

Strategic Analysis on Promoting International Dissemination of Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) Culture via New Media Platforms

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Abstract: In the era of globalization and digital transformation, traditional Chinese medicine (TCM) culture is encountering new prospects for international promotion. Thanks to their distinctive communication strengths, new media platforms provide strong support for TCM culture to reach global audiences. Nevertheless, analysis of how these platforms have promoted TCM internationally reveals several challenges, including homogenization of content, insufficient coordination among communication channels, as well as barriers to cross-cultural communication. To enhance the effectiveness of TCM's global dissemination, it is essential to develop a diverse content strategy, by way of integrating and optimizing communication channels, applying technological innovations for better outreach methods, and fostering international collaborative exchanges. These endeavors will not only expand TCM's global influence but also support its preservation and development on an international scale.

Keywords: new media platform; TCM culture; international communication; communication strategy; cross-cultural communication

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1. Foreword

As a precious gem of Chinese traditional culture, TCM encompasses profound philosophical insights and extensive practical experience. With the ongoing advancement of the Belt and Road Initiative and the rising global demand for healthcare, the international promotion of TCM culture has grown in both importance and urgency. Nevertheless, conventional methods of dissemination are confronted with restrictions in terms of time, locations, and resources, making it increasingly inadequate to meet international communication demands.

However, new media platforms, featuring immediacy, interactivity, and global accessibility, have opened up innovative avenues for cultural exchanges. Further exploration and research will center around how to make effective use of these platforms to advance international dissemination of TCM culture, overcome cultural barriers, and strengthen its global influence.

2. Current Status and Challenges in Communication

2.1. Innovations and Constraints in Communication Channels

The booming new media era has presented unprecedented opportunities for international dissemination of TCM culture. Platforms such as social media, short-video apps, and news websites have transcended geographical boundaries, enabling rapid dissemination of TCM practices like acupuncture and massage through dynamic visual content^[1]. These mediums often serve as the “first impression” of TCM for overseas audiences, showcasing its practical applications. However, this communication model harbors significant limitations: it prioritizes technical demonstrations over theoretical elaboration, reducing TCM culture to fragmented “performative art”. While overseas viewers are frequently impressed by the perceived miracles of acupuncture, they struggle to comprehend underlying concepts such as “meridian theory” and “qi-blood balance.” This creates a paradox where TCM is admired as a technical curiosity but remains intellectually inaccessible, resulting in a superficial “recognition without understanding.”

2.2. Content Homogenization and Innovation Deficiency

Presently, the content of traditional Chinese medicine (TCM) dissemination across diverse new media platforms demonstrates a striking uniformity. Whether through health-oriented short videos or graphic-social media posts, most materials largely center on generic topics such as medicinal cuisine and acupressure massage, neglecting profound exploration of TCM cultural foundations. This “one-size-fits-all” communication paradigm fails to satisfy overseas audiences’ deeper curiosity about Eastern philosophical wisdom and struggles to surmount the hurdle of cultural discount^[2]. For instance, when explaining the concept of “preventive treatment”, a mere literal translation as “disease prevention” without integrating the philosophical framework of harmony between “humanity and nature” risks stripping away core cultural values during cross-cultural transmission. Such superficial content not only limits the depth of TCM’s cultural representation but also reinforces a truncated understanding of its holistic wisdom, reducing millennia-old traditions to simplistic health tips rather than presenting them as a coherent philosophical system.

2.3. Channel Fragmentation and Coordination Dilemma

The proliferation of new media channels theoretically holds promise for synergistic communication, yet absence of systematic planning has led to a situation where platforms operate independently. User demographics and communication approaches vary drastically across channels: for instance, short-video platforms prioritize entertainment-driven engagement, whereas academic websites focus on specialized scholarly discourse. When content is not strategically matched to channel characteristics, it results in disjointed communication effects, akin to delivering complex philosophical concepts through meme-driven formats or reducing practical wellness tips to impenetrable academic jargon. Lack of data sharing and content integration between platforms has further entrenched “information islands” in TCM cultural dissemination. Each channel functions as a standalone entity, with limited cross-platform synchronization. This fragmentation prevents the formation of a cohesive narrative, making it impossible for overseas audiences to piece together a holistic picture of TCM as both a clinical practice and a philosophical system^[3]. Consequently, the disjointed flow of information exacerbates the existing problem of one-dimensional understanding, trapping TCM in a cycle of fragmented representation that undermines its cultural integrity and intellectual depth.

