

Original Paper

A Study of the Construction and Communication Strategies of China's International Discourse in the Context of New Digital

Media

—A Case Study of Li Ziqi

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Abstract

Under the background of new digital media, the development and dissemination of short video in China is in full swing. Li Ziqi's short video is good at spreading Chinese traditional culture and makes important contribution to the construction of China's international image. Li Ziqi's retirement and comeback as the top tier is worth discussing. Her success is due to high-quality and scarce content with idyllic life as the theme, international communication power that is widely welcomed internationally, strong personal image and aesthetic form that is full of colorful Chinese culture and so on. Therefore, the construction and dissemination strategy of China's international new media discourse has become rich and diversified, gradually cooperating with the theme to get further optimized.

Keywords

new digital media, Chinese international discourse, construction and communication, Li Ziqi

Introduction

The development of Intellectual Property (IP) shows the trend of diversification and globalization (Feng & Li, 2019, pp. 33-37). With the progress of science and technology and the popularization of the Internet, the development of short video is making the robust progress. Among many short videos, Li Ziqi quickly became popular around the world and stood out from the rest. Before retiring in 2020, Li Ziqi, as a creator of short videos, had a solid fan base, and her works were favored by domestic and foreign audiences. But as the passage of time and the renewal of new media, short video creators faced

unprecedented challenges. So did Li Ziqi. Therefore, she chose to retire and refine herself for that moment. After three years' silence, Li released two videos on Douyin, Kuaishou, Weibo and Youtube in the afternoon of November 12, 2024, announcing her return. The videos swept across mainland China and overseas and exploded in an instant (document to proof). There is no doubt that Li Ziqi is still the top tier.

It is worth discussing and studying that Li Ziqi chose to retirement from the peak and returned as the top tier, and it is paid close attention to by academic circles at home and abroad. As far as domestic research is concerned, many scholars focus on the researches of Chinese cultural values, traditional culture and Chinese cultural symbols (Liu, 2021), Cross-cultural Studies in International Discourse (Xin & Ye, 2020, pp. 7-23), Aesthetic form (Liu, 2020, pp. 84-87), and the effective dissemination of Chinese culture of Li Ziqi's short videos (Ye, 2020).

As far as international research is concerned, the international community attaches great importance to it and actively carries out research on Li Ziqi's videos. They discuss how she has successfully demonstrated Chinese traditional rural life and culture to the world through video content, as well as the role of such communication in bridging cultural barriers and enhancing international understanding and appreciation of Chinese culture. As far as cultural communication is concerned, scholars analyze that the reasons why she has gained much attention and fans on international social media includes content creation strategy, communication mode and other aspects etc. And the rural life presents the study of the appeal from the rural lifestyle she depicts to modern society and the significance of this presentation to arouse people's re-understanding of the value of the countryside. It has been confirmed by studies that her image and role as a woman, focusing on her independence, competence and creativity as a woman in a rural, as well as on the international impact on the female image and role perception. As far as the commercial value is concerned, some studies affirm its brand and commercial value, discuss the construction and development of her personal brand and the reference and enlightenment of her successful business model in the international scope.

1. Construction of International Discourse

Li Ziqi has become popular all over the world for she has attracted the attention of netizen after three years of retirement. There are three main reasons for this. First comes to the continuous output of high-quality content: in more than 3-year hiatus, Li Ziqi did not go with the flow, but continued to visit intangible cultural heritage artists to constantly understand Chinese traditional culture and enrich her own knowledge reserve and accumulate materials for high-quality content creation, constantly innovating and developing.

