

Empathy Mechanism in International Communication of Jingdezhen Ceramic Intangible Cultural Heritage

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ABSTRACT

Through analyzing the comments of videos on YouTube, this study identifies three types of audience feedback and points out that the emotional genes such as ecological wisdom and craftsman spirit embodied in Jingdezhen ceramic intangible cultural heritage (ICH) possess cross-cultural empathetic potential. However, there exist issues including insufficient thematic content, lack of official interaction, and unresolved cognitive biases. Based on this, the study proposes suggestions such as building a collaborative communication matrix, deepening hierarchical content supply, using digital-intelligent technologies to address biases, and promoting the transformation of emotions into behaviors. These suggestions aim to enhance the effectiveness of emotional connection in the cross-cultural communication of Jingdezhen ceramic ICH, facilitate its elevation from aesthetic cognition to cultural identity, and provide references for empathetic practices in ICH international communication.

KEYWORDS

Ceramic intangible cultural heritage; International communication; Empathy mechanism

1 Introduction

To promote the development of the international communication power of Chinese culture, this research conducts real-time analysis of the emotional tendencies and emotional empathy of international audiences, using sentiment analysis technology and big data from social media. It explores the internal mechanism through which Jingdezhen ceramic ICH forms emotional empathy with overseas audiences in international communication, aiming to help enhance the effectiveness of emotional connection of Jingdezhen ICH in cross-cultural communication and promote the elevation of Jingdezhen ceramic ICH from aesthetic cognition at the level of artifacts to emotional resonance at the cultural level.

2 Communication of intangible cultural heritage

Intangible cultural heritage, as an important carrier of national cultural genes, its effective communication is a core path to realize living inheritance and sustainable development, and also a key topic and hot direction in the current field of ICH research. With the advent of the era of globalization and digitization, profound changes have taken place in the practice models and research paradigms of ICH communication. Scholars generally conduct systematic researches from five core dimensions: Who, says What, in Which channel, to Whom, and with What effect (5W), forming rich theoretical achievements and practical experiences.

In the past, ICH inheritors were mostly regarded as holders of specific skills and intergenerational transmitters, focusing more on the survival of the skills. In the context of contemporary communication, however, inheritors are gradually expanding into the diversified identity of cultural communicators. This transformation is not only reflected in their enthusiasm for actively participating in various communication activities but also strongly supported at the institutional level. The introduction and implementation of policy documents such as Measures for the Identification and Management of Representative Inheritors of National-Level Intangible Cultural Heritage Projects have established the official identity of ICH inheritors through institutionalization and built a more complete system of social recognition. The diversified development of communication channels is another important aspect of ICH communication research. The research by Tan Guoxin, Zheng Songyin, and He Qimin (2022) has made a clear typological division, summarizing them into two categories: static communication and dynamic communication. Among them, static communication mainly takes the form of archives, academic treatises, and physical exhibitions, focusing on the systematic preservation and authoritative presentation of ICH information. Dynamic communication is more flexible and interactive, covering various forms such as video narration in documentaries, real-time sharing on new media platforms, immersive experiences enabled by artificial intelligence technology, and scenario-based participation in cultural tourism^[1].

The communication content of ICH shows a trend of shifting from simple skill display to in-depth interpretation of

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cultural values. Early communication mostly focused on the external manifestations of ICH skills, such as operational processes and finished product forms, while current communication content emphasizes the transmission of deep cultural values behind the skills, including historical memories, life wisdom, aesthetic tastes, and national spirit. The modern reconstruction of ICH cultural symbols and the improvement of cross-cultural narrative capabilities have become research focuses. For example, we endow ICH culture with new narrative vitality through animation character design (Li Xiaoxiao, 2022) ^[2], realize the integration of ICH elements with modern lifestyles through innovative design of cultural and creative products (Li Yuliang, 2017) ^[3], and explore methods for constructing the discourse system of international communication of Chinese ICH (Liu Ying, Kong Qian, 2022) ^[4]. With the increasing diversification of audience needs, targeted communication strategies have received attention. Xiao Jin (2024), taking Zhuzhou Museum as an example, studied the targeted communication strategies for basic exhibitions in small and medium-sized museums, emphasizing the need to customize communication content and forms according to the audience's age, knowledge background, interest preferences, and other characteristics ^[5]. At the same time, the concept of participatory communication has gradually become popular. Zhong Qian and Mo Jiyan (2022) pointed out that the protection of China's ICH has gone through stages from inheritance-oriented protection to innovative development, and then to participatory communication ^[6]. This means that the audience is no longer passive recipients of information but has transformed into active participants in ICH communication, re-creation, and even co-guardians, thereby enhancing their sense of identity and responsibility for ICH culture.

