

## How China's State Media uses Culture and Art to Reshape Collective Memory and Identity - A Case Study of China Daily

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### ABSTRACT

In the context of the deep integration of globalization and digitalization, the function of state media, has become increasingly prominent in reshaping collective memory and strengthening national identity with the help of cultural and artistic means. Based on the three-layer analytical framework of "symbol production, memory construction, and identity", this paper systematically discusses the cultural communication practice path of China's state media based on the three-layer analytical framework of "symbol production, memory construction, and identity", combined with cultural memory theory, media ritual theory and identity theory. In the end, the role of the state media has changed from historical recorders to memory translators, forming a Chinese communication model of cultural and technological integration, and providing a practical paradigm for the generation of cultural self-confidence and the dissemination of new forms of human civilization.

**Keywords:** State Media; Culture and Art; Collective Memory; Identity; China Daily

### INTRODUCTION

As a spiritual bond that maintains the national community, the formation and inheritance of collective memory are inseparable from the participation of the media (Adriaansen & Smit, 2025). Since the founding of the People's Republic of China, the role of China's state media has undergone three important evolutions, from "historical recorders" to "memory builders" to "identity shapers" (Chin, 2019).

In the early days of the founding of the People's Republic of China, the core functions of the state media represented by "People's Daily" and "China Daily" focused on the objective recording of historical events and the accurate transmission of policy information. In the digital age, the role of the state media has undergone a fundamental shift. On the one hand, the wave of globalization has brought about the collision of cultural diversity, and some groups have collective memory ambiguity and identity anxiety (Rosenmann et al., 2016). On the other hand, new technologies such as 5G, VR, AI, etc. provide new possibilities for cultural dissemination. As the core media of China's external communication, China Daily took the lead in exploring the communication mode of "culture and art + technology", transforming scattered historical memories into perceptible and participatory cultural symbols through innovative forms such as national style H5, intangible cultural heritage digital IP, and virtual cultural landscapes, which not only reshaped collective memory, but also strengthened the cultural identity of the people and opened up a new path for the international dissemination of Chinese culture. From the perspective of the logic of role evolution, the functional expansion of state media has always been in line with the needs of the times. At a time when cultural self-confidence has become the core strategy of national development, studying how China Daily uses cultural and artistic means to construct collective memory and generate identity not

only has important theoretical value, but also provides reference for the cultural communication practice of media in other countries.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Role of Media in Constructing National Identity

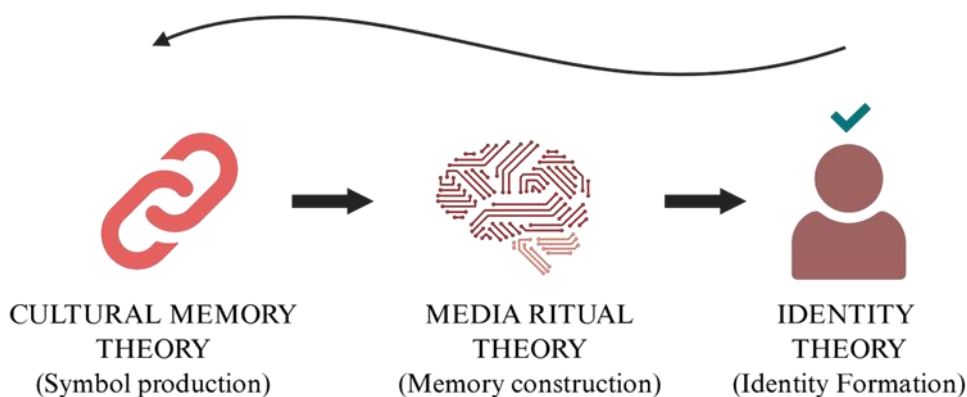
Media in China holds significant influence over the dissemination of information and the formation of public opinion, particularly state-controlled media entities (Stockmann & Gallagher, 2011). Rather than being solely a reflection of government perspectives, the media serves as a multifaceted tool for social education and public diplomacy (ЧЖАН et al., 2025). The unique landscape of media in China is characterized by stringent regulatory measures, resulting in content often being subject to censorship and scrutiny to ensure alignment with government objectives and policies (K.-C. Lin, 2024). The media landscape in China, particularly state-controlled media, serves as a vital platform for disseminating information and shaping public opinion. Zhang et al. assert that media channels are not only conduits for conveying government viewpoints but also play a crucial role in molding societal perspectives and fostering national unity. Through various forms of media, including newspapers, television, radio, and online platforms, the Chinese government disseminates information, educates the public on key policies and initiatives, and promotes national identity and cultural values.

