

Characteristics, Challenges and Countermeasures of Strengthening International Communication Capacity Building in the New Media Era

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Abstract: *In the new media era, international communication presents the characteristics of diversified communication subjects, fragmented communication content, and interactive communication forms. China has problems in international communication, such as a single communication subject, insufficient communication channels, and lack of innovation in communication forms and content. Based on the many characteristics of new media, China should break the traditional thinking, expand the communication subjects, combine “speaking by oneself” with “speaking by others”, and pay attention to the influence of grassroots communication subjects. It is necessary to broaden the communication channels and build an all-media communication pattern that combines central-level media with social media and short video media. In terms of communication forms, AI, VR and other technologies should be used to enable communication effects, and in terms of communication content, Marxism, the “soul” and the excellent traditional Chinese culture, the “roots”, should not be abandoned. Only in this way can we tell the Chinese story well and show a charming image of China.*

Keywords: New Media Era, International Communication Capabilities.

1. Introduction

At the National Conference on Propaganda, Ideology and Culture [1], China's General Secretary pointed out that efforts should be made to strengthen international communication capabilities and promote exchanges and mutual learning among civilizations. Since the 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, the Party Central Committee with General Secretary Xi Jinping as its core has always placed international communication work in an important position, emphasizing the need to tell China's stories well and spread China's voice well [2]. Storytelling is the best way to communicate internationally [3]. Looking at the international situation in the new era, China's construction of international discourse power has not been smooth sailing. With the improvement of China's comprehensive national strength and international status, some countries in the world are worried that China will follow the path of “a strong country must dominate”. For a time, the “China threat theory” and “China hegemony theory” were rampant. The current US President Biden even proposed the “sharp power theory” at the Munich Security Conference. He claimed that authoritarian countries such as China use people-to-people diplomacy, academic exchanges, media, information technology, political donations, academic funding and other means to influence the politics and public opinion of other countries, but these means do not rely on attraction and persuasion, but on manipulation and coercion. This kind of power, which is neither “soft” nor “hard”, is “sharp power”, that is, the ability to “penetrate and infiltrate the political and information environment of the target country”, like the “tip of a knife” or the “needle of a syringe” [4]. They attempt to use the spread of this theory to counter the influence of Chinese culture and the construction of international discourse power. Faced with a complex international situation and opportunities and challenges in the field of international communication, we should thoroughly study and implement Xi Jinping's cultural thoughts, arm our minds with theory, use theory to guide practice, deepen research on international communication capabilities, and

strive to enhance China's international communication effectiveness in the new media era, and present a credible, lovable and respectable image of China [5].

2. Characteristics of International Communication in the New Media Era

Xi Jinping pointed out: “The world is entering a period of economic development dominated by the information industry. We must seize the opportunity of the integrated development of digitalization, networking and intelligence, and cultivate new momentum with informatization and intelligence as leverage.” [6] New media is a concept that came into being with the development of digital technology and network technology. Compared with traditional media, new media has its own innovations in communication technology and communication forms. In terms of communication technology, it relies on the development of digital technology. In terms of communication forms, new media mainly provides information to users through mobile terminals such as computers and mobile phones. In today's era, we tend to understand “new media” as “new media with digital media as the core”. It is a communication form that provides information and services to users through digital interactive fixed or instant mobile multimedia terminals [7]. Compared with traditional media, new media has many characteristics. Liu Ji believes that the newness of “new media” lies in the four words “fast, accurate, complete and easy” [8]. “Fast” refers to the fast speed of information dissemination, which is one of the biggest characteristics of new media. New media disseminates information through channels such as the Internet and mobile devices, and can disseminate information to audiences around the world in an instant. This rapid dissemination method makes new media a very effective means of propaganda, and also makes news and information more timely and fresh. “Accurate” means that the target users of information are accurate. New media can also use data analysis and accurate push to make information more accurately delivered to the target audience, thereby achieving

more efficient publicity. “All” means that all people can be disseminators of information. New media can allow the audience to participate in the dissemination of information, forming a “national dissemination” situation. For example, on social media platforms, everyone can become a publisher and disseminator of information, interact with other users through likes, comments, forwarding, etc., thereby expanding the scope of information dissemination. “Easy” means that the threshold of new media is low and easy to enter. The low threshold of new media is reflected in its publishing method. Traditional media need to be strictly reviewed and edited before they can be published, while new media can be freely published through online platforms. This free method enables more people to participate in the new media industry and allows more people to understand this industry. The many characteristics of new media have created a new pattern and new changes in international communication.

