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Characteristics of Chinese Food Culture Documentary Communication in the New Century and Its Implications

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper is to study the communication characteristics and enlightenment of Chinese food culture documentary in the new century. Since 2000, under the background of cultural industrialization transformation, Internet communication and mass cultural consumption, the communication of Chinese food culture documentary has become a prominent cultural communication phenomenon. This paper takes Chinese food culture documentary in the new century as the research object, sets the target in multi-dimension and multi-method for three-dimensional consideration, explores the communication characteristics and enlightenment of Chinese food culture documentary in the new century, and hopes to provide reasonable suggestions for the development of documentary culture communication in the future. The findings are as follows:

1. Multiple features of the connotation of Chinese food culture documentaries in the new century. 2. Characteristics of the compound framework of documentary communication of Chinese food culture in the new century 3. Enlightenment of documentary communication of Chinese food culture in the new century.

Introduction

The documentary communication of Chinese food culture in the new century represents one of the most significant cultural communication phenomena in Chinese media since 2000. The flourishing landscape of food culture documentaries, exemplified by popular productions such as A Bite of China (CCTV, 2012), Flavor World (Tencent Video, 2018), and Gourmets Alive (iQIYI, 2019), has led to widespread discussions on documentary production, storytelling, and dissemination strategies. These documentaries have not only achieved remarkable success in terms of audience reception but have also shaped the global perception of Chinese culinary traditions and cultural identity (CGTN, 2020; Global Times, 2019). Their impact highlights the

evolving dynamics of documentary communication in an era of digital media expansion and globalization (Zhu, 2021).

The growing popularity of food culture documentaries reflects deeper cultural and technological transformations within Chinese society. The integration of high-quality cinematography, immersive storytelling, and cross-platform media distribution has amplified the global visibility of Chinese food culture (Li & Zhang, 2021). Furthermore, these documentaries serve as cultural artifacts that bridge the historical and contemporary dimensions of Chinese cuisine, fostering both national pride and international curiosity (Wang & Liu, 2022). The rise of streaming platforms and digital content consumption has also played a crucial role in shaping the accessibility and reception of food documentaries among diverse audiences (Zhou, 2020). Consequently, food culture documentaries have evolved beyond mere culinary showcases to become vehicles for cultural diplomacy and identity representation (Chen & Sun, 2021).

The study of food culture documentaries in China has primarily focused on their cultural significance, audience engagement, and economic implications (Huang, 2020; Li & Wang, 2019). Existing research has explored various aspects, such as the role of aesthetics and storytelling techniques in documentary filmmaking (Yang, 2020), the influence of nationalism in cultural representations (Chen, 2021), and the audience reception of food narratives across different demographics (Zhang, 2018). However, significant gaps remain in understanding the methodological approaches to studying these documentaries and the theoretical frameworks that underpin their narrative and communicative structures. More comprehensive research is required to examine the interplay between documentary techniques, communication characteristics, and cultural dissemination in the context of Chinese food culture (Sun & Liu, 2022). Additionally, while prior research has emphasized audience reception and documentary production, less attention has been paid to the broader implications of documentary communication on cultural sustainability and transnational media influence (Xu, 2023).

This study aims to bridge these research gaps by adopting a communication-centered perspective. Using documentary theory (Nichols, 2017) and framing theory (Entman, 1993) as its analytical foundation, this research employs a mixed-methods approach, incorporating literature review, content analysis, and case studies. The study seeks to answer three key questions: (1) What are the primary factors contributing to the flourishing communication of food culture documentaries in the new century? (2) What are the distinctive communication characteristics of Chinese food culture documentaries? (3) What are the dissemination values and sociocultural influences of these documentaries? Through detailed case studies, this paper explores the narrative structures, thematic elements, and communicative functions of food culture documentaries to provide a comprehensive understanding of their role in cultural exchange and identity construction (Wang & Wu, 2020).