The distinction between state and independent media in China is significant, particularly in terms of content, editorial freedom, and representation of minority issues (Stockmann, 2013; Waight et al., 2025). State media, such as China Central Television (CCTV) and People's Daily, are known for their alignment with government perspectives, often portraying an image of ethnic harmony and unity in line with state narratives (J. C. Lin & Jackson, 2022). On the other hand, independent media, though limited and often subject to constraints, can offer alternative perspectives and occasionally more nuanced representations of ethnic issues (Mattingly et al., 2025). However, the space for truly independent media in China is limited, and such outlets often face significant challenges in terms of censorship and political pressure (Kuo, 2025).

China's media landscape resonates with, yet diverges from, other nations. The dominance of a single majority group, like Japan's Yamato people or Korea's Han, carries echoes of similar dynamics. However, China's sheer number of recognized ethnicities surpasses both, necessitating unique approaches to representation (Qin et al., 2018). Additionally, the role of state media as a powerful tool for shaping public opinion is more pronounced in China compared to many Western democracies (K.-C. Lin, 2024).

### Relevant Theoretical Connotations

The theoretical framework of this study is composed of cultural memory theory, media ritual theory and identity theory, which are interrelated and progressive, and jointly support the analytical logic of "symbol production-memory construction-identity" (Figure 1).



**Figure 1** Research Framework Based on Cultural Memory Theory, Media Ritual Theory, and Identity Theory.

First, the theory of cultural memory. Jan Assmann's theory of cultural memory divides memory into "communicative memory" and "cultural memory" (Laanes & Meretoja, 2021). Communicative memory is based on direct communication between individuals, which is time-sensitive and regional. Cultural memory, on the other hand, is "a knowledge system about the past shared by a social group", which is inherited by cultural symbols such as words, images, and rituals, and has transtemporal and spatial characteristics. Assmann emphasized that cultural symbols are the core carriers of cultural memory, and "only through the encoding and decoding of symbols can

the past be transformed into inheritable memory" (Kang & Yu, 2022). In this study, the cultural and artistic practice of China Daily is essentially the production process of cultural symbols. Whether it is the auspicious cloud pattern in the national style aesthetic system or the Nuo opera mask in the intangible cultural heritage IP, they are all symbolic encoding of traditional Chinese cultural elements. These symbols carry the historical experience and values of the Chinese nation, and are transformed into cultural memory through media dissemination.

Second, the theory of media rituals. Media ritual theory believes that media is not only a tool for information dissemination, but also a "ritual field for constructing social reality and maintaining collective identity (Couldry, 2003). Through the presentation of "focused events", media rituals bring together scattered individuals into common cultural practices to form an "imaginary community" (B. Zhang & Zhang, 2025). The "ritual view of communication" emphasizes that the essence of communication is to "construct and maintain an orderly and meaningful cultural world through the sharing of symbols (Carey, 1992). Many of the cultural and artistic practices of China Daily have the attribute of media rituals. For example, the "personal front page generation" activity allows the audience to combine their own stories with the country's development history, and form a collective participation ceremony through the "posting" behavior; The launch of the "Ten Years Journal" takes "time" as the core, connecting the major events of the past decade into a focused event, guiding the audience to form emotional resonance in the process of reviewing history. Media ritual theory helps us understand how the state media constructs "ritual scenes" through cultural and artistic forms, transforming audiences from "passive recipients" to "active participants", and reinforcing collective memory and identity through ritualistic participation.

Third, identity theory. Identity theory states that identity is not a static "self-perception" but a dynamic "construction process" in which individuals continuously adjust and reconstruct their identity through interaction with the social environment (Giddens, 1991). From the perspective of cultural studies, some scholars believe that identity is "closely related to cultural representation, and individuals gain a sense of belonging through shared cultural symbols and narratives (Hall, 1994). At the national level, the core of identity is the people's cognition and identification with their own cultural identity. The cultural and artistic communication of China Daily helps the people form a clear cultural identity through the transmission of cultural symbols and the construction of cultural narratives. For example, the "Kunlun Naming" activity combines the cultural symbol "Kunlun" with the national spirit, providing the "spiritual coordinates" of national identity. Nuo Noodle Street Dance and Classic Theater allow different age groups to find their own positioning in cultural practice through intergenerational cultural expression, so as to realize the intergenerational inheritance of identity.

In summary, cultural memory theory provides an analytical basis for "symbol production", media ritual theory explains the realization path of "memory construction", and identity theory clarifies the goal of "identity generation". Together, these three form the theoretical support of this study, ensuring the depth and systematization of the analysis.

