

Research on TCM Culture Communication from the Perspective of Empathy Theory

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Abstract: In the background of cultural diversity, traditional Chinese medicine culture, as a treasure of Chinese traditional culture, constitutes an important part of the country's cultural soft power. Facing the challenges of the new era, promoting the international dissemination of traditional Chinese medicine (TCM) culture has become a crucial task. This paper will introduce the theory of empathy and discuss how to spread the TCM culture effectively under the framework of this theory. On the basis of analyzing the present situation of cultural communication of TCM, interpretation of the empathy theory mechanism, from the communication content, communication mode and audience interaction multiple dimensions put forward the corresponding strategy, in order to enhance the spread of TCM culture, promote cultural inheritance and progress of TCM, contribute to human health.

Keywords: Empathy Theory; Traditional Chinese Medicine Culture; Cultural Communication

1. Introduction

With China's increasing status on the international stage, TCM is spreading to the world at an unprecedented speed. General Secretary has mentioned TCM on many occasions, stressing its importance as a precious heritage of Chinese civilization and pointing out that efforts must be promoted the revitalization and progress of TCM.^[1] However, with the rapid development of modern medicine and the impact of multiculturalism in the process of globalization, TCM culture is faced with a series of challenges in the process of dissemination. How to overcome these challenges and make TCM culture flourish in the new era has become an urgent problem to be solved.

Empathy theory mainly studies how individuals perceive, understand and respond to others' emotional states, and explores the psychological mechanism of understanding others' emotional states. The application of empathy theory in the field of TCM culture dissemination can help eliminate cultural barriers, shorten the distance between TCM culture and the audience, so as to improve the communication effect. By stimulating the emotional resonance of the audience, deepen their recognition of TCM culture, and promote the inheritance and development of TCM culture.

2. The current situation of TCM culture transmission

2.1 The influence of cultural foundation differences between East and West on the cross-cultural communication of TCM

The roots of western culture can be traced back to ancient Greece, ancient Rome and Hebrew culture, and its ideas of freedom, equality and human rights have been deeply rooted in people's hearts. Relatively speaking, ancient Chinese civilization is characterized by culture based on agriculture and attaches great importance to the values of hierarchical order and harmonious unity. These two completely different cultural backgrounds make the spread of TCM culture a cross-cultural communication phenomenon, involving the transformation process from ancient medical literature to modern Chinese and then to modern scientific language. There are significant differences between Chinese medicine and Western medicine in philosophical thought and concept. TCM focuses on the holistic study of the interconnection between human viscera and meridians, and adopts the method of syndrome differentiation to implement personalized diagnosis and treatment. Western medicine tends to use unified, universal and standardized means for disease treatment.^[2] The implicit of Chinese culture

and the logical rigor of Western culture make it difficult for modern people to fully understand the difference between the two medical knowledge systems. In the process of exploring the cross-cultural communication of TCM culture, few people pay attention to the possible difficulties in understanding modern people caused by the inherent ambiguity of TCM language, and even misunderstanding and rejection. At the same time, from the perspective of empathy theory, there are few scholars who study the cross-cultural communication of TCM culture.

2.2 New requirements and challenges for the spread of TCM culture in the era of new media

With the rise and rapid development of new media, the richness and complexity of TCM cultural content put forward more stringent requirements for communication. The era of “Internet +” and the arrival of artificial intelligence have had a profound impact on communication effects. Firstly, the communication mode has changed. How to widely apply “the Internet+TCM culture” model in the Internet era has become a problem worth discussing.^[2] Secondly, with the increasing number of new digital approaches, their potential drawbacks cannot be ignored. Some false information about TCM spreads rapidly through the Internet. Due to the general lack of basic knowledge of TCM among the public, they are often easy to trust these information, which damages the image of TCM to a large extent. In the era of artificial intelligence, how to adapt TCM culture to new media means, grasp the opportunity of rapid development of digital technology, promote the communication at the level of audience perception, and build a safety and prevention supervision system to ensure the scientific dissemination of TCM culture need further verification and expansion.

