Cross-cultural Empathic Communication of National Image: Analysis of International Communication Strategies and Effects of the Beijing Winter Olympic Games

Zihan Zeng

1. Winter Olympics Communication and National Image

From the 2008 Beijing Summer Olympics to the 2022 Beijing Winter Olympics, the world political landscape and economic situation have changed dramatically, China's comprehensive national power has developed greatly, and the two-way relationship between China and the world, and the goals and visions of China's national image building have been constantly adjusted. The national image communication of this Beijing Winter Olympic Games has the outstanding characteristics of multi-dimensional connotation and subject to many layers. It is necessary to address people of different nationalities, cultural backgrounds and identity positions around the world and convey the image of China that contains multiple dimensions of civilization, technology, security and creativity.

Faced with a multi-dimensional communication environment with complex communication targets, the Beijing Winter Olympic Games has gradually awakened empathetic feedback from global audiences through direct audience demands, global consensus, creative expressions and deepened cultural connotations, setting an important benchmark for the media development of sporting events and an excellent example for considering how to realize empathetic communication of multi-dimensional national images. Therefore, this paper compares the real-life dilemmas of national image building, discusses in detail how empathic communication can empower China's national image building, and uses the international communication strategy and effect of the Beijing Winter Olympics as a case study to explore how both the transmitter and the receiver can form a new cultural space of communality in the process of empathic communication.

2. Multidimensional Communication of National Images: Status and Dilemmas

In fact, international communication researchers and practitioners have noticed the multidimensional nature of the country's image and the differences in audiences. However, with the rapid development of algorithmic technology, digital platforms are gradually becoming an important channel for international exchanges among different groups and a mainstream position for China to conduct international communication. "These new features of digital platforms provide opportunities to break down old communication barriers and create new communication spaces, but they also exacerbate problems such as the solidification of cognitive biases due to
algorithmic recommendations and the information cocoon effect. In the platform-based international communication environment, the multidimensionality of national images and the complexity of audience perceptions have been interpreted and polarized as never before.

Faced with the dilemma of national image communication theory and practice, we must rethink the essential characteristics and generation mechanism of national image, and propose a framework of national image construction that can not only gather consensus to the greatest extent, but also realize differentiated communication for the characteristics of different groups. This paper argues that through the reciprocal unification of the interests of the body and the interests of the others, and the sharing and co-creation of self-image and the perception of the others, cross-cultural empathic communication that pays more attention to audience differences and appeals to emotional resonance can become an important initiative for the construction of a multidimensional national image.

3. Cross-cultural Empathy: The Way of National Image Communication

This paper argues that the importance and feasibility of cross-cultural empathic communication of national images is based mainly on the essential link between national images and empathic communication. From the point of view of the occurrence mechanism, the state image can be considered as a product of empathy. As mentioned earlier, the image of the state is not a mechanical projection of the subject's will in the object's psyche, not a static and unchanging result, but a result of the interaction of different subjects. In this sense, there may be a discrepancy between the image of China as perceived by the public in other countries and the image constructed by China on its own initiative. The reason for this is that some of the dimensions of the image conveyed by China do not succeed in making the audience empathize, while some signals sent by other source subjects succeed in making the audience empathize and enter its cognitive system. Therefore, cross-cultural empathy is the only way to improve the effectiveness of national image communication. Only through active empathic substitution, symbolic code selection, positive feedback interaction and continuous adjustment, can the national image break through the barriers of information and cognitive barriers, and be truly felt and understood by the audience. Especially in the context of multi-dimensional national image communication for multi-dimensional audience groups, cross-cultural empathy communication has become an important initiative for national image communication.

This paper will further analyze the practical path of cross-cultural empathy communication based on the international communication strategies and effects of the Beijing 2022 Winter Olympic Games, which vividly illustrates the innovative meaning of cross-cultural empathy communication.

4. Beijing Winter Olympic Games: An Innovative Practice of Cross-cultural Empathetic Communication of National Image

As one of the largest and most influential international sporting events, the 2022 Beijing Winter Olympic Games is a grand stage to present a multidimensional national image to a diverse group of people. This paper focuses on the opening and closing ceremonies of the Beijing Winter Olympic Games and the Winter Paralympic Games, and analyzes the cross-cultural empathy significance of the opening ceremony elements, symbolic choices and creative expressions based on the director's statement and live presentation, so as to clarify the cross-cultural empathy communication mode of multidimensional national image. The study found that the communication subjects of the Beijing Winter Olympics adopted a cascading and interlocking communication strategy when communicating the national image, which is in line with the cascading nature of empathetic communication.

