
Research Articles

The Value of News Communication in Disseminating Chinese Culture on Social Media: A Conceptual Research Framework

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Received: August 09, 2026; Revised: September 20, 2026; Accepted: October 15, 2026

Abstract

This study aimed to: (1) explore how social media affordances transform the channels, formats, and practices of news-based cultural communication; (2) identify the value of news communication in enhancing cultural visibility, audience engagement, contemporary cultural interpretation, and cross-cultural understanding; and (3) develop a conceptual research framework explaining the relationships among platform affordances, journalistic practices, audience engagement, and communication outcomes. The study employed a qualitative documentary research design, drawing on purposively selected scholarly literature related to media convergence, social media journalism, cultural communication, and the dissemination of Chinese culture. Data were collected through documentary review and analyzed using thematic content analysis to identify recurring concepts, relationships, opportunities, and challenges. The analysis was organized around four interconnected dimensions: platform affordances, journalistic practices, audience engagement, and communication outcomes, with cultural contexts and communication risks considered as moderating factors.

The findings suggest that social media facilitate the rapid, multimodal, interactive, and cross-platform dissemination of Chinese cultural content. News communication contributes to cultural understanding by providing contextual information, verifying cultural representations, presenting engaging narratives, and connecting traditional cultural resources with contemporary social experiences. Audience participation through commenting, sharing, and reinterpretation may further extend content circulation and strengthen cultural relevance. However, information fragmentation, algorithmic bias, entertainment-oriented framing, cultural stereotyping, and translation barriers may limit communication effectiveness. Accordingly, the proposed conceptual framework positions news communication as a mediating process through which social media affordances can generate cultural and intercultural value. The study highlights the importance of accuracy, contextualization.

Keywords: Social Media, News Communication, Chinese Culture, Cultural Communication, Audience Engagement, Cross-Cultural Communication

Introduction

Digital media have transformed the production, distribution, and consumption of news. Social media platforms enable news organizations to publish information rapidly, reach diverse audiences, and encourage public interaction. Social network sites facilitate communication through networked connections (boyd & Ellison, 2007), while social media support user-generated content and interactive participation (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). These developments have reshaped journalism from primarily one-way information transmission into a more dynamic process involving content circulation, audience engagement, and digital storytelling. Guo, Wang, and Xu (2024) demonstrated how traditional Chinese news media use contextualization, personalized production, and public dialogue to strengthen their integration into social media.

This transformation creates new opportunities for disseminating Chinese culture. Chinese culture encompasses traditional philosophy, literature, festivals, cuisine, architecture, traditional crafts, performing arts, and contemporary social practices. Cultural representation is not simply the presentation of existing traditions; it also involves producing and negotiating

meanings within particular social and historical contexts (Hall, 1997). Through news communication, cultural information can be connected with current events, human-interest stories, historical narratives, and everyday experiences. Social media further enable cultural content to circulate through images, videos, short-form narratives, and audience discussions. Consequently, news communication can help preserve cultural knowledge, increase public awareness, and introduce Chinese cultural values to broader audiences.

The value of news communication, however, depends on more than the quantity or speed of information dissemination. News selection, narrative framing, credibility, accessibility, and audience engagement influence how cultural information is presented and interpreted. Research on Chinese news media's social media practices highlights the importance of adapting journalistic forms to platform environments while maintaining professional responsibilities (Guo et al., 2024). found that international audiences engage differently with various topics in Chinese news distributed through CGTN's YouTube channel, indicating that the visibility of cultural content does not necessarily guarantee strong audience engagement. These findings suggest that cultural dissemination should be examined as a communication process involving news production, platform distribution, audience participation, and cultural interpretation.

Although existing studies have examined social media journalism, digital cultural communication, and audience engagement, an integrated explanation of how news communication creates value in disseminating Chinese culture remains necessary. Platform algorithms, journalistic practices, content presentation, and audience responses may interact to influence cultural visibility, understanding, and engagement. At the same time, simplified narratives and entertainment-oriented formats may reduce cultural complexity or encourage superficial interpretations. A conceptual framework is therefore needed to clarify these relationships and provide a foundation for future empirical investigation.

