

# *The Mode of Transmission Research of Tibetan Culture in New Media*

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**Abstract:** Tibetans are an ethnic minority in China and have a rich and unique cultural heritage after thousands of years of historical changes. With the increase of internet penetration and the rise of various new media platforms, new media has become an important medium for cultural dissemination. In order to inherit Tibetan culture, the paper summarized the different ways of Tibetan culture output in new media and analyzed the advantages and disadvantages of government-led and individual-based cultural communication modes in terms of images and texts. By taking advantage of the strengths and weaknesses, the paper finally concluded and discussed three feasible new media communication solutions to help the transmission and dissemination of Tibetan culture, namely, promoting a series of scenario-based stories based on Tibetan culture, creating a systematic Tibetan culture communication account and creating an incentive mechanism for cultural communication on each platform. Through these improvements to address the current shortcomings of new media cultural communication, Tibetan culture will be better known and passed on to more people.

**Keywords:** Tibetan culture, new media, transmission mode

## 1. Introduction

New media, a new type of network communication that has been developed over the past fifty decades, mainly uses technologies such as the Internet and mobile communication to provide users with information or services such as video and audio clips through electronic mobile devices [1]. With the popularization of mobile phones, new media has become an important medium for cultural communication, as it has gradually penetrated into people's lives. According to the Statistical Report on the Development of China's Internet, as of December 2022, the size of China's Internet users reached 1.067 billion and the Internet penetration rate reached 75.6% [2]. Thus, it can be helpful in terms of protecting cultural heritage.

For example, the Tibetan people, which have rich cultural traditions and unique lifestyles, are faced with potential loss of such cultural practices [3]. As an ethnic minority whose population ranks among the top ten out of the fifty-five ethnic minorities in China, Tibetans mainly live in the western area of China, a region famous for the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau. However, with the development of modern technology and changes of the society, Tibetan culture begins to be commodified and vulgarized. Therefore, it causes that the Tibetan people have gradually simplified their cultural practices, resulting in their lifestyle becoming similar to that of the other Chinese. This

result has led that Tibetan culture is gradually lost, posing potential threat to the loss of its cultural heritage [4].

From a cultural perspective, this paper will discuss how to improve the communication methods in social media to increase cultural exposure and help pass on the tradition. In the first part, this paper analyzes the characteristics of the traditional Tibetan culture. It then moves on to analyzes the main new media communication methods of Tibetan culture by taking a look at the advantages and disadvantages of each method. In the final section, this paper will put forward multi-angle suggestions for promoting Tibetan culture to a larger audience. In doing so, this paper aims to find better ways to promote Tibetan culture, so that more people around the world can get a taste of the unique charm of Chinese culture.

## **2. Tibetan Culture**

As an ethnic minority in China, Tibetans have a rich cultural heritage with thousands of years of history.

Since the Tibetans live in the west of the Central China plain, which covers much of the Tibetan Plateau, the unique geographical environment enables them to create their own lifestyle. For example, they invented Tibetan robes to resist to the huge temperature difference between mornings and evenings. The thick sheepskin and wool of such robes can keep Tibetans against coldness in the morning and evening, while the lack of a sleeve can keep them cool in the hot afternoon [5].

Apart from that, the Tibetan people have also created an exclusive religious belief-Tibetan Buddhism. On top of that, they established unique customs as well as religious products. All these allow the Tibetan people to have their classic way of life.

## **3. Tibetan Culture Spreads in New Media**

With the development of science and technology, the Internet has become the most important network to exchange ideas. A survey shows that the amount of information related to Tibetan culture is small. It also indicates that the transmission methods are limited.

### **3.1. Government-led Cultural Communication**

As the major driving force of promoting the Tibetan culture, the Chinese government has been trying to introduce the Tibetan culture to be known and accepted by more people. Through continuous efforts of the central government and local governments, Tibetan culture has been disseminated in various forms of media [6].

#### **3.1.1. Visual-based Communication Method**

The government officials have been capturing the unique customs and festivals of the Tibetan people in photos and videos. By publish such multimedia stories on news platforms, they introduce the Tibetan culture to a broader audience. At the same time, the central and local TV stations will also send video production teams to shoot documentaries about one particular cultural practice, which includes but is not limited to etiquette and cultural relics and publicize them on a large scale [7]. For example, the production team of *the Extreme* went deep into 73 counties and cities in Tibet to record the most authentic life of the Tibetan people. They experienced a variety of extreme weather and natural environments where Tibetans live and recorded the unique living culture and lifestyle evolved by the Tibetan people under the extreme environment.