2.1 The Subjects of International Communication are Becoming Increasingly Diversified

The low threshold of new media and its non-control of time and space have created the diversification of its communication subjects. In the era of traditional media, the communication subjects with radio, television, books and periodicals as the main media have the characteristics of professional practitioners, authoritative and solemn content, and low level of mass participation due to time and space constraints, concentrated resources, high costs and other reasons. However, with the continuous development of new media, everyone can become a publisher and disseminator of information, and the subject of storytelling has been greatly improved in terms of its richness. Whether it is experts and scholars or the people, whether it is celebrities or ordinary people, everyone can tell Chinese stories on new media platforms. The people are no longer just receivers of information, but can also be producers and disseminators of information. Take Li Ziqi as an example. As of December 18, 2023, Li Ziqi has 18 million fans on YouTube, and the number of fans is even comparable to that of CNN. The content she creates is also related to traditional Chinese food culture and Chinese intangible cultural heritage, showing the profoundness of Chinese culture to people all over the world. This is sufficient to prove that even if the communication subject is not an official media with strong financial, material and human resources support, it can still have good communication effectiveness and influence.

In terms of its practical significance, my country can use this feature and trend to further strengthen its international communication capacity building and encourage people from all walks of life to participate in the main body of telling China's story. From the perspective of the subject of communication, my country has good innate advantages in the field of new media. First of all, my country has a large number of Internet users and a very high Internet penetration rate. This advantage has greatly contributed to the diversification of communication subjects, because the advantage of the number of communication subjects is an important basis for spreading China's voice. Secondly, the global Internet coverage and digitalization are also constantly increasing. More people in the world can break the limitations of time and space and use the Internet to understand China's

current situation and listen to China's voice.

2.2 International Communication Content is Becoming Increasingly Fragmented

In the era of traditional media, in order to fully display China's historical context, social value, and development of the times, traditional media usually use professional teams to produce far-reaching masterpieces. These cultural products are mostly presented in the form of books, documentaries, film and television dramas, etc. For example, the large-scale red documentary “Mountains and Rivers Years” has more than 100 episodes, each of which tells 5-6 real historical stories. The documentary shows the glorious years of the 100th anniversary of the founding of the Party, contains precious and real interview materials and historical materials, and uses extremely beautiful lenses to show the magnificence and splendor of the Chinese land while sorting out the historical context. There is no doubt that such a grand masterpiece has great educational significance and historical value, but it does not have a competitive advantage in traffic in the new media era.

In the new media era, as people's work and life pace accelerates, portable mobile terminals such as mobile phones and computers are increasingly replacing newspapers and television, becoming a new “window” for people to obtain information. Internet users can take out their mobile phones to read an article and watch a short video anytime and anywhere, which further leads to the fragmentation and superficiality of people's information reception. In other words, people use fragmented time to browse fragmented information, communicate and comment through mobile smartphones or PC terminals, which is difficult to achieve under the traditional media environment and technical conditions [9]. People are keen to browse those short and eye-catching content, hoping to understand the whole story in the shortest time possible. Based on this feature of new media communication, China should make the communication content as short and concise as possible without giving up traditional communication methods, so as to meet the audience's needs for “fragmented reading”. And put the Chinese road, Chinese theory, Chinese system, Chinese spirit, and Chinese power into it, so that people want to listen, think and gain [10]. Then use shorter content to achieve the communication effect of “four ounces to move a thousand pounds”.

2.3 International Communication is Becoming More Interactive

In the era of traditional media, the transmission and indoctrination of information is one-way, that is, it flows from the source to the receiver. It is difficult for readers or viewers at the receiving end to directly and promptly feedback their opinions and views to the source. Information is hardly added, deleted or changed during its flow, and is also difficult to be affected by the receiver. Traditional media such as newspapers, books, periodicals, and television all have this characteristic.

