

# ***Research on the Export Strategy of Chinese Culture on TikTok Platform***

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**Abstract:** With the strengthening of our comprehensive strength, in the background of the development of economic globalization, the spread of culture is also an indispensable part of improving the power of national discourse. We not only need to continue to inherit and develop our own culture, but also need to export our culture to international platforms, so that a wider audience can understand our culture. Meanwhile, with the rapid development of economy, the leisure time of the public is gradually fragmented, and the demand for entertainment is also changing imperceptibly. However, although TikTok is widely accepted by overseas users, there are still defects in the transmission of Chinese culture-related content. Problems such as the quality of Chinese culture-related videos and the differences between Chinese and foreign cultures have led to the limitation of cultural output on short video platforms everywhere, and there is still a lack of key strategies to break the situation. This paper starts with the current status of TikTok's overseas development, refers to the literature studies of many scholars, analyzes the shortcomings of its current cultural output, and finds out possible breakthrough strategies to provide opportunities for the export of Chinese culture on overseas platforms.

**Keywords:** TikTok, international communication, export of Chinese culture

## **1. Introduction**

In recent years, the comprehensive national strength of our country has increased, and we have made great achievements in politics, the military, and education. However, in terms of cultural communication, the mass media continues to follow the inherent pattern of "strong east and weak west," with Western countries remaining in the center. Foreign social media platforms, such as Twitter and Instagram, have become popular in international communication, as our country has been constantly influenced by foreign culture, and our traditional culture still leaves many stereotypes on the international stage. However, with the advent of the 5G era, intelligent media and big data-driven algorithms have brought a lot of opportunities for Chinese culture to enter the center of international communication. As a result, we should strengthen international communication in order to increase global recognition of Chinese culture and achieve discourse power comparable to overall national strength. It not only contributes to the "going global" of Chinese culture but also creates a favorable external public opinion environment for China's development and stability.

At the same time, with the rise of intelligent media on international social media platforms, localization screening and customized recommendation have gradually been accepted and recognized by the masses. Intelligent media such as short video platforms like TikTok have become a major revolution in international communication. The linear, one-way communication mode is transformed into an interactive, two-way communication mode.

TikTok, an overseas version of Douyin launched by ByteDance, was launched on overseas platforms in 2017. According to APP Annie's 2020 mobile market report, TikTok ranks fourth in the global downloads list and is the most internationalized social media platform launched in China so far. At the beginning of 2020, the novel coronavirus epidemic swept the world, and the time efficiency of information dissemination was crucial. People gradually focused their attention on short video platforms, and a large number of users began to download short video platforms to kill time or create self-media. The international version of TikTok developed rapidly overseas. TikTok has been downloaded 115 million times.

Taking social media communication as a platform and combining it with the key strategies for TikTok's success overseas, this study conducted an in-depth exploration on how to utilize TikTok's communication effect to effectively and reasonably export Chinese culture, from which potential risks were found. Propose effective coping methods. This study is conducive to the external communication of Chinese culture, breaking the stereotype, reducing the possibility of foreign cultural hegemony, rapidly promoting Chinese traditional culture to the international scope in a more acceptable way, and improving China's international status in the field of cultural communication.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1. Introduction to International Communication and TikTok

International communication is the exchange of cross-cultural information and communication with ethnic groups and countries as the primary body. This paper discusses international communication in a narrow sense, namely "communication between countries with mass communication as the pillar," which rises with the emergence of mass media and the gradual development of information globalization [1]. Scholar Cheng Manli believes that globalization, or information globalization, is an inevitable trend of historical development. Despite its origins in the capitalist commodity economy, it belongs to all of humanity, not just the West. This is both an opportunity and a challenge for developing countries. She points out that international communication has the following three characteristics: the dominant player is sovereign states and other international actors; information transmission is under the control of international actors (mainly countries); and communication is filtered [1]. This fully demonstrates that international communication is related to national interests and has a clear political orientation. Therefore, in the process of exporting Chinese culture, we should adapt to the current international environment to avoid international conflicts. Create a harmonious and favorable communication environment.

According to Fang Xingdong and scholar Zhong Xiangming, the global communication pattern has entered a new stage of reform in the 2020s, especially with the sudden rise of intelligent media and intelligent communication. The intelligent wave has brought media convergence to a new stage of development, and China will also usher in new opportunities when the communication mechanism enters a new field [2]. In such an international export environment, TikTok, an intelligent media application that originated in China, has developed rapidly and spread widely overseas. Huang Jie believes that at present, in the process of "going out," domestic media tend to pay more attention to the external communication of content while ignoring the operation of capital. In order to gain a foothold in the international media market, Chinese media groups must adopt the road of group-oriented and large-scale development, and overseas M&A is a very important means of capital

operation. Therefore, TikTok's acquisition of Flipagram, a short video application, and Musically, a short video platform, is of great significance in terms of its development [3].

