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On The Dilemma and Countermeasures of Intercultural Communication of Chinese National Image in The Context of New Media

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*Intercultural communication;
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Abstract

This study investigates the challenges and responses involved in shaping China's national image through intercultural communication within the landscape of new media. It focuses on problems like cultural misunderstandings and media fragmentation and suggests ways to improve China's global image. To reach the research objectives, a mixed-methods approach was adopted where structural-functional analysis, dialectical reasoning, and comparative analysis with empirical data from digital platforms were utilised. This methodology facilitates an in-depth examination of how China's national image is portrayed across both traditional media and emerging digital channels and assesses the efficacy of current communication strategies. However, challenges like cultural misunderstandings, media polarization, and difficulty in maintaining a consistent positive image among diverse international audiences remain. Social media, on the other hand, offers new opportunities for direct engagement and cultural exchange, making it easier to share a positive image. Case studies show that targeted social media campaigns have helped address some of these issues by encouraging interactive dialogues and fostering cultural appreciation. To improve its international image, China needs to enhance its intercultural communication strategies by using the interactive and flexible features of new media. This includes creating culturally sensitive content, connecting with diverse audiences through personalized communication, and using data analytics to adapt messages effectively. These strategies are crucial for bridging cultural differences and maintaining long-term global engagement. This study offers practical insights for policymakers, communication strategists, and scholars working to improve China's intercultural communication. By using digital platforms effectively, China can create a more positive and detailed global image, showing its cooperative and culturally rich identity.



关键词

跨文化交流；
中國國家形象；
新媒體平台；
數位外交；
文化認同；
社群媒體策略。

摘要

目的：本研究探討了在不斷發展的新媒體格局下透過跨文化傳播塑造中國國家形象的具體挑戰和戰略應對。該研究旨在透過關注文化誤解和媒體碎片化等議題，闡明提升中國全球形象的有效對策。

方法：本研究採用混合方法，將結構功能分析、辯證推理以及與數位平台經驗資料的比較分析結合。這種綜合方法有助於深入研究中國的國家形像如何透過傳統媒體和新興數位管道呈現，評估當前傳播策略的有效性。

結果：分析表明，雖然中國的國家形象透過各種媒體積極宣傳，但仍存在重大障礙。這些障礙包括文化誤解、媒體兩極化以及難以在不同的國際受眾之間保持積極和一致的看法。然而，社群媒體的興起為直接互動和跨文化交流提供了新的機遇，為更有效的圖像傳播提供了管道。案例研究展示了社交媒體上的有針對性的活動如何透過促進互動對話和文化欣賞成功地緩解了其中一些挑戰。

結論：中國要提升國際形象，必須充分利用新媒體的互動性和適應性特點，以完善跨文化傳播策略。這需要開發文化敏感的內容，透過個人溝通與不同的受眾互動，並使用數據分析來有效地客製化訊息。這種適應性策略對於彌合文化差距和實現可持續的全球互動至關重要。

意義：本研究為尋求加強中國跨文化傳播工作的政策制定者、傳播策略師和研究人員提供了適用的見解。透過挖掘數位平台的潛力，中國可以促進更準確和積極的全球認知，鞏固其作為一個合作和文化豐富國家的地位。該研究還透過強調國家形象建立與新媒體動態之間的相互作用，為更廣泛的跨文化傳播領域做出了貢獻。

1. Introduction

In the contemporary globalized world, the cultivation of a positive national image has become a strategic objective for countries seeking to enhance their global influence. For China, this pursuit is encapsulated in its “harmonious world” philosophy, which is rooted in Confucian ideals of peaceful coexistence, mutual respect, and collaborative advancement. The concept of a harmonious world serves to illustrate China’s effort to emerge as a responsible global power through stability and well-being in international relations. A central tenet of this policy is the State-non-interference principle in the internal affairs of states. This is intended to foster an image of cooperation over conflict. As China strives to actualise this ideal, the process of shaping and sustaining a positive,



cohesive national image on the global stage has become increasingly challenging in the context of the accelerated digitalisation that is currently underway.

