

Excursion: The Chinese Imagination in Metaverse

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Abstract

The metaverse characterized by the fusion of virtual reality represents a new form of human social development. Based on digital internet and virtual reality technologies, its cultural landscape must incorporate Chinese culture. Chinese culture should seize this opportunity of the transformation of the media environment, construct the national cultural landscape consciously and demonstrate the demeanor of a major cultural country continuously in the metaverse.

Keywords

Metaverse, National Image, Cultural Construction, Excursion

1. Introduction

“China” is a cultural imagination as well as a cultural construction. It represents the world’s curiosity and yearning for the East, and also embodies the Chinese people’s recollection and identification of their own history and culture. As a pole of world culture, China will play an important role in the metaverse human social landscape marked by the integration of the virtual and the real.

The continuous advancement of technological has outlined a brand-new picture for the development of human society. Technological concepts have been rapidly popularized through Internet dissemination. The emergence of the metaverse has become a hot topic of public concern in this way. Metaverse was born out of artistic creation, with the efforts of technology companies, it has been infused with various interpretations. However, these interpretations undoubtedly indicate the prospects of the development of human society. It is a product of the integration and reinforcement of reality and imagination. Compared with the inevitable picture of the future world, it is more inclined to a kind of ideal imagination. As an important force in the global pattern, China’s political economic and cultural in-

fluence cannot be ignored. Under the development framework of the metaverse, China will contribute its national wisdom and spiritual strength.

2. The Cultural Construction of the Chinese Image

As a typical representative of an ancient civilization, beyond its geographical and administrative territory, the construction and imagination of a cultural China exist. In fact, this contains both the genetic wisdom of the national culture itself and the cultural construction of the national image.

2.1. The East and China: The Image of the Country Shaped by Others and by Itself

The national image is a comprehensive entity, representing the overall evaluation and recognition bestowed by both the external and internal publics upon the country itself (Guan, 1999). It is a constructed result. The shaping of the national image is a long-term and complex process, mainly in two ways: being shaped by others and shaping itself. Being shaped by others refers to a specific impression formed through the cognition of other countries. It may include elements of stereotypes, as well as deliberate actions taken by other countries for various reasons, such as distorting the image or maliciously smearing. By shaping and spreading a negative image over a long period, a fixed impression is left in the public's mind, and then, through the power of mass communication, this stereotype is spread, resulting in a misinterpreted recognition on a global scale.

Self-shaping, on the other hand, means consciously establishing a positive self-image through various means of communication to serve the purpose of development in a way that meets one's own expectations. Self-shaping is divided into two aspects: internal and external. Depending on the different audiences, the purposes and methods of self-shaping also vary. Internal self-shaping mainly aims to form a national identity and build a national community, thus gathering national cohesion. External self-shaping focuses on presenting one's own image, indirectly obtaining recognition through cultural attraction, and thus winning more support in the international community.

The national image is based on the interpretation and understanding of national culture, which necessarily includes historical factors. There are certain differences in time and space in the shaping of the Chinese image. In the early cultural exchanges, the Chinese image was shaped as an oriental image that was in binary opposition to the West. This image has the mysterious color of ancient civilization and also buried the old and backward judgment elements, so that the demonized China has become the continuity annotation based on the oriental image. In terms of the self-shaping of the national image, the long-standing self positioning of the country in the Central Plains makes the consciousness and experience deficient, and the process of practical exploration is relatively slow.

However, in the internal communication of self-shaping, with clear communication purposes, strict communication mechanism and flexible communication

skills, we have achieved relatively remarkable results. Historical experience shows that the shaping of the national image should not adopt a direct propaganda method. Instead, we should explore cultural power under the premise of clarifying our own communication intention and rely on the attraction and cohesion of national culture to achieve the best performance of internal and external communication effects.

2.2. Spontaneity and Consciousness: The Positive Display of the National Cultural Image

The shaping of China's national image is intricately linked to the cultural manifestation of "Chinese Values." "Chinese Values" encompasses both internal and external dimensions: internally, it seeks to bolster national self-esteem self-confidence and pride, fostering social consensus; externally, it strives to establish China's image as a responsible and dependable great power by engaging in global governance and contributing Chinese wisdom and solutions (Cheng, 2023). In the context of global cultural circulation and consumerism, the bottom-up dissemination of "Chinese Values" can attract the broadest segment of the population, thereby forming a profound mass foundation.