2.3 The shaking of the foundation TCM culture under the impact of the New Culture Movement

The May Fourth New Culture Movement initiated the prelude to opposing traditional culture. In order to promote democracy and science in our country, modern intellectuals sacrificed traditional Chinese culture, resulting in the gradual loss of traditional culture and medicine facing the impact and squeeze of Western medicine. TCM, as a knowledge system with ancient books and classical Chinese as its carriers and traditional philosophical thoughts as its core, encountered opposition from the new literature and science advocated by the New Culture Movement, as well as resistance to the old literature and classical Chinese. In the cultural field, criticism of TCM has become increasingly intense. The medical community has also begun to question TCM, advocate the active introduction of Western medical concepts and reform TCM system. The education system gradually popularized modern Western science and culture, and modern people began to absorb Western knowledge of mathematics, physics, chemistry as well as logical thinking patterns. This phenomenon objectively leads to the gradual dissolution of the inheritance environment of TCM culture. With the mutual collision and competition between Chinese and Western cultures, the cultural structure of modern people is gradually changing. The cultural pattern where Confucianism dominated the world has been completely overturned, thus leading to differences in cultural concepts among the audience. However, in the process of the dissemination of traditional Chinese medicine culture, the research on these issues appears rather insufficient.

3. Overview of the theory of empathy

The term “empathy” comes from the German word “Einfühlung” originally proposed by German philosophers Hermann Lotze and Robert Vischer, which refers to the phenomenon in which the subject projects his or her own emotions onto a natural landscape or work of art during aesthetic appreciation. The concept of “empathy” comes from the field of psychology and is also known as empathetic understanding. It refers to the ability of an individual to accurately grasp the emotions of others and respond appropriately in specific situations.^[3] Empathy includes many types and levels, mainly involving emotional empathy, cognitive empathy and action empathy.^[4]

The concept of empathic communication originates from the theory of empathy, but its definition is still complicated and not clear enough. In recent years, Chinese scholars have made a series of explorations in the field of empathy communication. Liu Haoming and Song Ting define empathetic communication as the behavioral process an individual undergoes when receiving, expressing, and transmitting information in situations where they encounter group emotions. They emphasize that empathetic communication plays a crucial role in news and public opinion dissemination, especially evident in international political and social events. Additionally, empathetic communication has given rise to two sub-concepts: “emotional community” and “case eventization”.^[5] Professor Zhao Jianguo

discussed the internal connection between empathy and communication, pointed out that the expression of empathy is essentially a communication process, and the in-depth study of empathy is actually to explore the communication between emotion and mood. Empathy communication is defined as “the transmission, diffusion and sharing of information to trigger emotional resonance within a certain range, forming the same or similar emotions or moods”.^[6]

4. The mechanism of empathy theory in the dissemination of TCM culture

Empathy theory drives the spread of TCM culture through emotional resonance and cognitive fit. Arousing cultural memory and triggering emotional resonance through story-based and experiential content; Transforming TCM theory into healthy knowledge in daily life to reduce the threshold of understanding. Emotional identity and rational cognition promote each other, so that the audience can change from a cultural stranger to an active recognizer, and help TCM culture integrate into contemporary life and realize effective inheritance.

4.1 Promoting emotional connection

TCM culture contains profound medical knowledge and treatment skills, as well as profound humanistic care and emotional connotation. By digging deep into and narrating the historical stories of TCM, the deeds of famous doctors and the touching moments in the process of fighting the epidemic, communicators can effectively stimulate the emotional resonance of the audience. This emotional resonance plays an important role in building a deep emotional bond between TCM culture and the audience. When the audience appreciates the unique charm of TCM culture through these stories and deeds, they usually develop an interest and goodwill in their hearts, and then are willing to further explore and study the profound aspects of TCM.

4.2 Enhancing understanding and recognition

Empathy theory plays a vital role in the dissemination of TCM culture. It helps communicators to present the profound and complex knowledge of TCM culture in a way that is more acceptable and understandable to the audience. By using various ways of expression such as analogy and example, communicators can closely link the theoretical knowledge of TCM with things familiar to the audience in their daily life or personal experience, so that the audience can grasp the essence and connotation of TCM culture more intuitively. When the audience really understands the value and significance of TCM culture, they are more likely to have a sense of identity with this culture, which will stimulate them to actively spread and promote TCM culture, so that this ancient culture can be widely spread in modern society.

4.3 Changing stereotypes

In modern society, TCM, as a representative of traditional medicine, may have some deep-rooted prejudices among some groups. These biases may involve negative views such as the bitter taste of Chinese medicine, which is difficult to accept, and the slow effect of treatment. However, through the application of empathy theory, communicators can gain a deeper understanding of the underlying reasons why audiences form these biases. By sharing real cases and providing scientific explanations, communicators can effectively eliminate these biases and change the audience's traditional understanding of TCM. For example, communicators can introduce the latest developments in the modernization of TCM, such as the convenience of traditional Chinese medicine granules, which are not only easy to carry and use, but also improve the taste while maintaining the therapeutic effect of TCM. In addition, the unique advantages of traditional Chinese medicine in treating chronic diseases can be emphasized, such as its excellent effects in regulating body functions and enhancing immunity. Through the dissemination of these information, the negative views of the audience on TCM can be gradually changed and comprehensive cognition can be established.