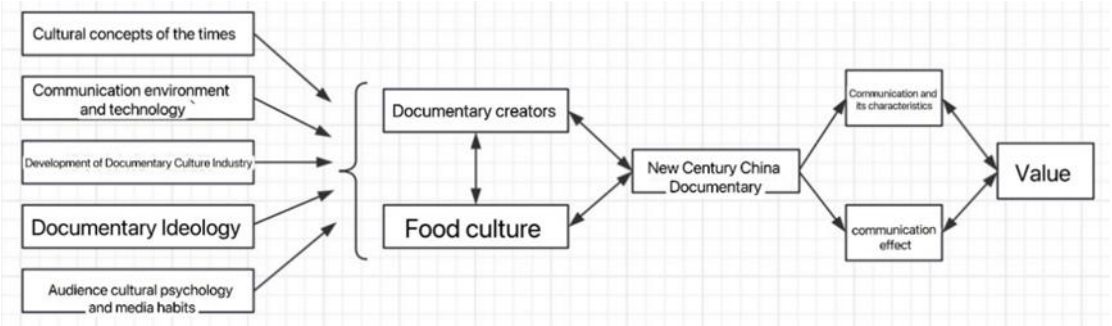
By analyzing these aspects, this study contributes to the broader discourse on media and cultural studies by elucidating the mechanisms through which food culture documentaries shape public perception and influence cross-cultural interactions. The findings of this research offer valuable insights for documentary practitioners, media scholars, and cultural policymakers on leveraging documentary communication for enhanced cultural representation and international engagement (Xu, 2023). Furthermore, the study underscores the importance of documentary narratives in fostering a deeper appreciation of Chinese culinary heritage and its integration into the global cultural landscape. As the global media landscape continues to

evolve, understanding the communication strategies of food culture documentaries provides essential guidance for future documentary productions that seek to balance cultural authenticity with global market appeal (Liu & Chen, 2024).

Conceptual Framework

This study is a research study. The researcher defines the research conceptual framework of "New Century Chinese food Culture documentary Communication Research", which is composed of three basic concepts of "food culture", "New century Chinese documentary" and "communication". Among them, "New century Chinese documentary" is the main body of the research, "food culture" is the core variable, and "communication" is a means to reveal problems and carry out analysis and discussion from a certain perspective.

The conceptual framework of the research on this topic can be demonstrated by the following research model:



Research Objective

1. The causes of the flourishing of food culture documentaries in the new century;
2. Communication characteristics of Chinese food culture documentaries in the new century;
3. Influence and value of Chinese food culture documentary communication in the new century.

Literature analysis

1. I have studied the background of the communication and development of Chinese food culture documentaries in the new century. The research on the development background of documentary communication of Chinese food culture in the new century mainly includes the cultural background of The Times, the concept of documentary communication and the concept of documentary aesthetics. Scholars explain the influence of the development and change of The Times environment on the communication of Chinese food culture documentaries in the new century and its specific performance, which helps this topic to understand the nature, characteristics and value of the communication of food culture documentaries. It is helpful to the cognition of the communication framework and media effect of food culture documentary. Based on the literature integration, this paper puts forward the systematic factors affecting the dissemination of Chinese food culture documentaries in the new century. The emergence of the spreading boom of Chinese food

culture documentary in the new century is the result of The Times, culture, technology and market, and it is a cultural phenomenon reflecting The Times.

2. I studied the communication concept of documentary. It can be seen from the comprehensive literature that scholars have elaborated the ideas and concepts of documentary communication, such as the concept of "mission", the concept of balancing cultural communication with economic benefits, the speculation on the relationship between localization and internationalization, the concept of organic unity of documentary reality and artistry, humanistic value and cultural consumption, brand communication, etc. Especially in the past decade, the concept of "technical beauty" in the communication of food culture documentaries has been paid attention to. It shows the significance of advanced science and technology to enable the dissemination of food culture documentaries. Based on literature and cases, this paper further studies the characteristics of documentary communication methods.

3. I have studied the communication characteristics of Chinese food culture documentaries in the new century. The research on the communication characteristics of Chinese food culture documentaries in the new century includes the communication connotation characteristics of Chinese food culture documentaries in the new century, the communication subject characteristics of Chinese food culture documentaries in the new century, the communication audience characteristics of Chinese food culture documentaries in the new century, the communication effect characteristics of Chinese food culture documentaries in the new century, and the communication aesthetic characteristics of Chinese food culture documentaries in the new century. Scholars analyze the main characteristics of food culture documentary communication in the new century from the perspectives of narrative, brand communication, network communication, anthropological vision, and comparative research, revealing its main characteristics of inheriting the theory and practical experience of previous documentaries, facing the new communication environment, new cultural trends, and the need for innovation in the new era. Scholars may use the theory of satisfaction to analyze the reception characteristics of the audience, and point out that "change of mood", "self-confirmation" and "emotional resonance" are the main psychological satisfaction of the audience of food culture documentaries. Or focus on the analysis of audience "empathy" psychological mechanism; Or explore new transmission characteristics under the Internet communication environment.