### **Symbol Production: Cultural and Artistic Coding Strategies**

Symbolic production is the basic layer of state media to reshape collective memory and identity (Neiger, 2020). By building a national style aesthetic system, activating the intangible cultural heritage IP matrix, and empowering the dissemination of symbols with science and technology, China Daily transforms traditional Chinese cultural elements into cultural symbols with the characteristics of the times and dissemination, laying the foundation for subsequent memory construction and identity generation.

#### ***National Style Aesthetic System***

In the theme H5 of "Ten Years and One Moment" launched by China Daily in 2022 (hereinafter referred to as "Ten Years H5"), a systematic national style aesthetic system was constructed through auspicious cloud patterns, realizing the integration of traditional culture and modern design, and providing a visual carrier for the production of cultural symbols.

In particular, the auspicious cloud pattern is a visual expression of cultural meaning. The auspicious cloud pattern is one of the most representative elements of traditional Chinese patterns, symbolizing auspiciousness, harmony and prosperity (Sullivan, 2008). "Ten Years H5" uses the auspicious cloud pattern as the core visual symbol, integrating it into page transitions, scene switching and information presentation, realizing the visual expression of cultural meaning. The auspicious cloud pattern not only creates a solemn and agile atmosphere, but also symbolizes the passage of time and the development of the country through the "fluidity" of the auspicious clouds (Figure 2). This coding method transforms the auspicious cloud pattern from a "decorative element" to a "meaning carrier", so that the audience can perceive the achievements of modern development while also receiving the values in traditional culture.



**Figure 2.** Visual elements from "Ten Years H5". (A) cover page featuring the auspicious cloud motif; (B) page transition scene integrating traditional cultural patterns.

**Note:** Images reproduced for academic purposes from China Daily's "Ten Years and One Moment" H5 theme report (2022). The figure illustrates how the auspicious cloud motif functions within the national-style aesthetic system, serving as both a decorative design and a carrier of cultural meaning. Source: China Daily, 2022. Used for academic purposes only, no commercial distribution intended.

From the perspective of theoretical dialogue, the construction of the national style aesthetic system of "Ten Years H5" echoes Asman's theory of cultural memory. Asman believes that "cultural symbols must have 'recognizability' and 'inheritability'", and the auspicious cloud pattern forms highly recognizable visual symbols through the modern translation of traditional aesthetic elements, which carry the aesthetic memory and values of the Chinese nation and are transformed into inheritable cultural memory through the dissemination of H5. At the same time, this aesthetic coding also meets the communication needs of the digital age - a simple and elegant visual style is easier to spread on mobile devices, improving the communication efficiency of cultural symbols.

### *Intangible Cultural Heritage IP Activation Matrix*

Intangible cultural heritage is an important carrier of the collective memory of the Chinese nation (Q. Lin & Lian, 2018), but traditional intangible cultural heritage is facing the dilemma of "difficult to inherit and narrow dissemination (Yan, 2023). China Daily has built an intangible cultural heritage IP activation matrix by creating intangible cultural heritage IP projects such as "Show Her Embroidery", making intangible cultural heritage "alive" in the form of digital translation, and realizing the modern production and dissemination of intangible cultural heritage symbols (Qi et al., 2025).

"Show what she embroiders" realizes the female narrative and digital dissemination of embroidered intangible cultural heritage. "Show Her Embroidery" is an embroidery intangible cultural heritage IP project launched by China Daily in 2021, focusing on the inheritance and dissemination of traditional Chinese embroidery (such as Su embroidery, Hunan embroidery, and Qiang embroidery) (Table 1). In terms of content coding, "Show Her Embroidery" is not limited to the introduction of embroidery skills, but tells the female stories of embroidery inheritors through documentaries, short videos, graphic topics and other forms. For example, when introducing Qiang embroidery, the project team filmed a documentary about Yang Huazhen, the inheritor of Qiang embroidery. After the Wenchuan earthquake, Yang Huazhen led Qiang women to rebuild their homes through embroidery and integrate Qiang culture into embroidery works. This coding method makes intangible cultural heritage related to modern social issues (such as women's power and rural revitalization), and enhances the era and appeal of intangible cultural heritage. In terms of communication channels, "Show Her Embroidery" makes full use of the advantages of the digital platform and launches the "Embroidery DIY" interactive applet on the WeChat public account, where users can simulate the embroidery process online and generate exclusive embroidery works. This multi-platform and interactive communication method breaks the geographical restrictions of intangible cultural heritage communication, allowing more people to contact and understand embroidery culture through digital channels, and realizing the widespread dissemination of intangible cultural heritage symbols.