This study examines the challenges China encounters in utilising new media to cultivate its national image through intercultural communication. It analyses the impact of digital platforms on perceptions, the creation of opportunities and the emergence of obstacles in the pursuit of a nuanced and positive image of China.

The advent of digital technologies and social media has precipitated a profound transformation in the manner by which countries engage with global audiences. In contrast to conventional media, which is characterised by inflexible structures and high levels of editorial control, platforms such as WeChat, Douyin (TikTok) and microblogs facilitate more fluid and direct forms of communication, circumventing the traditional media filters (Oliinyk et al., 2023). These channels provide China with new avenues for disseminating its cultural and political narratives on an unprecedented scale. The use of social media allows for diverse and interactive exchanges, which enables China to project its image through a variety of voices, including those of government actors and private citizens.

While these digital platforms provide China with a broader reach, they also present a number of unique challenges. The open nature of social media facilitates the rapid dissemination of information but also exposes China to the risks of misinformation, misinterpretation, and tension between official narratives and user-generated content. This duality presents a challenge for China in terms of maintaining a consistent message, as interpretations vary across cultural boundaries, often leading to mixed reactions among international audiences. The interactive nature of social media facilitates a two-way flow of communication, whereby feedback and criticism are readily integrated into the public discourse, thereby challenging the carefully curated image that state channels intend to portray (Leonow et al., 2019; Berdykulova et al., 2019).

Although China's culture is rich and multifaceted, Western audiences often perceive it through limited symbols like Kung Fu, Confucius, and the Great Wall. These surface-level symbols obscure the depth of China's cultural heritage and contemporary values, creating a perception gap that China's soft power strategies seek to bridge (Hines, 2023). As Eskaraeva (2023) highlights, national image functions as an extension of state identity, influencing global perception and serving as a tool for soft power. By promoting intercultural communication, China aims to project an image that resonates with its ancient heritage and modern values. However, cultural misinterpretations and oversimplifications remain significant challenges in shaping an accurate and appealing image internationally (Esenbaev, 2013; Suprun, 2024).

The advent of new media has enabled China to address these perception gaps in a more dynamic manner than would have been possible with traditional media. In particular, social media provides a platform for narratives that are more relatable to a wider audience. This is exemplified by the work of influencers such as Li Ziqi, who celebrates traditional Chinese culture in everyday life and has attracted millions of followers worldwide (Whyke et al., 2022). These influencers resonate with global audiences, offering content that



contrasts with the often rigid and state-driven messages of official media channels. However, as Ibraeva (2013) observes, the transition from traditional to digital media gives rise to new challenges, particularly in terms of audience trust. While traditional media is perceived as authoritative, social media is confronted with credibility issues, particularly when state narratives are perceived as excessively curated or lacking transparency.

To navigate the evolving media landscape, China must strike a delicate balance between state-led narratives and contributions from non-state actors. State media institutions, such as China Global Television Network (CGTN) and Xinhua News Agency, play a pivotal role in articulating China's official stance on global issues. Nevertheless, depending on these channels exclusively may prove inadequate for establishing a credible and internationally relatable image, as official narratives can occasionally be perceived as lacking authenticity by foreign audiences. The incorporation of non-governmental voices, including prominent social media personalities, into China's digital strategy could facilitate a more multifaceted and per-suasive approach that resonates with international audiences on a personal level.

To illustrate, the Chinese government is progressively encouraging international partnerships, including collaborations with foreign media, intending to extend its influence. This strategy of utilising the influence of foreign entities is designed to engage foreign audiences with messages that China is unable to convey as effectively on its own. Nevertheless, an overreliance on government-controlled narratives, without genuine engagement with nonstate perspectives, can limit the resonance of the image. Diverse and organic voices are often the most effective means of fostering credibility and relatability among international viewers (Celik, 2021).

The main objective of this study is to examine the ways in which China employs both traditional and new media in the construction of its national image within the context of intercultural communication. Particularly, it assesses how China's digital platforms present its image, identifies challenges associated with media fragmentation and audience segmentation, and proposes strategies to enhance the credibility and effectiveness of these efforts. This research employs a mixed-methods approach, integrating structural-functional analysis, comparative techniques, and dialectical reasoning, to elucidate the strengths and limitations of China's current strategies and to propose recommendations for a more unified representation of China's identity.

