

China Chic in Full Swing, Integration for Greater Brilliance: A Postprint on New Media Technology Empowering Henan Satellite TV' s “Chinese Festivals” Series

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Abstract

As an integral component of the Chinese nation' s long-standing historical culture, traditional Chinese festivals constitute a precious spiritual and cultural heritage formed through the long-term accumulation and condensation of Chinese national history and culture. Concurrently, with the progress of the times and the development of science and technology, people' s lives are increasingly inseparable from new media technology; particularly in the transformation and development of traditional media, the application of new media technology has played a crucial role. Rooted in traditional culture and making full use of new media technology, the “2021 Henan Satellite TV Chinese Festival Series” presented to audiences the cultural connotations of traditional Chinese festivals through entirely new artistic forms, fully utilizing mobile-first, convergent communication, interconnectivity, and advanced video technologies, grounded in Central Plains culture and Yellow River culture, and adhering to the principle of “content is king.” This series highlighted the hierarchical and spatial transformations of stage and aesthetic layouts, with technology empowerment achieving the perfect integration of virtual scenes and real stages, employing entirely new modes of expression and technical means for packaging to excavate the cultural connotations of traditional Chinese festivals for audiences, further driving a wave of cultural root-seeking, promoting Central Plains culture, and strengthening the cultural confidence of the Chinese nation.

Full Text

Introduction

President Xi Jinping emphasized during the 23rd collective study session of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee: “We must strengthen

archaeological work and historical research, bringing to life the artifacts housed in museums, the heritage displayed across the vast land, and the texts written in ancient books, thereby enriching the nourishment of history and culture for the entire society.” This directive calls for creative works rooted in Chinese traditional festivals and culture, vigorously promoting the inheritance, innovation, and development of excellent traditional Chinese culture, further protecting precious historical and cultural heritage, strengthening cultural confidence, and activating the vitality of excellent traditional Chinese culture with the innovative spirit of the new era.

In response, Henan TV launched its “Chinese Traditional Festival Series” in 2021. Beginning with the “2021 Henan Spring Festival Gala,” which broke into the mainstream with the theme “Trendy and Unstoppable, Hello Ox,” followed by the equally explosive “Museum Lantern Festival Night,” and subsequently the continuously popular “Qingming Wonderful Tour” and “Dragon Boat Festival Wonderful Tour,” these programs have sparked nationwide discussion and netizen acclaim. The “Tang Palace Girls” and “Goddess Luo” characters derived from the shows have been widely disseminated. The “Dragon Boat Festival Wonderful Tour” alone has garnered over 5 billion views across the internet, with the hashtag #HenanTVIsKillingIt reaching 1 billion views within 24 hours of a single topic’s launch, and #DragonBoatFestivalWonderfulTour amassing 580 million views. Major central media outlets including People’s Daily, Xinhua News Agency, Guangming Daily, and China Daily have repeatedly shared the content, while the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Central Committee of the Communist Youth League have also voiced their support. Xinhua News Agency simultaneously published on Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter, and overseas editions of People’s Daily TikTok and China News Service have synchronized their promotion, with overseas cultural centers of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism forwarding and praising the content, showcasing the beauty of Chinese culture to international audiences. Central-level media attention and recommendations have reached hundreds of millions of users, triggering secondary waves of discussion.

1. Traditional Culture as the Eternal Source of Creation

Excellent traditional Chinese culture constitutes the spiritual lifeblood of the Chinese nation, while cultural confidence represents an inexhaustible source for a country’s development and the most dynamic spiritual foundation for a people. As media professionals on the front lines of cultural communication, we constantly contemplate how to inherit and promote traditional culture and how to express it in a fashionable manner. When planning Henan’s 2021 Spring Festival Gala, we established the creative principle of “contemporary expression of Chinese civilization,” drawing upon the profound Yellow River culture and integrating symbols of “Homecoming to Henan” throughout the creative process using contemporary new media technology. After countless brainstorming sessions, repeated rejections and reconstructions, we gradually formed the youthful

“Trendy and Unstoppable, Hello Ox” gala concept.

The entire series is deeply rooted in China’s excellent traditional culture, firmly grasping the core concept of “contemporary expression of Chinese civilization.” From the viral “Tang Palace Night Banquet” that made national treasures popular, to the imagination-defying “Museum Lantern Festival Night,” to the cultural innovation treasure hunt of “Qingming Wonderful Tour” and the visual feast of “Dragon Boat Festival Wonderful Tour,” Henan TV continuously employs internet thinking patterns and technology empowerment to tell compelling stories of Chinese civilization. Currently, Henan Spring Festival Gala has exceeded 5 billion views across the internet, securing 18 national trending topics, occupying Douyin’s hot list for four consecutive days, receiving Bilibili’s opening screen recommendation, and repeatedly topping various charts. Lantern Festival Wonderful Tour has garnered over 3 billion views and engagements, Qingming Wonderful Tour has surpassed 3 billion, and Dragon Boat Festival Wonderful Tour has broken 5 billion views.