With the deepening of globalization and the increasing frequency of international exchanges, the positive construction and display of the national image have become a common understanding. We need to assume more important responsibilities and missions within the development framework of a community with a shared future for mankind. Therefore, it is an inevitable choice to display the image of a responsible major country in the world.

Cultural output through cultural products is an effective way to speed up the construction of the national cultural image at present. From the iconic online celebrity Li Ziqi to the overseas popularity of the online drama *Love Between Fairy and Devil*, all of them convey and express the charm of Chinese culture. Such cultural products with distinctive national styles can not only bring visual spectacles to overseas audiences and satisfy their oriental imagination. What is more important is to take this opportunity to focus on the developing China with curiosity and examination, so as to present the real appearance of contemporary China.

In the historical process of the rise of China's great power, the construction and display of the national cultural image have also evolved from spontaneity to consciousness, and began to consciously establish the cultural image of the great power. From the concern and participation in international social issues, China has used its own cultural power to shock the old stereotypes and resist malicious misinterpretation and defamation.

As global integration is a foregone conclusion, the community of shared future for mankind will become a common premise to face environmental problems, ecological problems and technological development problems. China has seen the risks and challenges posed by global issues, and proposes solutions from a global perspective (Huang, 2023). Only by breaking cultural barriers, eliminating cultural

prejudice and truly standing from the perspective of all mankind can we better embrace the future.

Among them, China should contribute the wisdom of civilization and the power of culture, with the goal of promoting cultural diversity and harmonious development, based on the comprehensive development of humanity, and shoulder the historical mission of a major country. However, the prerequisite is to truly extract and present the charm and essence of Chinese culture through the construction of the cultural image and the multimodal dissemination of national culture, thus completing the underlying foundation of cultural image construction.

3. The Metaverse Presentation of Cultural China

With the help of rapidly developing high-tech, the metaverse that originally existed in artistic fantasies has become traceable. The emergence of the metaverse concept, support from technologies, and policy support from relevant departments have all contributed to the advent of the metaverse. “Metauniverse”, conceptualized as a “universe”, endeavors to establish a relatively comprehensive and self-contained space within the overarching realm of real-life environments (Hu, 2023). The metaverse, with cultural entertainment as its primary entry point, will jointly form the living environment of humanity with the real world. Against this backdrop, the issue of national cultural image construction should also be involved in the development process of the metaverse, and cultural China will also be revitalized in metaverse.

3.1. The Excursion of Scenarios

Excursion is not only an entertainment experience, but also an aesthetic experience and a life attitude. In the metaverse world, the concept of excursion with Chinese cultural significance can be comprehensively implemented and penetrated from multiple angles, providing new interpretations for humanity in the visual and cognitive worlds.

The idea of metaverse is inseparable from the support of the entertainment industry. Starting from science fiction, metaverse has become the ultimate imagination for the form of social development. Although various technology giants have formed multiple definitions and interpretations of metauniverse according to their own technological advantages, the chaotic appearance of the development of technical features has long been recognized as a development scene. To face this new type of society, we need to use the power of Chinese culture to provide the wisdom of interpretation.

The metaverse also focuses on the concepts of people, goods and fields, among which the scenario first arouses users’ visual interest. In the era of Web 3.0, people pursue novel experiences at the visual level. The fantasy world is visualized by technology, although it is largely a visual display of virtual images rather than physical images.

Chinese culture can provide excursion scenarios for the metaverse. From a re-

alistic perspective, China's rich tourism resources can enter the metaverse in the form of digital twins, providing a more diverse selection of natural scenery and scenario, providing solutions for connecting online and offline space (Fan & Chen, 2024). The world conceived by the metaverse is not only fantasy, but also based on the real scenes of the real world, so as to form the digital transformation of the real world.

