

Measuring the Success of Grandpa Aki's Short Video Series in Cross-cultural Transmission of Traditional Chinese Culture

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Abstract

With the development of digitization and online platforms, short videos have become one of the ways to spread traditional Chinese culture. The success of Grandpa Aki's short videos is a model of cross-cultural transmission of traditional Chinese culture, especially craftsmanship, via short videos. However, few scholars have talked about the implications of cross-cultural transmission of Chinese excellent traditional culture brought by Grandpa Aki's short video series. The paper collected the title of the video, the view of the video and the proportion of positive comments and negative comments from the top 5 popular videos by using Python. The paper aims to identify (1) the characteristics of Grandpa Aki's short video series; (2) the reasons for the success of Grandpa Aki's short video series; (3) the implication of cross-cultural transmission of traditional Chinese culture from the success of Grandpa Aki's short video series. The results show that 1) these videos are characterized by an immersive experience and spread traditional Chinese culture in detail. 2) The reasons for the success of these videos are the strong curiosity about traditional Chinese culture from overseas citizens, the value of traditional Chinese culture, the entertainment value of these videos and the resonance from people. The paper provides a thinking mode for scholars to solve the dilemma of overseas dissemination of traditional Chinese culture.

Keywords: Traditional Chinese Culture, Cross-cultural Transmission, Short Video

Introduction

With the development of digitization and online platforms, short videos have become one of the ways to spread traditional Chinese culture. Many scholars analyzed the cross-cultural transmission of traditional Chinese culture by analyzing the overseas short video platform. The current study focused on the way to tell Chinese stories well through short videos (Zhang & Wu, 2020; Feng, Ren, & Wu, 2022), the cross-cultural communication effect of traditional Chinese culture (Li, Yang, Guang, & Mao, 2024; Zhao, 2020; Zhao, 2020), the influencing factors of cross-cultural communication effect (Li, Chen, Mao, & Huang, 2022; Yu & Zhu, 2020), the path of cross-cultural communication via short videos (Zhang & Zhou, 2022; Luo & Zhang, 2020), cultural difference in the process of the communication via short videos (Koh & De Fina, 2024) and the value of cross-cultural communication via short videos (Lu, Fu, & Zhang, 2021). However, few scholars analyze the implications of cross-cultural transmission of traditional Chinese culture.

Grandpa Aki's short videos are a model of cross-cultural transmission of traditional Chinese culture, especially craftsmanship, via short video. On 13 July 2020, a person named "Grandpa Aki" went viral on YouTube, which attracted a lot of attention from the media. He has been dubbed by netizens as a "contemporary Lu Ban" for his ability to make interesting wooden objects and toys without using any modern mechanical tools. As of 2024, his YouTube channel has received more than 400 million views. The popularity of Grandpa Aki's short videos overseas stems from the development of digitization and online platforms in China. The success of Grandpa Aki's short video is a model of cross-cultural transmission of excellent Chinese traditional culture, especially the craftsmanship, via short videos. An analysis of the characteristics of Grandpa Aki's short video series and reasons for the success of Grandpa Aki's short video series provides experience and feasible paths for people to use online platforms to tell Chinese stories well and enhance the transmission of Chinese culture. However, few scholars have talked about the implications of cross-cultural transmission of Chinese excellent traditional culture brought by Grandpa Aki's short video series. The paper analyses the implication of cross-cultural transmission of traditional Chinese culture from the success of Grandpa Aki's short video series by clarifying the characteristics of these videos and the reasons for the success of these videos. The paper aims to identify (1) the characteristics of Grandpa Aki's short video series; (2) the reasons for the success of Grandpa Aki's short video series; (3) the implication of cross-cultural transmission of traditional Chinese culture from the success of Grandpa Aki's short video series.

Methods

The Grandpa Aki's YouTube channel is the main channel for the Grandpa Aki to show his daily life to the overseas people. A purposive sample consisting of comments from the top 5 popular videos according to the view of the video. The data includes the title of the video, the view of the video and the proportion of positive comments and negative comments. Specific steps are as follows. If positive words, such as "amazing", "like" or "respect", are shown in the comment, the commenter is regarded to show positive sentiments towards the video. If negative words like "dislike", "hate" or "fake" are shown in the comment, the commenter is regarded to show negative sentiments towards the video. The purpose is to analyze the reasons for the success of Grandpa Aki's short video series and the characteristics of Grandpa Aki's short video series.

Firstly, I ranked the videos from Grandpa Aki's YouTube channel according to the view. Secondly, I got the title of the video, the view of the video. Thirdly, I got the top 1000 comments from these videos by using Python. Fourthly, I deleted the non-English comments, comments that have nothing to do with Grandpa Aki and comments without any words. Then I clarified whether the comment was negative or positive by analyzing the content of the comment. Finally, I got the proportion of positive comments and the negative comments.