2. Materials and Methods

The research design is based on a phased approach, commencing with a theoretical examination of media methods and progressing to an empirical analysis of platform-specific engagement metrics and content strategy. The design comprises two principal phases. The initial phase focuses on the role of conventional media in the formation of national images, while the second phase analyses the impact of digital media through the examination of case studies of popular social media accounts. This structure permits a



gradual evaluation of the extent to which each media type contributes to the overarching objective of intercultural communication.

The following definition is offered for the key concepts: The term “national image” is used to describe the collective perception of a country’s cultural, political, and social identity as it is projected internationally. The term “new media” encompasses digital communication platforms such as social networks, video-sharing sites, and microblogs, which facilitate the dissemination of content in an interactive and user-driven manner. These definitions are of great importance for contextualising the challenges and strategies explored in this study, as they provide a framework for analysing how China seeks to present itself on global media platforms.

Using the structural and functional method, the key concepts of the subject were investigated, namely “national image”, “intercultural communication”, “image communication”, it was determined what the basic concept, features, and uniqueness of intercultural communication is, the main elements were analysed, and the features of promoting the national image abroad. Also at this stage, the concept of “new media” was considered. The study examines how new media are represented in China which social platforms are the most common among citizens, and the main international communication institutions. The process of transformation of mass media methods is considered.

It is highlighted what problems the intercultural dissemination of the national image faces in the context of new media, and, vice versa, what opportunities appear. The specific challenges in promoting China’s national image through intercultural communication include addressing cultural misunderstandings, counteracting media stereotypes and managing the dissemination of a unified narrative across different digital platforms. For example, the study examined issues such as cultural misinterpretation and the varying receptivity of media content between Western and Eastern audiences. It focused on challenges such as the tailoring of content to specific audiences and the balancing of state-driven narratives with genuine cultural representation.

The study provides an analysis of the Chinese cultural elements that are most relevant to international perception. These include traditional symbols such as Confucius and the Great Wall, as well as contemporary representations in social media. Furthermore, the analysis considers distinctive cultural elements of Chinese civilisation that shape the external representation of the country, including an emphasis on collectivism, respect for authority, and the concept of “face” (mianzi). This cultural backdrop provides invaluable insights for international readers who are unfamiliar with Chinese societal norms. The specific features and uniqueness of the history and culture of Chinese civilisation were investigated. It is highlighted why the intercultural dissemination of the Chinese national image is only a superficial and scattered symbolic product. The dialectical method was used to analyse the research and views of other researchers on this problem, which helped to formulate a unified idea about the intercultural dissemination of the Chinese national image in the context of new media.



The analytical and synthetic approaches were employed in a sequential manner. The initial stage entailed an exhaustive examination of conventional media methods, which was followed by a synthesis phase aimed at consolidating the findings across diverse media platforms. This structured approach ensured that findings from both conventional and non-conventional media were integrated in a systematic manner, thereby avoiding redundancy while building a coherent understanding of China's external image construction. The study was conditionally divided into several parts for an in-depth examination of the subject. In the first part, the role of conventional mass media in the formation of the national image of China was analysed, namely: national news agencies, national radio and television stations, central newspapers, national professional international communication institutes, and analytical centres with the functions of international communications in the formation of the national image of the country.

It was considered what reasons explain the control of the Chinese authorities over conventional media and over content that is sent abroad. It was analysed why the media often provide inaccurate information about the country and the issue of the existing image of the national image of China in the media space was investigated. The second part investigated the possibilities of new non-conventional mass media in the intercultural dissemination of the national image.

The study analyses because new media have a unique advantage in external communications compared to conventional media. In addition, the role of popular forces in promoting the image of the country was investigated, the context of new media and the functions of popular unconventional media in China – social networks such as TikTok, WeChat, and microblogs in the formation of the national Chinese image were examined. The second method – synthesis – formed all the information received into a logically structured study.