**Table 1.** “Show Her Embroidery” intangible cultural heritage IP – Encoding strategies and dissemination effects

Dimension	Specific Practice	Effect / Symbol Outcome
Content coding	Female inheritor stories via documentaries, short videos, graphics	Connects embroidery with women’s empowerment & rural revitalization
Format & platforms	“Embroidery DIY” WeChat mini-program; multi-platform release	Removes geographic limits; enables interactive creation
Theoretical alignment	Audience-tailored coding: women → narratives; youth → gamification	Aligns with Hall’s encoding–decoding; boosts reach & decoding efficiency

From a theoretical point of view, the digital translation logic is in line with Hall's "encoding-decoding" theory. Stuart Hall believes that "the communication process of cultural products is an interactive process of encoding and decoding, and coders need to adjust the coding strategy according to the cultural background and acceptance habits of the audience to achieve effective communication (Bødker, 2018). In the activation of intangible cultural heritage IP, China Daily did not convey the intangible cultural heritage symbols to the audience "as they are", but adjusted the code according to the needs of different audiences (female audiences focus on stories, young audiences pay attention to fun), and make intangible cultural heritage symbols easier to decode through narrative innovation, design transformation, and scene construction, so as to realize the effective dissemination of intangible cultural heritage culture. At the same time, this digital translation also realizes the transformation of intangible cultural heritage from "niche inheritance" to "public sharing", providing a new path for the inheritance of intangible cultural heritage memory.

### ***Science and Technology Empower Symbol Communication***

In the digital age, technology is not only a communication tool, but also an important enabling means for the production of cultural symbols (Li et al., 2025). Through VR, NFT, virtual technology and other scientific and technological means, China Daily has constructed digital cultural symbols that are "perceptible, ownable, and interactive", breaking the time and space limitations of traditional cultural dissemination and enhancing the dissemination and influence of cultural symbols.

Qiang villages are important carriers of Qiang culture, carrying the architectural art, living customs and historical memory of the Qiang people. However, due to geographical constraints, many people were unable to visit Qiang villages on the spot, which limited the spread of Qiang culture. The "VR Qiangzhai" project launched by China Daily in 2022 uses virtual reality technology to build a 1:1 restoration of digital Qiangzhai, allowing the audience to perceive Qiang cultural symbols through immersive experience. From the perspective of communication effect, after the launch of the "VR Qiangzhai" project, it has been downloaded more than 500,000 times on major VR platforms in China and more than 100,000 times on overseas platforms (such as Steam). Many users said after the experience, "Through VR Qiangzhai, I truly felt the charm of Qiang culture for the first time, and I was impressed by the architectural art of the Qiang diao and the exquisite patterns of Qiang embroidery." This feedback shows that VR technology enhances the effect of cultural dissemination by improving the "perceptibility" of cultural symbols, providing a new path for the inheritance of cultural memory of ethnic minorities.

To sum up, China Daily has realized the "immersive, confirmed, and cross-time and space" upgrade of cultural symbol communication through VR, NFT, virtual technology and other scientific and technological means. These scientific and technological means not only improve the efficiency and value of cultural symbols, but also change cultural symbols from "static" to "dynamic", from "one-way communication" to "interactive sharing", laying a solid foundation for subsequent memory construction and identity generation.

### **Memory Construction: Spatio-Temporal Narrative and Emotional Mobilization**

Memory construction is the intermediary layer for the state media to reshape collective memory and identity. On the basis of completing the production of cultural symbols, China Daily realizes the dialogue between history and reality through "space-time folding", uses microscopic memory carriers to arouse emotional resonance, and expands the boundaries of memory through global memory symbols, so as to build a systematic, profound, and inclusive collective memory.

#### ***Spatiotemporal Folding***

The construction of collective memory needs to achieve a "connection between history and reality", otherwise historical memory will become an "isolated past" and will have difficulty having an impact on reality. Through the "space-time folding technique", China Daily presents the memory symbols of different time and space in a dialogue

manner, so that historical memory and real memory echo and reinforce each other, so as to build a continuous collective memory. The linkage between the "Decade Journal" and the "Lugou Bridge AI Soldier" is a typical example of this strategy.

