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SWOT Analysis and Development Strategy of Taoist Culture Dissemination through Network Literature

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***Abstract**: As a religious culture of China, Taoism, which has a long history and deep foundation, is gradually declining under the impact of multi-culture. In the context of the widespread dissemination of mass culture, the network literature can be used to promote the dissemination of Taoist culture. Using the SWOT model, this thesis analyzes the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of Taoist Culture's dissemination through network literature. The thesis also advises to strengthen the study of Taoist culture, explore new genres of network novels combining Taoist culture, seek cross-boundary cooperation between different media, and improve the supervision mechanism of network literature.*

***Keywords**: Taoist; Network literature; SWOT; Dissemination; Strategy*

Introduction

Taoism is a native religion in China. Taoism culture is a unique cultural resource in China. It has a long history and a deep foundation in China. However, under the impact of modern multiculturalism, Taoism culture is declining gradually and its disseminate path is very narrow. The government's attitude towards religion is to actively guide and adapt it to the socialist society, and religion is a sensitive topic that most people do not want to mention. Therefore, many rich and unique Taoist cultural resources missed the declaration of intangible cultural heritage. The main way for youth to get in touch with Taoist culture is the Immortal (修仙 Xiuxian) network novels of and their adaptations.

Taoist Culture Dissemination through network literature refers to the way in which Taoist thoughts and culture are skillfully integrated into internet literary works (mainly network novels). With a large number of works and readers, and strong social influence, this kind of "Taoist Network Novels" objectively promotes the dissemination of Taoist culture. However, the combination of Taoist culture and network novels also cause some questions. Can "Taoist online novels" carry forward Taoist culture? Using the SWOT analysis model, this thesis intends to analyze the dissemination of Taoist culture through network literature from the four dimensions of strength, weakness, opportunity and threat, and put forward improvement countermeasures.

Table 1. SWOT Analysis and Development Strategy of Taoist Culture Dissemination through Network Literature

Strength	Weaknesses
•profound Taoist culture •rich contemporary value of Taoist culture •long history and mature paradigm of Taoist literature	•insufficient resource utilization of Taoist culture •conflict between Taoist culture and socialist core values •solidification of Taoist image in literature and film works •limited subjects of Taoist network literature (limited to fantasy and immortals)
Opportunities	Threats
•thriving network literature •rapidly developing short video market •national cultural policy support	•distortion of Taoist culture by network literature. •threat of electronic game logic in network literature to Taoist culture •How do Taoist Network Novels balance culture and entertainment?

Strength of Taoist Culture Dissemination through Network literature

Taoism Has Long History and Profound Culture

Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism are the three pillars of Chinese traditional culture. Taoism is the only local religion in China. It originated in the pre-Qin period and was formed in the Han and Jin dynasties. It has a long history and profound deposits. Xu Dishan (许地山), a famous writer and thinker in modern times, said, “We can almost say that it is Taoism that dominates the ideal and life of ordinary people in China, while Confucianism is only a small part of ethics.” Lu Xun (鲁迅) also said in a letter to Xu Shouchang (许寿裳) that "the roots of China are all in Taoism". Even today in the 21st century, Taoism culture still has the value of philosophical wisdom, which can make up for the lack of understanding world life only from the scientific perspective for a long time.

Taoist Culture Has Contemporary Value

Taoist culture values reverence for life. The Xiang’er Annotation to Laozi(《老子想尔注》), an annotated version of Tao Te Ching (《道德经》), changed the words " heaven is great, earth is great, so is the king (天大、地大、王亦大 tian da, di da, wang yi da)" in Laozi 5000 Wen to " heaven is great, earth is great, so is the life (天大、地大、生大 tian da, di da, sheng da)" in order to highlight the characteristics of Taoism "precious health"(贵 生 gui sheng). The visualization and concretization of this thought is "the immortals save the world". This humanitarian thought of "helping the people(济民 jimin)" has contemporary value.