Traditional Chinese Culture deserves our attention, too. Li Ziqi's videos set China's countryside as the stage and mainly cover farming culture, cooking culture and handicraft culture. Farming culture as a

kind of custom culture is cultivated by human beings in long-term agricultural production. It is one of the earliest cultures in the world that exerts greatest influence on human beings, and the most extensive cultural type in our country (Peng, 2011, pp. 145-150). Li Ziqi embodies farming culture in a unique way and displays various traditional farming techniques in Li Ziqi's video that often take "the whole life of a crop" as the theme, recording the whole process of ploughing in spring, planting in summer, harvesting in autumn and storing in winter, and showing how those crops such as cucumber and tomato germinate from a seed to blossom and bear fruit. She personally participated in farming activities such as sowing, irrigation, fertilization, harvesting and other farming activities, so that the audience can intuitively understand the hardships and beauty of traditional farming.

In the video, Li Ziqi uses traditional agricultural tools and techniques, which is also closely linked to farming culture. Li Ziqi successfully planted tomatoes by adopting the traditional agricultural planting method of plug tray (seeding tray) in the video on July 14, 2020. Li Ziqi used seedling blocks and film sheds to grow cucumbers in a video on July 29, 2020, which undoubtedly combines traditional agricultural wisdom with modern planting techniques. These tools not only prompt the growth of crops, but also reflect the profound and handed down from generation to generation of traditional farming culture.

Also, cooking culture is an indispensable part of human that not only meets people's fundamental physiological needs, but also becomes a bridge linking the cultural exchange (Xu & Guo, 2013, pp. 2-9). Cooking culture integrates the choice of ingredients, the proportion of seasoning, the cooking methods of chefs and the eating customs and eating habits of different places. It reflects human understanding of food essentially. In this process, people constantly innovate cooking methods, which is an important carrier for communication and inheritance between different regions and cultures.

The videos of Li Ziqi are filled with cooking methods of traditional Chinese cuisine, vast majority of her videos, it can be seen that she does everything by herself and is strict with herself, from learning how to make, selecting materials, preparing ingredients to cooking. Every step is carried out in strict accordance with ancient and traditional processes.

During the process of making cuisine, Li Ziqi tries her best to maintain the original taste of the food materials. She acquires food raw materials by using original labor methods, contains and prepares the food materials with simple tools, and then cooks the cuisine with traditional cooking methods. This cooking way not only retains the original taste of the food, but also shows the charm and connotation of traditional Chinese cooking culture. Li Ziqi's cooking videos are not merely the introduction and display of cuisine, but more the reflection of a positive attitude towards life and the transmission of positive values. Through her own hands and efforts, she vividly shows that high-end food materials often only need the simplest cooking methods and conveys a life philosophy of diligence, simplicity and harmonious coexistence with nature to the audience. Meanwhile, Li Ziqi also shows the profound

background and infinite charm of Chinese cooking culture to the world through her videos.

Handicraft culture is an important carrier that bears the long history of the Chinese nation and the memory of traditional Chinese culture. Through manual skills, accumulated practice and pure natural material materials, its finished products can express rich spiritual connotations (Pan, 2018, pp. 46-52).

In today's era when machine-made products can replace handmade ones, handicraft products have gradually faded out of people's lives. However, Li Ziqi as a pure stream adopts the dissemination method of new media and the lens of the camera to unfold gradually one exquisite picture after another about traditional Chinese handicraft culture to people. In every frame and every background of Li Ziqi's videos, there lies Li Ziqi's deep awe for traditional Chinese handicraft culture and her determination to inherit it, which further reflects the true meaning of "fine work takes time".

2. Spreading of Traditional Chinese Intangible Cultural Heritages

The Shu embroidery culture, stitch by stitch, embroiders the delicacy and tenderness of the land of Bashu. Shu embroidery is famous in China for its exquisite craftsmanship, the application of colors and unique stitch techniques. Li Ziqi displayed the Shu embroidery culture through videos. Her videos seem to place the viewers in the cultural journey of thousands of years, making people intoxicated. On August 12, 2019, Li Ziqi shot a video on seeking knowledge of the Shu embroidery culture. On August 15, 2019, Li Ziqi shot a video on the embroidery of the Shu embroidery culture, showing every step of the embroidery in detail. On August 16, 2019, one day after learning the culture of embroidery, Li Ziqi learned the skill of making clothes with the Shu embroidery culture from her teacher. On August 19, 2019, she shot the last video about Shu embroidery, integrating the skills of the previous two videos, making a dress for herself with the Shu embroidery craftsmanship and showing the detailed process.