From a virtual perspective, the magnificent picture conceived in Chinese folk culture and artworks can also enrich the scenario construction of the metaverse. The original national cultural symbol intention existing in the imagination is intuitively presented in front of users with the help of virtual reality technology. With the gradual improvement of supporting equipment, the full-scale design and strengthening of personal perception can make the sense of immersion more real and make the virtual world of the metaverse have the perception path of the real world. For example, Henan TV station, which has become popular with song and dance programs, has designed programs that amaze the audience. It provides a space for activities, which is not only the object of people's understanding, the technical element of people's life, but also the living scenarios that people cannot be separated from.

In the metaverse, to meet the needs of digital-intelligent survival and interaction, cultural products and services related to scenario experiences will continue to diversify in their consumption forms (Zhan & Tian, 2024). The scenes available for excursion can bring users with entertainment sensory upgrades, and have advantages in creating audio-visual wonders. Users can be attracted online by satisfying entertainment needs, so as to quickly complete the transition process of the metaverse.

3.2. The Excursion of Implication

Chinese culture can endow the meaning of excursion. Excursion is a unique aesthetic experience in China, which can help people understand the beautiful world with a detached aesthetic experience.

Chinese culture has a tradition of excursion in the art world. Zhu Xi elucidated that the concept of excursion signifies engaging with objects to attain joy and fulfillment. Originally rooted in the mastery and exploration of the "Six Arts", excursion embodied a spontaneous artistic spirit. In Zhuangzi's philosophy, this notion evolved into profound metaphysical concepts—"unconditioned wandering", which implies absolute spiritual freedom, and "equalizing wandering", representing a state of oneness with all things. These ideas crystallized a holistic worldview that transcends the subject-object dichotomy. By excursion through artistic realms, individuals achieve profound harmony of body and mind—a defining feature of Chinese artistic tradition.

Chinese art is good at breaking through the constraints of physical time and space, connecting the five senses through synesthesia, generating the aesthetic intention of completion from the visual stimulation in works, thus forming the sense

of excursion. This is similar to the realization form of the metaverse. With the support of technology, the feeling of metaverse for users is to emphasize the realistic effect of senses and realize the organic integration of virtual and reality. This aesthetic orientation focusing on synesthesia and empathy is consistent with the technical pursuit of the metaverse, and its aesthetic experience can provide enlightenment for the construction of the metaverse culture. The aesthetic elements in Chinese national culture can also enrich the cultural patterns of the human community.

In metaverse framework, the fusion of real landscape and virtual landscape is essentially a transmission orientation that focuses on visual perception information. In the scene of virtual reality, the integration of natural beauty, social beauty and artistic beauty actually opens up the boundary between art and life, and better realizes the aestheticization of life and aesthetic life.

Aesthetic experiences permeate our daily lives with remarkable pervasiveness. Contemporary urban landscapes now boast a growing array of professional cultural venues—from art galleries and concert halls to museums—most offering free public access (Zhu, 2024). Beyond these dedicated spaces, artistic expressions manifest dynamically through public installations and live performances that organically blend into commercial hubs, cultural quarters, and other communal areas. Aesthetic life refers to the integration of elements of beauty into daily life. By adding aesthetic elements, daily life will no longer be dull, avoiding the paralysis of individual experience brought by rapid social development. After people's living standards have been significantly improved, we should have an aesthetic attitude on the material life, and obtain spiritual pleasure and satisfaction in the national cultural image with the mood of excursion.

Aestheticization of life refers to enjoying life with an aesthetic perspective. When people can transcend real life and regard life itself as an aesthetic object, they can use a more open-minded attitude to confront the increasingly anxious modern life. The aesthetic solution lies in guiding people to break away from their existing life state, understand life and examine it from higher dimension, and explore another picture of the integration and development between man and the world.

In the metaverse human needs are no longer limited to survival needs. To meet the higher-level spiritual world is the real way to survive in the new environment. The art space constructed by existing works of art naturally has national aesthetic implications. With visual presentation, it can endow metaverse with the beauty of traditional culture and national culture.

3.3. The Excursion of Wisdom

In the BANI era of technology blessing, all uncertainties bring difficulties and risks to human survival. How to participate in current life and realize self-worth actually requires the guidance of some kind of survival wisdom and life attitude.

