Cultural Activation: A Study of the Impact of the Image of Hutongs Shaped by Yao-Chinese Folktales on the Transformation of Cultural Spaces in Old Town Areas

Shuyang Ran
Beijing Institute of Graphic Communication, China
***Corresponding author E-mail: 15928871753@163.com**

Abstract: This paper takes the transformation of the image of cultural space in the old city as the starting point, and starts from the perspective of "Beijing Hutong" in animation art, based on the background of the existing research on animation in many fields, to seize the innovation point of new art to help cultural transformation. This paper focuses on the artistic presentation and logical conception of the work "The Kiosk" in the widely acclaimed Chinese animation " Yao-Chinese Folktales ", and further analyzes the effect of "Beijing Hutong" on enhancing residents' cultural identity and promoting socially virtuous construction and transformation of cultural space in the old city with the aid of artistic creation. This paper adopts a questionnaire survey to investigate whether the scenes of hutong life have enhanced the cultural confidence of the residents and to analyze the unique artistic form and creation mechanism of the work "The Kiosk".
Keywords: hutong culture, cultural identity, lifelike narrative

1 Introduction

Today, with China's rapid economic development, hard power such as science and technology, military and economy are constantly improving, and cultural soft power is also receiving more and more attention. In the Proposal of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China on the 14th Five-Year Plan for National Economic and Social Development and the Visionary Goals for 2035, it is stated that "we should focus on telling a good Chinese story, innovate and promote international communication, and strengthen cultural exchanges and multi-level civilizational dialogue with foreign countries". Telling the Chinese story well and promoting it to the world should be based on tapping into the unique charm of our own culture, strengthening our cultural confidence, enhancing our cultural soft power and building a strong cultural nation.

As a characteristic culture of Beijing, Hutong is a unique cultural propaganda gateway to the city. Therefore, the promotion and improvement of Beijing's hutong culture has an important leading role in the promotion of the country's cultural soft power. So, does the shaping of hutong living scenes enhance the cultural confidence of residents? Through what mechanisms does it enhance this confidence? This paper will focus on this question.

2 Review of the literature

2.1 Literature review of hutong culture

Based on a literature search of "Beijing hutongs", there are 829 documents in total, and the distribution and content of the literature suggests that there is a large research base on Beijing hutongs. The main areas of research are hutongs as a whole or hutong culture, brand marketing, spatial and landscape design of hutongs, literature about hutongs, and hutong tourism from the perspective of analysis.

Domestic scholar Zhang Qiao Xue 2016 in "Designing the Brand Visual Identity System of Beijing Hutong Cultural Tour" ponders and explores the inheritance and promotion of hutong culture in visual design, proposing a new idea of combining the modern trendy visual design of urban image with the visual identity design of tourism brand. Domestic scholars Chen Xiaohan and Zhang Wini 2020 conclude in "Exploring the Landscape Design of Hutong Microspaces in Beijing" that hutong microspaces, as a kind of small-scale charming cellular space in the macro-structural system of the city, have an improvement effect on the daily life environment of residents that cannot be ignored. Li Peilin, a domestic scholar, published an article on the spiritual dilemma of "patience" in hutong culture in the journal Yihai in 2017, arguing that if "patience" changes from a survival instinct to a national psyche, then the whole nation will be trapped in a whirlpool of spiritual dilemmas.

2.2 A literature review of scene theory

Domestic scholar Wang Yaqi analysed the "love and hate" in Beijing's hutongs from a literary perspective in terms of the locational characteristics of the image portrayed in The Hall of Four Ages. Xu Hong and Han Linjuan compared artistic images with tourists' perceptions of Beijing's hutong scenes in the field of literary tourism, and demonstrate the gap between literary artworks and tourists' actual perceptions of hutong images. Less research has been conducted on scenes from the field of animation art.