Wooden movable type is also among those important categories. In the era of working with printers and printing machines, the wooden movable type printing technique is particularly precious for it is not only a carrier of words but also a symbol of the wisdom of ancient Chinese people and needs to be passed down. Li Ziqi used the wooden movable type for typesetting, conducting a dialogue with the ancients in today's digital age, which is even more precious. From August 21, 2018 to August 24, 2018, Li Ziqi released a total of five videos about wooden movable type. From sharpening the knife, typesetting, writing the characters on the wooden blocks with a brush, carving, printing on the paper, and finally using carrier pigeons to send messages. Each step is complex and extremely tests patience and concentration. Finally, Li Ziqi demonstrated the oldest movable type printing in China to the world. Here comes to the silk flowers, which is probably mistaken for real ones, for each flower condenses the emotions, time and efforts of the craftsman. On April 18, 2021, Li Ziqi released a video, the content of which was making a set of peach blossom phoenix coronets using the traditional silk flower craftsmanship. Li Ziqi first drew the pattern of the petals on the cloth, then cut them, dyed them with

rouge radishes aired them, picked the stamens of peach blossoms, and finally combined them. The finished product was like real peach blossoms blooming slowly. The silk flowers in Li Ziqi's hands are not only colorful and diverse in shape, but also reveal an exquisite and transcendent vitality, which can show that all these are based on Li Ziqi's wonderful craftsmanship.

Then Blue dyeing follows up with the previous one. The blue dyeing technique develops with many years comes with its unique color and concept, radiates new vitality and vigor in modern society. From March 23, 2020 to April 20, 2020, for nearly a month, Li Ziqi successively shot 9 episodes of videos using the blue dyeing technique, Dyeing indigo-Starting the vat-Engraving the flower pattern plate-Appling the resist paste-Batik-Dyeing the cloth (From sowing-Harvesting and beating indigo-Starting the vat-Engraving the flower pattern plate-Appling the resist paste-Batik-Dyeing the cloth-Making clothes-Appreciating flowers). Every step bears the efforts of Li Ziqi. The clothes made with the blue dyeing technique are simple yet elegant, perfectly combining traditional culture with modern civilization.

Silkworm and Mulberry customs represent people's desire for the high quality life. From silkworm rearing to silk reeling and manufacturing, silkworm and mulberry culture carries the agricultural wisdom of the Chinese nation for thousands of years (Tao & Zhang, 2007, pp. 171-177). From October 17, 2018 to November 6, 2018, Li Ziqi shot the production of silk quilts. Through the handmade silk quilts, she showed the process of silk production, including boiling cocoons, rinsing silkworm pupae, opening and fluffing silkworm cocoons, airing, after airing, evenly spreading the cotton pouches, observing while spreading, laying them layer by layer on the platform, filling in the thin places, spreading out the thick places, finally, spreading to the desired thickness, finishing and trimming the corners, then fixing them with needles and threads, evenly fixing them with needles and threads to prevent the cotton from running out, and finally putting them into the quilt cover, and the silk quilt was completed. Li Ziqi personally participated in the entire process of silkworm and mulberry, reflecting the hard work and warmth contained in the customs.

Papermaking is a typical case for Chinese ancient wisdom. A piece of paper contains the thousand-year history of Chinese civilization. Papermaking is one of the Four Great Inventions of China, which enables Chinese civilization to be recorded and passed down. On December 18, 2017, Li Ziqi shot a video named "The Past and Present of Goupi Paper" (Goupi Paper is a kind of product of papermaking), and its content was about the entire process of making Goupi Paper. The process can be divided into the following steps: collecting materials, processing the bark, boiling the bark, cleaning and pounding, pulping and spreading the pulp, and the last step is cutting into the finished product. In every process of making Goupi Paper, Li Ziqi's respect for culture is reflected.

