

Original Paper

How Does Social Media Affect Traditional Culture

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Abstract

In the 21st century, with the changes in mass media, new forms of social media have emerged. Social media has become an indispensable part of human society, thoroughly integrated into various aspects of people's lives. Social media plays an important role in the dissemination and promotion of traditional culture. However, in recent years, many new forms of social media have inappropriately used or showcased traditional culture and cultural heritage for the sake of entertainment, neglecting the respect for traditional culture and the understanding of its cultural essence, or directly engaging in cultural appropriation. This paper explores how to better use social media to promote and disseminate traditional culture through collecting and comparing the impact of social media on the dissemination of traditional culture, how to use social media in a correct manner.

Keywords

social media, traditional culture, cultural appropriation, medium

1. Introduction

This research is based on the idea from learning our class text, Everyday Use and discussing heritage. This then led to a discussion of the appropriate use of cultural heritage. I then researched this idea further, and focused on the study of how social media and short-formed videos have positively and negatively influenced the traditional culture of the consciousness of the general public. I became further interested in finding out how social media will impact this further in the future and how we can instead use social media positively. The most useful and valid sources I found were the book "Amusing ourselves to death" by Neil Postman. Neil was a well-respected author and media theorist. Other useful and valid sources I found were articles from on-line respected news sites, such as the New Zealand Herald. Newspapers are bound by rules of journalism such as providing a balanced argument and providing information from verifiable and trustworthy sources only through their editing processes. Another useful source was YouTube and a video from Chinese Youtuber Li Ziqi. Li is a valid and trustworthy source as she is a youtuber with millions of followers and has made many famous videos.

The author who wrote her story into news is from New Zealand Herald, a well-known and authoritative news website in New Zealand. The author not only introduces Li Ziqi's subjects and methods in detail, but also provides us with points of view worthy of reference. So it is very trustworthy.

2. What Are the Negative Ways Social Media and Short-Form Videos Are Used to Show Uicultural Heritage?

To help me gain a multi-dimensional understanding of the influence of social media, I searched various materials and references. One source I used to help me answer this question was "*Amusing ourselves to death*" by Neil Postman. This book is about the future human lifestyle and how we are being influenced by social media. I think we are today in the midst of the author's prediction that "television turns everything into banal entertainment – including education and news" (Sowin, 2005). I found this book to be very informative as it helped me to explore the changes in people's way of life that the emergence of television media in the last century has had and the profound impact of the changes in mainstream media on the general public and society. This links to my theory that social media often shows cultural traditional heritage inappropriately, for simple entertainment only forgetting the respect and importance of many cultural traditions for those whose tradition it is. For example, after a TikTok video went viral, a headline from an article in the NZ Herald reads, "America's Cup partygoers slammed for cultural appropriation in mock haka video". This article explains that traditional culture will be misunderstood by some short-formed videos posted by influencers. The haka videos point out the cultural error caused by Tik Tok and introduced the views of many relevant experts, Māori Party co-leader Debbie Ngarewa-Packer said it "people expect a better degree of behaviour than appropriating a culture in a derogatory way. They could have used a better way to present the Haka culture, instead of making haka videos just for fun". Clearly social media and short form videos for entertainment can be damaging and disrespectful for cultural traditions where these are misappropriated.

3. What Are the Positive Ways Social Media and Short-Form Videos Are Used to Show Cultural Hheritance?

Chinese Youtuber Li Ziqi presents us with information on how social media and short videos have attracted many foreign tourists to visit China and experience traditional culture, with many scenic spots posed online to sell and encourage tourists to visit and partake in traditional Chinese culture. This made me understand that short videos can not only promote traditional culture, but also bring economic benefits to many impoverished areas and increase the income of local farmers. However, this positive side can also be negative. An example is that while these culturally traditional things exist, are they real, do they exist for the right traditional reason or are they just a way to make money and therefore nothing more than cultural misappropriation, like those misusing the Haka for their own entertainment? For example, due to popularity created by tiktok videos, local people may have gained money and

popularity, however, are social media and short videos really showing real traditional culture? Is this kind of traditional cultural video purely for increasing tourist traffic worthy of praise?

By considering the information I gathered here, it's clear that social media and short-formed videos positively publicise traditional culture and effectively drive the economy. These findings somewhat support my hypothesis because social media and short videos have attracted many foreign tourists to visit China and experience traditional culture due to the contribution offered by Li Ziqi and others for example. Videos of Li Ziqi introduce many different viewers to different forms of traditional Chinese culture such as the local foods, culture and environment. Social media is the main economic driver for strange potemkin villages on the East China Sea. It's a landscape and particular genre of tourism that has been shaped by the pressures of social media. Whether that be Instagram or Twitter, the short video which is needed to document a perfect ,sensational experience has become a central part of Xiapu Country (Bywater, 2022). However, is this real and improving the understanding of traditional cultures, or actually losing and turning traditional cultural events and experiences into nothing more than fake tourist traps? Therefore, How can traditional culture be spread on social media and short video platforms in a better way in the future is a question worthy of us to deep consideration.

4. How Can Traditional Culture Be Spread on Social Media and Short-Form Videos in a Better Way in the Future?

According to the TEDx speech *How Culture and Technology Create One Another*, by **Ramesh Srinivasan** social media and short videos connect people together regardless of different races, cultures and beliefs, he says of people creating continent that “by *creating these videos they were able to collectively rally around the content produced by that technology to actually try to generate some forms of what we call in social sciences collective action from below*”. **Ramesh Srinivasan** goes on to tell us “It is not just technology creating and shaping culture, it is also culture creating and shaping technology”. The truth of really empowering cultural voices around technology is allowing those different voices to exist in parallel, speaking to and informing one another. It is really important to think about how to use social media and short video platforms to achieve cultural diversity in this world where digital technology is rapidly developing.

In my opinion, in order to be able to spread the culture in a better way on short form videos and social media. The users of short video and social media must independently and critically think about what information they have gathered from social-media and short-formed videos. The internet will provide individuals with complicated and different situations and expose them to many different cultures. In most cases, users should be equipped with abilities to clarify the reality of the information. For example, once people want to have one piece of information, individuals should firstly search different comments about what they need, and users should use critical thinking ability to distinguish the available or accessible and unavailable information, all of these can enable users to have a

multi-dimensional understanding about the information offered by social media to ensure the positive spreading of traditional cultures.

Also, makers and monitors of social media should also ensure the content to be correct and pay less attention to their profits behind all these videos, instead focusing on the influence that videos can give. The key reason may be the fact that once one information is posted on the internet, no matter if the knowledge is correct or not, it will have a great number of supporters or audience. Serving as publishers, they are responsible for making sure that viewers with not enough abilities to have information are on the right track. For example, had those who posted the Haka videos on Tiktok instead been exposed to culturally appropriate information, they would have known Haka are performed to welcome distinguished guests, or to acknowledge great achievements, occasions, or funerals, not to make a video of the Haka just for fun.

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