In Chinese traditional culture, different schools also pursue excursion. Among them, the “carefree excursion” of Taoist thought is most suitable for settling down

the inner self. In a changing social environment, the new scenarios of metaverse reveal a new social form, but the basic philosophical problems that perplex mankind are still unsolved. Facing such social pressure, we will naturally choose to become our own philosophy in a wise way.

Excursion means facing up to and accepting the real world, and more importantly, complying with and insight into the truth. As the wisdom of life, the attitude of excursion is rooted in people's view of the world and their choice of how to spend their life. It implies transcending the existing reality and is a higher-dimensional perspective on real life.

The metaverse is the presentation form that combines technology and art. The moral and ethical issues and real-world difficulties that people will encounter will be more complex than those in the real world that people have been accustomed to for a long time. When the survival state has changed fundamentally, we urgently need the guidance of survival wisdom based on profound cultural heritage. Chinese culture has naturally become one of the ideological paths to solve this problem.

When people are troubled by the digital world and have some cognitive fuzziness about the illusory world where the virtual and the real coexist, we need to solve this through thinking. We should enjoy life and feel the true meaning of life in a detached and transcendent state.

The underlying foundation of the metaverse is technology. The rational thinking behind it provides us with a solid technical framework, but it also lacks the flexibility of thought. When people do not know where to go under the impact of the rapid development of AI, the freedom of excursion can just resolve and reconcile this problem.

The excursion of life that points to the attitude towards life is enough to become a kind of spiritual pursuit. Under such a premise, we can more freely and smoothly complete the experience of real life.

Under the framework of a community with a shared future for mankind, the way humans deal with technological life has universal significance and value. Only when we can treat the real world and our own individual life more profoundly can we provide suitable solutions for human survival in general.

As a social form, the metaverse will produce new problems in the virtual technological environment. The psychological experience of human beings may be subversive. In this unprecedented panic and crisis, the method of excursion full of Eastern wisdom can help people solve their inner spiritual dilemmas and enable humanity to forge ahead on a smooth path in development.

4. Creating a Chinese Landscape in the Metaverse

The advent of the metaverse is an irresistible trend. The world of virtual-real symbiosis it shows the imagination and expectation of human beings for the future life state. How to continue and enrich the cultural image of China in the metaverse is undoubtedly an important issue related to national development and the pro-

gress of human civilization. Therefore, we should strengthen the innovative application of Chinese elements in technology, art and communication.

4.1. Strengthening the Underlying Construction with Technology

The development of metaverse is inseparable from the support of technology. To endow the metaverse with Chinese characteristics, we should first strengthen the technical brand of China in the underlying construction of technology, and incorporate Chinese elements into character and scene design.

Due to the unbalanced development of technology and the long-standing tradition of Western-biased character design in the digital interaction field, the common human-like images in the metaverse such as virtual digital humans and robots currently lack the manifestation of Chinese characteristics. Whether from the perspective of identity or differentiation, Chinese design elements should be added to highlight the beauty of China in character image design. To achieve this goal, we need to consciously establish a database suitable for the physical and appearance characteristics of the Chinese race, generate a role image database based on large-scale sampling, and then play the role of the database, using artificial intelligence technology to accelerate the mass generation of Chinese-style character images.

In fact, as a companion product of the digital transformation of society, the “virtual digital human” industry contains a huge market demand (Jian, 2023), China’s major technology companies and platforms have successively launched digital human. Images like Liu Yexi and Florasis also carry Chinese charm. However, in the field of robot research and development, there is still a lack of spontaneous and self-awareness in character design.

In the scene design, the metaverse has the sense of future, and its cyborg attribute is obvious. The construction of modern-style scenes causes the national symbol attribute to be weakened, which is easy to form a monotonous visual sense. This requires us to speed up the construction of scene database, and then provide more choices for the multiple display of metaverse.

On this basis, we should increase technology investment, strengthen independent research and development, protect intellectual property rights with effective legal and technical means, continuously achieve innovative and expansion in the field of technology, and truly strengthen subjectivity from the bottom of technology.