4.1 Constructing a Multidimensional Image for Multiple Subjects

Only when the communication audience and the communication target are clearly defined can the communicator's empathic behavior have a place to land. Due to the inherent tension between the international and national character of the Olympic Games, it is often necessary to combine two sets of ideographic systems: the former refers to symbols that trigger responses through light, shadow and sound, which are not limited by language and cultural differences and are applicable to the largest international audience; the latter is more based on cultural consensus and is used to express the exclusive emotions among specific cultural groups. The Beijing Winter Olympic Games need to convey a multi-dimensional image of China to the widest audience at the same time, so the international communication has adopted a total and divided communication idea, which is not only cohesive but also highlights differences. Zhang Yimou, the chief director of the opening ceremony of the Winter Olympics, mentioned that he chose to have athletes and ordinary people rather than professional artists as the protagonists of the ceremony because he wanted to highlight the "people's nature" of the Winter Olympics, so the huge "snowflakes" made up of the names of all the participating countries and the miniature torches releasing warmth
constitute a vivid metaphor for the unity of the world's people in confronting global challenges with the spirit of the community of human destiny. At the same time, the Beijing Winter Olympics will tell the memory of the "City of Two Olympics" to those who are familiar with the Beijing Summer Olympics, but also to those who do not know Beijing through the review of the 2018 Winter Olympics in Pyeongchang, South Korea and the prospect of the 2026 Winter Olympics in Milan-Cortina d'Ampezzo. But at the same time, through the review of the PyeongChang Winter Games in Korea in 2018 and the prospect of the Milan-Cortina Dampedzo Winter Games in 2026, viewers who do not know the history of Beijing as the "City of Two Olympics" can also perceive the historical depth of Olympic development. Through the organic combination of consensual and segmented communication, the Beijing Winter Olympics achieved a holistic perception and empathy for China's image.

4.2 Deepening Emotional Identity

After clearly defining the communication audience and image dimension, it is important to make the audience perceive the similarity between themselves and the communication subject through various means of meaningful symbols, which is the cornerstone of audience empathy. For example, during the New Crown epidemic, China and Japan used common cultural memory symbols such as "the mountains and rivers are different, but the wind and the moon are the same" and "the moon is the same as the two hometowns" to facilitate empathy between the aid recipients. In this year's Winter Olympics, the communicators evoked the shared emotions of the audience through a multimodal communication system, including the following aspects. First, the communicators highlighted the thematic elements of the world's common concern in the opening ceremony. With the addition of "more unity" to the Olympic motto, the international community hopes to unite the hearts and minds of the global community through sports events. Together for the Future" is China's powerful initiative for a "more united" world. Second, communicators use commonly perceived audiovisual texts. For example, the opening and closing ceremonies of the Beijing Winter (Paralympic) Games used the theme of "a snowflake" throughout. As an aesthetic and comprehensible visual symbol, the snowflake is a condensed expression of ice and snow sports and the spirit of the Winter Olympics. The audiovisual narrative of the Beijing Winter Olympics transcends the cognitive barriers of language and civilization. Third, the communicators have incorporated emotional memories that resonate with the world in the opening ceremony. The opening ceremony of the Beijing Winter Olympic Games has always taken "common feeling and unity" as the main tone, using the common narrative of human beings to convey the common aspirations of the world and express the common expectations of the global community for future development. Through the awakening of the common emotional vision of the hosts and the guests, the Beijing Winter Olympics has realized the emotional identification from "I" to "we" between the hosts and the guests.

4.3 Creative Expression for Interactive Fun

After the audience has formed an identity with the subject due to the connection of similarity, the communicator must enhance the audience's interactive experience of the communication process through aesthetic and creative expressions, so as to develop empathy to a deeper level on the premise that there is a clear boundary between the subject and the object. For example, the communicators of the Beijing Winter Olympics used the twenty-four solar terms in the opening ceremony to express the beautiful vision of the beginning of winter and the beginning of spring, and cleverly combined the twelve Chinese zodiac signs with ice skates in the closing ceremony. The creative expression of traditional cultural resources such as Chinese knots increases the interest of the communication content and provides the possibility for audiences to deepen their thinking and form deep empathy. The mascot of the Beijing Winter Olympics, Bingdu, has become a huge hit, based on the innovative design of the cute image of the panda. Creative expression can also be achieved through the creative development of emerging resources. One of the highlights of the opening ceremony of the Beijing Winter Olympics was the use of a miniature torch. The opening ceremony changed the tradition of burning torches from previous Winter Olympics, and used a lightweight miniature torch placed in the middle of the "snowflakes" made up of national nameplates, which not only brought a new sensory experience for the audience aesthetically, but also made a practical contribution to the low-carbon and green Olympics.

