

# The Impact of Social Media on the Promotion of Traditional Culture: A Case Study of the Horse-Face Skirt

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**Abstract.** With the rapid development of social media, the ways in which traditional culture is presented and received through modern communication methods have undergone significant changes. This paper takes the horse-face skirt, a traditional garment, as the subject of study to explore the impact of social media on the dissemination of traditional culture. Using the method of content analysis, this study reviews recent cases of the horse-face skirt on social media platforms (such as Tiktok, Xiaohongshu, Instagram, etc.) to analyze the reasons for its rise, its dissemination characteristics, and its impacts. The study finds that social media, through visual and interactive means of communication, has successfully expanded the audience for traditional clothing and enhanced cultural identity. However, it has also revealed problems such as excessive commercialization and cultural misinterpretation. The study argues that while promoting the commercialization of the "horse-face skirt", it is also necessary to deepen the exploration and inheritance of its cultural essence, in order to achieve a healthy interaction between culture and commerce. This research provides a reference for the dissemination path of traditional culture in the new media environment and offers insights into the communication strategies of related cultural products.

**Keywords:** Social media dissemination; Traditional clothing; The horse-face skirt.

## 1. Introduction

This study focuses on the impact of social media on the dissemination of traditional culture, with particular attention to its specific application in the field of traditional clothing. In recent years, with the rise of the "Guochao" (national trend) movement, traditional clothing has attracted widespread attention, and the horse-face skirt, as a representative traditional garment, has rapidly gained popularity through social media, becoming a focal point of public interest. This research is of great significance in exploring how traditional culture can be effectively disseminated in the context of the new era. This study analyzes the horse-face skirt from multiple perspectives, including its historical background, reasons for its resurgence, characteristics of social media dissemination, and the effects of that dissemination, aiming to reveal both the driving forces and challenges posed by social media in spreading traditional clothing culture. The study adopts the method of content analysis, reviewing relevant academic journals, industry reports, and data from social media platforms to summarize the key influencing factors and trends in the dissemination of the horse-face skirt. The advantage of this method lies in its ability to systematically organize existing research findings and deeply analyze the communication logic of social media platforms and user behavior, which facilitates a comprehensive understanding of the dissemination mechanisms of traditional culture in the contemporary context. The ultimate goal of this study is to offer insights and references for the dissemination of traditional culture in the modern media environment, and to propose suggestions for achieving a balance between commercialization and cultural heritage in the case of the horse-face skirt.

## 2. Background

Traditional culture takes diverse forms, and social media adopts differentiated strategies in promotion to enhance dissemination effectiveness. Traditional clothing, particularly the horse-face skirt, has attracted widespread attention on social media platforms through short videos and high-quality



images. Users often use traditional gardens, ancient architecture, and other historical backdrops to showcase their outfits while explaining the history, craftsmanship, and cultural symbolism, thereby creating a retro atmosphere. In addition, pairing the horse-face skirt with modern clothing such as T-shirts and leather shoes, or having celebrities wear traditional attire at public events, has further boosted its popularity and attracted the interest and participation of younger audiences. In the study *A Semiotic Perspective on the Cross-Cultural Communication of Hanfu Culture on Social Media Platforms—Taking Hanfu Videos on YouTube as an Example*, Miki Harada used text and sentiment analysis methods to explore the effectiveness of Hanfu culture dissemination on overseas platforms. The research indicates that Hanfu, as a cultural symbol, has demonstrated significant communication effectiveness on international social media, with overseas users generally showing a positive attitude toward it, making it valuable in enhancing national image and strengthening cultural soft power. However, the study focuses more on cross-cultural reception and emotional responses, with limited discussion on how clothing culture achieves cultural identity and consumer transformation through social media in a domestic context. Existing research mostly centers on Hanfu as a whole or on its broad dissemination overseas, and there is still a lack of systematic study on the dissemination path of the horse-face skirt, audience responses, and the relationship between cultural promotion and commercialization on domestic social media platforms. This paper focuses on the horse-face skirt as a representative of traditional attire, analyzing its dissemination characteristics, cultural communication effects, and potential issues on social media platforms, aiming to fill the research gap regarding specific categories of traditional clothing and to provide supplementary perspectives and strategic suggestions for the domestic dissemination mechanisms of Chinese traditional culture.

### **3. Case Analysis**

The horse-face skirt, composed of a “horse face” front panel and pleats, also known as the “horse-face pleated skirt,” is one of the main representative styles of skirts in ancient China. The term “horse face” first appeared in relation to clothing in the “History of the Ming Palace”, which records: “The yesa garment has an unbroken back panel, flared sides, a two-part front, and pleats called ‘horse face’ that extend toward both sides”. According to the “Great Dictionary of Chinese Cultural Relics”, the horse-face skirt is a traditional Chinese skirt style: the sides of the skirt are pleated, and the center has a smooth, unpleated section commonly referred to as the “horse face”. Originally, it was designed as a split-skirt to make it easier for women to ride donkeys, due to its wide hem and flowing silhouette, it was well-suited for riding and thus became widely popular. It began to take shape in the early Song dynasty, became more standardized during the Ming dynasty, reached peak popularity in the Ming and Qing periods, and continued to be worn into the Republican era [1].

