

Deep Interconnection and Dissemination of Culture and Tourism Under Technological Logic: Reflections on Shaping the “Hometown Henan” Cultural Brand (Postprint)

Authors: Li Na

Date: 2023-10-08T00:00:00+00:00

Abstract

“All technologies possess an alchemical nature.” [1] Mobile Internet, big data, cloud computing, and other new media technologies have not only subverted the information production and dissemination models of traditional media, but are also dissolving industry boundaries and driving social transformation. For the tourism industry, the development of new technologies has driven innovation in regional image promotion models, with UGC content that highlights interactive experiences and individuality gradually replacing PGC dissemination within the official discourse of institutional media. As a core element of interactive experience, the excavation of cultural cores has become a key initiative for provinces to develop all-for-one tourism, promote deep interconnection between culture and tourism, and enhance brand image.

Full Text

Deep Interconnection and Communication of Culture and Tourism under the Logic of Technology: Reflections on the Shaping of the “Home Henan” Cultural Brand

Abstract: “All technologies possess the nature of alchemy.” [1] New media technologies such as mobile internet, big data, and cloud computing have not only subverted the information production and dissemination models of traditional media but are also dissolving industry boundaries and driving social transformation. For the tourism industry, technological development has spurred innovation in regional image promotion models, with UGC content that emphasizes interactive experiences and individuality gradually replacing PGC communication in the official discourse of institutional media. As a core element of interactive experience, the excavation of cultural 内核 has become a key initiative for

provinces to develop all-for-one tourism, promote deep interconnection between culture and tourism, and enhance brand image.

Keywords: cultural memory; new media logic; ritual communication; discursive turn

CLC Number: G206

Document Code: A

Article ID: 1671-0134(2019)01-088-03

DOI: 10.19483/j.cnki.11-4653/n.2019.01.022

Author: Li Na

In 2012, the Henan Provincial Tourism Bureau introduced the brand concept of “Spiritual Hometown, Home Henan,” gradually bringing the term “Home Henan” into public view as a slogan and new direction for Henan’s tourism development. That same year, a series of “Home Henan” scenic promotional videos produced by CCTV Golden Bridge Advertising aired during prime time on multiple CCTV channels, with renowned Henan tourist attractions such as Yuntai Mountain, Shaolin Temple, Longmen Grottoes, Yin Ruins, Wanxian Mountain, Chongdugou, and Jigong Mountain becoming ambassadors for the “Home Henan” brand image. However, these promotional videos focused primarily on the beauty of natural landscapes—mountains, rivers, and scenery—while rarely presenting Henan’s unique customs and folk culture from historical and cultural perspectives. This easily created a one-sided perception among external audiences, simplistically equating “Home Henan” with “tourism advertising” and overlooking the cultural core contained within the brand. Therefore, this paper takes the “Home Henan” brand as a case study to explore the importance of cultural experience excavation and cultural atmosphere shaping for regional brands under the logic of technological evolution, and to identify pathways for the deep interconnection and symbiosis of culture and tourism.

1. The Social Culture and Collective Memory of “Home”

“Family culture is the gene of Chinese culture.” [2] For every Chinese person, home is both a place of physical shelter and a spiritual habitat. In this new era of technological development and social transformation, the cultural core of “Home Henan” is rich and multifaceted: it encompasses temporal memory, spatial production, and emotional attachment.

First, as a spatial and geographical reference, “home” represents the cognitive understanding of where Henan people call “home” and “root.” “Home” is the “old root” —the yellow earth cultivated by generations of rural people, the “old city walls” where urban dwellers live. Under this geographical and spatial orientation, initial villages and communities emerged, forming Henan people’s cognitive understanding of “home” and regional belonging. People built bridges of communication, eliminated inner isolation and estrangement, and from this familiarity, trust was born and memory was created—culture formed here. “Home” has

become a cultural symbol with local and regional characteristics, giving rise to a cultural psychology: localism and root-kinship complex. “My hometown…” has become one of the most commonly used expressions among Henan people.

Second, in today’ s accelerated pace of life, new phenomena such as high-speed rail, highways, and high-rise buildings constitute modern people’ s contemporary cognition. China’ s social development has entered a new stage. Rapid urbanization means accelerated population mobility and outflow. Communication and contact between people become “functional, superficial, and depersonalized.” The lack of shared emotions deepens the gap between individuals. As Simmel put it, “people feel nowhere as isolated and lost as in the metropolitan crowd.” [3] Meanwhile, family concepts have undergone dramatic changes, with space’ s influence on domestic life becoming increasingly prominent, even dominating and shaping the family. The size of living space has become an external representation of socioeconomic status, establishing a subtle yet inevitable connection between happiness and square footage. Imagination of living space both motivates people’ s work and reveals their dissatisfaction with reality. Emotional alienation and present anxiety are dissolving the emotional and social significance of “home.” “Home Henan” strips the connotation of “home” from its realistic context, reshaping people’ s emotional cognition and sense of belonging toward “home.”