4.2. Highlighting Aesthetic Style with Art

The metaverse is the vision of the future world, which needs to be shared by all mankind. At present, the construction of the metaverse is steadily advancing. Although there are concept bubbles hyped by capital, its development direction is still inferred from the existing technology foundation and technology trend.

Among the major construction fields of the metaverse, works with distinctive artistic style led by digital collections and virtual assets have become an important

part of circulation. Just like cultural consumption behaviors in the real world, the cultural consumption in the metaverse is also a comprehensive behavior with both economic and cultural values. On this basis, we should highlight Chinese aesthetic style with works of art that full of national connotations.

The development of the metaverse is the premise of the current transformation of cultural and creative industries. It is an inevitable choice for China's cultural industry to reflect the profound connotation of national aesthetics in the metaverse. In terms of the content of the works, we should deepen the development of national cultural resources. Myths and legends, folk stories, and realistic events that reflect the spirit of the contemporary Chinese can all serve as sources of topics for works. These contents continue the Chinese context and aesthetic pursuit, and can shape the style of the "Chinese School" with the accumulation of creative experience. In terms of categories of works, we should base ourselves on the communication characteristics of the Internet age and generate multimodal works cluster around IP to meet the different needs of different groups of people. The aesthetic experience of new media art is an interactive aesthetic experience (Ma & Zhang, 2019). In metaverse, the interactive aesthetic paradigm will also be the first choice for users' preferences. Therefore, at the beginning of cultural production creativity, we should strengthen the awareness of audience segmentation, grasp the personalized demands of users, and strive to cover a wide range of users with different types of works under the same IP.

4.3. Promoting Cultural Integration through Communication

Promoting the construction of Chinese cultural image under the framework of metaverse and using Chinese culture to enrich the world cultural landscape are the contemporary aims of cross-cultural communication. As a high-context culture, the dissemination of Chinese culture has its own difficulties, which require a longer time and diverse methods to transmit the core and essence of culture to the public. Moreover, cross-cultural communication in the metaverse needs to not only reflect the inter-subjectivity of cultures but also take into account the technical logic of offline and online conversion.

In the field of cross-cultural communication, it is necessary to combine China's contemporary spirit and the characteristics of traditional culture, extract representative symbols (Ling & Miao, 2025), integrate and refine them in visual symbols, form cultural attraction in a way facing wide audience, and win unintentional attention from the superficial level. When the threshold of cultural access is lowered, diversified visual displays will transform the public's unintentional attention into intentional attention, so as to cultivate their understanding and attention to Chinese culture. Only when attention is attracted, audience can understand the original appearance of Chinese culture through more time and energy investment, and then realize cultural identity. Therefore, different content strategies should be set to achieve different communication effects for different audiences.

In the process of turning from offline to online, we should respect the law of

Internet communication, use the decentralized communication characteristics, carry out content marketing through word-of-mouth communication, and promote the cultural integration of the Internet through the exchange of popular cultural products with national cultural genes, so as to finally form a new era of human civilization.

5. Conclusion

Chinese culture can provide the metaverse with scenarios for excursion. Distinctive national cultural symbols can be the trend and guidance of cultural consumption in the metaverse. Chinese culture can endow the metaverse with the connotation of excursion. Classic national artworks can build a diverse artistic space, and help achieve the aestheticization of life and the integration of aesthetics into daily life. Chinese culture can offer the metaverse the wisdom of excursion. Excursion is a kind of freedom aiming at self-preservation and also a transcendence of the present world. It can provide humanity with a wonderful prescription for physical and mental peace in the illusory-real world. Driven by high-tech such as digital technology, Internet technology and virtual reality technology, as a new form of human social development, the advent of the metaverse is an irresistible trend.

Today, with the rapid development of high-tech, the development of metaverse's technology architecture and social form is the general trend. Human society will gradually bridge the online and offline scenarios, break through the traditional structure of binary opposition between virtual and reality, and ultimately achieve a new future of virtual and real integration. As an important part of the world's economic, political, technological and culture, China is bound to play a significant role. Therefore, during the construction of the metaverse, we should consciously incorporate the elements of national culture, present and apply them in multiple ways, spread the vitality, creativity and influence of Chinese culture to the world and the future.

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The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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