In the context of the impact of the novel coronavirus epidemic, Ji Deqiang found that, under the influence of the novel coronavirus epidemic, articles related to TikTok and COVID-19 have gradually increased, and TikTok has gradually become a new hotspot of global academics [4]. In this sense, it shows that effective communication through TikTok has the opportunity to break the pattern of cultural hegemony and monopoly.

## **2.2. Development Status and Strategy of TikTok International Communication Environment**

Academic circles have conducted in-depth research on TikTok's international dissemination and development status. After scholars Chen Mo and Yang Zhuorui deeply explored why TikTok is so popular overseas, it is believed that the reasons lie in the fact that micro-video caters to the media trend, the self-organizing system keeps it constantly updated, the unique accurate algorithm forms user-centered rules, and the full-effect information platform provides users with one-stop service and an immersive user experience to bring users pleasant feelings [5]. Scholar Chen Hao and scholar Li Kaixuan also pointed out that the development trend of short videos in foreign countries should be closer to the mainstream voice of life, continue to deeply satisfy core users, and cultivate professional management of talents [6]. In a word, TikTok's success cannot be separated from its strategy combined with intelligence, precisely controlling users' demands, and recommending content satisfactory to users.

Scholars have also conducted extensive research on TikTok's international communication strategy. For example, based on the overseas communication of Chinese culture under the "meme theory," Chen Baoyu put forward suggestions on cultural communication including rational use of meme strategy, improvement of communication content quality, and giving play to the advantages of local platforms. She believes that in terms of exporting Chinese culture, we should reasonably use meme strategy, improve the quality of communication content, give play to the advantages of local platforms, establish an orderly communication system, export high-quality cultural content, reduce cultural estrangement and strangeness, and better establish China's national image [7]. Similarly, Kuang Wenbo and Yang Zheng also mentioned that a meme is an important form of emotional communication and expression that contains users' choice tendencies and meaning conferment as well as the projection of social mentality [8]. Wang Yuchen studied TikTok's shortcomings in the process of internationalization and believed that TikTok should make efforts in three aspects: as a media platform for cultural exchange among countries, as a competition field for international relations, and as a platform for demonstrating cultural confidence, to promote its internationalization process and effectively improve the effectiveness of China's international communication [9].

Despite the massive amount of existing research literature, the export of Chinese culture for TikTok still has defects in the current international communication environment, namely the lack of systematic export strategies and the existence of cultural conflicts. It is worth further study and discussion.

## **3. The Challenges of Exporting Chinese Culture Internationally on TikTok**

### **3.1. Video Quality on the Overseas Platform is Mixed**

At present, the international environment is conducive to the rapid development of intelligent media, making short video platforms widely entrenched in users' lives. TikTok has a unique design that takes advantage of the fragmented time, large number of young people, and high pressure of its target audience. The most important feature is that the length of the video matches the pace of young people's lives. The platform divides the challenge activities into global topics, such as large-scale

festivals or news, and regional events unique to each region, such as the Spring Festival and other festivals. In this way, TikTok meets the cultural communication needs of each region while ensuring internationalization. However, such a communication mode will have homogeneity affect the quality of the video, and in this aspect, there is no check at present; the quality of the content is poor, and the perception is not good.

To explore the reasons, the main reason is the lack of quality bloggers and their creation of high-quality content. Because TikTok's technology provides convenience, its creative participation costs and barriers are low. For example, in the early days of short video platforms, foreigners' empty boasts of China were regarded as the "traffic password." There were many hot videos with no substantive content, such as "shock body" and "Title Party," and the creation of a low threshold led to blind imitation, which resulted in a serious homogeneity of short video content. Reasons for this include aesthetic fatigue caused by homogenization of content and shoddy creation for the sake of traffic. These phenomena will not only result in a situation in which bad money drives out good money in the export field, but will also become a hotbed of rumors, making Chinese culture on TikTok single and rigid, and may even harm international relations.

### **3.2. Cultural Differences Limit the Understanding of Overseas Audiences**

Although TikTok adopts the operation mode of "globalization + localization," which reduces the cultural barrier between regions to a certain extent, Chinese culture is still not fully transmitted based on the perspectives and needs of overseas users [9], and the content style related to Chinese culture on the platform is still biased towards overseas Chinese users. In traditional communication methods, Chinese culture is usually narrated with strong narrative logic and structure. Culture is integrated into interesting and life-style stories so that the audience can understand Chinese culture. Such videos usually last a long time. As a short video platform that shines on the international stage, TikTok's main purpose is to fill the audience's fragmented time. Traditional cultural communication methods on such short video platforms have a narrow audience. Firstly, the audience may not have the time and patience to watch the whole video; secondly, the video style is more serious, which fails to reach the audience's goal of relaxing by using short videos. and lose interest in such videos even more.