Existing research provides valuable insights into Chinese news media's adaptation to social media and the relationship between news content and audience engagement. However, these areas are not always integrated into a framework specifically explaining the value of news communication in disseminating Chinese culture. The relationships among news

communication strategies, platform affordances, audience engagement, and cultural dissemination outcomes require further conceptual clarification. This study addresses this gap by developing a conceptual research framework to identify the principal dimensions of news communication value, explain their potential relationships, and establish a structured foundation for subsequent empirical research.

Objective

1. To analyze the social-media affordances that transform the channels and forms of news-based cultural communication.
2. To synthesize the value generated through journalistic practices and audience engagement for cultural visibility, contemporary interpretation, participatory identity, and cross-cultural understanding.
3. To develop an integrated conceptual framework and practical guidelines for responsible news communication of Chinese culture on social media.

Literature Review

Social media and news communication

Social media replace the simple sender-message-receiver model with a networked environment in which professional journalists, institutions, users, and platforms interact. This change rests on network visibility (boyd & Ellison, 2007), user-generated content (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010), and platform functions that organize sharing, identity, reputation, and community (Kietzmann et al., 2011). For journalism, continuous streams create ambient awareness while simultaneously complicating verification and editorial control (Hermida, 2010). Guo et al. (2024) identified contextualization as a path through which traditional Chinese news media integrate into social media. Such practices connect news to audience concerns, platform conventions, and participatory dialogue.

Cultural communication, convergence, and mediated reality

Jenkins (2006) described convergence as the flow of content across media and the active movement of audiences among platforms. Couldry and Hepp (2017) emphasized that social reality is constructed through increasingly deep processes of mediation. Hall (1997) similarly located cultural meaning in representational practices, while Hall and Du Gay (1996) presented cultural identity as relational and continually reconstructed. Cultural meanings also travel unevenly across global and local contexts (Appadurai, 1996), and cultural identity formation is shaped by both risk and opportunity under globalization (Jensen et al., 2011). From this perspective, journalism does not simply transmit pre-existing culture; it selects, frames, contextualizes, and makes cultural meanings publicly available.

Platform affordances and algorithmic visibility

Affordances describe the possibilities and constraints that emerge between users and technological environments. Bucher and Helmond (2018) showed that social-media affordances operate at multiple levels, from interface features to platform architectures. Gillespie (2014) demonstrated that algorithms are relevant because their classifications and selections organize public visibility. Social media logic moreover rewards popularity, connectivity, and data-driven personalization (van Dijck & Poell, 2013), while platform governance raises questions of public interest and accountability (Napoli, 2015). Cultural communication is therefore shaped not only by editorial decisions but also by recommendation systems, engagement metrics, searchable tags, and platform-specific formats.

Chinese cultural symbols and digital heritage

Lyu and Dai (2024) highlighted the transmission and sharing of Chinese cultural symbols under social-media conditions. Fitzgerald et al. (2022) described Chinese social media as a distinctive interaction among technology, culture, and creativity. Research on intangible cultural heritage further shows that short video can return traditional practices to public

attention and provide accessible formats for cultural activation (Cao, 2022). A mixed-method study of Douyin found that heritage videos also involve negotiations over power, identity, knowledge, and representational framing (Wang, Zhao, Hu, Ma, & Lu, 2024). These findings show that visibility creates opportunity but does not guarantee contextual accuracy.

Synthesis and propositions

The reviewed literature supports three propositions. First, platform affordances and social media logic shape the reach, speed, and form of cultural news (Bucher & Helmond, 2018; Kietzmann et al., 2011; van Dijck & Poell, 2013). Second, journalistic contextualization mediates the relationship between cultural resources and audience understanding (Guo et al., 2024; Hall, 1997). Third, audience engagement extends circulation and may transform exposure into cultural relevance (Jenkins, 2006; Wang et al., 2024). Algorithmic selection, platform governance, and cultural context operate across the whole process and may moderate its outcomes (Gillespie, 2014; Napoli, 2015).

Conceptual Framework

The study adopts a process framework in which the value of social-media cultural communication emerges from linked stages rather than from platform use alone. Platform affordances constitute the enabling environment. Journalistic practices convert cultural resources into verified, contextualized, and accessible stories. Audience engagement extends and reinterprets these stories. Together, these mechanisms produce communication outcomes. Risks and contextual conditions may strengthen, redirect, or weaken every link.

