

A Study of Empathy-Based Communication of Jingdezhen Ceramic Culture on International Social Media Platforms

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Abstract: Empathy, originating from psychology, has been introduced into the field of journalism and communication in recent years, offering a new perspective for studying cultural communication activities. This paper explores the empathy-based communication of Jingdezhen ceramic culture on international social media platforms-YouTube, aiming to enhance the international influence of Jingdezhen ceramic culture and contribute to the construction of a positive international image of Jingdezhen. The study analyzes the current situation and existing problems of Jingdezhen ceramic culture communication on international social media, investigates the content and representation of empathy-based communication, and proposes optimization strategies based on empathy theory. The findings suggest that international social media platforms and Jingdezhen ceramic culture have a mutually beneficial relationship in empathy-based communication. Effective strategies should be adopted to optimize empathy-based communication of Jingdezhen ceramic culture on international social media.

1. Introduction

As a core carrier of excellent traditional Chinese culture, ceramic culture embodies thousands of years of craft wisdom and aesthetic philosophy. With the advancement of the "Cultural Digitalization Strategy," Jingdezhen ceramic culture has achieved global communication breakthroughs through short video platforms. According to the International Communication Index of Material Culture, Chinese ceramic content on YouTube reached 470 million views in 2025, covering 192 countries. Among these, short videos with over 100,000 views have become key carriers of cultural export, and their communication logic of breaking cultural barriers through emotional empathy deserves in-depth exploration.

In the past six months, short videos on Jingdezhen ceramics have experienced explosive growth.

The "Digital Kiln Fire" practice, for example, has transformed intangible cultural heritage techniques into "visualizable and interactive" forms, with content evolving from traditional craft demonstrations to contemporary artistic expressions. However, existing studies mostly focus on documentaries or domestic platforms, leaving a research gap in the emotional empathy mechanism of high-view short videos on YouTube. There is an urgent need for special analysis combined with the empathy-based communication context.

2. Literature Review of Empathy-based Communication

Empathy, initially rooted in psychology, has been defined by Barrett-Lenarrd (1981) as a cyclical process that includes empathetic listening, resonance, and internal psychological processes of personal understanding, followed by the expression of empathetic understanding and the acquisition of empathy.^[1] In recent years, domestic scholars have introduced the concept of empathy into the field of journalism and communication, combining it with communication to create a new research perspective. Zhao Jianguo (2021) defined empathy-based communication as the process in which communicators construct information contexts during news reporting to evoke understanding, identification, and emotional resonance among audiences towards the reported subjects.^[2]

Empathy-based communication has garnered extensive attention and in-depth research from scholars, with studies mainly focusing on theoretical research and practical strategies and effects of communication activities. Wu Fei (2021) systematically elaborated on the origin and development of empathy-based communication, emphasizing that enhanced communication can foster mutual understanding and respect among people from diverse cultural backgrounds, thereby establishing the concept of a community with a shared future for humanity.^[3] Xu Xiangdong (2023) traced the theoretical foundations of empathy, highlighting its significant practical implications in both daily life and major affairs. He also explored the conditions and pathways for triggering empathy-based communication from the perspective of communication effects.^[4]

In terms of practical application research, scholars have conducted micro-level analyses by integrating empathy theory with narratology and semiotics. They have examined the content and forms of communication practices, summarizing empathy-based communication strategies and their effects in cultural programs. For instance, Zhang Long and Zhao Ziyu (2022) investigated the empathetic portrayal of characters in recent urban-themed documentaries.^[5] Han Youhuan and Cui Ruilan (2024) comprehensively analyzed the empathy-based communication strategies of the short video "Escape from the British Museum." These studies primarily aim to achieve emotional and cognitive consensus through empathy-based communication strategies.^[6]

As an emerging field, empathy-based communication is still being explored for its theoretical resources. Utilizing empathy strategies to reduce cultural discounts and enhance international communication efficacy is gradually becoming a catalyst for promoting external publicity.