In addition, although Chinese culture is integrated into the story with a narrative structure, some unique habits and cultures of Chinese culture, such as face and dowry, are difficult to be understood by overseas audiences and will also extinguish their enthusiasm. When Duan Tingting and Zhou Maojun interviewed overseas students from Confucius Institutes and other Chinese language schools, they found that overseas audiences had a low understanding of short videos produced by foreign "we media" in China [10]. Moreover, most of these videos are targeted at overseas Chinese, and the language barrier further aggravates the difficulty of understanding, which makes the export of Chinese culture from China even more difficult.

## **4. Feasible Strategies are Discussed for the Above Problems in TikTok International Communication Environment**

### **4.1. Professional Bloggers and Quality Content**

In the field of international communication, make good use of the cross-cultural gap and adopt IP images with obvious geographical identifiers for personalized output, which will attract the curiosity of "cultural others" to a greater extent [11]. In order to produce content more suitable for foreign audiences on international short video platforms, we need to change the existing "domestic style" output strategy. The existence of cultural differences makes it difficult for foreigners to understand the punchlines and customs, and the lack of good guidance will lead to self-interpretation and misunderstanding. To break through the status quo, it may be necessary to introduce local quality

bloggers in various fields, such as blogger "Li Ziqi," who, after a certain level of visibility, customized his IP, turning the video style into a special "sign," so that the audience, as long as they see the series of content, can be associated with the relevant cultural habits.

At the same time, it is also possible to explore foreign bloggers overseas for culturally popular creations, such as those of "Guo Jiali" and "Foreigner Studies Association." What they have in common is that they reflect and spread the real thoughts of ordinary people through interviews so as to express different cultural views, arouse people's interest through differences, and create opportunities for output. We can reproduce this kind of form on the international platform and then combine with the local bloggers' own ideas, using vivid and interesting forms of cultural communication.

#### **4.2. Weakening the Deep Differences and Paying More Attention to the Performance of Life Differences**

If culture is divided into outer and inner cultures, the outer culture is symbols, such as clothing, food, shelter, etc., the inner culture involves religion and belief, etc., and the deepest culture is values. It can be seen that the deeper the cultural differences, the more likely they are to produce contradictions. Therefore, in the process of exporting Chinese culture, we should weaken the deep culture and highlight the surface content, such as daily living, diet, life, and other overlapping parts of each country, so as to make the exported culture more acceptable.

"Li Ziqi," the YouTuber mentioned above, is an example. She and her IP team focus on "recording life" rather than simply "telling stories." Through multiple videos about daily living, farm work, food, and cooking, they gradually infiltrate Chinese life onto international platforms. The same approach can also be applied to the short video platform, which can even simplify and highlight the fragments of life, such as a certain lunch, a trip to the sea, daily dressing and sharing, etc., first to produce quality content, then play to the advantages of short video transmission that are easy to imitate, first guide ordinary people to imitate, focus on "daily life," and finally spread through intelligent communication.

Cultural differences cannot be eliminated, but they can be used to weaken stereotypes. The content of life not only makes ordinary people more intuitive to realize the misunderstanding they have been having, but even if the culture is not connected, their emotions are not. The love for life, the fear of disaster, the sympathy for vulnerable groups, and other emotions expressed in life can make people seek common ground while putting aside differences and empathizing with each other. The background of the epidemic makes people more empathic. These surface cultural differences in life are easier to reflect on and more real, making it easy for ordinary people in foreign countries to feel the details of Chinese culture directly.

#### **5. Conclusions**

The rise and rapid development of the TikTok platform overseas shows that the short video platform largely meets the needs of the public for life and entertainment. However, the quality of videos related to the export of Chinese culture on the platform cannot be guaranteed at present, and the existing cultural differences have not been reasonably neutralized, which further widens the gap in mutual understanding. Although TikTok, as a product of domestic companies, has natural advantages in the export of Chinese culture, it still needs a reasonable strategy. Therefore, by analyzing the challenges faced by the TikTok platform in exporting Chinese culture overseas, this study explores ways to introduce professional bloggers and highlight surface cultural differences to make up for the defects.

However, this study lacks practice and comprehensive consideration, and the author's ability is limited and not rigorous enough. Moreover, due to the lack of practice, there is still a large space for exploration of potential opportunities on TikTok's overseas platform. In the follow-up research,



samples can be set, data can be collected, and users' needs, preferences, and acceptance can be further analyzed to draw more specific export strategies for Chinese culture.

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