The "Ten Years" (i.e., the "Ten Years, One Moment" theme report of China Daily) takes the "2012-2022" decade as the time span and records China's major achievements in the fields of economy, science and technology, culture, and people's livelihood through text, pictures, videos, H5 and other forms. Its core narrative logic is "the combination of micro individuals and macro era" - by telling the stories of ordinary people (such as poverty alleviation cadres, anti-epidemic doctors, and scientific and technological workers), it shows the course of national development in the past ten years.

Lugou Bridge is an important historical site of China's War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression, carrying the historical memory of the Chinese nation to "resist aggression and defend peace". However, for young audiences, the historical memory of Lugou Bridge is relatively vague and difficult to resonate deeply. The "Lugou Bridge AI Soldiers" project launched by China Daily in 2023 uses artificial intelligence technology to "resurrect" the historical memory of Lugou Bridge, allowing history to have a dialogue with reality. This interactive method transforms historical memory from "static text" to "dynamic dialogue", enhancing the appeal and persuasiveness of historical memory.

The linkage between the "Ten Years" and the "Lugou Bridge AI Soldier" realizes the "spatio-temporal dialogue" between historical memory and real memory. In the "Peaceful Development" section of the "Decade Issue", "China Daily" inserted an interactive entrance of "Lugou Bridge AI Soldiers". While reading about China's achievements in national defense construction and peace diplomacy in the past ten years, users can click on the entrance to interact with "AI soldiers" and learn about the history of the War of Resistance Against Japan.

From a theoretical perspective, this dialogue between time and space is in line with Asman's view of the "contemporaneity of cultural memory". Asman believes that "cultural memory is not a simple reproduction of the past, but a reconstruction of the past according to the needs of the present, so that the past can provide meaningful support for the present." The linkage between the "Ten Years" and the "Lugou Bridge AI Soldiers" combines historical memory with the current needs of "peaceful development", and through the dialogue between history and reality, historical memory provides spiritual impetus for the development of reality, and at the same time, it also makes realistic achievements a "contemporary footnote" of historical memory, so as to construct an interrelated collective memory of "past and present".

### ***Microscopic Memory Carriers***

The construction of collective memory requires not only macroscopic historical narratives, but also microscopic memory carriers. Macro narratives can easily create a "sense of distance" for audiences, while micro carriers can evoke emotional resonance through "individual experiences", making collective memories "touchable and perceptible". By focusing on micro carriers such as "poverty alleviation baskets" and "anti-epidemic goggles", China Daily excavates the individual stories and emotional values behind them, and realizes the emotional construction of collective memory.

### ***Poverty Alleviation Basket: A Memory Symbol of Rural Revitalization***

Poverty alleviation baskets are a common tool in China's poverty alleviation process. The special report "China in the Poverty Alleviation Basket" launched by China Daily in 2021 constructs a micro memory of poverty alleviation by telling the story behind the poverty alleviation basket.

In the special report, China Daily selected three cases of poverty alleviation baskets in different regions: the first case is the "medicinal materials basket" in Nujiang Lisu Autonomous Prefecture, Yunnan Province - Wang Min, a poverty alleviation cadre, will carry a basket every week, lead villagers to the mountains to collect Chinese medicinal materials, and then transport the medicinal materials to the county seat for sale, helping villagers achieve an annual per capita income increase of 3,000 yuan; The second case is the "education basket" in Bijie, Guizhou Province - Zhang Guimei, a rural teacher, carries a basket every day to deliver textbooks and stationery to the homes of students in mountainous areas, and the "educational hope" in the basket has reduced the local dropout rate from 30% to 0.5%; The third case is the "e-commerce basket" in Yan'an, Shaanxi Province - Li Yang, a young returnee, bought farmers' apples through the basket and sold them through the e-commerce platform, allowing Yan'an apples to go to the whole country and driving more than 500 farmers out of poverty.

From the perspective of emotional mobilization, the report on poverty alleviation has triggered a strong empathy effect. Many audiences said in the comments, "I can't help but cry when I see the video of poverty alleviation cadres carrying baskets up the mountain, their efforts are not easy" and "Although the poverty alleviation basket is ordinary, it carries the hope of too many people, which is a true portrayal of China's poverty alleviation." This empathy effect stems from the "closeness" of microscopic carriers - poverty alleviation baskets are a common tool in ordinary people's lives, and the audience can understand the hardships and warmth behind

the baskets through their own experience, so as to emotionally resonate with the collective memory of poverty alleviation.

### ***Anti-Epidemic Goggles: The Emotional Memory of the Whole People's Fight against the Epidemic***

Anti-epidemic goggles are an important protective equipment for medical staff during the new crown epidemic in 2020, which has witnessed the perseverance of medical staff and the unity of the whole people in the fight against the epidemic, and is an important emotional memory carrier for the whole people to fight the epidemic. The special report "China Behind the Goggles" launched by China Daily in 2020 has built a microscopic memory of the whole people's fight against the epidemic by focusing on anti-epidemic goggles.