3. Results

This study concentrates on several pivotal elements of intercultural communication, which are especially pertinent to grasping the processes through which China's national image is constructed and perceived. The principal areas of investigation encompass the impact of political control on communication, the function of new media in shaping China's international image, and the efficacy of official versus non-governmental initiatives in intercultural dialogue. These aspects were evaluated with their impact on the efficacy of China's external communication strategies in improving its global standing.

3.1. Government initiatives in national image formation

The Chinese government is taking certain measures to form and spread the national image, but they have not brought the desired effect (Lee, 2022). In China, the initiation and implementation of intercultural communication activities are primarily the responsibility of official institutions, such as national news agencies and state-owned media outlets like CGTN and Xinhua News Agency. These institutions bear the



responsibility of framing and disseminating China's perspective on international events. Furthermore, the government has established cultural exchange programmes, such as the Confucius Institutes, to foster international comprehension of the Chinese language and culture. The utilisation of novel digital platforms, including social media influencers such as Li Ziqi, has constituted an indispensable component of China's strategy to enhance its "soft power". The concept of "soft power" refers to China's efforts to influence global perceptions through cultural appeal, which is in contrast to the use of hard, coercive methods. Similarly, the term "national image" is used to describe the collective perception of China's values, policies, and culture as presented to international audiences. These concepts inform China's initiatives, which include cultural exchanges facilitated by Confucius Institutes and the use of digital influencers such as Li Ziqi, who combine traditional Chinese culture with relatable, modern storytelling. These influencers disseminate traditional Chinese culture to a global audience, thereby creating a more relatable and engaging narrative for foreign viewers.

Notwithstanding these endeavours, the findings of this study demonstrate considerable shortcomings in the efficacy of these communication strategies. The exercise of political oversight and control over these communication activities has resulted in a climate of distrust and scepticism among international audiences. This scepticism arises because, although the content is polished and professional, it is often perceived as state-driven and lacking in authenticity. Furthermore, the absence of engagement with non-governmental perspectives and the lack of audience-specific tailoring in these campaigns serve to diminish their impact, thereby limiting the effectiveness of China's external communication. While government-controlled narratives remain a central component of China's image strategy, there is a growing recognition of the benefits of incorporating non-governmental voices. A growing body of research indicates that audiences tend to view independent content as more credible, perceiving it as less biased and more reflective of everyday Chinese culture (Hines, 2023). Furthermore, collaboration with foreign media outlets, while advantageous in terms of reach, frequently gives rise to perception issues due to the imposition of restrictive content control. The incorporation of a multiplicity of narratives has the potential to mitigate scepticism and enhance the veracity of China's global communications.

For a long time, there have been problems in cross-cultural communication of China's national image, such as weak targeting and inaccurate segmentation of the audience. These problems manifest through the lack of tailored messaging that resonates with specific demographic or cultural groups, resulting in a one-size-fits-all approach that fails to engage the audience effectively. The absence of audience segmentation leads to a mismatch between the content provided and the needs or preferences of different segments, diminishing the relevance and appeal of the message. As a result, communication strategies become less effective, as they do not foster meaningful connections or interactions with the target audience. This can further lead to misinterpretations and resistance, which ultimately hinders the overall goal of improving



China's national image through intercultural communication (Subramaniam & Mani, 2024).

In general, the strength of China's international discourse is insufficient to provide strong support for building a good national image. Although China is becoming increasingly active on the international stage, it frequently encounters difficulties in managing its image. This study corroborates the assertion that statements such as "China's discourse strength is insufficient" emphasise the necessity for the implementation of sophisticated, audience-specific communication strategies in order to enhance credibility. A number of studies have indicated that certain international audiences perceive state-driven content as overly polished and politically motivated (Levchenko, 2023).

This highlights the need for more independent narratives and varied perspectives. The relationship between the power of international discourse and the ability to communicate internationally is interdependent. In other words, if a country does not have discursive power at the international level, it does not have channels for the dissemination of a true and three-dimensional national image. Therewith, the low cost, high speed and anonymity of the dissemination of new media facilitate the creation and dissemination of rumours in the process of cross-cultural dissemination of the national image. Manufacturers and distributors of rumours use people's attention and emotions in relation to certain subjects to manipulate the crowd to achieve their specific goals, which is even more harmful to the good intercultural dissemination of the national image.

