

Digital Practice Exploration of Universities in Promoting the Dissemination of Traditional Chinese Culture under the "Belt and Road" Initiative

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Abstract: The "Belt and Road" Initiative, as a major international cooperation platform proposed by China in the 21st century, has not only promoted economic cooperation and infrastructure connectivity among countries along the routes but also provided a broad stage for cultural exchange and mutual learning. Universities, serving as vital bastions for cultural inheritance and innovation, play an indispensable role in promoting traditional Chinese culture globally and deepening international people-to-people exchanges. This paper aims to explore how universities can leverage digital technologies to facilitate the international dissemination of traditional Chinese culture within the context of the "Belt and Road" Initiative. It analyzes specific pathways for digital practices and proposes corresponding strategic recommendations, offering theoretical and practical guidance for deepening people-to-people exchanges among countries along the Belt and Road.

Keywords: Belt and Road; Universities; Traditional Chinese Culture; Cultural Dissemination; Digitalization

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The excellent traditional Chinese culture embodies the most profound spiritual pursuits of the Chinese nation. Its inheritance is both an essential requirement and an inevitable path for the nation's continuous vitality and sustainable development (Dai Yan, Chen Jiawei, 2020). Since its inception, the "Belt and Road" Initiative has become a significant cooperation platform connecting multiple countries and regions across Asia, Europe, and Africa. It provides a rare opportunity for the dissemination of traditional Chinese culture, enabling Chinese culture to transcend borders, engage in dialogue and exchange with cultures worldwide, and jointly promote the progress of human civilization. As a crucial force in cultural inheritance and innovation, universities hold multifaceted significance in promoting the spread of traditional Chinese culture in Belt and Road countries through digital means. Their digital practices in cultural dissemination not only help foster exchange and understanding between different cultures and deepen the recognition and respect for Chinese culture in these countries but also enhance China's international influence and strengthen its cultural soft power. Therefore, how to promote the dissemination of traditional Chinese culture through digital means under the "Belt and Road" Initiative has become an important task currently facing universities.

1. Opportunities for Digital Cultural Dissemination Faced by Universities under the "Belt and Road" Initiative

1.1 Policy Support

The high-level emphasis on cultural dissemination at the national level is reflected in the introduction of a series of policy measures. The "Opinions on Promoting the Implementation of the National Cultural Digitalization Strategy" issued by the General Office of the Communist Party of China Central Committee and the General Office of the State Council clearly sets the goal of basically establishing cultural digital infrastructure and service platforms by the end of the 14th Five-Year Plan period, forming a cultural service supply system featuring online and offline integration and multi-dimensional coverage. It also outlines eight key tasks, including coordinating the use of digital projects and databases already built or under construction in the cultural field, consolidating cultural digital infrastructure, and encouraging multiple entities to jointly build cultural data service platforms relying on the national cultural network. Government departments such as the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Culture and Tourism have also issued a series of documents promoting cultural digitalization and strengthening international cultural exchanges, providing direction for universities' cultural exchange work under the BRI framework. In terms

of building international communication capacity, the Chinese government is committed to enhancing the international influence and discourse power of its culture. Through various measures, it strengthens cooperation with international media institutions, builds culturally influential international communication platforms, actively promotes the construction of multilingual websites, and improves the layout of overseas social media communication to increase the visibility and influence of traditional Chinese culture internationally.

1.2 Technological Support

The rapid development of advanced technologies such as mobile internet, big data, artificial intelligence, virtual reality (VR), and augmented reality (AR) provides strong support for the digital presentation and dissemination of traditional Chinese culture (Cheng Huawei, 2024). Digital technology breaks the temporal and spatial constraints of cultural dissemination, presenting traditional culture to a global audience in more vivid and tangible ways. Universities, as key hubs for scientific research and education, possess strong technological capabilities and innovative potential. Many have established advanced digital laboratories and R&D centers dedicated to applying digital technology in cultural dissemination. For instance, using VR technology, universities can create virtual ancient architecture and historical scenes, allowing audiences to immerse themselves in the charm of traditional culture; using AR technology, traditional cultural elements can be integrated into modern life scenarios, enhancing the fun and interactivity of cultural dissemination. Digital technology greatly facilitates transnational cooperation and resource sharing. Particularly under the BRI framework, cooperation between universities and those in BRI countries, as well as research institutions, to jointly develop digital cultural dissemination projects has become a trend. Such cooperation not only achieves resource sharing and complementary advantages but also promotes in-depth cultural exchange and integration.