In terms of communication strategy, China Daily makes full use of the emotional impact of "visual symbols": makes close-up photos of anti-epidemic goggles into posters and places them in public places such as subways, buses, and outdoor large screens; The story behind the goggles was made into a short video and disseminated on platforms such as Douyin and Weibo, among which Nurse Li Juan's goggle video was viewed more than 100 million times and retweeted more than 1 million times. This visual communication method transforms anti-epidemic goggles from "protective equipment" to "emotional symbols" - it not only represents the sacrifice of medical staff, but also symbolizes the unity of the whole people in the fight against the epidemic and the warmth of international mutual assistance.

From the perspective of theoretical dialogue, the use of microscopic memory vectors is in line with the theory of "emotional public" (Papacharissi, 2015). China Daily explores the emotional value of micro carriers such as poverty alleviation baskets and anti-epidemic goggles, which captures the needs of the "emotional public" - these carriers can evoke emotional resonance among the audience and allow the audience to change from "passively receiving" collective memory to "actively participating" in the construction of collective memory. At the same time, this emotional memory construction also enhances the stability of collective memory - emotional memory is deeper and more lasting than rational memory, and can affect the audience's cognition and behavior for a longer period of time.

### ***Globalized Memory Symbols***

In the era of globalization, the construction of collective memory not only needs to strengthen the memory identity of domestic audiences, but also needs to expand the international boundaries of memory, so that China's collective memory can become a globally inclusive memory (Ohnesorge & Owen, 2023). By creating the "Lion Dance IP", a global memory symbol, China Daily combines cross-cultural adaptation strategies to resonate with the memory of global audiences, and realizes the international construction of collective memory.

In order to better accept the lion dance IP with a global audience, China Daily has adopted a cross-cultural adaptation strategy of "content localization" and "form internationalization" (Table 2). In terms of content localization, China Daily adjusts the content narrative of lion dance IP according to the cultural background and audience needs of different countries. For example, in Southeast Asia (such as Malaysia and Singapore), China Daily has launched the content of "Traditional Lion Dance + Chinese Stories" - produced the documentary "Lion Dance Family", which tells the story of the inheritors of Chinese lion dance in Malaysia and shows the inheritance and development of lion dance culture overseas. In Europe and the United States, due to the relatively small understanding of traditional Chinese culture, China Daily has launched the content of "Lion Dance + Global Issues" - produced the animated short film "Lion Dance to Fight the Epidemic", which tells the story of the lion dance team and people around the world fighting the epidemic together, and combines the connotation of "courage and unity" of lion dance with the practical issues of global anti-epidemic to enhance the relevance and appeal of the content.

**Table 2.** Cross-cultural adaptation strategy of "Lion Dance IP"

<b>Target Region</b>	<b>Content Strategy (Localization)</b>	<b>Format Strategy (Internationalization)</b>	<b>Example Works</b>
Southeast Asia (e.g., Malaysia, Singapore)	Traditional stories + overseas Chinese diaspora narratives (inheritance, family, community)	Documentary / TV program	<i>Lion Dance Family</i> – Documentary on Malaysian lion dance inheritors
Europe & U.S.	Global issues + cultural symbolism (courage, unity, anti-epidemic)	Animation / Game	<i>Lion Dance to Fight the Epidemic</i> – Animated short film
Global Market	Cross-cultural collaboration + hybrid aesthetics (Chinese elements + international animation styles)	Co-production films / Commercial animation	<i>Kung Fu Lion Dance</i> (co-produced with Disney, global box office \$100M+)
Youth Audience (transnational)	Pop-culture integration (street dance, esports, music) + simplified lion dance imagery	Games / Variety shows / Short-video content	Interactive mobile game "Lion Dance GO"; Online variety show featuring lion dance challenges

In terms of form internationalization, China Daily adopts communication forms familiar to global audiences, such as animation, games, variety shows, etc. For example, the animated film "Kung Fu Lion" was produced in collaboration with Disney, which combined Chinese lion dance with Disney's animation style, and the film grossed more than \$100 million at the box office after its global release, allowing more American audiences to learn about lion dance culture.