4.4 Deepening Emotions and Perceptions

The opening ceremony of the Beijing Winter Olympic Games incorporated spiritual implications in three main dimensions: first, to tell the world about China's cultural heritage and its development philosophy, and to demonstrate China's sincerity and goodwill; second, to call on the world to jointly implement the spirit of sports, athletics and the Olympic spirit, and to promote the development of ice and snow sports and the Olympic cause; third, to tell the world concept of "one family under heaven Thirdly, it tells the world concept of "one world" and
highlights the value of the community of human destiny. Through the organic integration of audiovisual symbols and spiritual connotations, the Beijing Winter Olympics communicators enable the international audience to feel close to them because of the commonality and gain pleasure because of the novel expressions, and then realize the leap from emotional empathy to cognitive empathy, from superficial similarity to deep identification, and finally construct a cascading empathic communication process.

5. Conclusion
This paper further clarifies the mechanism of cross-cultural empathic communication of multidimensional national image through the analysis of China's international communication strategies and effects during the Beijing Winter Olympics. It is emphasized that empathic communication must take the communicator's active empathic setting as the origin and go through a deeper process in layers, but it also requires empathic feedback and interaction from the communicating audience in order to constitute a sustainable positive communication model.

This study is a guide to the subsequent theoretical research and practical development of international communication. However, it is also important to recognize that the perfect empathic communication model is only an ideal, and the positive cycle is often difficult to fully realize. However, this is not a reason to turn up one's nose at empathic communication or to choke on it, nor should it be an excuse to turn empathetic communication into a paper talk. The process of cross-cultural communication is bound to face many insurmountable gaps, and both practitioners and researchers should examine the multidimensional communication of national images in detail, so that empathic communication theory can truly contribute to the theoretical progress and practical development of international communication in China.

References
Arning. (2013). Soft power, ideology and symbolic manipulation in Summer Olympic Games opening ceremonies: A semiotic analysis. Social Semiotics, (4). https://doi.org/10.1080/10350330.2013.799008
Ji, D. Q. (2021). The conceptual transformation of China's international communication from the perspective of "Hypercultural Echo Chamber". Friends of the Editor, (11), 16-21. doi:10.13786/j.cnki.cn14-1066/g2.2021.11.002.
José, I. J., Magdalena, W., & Nuri, K. (2019). The Joint Effects of Imagined Contact and Similarity with the Protagonist of Testimonial Messages Through Identification and Transportation. Cuadernos.info, (45). https://doi.org/10.7764/cdi.45.1584
Li, K., & Zhu, H. Y. (2021). The Theoretical origin and mechanism Construction of "Empathy Rhetoric". Contemporary Rhetoric, (4), 57-69.
Ma, D. Y., & Lu, Y. Z. (2022). Psychological Analysis of the formation of National Image. International political science, (1), 114-148.
Song, W. L., Yao, X. L., Li, Z. P., Yang, R. Z., & Zhang, T. (2021). An Analysis of the Cultural display path of the Winter Olympic Opening Ceremony from the perspective of international Communication. Journal of Wuhan Sports College, (12), 12-19.
Valente Faith. (2016).Empathy and Communication: A Model of Empathy Development. Journal of New Media and Mass Communication, (1). https://doi.org/10.18488/journal.91/2016.3.1/91.1.1.24
Wu, X. J., & Zhang, K. (2016). National Image: A Rediscussion of Concepts, Characteristics and Research Paths. Modern Communication. Journal of Communication University of China, (1), 57-62.
Zhao, J. G. (2021). On the communication of Empathy. Modern Communication. Journal of Communication University of China, (6), 47-52.
Zhong, X., & Jiang, X. C. (2022). Global Concentric, multi-level Dialogue and Emotional Resonance: The keynote, path and Vision of the "Cloud" International communication of Beijing 2022 Winter Olympic Games. Journal of Chengdu Sports Institute, (1), 14, 20.

Copyrights
Copyright for this article is retained by the author(s), with first publication rights granted to the journal.
This is an open-access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution license (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).