

## Creative Way to Spread Traditional Chinese Culture Via Douyin App

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*Abstract: Since its launch in September 2016, Douyin App has developed rapidly, and is dominated by entertainment. Since 2018, Douyin app began to pursue the improvement of the quality, systematically promote the penetration and dissemination of traditional culture in the platform. Douyin proves to be a creative alternative to spread traditional Chinese culture and cultural heritages. With the help of traditional culture, the competitiveness and taste of Douyin will be greatly improved.*

*Keywords: Douyin, Traditional Chinese Culture, Cultural Heritages.*

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### 1. DEVELOPMENT

Currently, Social media in China is experiencing impressive growth. According to the 42th Statistical Report on Internet Development in China, by June 2018, the number of Chinese netizens reached 802 million, mobile Internet users reached 788million, and the percentage of Internet surfing via mobile was as high as 98.3% [1]. As smartphone is no longer luxury in China, mobile social media become part of daily life for netizen in China. Douyin ranks very high for mobile social media users in China. More and more ordinary persons use Douyin app for entertainment in their leisure time.

As a mobile social media, Douyin has become part of ordinary life for most young generations as well as some elders. By June 12th, 2018, Douyin has attracted 166 million active users, with the majority aged below 30, announced by Beijing ByteDance Technology [2]. Douyin users spend an average of 12.6 hours on a monthly basis. Douyin has been on top of the downloading chart at the China iOS Store for months. Short video accounted for 7.4% of the total time Chinese people spent online in May [3]. According to one survey launched by one Wechat platform, 38% of those surveyed surf on the Douyin app after work in the past month. According to one report in the past six months, the average user spent 20.27 minutes on Douyin every day. According to the survey of recruitment by Zhilian in 2018, 37.2% of the surveyed said that the reason why they sleep late is surfing on the net and indulging in short videos. [4]

### 2. CREATIVE ALTERNATIVE TO SPREAD CULTURE

According to use and gratification theory, users use this app to meet all kinds of needs, most important, to amuse themselves, spend the leisure time, release pressure and relax. With the development of visual medium, the age of “graph-reading” is coming. Video sharing is a growing category of time

spent online by Chinese users. Researches show that vivid posts with videos and pictures can attract more followers. As short video music app, Douyin provides videos that cater to users' reading habit. In *Entertainment to Death*, Pozman once said that "all public discourse is increasingly appearing in the form of entertainment and becomes a cultural spirit. Our politics, religion, news, sports, education and commerce are willing to become appendages of entertainment, without complaint or even silence. As a result, we become a species of entertainment to death." [5]

The way of content production by users is called as "cognitive surplus" by Scherky, a kind of constructive use of free time and leisure time to engage in creative activities, not just for consumption. Diffusing of traditional culture by Douyin app, and disseminating traditional culture to young people in a way they like, is kind of "cognitive surplus" of the general public. Douyin can be a more convenient and accessible tool for culture diffusion and education in China. So, it's an alternative to integrate Douyin into the ideal culture diffusion model. The spread of traditional culture will resist the infiltration of various harmful social ideas. Douyin should devote to spread rationality and humanistic spirit instead of value nihilism and cultural nihilism. Positive information and excellent traditional culture should exclude vulgar superficial information and seize what Luo Zhenyu calls "Gross Domestic Time". Therefore, how to let the general public, especially the young people who use Douyin, creatively making use of their leisure time to create and disseminate elegant traditional culture independently, instead of indulging in crazy surfing for meaningless content and thus falling into a situation of emptiness and loneliness, has become an arduous but hopeful task.

Studies show that traditional culture can be popularized via the Internet and new media. With increasing use of new media applications, they grow to be a means of popularizing the traditional culture by ordinary netizen whether consciously or unconsciously and whether purposefully or not. The materials chosen and transmitted by netizens can reach zillions of people judging from the perspective of users themselves.

### **3. TRADITIONAL CULTURE CAN ALSO BE ENTERTAINING**

In March 2018, Douyin launched the Good Challenge Program and Social Responsibility Program. In June, the "Thousand People to Inherit Traditional Culture Program" was launched. The purpose of these programs is that more and more people will participate in promoting and disseminate traditional culture through this platform. Short video platforms, innovatively offering a fun, popular and easy way to explore the traditional art forms, are receiving a lot of positive feedbacks from China's young generations.