1.3 Growing Demand

Under the "Belt and Road" Initiative, economic and trade cooperation between China and BRI countries continues to deepen, with trade volumes growing steadily and investment projects flourishing. This close economic linkage provides a material foundation for cultural exchange, fostering stronger willingness and more opportunities for both sides to understand and experience each other's cultures. Cultural exchange helps enhance mutual understanding and trust. As people in BRI countries engage with and understand traditional Chinese culture, they can gain deeper insights into Chinese business practices, modes of thinking, and social systems, thereby facilitating smoother economic and trade cooperation. The proposal of the BRI itself is a continuation and development of the ancient Silk Road spirit, emphasizing not only economic cooperation but also cultural exchange and people-to-people connectivity. As elite forces within the education system, universities possess rich digital education resources and technological strength. They can present traditional Chinese culture in more vivid and tangible ways to the people of BRI countries, meeting their growing demand for cultural exchange. Through in-depth understanding and experience of traditional Chinese culture, people in these countries can view China's development path and social system more objectively, thereby increasing their understanding and respect for China, and laying a solid cultural foundation for long-term cooperation under the BRI.

2. Digital Practice Pathways for Universities to Promote the Dissemination of Traditional Chinese Culture

With the widespread application of digital technology, digitalization has become a mainstream trend in cultural dissemination. Universities must keep pace with the times, using digital means to enhance the efficiency and influence of traditional Chinese cultural dissemination, and promote in-depth understanding and appreciation of traditional Chinese culture among people in BRI countries.

2.1 Building Online Courses and Cultural Resource Databases

Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) platforms, with their extensive reach and influence, serve as effective

channels for disseminating traditional Chinese culture. Universities can leverage MOOC platforms to develop online courses on traditional Chinese culture, such as Chinese history, philosophy, art, language, etc., open to students in BRI countries. For example, Tsinghua University's course "Introduction to Chinese Culture," offered globally through the internationally renowned online education platform edX, attracts students from around the world, achieving international dissemination of Chinese culture. Heilongjiang University's MOOC "The Analects of Confucius Life Classroom" has attracted enrolled students from over 50 universities across China and has also been launched on South Korea's largest MOOC platform, K-MOOC, playing a significant role in promoting the overseas dissemination of Analects culture. These courses introduce various aspects of Chinese culture—history, philosophy, art, etc.—in an accessible manner, providing an international student body with a window to understand Chinese culture and helping foster their interest and identification with it.

Digital cultural resource databases feature characteristics such as easy retrieval, convenient sharing, and long-term preservation(Wang Defang,2021). Universities can collaborate with institutions in BRI countries to jointly build digital cultural resource databases. By collecting and organizing various resources of traditional Chinese culture, such as ancient texts and documents, artworks, folk customs, etc., comprehensive and systematic digital cultural archives can be formed. These resources can be made available for online browsing and learning by people in BRI countries, enhancing their understanding and knowledge of traditional Chinese culture. For instance, the National Library of China, in collaboration with numerous universities, actively promotes the digitization of ancient texts. Through technologies like high-resolution scanning and OCR recognition, paper-based ancient texts are converted into electronic documents, establishing a vast digital repository of ancient texts. These resources include rare books, common ancient texts, oracle bones, Dunhuang manuscripts, stone rubbings, and more, accessible for sharing and exchange via specific online channels.

