose of propagation. The same applies to short videos featuring ethnic minority groups: members of ethnic minority groups create short videos to display their unique characters and cultural enchantment.

2.1. Sharing *vlog*'s

Vlog's, as a form of video expression, appeared outside of China in the early 21st century and with the development of internet technologies, became well known in China circa 2018, since when it is considered China's "*vlog* era." Short for "video log" or "video of log," this video form is primarily used to document and share one's life status. In the face of current media development, most *vlog* creators are millennials who consider it a way to show their personalities.

With the rapid development of mobile apps and new media platforms, the content of *vlog*'s have extended beyond sharing everyday lives. The video images have become a way for the creator to communicate with the audience for cultural exchanges and illustrations. Technological advancement has made the production of *vlog*'s more and more convenient, making it possible for all sorts of ethnic culture-related short videos to enter into public view and allowing all people to enjoy the cultural refreshment without traveling to ethnic minority regions in person.

2.2. Guiding news topics

There is no shortage of short videos on any platforms related to newsworthy topics. In the era of new media, managers and stakeholders of tourist attractions and ethnic cultural heritage are joining the ranks of short video creators en masse. With content creation and short video productions, they are disseminating the cultures of their own ethnic groups to the audience of a more general public and promoting inter-ethnic communications and integration. Such short videos are different from traditional movies and TV programs in that the creators are more focused on the authenticity, individuality and documentary quality of daily life or folk culture. Short videos are a way to bring art into life and to express and propagate one's unique ideas from the art of life by means of video images.

2.3. Integrating entertainment and socialization

Short videos that serve both entertainment and socialization purposes are the most common type on online platforms. Such videos host entertaining and socializing activities featuring one or several people, while live streaming for sales of cultural products for profit. Thanks to the modernization of the publicity of ethnic minority cultures and the ethnic integration policies of China, as more people join the industry of personal media, ethnic cultures are receiving more and more attention. The emergence of a variety of short videos featuring the dress-ups of ethnic minorities illustrates their cultural charms and stunningly special dressing styles.

With the help of internet technologies, people from different ethnic groups can communicate and better understand each other via video shooting, live streaming, and comment interactions. Such activities offer a platform to showcase one's own ethnic identity while allowing the creator and the audience to learn more about ethnic cultures and their uniqueness, facilitating mutual comprehension of different groups.

3. The Cultural Power of Ethnic Dress-up Short Videos

3.1. The creation forms of ethnic dress-up short videos

In the online society, the traditional Chinese culture is disseminated to the public via short videos for their advantage in text, image, and sound. Short videos bring little known, traditional ethnic skills and knowledge back into the public view via vivid images, demonstrating the diversity and profundity of ethnical cultures for dissemination purposes via dramatization, scenario building, visualization, and storytelling of the video content.

The diversity of ethnic cultures naturally helps the flourishing development of relevant short videos, as such videos are common on nearly all major platforms. Delicate screenwriting and skillful cinematography offer an audio-visual feast while the audience enjoys the charms of ethnic cultures. In particular, the brand of *Li Ziqi* is an exemplary model of the power of short videos featuring ethnic culture. It does a great job in displaying the traditional Chinese food culture, handicraft culture, clothing culture to a broader audience. Her short videos were well received and promoted, making a significant contribution to the development of local tourism and leading to more local people's awareness to cultural inheritance.

3.2. Ethnic dress-up short videos arousing the audience's interest in ethnic culture

Short videos are not only a form of entertainment but also a way for cultural dissemination, a characteristic being realized by more and more creators. The emergence of short videos of ethnic dress-ups brings the idea of entertainment and ethnic culture all over China. Usually, Ethnic dress-up short videos are usually created by independent creators. Then, the owners of some more popular channels will collect these original works to produce new, compilation videos on the theme. Regardless of the type of the videos, the content is to display the ethnic clothing and relevant cultural elements of the group where the creators are from. As creators from different ethnic groups join and dress up in their respective ethnic clothing, the clothing culture of all 56 officially recognized ethnical groups are on display in short videos. From these videos, we can see that the Hmong (*Miáo*) and Kam (*Dòng*) dresses are mostly embellished by silver ornaments and ethnical embroidery, whereas Tibetan (*Zàng*) dresses are mostly robes and coats. Every ethnic group has its own characteristics. The diversity of ethnic characteristics shown in each short video may prompt the audience's to explore their causes, leading to interest in their ethnic origins. The

emergence of short videos is an opportunity to plant the seeds of ethnic culture awareness in the hearts of the Chinese people, encouraging them to seek the memories of ethnic culture and to inherit the ethnic skills.

3.3. The dissemination method of ethnic culture in ethnic dress-up short videos

Short video platforms usually initiate some topics to use as entry points to draw potential creators to make dress-up videos. The use of "ethnic dressing" as a new, hot topic and content creation by a gathered audience are their creator-attracting advantage. Based on a large audience, platforms collect and analyze the big data on hot topics to make accurate recommendations of ethnic dress-up videos for broader attention and more user interactions, effectively promoting the dissemination of these videos.

Additionally, technical innovations by the platforms, such as data integration and shooting plug-ins, attract more people to the topic of ethnic dress-ups, encouraging the creation of derivative works based on quality original content. The enhancement of interactions and entertainment values increase the influence and facilitate the dissemination of ethnic culture under the topics of ethnic dress-ups.