Taoist culture promotes self-restraint and the abstinence of desire. Taoism believes that in order to become immortals, in addition to relying on external forces to practice, but also must cultivate the moral character, in line with the ethical norms of Taoism. After the Song and Yuan Dynasties, Taoist ethics required practitioners

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to "practice without desire inside" and "accumulate merit outside". Taoism has always believed that human desire is a real obstacle to the cultivation of immortals. This kind of detached state of mind unfettered by the desire for fame and wealth, quiet and tranquil spiritual realm, life creed of embracing thrift and restraining extravagance, and life character of "not attached to poverty or wealth and wealth" are very rare in today's society where materialism is rampant and consumerism is prevailing.

Taoist culture promotes filial piety. Zhou Shandong (2013) thinks, Taoism, through the use of reason and faith, converts the Confucian ideological ethical system of filial piety into the summary of experience in daily moral life, which is very successful in promoting the formation of moral consensus.

Taoist spirit provides spiritual habitat for contemporary urbanites. In today's society, competition is fierce, and the phenomenon of involution is serious. All kinds of social rules have formed a heavy constraint on people. Taoism's "non-action（无为 Wuwei）" makes people regain their freedom and becomes a good medicine to cure their inner anxiety in the post-industrial era, thus achieving the path of spiritual salvation for ordinary people.

Taoist Literature Has Long History and Mature Paradigm

The combination of Taoist culture and literary works is not a new thing, but has a long history, rich successful experience and mature paradigm. Literary works rich in Taoist culture and thoughts are defined as "Taoist Literature". Gou Bo (2005) think, Novels of Gods and Spirits in Ming and Qing Dynasties was greatly influenced by Taoism and was a real Taoist literature. Novels of Gods and Spirits have a relatively uniform and fixed paradigm in character design and theme conception.

1. Fictional Character Setting

Most of the characters in Novels of Gods and Spirits come from Taoist immortals who have great influence in the society, and many of them are the main representatives of the important Taoist schools at that time. In Journey to the North（《北游记》）, Great Emperor Zhenwu（真武大帝 zhenwu dadi） is the Northern Xuanwu god revered by Taoism. Xu Xun immortal（许逊真人 xuxun zhenren）, the hero of the book Tieshuji（《铁树记》）, was a Taoist immortal who had great influence after Song and Yuan Dynasties. Lv Dongbin （吕洞宾）in Feijian Ji（《飞剑记》）is one of the "Northern Five Ancestors" of Quanzhen Taoism, and later became a famous immortal among the "Eight Immortals" which are widely circulated among the people. Sa Shoujian（萨守坚） in Zhouzao Ji （《咒枣记》）later became one of the "Four Heavenly Masters（四大天王 sida tianwang）" of Taoism. The other characters in the "god and demon novels" are not well-known Taoist immortals. In order to take advantage of the "celebrity benefit" of immortals, novelists have borrowed a lot from the immortals system of Taoism when designing the relationship between characters and incorporated these characters into the ranks of Taoist deities. Thus, the characters in the novel have a clear Taoist ancestry. For example, Jiang Ziya（姜子牙） was written as a disciple of Primus（元始天尊 yuanshi tianzun）, the revered Taoist immortal, in Creation of the Gods（《封神演义》）, and Sun Wukong（孙悟空） and others were written as "banished immortals" in Journey to the West（《西游记》）.

When describing the ideal personality of "immortals", Novels of Gods and Spirits also shape the opposite camp -- the systematic image of "demons". The opposition between immortal and demon has long been formed and widely spread in various Taoist classics and immortal stories. For example, in Journey to the West, Tang Monk encountered various demons and ghosts on his way to the West for Buddhist scriptures; the spirits of fox, lute and pheasant in Creation of the Gods, and the party of the snake and the dragon in Tieshu Ji.

There are also images of common people in Novels of Gods and Spirits. Taoism originally has the idea of "all tangible things have immortals". After becoming immortals, people can change into various images and are free from the bondage of nature.

2. Novel Theme Setting

In Novels of Gods and Spirits, the two themes are "practicing Taoism to become immortals" and "the immortals saving the world", which are unified with each other.