3. Second, the construction of a diversified content system

3.1. Integrating Theoretical Depth and Cultural Substance

A diversified content system should transcend a “technique-centric” approach to deeply integrating TCM theoretical framework with its cultural essence. Beyond showcasing diagnostic and therapeutic methods, it is crucial to highlight philosophical foundations like “yin-yang equilibrium” and “five elements interconnection”, bridging TCM’s holistic perspective with Western scientific paradigms. When explaining herbal compatibility through the theory of “principal,

auxiliary, messenger, and messenger’, we compare it to symphonic orchestration, translating abstract concepts into relatable analogies. Through such cultural decoding and theoretical clarification, overseas audiences can grasp that TCM constitutes not merely a medical practice, but a holistic system of life knowledge rooted in millennia of philosophical inquiry.

3.2. Localized Narrative and Audience-Tailored Strategies

Effective cross-cultural communication hinges on bridging cultural divides through audience-centric localization. Content should be crafted to resonate with regional epistemologies: leverage modern medical data for Western audiences rooted in empirical science, or draw parallels with local traditional practices in Southeast Asia to establish common ground. For instance, introducing moxibustion in Europe can reference ancient Greek “therapeutic heat” concepts, while in the Middle East, aligning Huangdi Neijing principles with Arab medical traditions creates pathways for dialogue. By anchoring TCM in shared cultural touchpoints and regional knowledge systems, these strategies transform it from a foreign practice into a universally resonant expression of holistic wisdom.

3.3. Serialized Content and Immersive Experience

To elevate content resonance and audience engagement, strategic serialization of narrative works is paramount. A historical series like “The Millennial Medical Odyssey” could trace TCM’s evolution from ‘Treatise on Cold Damage and Miscellaneous Diseases’ to Tu Youyou’s Nobel-winning discovery of artemisinin, blending scientific milestones with human-interest storytelling. Complementarily, a documentary franchise such as “Guardians of TCM Heritage” could spotlight lineage practitioners, revealing the transmission of ancient wisdom through modern lenses^[4]. By incorporating suspense-driven narratives, historical reconstructions, and interactive elements such as virtual herbal identifications or animated meridian maps, complex TCM concepts are transformed into accessible, immersive journeys. This ecosystemic approach fosters sustained engagement, enabling global audiences to develop nuanced, multi-dimensional insights into TCM’s cultural, historical, and scientific dimensions.

4. Third, integration and optimization of communication channels

4.1. Platform characteristics and content adaptation

Platforms like TikTok and Instagram emphasize visual impact, capturing users’ attention by highly dynamic images. For effective dissemination of traditional Chinese medicine (TCM) culture, it is critical to explore its aesthetic dimensions through microscopic documentation of preparation processes. For instance, use a macro lens to capture the subtle color shifts of herbs during traditional stir-frying and slow-roasting process, revealing transformative textures and visual alchemy. Dynamic visual breakdowns can deconstruct acupuncture’s “light, agile, precise” techniques into a series of clear and coherent images, immersing audiences in clinical subtleties as if present in treatment settings.

On platforms fostering intellectual exchange (e.g., Facebook, Twitter), thematic discussions on “TCM philosophy in modern healthcare” or “Five Elements theory in contemporary wellness” resonate deeply for discussion^[5]. By posing interdisciplinary questions, these platforms facilitate cross-cultural dialogues that bridge TCM’s philosophical foundations—such as harmony between man and nature—with global knowledge systems. Interactive debates and shared insights serve to unpack TCM’s wisdom, showcasing its holistic logic through collaborative exploration.