### **3.1.2. Text-based Communication Method**

China mainly uses news, online publications, and professional websites to disseminate written works that depict the Tibetan culture. Local TV stations will send reporters to visit various Tibetan scenic spots and interview local Tibetans and people in charge of Tibetan cultural protection. When reporters form a deep understanding and perception of the Tibetan culture, they will write articles and publish them in China's famous news and journals so that the whole nation can get to know more about such phenomenon.

With the support of the government, the Tibetan people have also established ethnic cultural protection departments and Tibetan research associations. The Tibetan cultural protection teams in different regions have jointly created a website called the China's Tibetan net to promote Tibetan traditional culture and history. Related academic works have been published on the website. The website has different versions in various languages, including Tibetan, Chinese, English and other mainstream languages in the world. The diversity of languages expands the spread of Tibetan culture articles published on it, and gives more people an opportunity to understand this culture. This website not only updates daily news in Tibetan areas, but also has a special column for Tibetan culture. The column divides Tibetan culture into multiple categories and sets up a series of sub columns for each category, such as Tibetan medicine, Tibetan classic literature, Tibetan Buddhism, folk culture and etc. In each sub column, detailed descriptions and records of individual cultures related to it will be regularly updated. For example, on May 5, 2023, an article on Tibetan folk culture was published to record the Ongkor Festival in Sangda Village. In this article, the author writes about the overall process, the history and significance of the Ongkor Festival [8]. By reading it, readers can have a deep understanding of this cultural celebration.

## **3.2. KOL-led Cultural Communication**

As the country attaches great importance to ethnic culture education among the youth and the promotion of the Tibetan culture, more and more Chinese content creators volunteer to publish content related to the Tibetan culture on the Internet.

### **3.2.1. Visual-based Communication Method**

In the past five years, new media platforms such as Douyin and Xiaohongshu have developed rapidly. As of December 2022, the number of short video users in China has reached 1.012 billion, marking the fact that new media has become an important part of most people's lives. With the development of this industry, the number of people engaged in it has also increased significantly. In order to have more fans and traffic, content creators began to create their own personalized channels and content. Since a very small number of them were born in Tibetan areas or live there, they began to present Tibet-related things to the public in an interesting and personal way. For example, Panpan nikki was born in Garzê Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Sichuan province. She often produces and publishes videos on Tibetan culture. Her channel has a lot of popular science videos about Tibetan customs, Tibetan costumes and Tibetan family activities. Sometimes she will also go back to the place where she grew up to explain and show the living habits and living environment of the native Tibetans. Apart from her, more and more Tibetans have begun to start their own channels. Therefore, many people of other ethnic groups get to learn about the Tibetan culture through short videos, thus building an interest in this ethnic culture.

### **3.2.2. Text-based Communication**

On new media platforms, textual content related to the Tibetan culture can be roughly divided into two types. A large proportion is explainers and articles about Tibetan customs created by Tibetan people and those who love Tibetan culture. They are mainly print articles that have many paragraphs. The other part is produced by visitors who have travel to Tibetan areas. They share what they have experienced in the areas and how they feel about them in the form of travel diaries. Those two ways, one objective and the other subjective, allow readers to critically understand Tibetan culture in many ways. For example, some people will post excerpts of introductions to scenic spots in Tibetan areas on social media, while others will write their impressions of the Tibetan culture and describe certain Tibetan cultural practices based on their one-day visits.

## **4. Analysis**

### **4.1. Government-led Cultural Communication**

Since China adopts a one-party system, the government's cultural communication behaviors are very popular with the people and the government's policies are very influential. With the support of the Party, the government's cultural communication will allow more people to understand Tibetan culture on a large scale. The articles and visuals related to the Tibetan culture are played on a specific central channel, which can be watched by its subscribers, thus ensuring a certain amount of audience and communication efficiency of cultural communication. But at the same time, there are also disadvantages in the cultural communication led by the government. Due to the political characteristics, such videos or texts tend to be in-depth, serious and formal, with a political angle. Some knowledge can also be too professional. When most people of today's China do not understand Tibetan culture, this kind of communication method cannot create special memories or generate empathy with readers. For these readers, most of them cannot devote themselves to absorbing new knowledge about the Tibetan culture, when they lost interest in watching videos for the first time. Therefore, the communication effect of this method will depend heavily on the readers' cultural background and personal preferences, which is highly variable and not quite effective. At the same time, because the government does not pay much attention to the effectiveness or requirement for Tibetan cultural communication, the promotion work of the cultural departments tend to be relatively superficial, resulting in the creation of a cultural propaganda platform that no one pays attention to. For example, according to the questionnaire survey, among the 357 responses, only 107 people know about the China's Tibetan net and have read an article on it. Sadly, the reason why all these 107 people discovered this website was that they wanted to know more about the Tibetan culture after they have learned about it through different channels. The publicity work of the research association only stays on the construction of the website. They didn't put much efforts in making this website known to more people.