An important Taoist classic Tai Shang Dong Yuan Shen Zhou Jing（《太上洞渊神咒经》） writes, "The nature of the Tao is pure in nature. It saves all people, helps all living beings, and spreads great kindness." For example, Tieshuji is about a story in which the immortals killed the dragons five times to eliminate disasters. In Journey to the North, Nvxian Waishi (《女仙外史》), Journey to the West and Lvye Xianzong(《绿野仙踪》), there are numerous stories of immortals praying for rain to relieve a drought, eliminating the locusts, or subduing flood. Moreover, the immortals in Novels of Gods and Spirits also participated in political struggles, supported the wise emperor, praised virtue and punished vice, and fought for justice. In addition, helping mortals become immortals are considered by Taoism as the most fundamental and thorough form of relief.

As a successful example of combining Taoist culture with literary works, Novels of Gods and Spirits have exerted great social influence. The success of the Cultivate Immortality Genre Novels（修仙文 xiuxian wen）in network literature cannot be separated from the rich cultural resources and deep psychological foundation provided by the theme of " Cultivate Immortality " in the Novels of Gods and Spirits. Gou Bo (2005) believes that Novels of Gods and Spirits take the religious goals of immortalization as bait to publicize the ethics and morality of saving the world and benefiting the people（救世济民 jiushi jimin）. Taoist culture is both altruistic and egoistic. For the readers of network literature "cool feeling" and "counter-attack", Taoism culture is not only compatible, but also advanced and leading.

Weaknesses of Taoist Culture Dissemination through Network literature

Insufficient Resource Utilization of Taoist Culture

For a long time, many people regard Confucian culture as the only representative of traditional Chinese culture and Taoism exists as a non-mainstream culture, so that some people have a certain prejudice against Taoism and consider it a kind of superstition. Even the academic circles also hold a scornful and dismissive

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attitude towards Taoism, that Taoism does not have its own systematic theory. Insufficient Resource Utilization of Taoist Culture leads to the lack of correct cognition and due attention to Taoist culture.

Ambiguous Relationship between Taoist Culture and Feudal Superstition

Feudal superstition has some connection with Taoism, both of which based on theism. “Feudal superstition mainly refers to those miraculists, witches and superstitious professionals using witchcraft left over from feudal society, to deceive people, cheat money and harm people's activities, such as inviting gods to drop immortal, exorcising ghosts, treating illness, fortune telling, practicing geomancy and so on.” When Taoism came into being, its thought source included the primitive belief in ghosts and gods, and the early Taoist prescriptions (such as amulet, Mingshu（命术） and divination) had elements of witchcraft.

These connections have led to a blurred understanding of the boundary between Taoism and feudal superstition in society. After the founding of the People's Republic of China, the legitimacy of Taoism has been questioned under the official mainstream ideology of atheism. Some textbooks (middle school history textbooks, etc.) have described Taoism as feudalistic superstition. Some people wrongly equate Taoism with feudal superstition. Nowadays, with the advocation of science, the cognitive biases of Taoism has led to people’s antipathy to Taoism.

The Solidification of Taoist Image in Literature and Film Works

There are a large number of Taoist novels, films and television works with Taoist themes and elements, which formed the genre of films with Chinese characteristics, such as swordsmen films, ghost films and zombie films. After 1949, Taoist films almost disappeared in mainland China, but flourished in Hong Kong. After the 1970s, "ghost film" began to be popular in Hong Kong. "Ghost film" is a type of localized film under the influence of Taoist culture. Based on the Taoist concept of supernatural beings, the image world of "people and ghosts with different ways" is constructed. Hong Kong zombie films were also popular in the 1980s and 1990s. Inspired by western zombie films and combined with Chinese Taoist culture and folk customs, these Chinese zombie films have developed with distinctive "Hong Kong flavor". The films with the theme of the Taoist priest hunting ghosts have been deeply rooted in the hearts of the people. The image of Taoism and Taoists is solidified seriously.

3.4 Limited subjects of Taoist Network Literature (Limited to Cultivate Immortality Genre and Fantasy Genre)

There are many genres of online literature, and each one has a specific fan base. At present, Taoist online literature is often limited to Cultivate Immortality (修仙 / 修真 xiuxian/xiuzhen) Genre and Fantasy（玄幻 xuanhuan） Genre, with a small target audience, which is not conducive to widespread dissemination.

