Original Paper

Share Beijing Stories in the Context of Media Convergence

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Abstract

International Exchange Center is one of the "four centers" of Beijing's strategic positioning. Accompanied by the continuous progress and development of media, Beijing's city image is subject to increasingly frequent exchanges among cities of different countries, and the requirements for external communication are also increasing. How to effectively promote Beijing's external communication in the cross-cultural context and share a good "Beijing city story" of the new era? One of the most important ways is to effectively shape Beijing's city image through the media, to improve Beijing's influence through the media, to adjust the way of Beijing's international communication in a timely manner, and to create communication contents that are closer to the audience's psychology, so as to achieve a better effect of the external communication of Beijing's city image.

Keywords

media convergence, Beijing city image, cross-cultural communication

1. City Image Dissemination in the Context of Media Convergence

M. McLuhan (1964), a Master of Media Studies, wrote in his book *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*, "Media are extensions of human body", "The medium can be everything and everything is a medium. A medium, in the broadest sense, is a substance that enables a relationship to be created between people, people and things, or things and thing." (MCLUHAN & GORDON, 2003) The new media will replace the old media. The emergence and popularization of the Internet has enabled people to communicate over long distances. People can easily get all kinds of information through cell phones, which improves human cognitive ability. In the process of using the media, people will unconsciously form attachments and it has become almost impossible for people to stay away from

the internet and mobile phones. Thus the new media technology has become a part of the extension of the human body. "The medium is the message". (MCLUHAN & GORDON, 2003) That is, the different content presented by the media will gradually change people's perception of the world, form their own values, and ultimately affect all aspects of society. In contemporary daily life, most of us are "media experts", and we are constantly exposed to different forms of mass media, such as television, movies, social software, video games, etc. The high stickiness between media and users highlights its important role in promoting Beijing's city image to the world. The concept of "Media Convergence" was first proposed by Prof. Poole of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in the United States, which refers to the integration of the same type of media, and the tendency of multifunctional integration of various media. At the macro level, media convergence is the multi-dimensional integration of major media, various contents, and major platforms. (Tan & Pan, 2023) Media convergence has broken the limitations of platforms, and it enables traditional media and modern media to learn from each other and develop together, forming a new media form.

Sociologist Lewis Mumford believes that "the image of a city is people's subjective impression of the city, which is formed through the combined effect of factors such as mass media, personal experience, interpersonal communication, memory and environment, so the image of a city cannot be separated from the construction of media." (Lewis, Song, J. L., & Song, Y. R., 2019) Economic globalization and urbanization have made different cities diversified and similar. The emergence of new media has changed the traditional way of communication and shaped a unique communication environment, but it also intensified the fierce competition among cities. How to enhance the effective communication of city image and build a unique city image has become the focus of all major cities. Since the 1990s, the study of mass media has begun to combine with the cultural field, and each city has its own unique culture. Beijing, as the capital city, has unique advantages. It not only has rich historical and cultural heritage, but also serves as the political center, cultural center, international exchange center, and technological innovation center of the country. The spiritual connotation of the city mainly depends on the interpretation of the media. (Li & Zhang, 2022) Media integration has brought a new way to spread the unique culture of each city. It is an effective way to enhance the value and influence of the city by Constructing Beijing's city image externally through the media.

In order to build a better Beijing's urban image and do a good job of external communication, it is necessary to grasp several new changes in the communication of urban image in this context:

Decentralization of the main body of communication. There are five main bodies of urban communication in the new media, namely, the government, non-governmental organizations, enterprises, citizens, and traditional media. (Zhang, 2018) The gradual decentralization of the main body of communication has formed a new cross-cultural communication mode, giving the right to choose information to everyone in the society. The identity of the audience has changed from a passive receiver to a direct participant, and everyone is the medium of information dissemination, the constructor and narrator of Beijing's urban image.

Diversification of communication channels. The type of media, that is, the channel of obtaining information, ranges from television, magazines, and newspapers to cell phones to get external information. The public no longer receives information from a single channel, and people can choose different media platforms to get the information they want. In addition, short videos, as one of the mainstream communication channels nowadays, have obvious advantages in terms of communication subject, communication content, clip-type editing communication, and the speed of communication. Therefore, the image of Beijing needs to be disseminated through multi-dimensional media platforms, and the content should be adjusted according to the characteristics of different audience groups on different platforms.