Analysis and Discussion

Traditional Chinese Culture and Craftsmanship

Culture is the spiritual activities of human beings and their products, and the aggregation of the establishment, inheritance, creation and development of social phenomena and the inherent spirit (Zhang, 2010). The world has become a melting pot of cultures in which people with different cultures integrate. Henceforth, Understanding traditional Chinese culture is not only conducive to promoting the spread of Chinese culture but also is helpful for the integration of different cultures.

Craftsmanship is an important part of traditional Chinese culture. Craftsmanship is a kind of professional spirit, mainly including "dedicated perseverance", "dedication and honesty", "inheritance and creation", and "striving for perfection" (Mei, Han, & Chen, 2022). The spirit of craftsmanship has existed in China since ancient times. The invention of paper-making by Cai Lun and the invention of printing by Bisheng represent the typical of craftsmanship. These crafts are accumulated by generation, enriching the traditional Chinese culture. Grandpa Aki's short video is the embodiment of the craftsmanship in modern times. In the winter of 2012, Grandpa Aki cut off the middle finger of his right hand with his wood-cutting tool, but he started to work again in just seven or eight days after medical

treatment. This is the embodiment of the spirit of “dedicated perseverance”. The success of Grandpa Aki’s short video is a model of cross-cultural transmission of Chinese excellent traditional culture, especially the craftsmanship, via short videos.

Characteristics of Grandpa Aki’s short video series

The scenes in Grandpa Aki’s short video series are characterized by diverse narrative processes and multiple narrative subjects, including family members and other subjects. Up to now, the total views of Grandpa Aki’s short video series have been 3.35 million, and his YouTube followers reached more than 1.7 million. His most popular videos are about wooden arched bridges, axes, bamboo waterwheels, stoves and Luban stools. The specific data is shown in Table 1. The date for the data collection is May 2024.

Table 1: View, Number and Proportion of Negative and Positive Comments in Top 5 Short Videos

NO.	Title	View (k)	Positive Comment	Negative Comment
1	Grandpa Aki creates a wooden arch bridge, no nails, very powerful craftsman Link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PYkgEf3eWqA	58,930	937, 99.8%	2,02%
2	The rural grandpa turned a pile of waste bamboo into a small water wheel with aura, and the bamboo man could grind the rice, which is creative Link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5qCIYJwADVw&t=37s	16,950	489, 100%	0,0%
3	The simplified version of Luban stool production Link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pt7CdJECjdc&t=12s	12,710	800, 99.8%	2,2%
4	The rural grandfather makes a bird-repelling artifact, his hand and wisdom solve the problem of rice stealing Link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ayx351iLHho&t=431s	5,480	453, 100%	0,0%
5	Grandpa Aki makes bamboo cups, natural and environmentally friendly Link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ljnma8gWZc4	4,520	545, 100%	0,0%

According to Table 1, the top five videos are all about the daily life of Grandpa Aki. The first video describes how Grandpa Aki creates a wooden arch bridge. The second video describes how Grandpa Aki turns a pile of waste bamboo into a small water wheel with aura. The third video describes how Grandpa Aki makes toys by using a Luban stool. The fourth video describes how Grandpa Aki makes a bird-repelling artifact. The fifth video depicts that Grandpa Aki makes bamboo cups. By analyzing the content of these short

videos, it can be concluded that Grandpa Aki's short video series has the following characteristics.

These videos are characterized by an immersive experience. Immersion experience refers to the situation in which people are satisfied and calm when he or she is completely attracted to a certain activity. Grandpa Aki's short video series has successfully rendered a leisurely and quiet atmosphere, creating a paradise away from the hustle and bustle of the world by using light music to create an idyllic mood of calm and nature. The unsubtitled and non-verbal videos give the audience enough space for imagination and purely enjoy the rustic and natural sounds of the Chinese countryside.

Another characteristic is that these videos spread traditional Chinese culture in detail. Although a short video with good audio-visual language expression can attract audiences, the audience will have no desire to watch the video on the condition in case of lack of distinctive content. Grandpa Aki's short video focuses on the spirit of craftsmanship, demonstrating the unique charm of Chinese culture.

Reasons for the Success of Grandpa Aki's short video

Overseas citizens have a strong curiosity about traditional Chinese culture. China has a vast and profound culture (Jiang, 2021). According to Table 1, the comments from the top 5 videos are mostly positive. Foreigner citizens expressed their positive sentiments by expressing their wish to learn traditional crafts and their interest in the craftsmanship of Grandpa Aki and so on.

Another reason for the success of these videos is that traditional Chinese culture has value. Grandpa Aki's short video has realized culture dissemination to a large extent. First of all, Grandpa Aki's videos have no flashy filming techniques or gorgeous special effects. He uses only a few minutes to tell the real life of a craftsman, showing the "dedicated perseverance" in craftsmanship.

