

# *A Narrative Study on the International Dissemination of Jingdezhen Ceramic Culture from the Perspective of Communication Studies*

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**Abstract:** From the perspective of communication studies, this study systematically examines the narrative mechanisms and strategies of Jingdezhen ceramic culture in international communication by employing narrative theory and intercultural communication theory. Through text analysis and case studies, this paper provides an in-depth analysis of the narrative styles of Jingdezhen ceramic culture in current international communication. It finds that the international communication of Jingdezhen ceramic culture has developed characteristics of diversified narrative subjects, varied narrative perspectives and focalizations, and multidimensional narrative discourses. This study offers actionable narrative paradigms and theoretical references for the international communication of traditional Chinese culture.

## **1. Introduction**

As a brilliant treasure of Chinese civilization, Jingdezhen ceramics, forged through millennia of kiln fire, serve not only as the materialized symbol of Chinese “craftsmanship spirit” but also as cultural icons embodying Oriental aesthetics and life wisdom. Since the Song and Yuan dynasties, Jingdezhen porcelain has been exported to Europe and Asia via the Maritime Silk Road, becoming a crucial medium through which the West perceived China. Its characteristics—“white as jade, bright as mirror, thin as paper, resonant as chime stone”—have profoundly influenced the development of global ceramic art, reshaped dietary customs and aesthetic orientations in countries along the route, and established a cultural influence transcending time and space.

At present, against the backdrop of the deepening advancement of the Belt and Road Initiative and the “going global” strategy of Chinese culture, ceramic culture has encountered a historic opportunity for international communication. As a national pilot zone for ceramic culture inheritance and innovation, Jingdezhen has been entrusted with the important mission of building a new platform for international cultural exchange<sup>[1]</sup>. The transformation of ceramic culture from traditional trade commodity to carrier of national cultural image has rendered its strategic value increasingly prominent.

Meanwhile, digital technology has fundamentally restructured the landscape of international communication. Short-video platforms break cross-linguistic barriers through fragmented, highly immersive visual logic; cross-border e-commerce bypasses traditional intermediaries, enabling craftsmen to engage directly with global consumers; and social media has spawned numerous grassroots narrative subjects. This media environment not only provides diverse channels for ceramic culture to “sail abroad by borrowed boats” but also brings new challenges such as decentralized narrative authority and content homogenization. How to construct a narrative system that balances cultural depth with communication efficacy under new media contexts has become a practical proposition demanding urgent response.

## 2. The Connotation of Cultural Narratives

The rejuvenation of a nation and a country is ultimately manifested in the rejuvenation of its culture and civilization, which encompasses not only internal cultural confidence and cultural identity but also external cultural exchange and cultural influence. Cultural narrative power involves multiple key dimensions including cultural shaping power, persuasiveness, and communication capacity, as well as various aspects such as cultural inheritance, innovation, and exchange. Ceramics are not merely creations of clay and fire, but also a wordless history book, carrying craftsmanship, aesthetics, and ways of life, continuously completing the generation and transmission of meaning in the process of traversing mountains and seas. From the perspective of communication studies, ceramic cultural narrative is not simply “storytelling”, but rather a cultural practice system with material as its carrier, symbols as its medium, and meaning production as its core<sup>[2]</sup>. This chapter aims to define the core connotation of ceramic cultural narrative, analyze its typological spectrum and elemental composition, and reveal its deep operational logic, thereby laying a theoretical foundation for subsequent research on international communication strategies.

The narrative of ceramic culture refers to the process and outcome of organizing specific cultural information into comprehensible and transmissible story texts through symbolic encoding and meaning production, with ceramic objects, manufacturing techniques, and related practical activities as carriers. This concept encompasses three interrelated levels: narrative as material text, where vessel forms, decorative patterns, and glaze colors themselves constitute solidified cultural language—the “jade-like” texture of Song Dynasty celadon conveys the literati’s spiritual pursuit of investigating things to extend knowledge, while the large plate forms of Yuan Dynasty blue-and-white porcelain echo the dietary customs of the Islamic world; narrative as technical practice, where ceramic production processes constitute embodied, intergenerationally transmitted living narratives, with the saying “seventy-two hands pass over it before it becomes a vessel” encapsulating the accumulated experience of craftsmen through successive dynasties; and narrative as meaning production, where ceramics are continuously reinterpreted and endowed with new significance during circulation—Kraak porcelain, for instance, is mounted with gold and silver in Europe to become a symbol of status, with narrative meanings thereby undergoing transformation.