4.2. Integrated Matrix for Communication Resonance

We can establish a cohesive dissemination ecosystem: “social media priming→short-video traffic diversion→live-stream engagement→knowledge-platform accumulation”. Leverage Weibo’s real-time topic-driving capabilities to amplify TCM cultural narratives. Curate seasonal campaigns such as “24 Solar Terms & TCM Wellness” featuring interactive questions (e.g., How does autumn dryness affect your lung meridian?) to spark timely discussions. By aligning with cultural

rhythms and user interests, these campaigns generate viral momentum, creating pre-engagement that primes audiences for subsequent phases.

By leveraging the massive user base and high engagement of short video platforms such as TikTok and Kuaishou, we can effectively simplify and popularize complex Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) knowledge through engaging short-form content. This can be achieved through animated demonstrations that vividly illustrate meridian pathways, situational dramas that bring the stories behind classic TCM formulas to life, and expert-led content featuring TCM professionals delivering entertaining, accessible, and humorous explanations. By making TCM knowledge both understandable and engaging, we can achieve widespread traffic diversion and broader audience reach.

Once the platform gains significant popularity, it will invite renowned TCM experts to host live-streamed sessions, during which, viewers can engage in real-time Q&A sessions on topics such as health management, disease prevention, and therapeutic approaches. Experts will provide immediate, expert-backed answers and explanations, fostering deeper audience engagement. Through these interactive exchanges, the platform not only enhances viewers' understanding of TCM but also strengthens their trust and appreciation for TCM culture. Finally, high-quality content such as expert insights, user discussions, and educational materials generated during the initial dissemination phase will be systematically curated and archived on knowledge-sharing platforms like Zhihu and Wikipedia. These structured archives serve as a valuable resource for beginners, who seek foundational knowledge of TCM, as well as professionals, who require in-depth references for research or clinical practice.

4.3. Cross-Media Narrative and Scene Extension

Virtual Reality (VR) technology has unlocked innovative frontiers for the dissemination of traditional Chinese medicine (TCM). By creating a “virtual TCM clinic,” users can wear VR devices and step into an exquisitely recreated ancient TCM clinic, transcending temporal and spatial boundaries. Within this hyper-realistic environment, users can fully immerse themselves in the entire diagnostic process—from experiencing the four classic TCM diagnostic methods—observation, auscultation & olfaction, inquiry, and pulse palpation—to witnessing pharmacists meticulously compounding herbal formulas. This immersive journey not only allows users to appreciate the unique charm of TCM diagnosis and treatment but also deepens their cognitive understanding and emotional resonance with TCM culture through sensory-rich engagement.

Beyond VR, interactive comics offer another dynamic medium for spreading TCM culture. When creating TCM-themed interactive comics, compelling storylines can be designed where protagonists gradually unravel TCM knowledge while navigating diverse health challenges. As readers journey through the narrative, they naturally absorb health preservation concepts and therapeutic principles of Chinese herbal medicine. Through interactive elements such as selecting personalized treatment protocols or choosing between different herbal regimens, they actively participate in the TCM philosophy of syndrome differentiation and personalized treatment, transforming passive reading into an engaging learning experience that bridges tradition with modern interactivity.

5. Fourth, Technology-driven Communication Innovation

5.1. Immersive Experience and Sensory Activation

In innovative dissemination of TCM culture, virtual reality (VR) and augmented reality (AR) technologies function as portals to immersive realms, driving transformative change. Through VR headsets, users transcend time and space, stepping into vivid reimaginations of ancient TCM context—environments where the aroma of medicinal herbs lingers, and historical figures like Hua Tuo (inventor of the Five Animal Qigong) and Li Shizhen (author of *Compendium of Materia Medica*) materialize as interactive guides. Within these herb-scented virtual realms, users engage in dialogues about the nuances of the Five Animal Exercises or listen to Li Shizhen recount the decades-long journey of compiling his monumental herbal encyclopedia. This transcendent, narrative-driven immersion allows audiences to witness millennia of

TCM evolution not as static history, but as a living, experiential legacy.