Cultivate Immortality Genre is a kind of network literature genre with cultural core of the Taoist theory system of cultivating immortals. The representative works of this genre include A Record of a Mortal’s Journey to Immortality（《凡人修仙传》Fanren Xiuxian Zhuan）(wrote by Wangyu, published by Start

Chinese Net), Xiuzhen Siwan Nian（《修真四万年》）(wrote by Woniu Zhenren, published by Start Chinese Net), Xiuzhen Liaotianqun（《修真聊天群》）(wrote by Shengqishi de Chuanshuo, published by Start Chinese Net). In these works, protagonists always use Taoist alchemy, metaphysics, arts of necromancy, astrology, medicine, ghost spell and so on as their ways of cultivation and refinement. Besides, Characters in the novel pursue immortality and eternal life as their lifelong pursuit.There are different versions of Taoism in different novels, but on the whole these novels didn't deviate from Taoist doctrines such as "Lao Tzu is the initiator of Taoism", "inaction being the nature of Tao", "Taishang Laojun Yi Qi Hua Three-Ching"（太上老君一气化三清） and so on.

Opportunities of Taoist Culture Dissemination through Network literature

Opportunities Created by Network literature Platforms

The first opportunity is a huge increase in the reader of network literature. According to the 2020 China Online Literature Copyright Protection Research Report, "In 2019, the online literature industry as a whole has shown a steady and healthy development trend, and is expected to continue to grow in the future. By the end of 2019, the number of industry users have reached 460 million, an increase of 5.3% compared with 2018. The market size of the industry was 19.51 billion Yuan, an increase of 27.1% over 2018." Based on this, we can find that network literature is no longer a hobby of minority groups, but has become a mass culture. Although in the eyes of some scholars, network literature is still unrefined, it is undeniable that network literature has a wide influence. Therefore, any minority culture (such as Taoist culture) can use this platform to expand its influence.

The second opportunity is that Taoist culture has a lot of interaction with the readers in the process of dissemination through network literature. The strong interactivity and weak controllability of the network make the dissemination of Taoist culture realize "decentralization" and "two-way communication". With the help of readers, the interaction is conducive to the self-adjustment and creative transformation of Taoist culture.

The Boom in the Short Video Market

According to the 46th Statistical Report on the Development of Internet in China published in September 2020, in June 2020, among the various APPs, the number of users of online video (including short video) reached 888 million, and the usage time of online video apps accounted for 21.6%, which is far more than the second most popular APP (13.7%). Given the popularity of the video market, Taoist network literature is more likely to be adapted into online dramas or movies. Through IP operation mode to develop the full industrial chain, the spread speed and breadth of Taoism culture will increase exponentially.

National Level Cultural Policy Support

China has made great efforts to carry forward its fine traditional culture. In May 2016, Xi Jinping pointed

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out in his speech at the symposium on philosophy and social sciences that cultural confidence is a more basic, deeper and more lasting power for the sustainable development of a country and a nation. In January 2017, the General Offices of the CPC Central Committee and the State Council issued the Opinions on the Implementation of the Project to Inherit and Develop Fine Traditional Chinese Culture (hereinafter referred to as the Opinions). The Opinions point out that the unique ideas, wisdom, tolerance and charm of the Chinese culture are important sources of our cultural confidence and pride, and a strong support for the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation. Zhang Dainian（张岱年） and Cheng Yishan（程宜山） believed that the basic spirit of Chinese culture is a unity composed of four elements: "vigorous and promising", "harmony and harmony", "worship of virtue ", and "harmony between nature and human". Harmony between nature and human is also an important connotation of Taoist culture. Therefore, Taoist culture can grasp the national policy and opportunity of promoting traditional culture.

