Vol.7 Iss.3 2026 Communication & Education Review
https://doi.org/10.37420/j.cer.2026.047

Transformation and Symbiosis: A Study on the Construction of an Interactive Communication Ecology of Sichuan Opera in "In-Person" and "Online" Contexts

Chunjuan Xu*
Chengdu University of Technology, Sichuan, China
***Corresponding author, E-mail: 51514254@qq.com**

Abstract:
Amid the rapid advancement of digital technologies and the transformation of communication media, Sichuan Opera faces both significant challenges and unprecedented opportunities. A pressing issue is how to enable mutual empowerment between two modes of communication—"in-person interaction" and "online interaction." Addressing the fragmentation and impediments in energy flow between these modes requires a return to the intrinsic relationship between the artistic essence of Sichuan Opera and the interactive logic of digital media. By clarifying the functional positioning of "in-person" and "online" forms, this study proposes adaptive niche differentiation, promotes value transformation, and advances the development of a synergistic and symbiotic mechanism of integrated communication. Ultimately, it seeks to construct a sustainable and organically evolving communication ecology. This research provides a theoretical framework for understanding the digital survival and integrative dissemination ecology of traditional theater, and offers practical implications for promoting the dissemination and development of Sichuan Opera and other forms of traditional performing arts.

Keywords:
Sichuan Opera; Interactive Communication; Traditional Theater; Communication Ecology

Introduction

The rapid advancement of digital technologies and the profound transformation of the communication environment have fundamentally reshaped the logic of cultural transmission in traditional theater, giving rise to a reconfiguration of its dissemination ecology. As a nationally recognized intangible cultural heritage, Sichuan Opera has, in recent years, actively deployed a full-spectrum communication matrix. Its offline performances have achieved notable market breakthroughs, signaling a renewed trajectory of development. According to publicly available reports, during the 2025 National Day holiday, more than 11,000 audience members attended performances at the Sichuan Opera Theater in Sichuan Province. Meanwhile, as of April 2026, the topic "Sichuan Opera Face-Changing" on the short-video platform Douyin has garnered over 8.57 billion views. In February 2026, the Publicity Department of the Communist Party of China, in collaboration with

© 2026 by the author(s); licensee Mason Publish Group, this work for open access publication is under the Creative Commons Attribution International License (CC BY 4.0). (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/)

four other ministries, issued the Three-Year Action Plan for the Revitalization of Theater (2026–2028), explicitly calling for the expansion of theatrical dissemination channels, the empowerment of theatrical creation and communication through technology, and the strengthening of preservation and transmission efforts. These developments present significant opportunities for the dissemination and growth of Sichuan Opera. Despite these advances, Sichuan Opera continues to face persistent challenges, including insufficient growth in live theater attendance, an aging core audience base, limited conversion of online traffic into sustained engagement, and the dilution of cultural depth in digital contexts. This study argues that, as a multimodal art form integrating music, dance, acrobatics, and mask performance, Sichuan Opera possesses an inherently strong interactive relationship with its audience. Its "in-person" interactive communication, grounded in the physical theater space, and its "online" interactive communication, mediated through digital platforms, are intrinsically interconnected. The core difficulty lies in the lack of effective energy flow between these two modes of interaction, resulting in a fragmented "dual-track" condition in which they operate in isolation rather than in mutual reinforcement and symbiotic coordination. Building on the concept of interactivity as a foundational analytical lens, this study examines the relationship between "in-person" and "online" modes, and analyzes the mechanisms through which interactive value is transformed across these domains. It aims to help Sichuan Opera overcome the barriers to energy circulation between physical and digital contexts, thereby constructing a unified, sustainable, and symbiotic communication ecology. This research offers a theoretical framework for understanding the digital survival and integrative dissemination ecology of traditional theater, and provides practical insights for advancing the creative transformation and development of Sichuan Opera as well as other forms of traditional performing arts.