From a theoretical point of view, the cross-cultural adaptation path of lion dance IP is in line with the "synergistic theory of cross-cultural communication". The theory believes that "the key to the success of cross-cultural communication lies in 'synergy' - communicators need to find a 'common meaning space' between different cultures, and adjust communication strategies so that audiences from different cultural backgrounds can resonate in the common meaning space." By refining the core connotation of lion dance culture (common meaning space), China Daily combines the strategy of content localization and form internationalization, so that global audiences can resonate with common values such as "courage, unity, and auspiciousness", so as to realize the international construction of China's collective memory.

### Identity Generation: Participation Mechanism And Intergenerational Inheritance

Identity generation is the target layer of state media to reshape collective memory and identity (Adams & Mitrani, 2024). On the basis of completing the production of symbols and the construction of memory, China Daily transforms the audience from "memory recipients" to "memory creators" by constructing a ritualistic participation mechanism. through innovative intergenerational connection methods, the intergenerational inheritance of identity is realized; By anchoring the national spiritual coordinates and building a community imagination, a stable and lasting national identity will finally be generated.

#### *Ritualized Participation*

Media rituals are an important way to generate identity, which brings together dispersed individuals through "common cultural practices" to form an "imaginary community" (Putri et al., 2018). China Daily has built a digital media ritual by launching the "Personal Front Page Generation" activity, allowing the audience to strengthen their identity through ritualistic participation.

"Personal front page generation" is an interactive activity launched by China Daily during the 2022 National Day, users can upload their own photos and enter personal stories (such as "My Ten Years of Struggle" and "My Cultural Inheritance Story") through the official APP of China Daily or WeChat mini program, and the system will automatically generate an exclusive front page of China Daily. The layout design of the front page is the same as that of the paper version of China Daily, with the masthead of "China Daily" in the upper left corner, the user's photos and stories in the middle, and the blessings of "Happy National Day" and the auspicious cloud pattern of the national style below.

The central innovation of this event lies in the "combination of personal and national narratives". In the process of generating a personal front page, users need to review their personal experiences and combine them with the general context of national development. This combination of personal narrative and national narrative allows users to express their personal identity while also feeling the close connection between the individual and the country, thereby strengthening the identity of "a member of the country". Judging from the participation data, after the launch of the "Personal Front Page Generation" event, the number of participants exceeded 5 million, and more than 8 million personal front pages were generated. Among them, the post-90s and post-00s users accounted for 70%, and many young users said, "Generating their own personal front page and feeling that their stories have become part of the country's history, which is very wonderful." This feedback shows that the personal front page generation activity provides users with a personalized expression channel for their identity, allowing them to feel their own value and sense of belonging to the country in their participation.

#### *Intergenerational Connection Innovation*

The inheritance of identity needs to span generations, otherwise there will be an "identity break"(Dai et al., 2024). Through innovative intergenerational connection, China Daily launched two projects, "Nuo Noodle Street Dance" and "Classic Theater", which are aimed at young people and middle-aged and elderly groups respectively, and realize the intergenerational inheritance of identity through emotional education (Table 3).

**Table 3.** Intergenerational Cultural Innovation Projects of China Daily

Project Name	Target Group	Cultural Element Integrated	Modern Adaptation Form	Reach / Impact
Nuo Noodle Street Dance	Youth	Nuo Opera mask	Street dance fusion	500k students, 500M+ views
Classic Theater	Middle-aged/Older	Confucian/Taoist classics	Drama / Opera	Nationwide TV coverage

### ***Nuo Noodle Street Dance: Identity Construction of Young Groups***

Young people are the core object of identity inheritance, but they are less receptive to traditional forms of cultural communication (Y. Zhang et al., 2024). The "Nuo Noodle Street Dance" project launched by China Daily combines traditional Nuo opera masks with modern street dance, and builds the identity of young people through youthful cultural expression.

The core innovation of "Nuo Noodle Street Dance" lies in the "integration of traditional symbols and modern culture". The project team invited a well-known street dance team in China to integrate the elements of Nuo opera masks into street dance movements and costume design: street dance movements borrow from the basic movements of Nuo opera such as "stepping" and "turning", and the costumes adopt the colors and patterns of Nuo opera masks. For example, in the dance "New Rhyme of Nuo Dance", the dancers wear a simplified version of the Nuo Opera mask and wear street dance costumes printed with auspicious cloud patterns, and the movements not only have the dynamics and vitality of street dance, but also retain the solemnity and mystery of Nuo Opera. This kind of integrated cultural expression allows young people to perceive traditional culture in the familiar street dance culture and enhances the affinity of traditional culture. According to statistics, the "Nuo Noodle Street Dance" project covers more than 500,000 college students, the number of participants in the online challenge exceeds 1 million, and the number of related videos has been viewed more than 500 million times. Many young students said, "Through Nuo noodle street dance, I discovered for the first time that traditional culture can be so cool, and I am proud that China has such a traditional culture." This feedback shows that Nuo Noodle Street Dance has successfully constructed the cultural identity of young people through youthful cultural expression, laying the foundation for the intergenerational inheritance of identity.