AR technology, meanwhile, transforms abstract TCM concepts—once obscure to outsiders—into tangible, interactive experiences. It projects luminous meridians onto 3D anatomical models, animating the body's energy pathways and making acupoint networks visually intelligible. The 'AR TCM Garden' application exemplifies this innovation by scanning real-world plants with a smartphone, through which users will unlock layered digital overlays that reveal each herb's medicinal properties, cultural significance, and clinical applications. A common mugwort plant, for instance, instantly reveals its dual role in Dragon Boat Festival traditions (as a parasite-repellent) and TCM therapy (as a warming agent to dispel cold and activate meridians). Blending the physical and digital, such interactive encounters break conventional learning paradigms and infuse discovery and delight into the educational process. For global audiences, this sensory engagement dissolves intellectual barriers, enabling them to experience TCM's holistic wisdom through intuitive, body-centered understanding rather than purely theoretical knowledge.

5.2. Gamified Interaction and Participatory Upgrades

Integrating TCM knowledge into gaming experiences offers an engaging way to connect with audiences. In TCM Formula Puzzle, players assume the role of a TCM apprentice, diagnosing virtual patients and selecting herbal formulas from a digital pharmacopeia, each choice requiring strategic application of TCM principles. The TCM Clinic Simulation app lets users step into the role of physicians, guiding them through the full diagnostic process of observation, auscultation, inquiry, pulse-taking, and prescription to experience TCM's clinical depth in a virtual setting. These games offer more than entertainment; their built-in social sharing features turn players into cultural ambassadors for secondary dissemination. Upon completing challenges, users can share achievements on social platforms, sparking curiosity and inviting others to explore TCM.

Lightweight platforms like WeChat Mini Programs and H5 pages further facilitate engagement through features such as Daily Health Challenges and Acupoint Check-ins delivering bite-sized TCM wellness tips during daily routines—morning commutes or lunch breaks—making health knowledge accessible in fragmented moments. By lowering participation barriers, these tools weave TCM culture into the fabric of everyday life, fostering habitual engagement and organic dissemination.

5.3. Data-Driven Precision and Hyper-Personalized Outreach

Big data analytics serve as a strategic compass, refining the dissemination of TCM culture through granular audience insights. By analyzing browsing patterns, search queries, and engagement metrics, it detects nuanced regional and demographic preferences. While Western audiences often prioritize TCM's efficacy in managing chronic conditions, Southeast Asian communities show greater interest in medicinal cuisine that blends flavor with wellness. These insights fuel hyper-personalized content strategies. While fitness enthusiasts receive targeted guides on TCM rehabilitation from acupoint massage for post-workout recovery to herbal poultices for inflammation, new mothers access curated postpartum care packages, integrating dietary therapy and TCM physiotherapy protocols. Advanced algorithmic models further enhance relevance by anticipating trends and catalyzing conversations. As seasons shift, the system triggers proactive health bulletins such as winter-focused guides on nourishing the kidneys with black sesame or summer tips for cooling the body with mung bean decoctions, ensuring TCM wisdom aligns with real-time wellness needs. This data-driven precision not only bridges cultural divides but also transforms TCM from a niche interest into a contextually resonant lifestyle resource, guaranteeing its principles reach the right audiences with tailored, timely relevance.