1.Literature Review

1.1 Studies on the Artistic Ontology of Sichuan Opera

Research on the artistic ontology of Sichuan Opera has primarily focused on several dimensions, including its historical origins, artistic composition, contemporary transmission, and digital development. Historically, Sichuan Opera can be traced back to the ancient song-and-dance theatrical traditions of the Bashu region. Through the integration of multiple vocal systems introduced during the Qing Dynasty migration movement known as "Huguang Fills Sichuan," it gradually evolved into a mature theatrical genre by the early twentieth century (Zhou, 2001). In terms of artistic composition, Sichuan Opera is characterized by its synthetic nature, encompassing literary, musical, performative, directorial, and aesthetic elements (Zhou, 2015). It is widely regarded as an inherently interactive art form (Zhu, 2019), with performances that balance codified conventions and distinctive Bashu cultural expression (Wang, 2023). In recent years, however, Sichuan Opera has encountered a range of challenges, including a deteriorating performance environment, audience attrition, gaps in talent cultivation, and insufficient innovation. Internally, strengthening the ecological chain requires improvements in troupe development, talent training, repertoire creation, and theoretical research (Wang, 2019). Externally, efforts should focus on expanding transmission through schools and communities, integrating with the tourism industry, and leveraging digital technologies for preservation, inheritance, dissemination, and innovative expression (Zhou & Chen, 2025). Overall, scholarship on Sichuan Opera has shifted from early historical verification and descriptive analysis toward concerns with contemporary survival strategies, digital

© 2026 by the author(s); licensee Mason Publish Group, this work for open access publication is under the Creative Commons Attribution International License (CC BY 4.0). (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/)

preservation, and innovative transformation. While existing studies tend to adopt a macro-level perspective, they often provide only limited and particulation of the intrinsic interactivity between the artistic ontology of Sichuan Opera and its audiences. Moreover, concrete practices for preserving its cultural depth in the digital age remain underexplored.

1.2 Studies on the Digital Dissemination of Sichuan Opera

Research on the digital dissemination of Sichuan Opera has largely concentrated on three aspects: technological applications, communication strategies, and cultural implications. First, with regard to technological applications, contemporary digital technologies have created immersive and gamified interactive environments that lower cognitive barriers and attract younger audiences (Ying, 2024). These innovations have reconfigured the performer–audience relationship and modes of presentation (Lu & Cao, 2025), enabling Sichuan Opera to evolve toward immersive, networked, and future-oriented forms of dissemination (Ma, 2023). Second, in terms of communication strategies, the construction of integrated online communication matrices and the adoption of new media approaches—such as fragmentation, fashion-oriented content, and youth-oriented positioning—have expanded the reach of Sichuan Opera (Yan & Luo, 2024). Short-video and livestreaming formats, in particular, have transformed audiences from passive viewers into participants and co-creators (Qiu & Lu, 2023; Pan & Lin, 2024), facilitating a shift from single-channel dissemination to integrated and cross-sectoral development (Hou, 2023). Third, from the perspective of cultural implications, digital media have extended the spatiotemporal boundaries of Sichuan Opera and enriched its expressive repertoire, giving rise to new forms of community formation and meaning production (Wu & Qiu, 2022). At the same time, digital dissemination poses challenges, including the erosion of artistic integrity and the alienation of the performer–audience relationship (Jiang, 2015). Scholars have also cautioned against excessive entertainment, the dilution of cultural depth under fragmented communication conditions, and the lack of professional operational capacity (Liu, 2023; Feng, 2023). In sum, existing research has responded to transformations in the contemporary media environment by proposing practical strategies for Sichuan Opera from the perspectives of technological application and communication strategy, while also emphasizing the importance of examining its cultural implications.

In summary, prior studies have mapped the developmental trajectory of the artistic ontology of Sichuan Opera and proposed strategies for its evolution in the era of digital dissemination. However, much of the existing literature treats the artistic ontology and digital dissemination of Sichuan Opera—as well as its online and offline modes of communication—as relatively independent domains or as linearly additive processes. There remains a lack of systematic analysis of the interactive relationship between physical theatrical dissemination and digital communication, as well as insufficient exploration of the mechanisms of value transformation between the two. Furthermore, Sichuan Opera dissemination has yet to be fully conceptualized as an integrated system shaped by multiple actors and diverse media forms. In response, this study returns to the theatrical (in-person) dissemination rooted in the artistic ontology of Sichuan Opera and its online dissemination via digital platforms, conducting a comparative analysis of their intrinsic interactivity. It seeks to identify the foundations of their coordination and the mechanisms of value transformation, with the ultimate aim of constructing an organically integrated communication ecology.