#### **3.1. Reasons for the Rise**

The popularity of the horse-face skirt has benefited from the recent rise of the “New Chinese Style” and the “Guochao” (national trend) movements. According to the “2024 Douyin E-commerce Women’s Consumption Trend Report”, orders for horse-face skirts increased by 841% year-on-year, indicating strong market interest in traditional clothing. China’s Hanfu market has grown rapidly since 2015, reaching a value of 10.19 billion yuan in 2021 and projected to reach 19.11 billion yuan by 2025, showing a continuous upward trend. The concept of “Guochao” has attracted widespread attention since 2018, emphasizing the revival of Chinese culture and its expression in contemporary forms. As national sentiment and Guochao culture gain momentum, the horse-face skirt—rich in cultural heritage—has drawn the attention of modern designers who, by incorporating contemporary design elements, have made it both culturally authentic and aesthetically appealing to modern consumers [2]. The rise in popularity of the horse-face skirt has not only become a driving force in boosting domestic consumption, but also reflects the growing cultural confidence and national pride associated with domestic brands [3].

## **3.2. Trend of Traditional Culture Promotion through Social Media**

### **3.2.1. The Driving Force of Social Media on Traditional Culture Promotion**

In recent years, social media has played an increasingly prominent role in the dissemination of traditional culture. First of all, social media can enhance the visibility of traditional culture by offering broad exposure through widespread dissemination [4]. With the rapid development of short video platforms, traditional clothing such as the horse-face skirt has quickly entered the mass consumer market, becoming part of contemporary fashion trends. Second, people can share their opinions, interpretations, and suggestions about traditional culture on social media platforms, which can inspire more creativity and innovation, contributing to the dynamic development of traditional culture. Many fashion bloggers, internet influencers, Hanfu enthusiasts, and celebrities showcase horse-face skirt outfits on social media, demonstrating how to incorporate them into everyday wear. Finally, social media revitalizes traditional brands. Many brands promote Hanfu through social media, collaborating with well-known influencers and even co-branding with traditional cultural IPs such as the Palace Museum and Dunhuang culture, thereby expanding their influence and attracting consumer purchases [5].

### **3.2.2. Characteristics of the Social Media Dissemination of the Horse-Face Skirt**

First, the forms of dissemination are diversified. Leveraging self-media, information can be spread rapidly and operated anytime and anywhere. Online users can further expand the scope of dissemination through comments, shares, and reposts, giving information transmission strong interactivity [6]. Many Hanfu brands and bloggers promote and sell horse-face skirts through short videos and livestreaming on self-media platforms. Numerous bloggers, influencers, and ordinary users also post their outfits, photos, and reviews on social media platforms, showcasing the charm of the horse-face skirt. Many foreign tourists have shared videos and content on social media showing their experiences wearing traditional Chinese clothing like the horse-face skirt during their visits to China. To some extent, these tourists serve a role similar to that of ancient monks or missionaries by spreading Chinese culture to their home countries. This enables international audiences to gain a more direct understanding of the charm of traditional Chinese clothing culture [7]. Second, hashtags such as #horsefaceskirt, #HanfuOutfit, and #GuochaoAesthetics have continued to gain popularity on social media, creating a hashtag effect that promotes further dissemination. Moreover, the audience for horse-face skirts has also expanded. Traditionally, Hanfu culture was primarily targeted at dedicated Hanfu enthusiasts and considered a niche interest. However, the popularity of social media has enabled a broader segment of young people to embrace and experiment with wearing horse-face skirts. The rise of Guochao culture has further sparked interest in horse-face skirts among international audiences, some of whom have begun wearing them.

## **4. Discussion**

### **4.1. Issues Concerning the Dissemination of Traditional Clothing in the Context of Social Media**

Although China has long been known as the “Land of Clothes and Hats”, its contemporary fashion industry largely remains at the level of OEM manufacturing, lacking in cultural creativity, weak in brand influence, and deficient in original design capabilities. For a long time, China’s fashion industry has been seen as a “factory”, struggling to transition from being large to being strong. Thus, it is necessary to leverage Chinese traditional clothing culture as a resource to drive creative design and brand building, injecting cultural momentum into the industry’s development. In recent years, with the rise of the “Hanfu craze” and “Guofeng trend”, public and media attention on traditional Chinese clothing has increased. However, due to a lack of professional knowledge, there have been many misunderstandings and confusions in its dissemination. For example, the concepts of “Tang suit” and “Hanfu” are vague, their definitions are confusing, and they have even been misinterpreted and misrepresented. This unverified content quickly spreads online, leading to a one-sided and blind