2.2 Organizing Online Cultural Exchange Activities

In the digital era, online lectures and seminars have become important forms of cultural dissemination and exchange. Universities use live streaming platforms to invite domestic and foreign experts and scholars to conduct online lectures or seminars on specific aspects or themes of traditional Chinese culture, expanding the breadth and depth of cultural exchange. Audiences can interact with speakers in real-time through bullet comments, comments, etc., asking questions or sharing insights, enhancing the sense of participation and interactivity in cultural exchange. Universities can also utilize live streaming platforms, social media, and other channels to organize celebrations for traditional festivals, commemorative days, or specific cultural themes. This allows more people in BRI countries to participate in cultural festivities, experience the charm of traditional culture, and strengthen cultural cohesion and identity. Chinese universities can jointly organize online cultural exchange projects with institutions in BRI countries, facilitating in-depth experience and learning of traditional Chinese culture by teachers, students, and cultural workers from these countries, thereby enhancing their identification with Chinese culture.

Universities utilizing various online channels to host online lectures, seminars, and cultural festival activities is an effective way to promote the international dissemination of traditional Chinese culture. For example, Beijing Foreign Studies University, as a university with distinct foreign language features and an international outlook, not only offers various non-common language majors but also actively uses online platforms to organize cultural activities. The university invites renowned domestic and international experts and scholars to conduct lectures or seminars via online platforms (e.g., live streaming platforms, video conferences), making them available to overseas audiences through live or recorded broadcasts, attracting significant attention from international scholars and researchers. The university uses social media (e.g., Weibo, WeChat, YouTube) and online platforms to host various online cultural festival activities. Employing formats such as live streaming, video sharing, and interactive games, these activities showcase traditional customs and cultural events of the festivals, allowing overseas audiences to immerse themselves in the charm of Chinese culture. For instance, the university's "Cloud Spring Festival" event

transmits New Year blessings and traditional cultural knowledge to overseas students and foreign friends via online platforms, attracting considerable participation from overseas audiences.

2.3 Development of Digital Cultural and Creative Products

Digital cultural and creative products refer to digital products formed in the digital environment, with cultural creativity at their core, utilizing modern information technology to innovatively develop and integrate traditional cultural resources, possessing high cultural, artistic, and economic value. Under the BRI, universities developing digital cultural and creative products incorporating elements of traditional Chinese culture—such as virtual reality (VR) experience projects, digital artworks, and cultural games—by combining modern design concepts and technology, represents a creative and effective method of cultural dissemination. Through developing such products, universities enable innovative transformation of traditional Chinese culture, making it more aligned with modern aesthetics and market demands, thereby enhancing its vitality and influence. Digital cultural and creative products can break through geographical and linguistic barriers, presenting traditional culture to international audiences in more vivid and intuitive ways, achieving widespread cultural dissemination. Through channels like the internet and social media, these products can quickly reach audiences worldwide, allowing more people to understand and appreciate traditional Chinese culture.

Digital cultural and creative products, with their unique creativity, rich cultural connotations, and modern forms of expression, satisfy people's demand for fresh, interesting, and profound cultural products. For example, the interactive shadow play project at Ningbo University of Finance & Economics utilizes digital technology to comprehensively organize, reproduce, and design interactive experiences for traditional shadow puppetry. Audience members simply place their hands on a sensor in front of a TV screen, and the shadow puppet characters on the screen can follow their hand movements in real-time, nimbly flipping and leaping. The Digital Art Department of Shanghai Academy of Fine Arts collaborated with Xietongmen County in Tibet on the digital preservation and innovative dissemination of local ancient murals. The team used high-precision scanning and 3D modeling technology to accurately record every detail of the murals and completely recreate them in digital space. Simultaneously, they employed interactive installations, hand-drawn animations, and other methods for secondary creation based on the ancient murals, breathing new life into the two-dimensional ancient artworks. Both projects possess significant dissemination value and can be accessed and understood by international audiences through international cultural exchange activities, online platforms, or overseas exhibitions.