However, this situation has changed a lot in the new media era. In the 5G era, the circulation of information is faster and more

accurate, which makes it possible for information receivers to directly participate in the process of information dissemination. Video websites, social software, short videos and live broadcast platforms rely heavily on users to create content independently, with high audience participation and frequent interactions, which are typical characteristics of new media [11]. Taking the long video website Bilibili as an example, all videos have the functions of forwarding, commenting, liking, coining and barrage below. Audiences from different time and space backgrounds gather in the cloud to exchange their views on the same video theme and put forward their own opinions. Video creators can obtain new information and audience preferences in the interaction with the audience, provide reference for subsequent creation and accumulate experience. Such interaction is not limited to the communication subject and the audience, but also exists between the audience. Through liking and commenting on each other, the audience can discuss views and share information. In terms of its practical significance, the high interactivity of new media makes it possible to accurately push dissemination content. Different audiences will have different characteristics, preferences and needs due to different reasons such as personality, experience and environment. By analyzing the interactions of target users and inferring based on big data and algorithms, we can push content that suits their interests to users, thereby achieving efficient and targeted communication.

3. Challenges of International Communication in the New Media Era

3.1 Communication Subjects Need to be Discovered and Cultivated Urgently

The construction of China's international communication capacity is an important means to enhance China's influence on the international stage. However, the current international communication subjects in China have unsteady political positions, insufficient capabilities, and low aesthetic tastes, and the country has not made enough efforts to discover and cultivate talents. Cheng Lei, a former CCTV financial reporter, lurked for more than 20 years and illegally provided state secrets to foreign countries, causing China to lose more than 100 billion yuan. As a front-line staff member of international communication, it was precisely because of her unsteady political position and lack of the most basic patriotic feelings that she went to the abyss and went astray. Translators are also an indispensable part of the international communication subject team. "The world is governed by talents." Improving the quality of translation talent training and strengthening the construction of translation talent teams are important cornerstones for promoting the coordinated development of China's foreign translation capabilities and international communication capabilities [12]. However, China's current high-level translators are still rare and scarce talents, especially for the translation of vocabulary related to the sinicization of Marxism, there is still a mismatch between translation ability and its important role. There are also some communication subjects with low aesthetics, using vulgar or bad tastes to attract people's attention. Some anchors even try to gain traffic by "skirting the line". This kind of "ugly-fawning" behavior is not only not conducive to creating a clear network environment, but once it spreads abroad, it

will undoubtedly have a negative impact on China's international image.

3.2 Communication Channels Need to be Consolidated and Expanded

Compared with some developed Western countries, my country's international communication channels are not rich enough and lack diversified communication methods. Its international discourse power still shows a trend of "strong West and weak East".

First, China's international communication mainly relies on traditional media, such as television, radio and newspapers, and the use of new media still needs to be strengthened. There is no doubt that in order to enhance China's international communication capabilities, it is necessary to expand communication channels. In addition to traditional media, new media platforms such as the Internet, social media, and mobile devices should be actively used to convey information to global audiences in a diversified way. Through these new media platforms, the needs and preferences of global audiences can be understood more accurately, so as to carry out more targeted communication. Secondly, China lacks assistance and support for self-media communication channels. Although self-media has developed rapidly in recent years, relevant policy support and financial support have not kept up. This has led to difficulties in the operation of many self-media platforms, making it difficult to expand their scale and improve their quality. Therefore, the government and society should strengthen their attention and support for self-media platforms, provide them with more resources and opportunities, promote their healthy and stable development, and then build an all-media communication matrix to further contribute to the construction of my country's international communication capabilities. In short, expanding communication channels is an important way to enhance China's international communication capabilities. Only through diversified communication methods can China's image and influence be better displayed to the world.

3.3 The Content and form of Communication Need to be Innovated and Strengthened

The construction of China's international communication capacity has always been an important part of the national strategy. However, the content and form of communication need to be innovated. In terms of communication content, the outstanding problem is that the efforts to explore the excellent traditional Chinese culture are not enough. It often stays at the level of cultural symbols, while ignoring the social value orientation and spiritual connotation of the Chinese people behind the culture. In terms of form, the emphasis and development of technology-enabled international communication are insufficient, and the use of technologies such as artificial intelligence and virtual reality is ignored, resulting in poor communication effects and difficulty in presenting the content of communication in a lively and beautiful way. In Marxist philosophy, content and form are in unity of opposites. Content determines form, and form has a reaction to content. The two can be transformed into each other under certain conditions. We must not only pay attention to content and ignore the important role of form.