3.2. International media partnerships and promotion policies

In addition to creating its own media, China's ruling class has always pursued a policy of "using foreign power to promote the national image", encouraging international media to cover the situation in China under the control of the Chinese government. Beijing has specifically promoted joint venture initiatives with international television, radio, advertising organisations and film groups and encouraged foreign authors and journalists to cover events in China (Hines, 2023). According to the authorities, the chosen cooperation with international media companies will allow Chinese media to reach a foreign audience they will not be able to reach. The concept of communication is to "deliver good news". Some communication content is repetitive conventional media content devoid of innovation and uniqueness. In fact, image communication is a process in which information about a country is transmitted through a certain channel and, ultimately, a national image is formed (Jia, 2016; Sanzharovskiy & Yurchyshyn, 2023).

The information policy of the People's Republic of China is generally based on the ideological principles of the Communist Party of China, which has a department responsible for the content of information flows and regularly sends recommendations and prohibitions to the media. Since 2003, the Golden Shield project ("The Great Chinese Firewall") has been operating, regulating and restricting Internet content. At the end of the first decade of the 21st century, the external vector of media growth intensified: a group of major Chinese media began to invest resources in expanding their presence in the global



information arena and spreading the official standpoint of the government (Chandel et al., 2019). China positions itself as a “country open to international cooperation” and a “great power” in materials aimed at creating an external image. One of their duties is to provide the audience with a good idea of the China. This is primarily due to the fact that the country’s image is a form of “product” of public opinion, inextricably linked with the actions of the state in the international arena.

In the context of new media, the intercultural dissemination of the national image faces both challenges and opportunities. New media refers to a new form of context gradually being formed in society and “presupposes a new cognitive structure and value system, that is, the expression of discourse, social personality, and cultural form influenced by new media” (Xinjie, 2020). Due to the rapid speed of distribution and wide audience involvement, new media have a unique advantage in external communications. New media have had a huge impact on the conventional model of communication, and the ecology of national image communication has also undergone a transformation. However, in the current context of new media, intercultural communication cannot achieve ideal communication effects when faced with other cultures and their audiences.

3.3. Integrated communication model for enhanced engagement

In the new media environment, the intercultural communication of the Chinese national image should take advantage of the openness and interaction of the new media communication space, integrate the main part of communication, and create a communication model in which official and non-governmental forces take part together. As the main means of external dissemination of the national image, the leading mass media play a leading role. In the context of new media, the Chinese government carefully designs at the highest level, formulates a comprehensive communication strategy, integrates communication resources, forms a three-dimensional and diverse system of new media communications, and conducts effective communication of the national image. It can influence targeted government leaders and captivate and convince the wider population. Public diplomacy is an essential tool for projecting China’s attractiveness and “soft power” around the world (Huang & Wang, 2020).

In addition, the role of popular forces in promoting new media communications should not be underestimated. The rapid spread of the mobile Internet (social networks) in recent years has created additional alternatives for the dissemination of information about the national image among various target groups. Therefore, the image of the state is now presented in two ways: through conventional media and new digital media. The features of building the image of the state in conventional and modern media differ substantially.

The main difference in building the image of the country is manifested in the fact that the external and internal images of the state are developed differently. Due to the interactive and open nature of new media, the share of folklore online communication in the intercultural dissemination of the national image is increasing. Citizens can make their



voices heard through popular non-mainstream media in China, such as TikTok, the official WeChat account, and microblogs, and achieve equal communication with audience groups. When spreading the national image, starting from the standpoint of populism and adopting a communication model close to people's lives, it is possible to reduce the distance between the subject and the audience, strengthen the understanding of China's image by other audiences and effectively promote the basic creation of China's national image. Dynamic flows of information and communication in social networks, in particular, have allowed the population in general to become opinion leaders and influencers (Yesiloglu & Costello, 2021). A huge advantage of online media is the ability of people to take part and even create their networks.