3.Strategic Recommendations for Universities' Digital Practices

3.1 Deepening International Cooperation and Exchange

Universities should fully leverage the opportunities presented by the BRI to deepen international cooperation and exchange with countries along the routes(Li Hezhang, Lin Songyue, Liu Jin.2019). By signing cooperation agreements and establishing collaboration mechanisms, they can build long-term, stable cooperative relationships with universities, research institutions, and cultural organizations in BRI countries, jointly exploring new models and pathways for digital cultural dissemination, such as co-organizing online cultural exchange activities and jointly developing digital cultural resource databases. Such cooperation not only helps enhance understanding and recognition of traditional Chinese culture in BRI countries but also promotes the widespread application of digital technology in cultural dissemination, improving its efficiency and effectiveness. Specifically, universities can collaborate with institutions in BRI countries to jointly conduct digital cultural dissemination projects, such as digital exhibitions, online lectures, and virtual experiences; utilize platforms like international academic conferences and seminars to strengthen exchange and cooperation with scholars and experts from BRI countries, jointly discussing theoretical and practical issues in digital cultural dissemination; and promote faculty and student exchange visits to enhance understanding and respect for different cultures.

3.2 Strengthening Talent Cultivation and Introduction

Universities should increase efforts in talent cultivation and introduction, constructing a diversified talent structure and building a team with international vision and professional skills. Specifically, universities should introduce professionals with strong language proficiency and translation experience to accurately translate traditional Chinese cultural content into multiple languages, laying the foundation for digital dissemination; hire experts with rich experience in the field of cultural dissemination who can provide strategic advice and help formulate effective communication plans; cultivate personnel with international vision and cross-cultural communication skills to establish cooperative relationships with foreign cultural institutions and academic groups, promoting the implementation of digital cultural exchange projects; and introduce and cultivate talent familiar with digital media technology and network communication technology to provide technical support for cultural dissemination. Simultaneously, universities should establish a scientific and reasonable evaluation system to regularly assess and provide feedback on the work outcomes of the talent team, recognizing and rewarding outstanding performers to stimulate their enthusiasm and creativity. Universities need to gradually build a talent team dedicated to the digital dissemination of traditional Chinese culture, becoming an important force in promoting the university's cultural dissemination work and making positive contributions to enhancing the understanding and identification with Chinese culture among people in BRI countries.

3.3 Emphasizing User Experience and Feedback

In promoting the digital dissemination of traditional Chinese culture, universities should pay special attention to user experience and feedback to ensure that the form and effectiveness of the disseminated content align with the needs and expectations of audiences in BRI countries. First, universities should establish diverse feedback channels tailored to different audience groups in these countries, such as online questionnaires, user forums, and social media interactions. These channels can not only collect user evaluations and suggestions regarding digital cultural content but also serve as direct communication bridges with the audience. Second, based on the collected user feedback, universities should timely adjust and optimize the content and form of digital cultural dissemination. For example, if audiences show particular interest in a specific aspect of traditional Chinese culture, the proportion and depth of related content can be increased. Finally, universities should establish long-term, stable connections with audiences in BRI countries through social media, online forums, etc. This not only allows for timely responses to their questions and concerns but also enables proactive initiation of topic discussions and cultural exchange activities to foster mutual understanding and friendship.

4. Conclusion

The "Belt and Road" Initiative is not only a path of economic cooperation but also a path of cultural exchange and mutual learning, presenting a rare opportunity for universities to promote the digital dissemination of traditional Chinese culture. As important forces in cultural inheritance and innovation, universities bear the historical mission of promoting the digital dissemination of traditional Chinese culture and enhancing cultural exchange and understanding among BRI countries. Universities can fully leverage their advantages in research, education, and technology. Through measures such as building online courses and cultural resource databases, organizing online cultural exchange activities, and developing digital cultural and creative products, they can enable traditional Chinese culture to transcend temporal and spatial boundaries and engage with cultures worldwide. In the process of conducting digital practices, universities should deepen international cooperation and exchange, strengthen talent cultivation and introduction, and emphasize user experience and feedback. They should continuously advance the development of digital cultural dissemination, contributing cultural wisdom and strength to building a community with a shared future for mankind.

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