High timeliness of dissemination. Media convergence has led to the resolution of one of the major problems that cross-cultural communication once faced, but it has also brought new challenges. Due to the rapid dissemination of information, the public receives a large amount of push messages every day. Those messages that take longer to get through are less likely to be clicked on as well as viewed in their entirety. This is one of the reasons why short video platforms can become the main communication platforms, with more information available to the audience in a short period of time, however, the prolonged dissemination of fragmented and one-sided information can cause the co-public to lose sight of the event as a whole, thus creating a localized center of public opinion.

2. Cross-Cultural Communication Strategies for Beijing's City Image

2.1 Understanding the Culture of the Audience and Focus on the Way of Publicity

Hall (1976) proposed that cultures can be identified based on the messages the members in a given culture prefer to use, and he defined these as HC or LC communication. Cultures cannot be categorized as exclusively HC or LC, but some cultures tend to be at the higher end while others are at the lower end of the continuum (Hall, 1976). Due to different cultural and historical backgrounds, growing environments, and levels of education, etc., the understanding of the same thing differs between Eastern and Western countries. This theory of Hall can well facilitate the exchange of Eastern and Western cultures. The contextual differences between the different cultures and the differences in cultural value dimensions, ways of thinking and behavioral characteristics between the East and the West lead to communication barriers that are difficult to avoid. China belongs to high-context and expresses itself in a subtle, indirect, and implicit way. When promoting to the outside world, it is necessary to take into account the cultural type of the country, actively study the user preferences of foreign audiences, and choose the preferred expression method to achieve more effective topic planning, increase user stickiness, and enhance communication effectiveness. In the process of propaganda, we should first base ourselves on the local cultural environment of our country, and then report based on the cultural characteristics of other countries, neither "abandoning ourselves" nor "self-centered", but striking a balance between the two. For example, Ottawa belongs to low-context and prefers to express itself in a frank and straightforward way. Therefore, when Beijing and Ottawa

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engage in sister city cooperation, we should pay more attention to understanding Ottawa's cultural type. For Ottawa, which pursues freedom, openness and democracy, in terms of communication, we should focus on showing the free, open and enterprising spirit of Beijingers. The process of telling Beijing stories to the public should be in line with foreign thinking expressions, and the message should be expressed in a context familiar to the audience. Only in this way can we better avoid misinterpretation and ensure that the other party can correctly understand the meaning of the message. Although there are cultural differences between countries, people's interests can cross borders, and people pay more attention to information related to themselves, such as outdoor sports, games, beauty and so on. By spreading the message from these daily life activities, people are more likely to resonate with each other. To connect people around the world who are interested in a certain field and establish a "circle of interest", for those who love outdoor hiking, Beijing's Cultural and Tourism Department can post photos of the Great Wall of Beijing, the Thirteen Ling Reservoir, the Shihua Cave, and the Ancient Road to the West of Beijing on platforms such as Instagram, Tiktok, and Facebook, and share people's "hiking diary".

2.2 Combining Multiple Narrative Perspectives to Innovate Communication Content

The American scholar Lynch firstly proposed the concept of "city image", and in his book *Urban Image*, he mentioned that the city can be regarded as a story, and the process of building a city image is the process of people interacting with the city. (Lynch, 1960) Therefore, how to tell a story is an important way to build a city's image. The dissemination of a city's image requires both internal and external dissemination. Internal dissemination can enhance the internal cohesion of citizens. With the development of globalization, enhancing the city's image and promoting it to the outside world is also an important strategy for the development of each city. Media convergence has brought many advantages to urban communication, but only through "content is king" can we capture the audience's attention and increase Beijing's unique urban memory. According to the characteristics of different platforms, it is important to publish content that matches their communication style. The international communication of Beijing city is mostly grand narrative, focusing on international major events. The main contents of its release are mainly two types, one is pure images with exciting background music, and the other is similar to traditional documentaries with long narration and changing images. The "zero-focus" or "out-of-focus" perspective is able to present a broad, and comprehensive urban landscape of Beijing, but it is inevitably too official and can easily lead to a separation between the city and its audience. In terms of external publicity, it is more necessary to combine the "first person" internal focus perspective to carry out "micro narratives", and the content should be based on the daily life of ordinary people, highlighting the sense of reality and scene, so that the audience can empathize with it. Through multi-perspective storytelling, it combines the modern prosperity and development of Beijing with its history and culture, showcases the coexistence of ancient and modern characteristics of Beijing, and conveys the charm and attractiveness of Beijing as an international metropolis. Many foreigners have never been to Beijing, and as they receive different information from various media,

they will inevitably be influenced by biased information and be skeptical of Beijing's self-representation. The self-narration and his narration complement each other, using the words of others to promote Beijing is more authentic.