As a matter of fact, Brush, ink, rice paper and inkstone, also known as "The Four Treasures of the Study", are tools for writing in ancient China, and they are even more symbols of culture. During the

period from April 1st, 2019 to April 14th, Li Ziqi filmed videos about the production process of the Four Treasures of the Study. She utilized a large number of natural materials and introduced the production process with verbal descriptions. In this video, Li Ziqi also practiced Chinese calligraphy, freely wielding the brush and ink, allowing people to experience the powerful and unique charm of Chinese calligraphy.

Carved lacquerware craft with hidden patterns, also known as “red lacquer carving with hidden designs”, is a treasure of traditional Chinese lacquer art. It is known as the “Four Famous Dans of Peking handicrafts” together with cloisonné ivory carving, and jade carving. On November 12th, 2024, Li Ziqi, who had been stopped updating her videos for three years, made a strong comeback with a video titled “Carved lacquerware craft with Hidden Patterns, carving out the Auspicious Atmosphere of Purple Qi Coming from the East”.

The production process of carved lacquer with hidden patterns is cumbersome and intricate, mainly including the following steps: Firstly, the decorative work needs to be produced by the application of many coats of lacquer to a core material, and each layer must dry enough before applying the next staining, until the appropriate thickness is achieved. Next the craftsman can design the pattern and carve out the contour of the pattern on the lacquer body. Then, colors or apply decorative items such as gold or silver foil can be filled on the body. Finally, the entire surface will be covered with transparent lacquer, so that the patterns can be faintly visible and forming a unique artistic effect. During the whole production process, carving is the most complex and fascinating stage. It requires the craftsman to possess superb skills and extensive experience. Meanwhile, the “purple lacquer cabinet” made by Li Ziqi has a homophone for “Zi Qi’s Return” in Chinese, which also signified Li Ziqi’s triumphant return after a three-year hiatus.

Throughout her videos, Li Ziqi shows the charm and uniqueness of traditional Chinese culture to the world (Zhao, 2007, pp. 127-129). The core values of traditional Chinese culture reflect the wisdom and ideological essence of China. Li Ziqi’s videos present a rich variety of traditional Chinese culture, demonstrating its profound cultural heritage, and spreading it worldwide with unique aesthetic value and artistic expression.

3. The Expatriation for Li Ziqi’s Successful Video

The success of cultural output and cross-cultural communication plays an important role. Li Ziqi’s videos successfully spread China’s traditional culture, cuisine, handicrafts, and other content in a visual and symbolic way to global audiences. Besides, Beautifully composed frames can not be ignored. The popularity of Li Ziqi’s videos is also attributed to her filming and editing techniques. The composed frames are beautiful, and the colors are vibrant, providing a visual treat for audiences. Her filming techniques mainly have the following characteristics:

It's worth mentioning that the symmetrical composition plays an important part for his technique is frequently adopted by Li Ziqi in scenes showing traditional architecture and rural landscapes. For example, when filming traditional Chinese courtyards, the photographer always uses the courtyard's central axis as a benchmark, keeping the buildings, plants, and other elements on the left and right sides in a symmetrical distribution, giving a harmonious and stable beauty to the shot. This filming technique can well display the symmetrical beauty in traditional Chinese culture.

Besides, the framework composition makes a sense too. Li Ziqi is skilled at utilizing natural elements or the framework of architectural structures to highlight the main subject of her videos. For instance, when making traditional cuisine, she often films indoors through a window, where the window forms a natural framework, so that the audience's attention can be better focused on Li Ziqi, and the layer feeling of the whole framework can be better enhanced.

Also, the camera techniques play an indispensable role too. Close-up Shot: This is highly used in Li Ziqi's videos. During the filming process of handicraft production, this technique can capture the details of the production process, such as the shot of drawing petals when making silk flowers. In the process of cooking, this technique can focus on the color and texture of the ingredients, significantly stimulating the audience's visual senses and enhancing the attractiveness of the food to viewers.