3. Current Status and Existing Problems of Jingdezhen Ceramic Culture Communication on International Social Media.

As an important part of the excellent traditional Chinese culture, the excellent traditional Chinese ceramic culture has gradually crossed the barriers and gaps caused by the characteristics of heterogeneous cultures in the process of cross - cultural communication, with its mass nature and non - ideological nature, and has shown the charm of the excellent traditional Chinese culture to the world. However, in the process of international communication, traditional ceramic culture still faces many practical difficulties, such as the content of communication not yet meeting the personalized needs of overseas audiences, limited space for communication, and marginalization of cultural communication. The ceramic culture of Jingdezhen, as an excellent example of Chinese

national culture, faces practical problems such as language symbol conflicts, inconsistent cultural symbols, rigid communication methods, and insufficient cultural identity, which are quite representative.^[7] Therefore, by sorting out the difficulties in the international communication of Jingdezhen ceramic culture and exploring the problems, it is possible to provide theoretical guidance for how Jingdezhen ceramic culture can take root in foreign countries.

3.1. Language Symbol Conflict and Lack of Cultural Connotation

Saussure, as a representative of the European Continental School of semiotics theory, proposed that "Language symbols are the most basic and universal symbol modes in the symbol environment. In the communication of symbol texts, language is an important carrier of symbol interaction." In the process of international communication of ceramic culture, language, as a medium and link for cultural and ideological exchanges between communicators and audiences, is used to communicate with the communicators through language symbols. The cultural information about Jingdezhen ceramics obtained through language communication will be easier to understand, and the communication efficiency can also be improved accordingly. However, most of the communicators of Jingdezhen ceramic culture are ceramic craftsmen in Jingdezhen. Most of them have little command of foreign language. In foreign communication practice, meeting the language needs of overseas audiences is the first priority. Language symbol conflicts will directly increase the difficulty of communication between the two sides and affect the efficiency of communication.

3.2. Rigid Communication Methods and Limited Influence on Audiences

The communication of Jingdezhen ceramic culture has not been able to adapt well to the Internet communication environment, which has put the overseas communication of Jingdezhen ceramic culture in a restricted state of development. On the one hand, the main body of the communication of Jingdezhen ceramic culture lacks the awareness of using local official or well-known media for publicity, and the influence of communication is relatively limited. On the other hand, the production of communication content lacks experience, including insufficient sensitivity to hot topics, inability to fully meet the diverse demands of the audience, and lack of social interaction to maintain the audience's attention stickiness. It is worth mentioning that mass communication has brought opportunities for the inheritance and communication of Jingdezhen ceramic culture. New media has also given the public the power to speak for themselves and obtain ceramic culture information. Everyone can become a communicator of Jingdezhen ceramic culture in the network.

3.3. Individual Cognitive Differences and insufficient cultural identity

With the increasing refinement of social division of labor, an invisible barrier has been set up between different industries and groups of people, making it difficult for them to truly understand each other's industry. Including in the field of mass communication, the phenomenon of information asymmetry widely exists in economic and social life, which is fully reflected in the communication of ceramic culture. In the process of international communication of Jingdezhen ceramic culture, due to the differences in cultural background and language between countries, and the knowledge barriers and information gaps caused by factors such as living areas, educational levels, life experiences, professional backgrounds and cognitive insights among overseas audiences, it is difficult for them to identify and judge Jingdezhen ceramic culture comprehensively and accurately with limited time and energy. They can only screen and filter relevant information, which will easily lead to deviations in information reception and understanding. It will also lead to the continuous repetition and reinforcement of one-sided cognition in the mass group, and produce new

information asymmetry.

4. Content Analysis of Empathy-Based Communication of Jingdezhen Ceramic Culture on International Social Media Platforms

The research period spans from May 1, 2025, to November 1, 2025. Short videos were retrieved through YouTube's open data API using bilingual keywords, including "Jingdezhen ceramic", and "Jingdezhen porcelain". Initial samples were restricted to those with $\geq 100,000$ views; after excluding advertisements, duplicate content, and videos not centered on core ceramic culture themes, 87 valid samples were finalized. (Table 1). Drawing on previous research literature and based on the data characteristics of this study, categories are constructed to explore how high-view Jingdezhen ceramic culture videos utilize hidden empathy factors to achieve significant communication effectiveness from two dimensions: language empathy and thematic resonance.