5. Strategies for the dissemination of TCM culture under the perspective of empathy theory

In the current era of multicultural convergence, the dissemination of TCM culture plays a vital role in promoting the development of TCM. The theory of empathy provides a new perspective for the dissemination of TCM culture, which helps audiences to understand and accept TCM culture more

deeply by stimulating emotional resonance.

5.1 Construction of communication content based on audience needs

In the era of information explosion, building the content of TCM culture dissemination based on the needs of the audience is the core of effective communication. Only by accurately grasping the knowledge demands, health needs and cultural expectations of different groups, transforming obscure TCM theories into popular health guidelines, interesting science popularization and cultural stories in a narrative style and knowledge carrier that are popular with the public, can we break down the barriers to communication.

5.1.1 Exploring emotional stories

We can delve into the touching chapters in the history of TCM development, such as the heroic deeds of ancient famous doctors who were not afraid of difficulties to treat patients, the heroic deeds of Tu Youyou's team who extracted artemisinin in the face of many difficulties, and the selfless dedication shown by modern TCM practitioners in the fight against the epidemic. These stories are carefully organized and created to present them to the public in a vivid and thought-provoking way, inspiring emotional resonance. Through the production of short videos, comics and other media, the arduous process of Li Shizhen compiling Compendium of Materia Medica can be narrated, allowing the audience to resonate emotionally, deeply understand the significant contributions of traditional Chinese medicine to the development of modern medicine, feel the unremitting pursuit of the pioneers of traditional Chinese medicine for the medical cause and their generous contributions to human health, and thus develop respect and interest in traditional Chinese medicine culture.

5.1.2 Popularizing culture in combination with daily life scenes

Carry out activities to popularize knowledge of TCM. The activities can focus on the prevention, treatment and health care of common diseases, using understandable expressions and vivid examples to spread knowledge about TCM to the public. For example, in response to the widespread problem of insomnia in modern society, popularize TCM food therapy (such as sour jujube porridge) and acupoint massage techniques (such as Shenmen acupoint massage); For the common cervical problems of office workers, TCM massage and acupoint massage are spread to relieve them; During the seasonal change, the wonderful tips of TCM for preventing colds and regulating the body are introduced, so that the audience can feel the close connection between TCM and daily life, meet their pursuit of healthy life, and enhance their goodwill towards traditional Chinese medicine culture.

5.1.3 Combining cultural differences to achieve accurate communication

In the process of international communication, communicators should consider and analyze the unique cultural background and value differences of different countries and regions. Taking European and American countries as an example, they can combine the concept of TCM with the theory of Western medicine, and explain it in a way that is more acceptable and understandable to western audiences, so as to enhance the advantages and recognition of TCM in the treatment of chronic diseases and improvement of quality of life. In the Asian cultural circle, they can use the similarities between TCM and local culture to tell stories about the exchanges and interactions between TCM and other cultures in history, such as exploring the mutual influence between traditional Chinese medicine and Japanese Kampo medicine, in order to enhance the cultural identity of the target audience. In this way, we can stimulate the emotional resonance of the audience and effectively promote the wide spread of TCM culture in the international community.

5.2 Innovating different ways of communication

Diversified TCM culture dissemination breaks the boundaries of traditional communication and strikes the emotional resonance point of the public with multiple carriers and innovative forms. Short videos, through visual identification of medicinal herbs and acupoint massage teaching, make the wisdom of TCM "within reach"; Immersive experience activities awaken sensory memories through sachet making and moxibustion practice; These three-dimensional communication forms not only eliminate the understanding threshold of traditional Chinese medicine culture, but also transform the life care and humanistic spirit it contains into emotional experiences that individuals can perceive.