Third, Henan is a renowned historical and cultural province in China. Among China’ s eight ancient capitals, four are in Henan: Kaifeng (capital of eight dynasties), Luoyang (capital of nine dynasties), Anyang (capital of seven dynasties), and Zhengzhou (Shang Dynasty capital). The Shaolin Temple, a world cultural heritage site, is hailed as the “Number One Temple Under Heaven.” Chenjiagou in Jiaozuo is the birthplace of Chen-style Tai Chi. The “Yellow Emperor Hometown Ancestor Worship Ceremony” in Xinzheng is listed as a national intangible cultural heritage. Oracle bone script, the earliest Chinese writing system, was unearthed in Anyang. From a historical and cultural perspective, “Home Henan” is no longer merely the geographical outline of a spatial reference; its cultural connotation is profound, representing the expression of Chinese history and civilization and carrying the “home-country sentiment” of Chinese people worldwide.

Furthermore, over the four decades of reform and opening up, Chinese society has developed rapidly, with countless new things and high technologies emerging and people’ s lives undergoing tremendous changes. In this new social life and media environment, “home” has become a nostalgic symbol, carrying people’ s memories of the past and recollections of youth. “Home Henan” is both a microcosm of Henan’ s development and transformation in social, economic, political, and cultural fields, and the collective memory of every Henan person’ s birth, growth, life, and work.

2. Ritual Communication and the Spatial Reproduction of “Home”

“Rituals and their contained symbols are crucial because individuals become individuals, societies become societies, and nations become nations not naturally, but through cultural and psychological identification, which in turn is created through the operation of symbols and rituals.” [4] For “Home Henan,” as a cultural symbol, its “signified” has dual references to history and localism, while its “signifier” is equally rich and diverse: root-ancestor culture represented by the Yellow Emperor, ancient capital culture centered on Kaifeng, Luoyang, Anyang, and Zhengzhou, Tai Chi culture centered on Jiaozuo, Zen and martial arts culture represented by Shaolin, Chinese character culture centered on Anyang, Song culture represented by the Millennium City Park (Qingming Shanghe Garden), and more. These are all constituent elements of the “Home Henan” brand. However, they are mostly fixed and static, offering good viewing quality and historical reflection but suffering from low interactive participation. Coupled with limitations of physical space, these cultural elements face numerous restrictions in “going out.”

James W. Carey proposed in his book *Communication as Culture* that “the origin and highest purpose of communication is not the transmission of intellectual information, but the construction and maintenance of an orderly, meaningful cultural world that can be used to govern and accommodate human behavior.” [5] From this perspective, rituals enable people to complete the production and sharing of meaning through participation, achieving emotional resonance and identity construction, which can provide reference for the static culture of “Home Henan.” Through the participation and interaction of ritual communication, “activating the static with the dynamic” can unleash the enormous vitality and charm contained in its rich historical and cultural heritage.

Specifically, centered on the “Along the River During the Qingming Festival” painting and the Millennium City Park, typical events in Song culture can be excavated for activities such as Song lyrics singing games and folk stunt experiences. These can also be associated with the significant ritualistic occasion of Spring Festival, presenting Northern Song festival scenes through situational reenactment and interactive experiences. By observing the past to reflect on the present, this enhances the ritual sense, participation, and identity of the culture. For instance, “Wang Yuanwai’ s Daughter’ s Marriage Selection” could be partnered with China’ s traditional “Qixi Festival” (Valentine’ s Day), leveraging the trend of “park matchmaking corners” across the country to launch a series of activities themed around love and marriage. Similarly, Yue Fei’ s loyalty to the country can align with Mother’ s Day in May to excavate themes of family education and parent-child experiences, or be associated with National Day for a series of activities like “My Chinese Heart.” Through universal participation, experience, and co-creation, this drives the meaning production of “Home Henan.” In the process of ritual communication, tourists’ active participation in dissemination and sharing can in turn promote cross-regional and cross-cultural communication and exchange of the “Home Henan” regional brand, achieving

spatial reproduction and expansion of meaning.

3. Technology Logic + Human-Centered Approach: The Discursive Turn in Telling Henan' s Stories

“All technologies possess the nature of alchemy. Whenever society develops technologies that extend itself, all other functions in society must change to adapt to the form of that technology.” [6] Mobile internet, big data, cloud computing, and artificial intelligence have not only subverted the information production and dissemination models of traditional media but are also dissolving industry boundaries and driving social transformation.