Table 1. Statistical Table of Core Sample Data

Video Type	Quantity (Videos)	Proportion (%)	Main Language Distribution	View Count Range (10,000 views)	Average View Count (10,000 views)	Average Engagement Rate (%)
Craft Demonstration	36	42	English (67%), Chinese (22%), Bilingual (11%)	10.2–128	41.8	4.7
Craftsman Narrative	24	28	English (58%), Bilingual (33%), Chinese (9%)	11.5–96.3	37.2	5.2
Cultural Popularization	15	17	English (73%), Bilingual (20%), Chinese (7%)	10.5–78.6	34.5	3.8
Creative Creation	11	13	English (64%), Bilingual (27%), Chinese (9%)	10.8–89.2	32.1	3.6
Total / Average	87	100	-	10.2–128	38.6	4.3

The core of video language empathy lies in balancing cultural connotations with cross-cultural comprehensibility. High-view short videos achieve effective communication of high-context ceramic culture through three key strategies. In terms of linguistic symbols, a dual-coding approach of "professional terminology + popular explanation" is adopted, simplifying complex concepts via verbal narration and phenomenological analogy, complemented by question-based openings and quantitative data to lower cognitive barriers. Narrative logic abandons non-linear expression, adopting a linear "goal-process-result" structure. Conflicts are constructed through frameworks such as "challenge-breakthrough" and "history-current situation-impact" to enhance emotional engagement. For cultural context, cultural symbols are interpreted through a three-layer expression of "symbol presentation-historical traceability-contemporary significance," supplemented by refined bilingual subtitles and cultural analogies to bridge cross-cultural understanding gaps.

High-view short videos establish cross-cultural emotional connections through three core themes. Craftsman spirit, as the primary emotional anchor (accounting for 42% of samples), focuses on microcosmic craft details and "persistence-breakthrough" craftsman stories. Personified expressions significantly increase engagement rates, evoking global audiences' reverence for the pursuit of excellence. The theme of integration of tradition and modernity (28% of samples) achieves a 17%

higher average view than other themes. It showcases the cross-border vitality of traditional crafts and modern elements through technological applications such as 3D printing, cultural and creative product development, and cultural tourism space presentation. The cultural dialogue theme (30% of samples) leverages the inherent gene of ceramic cultural exchange, presenting civilizational mutual learning from two dimensions: historical communication and contemporary transnational creation. It resolves cultural disputes with neutral expressions and constructs emotional identification with a community with a shared future for mankind.

5. The Case Study of Empathy-Based Communication of Jingdezhen Ceramic Culture on International Social Media Platforms

The empirical data of 87 high-view short videos reveal that the empathy mechanism of Jingdezhen ceramic culture in cross-cultural communication operates through three interconnected paths, which align with core tenets of empathy theory (e.g.,sensory empathy, identity empathy, and innovative empathy) while presenting unique characteristics of Jingdezhen ceramic culture. The top five videos are chosen to be the sample cases for more understanding about how empathy empowers the cultural communication of Jingdezhen ceramic culture. (Table 2)

Table 2. Data of Typical Sample Cases

Case No.	Video Type	Video Title (English)	Language	View Count (10,000 views)	Engagement Rate (%)	Core Content Highlights
C01	Craft Demonstration	Handmade Jingdezhen Blue and White Porcelain: Full Process	English	128	6.1	Comprehensive presentation of the 72 processes of blue and white porcelain making, integrated with time-lapse photography and macro close-ups
C18	Craftsman Narrative	A Foreign Artist's Dream in Jingdezhen	Bilingual	76.5	5.8	Cross-cultural creative journey of a New York-based artist, featuring narratives of conflict and integration
C32	Cultural Popularization	The Silk Road of Porcelain: East-West Exchange	English	41.2	4.3	Cross-ocean communication history of ceramic culture, validated by cultural relic comparisons
C45	Creative Creation	3D Printed Ceramic vs Traditional Craftsmanship	English	89.2	4.9	Comparison between technology and traditional craftsmanship, showcasing experimental creations

5.1. Visualization of Craftsmanship: Triggering Sensory Empathy through Authentic Presentation

Craft demonstration videos accounted for the largest proportion (42%) with the highest average view count (418,000 views), and the top-case C01 (1.28 million views, 6.1% engagement rate) exemplified the power of sensory empathy. The 72 processes of blue and white porcelain making, captured via time-lapse photography and macro close-ups, transform abstract craftsmanship into tangible, visually striking scenes—from the refinement of clay to the delicate brushwork of underglaze painting. This aligns with Hoffman's (2000) concept of “sensory empathy”: the detailed presentation of manual labor transcends linguistic and cultural barriers, allowing global audiences to intuitively perceive the dedication, precision, and artistry embedded in traditional craftsmanship. Unlike text-based cultural communication, the visual-centric narrative of short videos reduces cognitive load, enabling viewers from diverse cultural backgrounds to experience the tactile and aesthetic appeal of ceramic making, thereby fostering initial emotional resonance. Additionally, the authenticity of the production process—free from excessive commercialization or dramatization—reinforces credibility, a key prerequisite for cross-cultural empathy (Brewer & Gardner, 1996).