Li Ziqi's short video series is a compelling example. She has attracted a huge following at home and abroad with her distinctive short videos. These short videos are scientific, practical and appealing. They

carry the genes of Chinese culture and have become a successful example of spreading Chinese culture to the world.^[7]She makes short videos that are authentic and credible, and she has consulted professionals to ensure the scientific dissemination of TCM culture. By combining the 24 solar terms with plant growth, she used the “four causes” characteristics of each Chinese medicine in the video, such as planting according to the place, picking according to the time, processing according to the use and using according to the disease, so that “Chinese medicine culture” can be regarded as a signifier, highlighting the unique charm of Chinese medicine which is in harmony with nature; In the warm interactions between Li Ziqi and her grandmother and neighbors, the process of a doctor saving lives and treating diseases is presented, demonstrating the medical ethics and superb medical skills of truly practicing the “the great compassion and empathy” with life, allowing the audience to experience the warmth of the humanistic feelings of traditional Chinese medicine and the practicality of traditional Chinese medicine in treating diseases and saving lives. She also set the main character in the video as one of ordinary TCM practitioners or depicted it as an ordinary TCM enthusiast, which reduced the distance between the communicator and the audience and enhanced the sense of intimacy; She has captured the anxiety and homesickness of modern people, depicting the carefree rural life like a paradise beyond the mundane world, which has resonated emotionally with people from all over the world.

5.3 Strengthening audience interaction and feedback

In the era of digital communication, strengthening audience interaction and feedback is the key path to improve the quality and efficiency of TCM culture dissemination. By building a two-way communication bridge, users are encouraged to express their views and needs on the popular science content and cultural activities of TCM in the form of comments, votes and questionnaires, so as to timely identify the public interest points and knowledge blind spots, so as to optimize the dissemination strategy accordingly.

5.3.1 Building an interactive platform

In order to build an interactive platform that can effectively spread the culture of TCM, we can make full use of various channels such as the forum of the official website and social media groups to invite the audience to actively share their stories, personal experiences and possible questions related to TCM. Communicators should respond to the audience's messages in time, and enhance their sense of participation and belonging through in-depth communication and interaction. For example, we can set up a special message area on the official WeChat account of TCM culture and regularly launch various topics for discussion, such as “TCM stories around you”, so as to stimulate the enthusiasm of the audience and guide them to actively share their experiences and opinions.

5.3.2 Collecting feedback and optimizing communication effect

In the process of spreading TCM culture, communicators should attach great importance to the feedback of the audience. They can adopt a variety of ways, including but not limited to questionnaires and online interviews. In this way, they can collect the real feelings and opinions of the audience and adjust and optimize communication strategy in time according to these feedback information. For example, by analyzing the audience's feedback, found that they have a high degree of love for the TCM Culture Museum, which shows that the museum is a very popular form of communication. Therefore, they can increase the construction and dissemination to meet the needs of the audience and enhance their understanding and interest in TCM culture.

The Museum of Beijing University of Chinese Medicine has successfully built a functional digital museum platform, which consists of five main parts: museum introduction, medical history homepage, TCM homepage, friendly links and information feedback. This digital platform provides a convenient online self-study and exploration environment for all learners interested in TCM as well as visitors who come to visit. In the homepage of TCM, rich graphic materials are used to show in detail the precious collections and rich historical materials in the museum, so that visitors can have an in-depth understanding of the history and culture of TCM. The friendship section provides links to famous museums around the world, such as Europe, America and Asia, so that users can conduct a wider range of academic exchanges and cultural exploration. The feedback area provides a platform for visitors to submit their opinions, experiences and suggestions, encouraging them to interact and communicate.^[8] In addition, other relevant institutions such as the Shaanxi Medical History Museum and the Shanxi Traditional Chinese Medicine Museum have set up online communication and feedback sections on their official websites or WeChat public accounts. These measures aim to better facilitate

interaction between users and the museums, providing a direct channel for museums to understand and respond to user needs, thereby continuously optimizing services and enriching user experiences.

6. Conclusion

Under the guidance of empathy theory, by deeply studying the needs of the audience, constructing emotional communication content, using diversified communication means to stimulate empathy, and strengthening the interaction and feedback with the audience, the communication effect of TCM culture can be significantly improved. This will not only help to break the boundaries of the spread of TCM culture and promote its wide propagation at home and abroad, but also enhance people's sense of identity and confidence in TCM culture and promote the inheritance and development of TCM. In the future dissemination of TCM, it is essential to continuously and deeply analyze the empathetic characteristics and needs of different audience groups. By integrating digital empowerment and emerging technologies such as virtual reality and augmented reality, we should explore innovative methods for spreading TCM culture. This will inject new vitality into its dissemination and make greater contributions to human health and cultural diversity.

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