

Original Paper

The Communication Mechanism of Digital Music on National Culture in the New Media Era

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Abstract

The concept of “multidimensional integration” is a prominent theme and developmental trend in today’s music communication. The digital music industry, which stores music in digital formats and transmits it through the internet and wireless networks, is showing vigorous development momentum empowered by technology. As a convergent medium, digital music has strong penetration and easy breakout characteristics in cultural communication. Drawing on Simon Frith’s research on music, combined with the local practice of digital music, this paper discusses how music communication in the entertainment industry and the national culture it contains can survive and go international.

Keywords

communication science, digital music, cultural communication

1. Introduction

Traditional media sociology has always focused on “serious” and “heavy” media products. Although “entertainment” is an important ideological structure of media and is closely linked to news and art, under the perspective of elitism, entertainment is regarded as a pejorative term similar to “intellectual inferiority” and is difficult to enter the center of academic research. To provide a meaningful interpretation of entertainment, Simon Frith starts from the commodity, takes the oldest form of entertainment—music as the research object, and carries out academic research on popular music, discussing the impact of music on social culture, the operation mode of the music industry, and how music affects the audience’s emotional experience.

In recent years, China’s digital music market has grown rapidly, and the “music +” ecological industry chain of online and offline integration performances and virtual music festivals is gradually taking shape (Zhang & Li, 2020). Short video music creation has become a new channel for users to

participate in the communication of digital music culture. Therefore, this paper first analyzes the conditions for the flow of digital music, and then studies the cultural communication mechanism of digital music from the aspects of deconstruction and construction of music symbols, multimodal experience of music, and empathetic communication of music, to explore how to promote the national culture in music to the world.

2. Conditions for Music Flow in the New Media Era

2.1 Technological Advancements Provide Carriers for Music Communication

Simon Frith pointed out that the ever-changing technology provides the music industry with the functions of “storage” and “reproduction”. Music has evolved from the first stage of immediate appreciation and human brain storage to the second stage of music storage in the form of musical scores and then to the third stage of the invention of storage carriers and the mass sale of music products. The communication of music has also evolved from the natural communication of “word of mouth”, the communication of musical score symbols, the communication of record technology, to today’s mobile terminal communication.

Against the backdrop of the rise of the UGC (User-Generated Content) model post-Web 2.0, technology has not only provided a storage medium for the communication of music but has also facilitated the development of various mobile clients, creating a new platform for musical media. These platforms offer an effective medium for the interactive participation and emotional expression of interest-based communities. The immediacy and decentralization of the Internet have broken the limitations that only artists could compose music, allowing the audience to transition from being mere recipients to providers of content, participating in the creation of music. Concurrently, propelled by the development of AIGC (Artificial Intelligence Generated Content), the barriers to music production and distribution have been lowered, transforming the static experience of music into a “fluid experience,” providing technical support for the creation of music. Similar to the Crowdsourcing Journalism where the public spontaneously participates in news investigations and production, the Internet enables the audience to autonomously engage in music creation, promoting the production and communication of music.

In Internet social platforms primarily led by TikTok, the ample autonomy in user content creation is respected, and the audience’s re-creation of music also reflects their fragmented Internet product usage habits and the demand for emotional expression in content. According to data from TikTok’s music charts, the duration of the top ten songs is controlled within about one minute, with nearly seventy percent of the music lasting around half a minute. The integrity of music is stripped away, with short melodic sections replacing the natural integrity of music, moving from natural music to mimetic music, aligning with the audience’s fragmented media tendency characteristics.

2.2 *Music as a Medium—Audience Empathy under Media Affordance*

Simon Frith posits that what is directly provided to the public constitutes primary “entertainment”. When entertainment is catered to groups of the entertainment public, it is regarded as secondary entertainment mediated through the medium, and music is no exception. Music, which appeals to the auditory senses and emotional experiences, inherently possesses a stronger communicative power compared to print media and textual symbols. It can stream across various boundaries of time and space, sharing the fluidity and portability common with new media, capable of creating interactive and immersive experiences for the audience, thereby facilitating emotional resonance.

In the current era where communication technology is rapidly advancing, media technology enables the behavior of the audience and generates specific stimuli that place the audience within particular contexts (Dong, Li, & Liu, 2020). For instance, TikTok offers semi-thematic short music video production, providing users with video production templates or background music to inspire their creative ideas, encouraging them to integrate music with body language and facial expressions during the video shooting process. The audience can create their own music videos through performance forms such as gesture dances or solo dances. In this process, the audience not only expresses their emotions but also gains affirmation and strengthens their sense of belonging to the group through interaction with others, achieving a sense of self-satisfaction and heightened emotional energy.

3. How Can the National Culture in Digital Music Go Global

3.1 *Constructing and Deconstructing Musical Cultural Symbols*

In contemporary culture, “transmedia music” has become the primary mode of musical expression. As a medium, music interacts with other media to combine auditory symbols with visual and linguistic symbols, presenting a variety of meaning patterns that promote the integration of sound and image. For instance, music in films, musicals, and games coordinates with the visual imagery to form diegetic or non-diegetic sounds, establishing different semantic relationships such as “correspondence”, “counterpoint”, and “opposition” with the primary medium (Tian, 2018), aiding in the semantic expression of cultural communication. However, the construction of musical symbols is predicated on shared cultural customs and conventions, meaning that only specific ethnic groups or audiences with a common culture can decode and access this culture, while “outsiders” outside of the culture may struggle to interpret the cultural connotations endowed in the music.