The evaluation system of communication effects is also constantly improving, gradually shifting from a single traffic statistics to a composite analysis model combining data quantification and emotional resonance. The research by Li Yong, Yang Simin, Guan Hui, and Mao Taitian (2024) provides a useful reference. Taking representative Chinese cultural ICH as the object, they used text mining methods such as keyword analysis, sentiment analysis, and co-occurrence network analysis to parse user text data of ICH short videos on the YouTube platform, and applied the "cognitive-emotional-behavioral" framework model to examine their communication effects. It was found that the cognitive image of ICH is mostly positive, and emotional perception is mainly neutral and positive, providing empirical support for the construction of a scientific and comprehensive communication effect evaluation system ^[7].

3 Empathetic communication of jingdezhen ceramic intangible cultural heritage

In the international communication of ICH, empathetic communication refers to a dynamic process where communicators, by accurately grasping the emotional needs and cognitive logic of audiences from different cultural backgrounds, establish cross-cultural emotional connections, value recognition, and meaning sharing between communicators and audiences through appropriate communication strategies and diverse communication channels. Compared with consensus communication, empathetic communication has the advantages of strong influence momentum and low communication thresholds. In cross-cultural communication, the emotional infection-based nature of empathetic communication can better break through cultural barriers and efficiently achieve emotional connections with ICH culture.

3.1 Jingdezhen ceramic intangible cultural heritage

Jingdezhen national-level ceramic ICH projects include Jingdezhen Traditional Ceramic Kiln Workshop Construction Techniques and Jingdezhen Handmade Ceramic Techniques. Its provincial-level ceramic ICH projects include Fuliang Water-powered Trip-hammer Production Techniques, Fuliang Traditional Ceramic Glaze Fruit Production Techniques, and Jingdezhen Traditional Thin-Bodied Ceramic Production Techniques. Its municipal-level ceramic ICH projects include Jingdezhen Traditional Ceramic Carving Techniques and Jingdezhen Traditional Boneless Colored Porcelain Painting Techniques. Jingdezhen ceramic ICH system covers three levels: national, provincial, and municipal. Its core techniques and cultural expressions contain multi-level, differentiated emotional genes. These emotional genes include not only profound cultural spirits such as reverence for natural laws and adherence to skill inheritance, but also concrete emotional symbols such as the exploration of material properties and the pursuit of excellent craftsmanship. Moreover, they encompass universal emotional resonance points conveyed through visual aesthetics and tactile experiences. Together, they are empathetic communication contents for Jingdezhen ceramic ICH, providing diverse carriers for cross-cultural emotional connections.

Jingdezhen ceramic ICH can not only meet the international audiences' needs for cognitive curiosity and aesthetic experience of traditional crafts but also, through the translation and reconstruction of emotional symbols, trigger cross-cultural recognition of craftsmanship spirit, ecological wisdom, and humanistic values. The core of Jingdezhen Traditional Ceramic Kiln Workshop Construction Techniques and Fuliang Water-powered Trip-hammer Production Techniques lies in the wisdom of harmonious coexistence between humans and nature: designing kilns based on natural terrain and

grinding porcelain stones with hydraulic power. The concept of harmonious coexistence between humans and nature can be transformed into universal emotional symbols, arousing resonance among overseas audiences regarding sustainable development and ecological wisdom. Meanwhile, Jingdezhen Handmade Ceramic Techniques, Fuliang Traditional Ceramic Glaze Fruit Production Techniques, Jingdezhen Traditional Thin-Bodied Ceramic Production Techniques, Jingdezhen Traditional Ceramic Carving Techniques, and Jingdezhen Traditional Boneless Colored Porcelain Painting Techniques demonstrate humanity's creative transformation of materials and embody craftsmen's adherence to craftsmanship, which can arouse admiration for superb skills and craftsmanship spirit.

3.2 Current situation of empathetic communication

The acquisition of this dataset is achieved by crawling YouTube video comment data using Python tools. The specific process is as follows: First, search on YouTube platform using keywords of specific Jingdezhen ceramic ICH. After completing the search, manual screening is conducted based on the relevance of the videos and the number of comments in the comment section, and the addresses of the selected videos are recorded in "videos.txt" file. Then, the automated crawling program based on youtube-comment-downloader tool from GitHub is launched by running "run.bat" file, and the crawled comment data is automatically saved as JSON files. Finally, multiple JSON files are integrated and exported into an Excel file through the website "https://data.page/json/csv" to facilitate further in-depth analysis of the data.