The foreign media perspective is overwhelmingly critical of the mainstream media in the U.S. In 2003 Mark Steyn said in Beijing with the Walls Down: "Beijing mixes elements of resemblance and dissimilarity, modernity and antiquity. The removal of the city walls has given the city freedom, but it has also made the city a more confusing and largely stylistic mix." The New York Times, in "What do you do in Beijing", published on 22 February 2015, mentions that "To really understand Beijing, you have to delve deep into its hutongs. The old Beijing hutongs around Yonghegong are excellent places to get a feel for the ecology of Beijing's streets, even though many of them have been destroyed over the years." Similarly, the look and feel of the hutongs is reflected in the domestic media, which in 2014 stated in the People's Daily that in the Gulou area, a traditional hutong area of Beijing, "traditional culture has found a more intimate interface with modern life, and the human image of the city of Beijing has become more three-dimensional." After surfacing Beijing's hutongs with the art of the hairy monkey in the story "Heaven and Earth" by one of Beijing's hairy monkeys, Sun Huaizhong said, "You can get out of Beijing, but you can't get out of the hutongs." Hutongs here then have an intuitive, sensual and transcendent landscape

vehicle.

In 2010, Wang Xiaolu, a domestic scholar, proposed a scale for assessing the image of urban historical and cultural districts in the context of a study on the perceived image of urban historical and cultural districts: the example of the Shichahai district in Beijing, and concluded that tourists' perceptions and concerns about urban historical and cultural districts are mainly in the areas of cultural authenticity, visual authenticity, tourism and services, and social environment perception. The study concluded that tourists' perceptions and concerns of urban historic and cultural districts are mainly in the areas of cultural authenticity, visual authenticity, tourism and services and social environment perception. In 2008, the Chinese scholar Shan Jixiang proposed in his book 'Reinventing Urban Cultural Features and Cultural City Construction' that urban features have both static and dynamic meanings. In today's highly developed civilization, the culture of urban characteristics is gradually blurred, and many cultural imprints and traditional lifestyles have been ruthlessly erased. The cultural transformation of the old city of a historic city can create its own urban character according to different historical and geographical conditions.

2.3 Asking questions

In summary, studies on the image of hutongs and the planning of old urban areas have been conducted by scholars mainly from the perspectives of history, tourism and urban planning, but have neglected the effect of transforming and promoting the culture of ethnic characteristics brought about by animated artworks in the process of referencing and beautifying reality. As a result, there is less scope for further scholarly exploration of the image of hutongs and the transformation of cultural space in the old city as portrayed in the animated artwork Yao-Chinese Folktales, and there is more scope for research in animated artworks.

The Kiosk piece in China's Wonderland has a strong and authentic hutong culture. So do viewers who rate China Chitwan higher identify more with hutong culture? Do users who have seen it identify more strongly with it than those who have not seen Chinese Chitwan? Are users with higher ratings more inclined to visit hutong cultural attractions on site? Do objective conditions such as the audience's economic, social and educational level influence the creation of this cultural identity?

3 Research Methodology

Using a questionnaire survey, this paper examines the impact of the image of the hutong portrayed in China's Strange Tale on the transformation of cultural space in the old city, in an attempt to answer the above questions.

3.1. Formulation of hypotheses

Based on the questions above, the corresponding hypotheses are presented here:

H1: The more people who have seen the film, the more they identify with Hutong culture than

those who have not seen "China's Strange Tale".

H2: The higher the rating of " Yao-Chinese Folktales ", the more they identify with Hutong culture.

H3: The higher the rating of "China's Wonderful Tan", the more inclined they were to visit hutong cultural sites on the ground.

To prove the above hypothesis, this study used a questionnaire survey method to divide the overall population into two main target groups of people who had seen and had not seen the production of "The Commissary" in "China Chit Chat", a random sample of 269 was drawn and a questionnaire was created. A total of 269 questionnaires were collected, of which 100 respondents had seen episodes of China's Strange Tale - The Commissary and 169 respondents had not. In terms of gender, 80% of the sample were female and 20% of the sample were male. In terms of education the vast majority of the sample had a bachelor's degree, with a total of 211, or 78.44%.