3.1 Technology in Tourism: Mutual Construction in Benign Interaction Driven by technology, official websites, Weibo accounts, and WeChat public accounts have gradually become standard configurations for tourism brands. Among Henan' s tourism and cultural brands, scenic areas such as Millennium City Park, Longmen Grottoes, and Yantai Mountain have established their own official websites, Weibo, and WeChat platforms. However, examining the content production and distribution of these self-owned media platforms, taking Millennium City Park as an example, its official website, Weibo, and public account operate independently with weak coordination and interaction between content. The official website serves as a window for the scenic area' s visual image communication, with promotional videos on the homepage; the public account irregularly publishes activity introductions such as “The Dream of the Eastern Capital in the Great Song” performances, interactive experiences, and online stores; while most Weibo content introduces glimpses of life and work in the scenic area. On one hand, this reflects clear functional positioning of their self-owned media; on the other hand, under the wave of media convergence, the deep integration of information interconnectivity and technology has dissolved media boundaries and knowledge boundaries. Therefore, media convergence is not only about traditional institutional media; for tourism scenic areas and service industries, as new media institutions, only by improving and optimizing information resource allocation and establishing a benign interactive media mechanism can they continuously enhance their information dissemination influence.

Furthermore, examining the operation status of self-owned media across various “Home Henan” scenic areas, the volume, frequency, reposts, and comments of information releases are generally low. Even 5A-level scenic areas like Millennium City Park and Shaolin Temple cannot escape the “polarization” situation: high scenic area reputation but extremely low media attention and influence. The reasons are threefold: First, the existing brand effect and influence of scenic areas, often generated through interpersonal communication and knowledge experience in daily life, drives tourism behavior based on existing impressions of the “brand,” thus requiring less attention to or consumption of media information or advertising. Second, market dilution and influence of

platform-based media. Tourism information platforms such as Qunar, Ctrip, and Mafeng have accumulated considerable popularity and attention through extensive advertising and marketing. These internet companies already possess the attributes of platform-based media (institutions) and, unlike scenic area-owned media, have more market-oriented operational concepts. Through rich activity promotions, they have gathered a large and diverse range of tourism resources, with technical and team support in algorithms and precision marketing, better capturing consumer preferences. Consequently, they have become primary channels for young people to obtain travel information, making it difficult for emerging scenic area-owned media to surpass platform media influence in information release and interactive marketing. Third, content production models and concepts of scenic area-owned media have certain problems, still constrained by traditional thinking. On one hand, internal media resources are scattered; although scenic areas have launched new media communication with official websites and Weibo platforms, their content production remains linear and mechanical with weak information linkage and interaction. On the other hand, due to geographical separation, tourism resources, and market space differences, scenic area self-media have weak awareness of competition and cooperation, with limited collaboration with local media. Their “product awareness” and “media awareness” are not clearly defined, and their thinking in “new media logic” needs improvement. From this perspective, it is necessary to transform traditional information communication thinking, enhance content interactivity and personalization, strengthen information appeal; intensify cooperation with platform-based media to expand information distribution channels and dissemination scope, diffusing brand influence; and partner with local media to shape scenic area reputation and credibility.

3.2 People-Centered Stance: “Telling Ordinary People’s Own Stories”

From the perspective of cultural communication carriers, tourism promotional videos broadcast on mainstream media like CCTV and outdoor media (including bus mobile media) collectively convey the visual landscape of Henan’s regional brand image, constituting the official discourse context of the “Home Henan” tourism image. This is called official discourse for two reasons: First, these promotional videos often adopt macro-level narratives, highlighting beautiful mountains, rivers, and natural harmony, while rarely revealing micro-level narratives of ordinary people’s daily lives, resulting in the absence of “Home Henan’s” local flavor and simple living details. Second, compared with tourism promotional videos from other provinces, the “Home Henan” series has not escaped formulaic patterns, presenting a three-part structure of “historical narrative—natural beauty—humanistic atmosphere” before delivering a concluding “slogan” (the “Home Henan” tourism promotion slogan is “Spiritual Hometown, Home Henan”). This slogan, along with frequently broadcast slogans from other provinces during the same period such as “Northern Scenery, Beauty in Heilongjiang,” “Oriental Switzerland, Heavenly Qilian,” “Manchu Charm, Colorful Liaoning,” and “Colorful Guizhou, Most Beautiful Journey,” all adopt parallel structures to create

mutual enhancement of phonetic effects, thereby improving the readability and dissemination of advertising slogans, but also reducing their distinctiveness. Additionally, formulaic filming techniques—using long shots and panoramic views to present picturesque grandeur, using sonorous voiceovers and melodious music to convey historical weight, employing aerial photography, speed ramping, and extreme close-ups of human actions—effectively convey “values” and complete the dual construction of political and social values in promotional videos. However, due to formulaic uniformity and the “lofty” narrative of official discourse, the personalized characteristics of “Home Henan” as a regional cultural brand are diluted.