Currently, Chinese bloggers in international social networks mainly explore subjects related to various aspects of Chinese stories. These stories are close to everyday life, kinship, and contagiousness of people. For example, as noted by T.W. Whyke et al. (2022), as of August 15, 2023, Li Ziqi, the creator of short videos about various aspects of Chinese cultural life, reached 17.7 million subscribers on his personal channel on the YouTube, ahead of CNN (15.4 million), the most influential media in the United States and the British BBC news media (14.6 million) by the number of subscribers on the platform, which substantially exceeds the subscription volume of CGTN (3.04 million), the Chinese international communications news agency, on the platform.

The comparative data across multiple media accounts serves to further illustrate the reach of influencers such as Li Ziqi in comparison to both traditional Chinese and Western media outlets. To illustrate, Li Ziqi's YouTube channel can boast 16.2 million subscribers, which is greater than the 3.04 million subscribers of the state-affiliated CGTN and on a par with the 12.9 million subscribers of Western media outlets such as CNN. This data highlights the distinctive function of individual content creators in developing relatable and appealing narratives that resonate on a global scale. In contrast, state-controlled narratives face significant credibility challenges. Although Li Ziqi no longer updates his works for various reasons, he is still on the list of YouTube fans in China (Whyke et al., 2022).

The personal channel of Chinese blogger Li Ziqi is a notable exception: he has more subscribers than some of the most famous Western media (Table 1). However, such a phenomenal spread as Li Ziqi is just an example, and it is urgent to explore a variety of Chinese stories, especially works reflecting Chinese cultural style, excellent conventional Chinese cultural elements and content reflecting good national quality, which also deserve to be examined and shared.



Table 1.

Information about visits to YouTube accounts

YOUTUBE ACCOUNTS	DATE OF REGISTRATION	NUMBER OF VIEWS	SUBSCRIBERS (MILLIONS)
CNN	02.10.2005	10,339,680,553	12.9
BBC	12.11.2005	8,460,135,699	11.9
CCTV中国中央电视台	03.01.2014	634,639,094	1.32
李子柒LIZIQI	22.08.2017	2,560,217,600	16.2

Source: compiled by the authors based on Y. Xiao (2022).

3.4. Globalization and soft power in china's image strategy

With the beginning of the globalisation of the information economy, China's development is inseparable from the world, and the development of the world cannot be done without China's involvement. In the context of accelerating globalisation, building and spreading China's national image has become an integral part of strengthening "soft power" and also contributes to strengthening mutual understanding between the Chinese people and the peoples of other countries. It also created a favourable international environment for China's development and made a deeper contribution to the overall progress of mankind.

Conventional and modern mass media compete but complement each other. Due to the speed and convenience of information transmission, the boundlessness of time and space, the infinite amount of information, and the accessibility of the audience, new media are able to attract public attention; however, it should be recognised that new media cannot replace the authority of conventional media. Integration and complementarity of the two forms of mass media are inevitable since they allow for optimising the work, distribution of media resources, and maximising the communicative effect. New media allow editors and journalists to expand the scope of their activities and provide conventional media with a more extensive life platform. China's reputation has grown over the past year. The country began to receive more and more recognition among the world community. Moreover, developing countries tend to have a more favourable opinion of China. Respondents' perception of the leading Western countries was less positive.

4. Discussion

The evolution of intercultural communication theory, which commenced with its foundational integration into foreign language education and subsequently expanded to encompass broader fields of communication and cultural exchange, provides the theoretical foundation for this study. As Kadyrbekova (2011) has demonstrated, the advancement of intercultural communication is inextricably linked to external communication and exchange, particularly in the context of the contemporary globalised media environment. The present study corroborates the hypothesis that the Chinese



government's endeavours to utilise intercultural communication for the purpose of national image-building, particularly through the medium of new media, have been impeded by the deployment of ineffective strategies that fail to take into account the reception of such communication in other cultural contexts.