© 2026 by the author(s); licensee Mason Publish Group, this work for open access publication is under the Creative Commons Attribution International License (CC BY 4.0). (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/)

2. Two Forms of Interactivity in Sichuan Opera

Interactive communication refers to the multidirectional exchange and engagement between senders and receivers (Ouyang & Hu, 2017). In the context of Sichuan Opera, interactive communication denotes the dynamic, multidirectional interactions that occur between performers and audiences across different media forms during the process of artistic dissemination. This interactivity manifests in two primary modes: "in-person" and "online." In-person interaction is grounded in physical co-presence, such as theatrical performances and offline events, whereas online interaction is enabled by digital networks, including livestream comments, real-time bullet screens, and social media engagement.

2.1 In-Person Interactivity in Sichuan Opera

"In-person interactivity" in Sichuan Opera refers to a mode of interactive communication situated within the physical theater space, where performers convey meaning primarily through embodied performance, and audiences participate on-site, providing immediate feedback. As a multimodal and synthetic art form integrating language, music, vocal expression, and stage performance (Zhang, 2019), Sichuan Opera cultivates a distinctive aesthetic of co-present spectatorship, generating collective experience and emotional energy exchange (Jiang, 2015). This immediacy and multisensory engagement give rise to three representative patterns of in-person interaction: First, virtuoso performances (e.g., face-changing and fire-spitting) produce an interactional loop of "suspense generation–anticipation–instant feedback" at both physical and emotional levels. In these hallmark acts, performers carefully modulate movement tempo, orchestrate musical atmosphere, and engage audiences at close range to continuously generate suspense. This process evokes surprise, anticipation, and satisfaction among spectators, prompting immediate embodied responses such as gasps, applause, and cheers. Importantly, such audience feedback is not retrospective evaluation but an integral, real-time component of the performance itself. Second, the "choral accompaniment" (bangqiang) form establishes an interactional structure of "vocal intervention–distanciation–reflection" at the level of performative dialogue. As a distinctive vocal convention in the Gaoqiang style of Sichuan Opera, bangqiang involves offstage accompaniment that interacts with onstage performers through vocal cues, shaping the narrative tone, depicting scenes, revealing characters' inner states, articulating authorial commentary, and even voicing audience perspectives (Jing, 2006). This interplay creates a dialogic relationship across onstage and offstage spaces, effectively breaking the "fourth wall" between performers and spectators. In doing so, it produces a Brechtian "alienation effect" (Brecht, 1979), encouraging audiences to maintain critical distance and engage in reflective interpretation. Third, stylized movements and symbolic visual forms generate an interactional process of "encoded presentation–instant decoding" at the level of cultural meaning. Sichuan Opera employs a highly systematized repertoire of performative conventions to represent objects, convey meaning, and construct characters (Wang, 2023). Character design similarly relies on a complex symbolic system to signify age, personality, and emotional states. For instance, the beard prop (rankou) used for middle-aged and elderly male roles may change color in real time—such as shifting from black to white—to signify a character's sudden descent into despair (Wang, 2023). Likewise, facial makeup functions as a symbolic system representing moral qualities such as virtue, vice, loyalty, and treachery, as well as emotional expression (Ji, 2017). As characters appear and visual elements transform, these encoded theatrical symbols are immediately decoded and activated by the audience (Wang & Zou, 2007), enabling the perception of deeper cultural meanings. This tacit "encoding–decoding"

© 2026 by the author(s); licensee Mason Publish Group, this work for open access publication is under the Creative Commons Attribution International License (CC BY 4.0). (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/)

alignment reflects a highly efficient form of interaction grounded in shared cultural knowledge, sustained through long-term exposure and aesthetic immersion. It constitutes a core dimension of the depth of in-person interactive communication in Sichuan Opera.

In sum, the interactivity of Sichuan Opera is fundamentally rooted in a process of co-creation and tacit collaboration between the artistic form and its audience—it is embedded in its very ontology. Through in-person interaction, Sichuan Opera offers audiences a deeply immersive, multisensory experience and a sense of ritual grounded in physical co-presence, thereby fostering emotional resonance and cultural identification.