Moreover, in the evolution of technological logic, smartphones and mobile internet have enabled the redistribution of social information resources, gradually dismantling the information dominance of institutional media, and mature, pluralistic, and open socialized communication networks have emerged, ushering in an era of “everyone is media.” As technical barriers gradually dissolve, visual landscapes become more accessible, and dissemination channels more diversified, enabling everyone to immerse themselves in the charm of image symbols and participate in the production, creation, and dissemination of their own spectacles. The rapid rise of short video platforms such as Douyin, Kuaishou, and Huoshan has accelerated the popularization and democratization of visual culture. “Image communication has become the most indispensable daily life resource of this era, an inescapable symbolic situation for people, and has become a cultural ritual.” [7] Propelled by short videos, Xi’an, Chongqing, and Xining have become “viral” cities, with attractions like the Terracotta Warriors, Hongyadong, and Chaka Salt Lake achieving organic integration of online marketing and offline experience through topic bundling and deep integration with urban culture.

Compared with official tourism promotional videos costing millions to produce, short videos are created through UGC by netizens, then released on social media platforms and quickly disseminated through diversified communication methods such as point-to-point, point-to-face, and face-to-face, creating a snowball effect. This content production method and dissemination path both dilutes the political seriousness of official propaganda and bridges the distance between cultural brands and ordinary people. For “Home Henan,” “home” carries people’s emotional belonging toward “home” in a “weak ties” society, yet this emotional appeal is ignored in official discourse propaganda. Therefore, in the mobile internet era, following new media logic, opening up folk discourse communication, and optimizing short video marketing for the “Home Henan” cultural matrix are key pathways to promote the integration of culture and tourism and enhance cultural experiences.

“The internet, as a ‘high-dimensional medium’ different from traditional media, has changed the previous social communication pattern based on ‘institutions,’ replacing it with social communication based on ‘individuals’ as the basic unit.” [8] Individuals are activated as communication subjects, “public opinion from

the masses breaks the order of mainstream society, breaks the constraints of the 'extroverted' personality of self-protection, thereby causing public opinion to present bottom-up transformation."It can be said that in the network context, on one hand, the existence of information cascades strengthens people's emotional biases, making "wrong and harmful views on the internet not only spread rapidly through easy forwarding but also gain credibility through frequent forwarding." [9] On the other hand, the "spiral of silence" has shifted toward antagonism and criticism, driving public opinion toward complexity and unpredictability. In February 2017, the official Weibo account of Lijiang Old Town fell into a public opinion crisis due to inappropriate remarks. As an important Yunnan tourism cultural brand and opinion leader, facing netizens' "complaints," the Lijiang Old Town official Weibo @ 古宣发布 responded with a "verbal battle" retort: "You'd better never come! You're not missed if you're absent!" triggering public attention. This war of words began with Lijiang Old Town's "rip-offs" and "over-commercialization," landing on the loss of cultural essence and lack of cultural connotation. It reflected the pluralistic game of opinions in the internet's "pseudo-environment" and highlighted the urgency and practical necessity of deep integration between culture and tourism in the new media context.

Therefore, for the "Home Henan" regional brand, while optimizing tourism experiences and enhancing cultural quality, it is also necessary to be vigilant about information flow in secondary online spaces, improve its own media literacy with new media logic, cultivate unique and individual self-media "opinion leaders," and enhance and optimize the overall "backstage" image in daily life through good "frontstage" presentation on the internet, gradually guiding public opinion to avoid "backstage" image damage caused by online public opinion ("frontstage"). From this perspective, the Lijiang Old Town "retort gate" incident can serve as a cautionary tale.

References: [1] Marshall McLuhan. *Understanding Media*. Translated by He Daokuan. The Commercial Press.

[2] Chinese Cultural Communication. "Chinese Family Culture." https://www.sohu.com/a/209139630_{676588}

[3] Wang Min' an. *Body, Space and Postmodernity*. Phoenix Media Publishing Group, 2006: 119.

[4] Gao Bingzhong. "Folk Rituals and State Presence." *Peking University Journal (Philosophy and Social Sciences Edition)*, 2001(1): 42-50.

[5] James W. Carey. *Communication as Culture*. Beijing: Huaxia Publishing House.

[6] Marshall McLuhan. *Understanding Media*. Translated by He Daokuan. The Commercial Press.

[7] Wang Changxiao, Ren Yuanyuan, Lu Qiuzhu. "Mobile Online Video: A Socialized Visual Expression." *Radio & TV Journal*, 2017(3).

[8] Yu Guoming, Zhang Chao. "The Era of 'Activated Individuals': Constructing the Communication Ecology under Internet Logic." *Modern Communication*, 2015, 5.

[9] David Weinberger. *Too Big to Know*. Shanxi People's Publishing House, 2014: 378.

(Author Affiliation: Xinlian College, Henan Normal University)

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

Source: ChinaXiv –Machine translation. Verify with original.