4. I have studied the communication effect of documentaries on Chinese food culture in the new century. There are theoretical induction, comparative research, case analysis, and big data presentation. Scholars have revealed the cultural identity, information sharing, emotional resonance, associative thinking and other effects of food culture documentary communication. In particular, it reveals the transmission of food culture to the real economy and the multi-matrix communication to build cultural brands and expand the effect of cultural communication, which provides an important reference for the revelation of the communication of food culture documentary in this study.

5. I have studied the dissemination of Chinese food culture documentaries in the new century under the frame perspective. The characteristics of using frame theory to study the communication of Chinese food culture documentary in the new century are as follows: First, using frame theory to study the communication of food culture documentary in the new century reflects a new theoretical vision. Second, the framework theory is still in development.

Frame theory is introduced into the field of communication from psychology, sociology and journalism, which on the one hand shows the internal development of frame theory, on the other hand shows the universality of its interpretation, and also causes the extension of frame theory. While explaining the new problems, it also reflects the construction of the framework theory itself. Therefore, this topic has a certain theoretical value to explore the communication of food culture documentary by using frame theory. Scholars' theoretical research, case analysis and research methods all provide valuable reference for this topic.

Research Methodology

This paper adopts a mixed research paradigm of qualitative and quantitative research, including literature review method, questionnaire survey method, case study method, content analysis method and other methods. The specific method analysis and application are as follows:

Literature Analysis

Through consulting and sorting out the communication literature of food culture documentaries, analyzing and exploring the essential attributes of things, and learning about documentary theory, frame theory and their development in China through study and analysis; Fully collect Internet interactive communication research literature, understand the mode and characteristics of cultural communication in the network environment, and its impact on the innovation of food culture documentary. Through literature review, it provides research basis, research perspective and theoretical basis for this study.

Case Study Method

This topic carries out specific research on a Bite of China, Thousand Autumn Sichuan Cuisine, Gourmets Alive and other texts, and combines documentary theory and communication theory to analyze the communication characteristics of food culture documentaries in the new century, explore the communication framework and construction characteristics, and make scientific explanations.

Content Analysis

Content analysis is an objective and systematic quantitative analysis of text content, aiming to reveal the essential facts and trends in the text. The specific method is to establish content analysis categories based on the research object, narrative theory and forms, means and functions of food documentaries, conduct data statistics, analyze and interpret the meaning of the data, objectively present the appearance and characteristics of things, and reveal the characteristics of the construction of the communication framework of food culture documentaries.

Result

1. The results show that the causes of the flourishing of food culture documentary communication in the new century are the comprehensive influence of the requirements of The Times for the innovative development of documentary communication, the incentive mechanism for the innovative development of documentary communication, the Internet

communication environment in the new century, and the entertainment of the public aesthetic taste.

2. The results show that the communication characteristics of Chinese food culture documentaries in the new century are: 1. Constructing multiple information communication of characteristic diet and human history. 2. The form of communication is characterized by a composite narrative framework showing food life and cultural images.

3. The results show that food culture documentary clearly embodies the characteristics of the cultural communication transformation of Chinese documentary. In the new century, Chinese food culture documentary communication and communication effect are unique, and the communication characteristics formed have outstanding contributions to the development of Chinese documentary culture industry, and also have certain value in the world cultural exchange. The enlightenment provided for enhancing the cultural communication effect of documentary is reflected in the following aspects:

First, the harmony between realism and artistry. Second, break through the old circle of cultural transmission. Third, the social and economic effects of cultural communication are organically unified.

Discussion

I. Connotation and Characteristics of Chinese Food Culture Documentaries in the New Century

First, disseminate information and enhance people's awareness of environmental things, which is the basic value of documentary.

Second, share the culture with Chinese characteristics to the broad audience, promote the public's understanding of Chinese culture, and realize the value of cultural communication.

Third, documentaries are essentially non-fiction cultural products, non-fiction is not only a concept, attitude, information concept is the basic connotation of the non-fiction communication of Chinese food culture in the new century. Specifically, the documentary subject matter reflects the high integration of characteristic food information with humanistic and historical information.

Multiple information dissemination is the dimension of the content (topic selection, subject matter and theme) of Chinese food culture documentary in the new century, and forms the compound narrative framework of food life and cultural image.

II. Stage Characteristics of Chinese Food Culture Documentary Communication in the New Century

(i) Transitional stage of communication of food culture documentaries in the new century (2000-2011).

Before 2011, Chinese documentaries mainly used film, television media and electronic audio-visual products such as videotapes and DVDS (DVD players) as media. Television is the most important communication platform for food culture documentaries.