2.2 Online Interactive Communication in Sichuan Opera

Online interactive communication in Sichuan Opera refers to interaction mediated by digital platforms, where users engage with Sichuan Opera–related content—such as short videos and livestreams—through actions including liking, sharing, commenting, uploading, real-time bullet comments (danmu), and derivative creations. Within the ecosystem of new media platforms, the interactivity of Sichuan Opera is not merely preserved but also migrated, extended, and reconfigured.

First, the "suspense–anticipation–feedback" mechanism undergoes a process of migratory transformation. Through the recording and amplification of face-changing sequences, the manipulation of visual rhythm, and the enhancement of atmosphere through music, Sichuan Opera videos effectively evoke viewers' emotional engagement and interactive responses. For example, in the comment sections of traditional face-changing performance clips on Douyin, users frequently post reactions such as: "Changing faces with bare hands—this is a true master," or "Absolutely stunning." In this way, aspects of Sichuan Opera's interactivity are transferred to digital audiovisual platforms. However, online interaction relies predominantly on visual and auditory channels; the multisensory immersion characteristic of in-person interaction is significantly reduced, and the rich spectrum of embodied feedback is compressed into a largely visual mode. As a result, the ritualistic presence and affective intensity of the physical theater cannot be fully replicated.

Second, the "choral accompaniment–distanciation–dialogue" mechanism is extended in digital contexts. The danmu (bullet comment) function on video platforms such as Bilibili enables users to insert real-time textual commentary—including personal reactions, evaluations, and interpretive remarks—directly into the visual field of Sichuan Opera performances. For instance, in the danmu stream of the video "National Essence Sichuan Opera Face-Changing – Long Yice (HD Version)," comments such as "Bravo!", "This national treasure must be supported," "Face-changing is so cool," and "I've seen it up close many times and still can't figure it out" scroll continuously across the screen. Functionally, this resembles the traditional "bangqiang" (choral accompaniment) in Sichuan Opera. Its extension is evident in two key respects: first, audiences participate collectively and asynchronously in what may be termed "networked choral accompaniment," greatly exceeding the spatial limitations of a single theater; second, viewers can revisit videos and engage in repeated rounds of commentary over time, thereby continuously extending the dialogic process. In this sense, the interactivity of Sichuan Opera is both sustained and amplified in digital environments.

Third, the "encoding–decoding" mechanism undergoes a process of disenchantment and reconstructive transformation. The decentralization of information production on new media platforms enables users to participate in secondary creation and the production of new Sichuan Opera–related content, shifting their role

© 2026 by the author(s); licensee Mason Publish Group, this work for open access publication is under the Creative Commons Attribution International License (CC BY 4.0). (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/)

from passive spectators to active participants. For example, users appropriate Sichuan Opera clips to create mashups, memes, and other derivative works, or document and share behind-the-scenes stories of performers in private opera troupes. Additionally, content depicting backstage makeup, rehearsal practices, and audience movement before and after performances demystifies the theatrical aura of Sichuan Opera, constructing a more everyday, accessible narrative mode of interaction.

In this process, the originally highly codified symbolic system of Sichuan Opera is re-encoded into new interpretive frames—such as "the perseverance of veteran performers" or "playful innovation by younger generations"—allowing broader audiences to engage with the human stories behind the art form and to decode new layers of meaning. Consequently, the traditional "encoding–decoding" interaction, once rooted in condensed theatrical symbolism, is reconfigured into a more quotidian "witnessing–participation" model. This marks a shift in Sichuan Opera's interactive communication toward a phase characterized by disenchantment and renewed meaning production.

In the digital media era, short videos and livestreaming have become essential channels for the dissemination of Sichuan Opera. Online interactive communication expands the reach of the art form by creating broader spaces for audience access, dialogue, and co-creation, thereby generating new modes of interactivity and new layers of cultural meaning.