Threats of Taoist Culture Dissemination through Network literature

The Distortion of Taoist Culture by Network Literature

In the early network literature works, due to the lack of the correct guidance of mainstream values, there are many phenomena such as the wrong understanding or deliberate misinterpretation of Taoist culture, the dissemination of extreme egoism, the misinterpretation of traditional doctrines, the advocacy of extreme religious thoughts, the promotion of cults, and the rendering of violence. In Fantasy Genre and Cultivate Immortality Genre network novels, characters who want to cultivate and become immortals hold the creed of "fellow Taoist you go to die, I will not die"（死道友不死贫道 si daoyou bu si pindao）. They often rob, kill and plunder fellow monks, misread and advocate the idea that "heaven and earth are not benevolent, and all things are regarded as dogs"（天地不仁，以万物为刍狗）. In order to pursue the immortality, these characters pay more attention to their own interests, regard normal people as worthless as ants, which is an extreme act of self-interest.

As the network novel Fo Benshi Dao's（《佛本是道》）protagonist Zhou Qing said: "Hum! What I'm looking for is to do whatever I want to do. If I don't have strong power, everything is nothing but empty talk. Henceforth, I will plunder everything, to enhance the strength. What moral righteousness! What great Tao! Just go to hell! As long as my power is strong enough, I am the Tao! I am the heaven! The reason why heaven and earth are so strong is that they are unkind. They treat all things as dogs. Gods, demons, immortals and Buddha are all illusory things. Only the eternal power is fundamental!"

In this discourse, the author of the novel(Meng Ru Shenji 梦入神机) uses Lao Tzu's Tao Te Ching as saying, "Heaven and earth are not benevolent, and all things are treated as dogs. Sages are unkind and take people as dogs." The leading role Zhou Qing believes that this sentence means to abandon benevolence, righteousness and morality, which is Zhou Qing's (and perhaps the author's) misinterpretation of Taoist thought. Fan Wenlan（范文澜） explains this sentence in his book Compendium of the General History of China: "... Grass, dog and man are all natural creatures that grow between heaven and earth. Animals eat grass, and humans eat dogs. They are all in accordance with the laws of nature. Heaven and earth do not interfere with animals

eating grass and humans eating dogs. Therefore, the sage did not interfere with the people's various ways of living."

The Threat of Logic of Video Games Disintegrating the Taoist Culture

Entertainment and commerce are at the core of network literature, much like video games. In the process of media convergence, gamification thinking has already penetrated into many fields such as education, medical treatment, culture, entertainment, business, military and so on. Electronic games and network literature influence each other. While games absorb literary elements, network literature also uses game logic in large quantities. Xu Miaomiao believes that network literature uses game logic to construct virtual worlds, and "golden finger", "time travel" and "the greatest love" in network literature are all borrowed from game logic. Particularly, the Fantasy Genre Novel and Cultivate Immortality Genre Novel believed in the law of the jungle. The Fantasy Genre Novel is born out of the role-playing game. For example, the novel Douluo Dalu（《斗罗大陆》） by Tangjia Sanshao（唐家三少） is a mix of fantasy world, campus life, martial arts, game setting, competitive competition, etc. The novel Douluo Dalu tells a story about a disciple of Tang Clan（唐门 tang men） Tangsan（唐三）reincarnating as a child after his death in a new world of Douluo Dalu. Tangsan and a bunch of his friends kept hone their own, gradually enhanced their power and upgrade from lowest Hunshi（魂士） to Hunzun（魂尊）, Hunwang（魂王）, Hundi（魂帝）, Hunsheng（魂圣）, Douluo（斗罗） and finally God. Shao Yanjun（邵燕君） believes that the core elements of Doulo Dalu and Battle Through the Heavens （《斗破苍穹》Doupo Cangqiong）are fighting and upgrading, and Chinese style is just to create a sense of intimacy. Doulo Dalu borrowed from the network game setting which has great audience basis. This narrative strategy is just the typical mode of fighting to upgrading and becoming a hero in the network games.

5.3 How Do Taoist Network Novels Balance Culture and Entertainment

The most important reason why network literature is popular among netizens, especially grassroots groups, is that it can satisfy the sensory pleasure of readers. How to balance "culture" and "entertainment", how to make creative transformation and adjustment to Taoist culture, how to avoid inflexibility, boring and didactic, and avoid stereotyped expression under grand proposition? For example, the period drama The Love of the Mountain and the Sea（《山海情》）, with the theme of poverty alleviation, has a strong artistic appeal and arose the audience's empathy, although it is the main theme of propaganda.