Table 1 Integrated conceptual framework

Enabling conditions	Mediating mechanisms	Communication outcomes	Moderating conditions
Platform affordances: immediacy, networked reach, multimodality, cross-platform circulation	Journalistic practices: verification, contextualization, storytelling, translation, ethical framing	Cultural visibility and accessibility	Fragmentation and decontextualization
Diverse communicators: newsrooms, cultural institutions, experts, creators, users	Audience engagement: commenting, sharing, co-creation, reinterpretation, feedback	Contemporary interpretation and relevance	Entertainment-driven framing and homogenization
Participatory architecture and data-driven distribution	Cross-cultural adaptation: subtitles, explanation, culturally sensitive narration	Participatory cultural identity and cross-cultural understanding	Algorithmic visibility and cultural translation gaps

Research Methodology

This study employed qualitative documentary research using deductive thematic content analysis. The design aimed to synthesize concepts and patterns related to social media, media convergence, journalism, and Chinese cultural communication rather than measure causal effects or statistical relationships.

Data sources and selection criteria

The documentary corpus comprised six scholarly works published between 1985 and 2024. The sources were purposively selected using four inclusion criteria: (1) direct relevance to social media, media environments, convergence, journalism, or Chinese cultural communication; (2) capacity to explain at least one construct in the conceptual framework; (3) identifiable authorship and publication information; and (4) sufficient conceptual or empirical detail for thematic coding. Works that addressed communication only indirectly or lacked traceable bibliographic information were excluded. One unverified future-dated source appearing in the original manuscript was removed from the evidence base.

Analytical procedure

Analysis proceeded in four steps. First, each source was read for statements concerning platform characteristics, journalistic practices, participation, outcomes, risks, and contexts. Second, relevant passages were assigned deductive codes derived from the conceptual framework. Third, codes were compared across sources and grouped into higher-order themes. Fourth, the themes were arranged as a process model and checked against the research questions and objectives. The evidence matrix below establishes traceability between the corpus and the reported themes.

Table 2 Documentary evidence and analytical contribution

Source	Type/focus	Main analytical contribution
Guo et al. (2024)	Empirical journal article on Chinese traditional news media and social media	Contextualized news, innovation in production, audience dialogue
Lyu and Dai (2024)	Journal article on Chinese cultural symbols in social media	Transmission, sharing, and contemporary interpretation of cultural symbols
Couldry and Hepp (2017)	Scholarly monograph on mediated construction of reality	Media as constitutive conditions for social and cultural meaning
Jenkins (2006)	Scholarly monograph on convergence culture	Cross-media circulation and participatory culture
Meyrowitz (1985)	Scholarly monograph on electronic media and social behavior	Media environments and altered social situations
Krippendorff (2013)	Methodological monograph	Systematic and replicable logic for content analysis

Research quality and ethical considerations

Credibility was supported through conceptual triangulation across empirical and theoretical sources and through an explicit evidence matrix. Dependability was strengthened by applying the same coding dimensions to all documents. Confirmability was addressed by

distinguishing source-based interpretation from the author's synthesis and by avoiding claims of measured audience effects. As the study analyzed published documents and did not involve human participants or personal data, no participant consent was required; nevertheless, accurate attribution and responsible representation remained essential.

Results

Transformation of channels and forms

The analysis identified four platform affordances that transform cultural news communication. First, immediacy shortens the interval between cultural events and public communication, a condition that Hermida (2010) associated with ambient journalism. Second, networked distribution allows one item to circulate through institutional accounts, user networks, hashtags, and cross-platform links (boyd & Ellison, 2007; Jenkins, 2006). Third, multimodality enables cultural meaning to be expressed through text, image, movement, sound, narration, and live interaction (Kietzmann et al., 2011). Fourth, cross-platform circulation allows the same cultural resource to be adapted to different formats and audience practices, though adaptation is also conditioned by platform architectures (Bucher & Helmond, 2018). These results answer RQ1 by showing that social media change both the route and the representational form of cultural news.