### ***Classic Theater: Emotional Identity Awakening of Middle-aged and Elderly Groups***

Middle-aged and elderly groups have a deep emotional foundation in traditional culture, but they are relatively unfamiliar with modern forms of cultural communication. The "Classic Theater" project launched by China Daily adapts traditional classics (such as the Analects and Tao Te Ching) into traditional art forms such as drama and opera, and awakens the identity of middle-aged and elderly groups through emotional education.

The core innovation of the "Classic Theater" lies in the "combination of classic content and real life". The project team invited well-known domestic drama directors and opera actors to combine classic stories from classics with modern life issues and adapt them into easy-to-understand theater works. This adaptation method transforms traditional classics from "obscure texts" to "vivid life stories", enhances the realistic relevance of the content of classics, and resonates emotionally with middle-aged and elderly people. In terms of TV broadcasting, China Daily cooperated with CCTV to broadcast classic theater works on the opera channel, covering middle-aged and elderly audiences across the country. This close communication method allows middle-aged and elderly people to come into contact with traditional culture in familiar life scenes, awaken their emotional memory of traditional culture, and thus strengthen their identity.

### **Community Imagination: The Naming of Kunlun and The Anchoring of National Spiritual Coordinates**

Community imagination is the core of identity, which forms a collective identity by constructing "common spiritual coordinates" so that individuals can perceive themselves as members of the community. Through the "Kunlun Naming" activity, China Daily combines the cultural symbol of "Kunlun" with the national spirit, anchors the national spiritual coordinates, and constructs the community imagination of the Chinese nation.

Kunlun is an important symbol in traditional Chinese culture, with rich cultural connotations and spiritual values. At the geographical level, Kunlun Mountain is an important mountain range in western China and is known as the "ancestor of ten thousand mountains"; At the cultural level, Kunlun is an important birthplace of ancient Chinese mythology, such as "The Queen Mother of the West lives on the hill of Kunlun" and "The story of Chang'e running to the moon is related to Kunlun"; At the spiritual level, Kunlun symbolizes the spiritual qualities of "tenacity, lofty and inclusive" - Kunlun Mountain towers into the sky, symbolizing lofty ambitions; The Kunlun Mountains stretch endlessly, symbolizing tenacity and perseverance; Kunlun Mountain houses a variety of creatures and cultures, symbolizing an inclusive mind.

In the "Kunlun Naming" activity, China Daily first carried out the "refinement of the times" of Kunlun's spiritual value - combining the spiritual quality of Kunlun with the national spirit of contemporary China, and proposed that "Kunlun spirit = perseverance and struggle spirit + inclusive spirit with the world in mind + innovative spirit of pursuing excellence". This refinement of the times has transformed Kunlun from a "traditional cultural symbol" to a "contemporary spiritual coordinate", providing the core connotation for the construction of community imagination.

To sum up, China Daily has generated an identity of "personalization, intergenerationalization, and collectivization" through ritualistic participation and intergenerational innovation. This identity not only includes

the individual's sense of belonging to the country, but also realizes the inheritance of identity between generations, and also constructs the community cognition of the Chinese nation, which is the final result of the state media reshaping collective memory and identity (Yin et al., 2025).

## CONCLUSION

Through the systematic analysis of the cultural and artistic practice of China Daily, this study finds that in the digital era, China Daily has achieved role upgrade through cultural and artistic means. This transformation is reflected in three levels: at the symbolic level, traditional cultural elements are translated into digital symbols with the characteristics of the times and dissemination; At the memory level, the scattered historical memory and real memory are translated into systematic, profound, and inclusive collective memory. At the level of identity, the abstract national spirit is translated into a perceptible, participable, and inheritable identity. The core logic of this role transmutation is "audience-centric" - the state media is no longer a "one-way information carrier" but a "two-way memory interplayer". Through the progression of symbol production, memory construction, and identity generation, the state media allows the audience to change from "passive reception of memory" to "active participation in memory construction", and from "individual identity cognition" to "collective identity". This role transmutation not only enhances the cultural communication effect of the state media, but also strengthens the core position of the state media in the inheritance of civilization.

## Disclosure Statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s)

## Notes

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