The study found that there are relatively many videos about Jingdezhen traditional handcrafted porcelain techniques, but there are not many special videos about Jingdezhen other ceramic ICH; most are general introduction videos of Jingdezhen ceramics. Some official promotional videos of Jingdezhen ceramic ICH have disabled the comment function, making it impossible to understand the empathy status of international audiences. However, video publishers with high view counts and large numbers of comments are mostly individuals, and the content is mostly about Jingdezhen ceramic-themed tourism and traditional ceramic production. An in-depth analysis of audience comments reveals that the comments are mainly divided into the following three types: positive comments expressing amazement at craftsmen's skills and gratitude for sharing, positive comments reflecting consumption conversion, and biased negative comments. Below are representative examples of these three types of comments.

Table 1 Representative examples of the three types of comments

positive comments expressing amazement at craftsmen's skills and gratitude for sharing	positive comments reflecting consumption conversion	biased negative comments
Amazing hand crafted work.	Does Judy have a website where we can buy her art?	I think the ones being sold at auction houses are from these factories. Fakes they are.
What a treasure of a video! You let me understand many many tricks of this wonderful art form. Thank you so much!	What a wonderful journey for this potter. Thank you for making this video! How I hope to visit Jingdezhen!	How is the factory so clean? It's almost looks unreal.

These comments not only reflect the emotional connections already formed in the international communication of Jingdezhen ceramic ICH but also expose the problems existing in current empathetic communication. Positive comments directly confirm the appeal of the craftsmanship charm and cultural value of Jingdezhen ceramic ICH to international audiences. The exquisiteness of manual craftsmanship and the uniqueness of artistic forms constitute cross-cultural emotional resonance points. Essentially, such comments represent the audiences' emotional response to the craftsman spirit and traditional wisdom, indicating that ICH itself inherently possesses empathetic potential. Positive comments reflecting consumption conversion, in turn, demonstrate the communication's driving effect on the audiences' behavioral level. The willingness to purchase and the desire to travel reflect that emotional resonance has gradually transformed into behavioral intentions. In contrast, biased negative comments reveal international audiences' cognitive biases toward Jingdezhen ceramic ICH. Some audiences equate antique-replica porcelain with counterfeit porcelain, or develop misunderstandings about real porcelain-making scenes due to information asymmetry. Such comments reflect inadequacies in cultural interpretation within current communication.

4 Suggestions

In response to the current issues in the international communication of Jingdezhen ceramic ICH, such as inadequate widespread empathetic connection, insufficient content supply, and unresolved cognitive biases, and combining the communication characteristics of the digital-intelligent era and the laws of cross-cultural empathy, the following optimization suggestions are proposed.

In order to activate interactive empathy, a collaborative communication matrix between official and folk publishers is needed. Official publishers should break the one-way output model, open comment and interaction channels, and enhance emotional stickiness by promptly responding to audiences' questions and sharing ICH inheritance stories. Meanwhile, they can link up with high-quality individual publishers, such as travel bloggers and craftsmanship recorders, integrating the advantages of daily-life narratives and immersive experiences into the official communication system. This will form a combined communication force of authoritative interpretations and folk resonance, expanding the coverage of empathy.

Hierarchical content supply and differentiated empathy points of ICH projects should be strengthened. To address the shortage of current thematic videos, it is necessary to systematically sort out the unique emotional genes of national, provincial, and municipal ceramic ICH projects. For example, we highlight the ecological wisdom in Jingdezhen traditional porcelain kiln workshop construction techniques and focus on the craftsman spirit in traditional thin-body porcelain making techniques. Through customized content, the emotional symbols of different ICH projects can accurately reach the corresponding audiences, avoiding ambiguity in empathy caused by general communication.

Digital-intelligent technologies are supposed to be used to address cognitive biases and promote the transformation of emotions into behaviors. Sentiment analysis tools are used to real-time monitor the emotional tendencies of international audiences, conduct thematic interpretations on issues with negative emotions, and proactively guide cognition. In response to behavioral signals such as audiences' willingness to purchase and travel needs, a cross-border ICH experience platform can be built. Online we integrate cross-border purchasing channels of ICH inheritors' studios and cultural and creative stores, and link video content to set up entrances for product purchases and travel bookings. Offline we cooperate with Jingdezhen cultural and tourism institutions to develop ICH skill experience tours, transforming scenes such as handcrafting and porcelain kiln workshop visits in videos into participatory offline activities, so that emotional resonance can take root as in-depth cultural experiences.

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