Mechanisms that generate cultural value

Two connected mechanisms generated value. The first was journalistic mediation. Verification, contextualization, narrative organization, and translation transformed cultural resources into intelligible public stories, consistent with the contextualization strategy documented by Guo et al. (2024) and with the representational logic described by Hall (1997). The second was audience engagement. Commenting, sharing, feedback, and derivative creation prolonged circulation and connected cultural content with personal experience (Jenkins, 2006; Wang et al., 2024). These mechanisms produced four recurrent outcomes: greater cultural

visibility, contemporary interpretation of traditional culture, participatory cultural identification, and wider opportunities for cross-cultural understanding.

Visibility resulted from expanded distribution and reusable multimodal formats. Contemporary interpretation occurred when traditional crafts, festivals, architecture, food, or performance were connected with present-day visual language and everyday narratives (Cao, 2022). Participatory identity emerged because audiences could discuss, share, and reinterpret cultural content rather than receive it passively (Hall & Du Gay, 1996). Cross-cultural understanding became possible when translation, subtitles, explanatory context, and visual narration lowered practical barriers to access. These findings answer RQ2 and correspond directly to the second research objective.

Risks and contextual conditions

Five constraints moderated the process. Fragmentation could reduce complex traditions to isolated images or facts. Entertainment-driven framing could prioritize novelty and emotional impact over accuracy, a tendency reinforced by the popularity logic of social media (van Dijck & Poell, 2013). Homogenization could reproduce successful formulas and narrow the diversity of cultural representation. Algorithmic visibility could privilege content that performs well according to platform metrics rather than content with the greatest cultural value (Gillespie, 2014; Napoli, 2015). Finally, cultural translation gaps could produce misunderstanding when symbols are detached from historical, linguistic, or social contexts (Appadurai, 1996). These findings answer RQ3 and indicate that reach does not automatically produce understanding.

Table 3 Alignment of objectives, analytical dimensions, and findings

Research objective	Analytical dimension	Principal finding
1. Analyze transformed channels and forms	Platform affordances	Immediacy, networked reach, multimodality, and cross-platform circulation expand access and expressive possibilities
2. Synthesize communication value	Journalistic practices and audience engagement	Contextualization and participation generate visibility, contemporary interpretation, participatory identity, and cross-cultural understanding
3. Develop framework and guidelines	Moderating risks and integrated process	Responsible outcomes depend on accuracy, context, ethics, cultural sensitivity, and awareness of algorithmic constraints

Discussion

From Information Dissemination to Participatory Cultural Communication

The findings suggest that social media have transformed news-based cultural communication from a predominantly one-way dissemination process into a more interactive and participatory form of communication. Features such as sharing, commenting, multimedia storytelling, and algorithmic recommendation enable cultural news to circulate across diverse audiences and digital communities. This development is consistent with boyd and Ellison's (2007) discussion of social network sites and Hermida's (2010) examination of social media as an environment for participatory journalism. Jenkins (2006) further explains how participatory

culture enables audiences to contribute to the circulation and interpretation of media content. In communicating Chinese culture, these affordances create opportunities for audiences to engage with cultural traditions, historical narratives, and contemporary cultural practices. However, increased interaction does not automatically produce deeper cultural understanding. Journalistic mediation remains essential to ensure that participation is informed, meaningful, and respectful of cultural contexts.

Journalistic Practices and the Creation of Cultural Value

The findings also highlight the importance of journalistic practices in transforming cultural information into meaningful public knowledge. Contextualization, verification, narrative framing, and multimedia presentation help audiences understand the historical origins, symbolic meanings, and contemporary relevance of Chinese cultural expressions. Hall's (1997) theory of representation emphasizes that meaning is constructed through representational practices rather than simply transmitted as neutral information. Similarly, Couldry and Hepp (2017) demonstrate the importance of understanding media as part of the processes through which social reality is constructed. These perspectives suggest that cultural journalism should move beyond presenting traditional symbols as attractive visual objects and instead explain their significance within broader social and historical contexts. Audience engagement can further enhance cultural value by enabling discussion, personal interpretation, and the exchange of cultural experiences. Such practices strengthen cultural visibility while supporting contemporary interpretation and participatory identity.