### **4.2. KOL-led Cultural Communication**

Content creators that engage in promoting the Tibetan culture can be divided into two types.

The first kind is staff members who take content creation as their career path. They have received more professional training, which enables them to better understand storytelling techniques. What they would do is that they combine Tibetan culture with Internet buzzwords to form a complete story. Because the content of these videos is in line with the interests of young people, the number of views and likes is more than that of other promotional videos. It also indirectly allows more young people to understand Tibetan culture and increase their interest in it [9]. However, the disadvantage of such type of communication lies in that the content creators care more about

commercial benefits than cultural promotion, resulting in less efficiency in publicity. Apart from that, superficial cultural knowledge and bad writing cannot bring the depth of the Tibetan culture to the audience. At the same time, due to the insufficient loyalty of fans to KOLs and the lazy nature of human beings, fans will only learn about Tibetan culture when content creators release relevant videos. They will not learn more about it on their own. This will lead to the dissemination of Tibetan culture relying on KOLs' personal ideas, interests and exposure from content platforms. Once this topic is imitated by many other content creators, the traffic of this type of video will drop significantly, resulting in creators stopping publishing videos about the Tibetan culture [10].

The second kind is non-professionals. The Tibetan culture-related content they produce is lengthy and boring. It tends to be dominated by articles, instead of videos. Due to their limited comprehension and summary ability, the articles usually contain a lot of repetitive and useless sentences, which also makes the article very lengthy. In addition to that, because articles can only stimulate one sensory satisfaction for viewers, most people prefer watching multi-sensory communication products such as videos. Due to the limited sensory satisfaction and the lengthy nature of the articles, most readers will not click them, let alone finishing reading them, leading to an ineffective communication effect.

## **5. Suggestions**

### **5.1. Advocating Compelling Scenes about the Tibetan Culture**

A compelling scene can help advance the plot and entertain the audience in a more profitable way, which suits the needs for both content creators and cultural promotion departments. On the one hand, stories with such scenes enjoy a great number of clicks on new media platforms. They can also increase readers' interest in reading or watching as well as their loyalty to content creators. On the other hand, they can contain more and deeper knowledge of Tibetan culture and at the same time allow audiences to better understand cultural customs that are very different from their own habits through simulated events. On top of that, such stories usually leave more and deeper impressions with the audience, which also increases the chances of future audiences communicating with others and spreading Tibetan culture [11].

### **5.2. Creating Systematic Accounts to Promote Tibetan Culture Communication**

The biggest difficulty in cultural communication is the inability to raise people's continuous attention and in-depth understanding of targeted culture. All research organizations and cultural protection organizations should cater to audience's interests and traffic trends and create systematic video accounts with Tibetan culture as the core. Systematic accounts can allow fans to understand Tibetan culture continuously and gradually in depth, increasing the length of publicity and the effect of promotion. At the same time, systematic accounts will lead the trend of network traffic, gradually link traffic peaks with high-quality culture, improve the Internet atmosphere, and lay the foundation for further publicity.

### **5.3. Creating a Reward Mechanism for Cultural Communication on Each Platform**

According to the current social entertainment methods and audience's interests, the promotion of Tibetan culture should take the short video industry as a breakthrough point. In order to promote the combination of short video culture and Tibetan culture, a cultural network environment can be established by satisfying the creative purposes of content creators. Creating a cultural promotion mechanism on content platforms will attract professional content creators to try this field, which will shift the vision of many users to Tibetan culture. At the same time, with the continuous

exposure of such videos, more and more people will follow this trend to generate more related content, which will greatly expand the communication effect [12].

## 6. Conclusion

To sum up, new media, as the most universal information dissemination method in modern times, is the best channel to increase the promotion effect and depth of Tibetan culture. However, due to people's underestimation of the spread of Tibetan culture and less interesting content about this topic, Tibetan culture has gradually faded out of the spotlight. According to the research and analysis of this article, to improve the promotion efficiency and quality of Tibetan culture, it is necessary to jump on the bandwagon of new media, create characteristic content, and adopt communication methods with Tibetan culture as the theme. A series of Tibetan cultural accounts should be established to cultivate readers' habits of continuing to pay attention to this culture. At the same time, stories with compelling scenes related to Tibetan culture should be created to increase exposure and traffic. As for the government and new media platforms, an incentive mechanism should be established for creators who spread Tibetan culture and other ethnic cultures to stimulate their interest in creating such works and increase the number of works related to Tibetan culture from the source. After changing the new media communication methods and the mindset about content production related to the Tibetan culture, it is highly possible that it will get more attention, resulting in greater confidence in inheriting and preserving this culture into the future.

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