In the 2021 Henan Spring Festival Gala, besides the widely celebrated dance “Tang Palace Night Banquet,” the Tai Chi program “Within Heaven and Earth” also captivated audiences. In this performance, martial artists wearing space-suits practiced Tai Chi, creatively integrating elements such as the observatory, armillary sphere, and rocket launch. Netizens praised the program as “stunning and wildly creative.” Viewers could see that all elements were drawn from traditional Chinese culture, with minor fusions triggering contemplation about space science and awakening love and confidence for traditional culture. The program “Qingming Wonderful Tour” artfully expressed the connotations of the Qingming festival through the virtual characters of Tang Palace Girls, employing motion capture combined with animation to connect various segments through the logic of a “wonderful tour.” Through numerous subtle details, the program gently conveyed traditional culture, covering poetry, lectures, book displays, Hanfu, tea ceremonies, and Henan’s numerous historical sites. Netizens marveled that “every frame of the gala is wallpaper-beautiful,” “rich in content yet entertaining, with fresh combinations of culture and trend,” and “after watching Qingming Wonderful Tour, I can’t wait for Henan TV’s Dragon Boat Festival and Mid-Autumn galas.”

2. Integrated Innovation Creates a Central Plains Cultural 名片

If the 2021 Henan Spring Festival Gala remained a traditional studio-based performance, then “Museum Lantern Festival Night” represented a completely new integrated innovation. This program featured no fixed sets, instead employing visual technology to create a form of time-space travel and dimensional intersection. Using the resurrection and journey of Tang Palace Girls through Henan Museum’s collections as the narrative thread, the program led audiences through Henan Museum, Millennium City Park, Dengfeng Observatory, and other locations, weaving through opera, lantern riddles, martial arts, song

and dance performances. These diverse locations not only added vitality and depth to the program but also showcased the profound Central Plains culture to national audiences and netizens. By abandoning traditional host transitions and instead using the virtual-real combination of Tang Palace Girls for scene changes, the program satisfied netizens' eager anticipation for these characters while creating greater artistic conception, fashion sense, technological feel, and internet-native appeal.

Unlike "Museum Lantern Festival Night," "Qingming Wonderful Tour" featured more diverse settings, with eight programs filmed across Zhengzhou, Kaifeng, Dengfeng, Anyang, Xinyang, and other locations, taking audiences on a comprehensive tour of the Central Plains' magnificent landscapes through the camera lens. The narrative connection was achieved through the journey of the two-dimensional "Tang Palace Girls," who traveled from the "Along the River During Qingming Festival" painting into the Northern Song capital of Kaifeng to experience the elegance of Song culture. The song "Qingming" instantly immerses viewers in the painting, allowing them to feel the bustling scene of Bianliang captured by Zhang Zeduan. At the Songyang Academy, one of the four great ancient academies, viewers encounter "Scholar with Paper Fan." The girls dance through Shaolin Temple, Songyue Temple Pagoda, Zhongyue Temple, and Laojun Mountain, conveying the meanings of Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism. Through comic book-style transitions, they arrive at Yue Fei Temple in Tangyin, Anyang, experiencing the heroic spirit of "Loyalty to the Country." Netizens commented: "Life has two impulses: an impromptu journey and returning home anytime," and "Only after traveling across the country do we discover the beauty of our hometown—this is our root."

3. Technology Empowers New Program Formats

The consistent creative philosophy has been to "give technology thought and soul to visuals," achieving "aesthetically advanced" results through technology-enabled culture. To maximize space utilization, the production team employed the "red lantern" as the primary element representing traditional Chinese culture, using a combination of "mechanical lifting devices + mobile screens + hoisting" to divide the stage into performance areas of different dimensions, coordinated with lighting, high-definition screens, and other dynamic visual elements to create tremendous possibilities for stage presentation. The integration of wire stunts and AR visual effects extended the space, creating scenic and dramatic effects that delivered rich viewing experiences and visual impact.

During the production of the 2021 Henan Spring Festival Gala, 5G+AR technology expanded the temporal and spatial transformations of the entire stage design, achieving immersive experiences. "Tang Palace Night Banquet" utilized 70% post-production effects to create a museum 奇妙 night sensation, bringing the "Tang Palace Girls" to life in the museum. They traveled through "A Thousand Miles of Rivers and Mountains," playing among the Fuhao Owl Zun, Lotus and Crane Square Pot, Jiahu Bone Flute, and Tang Tri-color Glazed Ceram-

ics, while leading audiences into the prosperous Sui and Tang dynasties, truly bringing museum artifacts to life.