Balancing Visibility, Engagement, and Cultural Understanding

Although social media affordances expand the visibility of Chinese culture, visibility should not be treated as equivalent to understanding. Algorithmic recommendation systems influence which cultural narratives receive attention, while engagement-oriented platform structures may privilege emotional, entertaining, or visually appealing content. Gillespie (2014)

highlights the influence of algorithms in organizing online visibility, while van Dijck and Poell (2013) explain how social media platforms operate according to specific technological and economic logics. Consequently, highly shared cultural content may attract substantial attention without communicating its historical complexity or cultural significance. Responsible news communication should therefore balance audience reach with accuracy, contextual depth, and representational diversity. Journalists should assess not only quantitative indicators, such as views and shares, but also qualitative evidence of audience understanding, constructive discussion, and informed cultural interpretation.

Cross-Cultural Understanding and Responsible Communication

The findings indicate that effective international communication of Chinese culture requires more than translating information into different languages. It involves explaining unfamiliar cultural references, acknowledging differences in historical experience, and presenting cultural meanings in ways that international audiences can understand without oversimplification. Appadurai (1996) emphasizes the significance of global cultural flows in shaping contemporary cultural interactions. Building on this perspective, cultural journalism should employ accessible narratives, accurate subtitles, contextual explanations, and diverse perspectives to facilitate cross-cultural dialogue. These practices can reduce interpretive barriers while avoiding stereotypes and decontextualized representations. Audience participation should also be managed responsibly through transparent moderation, correction of misinformation, and respect for cultural diversity.

Toward an Integrated Framework for Responsible Cultural News Communication

Taken together, the findings support an integrated conceptual framework connecting social media affordances, journalistic mediation, audience participation, and cultural communication outcomes. Social media provide the infrastructure for circulation and interaction; journalistic practices establish credibility and contextual meaning; audience

engagement encourages interpretation and dialogue; and responsible communication principles guide the achievement of cultural visibility, contemporary relevance, participatory identity, and cross-cultural understanding. This framework addresses the three research objectives by explaining how platform features transform communication, how journalistic and audience practices generate cultural value, and how these relationships can inform practical guidelines. Ultimately, successful communication of Chinese culture on social media should be evaluated not merely by the amount of attention content receives, but by its contribution to informed interpretation, cultural respect, and meaningful intercultural exchange.

New knowledge

The principal contribution is an integrated process model that explains how value is generated: platform affordances enable journalistic practices; journalistic practices shape opportunities for audience engagement; engagement extends circulation and interpretation; and these mechanisms produce cultural outcomes under the influence of risks and contexts (Bucher & Helmond, 2018; Guo et al., 2024; Jenkins, 2006). The model clarifies that neither technology, journalism, nor participation alone is sufficient. Their alignment is the decisive condition.

Conclusion

This study concludes that social media play a significant role in disseminating Chinese culture through news communication by expanding its reach, improving accessibility, and encouraging audience participation. The findings demonstrate that digital platforms enable traditional and contemporary cultural elements to reach wider audiences through timely reporting, multimedia storytelling, and cross-platform sharing. The study also highlights the importance of accurate information, cultural context, effective storytelling, and appropriate translation in making Chinese culture understandable and meaningful to diverse audiences.

However, the research identifies several challenges, including fragmented information, entertainment-oriented content, cultural homogenization, algorithmic bias in visibility, and difficulties in cross-cultural interpretation. These limitations indicate that technological development alone cannot guarantee effective cultural communication. Overall, the study achieves its objectives by explaining how social media facilitate cultural dissemination, identifying the factors that influence communication effectiveness, and highlighting the challenges that may limit cultural understanding. Its significance lies in emphasizing the need to integrate digital innovation with journalistic integrity, cultural authenticity, ethical responsibility, and intercultural sensitivity. This approach can help improve the communication of Chinese culture, strengthen cultural engagement, and promote mutual understanding across cultural boundaries.

Suggestions

1. For Media Organizations Combine short-form content with historical and cultural context. Verify information through credible sources and adapt storytelling to each platform while maintaining accuracy and meaning.
2. For the Public Develop media literacy, verify information before sharing, seek diverse perspectives, and participate responsibly in online discussions.
3. For International Communication Use accurate translations, subtitles, and culturally sensitive explanations to ensure information is understood across different cultural backgrounds.
4. For Future Research Examine how digital storytelling affects audience understanding, cultural awareness, and information retention across platforms and demographic groups.
5. Contribution to the Body of Knowledge This research highlights the importance of balancing accessibility, cultural accuracy, contextual understanding, and audience engagement to promote responsible and effective digital communication.

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