In order to better showcase China's image and values to the world, we need to conduct in-depth research on the cultural background and needs of the target audience and develop more precise communication strategies. At the same time, we also need to strengthen the innovation of communication content and form, and explain China's position and policies in a more vivid, vivid and profound way, so that more international friends can understand and accept China's ideas.

4. Strategies for New Media to Empower International Communication Capacity Building

4.1 Breaking the Traditional Thinking and Expanding the Communication Subjects

In the new media era, the diversification of communication subjects means that we can combine "our own story" with "others' story". Leading people all over the world to tell the Chinese story together. Telling the Chinese story from the perspective of the international community can first improve the credibility of China's image and reduce the "sharpness" of cultural output. Secondly, through the voice of international communication subjects, the audience of Chinese stories will be wider and the communication channels will be wider, so that people in more countries in the world can understand the real China. For example, during the COVID-19 epidemic, my country extended a helping hand to Serbia. Serbian President Vucic then expressed his gratitude to China on his Twitter account and reaffirmed the friendly friendship between the two countries, and accompanied it with a picture of the two countries' national flags blending together, implying that the friendship between China and Serbia is in harmony. This kind of propaganda undoubtedly shows China's responsibility and great power sentiment in the context of the global fight against the epidemic, and has established a good reputation in the international community and won widespread praise.

In addition, we should also pay attention to the voice and influence of grassroots communication subjects. The more down-to-earth the story is, the more unpretentious the communication subject is, the more it can touch people's hearts and win more international attention. The "Rural Basketball Competition" in Taipan Village, Guizhou Province, was once popular all over the country and was affectionately called "Village B A " by netizens. This basketball game, which was completely organized by villagers, held in rural areas, and the players mainly came from rural areas, showed the world the simple, pure and passionate Chinese sports spirit and the good spiritual outlook of rural China, and even attracted the participation of world sports stars. The hosts of the short video brand "Seeing China with the Third Eye" are all foreign. In 2022, these foreign hosts traveled to more than 20 cities and villages in China, telling stories from their perspectives, including cultural relics, intangible cultural heritage, rural revitalization, and technological innovation. Among them, the short video of host Jack exploring the longest cave in Asia in Zunyi has a total of 3.104 million views on social media at home and abroad.

In terms of its practical significance, China should fully tap into the communication subjects of different fields, different countries and different backgrounds to jointly tell the Chinese

story and shape the Chinese image. The government should increase investment in communication capacity building, support media, think tanks, non-governmental organizations and other institutions to carry out international communication activities, and improve the quality and effectiveness of communication. At the same time, attention should be paid to cultivating professional international communication talents. China needs to further tap into talents suitable for international communication, cultivate a team of high-quality, composite international communication subjects with firm political stance, outstanding innovation ability and good at discovering beauty, and provide strong guarantees for China's international communication capacity building. In addition, enterprises, social organizations and citizens should be encouraged to actively participate in international communication activities to improve the diversity and breadth of international communication. Through multi-faceted efforts, China's international communication capacity building will be further strengthened, laying a solid foundation for China to play a greater role on the international stage.

4.2 Constructing a Discourse System and Broadening Communication Channels

The construction of communication channels cannot be achieved overnight. Faced with the discourse power advantage of Western developed countries, China cannot sit idly by. In the journey of strengthening the construction of international communication capabilities, the construction of communication channels is particularly important. With the advent of the new media era, my country's international communication channels have also developed from a single traditional media to a model that integrates new media and traditional media. With its own advantages, new media has made great contributions to the construction of my country's international communication capabilities and has become an important communication channel for telling Chinese stories.