Long Shot deserves our attention. This is frequently used to show the overall rural landscape and panoramic mountain views. For example, Li Ziqi often starts her videos with a long shot showing the entire village, mountains, and fields. This gives viewers a general impression of the environment and renders a peaceful and distant rural atmosphere, setting the emotional tone.

Here comes the tracking shot. This allows viewers to see the changes and production process of the entire scene more continuously. For example, when filming Li Ziqi walking home along a rural path, the photographer can use a tracking shot, so that viewers will receive a sense of continuity in time and space, better immersing them in the scene.

Then comes the color matching. The harmony of Natural Colors deserve our attention. Li Ziqi's videos are set in rural life, with colors dominated by natural hues. Including the green of plants, the blue of the sky, and the black of the soil, all those colors can provide a uniquely fresh, natural, and beautiful visual effect. In addition, the color contrast cannot be ignored. In showcasing traditional costumes and architecture, color contrast is utilized by Li Ziqi. For example, in wooden architectures, she wears bright-colored clothing that forms a sharp contrast with the building's colors, highlighting both the character and Li Ziqi's wisdom in color matching in her videos.

The last lighting application can be presented in full utilization of natural light. Most of the videos are filmed through the natural light. When filming rural landscapes, the photographer applies the first ray of sunlight in the morning to create a sense of peace, while the afterglow of the evening sunset gives a sense of serenity, further inspiring viewers' longing for this lifestyle. As a matter of fact, the effects of

sidelight and backlight are also of high priority. Sidelight is often used to shoot the outline of people or objects. Sidelight makes the outline of the person clearer, enhancing the dimensionality of the scene. And backlight is usually used for special visual effects, creating a halo effect that can make the frame more artistic.

It also deserves our attention to notice the the effective sound effects. As one of the indispensable elements of short videos, sound has played a significant role in improving the expressive force of short videos and enhancing their communication effects. It occupies a major position in the content creation of short videos.

Specifically, the adoption of sound in Li Ziqi's videos is mainly manifested in the following aspects: in terms of vocal expression, she extensively uses dialogue and narration mainly in Mandarin and Sichuan dialect, achieving an emotional empathy with the audience. In terms of sound effects, natural and action-related sounds are recorded, making people feel a strong sense of the hustle and bustle of life. In terms of musical expression, the use of light and melodic instrumental music successfully evokes a sense of leisure and contentment in rural life. Compared with other dialogues, the dialogue between family members always makes people feel particularly warm, involuntarily reminding people of themselves and evoking viewers' emotional memories. This aligns with foreigners' expectations of Chinese family life and interactions.

As a matter of fact, it is quite important for people to notice the function of conveying peace and beauty. Li Ziqi's videos create an idyllic atmosphere of tranquility, far from the hustle and bustle of the city. They allow people to feel inner peace and a longing for a simple life in the fast-paced modern world. The interactions between Li Ziqi and her family in the videos are filled with the warmth of kinship, which makes viewers feel the warmth and happiness of home and cherish the time spent with family even more.

Conclusion

This paper examines Li Ziqi's short video career as a paradigm of effective cross-cultural communication and global intellectual property development. Central to her success is her strategic portrayal of traditional Chinese culture through three pillars: farming, cooking, and handicraft cultures, which collectively showcase China's intangible cultural heritage. By meticulously documenting processes like Shu embroidery, wooden movable type printing, silkworm customs, and carved lacquerware, her videos bridge historical traditions with modern aesthetics, emphasizing craftsmanship and cultural preservation. Li Ziqi's hiatus and return underscore an effective strategy to sustain relevance and quality, reinforcing her status as a top-tier cultural ambassador. Her work transcends mere entertainment, serving as a conduit for global audiences to engage with Chinese traditions, thereby enhancing international discourse and understanding. This case study highlights the potential of

digital media in revitalizing cultural heritage and fostering cross-cultural appreciation.

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