3. Shared Interactive Foundations and Divergent Logics of "In-Person" and "Online" Modes in Sichuan Opera

3.1 A Shared Interactive Foundation

The in-person and online interactive modes of Sichuan Opera are underpinned by a common interactive foundation. Rather than constituting two heterogeneous forms, both modes draw upon the inherently interactive nature of the art form itself. Whether in a physical theater or on a digital platform, Sichuan Opera offers audiences a strong sense of participation and dialogic engagement. This intrinsic interactivity establishes a shared "interactive DNA" that renders the two modes fundamentally compatible and closely related. Accordingly, differences in media form and interactional logic should not be regarded as sufficient grounds for their separation. On the contrary, in-person and online interaction can be mutually intelligible and mutually reinforcing. Their deep structural connection, together with the broader imperative of advancing Sichuan Opera's dissemination, suggests that their relationship extends beyond simple aggregation or functional complementarity. Specifically, the depth of interaction achieved in theatrical settings can provide both material and expressive substance for online content, while the breadth of interaction afforded by digital platforms can attract new audiences and generate novel discourses for the theater. Online engagement also enables diversified processes of meaning production and cultural identification, which in turn can feed back into and enrich the depth of in-person interaction. Through such reciprocal dynamics, a synergistic and symbiotic communication ecology may be constructed.

3.2 Divergent Logics of Interaction

Despite their shared foundation, in-person and online interaction in Sichuan Opera differ fundamentally in

© 2026 by the author(s); licensee Mason Publish Group, this work for open access publication is under the Creative Commons Attribution International License (CC BY 4.0). (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/)

their underlying logics due to the distinct affordances of their respective media forms. These differences are evident in three primary dimensions.

First, temporal logic. In-person interaction unfolds within an immersive, continuous, and linear temporal framework. Upon entering the theater, audiences commit to a sustained of engagement, activating multiple sensory channels simultaneously. By contrast, the temporality of digital media is fragmented and discontinuous: users encounter Sichuan Opera content at arbitrary moments, often in short segments, and may disengage at any time.

Second, spatial logic. The theater constitutes a ritualized space of embodied co-presence, whereas digital platforms provide an everyday, virtual environment. Traditional spectators undergo a sequence of actions—selecting performances, purchasing tickets, allocating time in advance, traveling to the venue, and waiting for the performance—culminating in a focused and immersive viewing experience marked by a strong sense of ritual. In contrast, digital users access virtual spaces through ubiquitous smart devices, entering and exiting these environments freely and with minimal commitment.

Third, subjective logic. Within the theater, audiences primarily assume the roles of spectators and emotional participants. On digital platforms, however, individuals are first positioned as users within networked systems—as "netizens" or platform participants—before assuming the role of audience members. This shift in subjectivity reshapes patterns of interaction and engagement. As a result of these differing logics, the coexistence of in-person and online dissemination in Sichuan Opera currently tends to manifest as a linear aggregation or complementary relationship, rather than a deeply integrated system.

To sum up, Sichuan Opera is inherently characterized by strong interactivity. Its in-person mode achieves multilayered interaction through distinctive performance techniques and a sophisticated system of cultural symbols. In the process of digital transformation, this interactivity undergoes partial migration and attenuation, creative reconstruction and enhancement, as well as processes of disenchantment and reconfiguration. Although intrinsic differences in interactional logic exist between the two modes, such differences do not inevitably lead to conflict. Bridging the current divide between in-person and online interaction, and reconstructing the communication ecology of Sichuan Opera, requires a return to their shared interactive foundation. At the same time, it is essential to recognize their functional and logical differences, and to explore pathways for mutual empowerment and synergistic coexistence.

4. Pathways Toward a Synergistic and Symbiotic Model Based on Interactivity in Sichuan Opera

Building on both the shared interactive foundation and the divergent logics of in-person and online communication, the construction of an integrated dissemination ecology for Sichuan Opera requires clearly defined functional positioning for each mode. Through adaptive niche differentiation, coordinated collaboration, and the facilitation of energy flow, a dual empowerment mechanism of value transformation can be established, ultimately leading to a systemically integrated and symbiotic communication model.

