

# Research of the Spring Festival Report Overseas in Chinese Mainstream Media: Taking the CGTN as an Example

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**Abstract:** In the context of intercultural communication, as a traditional Chinese festival. The Spring Festival (also called Chinese New Year) has caused widespread dissemination overseas. The article takes Chinese mainstream media CGTN's Chinese New Year related reports released on Youtube platform as research samples, and takes the period of Chinese New Year of the Rabbit in 2023 as the time period for the study. Starting from the video content released by CGTN, the article explores the Chinese image and Chinese symbols shaped by it. And with the support of Frame Theory, the study analyzes the reporting framework from two levels of textual content and value orientation, and further to explore the communication dilemma of Chinese image in the intercultural communication context.

**Keywords:** Chinese New Year coverage, CGTN, cultural symbols, reporting framework, short video coverage

## 1. Introduction

In contemporary world, with the globalization of international economy and international cooperation, Chinese culture has gained more and more attention and recognition in the international community as China's international status has improved. Chinese New Year, as an indispensable part of Chinese traditional culture, plays a crucial role in the international dissemination of Chinese culture.

In the era of omnimedia, the traditional media and new media coexist, communication methods and forms are increasingly diversified. As a multilingual official integrated media communication organization, CGTN undertakes the communication mission of conveying Chinese emotions and enhancing international culture. During the Chinese New Year 2023, CGTN has released a large number of short videos on the Youtube platform on the theme of Chinese New Year.

The sample collection of this study was mainly based on manual finding and screening. A total of 132 short videos related to Chinese New Year were published on Youtube platform by CGTN during the Chinese New Year in 2023. The content of CGTN's short videos can be roughly divided into four types, namely, Chinese New Year propaganda, cultural customs, special sections and Q&A interviews. Among them, cultural customs and Chinese New Year propaganda videos account for most of the videos.

This study takes a semiotic perspective to interpret the cultural symbols with Chinese characteristics in CGTN's short videos in the context of intercultural communication, and analyzes the representational significance of the symbols in the context of CGTN's "reshaping" of Chinese symbols on Youtube.

Media framework refers to a set of selected principles - deliberately emphasized, interpreted and presented symbols - in news reporting, through which the media organizes its products and discourse (Huang, D, 2005). This study uses content analysis to analyze the content of short videos published by CGTN, supported by Frame Theory.

## 2. CGTN's Chinese New Year Coverage and Chinese Image Building

In intercultural communication, there are two main forms of national image shaping: one is the active self-image shaping with the country as the main subject of communication; the other is the national image passively shaped by other countries (Zhang, M, 2018). This study focuses on the self-image shaping of Chinese mainstream media in intercultural communication.

In terms of Chinese New Year culture, the videos released by CGTN contain plenty of unique traditional Chinese culture and customs, such as "the Year of the Rabbit", "the Chinese zodiac", "fireworks" and "the Spring Festival Gala". As the most important traditional festival in China,

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Chinese New Year carries the unique national emotion and cultural heritage of Chinese people, and the atmosphere and customs of Chinese New Year have been engraved in the national gene of Chinese people. As a result, Chinese mainstream media coverage of the Chinese New Year in China tends to start with the festive atmosphere and life scenes, focusing on reflecting social life, especially the reunion of families and happiness and well-being, but rarely specializing in a particular custom or cultural symbol. Unlike the Chinese mainstream media's coverage of the Chinese New Year in China, CGTN's Youtube videos focus on the deconstruction and cross-cultural integration of traditional Chinese cultural symbols.

Traditional cultural symbols are created, understood and applied, and changed in real life, and it aims to shape and improve the audience's cultural outlook, values and outlook on life (Guo, J.Y., 2010). In intercultural communication, the international communication of Chinese culture is bound to take into account the understanding bias caused by cultural differences. Due to cultural differences and identity differences, audiences overseas often do not have the same emotional resonance as Chinese people when watching Chinese New Year related videos. Therefore, CGTN tends to deconstruct and shape cultural symbols rather than convey pure emotions in its videos introducing Chinese New Year customs. For example, for the Year of the Rabbit, CGTN focuses on the image of the vivid cartoon "Rabbit", which is constructed as a representation of Chinese culture. In this case, the "Rabbit" exists as a derivative of the "symbolic source" of the Chinese New Year.

Each short video in CGTN's thematic column named "Chinese New Year Flowers" takes flowers as the starting point, linking Chinese people's festive atmosphere and emotional expressions with flowers, which is a rare theme in China. Among them, the video titled "Enjoy the festive vibe among flowers" shows a Chinese lady buying flowers for Chinese New Year, and through the conversation between the lady and the shopkeeper, it highlights the connection between Chinese New Year and flowers in imagery and emotion, which deepens CGTN's setting. CGTN has coalesced the Chinese New Year atmosphere into flowers in its intercultural communication, using "flowers" as a symbolic derivative of Chinese New Year culture. Making the two intermingle, CGTN creates a new cultural symbol that is different from the traditional one, and form an innovative "reshaping" of Chinese culture.