5.2. Cross-Cultural Narrative: Constructing Identity Empathy through Shared Human Experiences

Craftsman narrative videos achieved the highest average engagement rate (5.2%), with case C18 (765,000 views, 5.8% engagement rate) standing out for its focus on a New York artist's creative journey in Jingdezhen. This “outsider-insider” perspective embodies perspective-taking, a core dimension of empathy theory (Davis, 1983): the narrative of cultural conflict (e.g., adapting Western artistic concepts to traditional ceramic techniques) and integration (e.g., co-creation with local craftsmen) frames Jingdezhen ceramic culture not as an exotic, static relic, but as a dynamic space for cross-cultural dialogue. By centering the artist's personal struggles, curiosities, and achievements, the video transforms abstract cultural symbols into relatable human experiences—audience members from North America (38% of total viewers) and Europe (32%) can identify with the universal desire for creative exploration and cultural connection, transcending geographical and cultural boundaries. The high proportion of bilingual narratives (33%) in this category further enhances accessibility, enabling non-Chinese speakers to grasp the emotional nuances of the craftsman's journey and fostering identity empathy based on shared values of craftsmanship and innovation.

5.3. Tradition-Modernity Integration: Cultivating Innovative Empathy Through Contrast and Dialogue

Creative creation videos, though accounting for the smallest proportion (13%), demonstrated strong empathy potential, as seen in case C45 (892,000 views, 4.9% engagement rate) which compared 3D-printed ceramics with traditional craftsmanship. This contrast constructs “innovative empathy” by bridging traditional ceramic culture with modern technological discourse—a shared reference point for global audiences, particularly younger generations. According to Csikszentmihalyi's (1996) flow theory, the experimental collision between tradition and technology stimulates intellectual curiosity, encouraging viewers to reflect on the evolution of cultural heritage in the digital age. For audiences in Southeast Asia (15% of total viewers) and other regions experiencing rapid technological development, this narrative resonates with their own cultural identity struggles—balancing tradition and modernity—thus extending empathy from emotional

recognition to cognitive alignment. Moreover, such innovative presentations reposition Jingdezhen ceramic culture as a living, adaptive heritage rather than a static historical artifact, addressing the risk of “cultural exoticism” in cross-cultural communication and enabling audiences to perceive its relevance to contemporary life.

6. Conclusion

Guided by empathy theory, this study examines the issue of communication information homogenization in Jingdezhen ceramic culture videos on international social media platforms and proposes innovative pathways for cultural empathetic communication from three dimensions. In terms of linguistic expression, it adheres to the principle of “accurate translation + contextual compensation”: establishing a multilingual interpretation system for ceramic-specific terminology, and optimizing narrative logic tailored to audiences from diverse cultural backgrounds. For instance, linear narratives and conflict-driven plots are strengthened for low-context audiences, while implicit expressions are appropriately integrated for high-context audiences to align with their cultural cognitive patterns. In terms of content creation, the focus is placed on “traditional core + contemporary representation”: delving into emotional nuances in craftsmen’s stories, increasing the production of content that integrates technology with fashion elements, and forging global emotional connections through cross-border collaborations and dialogues with history. In terms of audio-visual production, emphasis is laid on “sensory experience + emotional encoding”: skillfully employing close-up shots and natural sound effects to enhance authenticity; constructing an emotional annotation system for visual symbols such as glaze colors and decorative patterns; and improving the efficiency of emotional transmission through the synergy of audio and visual elements.

The empathy-based communication of Jingdezhen ceramic culture on international social media platforms holds significant potential for enhancing the international influence of Jingdezhen and promoting cultural exchange. By addressing existing challenges and adopting effective strategies, it is possible to optimize empathy-based communication and achieve greater cultural resonance among international audiences. This study contributes to the theoretical development of empathy-based communication and provides practical guidance for the international communication of Jingdezhen ceramic culture. Future research should continue to explore innovative methods and technologies to further enhance the efficacy of empathy-based communication in the context of international cultural exchange.

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