© 2026 by the author(s); licensee Mason Publish Group, this work for open access publication is under the Creative Commons Attribution International License (CC BY 4.0). (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/)

4.1 Niche Differentiation Through Functional Positioning

Within the broader communication ecology, in-person and online interactive modes should occupy distinct yet complementary niches, thereby avoiding homogenized content replication and overlapping competition for audience attention. The core function of in-person interaction lies in delivering deeply immersive cultural experiences characterized by intensive engagement. This can be achieved through full-length theatrical productions, selected classic excerpts, educational programs, makeup and costume demonstrations, and performance-based experiential activities within physical spaces, all of which provide rich multisensory engagement. In addition, the incorporation of digital technologies into physical settings—such as immersive small theaters, environmental theater, and site-specific cultural tourism performances—can further enhance participation and reinforce the ritualistic dimensions of the experience, thereby revitalizing traditional in-person interaction (Zhang, 2024; Hou, 2023). By contrast, online interactive communication primarily serves to maximize audience reach and facilitate traffic conversion. It operates through the dissemination of fragmented yet engaging content, including highlight clips, educational materials, performer interactions, and livestream commentary. These are complemented by promotional content, previews, and accessible information regarding ticketing and experiential opportunities. In this framework, the two modes maintain distinct functional roles without overlap, each occupying a clearly defined ecological niche.

4.2 A Mechanism for Bidirectional Value Transformation and Mutual Empowerment

Operating within their respective niches, in-person and online interactive modes can guide resources toward one another, thereby generating dynamic energy flows and enabling mutual empowerment. Given users' habitual engagement with digital media in everyday contexts, online content—such as short videos showcasing signature performance techniques—can capture initial attention and stimulate low-threshold interactions (e.g., viewing, liking, commenting). These forms of shallow engagement may then evolve into a deeper interest in experiencing Sichuan Opera in live settings, encouraging users to transition from online browsing to ticket purchasing and in-person attendance. In this way, online interaction functions as an entry point, particularly for attracting younger audiences into the physical theater space. Conversely, high-quality in-person experiences—delivered through theater performances, salons, backstage storytelling, cultural lectures, and participatory workshops—foster embodied resonance and strengthen cultural identification. These deeper engagements can motivate participants to become content creators, contributing experiential narratives, performance reflections, personal interpretations, and community discussions to digital platforms. Such user-generated content, often characterized by narrative richness and emotional accessibility, feeds back into and enriches online dissemination. As a result, online content informed by in-person experience extends beyond the display of spectacular techniques to convey deeper cultural meanings. In this mutually reinforcing system, "in-person" and "online" modes each fulfill distinct roles while jointly facilitating the circulation of communicative energy. This dynamic not only expands the core audience base but also establishes a sustainable, bidirectional mechanism of value transformation and mutual empowerment.

4.3 Establishing a Systemically Integrated, Synergistic, and Symbiotic Mechanism in Sichuan Opera

The dual interactive modes of "in-person" and "online" communication in Sichuan Opera can be system-

© 2026 by the author(s); licensee Mason Publish Group, this work for open access publication is under the Creative Commons Attribution International License (CC BY 4.0). (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/)

ically integrated under the guidance of a brand IP–oriented strategy. Spanning content production, user engagement, and cross-platform coordination, this approach facilitates the formation of a cohesive and mutually reinforcing communication mechanism. A brand IP strategy entails the development of a unified and recognizable identity for Sichuan Opera. By constructing distinctive brand personas and narrative-driven symbolic representations, it is possible to create culturally resonant IP content characterized by strong recognizability, storytelling capacity, and communicative impact. Building on a well-structured Sichuan Opera cultural IP content system, offline experiential activities can be strategically designed as sources for content creation, incorporating interactive elements that are conducive to secondary dissemination and adaptable to diverse online formats. At the same time, online platforms can foster collaborative IP content creation by dynamically capturing user-generated points of interest—such as trending topics, interactive queries, and emergent discussions—and transforming them into accessible formats, including educational content, engaging interactions, and customized events. In this way, content production evolves toward an integrated model characterized by "community-oriented, personalized, and defamiliarized" approaches (Zhao, 2020). Building upon a well-developed new media communication matrix, sustained traffic accumulation can support the integration of user operations. This involves connecting online fan communities with offline membership systems, channeling users from public traffic domains into privately managed ecosystems, and establishing unified platforms for user management. Through in-depth community engagement and targeted cultural marketing, audience relationships can be strengthened and sustained. Furthermore, by coordinating cross-platform and cross-sector collaborative marketing initiatives, it is possible to generate synergistic communication effects. Such efforts can amplify the visibility of Sichuan Opera cultural IP, create viral discussion topics, transcend niche audience boundaries, expand the overall audience base, and enhance both brand recognition and audience affinity.