This questionnaire contains 15 questions, including 14 single-choice questions and 1 scoring question, and uses an online approach to collect data through Wechat Moments, Weibo and Qzone. By analysing the group of respondents who have watched the work of The Commissary, this study found that the most important viewing channels for respondents who have watched the work of Yao-Chinese Folktales - The Commissary are the video platforms represented by B website and Aiki Yi, accounting for 72% of the respondents. Moreover, respondents who have watched The Kiosk rated the work highly, with 89% of them giving it a rating of 4 or above (on a 5-point scale). This group did not know much about hutong culture, with 75% of respondents saying that they did not know much about the hutong culture shown in The Commissary, but after watching it, they became more interested in it (71%). An analysis of the respondents who had not seen The Commissary revealed that "not having heard of it" was the main reason why they had not seen it.

4 Research findings and discussion points

4.1 A unique visual style enhances the perceptibility of hutong culture

In this paper, we analyse the degree of acceptance and approval of hutong culture by behavioural individuals by discussing the degree of perception of hutong culture by viewers after watching the animated work of Yao-Chinese Folktales. In his 2021 empirical analysis of the Technology Acceptance Model, domestic scholar Liu Xuhui affirms the theoretical model of Davis, a well-known foreign scholar, known as the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM for short), which is used to analyse behavioural individuals' attitudes towards the perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use of information technology, and thus the behavioural individuals' perceived acceptability of the technology. The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) is used to analyse individuals' attitudes towards the perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use of information technology, and thus their acceptability of the technology. On the basis of this model, this study uses hutong culture as the basis of external variables and " Yao-Chinese Folktales - Kiosk" as the moderating variable. A reliability analysis of the scales used in this study revealed that the unique visual style of The Commissary enhances the perception of hutong culture. In

the independent sample t, I tested the difference in the perception of Hutong culture between respondents who had seen the work and those who had not seen it. The respondents who had seen the work were significantly more likely to identify with hutong culture than those who had not seen it, and those who had seen the work "China's Strange Tale - Kiosk" were more likely to identify with hutong culture.

4.2 Living narratives help to reinforce the audience's identification with the culture

The correlation between the rating of the work and the sense of identity with Hutong culture was found to be $r=0.461$, $p<0.01$. Therefore, the higher the rating of the work, the stronger the sense of identity with Hutong culture.

The living narrative is a key element in the content's high reputation. Scholar Zhang Wei Ling attributes cultural identity to an attitude, a psychological perception or self-awareness, and both the physical environment and the immaterial state of people in cultural spaces are important raw materials for shaping cultural identity. At the same time, cultural identity also plays a key role in the conservation of historical and cultural districts, spaces and environments.

Starting with the life of Master Yang in the hutong, The Chinese Wonderland - The Commissary captures the material environment and the immaterial state of people in the interchangeable space, creating a realistic and full-bodied animated work of The Commissary. The first scene of the animation features the jagged, grid-style eaves of the hutong, and the kiosk is filled with old snacks such as newspapers, sugar paper and Wangshi milk, elements designed to establish a strong sense of living customs in the hutong culture of this animation in the opening scene. The rubbish sorting, the transparent glue in Master Yang's hand, the cat in the hutong, and the dust cover of the car are all actually examined and exist in the hutong, and the author styles these symbols artistically and presents them through a lifelike narrative, thus achieving a spatial interchange and empathy between the viewer and the animated characters. In the transitions, like a horse-rider running through Beihai Park, the neighbourhood committee and the roadside poker game break the limitations of time and space, realising the interchange of living memories and emotional identification.

4.3 Artistic means contribute to the transformation of culture into modernity

The creative team of China's Wonderland - The Kiosk has made a realistic examination and reference to hutong culture, presenting a realistic, believable and highly restored version of it. The work achieves a unique visual communication effect by combining an artistically creative approach with the smoldering atmosphere of people's lives, resulting in a new style. Qin Hongling, Dean of the School of Humanities at Beijing Architecture University, proposed the principle of cultural identity and urban architectural heritage conservation - the principle of adaptive use based on strengthening cultural identity. This principle is characterised by the importance of community and public participation in the conservation of architectural heritage, and the enhancement of 'accessibility' in the planning and development of architectural heritage resources. Visitability refers to the ability of cultural heritage and public cultural spaces to be visited, appreciated,

experienced and consumed by the public, and is a secondary exploitation of value in the context of economic and network development in all areas. Visitable cultural heritage allows residents and visitors to experience architectural heritage and cultural heritage in an easier and more convenient way, thus achieving a mutually beneficial economic and cultural revitalisation effect. The author believes that such an innovation will give the viewer a better visual experience and at the same time a soft cultural implantation that will make the viewer interested in visiting hutong culture in the field.