(ii) Launching the stage of marketization of the communication of food culture documentaries (2011-2014)

In recent years, the rapid development from "the first year of industry" to "the first year of brand" has opened the initial stage of documentary new media communication, broadened the documentary communication channels, and stimulated the release of documentary

production capacity. This stage is characterized by the opening of the communication form of a civilian-oriented perspective. The first season of A Bite of China represents the highest achievement of the first year of food culture documentary industry and branding, and constitutes the first peak of the market-oriented transformation of China's food culture communication in the new century.

(iii) Stage of diversified communication of food culture documentaries in the new century (2015 - present)

In 2017 China's documentaries have formed a basic pattern with specialized documentary channels and satellite TV comprehensive channels as the main force and new media as the important support. In 2018, new media communication is growing rapidly. Mainstream media and commercial video websites integrate self-produced documentaries with communication to create a communication matrix. The series of A Bite of China (CCTV) and Flavor World (Tencent Video) have adopted new media communication planning, implemented a diversified new media communication matrix, and created famous cultural and tourism IP brands with documentary products as the core, which have been derived and spread in multiple social life areas, and have successfully realized the migration of cultural communication value.

III. Characteristics of Chinese Food Culture Documentary Communication in the New Century

The development of documentary communication of Chinese food culture in the new century is based on the composite narrative framework of food life and cultural image in the form of documentary, and the comprehensive use of audio-visual art to display Chinese cultural image and humanistic style, which constitutes an important feature of documentary communication of food culture in the new century.

After the 1990s, "the creation of TV documentaries in China has developed in two directions, one of which includes documentaries that are more closely connected with current affairs and politics, and these documentaries aim at realizing social education. ..... The other category of documentaries aims to find communication between society and society, between people and people, and between people's hearts and minds at all levels of society." (Shiyi,2000) Based on the composition of multiple messages in food culture documentaries, they show a composite narrative strategy characterized by images of food life and culture. The types of composite narrative strategies can be categorized into documentary narrative framework, poetic narrative framework, and non-deceiveive acting narrative framework.

(i) Documentary narrative framework

Documentary narrative is based on the classification of documentaries and its cultural communication function to reflect the characteristics of narrative strategy. Documentary narrative refers to the use of documentary documentary "conclusive documentary" type of method of organizing audio-visual materials, so that the food culture documentary communication presents a strong humanistic and historical cognitive function. For example, A Thousand Autumns of Sichuan Cuisine (2004) takes the dissemination of local food culture as a topic and arranges audio-visual materials such as Sichuan cuisine masters, Sichuan cuisine merchants and Sichuan cuisine scholars in chronological order, focusing on the four major development stages in the history of Sichuan cuisine, and also tells the entrepreneurial stories of many typical Sichuan cuisine celebrities and famous restaurants. It is praised as a documentary of food culture with documentary value by the media. In the same genre, Wuyi Mountain Tea Culture (2014), the narrative framework favors the cognitive communication of

tea drinks, tea affairs, tea life characteristics and their cultural implications. The common feature of their narratives is that they use high-end materials to strengthen the strength of food culture communication and professional materials to enhance the credibility of food culture communication. The common feature of their narratives is that the material has the characteristics of strong professionalism, knowledge or authoritative explanation, which strengthens the communication of food culture and enhances the communication credibility of food culture.

(ii) Poetic narrative framework

Poetic narration draws on the "poetic" concept of poetic documentary. Poetic narrative framework is characterized by the integration of information cognition and cultural entertainment. Compared with documentary narrative, poetic narrative framework is more distinct in artistry and documentary style.

The meaning of poetic narrative refers to the documentary narrative mode characterized by rhythm and rhythm constructed based on the information dissemination of food culture and the comprehensive use of audio-visual art means. The poetic narrative is a kind of poetry mainly expressed through rhythm. Different from the historical poetic documentary communication, poetic narration of Chinese food culture in the new century is not only an opportunity for documentary creators to show inspiration and art, but also an artistic reaction of the market competition of documentary communication. A Bite of China (2012) and the later novels Flavor World (2012) and the Taste of Shunde (2012) are representative examples of poetic narrative framework. Rhythm is the formal beauty characteristic of "poetry". The rhythmical formal beauty created by the audio-visual art of documentary is the main expression of poetic narration.