Through these three interrelated mechanisms—grounded in the shared language of interactivity—the relationship between in-person and online communication in Sichuan Opera evolves from a model of simple aggregation or functional complementarity into a dynamic system of mutual reinforcement, energy circulation, and reciprocal value creation. In doing so, the structural divide between the two modes is effectively bridged, culminating in the construction of an organically integrated, synergistic, and sustainable communication ecology.

5 Conclusion

Focusing on the developmental challenges faced by Sichuan Opera, this study has examined the apparent coexistence yet underlying disjunction between its "in-person" and "online" modes of interactive communication. Beginning with the intrinsically interactive nature of Sichuan Opera as an art form, the analysis has explored the internal connections and mechanisms of transformation between these two modes. It finds that while they share a common interactive foundation, they are differentiated by distinct interactional logics. On this basis, the study argues that the deep, immersive interactivity characteristic of in-person communication and the relatively shallow but ɹɯɲu-reaching interactivity of online communication can be integrated into a dynamic cycle of energy flow. Such integration has the potential to overcome the current "dual-track" separation between online and offline dissemination, thereby enabling the construction of a unified communication ecology characterized by the coordinated participation of multiple actors and diverse media forms in a symbi-

© 2026 by the author(s); licensee Mason Publish Group, this work for open access publication is under the Creative Commons Attribution International License (CC BY 4.0). (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/)

otic relationship.

Grounded in the intrinsic properties of Sichuan Opera and responsive to transformations in the digital media era, this paper proposes an analytical framework of "shared interactive foundation – value transformation – systemic symbiotic integration." By bridging research on the ontology of traditional art forms with studies of digital communication, it offers a theoretical perspective that moves beyond technological determinism and linear additive thinking. In doing so, it reveals the underlying dynamics driving the digital dissemination of Sichuan Opera and other traditional performing arts. This study further contends that the relationship between "in-person" and "online" interactive communication in Sichuan Opera should not be understood as substitutional or merely additive. Instead, grounded in their shared interactive foundation, the two modes can achieve complementary niche differentiation through precise functional positioning. This enables bidirectional value transformation and mutual empowerment across multiple dimensions, including brand IP development, user engagement, and cross-platform and cross-sector integration. Within this tripartite mechanism, online interactive communication plays a crucial role in attracting younger audiences, driving traffic toward in-person experiences, and generating creative inputs for offline innovation. In-person communication, in turn, provides deep interactive experiences, emotional resonance, and cultural identification, offering high-quality narrative resources that enrich online dissemination. By incorporating shareable interactive elements, it also stimulates secondary circulation and user-generated content, thereby feeding back into and enhancing online communication. Ultimately, the coordinated interplay between "in-person" and "online" modes enables them to function in an orderly and mutually reinforcing manner within the broader communication system of Sichuan Opera.

It should be noted, however, that due to constraints of scope, this study is primarily theoretical and lacks empirical validation. Future research could incorporate empirical analysis of online and offline content and data from specific Sichuan Opera troupes to further substantiate these findings. Additionally, how to balance the enhancement of communicative effectiveness with the deepening of cultural meaning and audience identification remains a critical question for ongoing inquiry.

Funding

Key Laboratory of Digital Protection and Intelligent Sharing of Traditional Local Opera Resources (Chengdu University of Technology), Sichuan Provincial Department of Culture and Tourism, 24XQZC15

References

[1]Fu, Y. S. (2025, June 20). Chuan Opera achieves the integration of performer, performance, and audience. China Culture Daily, p. 5.

[2]Zhou, Q. X. (2001). The formation and development of Sichuan Opera over the past century. Sichuan Drama, (03), 29–33.

[3]Zhou, Q. X. (2015). The epoch-making significance and modern qualities of the "Sanqinghui" theater troupe. Sichuan Drama, (10), 57–61.