City image is the public perception and evaluation of a region's internal strength, external vitality, and prospects. (Luo, 1997) The evaluation of foreigners living in Beijing is the most authentic embodiment of the city, and more and more foreigners in Beijing are also uploading their life Vlogs on various platforms to record the most real state of life in Beijing, so that more foreign netizens can know Beijing, understand Beijing, and perceive Beijing. For example, Gu Ailing's videos of visiting Sanlitun, eating Beijing specialty snacks, and daily life during the Winter Olympics vividly show the hustle and bustle of Beijing life to foreign people. In addition to shooting videos, live broadcast can also be added to foreign media platforms. Live broadcast is more authentic and interactive. It can be seen that live broadcast is also an effective way to publicize through the results achieved by Beijing Wild Animal Park on the domestic short video platform Douyin. Previously, due to the impact of the epidemic, the zoo added live broadcast form in the publicity process, and the Beijing Wildlife Park became the third most popular zoo on Douyin in 2022. Then in February this year, the Beijing Wildlife Park released the video of "Bear Big, Bear Small" taking small gliding steps to ask for food had a high number of likes of 101.4w, and many tourists came to visit.

2.3 Focusing on Interactive Feedback to Improve Communication Effect

The external communication of the city's image focuses on two-way interaction, as a center of international exchanges, Beijing often hosts different large-scale international events, and in addition to the events themselves, we should not ignore the audience acceptance. Each person is both a communicator and an audience, especially in the age of the Internet, where everyone has the opportunity to publish information. We should take advantage of the Internet to receive timely feedback from our audience. At the same time, media workers could strengthen their ties and cultivate relationships with their audiences while delivering messages. In addition to establishing Beijing-related official accounts on major social platforms of foreign media, focusing on interaction with the audience and allowing them to participate in discussions, we can also analyze the intention and actual effect of the reports based on the frequency and content of the mainstream media's reports on Beijing's city image. (Li, 2016) Understanding the needs of the audience through timely feedback with the audience. Adjusting and improving the communication content or methods in a timely manner according to the feedback from the audience. This is more targeted and more conducive to improving the effectiveness of communication.

The dissemination of urban image requires long-term maintenance, and correction is equally important for Beijing's urban image. In the context of media integration, information dissemination has enormous advantages in speed and space. Once any information is released, it will be spread rapidly, which also puts forward higher requirements for the transparency and authenticity of the communication information. The external image dissemination of Beijing needs to convey true, accurate and

comprehensive information to the audience, so as to avoid being kidnapped by the public opinion of other countries' media and falling into a passive state. When negative information about a city's image appears, if not intervened and stopped in a timely manner, it will present a "viral" dissemination characteristic, detached from the control of the media and the government. When communicating with the outside world, it is also important to note that Western countries, as long-term cultural hegemons, have strong discourse power. In addition to timely official responses, it is also necessary to cooperate with mainstream media and major social media outside the country, so as to turn passivity into initiative, do a good job in the aftermath, and eliminate the negative impacts. Enhance the sense of crisis, strengthen the daily monitoring of public opinion, and enhance and consolidate the image of Beijing.

3. Conclusion

The image of the city depends on the creation, perception and evaluation of people, and the occurrence and telling of urban stories are composed of vivid and specific people's practices. (Yan, 2023) The dissemination of a country's overall external image cannot be separated from cities. To tell the story of China well is to tell the story of each city well. Therefore, it is necessary to give full play to the advantages of Beijing as the capital city, be a good builder and leader, pay attention to the advantages and characteristics of interactive exchanges in the context of media integration and to follow the trend. To tell the story of Beijing from multiple perspectives, it is necessary to not only understand the audience's culture and innovate communication content from multiple narrative perspectives, but also pay attention to the subsequent consolidation of the city's image, improve public opinion monitoring and public relations capabilities, promote cultural exchange and dialogue, and build a diverse and inclusive international image of Beijing.

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