6. Deepening International Cooperation and Exchanges

6.1. Resource Integration and Global Building

A core strategy for advancing TCM's global footprint lies in forging strategic partnerships with overseas mainstream

media and cultural institutions. Collaborations with global influencers like the BBC to produce high-quality documentaries on TCM culture can harness their editorial excellence and worldwide distribution networks, transforming complex TCM philosophies into universally resonant narratives. Partnerships with tech titans such as Google and Amazon enable the seamless embedding of TCM knowledge within smart health ecosystems, such as AI-driven wellness apps that recommend herbal remedies or acupressure routines tailored to users' biometrics, blending ancient wisdom with cutting-edge technology. This dual focus on resource synergization and brand elevation achieves twofold objectives. It demystifies cultural nuances for overseas audiences through locally relevant storytelling while leveraging partners' domain expertise to elevate content excellence and authenticity.

A key strategy also entails jointly hosting the International Forum on TCM Culture, convening global scholars to explore pathways for cultural dissemination, and establishing a globally authoritative platform for dialogue.

6.2. Event Curation and Immersive Scenography

International cultural exchange initiatives serve as dynamic platforms to showcase the charm of TCM. Online, the “Cloud TCM Expo” can be launched, featuring 3D virtual galleries displaying ancient medical scrolls, rare herbal specimens, and interactive demos of pulse diagnosis. This digital showcase transcends geographical limits, allowing global audiences to zoom into the intricate illustrations of Huangdi Neijing (Yellow Emperor's Inner Canon) or virtually grind herbs using animated replicas of traditional mortars.

Offline, partnerships with international museums can birth exhibitions like “A Millennium of Fragrant Medicine,” which blends artifact displays such as Ming Dynasty acupuncture needles and Qing Dynasty herb scales with hands-on experiences, like herb-picking simulations or cupping therapy workshops. These activities not only enhance cultural influence but also break down barriers of ‘cultural otherness’ by creating engaging scenarios, allowing TCM to truly integrate into global cultural dialogues.

6.3. Talent Cultivation and Ecosystem Development

Professional talents are the core driving force behind the international dissemination of TCM. To strengthen this foundation, it is essential to establish an integrated industry-education-research-application (IER&A) training framework. Universities should offer bilingual dual-degree programs in TCM culture and cross-cultural communication, nurturing professionals proficient in both classical TCM theory and international communication. Enterprises and institutions, meanwhile, must provide global internship programs, allowing students to hone cross-cultural communication skills in real-world clinical or educational settings—whether assisting in TCM clinics abroad or designing cultural engagement campaigns for international audiences. Complementing this, an international talent exchange network should be established, featuring curated masterclasses and collaborative workshops where practitioners share best practices in cultural translation, digital outreach, and evidence-based advocacy. By fostering a self-sustaining ecosystem that merges academic rigor, practical experience, and technological innovation, TCM can cultivate a new generation of ambassadors capable of bridging cultural divides. This approach ensures that TCM's wisdom evolves dynamically—rooted in tradition yet adaptable to global trends—while creating a virtuous cycle of expertise sharing, innovation, and intercultural dialogue. Ultimately, such efforts transform talent development from a standalone initiative into a catalyst for TCM's enduring relevance in 21st-century global health and culture.

7. Epilogue

New media platforms have unlocked unprecedented opportunities for the global dissemination of TCM culture, offering innovative pathways to bridge cultural divides and amplify its timeless wisdom. By curating a multifaceted content ecosystem, streamlining cross-channel integration, pioneering engagement methodologies, and deepening international collaboration, TCM's global communication efficacy can be exponentially enhanced. These strategies not only digitize

TCM's heritage but also reframe it as a dynamic, accessible component of contemporary global culture.

As new media technologies continue to evolve and intercultural exchanges intensify, the international dissemination of TCM must remain agile and adaptive. Future efforts should prioritize continuous innovation in communication strategies—leveraging emerging technologies like AI-driven translation tools and metaverse-based cultural hubs—to decode TCM's complex philosophies for diverse audiences. Ultimately, the journey of TCM's global embrace lies in its ability to balance tradition with innovation, rootedness with reach. As it continues to permeate international consciousness, TCM is poised not only to enrich global health literacy but also to serve as a bridge for civilizational dialogue—nurturing a world where its wisdom contributes meaningfully to the shared tapestry of human wellness and cultural diversity.

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