4.1. Challenges of Political Control and Media Distrust

This corroborates Zhou's (2020) observations that despite the rapid development of social media and media technologies in China, there are ongoing difficulties in presenting a coherent and relatable image to foreign audiences. The findings of this study demonstrate that one of the key issues is the political control over the media, which generates distrust and resistance from international audiences, as noted by Strömbäck et al. (2020). The level of trust placed in the media has a significant impact on both the way in which the media is used and the way in which audiences perceive it (Haladzun et al., 2021). This can result in a tendency towards scepticism and a search for alternative sources of information. This distrust constrains China's capacity to leverage new media as a conduit for soft power and intercultural communication. The issue is further compounded by the fact that political scrutiny of media content has the effect of reducing its credibility, as audiences perceive it to be biased or politically motivated. China's strategies frequently lack transparency, which gives rise to resistance and disengagement from foreign audiences.

Notwithstanding assertions to the contrary, global confidence in the media remains low, with only 12% of respondents indicating that they have "great" confidence in the media. Although it is commonly acknowledged that confidence in the media is on the decline, this phenomenon is not ubiquitous. As indicated by Guess et al. (2018) and Newman et al. (2019), there are notable variations in media trust across different regions. In some areas, approximately 49% of individuals express trust in "most news" sources. The recognition of these contextual differences enables a more nuanced and targeted approach to China's media strategy, which may enhance credibility by aligning communication strategies with varying levels of media trust globally. This lack of trust creates a discrepancy between China's desired image of a "harmonious and peaceful global power" and its actual reception abroad. China's endeavours to refine its communication strategies, particularly in the context of new media, are impeded by the presence of trust issues. The creation of more transparent and less politically controlled media narratives is likely to foster greater international engagement and improve the overall perception of China's national image.

4.2. Cultural Misunderstandings and Opportunities for Cooperation

It is impossible not to agree with the conclusions of Li and Li (2024), from the standpoint of historical and cultural traces, Chinese civilisation has a clear uniqueness. In the process of intercultural communication, inherent cultural differences can easily lead to contradictions and conflicts (Yashnyk & Turitsyna, 2023). While inherent cultural



differences can give rise to misunderstandings, intercultural exchanges also present significant opportunities for cooperation, shared learning, and mutual respect. The promotion of collaborative projects, joint cultural initiatives and the benefits of mutual understanding can facilitate a shift in focus from potential conflict to positive cultural engagement. To illustrate, China's collaboration through international cultural festivals and educational programmes has served to promote cooperation and understanding, thereby counterbalancing perceptions of cultural discord. Furthermore, the theory of cultural imperialism, as put forth by Huang (2023), underscores the potential for media products to be shaped by dominant, centralized cultures. These findings align with this perspective in the context of China's media strategy. The over-reliance on government-controlled media channels and the lack of organic, culturally sensitive engagement with foreign audiences impede the efficacy of China's intercultural communication endeavours, reinforcing cultural differences rather than facilitating their dissolution.

It is impossible to disagree with the conclusions of Meel and Vishwakarma (2020), stating that social networks are an extremely fast tool for generating and distributing data since millions and millions of people use online platforms and collect huge amounts of data every second. However, unlike conventional news sources such as news channels and newspapers, the reliability of materials posted on social media platforms is questioned due to the independence of freedom of expression. However, it is worth adding that although new media communications are characterised by openness and interactivity, they are more likely to aggravate cultural expansion due to the large amount of information and complex content. Therefore, it is also easily exploited by a few economically and culturally developed countries, thus becoming an instrument for promoting cultural hegemony.

The issue of cultural hegemony, whereby content originating from dominant countries has a greater influence than local narratives, is a significant one in the context of new media. To mitigate these effects, it is necessary to adopt a balanced approach that incorporates authentic content with cultural resonance. To illustrate, influencers such as Li Ziqi offer culturally rich and authentic narratives that resonate on an international scale. By promoting such organic content that highlights the diversity within Chinese culture, China can circumvent the reinforcement of hegemonic perceptions and foster genuine cultural appreciation.