[4]Zhu, X. F. (2019). Inheritance and innovation of virtual design concepts in contemporary Sichuan Opera

© 2026 by the author(s); licensee Mason Publish Group, this work for open access publication is under the Creative Commons Attribution International License (CC BY 4.0). (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/)

stage art (Master's thesis). Chongqing University.
[5]Wang, J. (2023). An analysis of structural forms and genre characteristics of Sichuan Opera performance. Sichuan Drama, (06), 45–50.
[6]Wang, J. (2019). Research on the inheritance, development, and ecological chain construction of contemporary Sichuan Opera. Sichuan Drama, (09), 80–87.
[7]Zhou, L., & Chen, W. D. (2025). An analysis of the integration of Sichuan Opera and cultural tourism driven by new quality productive forces. Sichuan Drama, (11), 125–128.
[8]Ying, Y. L. (2024). Digital dissemination and development of Sichuan Opera under cloud technology. Drama House, (02), 31–33.
[9]Lu, M., & Cao, Y. N. (2025). An analysis of integrated innovation in Sichuan Opera theater design from a modern perspective. Sichuan Drama, (07), 125–128.
[10]Ma, X. J. (2024). Breaking boundaries or digital traps: Rethinking cross-disciplinary creation and "breaking circles" of regional opera in the digital media era. Sichuan Drama, (04), 46–51.
[11]Yan, Y. L., & Luo, Y. (2024). Practice and research on the online dissemination of Sichuan Opera. Sichuan Drama, (05), 21–24.
[12]Qiu, Z. M., & Lu, W. (2023). The role of live streaming in the dissemination of Sichuan Opera in the new media era. Sichuan Drama, (04), 40–43.
[13]Pan, S. X., & Lin, X. C. (2024). The impact of experiential short videos on the dissemination of Sichuan Opera: A case study of the viral video "Chi Zao Shi Wo" experiencing Sichuan Opera Hua Dan performance. Sichuan Drama, (05), 17–20.
[14]Hou, L. Y. M. (2023). Cross-boundary communication, audience expansion, and dissemination of Sichuan Opera from the perspective of media convergence. Drama Literature, (05), 4–10.
[15]Wu, M., & Qiu, P. X. (2022). The revitalization and future dissemination strategies of Sichuan Opera from the perspective of opera ecology. Sichuan Drama, (08), 91–96.
[16]Jiang, J. H. (2015). On the modern dissemination of Chinese opera: A case study of Sichuan Opera. Drama House, (12), 53.
[17]Liu, T. (2023). Fragmentation characteristics and communication strategies of Sichuan Opera dissemination. Drama House, (02), 37–39.
[18]Feng, W. T., & Zhang, L. F. (2023). Research on Sichuan Opera film and television dissemination in the context of new media. New Media Research, 9(07), 58–64.
[19]Ouyang, H. S., & Hu, P. (2017). The empathy effect in interactive communication and its realization pathways. Journal of Southwest Minzu University (Humanities and Social Sciences Edition), 38(01), 174–178.
[20]Zhang, Y. (2019). Translation of Sichuan Opera scripts from a multimodal discourse analysis perspective: A case study of Ba Shan Xiu Cai. Sichuan Drama, (03), 81–84.
[21]Jing, A. D. (2006). An overview of Sichuan Opera vocal music. Film Review, (13), 97–98.
[22]Brecht, B. (1979). Alienation effect. Film Art Translation Series, (03), 162.
[23]Ji, R. X. (2017). On the interaction between Sichuan Opera facial makeup art and audience aesthetics. Sichuan Drama, (09), 40–43.
[24]Wang, X. M., & Zou, X. C. (2007). The value of adaptation in theatrical communication: A discussion based on Tang Xianzu's critique of The Peony Pavilion. Sichuan Drama, (05), 20–22.
[25]Zhao, X. L. (2020). Communitization, personalization, and defamiliarization: Content production strate-

© 2026 by the author(s); licensee Mason Publish Group, this work for open access publication is under the Creative Commons Attribution International License (CC BY 4.0). (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/)

gies for opera dissemination in new media. Modern Communication (Journal of Communication University of China), 42(06), 110–114.

© 2026 by the author(s); licensee Mason Publish Group, this work for open access publication is under the Creative Commons Attribution International License (CC BY 4.0). (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/)