What's more, Grandpa Aki's videos have entertainment value. Through his contextualized interactions with his grandson, he presents the simplicity and purity of village life. In the videos, Grandpa Aki, wearing a straw hat and a friendly smile, uses a pair of wrinkled hands and traditional carpenter tools to make toys for his grandson. By watching his videos, people can immerse themselves in village life.

Furthermore, people can resonate with the life in the video. The pace of modern life is getting faster and faster, and most people live a nine-to-five life (Pan & Wang, 2020). So, people are eager to learn about different life by watching short videos to increase the fun of life. Grandpa Aki's short video is exactly the embodiment of a quiet and serene life. For example, when he teases

his little grandson to play with something, he will say 'I'll make it for you'. The scene between Grandpa Aki and his grandson reminds many foreigners of their childhood. Through the interaction between Grandpa Aki and his grandson, people can feel the simplicity and quietness of the countryside. His exquisite handcrafted products resonate with the audience's emotions.

Implication of Cross-cultural Transmission of Traditional Chinese Culture

Build a digital platform. The dissemination of traditional Chinese culture should make full use of the digital platform. In recent years, China has strongly supported the development of information technology, which has facilitated the diversification of communication methods. China has made initial progress in the cause of disseminating Chinese outstanding traditional culture on overseas platforms. Future development requires the construction of a specialized platform for the interpretation of traditional Chinese culture. By pooling and integrating resources, communicators can minimize the difficulty for overseas audiences to obtain information about Chinese culture. At the same time, communicators also should continuously improve the professionalism and authority of telling Chinese culture, so that more overseas people can understand and study Chinese culture.

Tap into the power of the private sector. The rich content presented in Grandpa Aki's short video contains deep cultural connotations and unique cultural imprints. One of the reasons why Grandpa Aki's short videos have been well received is that they are rich in content, complete, and able to express traditional Chinese culture uniquely and distinctively. Telling Chinese stories well requires the state and every Chinese citizen to take responsibility. Therefore, communicators should focus on mobilizing the power of the private sector. Only on such a basis can communicators better pass on and promote traditional Chinese culture and realize the inheritance and development of the traditional Chinese culture of the Chinese nation.

Stay close to people's lives and subtly spread the traditional Chinese culture. Xi Jinping, President of the People's Republic of China, said that literary and art workers should adhere to a people-centered orientation (Deng, 2023). In the new era, creators need to think about how to present traditional culture in a more vivid and interesting form and how to choose content that is both representative and interesting when promoting the dissemination of outstanding traditional Chinese culture. This requires creators to dig deep into the connotation and essence of traditional Chinese culture so as to make traditional Chinese culture more attractive and easier to be accepted and understood by the public. In the new era, how creators can promote the dissemination of Chinese outstanding traditional culture in a more vivid and interesting form and how to choose content that is both representative and interesting are issues communicators need to seriously consider when

innovating and disseminating outstanding traditional Chinese culture. Grandpa Aki's short video presents the spirit of craftsmanship in a daily form by selecting themes closely related to people's lives, such as traditional handicrafts and folk skills, and using actual scenes as the shooting background. He skilfully integrates the heritage of traditional Chinese culture in the Chinese nation into the video content. This way of selecting materials is close to the lives of the people, which makes the audience feel the fun and pleasure contained in the video while enjoying it. In this way, Grandpa Aki's short videos have successfully conveyed the values of craftsmanship and traditional culture, triggering resonance and praise from the general audience. These contents are rich in life flavor and can give people a visual understanding of Chinese culture.

Conclusions

Telling Chinese stories well is an important issue in the development of society. Great philosophical and social science workers should work together to promote creative transformation and innovation under the conditions of the new era (Wang, 2021). The paper analyses the implication of cross-cultural transmission of traditional Chinese culture from the success of Grandpa Aki's short video series by clarifying the characteristics of these videos and the reasons for the success of these videos. The results show that 1) these videos are characterized by an immersive experience and spread traditional Chinese culture in detail. 2) The reasons for the success of these videos are the strong curiosity about traditional Chinese culture from overseas citizens, the value of traditional Chinese culture, the entertainment value of these videos and the resonance from people. This study provides a thinking mode for scholars to solve the dilemma of overseas dissemination of traditional Chinese culture. Building a digital platform, tapping into the power of the private sector and staying close to people's lives and subtly spreading the traditional Chinese culture are vital to solve the dilemma of overseas dissemination of traditional Chinese culture. However, this study only analyses the new modes and ways of creative transformation of traditional Chinese culture overseas from the perspective of an individual case, and more data are needed to support it. Future research should pay more attention to the comments of these videos to clarify the effect of the cross-cultural transmission of traditional Chinese culture.

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Data Availability: All data are included in the content of the paper.

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