In the Lantern Festival Wonderful Tour, technological means enabled the “Tang Palace Girls” to instantly travel to Luoyang’s Yingtian Gate, unfurling a dream-like “Prosperous Tang” scroll. “Dou Zhuan Xing Yi,” performed by 400+ martial artists from Dengfeng Shaolin Tagou Martial Arts School, used technological packaging against a cosmic starry background at Dengfeng Observatory, demonstrating the unity of heaven and humanity with magnificent momentum, showcasing the heroic and united spirit of Chinese sons and daughters. “Qingming Wonderful Tour” demonstrated even greater technological power. The Tang Palace Girls were upgraded to two-dimensional virtual characters, leading audiences on a wonderful tour through time and space across the Central Plains to experience the charm of nature and culture. This narrative continued the “time travel + real scenes” logic, employing more sophisticated AR technology in many segments and introducing the two-dimensional virtual character “Tang Xiaomei” for the first time. The character was created using motion capture technology to capture actors’ movements and computer synthesis, representing high technological sophistication. Observant netizens noted: “This time the Tang Palace Girls use 3D models, and besides cloth simulation, I seriously suspect they used live-action motion capture—the dance movements are incredibly fluid.”

4. Embracing New Media Strengthens Cultural Confidence

The phenomenon of these programs sweeping the internet can be attributed to changes in distribution methods. During initial broadcast, new media platforms aired the content 30 minutes before Henan TV’s broadcast. Through high-density, high-frequency broadcasting on the large screen and deep cooperation with Kuaishou on the small screen, the team concentrated highlights for editing and distributed across multiple platforms including Weibo, Kuaishou, Douyin, Bilibili, Toutiao, and Elephant News client. This comprehensive new media distribution ensured everyone could access the wonderful programs, achieving maximized, three-dimensional dissemination.

The “Dragon Boat Festival Wonderful Tour” adopted an open production mindset, encouraging netizen participation and interaction. The team collected names for the four Tang Palace Girls from across the internet and recruited amateur actors, creating effective pre-heating. The results proved this approach correct. The program is rooted in the vast Central Plains, deeply excavating Henan’s cultural treasures and embedding cultural genes into content innovation. It transforms millennia of accumulated excellent traditional culture—from music, chess, calligraphy, and painting to poetry and literature—into visible, tangible, and experiential converged media products. Through unique aesthetic capabilities, it combines traditional culture with modern art, using cross-temporal conversion, two-dimensional connection, web drama + web variety, and high-tech video technology to create visual spectacles. Cultural treasures like “Along

the River During Qingming Festival,” “A Thousand Miles of Rivers and Mountains,” the Lotus and Crane Square Pot, Fuhao Owl Zun, Jiahu Bone Flute, and “Rhapsody on the Goddess of the Luo River” have come to life, transforming heavy, ancient, and distant historical and cultural images into vivid, interesting “new national trends” beloved by younger generations, forming a cultural phenomenon.

Cao Zhi’ s “Rhapsody on the Goddess of the Luo River” provided a broad user base for the underwater dance program “Prayer” in the Dragon Boat Festival Wonderful Tour. Upon broadcast, netizens immediately associated it with the “Goddess of the Luo River,” renaming the program “Luo River Goddess Water Dance” and exclaiming: “The Luo River dance is absolutely stunning!” “Am I seeing a deity?” The entire internet began circulating Cao Zhi’ s description: “Her form, soaring lightly as a startled swan, gracefully as a wandering dragon ...”

5. Institutional Reform Provides Momentum for Breaking Circles

Henan Radio and Television’ s innovative institutional mechanisms provide solid support for its programs’ breakthrough success. The station proposed the development concept of “integrated communication, transformation development, useful and effective,” constructing a modern communication pattern of “one end, one center, one cloud, one platform.” This has built a production camp that aggregates resources including performance venues, planning and promotion, director teams, lighting and stage design, 4K high-definition broadcast vehicles, post-production video editing, and brand promotion—forming a multi-media communication-capable production force suited to the new era.

Through creating these four programs, we have deeply experienced the mainstream values and aesthetics of young people. The Central Plains traditional culture in the programs has received praise, and the application of technology empowerment and new media technology has gained netizen recognition, further strengthening our confidence in making the dissemination and promotion of traditional culture and Yellow River culture our future creative path. The institutional reform has transformed promotional resources from “single combat” to “collective battle” across the entire station, forming a complete promotion mechanism and process with channel resonance, content co-creation, data sharing, mutual traffic guidance, and complete linkages, exponentially amplifying communication effects and catalyzing breakthroughs from niche to mainstream.

The creative approach of the Chinese Festival series has no fixed, single, traditional TV gala format. Instead, it centers on Chinese traditional culture and Yellow River culture, employing new media technology for innovative expression. By investing effort in creativity and details, focusing on innovative program expression, and using national treasures, national styles, and national trends, the series allows netizens to deeply experience the profound historical culture of the

Central Plains and the visual feast empowered by technology, thereby strengthening the cultural confidence of vast audiences. This is the internal reason why these programs have earned netizen praise and recognition.

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Note: Figure translations are in progress. See original paper for figures.

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