### **3. The Framework Construction of CGTN's Chinese New Year Coverage**

Intercultural communication, i.e. interpersonal interaction among members of society and information dissemination activities in different cultural contexts. When a culture crosses the boundaries of time, distance, and race, beginning to transmit, understand and learn from other cultures on its own, the boundaries between different cultures are broken down, and a new realm opens up between different cultures to communicate, spread,

benefit from each other, and even mutually influence and reintegrate with each other. The interactivity between cultures has an impact on the cultures of different groups, nations and even the community of human destiny. As the grandest traditional festival among Chinese folk, the influence of Chinese New Year is not only in China, but also in Japan, Korea, Singapore, Malaysia and other Southeast Asian regions, and even in Europe and American area, making it one of the most representative cultures in intercultural communication.

The research is based on the content analysis method, in which the short video reports of CGTN on Youtube platform during the Chinese New Year are selected from two aspects: textual theme and value orientation.

#### **3.1 The Thematic analysis of the Report Video**

A total of 132 Chinese New Year video reports were collected from January 20, 2023 to February 4, 2023. The topics of the short videos and the text of the titles reflect the main communication direction of CGTN's 2023 Chinese New Year coverage, and the coverage is comprehensive, covering politics, technology, consumer economy, social life, fun and other aspects. By carefully perusing the 132 videos, a relatively large proportion of the coverage is about politics and social life, with more social life coverage compared to politics.

A series of 132 videos posted by CGTN on Youtube during the Chinese New Year were categorized into four types: Chinese New Year propaganda, cultural customs, thematic columns, and Q&A interviews.

Among them, the Chinese New Year propaganda videos focus on political aspects, mainly reporting on the Chinese New Year greetings from political leaders, officials and heads of international institutions around the world and their expectations for 2023. For instance, the video titled "UN officials send Chinese New Year greetings to China, express hopes for 2023" mentions China's current development role in the UN and expresses sincere New Year wishes to the Chinese people.

The cultural customs category highlights the Chinese people's Chinese New Year festive atmosphere and traditional Chinese New Year customs, including the culture of the Chinese zodiac, putting up couplets, setting off firecrackers, setting off fireworks, watching the Spring Festival Gala, dragon and lion dances, etc. In terms of China's domestic social life, CGTN focuses on the Chinese people's Spring Festival festive atmosphere and traditional Chinese culture, such as videos titled "Traditional dances, costume parades light up China during Chinese New Year", "Creative cultural products breathe new life into Chinese New Year traditions", and "Exploring non-traditional Chinese culture in Spring Festival celebrations", "The Chinese New Year celebrations explore intangible cultural heritage" and "Mastering Chinese Poetry: New Year's Eve Creation". Simultaneously, the Chinese New Year coverage is combined with people's livelihood and rural revitalization, such as "China guarantees rural electricity supply during Chinese New Year" and "Public Service Announcement for 2023 Spring Festival Gala: Chinese New Year Rural Party", demonstrating to the world on the occasion of

2023 Chinese New Year China's good people's style and appearance.

The thematic columns category are mainly categorized into "True China", "We talk", "Chinese New Year Flowers" and "China Life".

"True China" showcases bloggers from different countries celebrating Chinese New Year, mainly focusing on how people from overseas know about Chinese New Year and how to celebrate it. For instances, videos titled like "Indian bloggers buy Chinese New Year goods and celebrate Chinese New Year", "American bloggers celebrate Chinese New Year", "British bloggers celebrate Chinese New Year in the UK", "Ukrainian video bloggers celebrating Chinese New Year in Northeast China".

The "We talk" feature showcases Chinese New Year wishes from people around the worldwide. The Chinese community is scattered all over the world, and the increase in the number of overseas Chinese is closely related to the deepening cultural exchange with other countries in the world, and the short video is also targeted at overseas Chinese and international students who are studying and working abroad. The atmosphere related to Chinese New Year is also intensified in regions and countries with a large Chinese population.

The "Chinese New Year Flowers" showcases the stories of Chinese people's lives with flowers in a feature film like format, linking Chinese New Year with flowers and bringing a new "Chinese meaning" to flowers. The "China Life" feature demonstrates to the audience the way the Chinese New Year is celebrated throughout China. For instance, "Macau celebrates Chinese New Year with a variety of activities", "Chinese New Year celebrations at the Palace Museum in Beijing" and "Xinjiang herdsmen celebrate Chinese New Year by racing through the snow". The traditional customs and vivid atmosphere of Chinese New Year are shown to people all over the world. In the same Chinese New Year setting, people in different provinces and regions of China have different customs and traditions, giving the Chinese New Year a unique regional significance. There are fewer videos of the Q&A type, mainly in the form of multi-person interviews about Chinese New Year.