At the same time, music as a symbol is not only endowed with meaning in information communication but also possesses a powerful expressive capacity in metaphorical emotional expression. French semiotician Jean-Jacques Nattiez points out that musical symbols have a dual nature; the phonetic and tonal structures of musical language constitute the “signifier” of the musical symbol, triggering associations with music. Compared to the “signified” composed of the textual meaning of music, the

“signifier” is received by the audience first and has a significant advantage in communication, promoting the audience to elaborate on the “signified” after feeling the emotional expression of the music.

It can be seen that cultural communication in digital music is a process where the transmitter constructs musical symbols and language codes, and the audience feels the “signifier” of the musical symbols and interprets the “signified” in the process of deconstruction. Therefore, the author believes that to globalize the communication of national culture in digital music, it is necessary to interpret the text of the music and the local cultural codes to promote communication between people and musical symbols, between people and the national culture contained in the musical symbols, and among audiences of different ethnicities.

3.2 Enhancing Multimodal Experiences in Music Communication

Information communication under the integration of all media has multimodal and multidimensional composite characteristics, providing possibilities for the visualization of music communication. With the aid of visual imagery, barriers between different cultures are broken down, and the connotations and implications of music can be more directly perceived by the audience (LI, 2019). At the same time, linguistic memes in the music communication process also build a bridge for the communication among audiences from different cultural backgrounds. The more languages the used linguistic memes can span, the broader the scope of cross-cultural communication, and the higher the openness of audience participation.

Simon Frith points out in “Entertainment” that the entertainment industry is a talent industry. Cross-cultural video communication requires more professional text settings, coherent soundtracks, professional camera language, and picture quality (Wu & Yan, 2016). To enhance the multimodality in music cultural communication, guidance and control by journalism professionals are needed to ensure the quality of video production and avoid misinterpretation of culture by the audience. In addition, the process of song recommendation on the TikTok platform mentioned earlier also demonstrates the key role of opinion leaders in music communication. In the communication of music culture, the influence of opinion leaders in various countries should be leveraged to promote the global communication of music and national culture.

Therefore, to tell the story of the national culture in music, video creators need to use visual information and linguistic memes to immerse the audience in the cultural charm of music through character shaping, costume matching, performance situation setting, musical instrument display, and other forms, enriching media expression and achieving the virtual presence of the audience. At the same time, the talent force in the music industry should control the quality of cross-cultural video content output and leverage the influence of opinion leaders in video communication to promote the global flow of culture in music.

3.3 Shaping Collective Memory in Cross-Cultural Contexts through Empathetic Communication

The communication of music is a process where the communicator and the recipient interact and provide feedback due to a shared focus—music, leading to emotional resonance, which constitutes a complete model of the interaction ritual chain. Emotional energy, as a core element in the interaction ritual chain, is an important driving force in the interaction between individuals and society.

Taking the decentralized field constructed by TikTok short videos as an example, under the availability of technology, the barriers of time and space are broken by new media technologies, increasing the authenticity of physical presence, and the audience's emotional experience is also more intense. The audience is given the space for personal expression and free speech, and can selectively participate in topics related to the music they are interested in, promoting the push of music-related videos through likes, shares, and comments, interacting with creators, and encouraging the continuous production of music creators.

The author believes that the communication of music is not only due to the invisible social network composed of groups with the same musical interests that breaks the limitations of time and space, but more importantly, the audience's need for emotional resonance in the relationship of interest. Only internet products with strong emotional power can stand out from a large amount of information and win the favor of users. Under the stimulation of music, the audience, combining their personal cognition of music, induces the emotional tone of the music, resonates emotionally with the music creators, and identifies with the group, satisfying their own emotional catharsis needs.

In international communication, empathetic communication is regarded as an important way to shape the national image and tell the national story. Therefore, in the process of shaping the collective memory of music across cultures, narrative methods should be used to shape or tell touching cultural stories related to music, making the communication of music more three-dimensional, triggering emotional resonance among audiences from different cultural backgrounds, and actively using music platform accounts in social interactions to shape collective memory, and enhancing the overseas communication capability of music culture.

4. Conclusion

With the development and empowerment of technology, the conditions for music flow have changed, and the boundaries between production and consumption have become blurred due to digital technology. The reduction in the difficulty of technological access decentralizes the power of music production to the public, providing a foundation for users to participate in music creation with subjective initiative. Communicators, under the interaction ritual chain model, use the availability of technology to provide a bridge for the audience to establish emotional connections, and embed this model in the process of song promotion, playing the role of opinion leaders to promote a feedback loop

between the audience and users. The audience's emotional interaction and the need for self-expression are satisfied in the process of media contact, becoming the main force in the production of short video music. The indigenous national culture in music, under the background of media convergence, should not only increase the exchange between music media and other media, enhance the audience's multi-sensory experience, and establish collective memory through narrative storytelling to promote emotional resonance between overseas audiences and culture, but also timely explain and structure the "signified" of musical symbols to facilitate cross-cultural communication and exchange.

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