Traditional Chinese culture and art has gain a foothold on short video platforms and attracted a large number of young followers. Traditional Chinese operas are a major beneficiary of the flourishing short video industry, and are even becoming popular among the young generation. Huangmei Opera, originated in Hubei and Anhui provinces, is one of the five major traditional operas in China. Recently, Huangmei Opera "Female Consort Prince" became a hit on short video platforms as a lot of young users covered the aria in their own way and shows great artistic talents. The interactive platforms are expanding the charm of the traditional opera among young people. Peking Opera artist Dong Fei started sharing his stories of the traditional Chinese art form on Douyin since 2018, taking the opera closer to more young Chinese. The videos of Li Shujian, a Henan opera performer and vice chief of

China Theater Association, have been viewed for over 20 million times in less than 20 days. The artist said he is amazed that such an ancient local opera could be loved by so many young people.

#### **4. INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE ARE PROMOTED VIA DOUYIN**

In addition to Chinese operas, intangible cultural heritage items are also actively promoted on short video platforms. Douyin launched a project called "Intangible Cultural Heritage Partnership," with a pledge that at least 10 intangible cultural inheritors would make at least one million yuan (140,000 U.S. dollars) every year or garner one million followers on the platform. According to the latest report Douyin released on June 12, the income of at least five inheritors has exceeded the million yuan mark, with over 40 boasting over a million followers on the platform. The report shows that as of May 31, 2020, clips uploaded on Douyin have featured 96 percent of the country's national intangible cultural heritage projects.[6]

Last year, 1,200 of 1,300 items of China's national intangible cultural heritage were presented on Douyin. A shadow play challenge saw 4.05 billion clicks and attracted a large number of young users to imitate the moves of the figures in shadow plays.[7] More and more inheritors of intangible cultural heritage (ICH) in China are taking it to online platforms to integrate ICH into modern life, in an attempt to attract more public attention on and consumption of ICH-related products, win people's respect for their wisdom and craftsmanship, and showcase the charm of cultural heritage.

Whether you're an ICH inheritor, enthusiast, promoter or simply someone who knows a local figure in ICH, you can share your personal stories about ICH by posting videos on video sharing platforms Douyin. Leading short-video and livestream platforms Douyin have launched ICH promotion topics, such as #GetToKnowICH (#ZoujinFeiyi) and #MyICHCraft (#WoDeFeiyiShouyi), where representative ICH inheritors have been posting videos showcasing their crafts, like embroidery and oral stunts.[8]

Qiao Xue, a young inheritor of handmade leather art, an item of the ICH list of Yinchuan city in northwest China's Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region, opened an account on short video platform Douyin, also known as Tik Tok last July to show her expertise in leather carving. In less than a year, Qiao has hosted nearly 60 livestreaming shows on the platform, selling handmade leather products totaling two million yuan (around \$282,789), with the highest turnover created in a single livestreaming show hitting 450,000 yuan. So far, clips uploaded on Douyin have featured 96 percent of China's national intangible cultural heritage projects, or 1,318 items. The number of videos related to intangible cultural heritage programs posted on the platform has hit 48 million, with more than 200 billion views and nearly 6.5 billion likes.[9]

China marked its Cultural and Natural Heritage Day on June 13 and the country's short video apps commemorated the occasion by publishing their latest reports on their efforts to boost traditional culture online and infuse new blood into ancient heritage.

#### **5. CONCLUSION**

Short video apps, like Douyin, are all the rage among the younger generation thanks to the plethora of filters and functions and quirky animations. The new trend is benefiting old traditions, and ancient Chinese culture is finding its place among modern millennials. As time goes by, Douyin grows to be

a means of popularizing the traditional culture by ordinary netizen whether consciously or unconsciously and whether purposefully or not. The traditional culture contributed by netizen themselves and disseminated via Douyin is more easily welcomed and accepted by netizens. Quite a lot of traditional culture has been generated and transmitted among tremendous numbers of users via Douyin, which approve that enormous potential of Douyin to affect the diffusion of culture among ordinary people. Whether and how this trend would affect the diffusion of culture among the general public remains to be observed.

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