4. The Aesthetic Characteristics of Traditional Chinese Culture in Dress-up Videos

4.1. Audiovisual artistry

Short videos of dress-ups build an artistic atmosphere of traditional Chinese culture in the compact format by using audiovisual effects, e.g., text, image, and sound, portrait orientation, visualization, scenario planning, and storytelling. They make digital reproductions of art forms that have been absent from modern daily life, such as traditional handicraft, opera, and poetry, assigning them aesthetic values of cultural edification and spiritual uplift and illustrating the Chinese aesthetic standard.^[3] The video creators use cell phones, cameras, and other mobile devices to shoot and edit, utilizing special effects and montage coupled with heavy rhythmic music. The videos are not only an audiovisual feast, but can also be visually striking in terms of imagery effects. The technical processing of image and sound makes the figures in the short videos, as well as their clothing, actions, and facial expressions, more impressive to the audience, serving the purpose of disseminating the beauty and charms of ethnic culture.

4.2. Ethnic emotions

The creators of ethnic dress-up short videos are mostly members of the very ethnic group where the dresses are from. Their interest is to become relevant to the hottest topics on the platform in an attempt to publicize their personal brands, or to demonstrate their own cultural characteristics via the short videos. Ethnic dresses are the external and material embodiment of ethnic identity. Creators of dress-up short videos use ethnic clothing as a carrier to express their own feelings and experience. Each dress-up short video shows Chinese people's admiration and identification with the Chinese traditional culture and the emotional nature of the ethno-cultural identity.

4.3. Cultural conceptuality

Dress-up videos represent a way for the platforms to show the ethnic culture in the form of ethnic dresses in a broader context of cultural promotion and dissemination. Many video creators also document traditional skills of their ethnic groups, such as the process of making Lusheng, their ethnical Lunar New Year custom, *etc.* Different regional environment and different ethnic cultural concepts make each ethnic group unique with distinguishing characteristics. The content and filmmaking of ethnic-themed short videos are a combination of the art, memories, and technology of the current time, making the traditional Chinese culture emanate vitality with the intermingling of multiple ethnic cultures.

4.4. The specialness of creation

The popularity of *Li Ziqi* and *Ding Zhen*, driven by their rapid and extensive dissemination on the internet, is the result of the awakening of Chinese public's identification with the traditional Chinese culture. By making short videos featuring concepts of ethnic culture, Ms. Li Ziqi has successfully established the image of her namesake brand (Figure 1 and Figure 2), achieving commercial profitability of ethnic culture. As the spokesperson of the Litang region, Mr. Ding Zhen (Figure 3) promotes the development of the local tourism and attracts more foreign tourists to experience the local cultural and

natural attractions. His ethnically characteristic appearance makes him a representative of the Tibetan culture in Litang. In his promotional videos, Mr. Ding Zhen, in ethnic dresses, guides the audience to experience the unique regional culture of Litang.



Figure 1: Ethnic specialties shown in Li Ziqi's short videos



Figure 2: A traditional technique shown in Li Ziqi's short video



Figure 3: Screenshot of Ding Zhen's promotional film for his hometown

China is a country with a large territory and one where multi-ethnic cultures prosper and develop together. What makes the creation of short videos featuring ethnic cultures special is that they are from different ethnical groups, based out of different regions and cultures. Each ethnic-themed short video is unique in content, creation method, and cultural concept it tries to convey. Variations in regional cultures endow the short videos with their own, distinguishing ethnic features. It is the cultural characteristics of different ethnic groups that promote the prosperity and development of the Chinese culture.

5. Aesthetic significance of short videos featuring ethnic dress-up

5.1. Arousing cultural identities of the public with ethnic culture

Ethnic dress-up short videos showcase ethnic cultures using imagery methods with the help of image vibrancy, light effects, and special effects in filming and editing. Typically coupled with heavily rhythmic music, they create a visual impact to the audience and bring spiritual uplift. In terms of video promotion and dissemination, such short videos have significant influence by virtue of short video platforms' young audience, extensive reach, and fragmented but concentrated format. Ethnically characteristic elements, such as ethnic clothing, ornaments, cultural atmosphere, ancient techniques, and food preparation in the videos show the ethnic cultural characteristics and memories via visual images, calling for the collective memories of the audience^[4]. By viewing the content featuring ethnic dress-ups, the audience can achieve

higher identification with the Chinese culture, thus promoting its heritage and development.

5.2. Thoughts on the fusion of traditional culture and the modern society

The combination of ethnic culture and short video is an innovative attempt to disseminate cultural concepts and connotations in the fast-paced, contemporary era. Ethnic dress-up short videos rely on the internet and big data algorithms for targeted recommendations to effectively achieve its goals in disseminating cultural emotions and concepts. The ethnic clothing, language, culture, and regional background all influence the audience's awareness of traditional ethnic culture in a subtle way. The disparity between the landscape of ethnic areas and the modern and prosperous urban landscape forms a strong visual contrast, triggering the thought on the integration and development of ethnic culture and the modern society. The creators of the short videos are not only propagating the concept of ethnic culture but are also exploring for an optimal path for integrating traditional culture with the modern society. By creating quality ethnic-themed short videos, they show the charms and characteristics of the ethnic culture to the general public and raise the awareness of the development and dissemination of traditional culture in the modern society.

6. Conclusions

Ethnic dress-up short videos are a way to disseminate the traditional Chinese culture. This genre of short videos propagates online with mobile apps on smart phones as the main carrier. Compared with the television and PC network communications, the largest differences are the portrait screen orientation instead of landscape and the reliance on the extensive reach of the internet to make a different communication experience. Ethnic dress-up videos promote the dissemination of ethnic culture in the form of personalized, specialized, and technology-intensive creation of content to arouse the audience's cultural identity and pride of being Chinese. The aesthetic value and significance of ethnic dress-up short videos promote the process of integration and development of traditional culture with the modern society, playing a conducive role in stimulating the vitality of traditional culture development and enhancing the comprehensive cultural strength of the country.

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