From the life and work of ordinary people, A Bite of China shows the living conditions of the Chinese people, the creation of life and the optimistic and cheerful spirit of facing the future. It expresses the theme with rich and diverse materials and the perspective of ordinary people, and shows the structure of prose. The delicate and well-proportioned structure of the audiovisual is in harmony with the humanistic imagery of the documentary and constitutes the inner rhythm of the narrative.

(iii) Narrative framework for non-deceive acting

The nature and significance of "acting" in the concepts of documentary masters and various documentary theories throughout history is a fundamental issue in Chinese academic research, which generally recognizes the inevitability of acting and therefore identifies the boundaries between acting and documentary, and qualifies the nature and use of acting. The meaning of deceive acting is "the use of actors, scenery, props, and other means to represent an event that has (or may have) happened", which divides into "deceive acting", "non-deceive acting" (Nie Xinru, 2021). This paper explores a scenario of the narrative framework of Chinese food culture documentaries in the new century, which can be called the non-deceiving acting narrative framework.

"Non-deceiving acting" includes "informative acting", "self-explanatory acting" and "innocent acting", "non-fiction". "Non-fictional removal i.e. non-fictional performance ..... But such a performance is non-fictional in the sense that all of the character's actions point to a realistic purpose and are not intended to be viewed by others." (Nie Xinru, 2021). Season 1 of Gourmets Alive takes well-known cultural figures from ancient and modern history as its introduction, combining interpretive reductions with contemporary documentary perspectives,

and showcasing China's time-honored food culture through the classic "literati cuisine" of gourmets. From the perspective of the multiple informational significance of food culture communication studied in this paper, due to the specificity of the characters, the function of character acting is not only an artistic means, but also provides historical and humanistic information.

The roles created by the moving of the performance in Gourmets Alive include the vivid effects of narrative and storytelling communication. The role of narrative is shown in the following: the introductory role of introducing the chronicle; causing the audience to make associations and adding cultural interest to the beginning and the end. Application of illumination in documentary narrative, can form a sense of narrative rhythm, but also make the clues of the narrative clear, deepen the audience's impression.

IV. Impacts and Implications of the Communication of Chinese Food Culture Documentaries in the New Century

Since the 1990s, it has been a period of change for Chinese documentaries. Under the influence of multiple factors such as the cultural concepts of The Times, communication environment and technology, the development of documentary culture industry, documentary ideas, creators' cultural thoughts, audiences' cultural psychology and media habits, food culture documentaries clearly reflect the characteristics of the transformation of Chinese documentary culture communication, from the emphasis on document and publicity to the dual attributes of culture and commodities. The communication characteristics formed have made outstanding contributions to the development of Chinese documentary culture industry, and also have certain value in world cultural exchanges.

The enlightenment provided for enhancing the communication effect of documentary culture is reflected in the following aspects: First, the harmony between documentary and artistic. Second, break through the old circle of cultural transmission. Third, the social and economic effects of cultural communication are organically unified. In the new century, Chinese food culture documentary adapted to the era of cultural industry transformation, formed a documentary cultural brand, obtained a high communication reputation and clicks, attracted continuous investment in the cultural market, obtained a high economic effect, and improved the ability of sustainable development of cultural communication. From this point of view, the experience gained in the dissemination of Chinese food culture documentaries in the new century has certain enlightenment.

Conclusion

Chinese food culture documentary in the new century is a true presentation of people's characteristic food life and its historical and humanistic heritage, and communication plays a very important role in realizing and expanding the influence of documentary.

This paper uses the non-participatory observation method to collect and deeply understand the communication phenomenon of food culture documentary. Using the research methods of humanities and social sciences such as philology and history, this paper collects, collates, summarizes and analyzes the relevant literature on the communication and communication

effect of Chinese food culture documentaries in the new century, distinguishes the communication information characteristics of food culture documentaries from the academic perspective, and points out that its meaning is based on documentary reality. Non-fiction, narrative Chinese mass video media works with food culture as content; Cognition and entertainment are the main functions of food culture documentary communication. From the perspective of diachronic research, this paper reveals the stages and characteristics of the development of documentary communication of Chinese food culture in the new century. Using frame theory and content analysis method as reference, this paper analyzes the characteristics of communication art, proposes multiple information communication based on characteristic diet and human history, and forms a composite narrative framework of diet life and cultural image. Moreover, three communication narrative frameworks are summarized, namely, documentary narrative framework, poetic narrative framework, and non-deception narrative framework. Explore the characteristics and functions of the three narrative frames with cases. This paper puts forward three enlightenments: the harmony and unity of documentary and artistic; Break through the old circle of cultural transmission; The social effect and economic effect of cultural transmission are organically unified.

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