First, China should attach importance to and make good use of central-level media. Xinhua News Agency, China International Television, People's Daily, China Daily, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs website, etc. are all important channels for spreading China's voice. Their authority and credibility cannot be replaced by other channels. It is necessary to strengthen the international responsibility of such channels, express opinions prudently, have a clear political stance on major international issues, have firm political determination in the face of major issues, and spread the mainstream ideology well. Secondly, China should follow the trend of the times and give full play to the role of social network media platforms and overseas short video platforms in international communication. Through such channels, people can transcend geographical, time and cultural limitations to achieve efficient information dissemination and interactive communication. For example, WeChat and overseas Douyin (Tik Tok) have played an important role in spreading China's voice. China should strengthen the supervision and management of overseas short video platforms to ensure that they are in line with the national image and interests. In addition, China should encourage enterprises and individuals to conduct international communication through overseas short video platforms to

enhance the national image and influence. China should strengthen its support and promotion of overseas short video platforms to increase their coverage and influence in international communication.

Only through the construction of an all-media communication matrix can we achieve complementary advantages among different communication channels, constantly adapt to the preferences of different audiences, and make China's international communication channels broader and its communication capabilities stronger.

4.3 Enriching Communication Content and Innovating Communication Forms

To tell the Chinese story well, the most important thing to solve is the problem of "what to tell" and "how to tell". What to tell? That is, the content of communication. In terms of communication content, we must not abandon Marxism, the "soul" and the "root" of China's excellent traditional culture. The content of China's story is inseparable from the excellent traditional Chinese culture nurtured by the 5,000-year-old civilization history of the Chinese nation, the revolutionary culture and advanced socialist culture created by the party's leadership of the people in revolution, construction, and reform, and the great practice of socialism with Chinese characteristics. In particular, the excellent traditional Chinese culture is a magnet that attracts people all over the world to understand China, and it is also an inexhaustible source of international communication content. However, the dissemination of Chinese culture cannot just stay on a few iconic cultural symbols, but must deeply explore the spiritual implications behind the excellent traditional Chinese culture. As General Secretary Xi Jinping pointed out, promoting the excellent traditional Chinese culture to go global cannot stay on dancing lions, making dumplings, and performing kung fu, and cannot be satisfied with providing some superficial cultural symbols to foreign countries. The key is to extract and display the spiritual symbols of excellent traditional culture, and to extract and display the cultural essence of excellent traditional culture with contemporary value and world significance [13]. At the same time, we must deeply explore and refine the common characteristics and common concepts of China's excellent traditional culture and the cultures of other countries in the world, so that we can gain the world's recognition in international communication.

How to tell? That is, the form of communication. The form of storytelling is inseparable from new media, technological innovation and keeping pace with the times. We must tell Chinese stories in a real, vivid and attractive way. First of all, China should pay attention to the enabling role of technological upgrading in communication, and make full use of big data analysis technology, artificial intelligence technology, AI writing and creation technology, such as the Heliograf model developed by The Washington Post and the large language model launched by Bloomberg--BloombergGPT, which can continuously and efficiently output communication content, and its efficiency is difficult for human journalists to achieve. However, it should be noted that artificial intelligence still has defects in this regard. It is difficult for them to understand the meaning behind the text and make judgments based on emotions, which requires

humans to proofread and supplement and modify. In addition, it is necessary to attach importance to the use of animation and virtual reality technology in international communication, and provide international audiences with interactive and immersive experiences. "Empathy communication" is the nature and due pursuit of international communication [14]. It is necessary to attach importance to the integration of China's excellent traditional culture with modern communication technology, and provide international audiences with a magnificent and beautiful visual feast, showing a vivid and fascinating image of China. The Tang Palace Night Banquet of the 2021 Henan TV Spring Festival Gala won more than 2 billion views. One of the reasons for this is the result of technological empowerment. A series of new technologies such as 5G, AR, VR, and naked-eye 3D were used throughout the gala to create an immersive scene that combines reality and virtuality, making it difficult for the audience to distinguish the boundary between reality and imagination, and thus immersing themselves in it, reluctant to leave, producing a significant communication effect.

In short, China's current international communication capacity building still faces many challenges and has many shortcomings. China should deeply grasp the communication characteristics of the new media era, based on China's national conditions and current situation, and build an all-round and three-dimensional communication matrix with rich communication subjects, broad communication channels, excellent communication content, and modern communication technology. Strengthen the construction of international communication capacity, comprehensively improve the effectiveness of international communication, and form an international discourse power that matches my country's comprehensive national strength and international status [15].

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