In this study, the correlation between the rating of the work and the willingness to visit hutongs in the field was analysed and found that the correlation coefficient $r=0.609$, $p<0.01$, so the higher the rating of the work "The Kiosk" by the respondents who had seen it, the stronger the willingness to visit hutong culture in the field. The development and use of hutong architecture and cultural promotion can not only give new value to the relatively backward architectural culture, but also link the architectural spatial structure and cultural and historical clues in the process of perception and sensation, realise the systemic, continuous and objective transformation of cultural space in the old city, improve the cultural identity of residents and visitors while displaying and promoting hutong culture, and enhance the national cultural soft power.

4.4 The modern interpretation of animated works has educational value

The main reason for not having seen the "kiosk" in "China Wonderland", a widely acclaimed and promoted animated short film from 2023, was that the sample had not heard of it. This suggests that the work still has limitations in terms of publicity and does not achieve a deeper narrative interpretation. Narrative interpretation is essentially an educational activity. "Narrativisation is itself a system of meaning production with a value orientation, where the narrative subject puts value judgements, power relations and ideologies into the narrative text, making the interpretation of the building or cultural heritage by this vehicle an activity with a value position and an edifying message. Nigel Walter sees the value of preserving cultural and historical buildings as a dynamic evolution, arguing that a good narrative can evoke the need, even the responsibility, for the viewer to carry the 'story' forward.

Domestic scholar Rao Shuguang said, "nationalisation" is a more "original" statement of animation creation, now China's animation film should pay more attention to modernisation, and this transformation can not be separated from the realism of animation aesthetics. Chinese animation needs to face life, face the people, draw nutrients from real life, synchronize with the times, and develop with the people. This modernisation is reflected in the conceptual innovation of storytelling from the perspective of animation art, and in the transformation of cultural space, in the narrative interpretation of the 'relationship between things and people'. Architectural emotions are the human bearers of historical and cultural memory, and David Lowenthal argues that the heritage of the past is both the 'historical other' and the 'cultural other'. The authenticity of heritage is subject to both time and cultural change, and 'the uncertain and discontinuous facts of the past can only be understood by interweaving them into stories'.

Through this study, we found that the Hutong production in China's Strange Tale had a good activating effect on cultural identity. The change in the viewer's attitude towards hutong culture

after watching this work shows that hutong, as a distinctive Chinese culture with historical and cultural deposits, can be packaged and promoted through the artwork form of Chinese animation to a certain extent to spread and preserve the culture.

5. Summary and Reflection

In short, hutong culture has important cultural values and emotional connotations, and "China's Wonderful Tan" is exploring new stories and inspirations to "tell" the viewer about the historical and spiritual connotations of China's excellent traditional culture. Hutong culture is an important breakthrough in enhancing the country's cultural soft power as an architectural carrier of both history and modernity.

The author argues that the strength of the cultural identity of hutongs in today's society can indirectly influence the transformation of such architectural old town cultural spaces by society. Different cultural spaces have different architectural styles, and people's feelings towards various types of historical and cultural spaces can vary greatly. As society's economy and politics, laws and regulations continue to develop, how can the architecture of cultural spaces in old urban areas build on their strengths and avoid their weaknesses in the future economic and cultural sphere, and get on the right track of development. One of the roots of cultural identity is still in the rapid pace of development of the social fabric.

People are the creators of culture, and in the same way that everything that constitutes culture is realised through people, the cultural structure is ultimately the result of their cultural activity. If every individual in the social structure loses his or her cultural identity, then people lose their roots in each other. The work "Kiosk" in "China's Wonderful Tan" uses the most authentic and grounded way, through its own unique visual symbolic style, to lead the viewer to find the initial touch of life and the original heart of culture in the horizontal line of time, to keep the nostalgia in the hutong, and to promote the inheritance and development of cultural characteristics.

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