public perception of traditional clothing, thereby affecting the authenticity and accuracy of cultural dissemination. Some historical costume dramas, in pursuit of visual effects, have deviated severely from historical accuracy. The exaggerated and distorted costume designs cause viewers to misunderstand the actual attire of historical periods. While this misapplication and dramatic treatment of traditional clothing may attract attention, it also distorts the public's understanding of Chinese clothing culture, causing negative effects on cultural inheritance. Currently, the dissemination of Chinese traditional clothing faces multiple challenges such as insufficient cultural depth, distorted perceptions, and media misguidance. Systematic improvements and innovations are urgently needed in the areas of industry, media, film, and education [8]. The rapid popularity of the horse-face skirt has led it to the fast fashion mode, with some brands or businesses over-commercializing it, such as cutting corners in material quality and deviating from traditional designs, which may dilute its cultural essence. Some consumers view the horse-face skirt merely as a trendy item, focusing solely on its appearance while ignoring its historical and cultural background.

## **4.2. Suggestions**

### **4.2.1. The Development of Maian Dance Skirt from the Perspective of Symbolic Consumption**

The renowned American anthropologist Leslie White once proposed a concept of culture: culture is a symbolic system created by humans. Symbols serve both cognitive functions—helping humans engage in rational thinking—and communicative functions, enabling the exchange of ideas and emotions between people. According to intercultural communication scholar Edward Hall, culture is communication, and communication is the main driver of cultural development; it forms the core of both culture and social life [9]. First of all, we should enhance its symbolic value by deeply exploring cultural connotations and engaging in innovative design, extracting cultural symbols from traditional clothing (such as dragon and phoenix motifs, “China red,” or ink-wash painting) and integrating them with modern aesthetics to enrich the product's cultural charm and fashion appeal. Creating visual symbols and strengthening brand identity can be achieved by using distinctive patterns, colors, and materials to establish a unified visual language, shape brand characteristics, and enhance brand recognition and market influence. Creating a sense of ritual can increase the value of clothing by launching limited or themed pieces during traditional festivals or significant cultural occasions to evoke emotional resonance and cultural identity among consumers, thereby enhancing the cultural value of the product. Second, it is essential to accurately position the market to meet diverse needs. For example, youth-oriented positioning can be achieved by integrating trendy elements (such as street culture or sports style) into traditional clothing design and leveraging social media for promotion to attract young consumers and enhance brand vitality. A differentiated strategy can also be employed to reach a diverse consumer base by offering various styles and price points tailored to different age groups and income levels, thereby meeting multi-level needs and expanding market coverage. Last but not least, improving the consumer experience can help boost purchase intention. For instance, enhancing the shopping environment by creating a comfortable atmosphere, such as building culturally immersive retail settings offline and streamlining processes and services online, can improve the overall consumer experience. Interactive marketing can strengthen brand loyalty through social media engagement, user participation in activities (such as outfit styling contests), and the dissemination of user-generated content, thereby fostering a sense of brand identity and belonging among consumers [10].

### **4.2.2. Commercialization and Cultural Essence**

The horse-face skirt must find a balance between commercialization and cultural essence. Firstly, brands should strengthen cultural marketing by telling the history and craftsmanship of the horse-face skirt, so that consumers can better understand its cultural value. Secondly, traditional craftsmanship should be preserved and combined with intangible cultural heritage practices to ensure the product is made in accordance with traditional techniques. Thirdly, innovative designs can be used to meet the aesthetic preferences of younger consumers while retaining traditional elements. In addition, brands

can offer customized services to enhance consumers' personalized experiences. Cross-industry collaboration is also an effective approach, for example, partnering with museums and other cultural institutions, so that the horse-face skirt not only can stand out in the market but also preserving its cultural uniqueness.

## 5. Conclusion

The findings of this study indicate that social media has played a significant role in promoting the dissemination of the horse-face skirt, a traditional garment. It has helped the garment transition from a niche cultural symbol to gaining widespread public attention, thus contributing to the revival of traditional clothing and the enhancement of cultural confidence. Through communication methods such as short videos, influencer recommendations, and celebrity endorsements, social media has enabled the rapid dissemination and image shaping of traditional culture, attracting greater attention and participation from younger audiences. However, this study also points out that during the processes of rapid dissemination and commercialization, the horse-face skirt faces issues such as the dilution of its cultural meaning and the trend toward superficial aesthetics. Therefore, it is necessary to strengthen the exploration and expression of the core values of traditional culture, promote a deeper transformation of symbolic consumption, reinforce brand cultural development, and maintain the authenticity and sustainability of cultural communication. This study provides theoretical references and practical insights for future research in this field. Future studies may further incorporate factors such as audience reception analysis and platform algorithm mechanisms to deepen the exploration of strategies for traditional culture communication in order to achieve a more scientific and effective integration of tradition and modernity.

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