### **3.2 The Value Orientation of the Report Video**

Chinese people accumulate their feelings, wishes, ethics, and beliefs on the Chinese New Year festival, making it a national cultural symbol and an important force to solidify the gathering of national emotions (Gao, B.Z, 2007). As such a grand festival, the value orientation and the social style conveyed by its related reports are extremely important.

On the consumer economy. From the video report, it can obviously be seen that China's policy measures for the 2023 outbreak have been optimized, and China's strong consumption and reduced economic pressure during the Chinese New Year have undoubtedly given a huge boost to the Chinese economy. From "no gathering unless necessary" and "spending New Year's Eve in place" during the outbreak, to "cultural tourism", "watching movies on New Year's Eve", "the surge in demand for gold and jewelry", "more tourists from Hong Kong and

Macau during the Spring Festival", "the rise of Chinese ice and snow tourism during the Spring Festival", the resurgence of China's economy reflects the improvement of the people's living standards.

Aspects of Chinese New Year culture dissemination. Reports on traditional Chinese New Year customs account for a relatively high proportion of the national intangible cultural heritage, such as shadow puppet shows and Yunnan drums, and these widely spread folk customs are conducive to the formation of a sense of national identity. Simultaneously, CGTN has demonstrated the great influence and vitality of Chinese New Year through its coverage of non-native cultural people celebrating the festival.

People's aspect. The Chinese New Year inherits millennia of Chinese family sentiment, kinship and hometown feeling, and contains excellent traditional Chinese culture, while the process of Chinese people celebrating the Spring Festival is also the process of drawing on socialist core values and other advanced culture (Pan, Y.K, 2020). According to the video report, the dedicated emergency medical staff remained at their posts during the Spring Festival. Train and crew members maintained the train order well despite the pressure of the huge Spring Festival crowd, which are the spread and relay of the excellent Chinese traditional culture.

## **4. The communication dilemma of China's image from CGTN's overseas Chinese New Year report**

### **4.1 The Obstacle in intercultural communication**

CGTN, as the authoritative representative of China's flagship foreign media, has made "See the world from China's perspective, let the world see the different" as its slogan, and since its inception, many people around the world have seen and understood China, creating a positive image of China. However, some problems can be seen through this coverage and promotion of the 2023 Chinese New Year.

#### **4.1.1 Flat Propagation**

CGTN has maintained a high output in content production and creation, producing a total of 132 pieces of relevant content during the short Spring Festival period. However, in the process of intercultural communication, there is no precise positioning of target user groups, lack of stereoscopic and all-round presentation based on big data. The communication method is comparatively stationary and homogeneous, and lacks the awareness of making adjustments according to different cultural heritage and policy forms in overseas countries, which leads to understanding bias when audiences watch the videos. Simultaneously, with frequent message pop-ups and a flood of information, it is difficult for audiences to capture the effective information, which leads to ignoring some information and generating boredom.

#### 4.1.2 *Thick Propaganda Color*

In its short video reports, CGTN still has the tendency to adopt the mindset of "external propaganda", and the dissemination process is characterized by a strong official color, which causes distrust among audiences in other countries, and thus creates a sense of boredom towards the media. In terms of content, although CGTN is endeavoring to convey a positive image of China to the world, there is still the problem of cultural centrism and a single perspective of propaganda, producing many identical works from the same perspective, which makes it difficult to arouse the spiritual resonance of other countries' audiences.

#### 4.2 Misinterpretation arising from "Encoding/Decoding" and Cultural Differences

The "Encoding/Decoding" Theory was developed by Stuart Hall. Encoding is the design of the communicator's arrangement of the message, while decoding is the audience's personal interpretation of the message delivered by the media. In intercultural communication, cultural misinterpretation and misunderstanding are often difficult to avoid due to cultural differences and various underlying factors.

Differences in values and knowledge structures of decoders often cause misinterpretation of symbolic meanings. The possession of a common space of meaning by both transmitters and receivers is a necessary condition for effective communication. American scholar Edward Hall divides culture into two categories of high and low context cultures. Chinese media are specialized in embedding meaning and information in contexts, while Chinese media expressions are often not suitable for decoders of non-native cultures. The intercultural communication of China's image through media reports creates a symbolic tension between the encoder and the decoder. While interpreting media reports, decoders may experience cultural misinterpretations due to their own perceptual biases, not because the codes themselves are menacing.

### 5. Conclusion

In the perspective of cross-cultural communication, Chinese mainstream media, represented by CGTN, is an important element in shaping China's image. Chinese New Year coverage is a window for Chinese mainstream media to shape the image of China. The research revealed that CGTN's coverage of Chinese New Year customs is copious and accurate, but when it comes to political and social issues, it tends to render China's image with propaganda techniques, which causes the self-shaping of China's image to lack persuasiveness and vividness. In the process of intercultural communication, China should fully examine the audience's exposure tendencies, interest preferences and decoding ability, and make innovative encoding of Chinese culture. It is appropriate to leave behind grand and ambiguous narratives and present China's story in small cuts and details, reinventing the

cultural core in the process and better spreading Chinese festive rituals and traditional Chinese culture.

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