4.3. New Media's Influence on Cultural Identity and Perceptions

As noted by Holliday (2021), a new cultural identity formed by new media, will directly challenge the traditional attributes of cultural identity, namely temporality, territoriality, contrast, interactivity, and multiplicity. New media provides a distinctive platform for collective identities to evolve beyond the conventional boundaries of temporality and territoriality. In these virtual spaces, interactions have the potential to foster a shared sense of community, irrespective of geographic limitations. By capitalising on this transition, China has the opportunity to cultivate an inclusive and adaptable identity that resonates with the global community. This could entail emphasising dialogue and



shared values over fixed, state-driven narratives. In particular, the cultural identity created by new media is no longer the result of historical growth (i.e., temporality), limited by the process of recognising people in a geographical position (i.e., territoriality). Judging by the processes of meaning formation of members (i.e., contrast), it can still be a separate collective consciousness. Notably, the virtual community is more heterogeneous and has a lower level of connectivity.

Social networks are extremely important because they are now the main means of communication (Doszhan, 2023). Firstly, it is necessary to promote and popularise the national image of the country. According to Hammou et al. (2020), this is a successful way of communicating because it achieves an important goal. The goal of developing and promoting the national image is an important component of the country's development plan and a decisive factor in attracting attention and investment worldwide. This study supports these conclusions since social networks have created additional alternatives for the dissemination of information about the national image among various target groups. The world was very interested in analysing China's national image as China's national power grew. Previous studies on global public opinion about China relied mainly on conventional media, such as newspapers, periodicals, radio, and television. With the emergence and rapid development of new media.

Against the background of global informatisation and economic integration, the rapid development of new media technologies has led to huge changes in the model of social networks, providing a wider space for intercultural communication and exchange between representatives of different cultures. In a global online community, individuals or groups with different values and cultural backgrounds communicate with each other through common and open concepts without creating barriers or even conflicts since intercultural communication does not meet expectations. Based on communication, they influence and modify each other, turning the global culture into a culture of communication and dialogue that can be transmitted and transmitted, and eventually no longer having an innate fear of the "other" culture to share a diverse world.

5. Conclusions

The national image of China is conveyed through two principal conduits: conventional media and new digital media. Despite the Chinese government implementing a range of measures with the intention of shaping and promoting this national image, the outcomes have not met expectations. For example, specific initiatives such as the Confucius Institutes, which were designed to facilitate cultural exchange, have yielded mixed results. This suggests that the anticipated positive reception and engagement from international audiences have not been achieved.

With regard to the international discourse, the efficacy of China's communication strategies is inadequate to foster a favourable national image. The use of metrics, such as audience engagement rates or international perception surveys, could provide further insight into the discrepancies between China's stated intentions and the actual public



reception. The information policy of the People's Republic of China is largely informed by the ideological principles of the Communist Party, with a dedicated department responsible for overseeing information flow and issuing directives with the aim of controlling media content. The Golden Shield project, which has been operational since 2003, provides an illustrative example of how regulatory measures restrict internet content. This ultimately impacts the global perception of China as a nation purportedly committed to international cooperation.

The advent of new media presents both significant challenges and opportunities for the dissemination of the national image across cultures. Although the Chinese government has implemented a comprehensive communication strategy to integrate and leverage these new platforms, there is still a paucity of detailed exploration of specific examples. To illustrate, campaigns that employ influencers on social media platforms such as TikTok have demonstrated the potential to engage younger, global audiences. However, it is essential to adopt a more nuanced approach that takes into account cultural sensitivities.

Furthermore, the role of popular forces in amplifying new media communications is becoming increasingly significant. The rapid proliferation of social networks provides alternative avenues for the dissemination of information about China's national image. However, it is crucial to acknowledge that the evolution of external and internal images exhibits considerable divergence in the context of these media. The interactive nature of new media facilitates the participation of folklore and grassroots narratives, which could enhance China's global image if strategically harnessed.

This study offers original insights into the challenges and complexities surrounding the formation of the Chinese national image within the context of new media. Further research is required to investigate the phenomenon of cultural hegemony in intercultural communication in greater depth. In addition, specific methodologies should be proposed, such as qualitative analyses of audience perceptions or quantitative assessments of engagement metrics. By addressing these challenges with targeted strategies, China can enhance its intercultural communication effectiveness and foster a more favourable international image.

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