Strategies of Taoist Culture Dissemination through Network literature

Discard the Dross and Select the Essential, Strengthening the Study of Taoist Culture

In order to carry forward Taoist culture, we must discard the dregs in Taoist culture, give play to its advantages as a traditional culture, and find a meeting point with the mainstream culture to promote the adaptation of Taoism to socialist society, while avoiding its sensitivity as an ideology as far as possible. Ouyang Youquan（欧阳友权） stressed that network writing needs to be serious in the face of significant

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topics such as literature and history, literature and moral, literature and social justice, literature and value. Network writing needs to disseminate humanistic rationality, reveal the spirit of times, participate in constructing the core values, and not give up its entity responsibility for any reason. Having such a logical fulcrum and confidence and advocating such values are the prerequisite for defining the meaning of online writing. Under this premise, Taoist faculty and researchers should strengthen academic research on Taoist culture, especially interdisciplinary research. For example, Taoism's influence on Chinese society's politics, economy, philosophy, literature, art, music, painting, architecture, chemistry, medicine, pharmacology, health maintenance, Qigong, ethics, social customs, ethnic relations, national psychology, national character, and conscientiously explore the contemporary value of Taoism.

Explore New Genres Literatures Combining of Network Novels Taoist Culture

1. Combination of Taoist Culture and Business Battle Network Novels

Taoism culture not only can be utilized in Cultivate Immortality Genre Novels, but also can be used in enterprise management and business battle network novels. For example, Zhou Nan（周南） wrote in his book Choose Money or Choose Life: Enlightenment from Tao Te Ching: "entrepreneurs should considered more about" growth "(action) at the early stage of the enterprise development, and pay more attention to" live "(non-action). Otherwise, it will violate ' the Tao way follows nature ', and there will be big problems."

2. Combination of Taoist Culture and Farming Genre Novels（种田文）

The main content of the early Farming Genre Novels is that the protagonist builds his own base and army from scratch on a small piece of territory, develops the economy, military and politics step by step, improve each system, and finally conquer the world. The word "Farming (种田 zhongtian)" can be traced back to Tao Yuanming's（陶渊明） creation of pastoral poetry. Zhan Shichuang（詹石窗） and Cheng Minhua（程敏华） think, Tao Yuanming was influenced by immortals and Taoism in his thoughts. From the prose Peach Blossoms Spring we can also trace the author's admiration for the immortals Taoist realm. Ten Immortal's Cave（十大洞天）, 36 Small Immortal's Cave（三十六小洞天） and 72 Blessings（七十二福地） are the so-called "Fairy Realm" of Taoism. In the story of Peach Blossoms Spring, the way fishermen enter the "Peach Blossoms Land" and the beautiful scene of the "Peach Blossoms Land" society are very similar to the Wonderland described in the Taoist Book. In addition, there are many similarities between Tao Yuanming's poems and Farming Genre Novels. The Taoist sentiment of pursuing a quiet and secluded life is very consistent with the life purview of Farming Genre Novels. Therefore, the combination of Taoist culture and Farming Genre Novels has a great possibility.

Taoist culture is a rich treasure. What we should seriously consider is how we should make changes in the connotation, expression forms and dissemination channels of traditional culture in order to carry forward the long-accumulated and stable traditional culture under the ever-new and ever-changing mass culture.

3. Actively Seek Cross-field Cooperation

Taoist culture should actively seek cooperation with TV, new media, Internet, etc., to change the traditional

communication path of Taoist culture. Religious organizations such as the Taoist Association can learn from the creation mode of the network novel Zao Zhidao（《枣知道》）, cooperate with well-known network literature writers, adopt the approach of "proposition composition", define the cultural core to be expressed in the creation of novels, and carry forward the essence of Taoist culture and its contemporary value.

4. Improve the Supervision Mechanism for Network literature

Only by strengthening work review, constructing digital publishing supervision mechanism, perfecting digital publishing laws and regulations, and strengthening religious literacy education, can we prevent creators from spreading harmful ideas and opinions through online works and promote the healthy development of Taoist network literature.

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