## 3. Narrative Study of Jingdezhen Ceramic Culture in International Communication

The international communication of Jingdezhen ceramic culture in contemporary times exhibits a three-dimensional, multi-layered development trajectory, with its core characteristics manifested in the systematic reconstruction of narrative subjects, perspectives, and discourses. At the level of narrative subjects, the communication landscape has shifted from traditional government-dominated models to multi-stakeholder collaboration, wherein government departments, ceramic enterprises, intangible cultural heritage inheritors, artists, academic institutions, and ceramic enthusiasts at home and abroad collectively constitute an open network of actors. Official channels and civil forces

complement each other, showcasing national cultural imagery through international exhibitions and cultural exchange activities while achieving individualized, everyday communication penetration via social media platforms. At the level of narrative perspective, the communication focus has transitioned from the craftsmanship techniques and aesthetic values of ceramic objects themselves to broader cultural interpretation and storytelling. Historically, it excavates the significance of civilizational mutual learning along the “Ceramic Road”; in contemporary dimensions, it presents the inheritance and innovation of porcelain-making techniques, while incorporating nuanced expressions of human emotions and lifestyles. Macro-level civilizational narratives and micro-level individual experiences intertwine to construct a transcultural dialogue space across time and space. At the level of narrative discourse, traditional elite academic discourse coexists with popularized, visualized, and emotionally resonant contemporary modes. New media forms such as short videos, immersive exhibitions, and cross-border e-commerce livestreaming have reconfigured the presentation of ceramic culture, achieving a discursive transformation from unidirectional propaganda to bidirectional dialogue, and from cultural export to value-sharing, thereby imbuing the millennium-old porcelain capital with renewed vitality in the global communication context<sup>[3]</sup>.

### 3.1 Diversification of Narrative Subjects

Examined from the dimension of narrative subjects, the dissemination of Jingdezhen ceramic culture has evolved into a diversified landscape characterized by the coexistence and deep interweaving of three types of subjects: official, market, and civil. This configuration constitutes a dynamic relational network continuously reconstructed through digital technology empowerment. Based on their respective resource endowments, value propositions, and target audiences, different subjects play differentiated roles in the production and circulation of ceramic cultural meanings, collectively weaving a polyphonic narrative field of resonance.

Official narratives are driven by core forces such as state-level media, local government institutions, and national foreign publicity projects. Thematic features on Jingdezhen by flagship CCTV programs like *Exploration and Discovery* and *Nostalgia*, along with integrated media reporting and planning by major outlets like Xinhua News Agency and *People’s Daily*, form the authoritative voice of official narratives. The “Jingdezhen National Ceramic Culture Heritage Innovation Pilot Zone” series of promotional activities initiated by the Municipal Publicity Department of Jingdezhen and the Municipal Bureau of Culture, Radio, Television, and Tourism integrate local development strategies into cultural narratives. Meanwhile, Jingdezhen’s presence in national foreign publicity projects such as “Experience China” and “China Culture Festival” elevates ceramics as a spiritual symbol of Chinese civilization on the international stage. The stance of such narratives is highly focused on the triple integration of cultural heritage preservation, national image building, and regional brand promotion—preservation serves to pass down the roots of ethnic craftsmanship, image building aims to demonstrate cultural confidence, and promotion supports local economic and social development. The narrative motivation combines cultural mission with political responsibility, pursuing discursive authority, visual ritualism, and ideological orthodoxy, often adopting a grand historical perspective, rigorous academic research, and refined audiovisual production, resulting in a solemn yet somewhat distant narrative tone.

Market narratives are driven by a diverse range of market entities. Leading local enterprises represented by Hongye Ceramics and Wanglong Ceramics use their brand websites, e-commerce product pages, and corporate videos to tell the story of quality associated with the “contemporary official kiln”. Jingdezhen ceramic sellers on cross-border e-commerce platforms such as Alibaba International Station and Amazon employ product catalogs, customer review images, and process-tracing videos to construct cross-cultural commodity narratives. Commercial documentaries,

including iQiyi's *The Craft*, Youku's *The Great Craftsman*, and Tencent Video's *Chinese Guardians*, select Jingdezhen as a subject and reshape the visual expression of traditional crafts based on platform-driven traffic logic. Additionally, market-driven operators such as the Taoxichuan Ceramic Art Avenue and Sanbao International Ceramic Valley continuously produce spatial narratives through curated exhibitions, artisan fairs, and social media marketing. Within this type of narrative, ceramic culture is treated as a value carrier that can be priced, traded, and branded, with the core objective of facilitating the circulation and consumption of cultural commodities. Consequently, narrative strategies become more agile—digital marketing tools such as search engine optimization, short video sales, livestream bargaining, and IP collaborations are widely employed. User experience is given priority, craft details are transformed into trust signals for consumer decision-making, and cultural connotations become narrative leverage for brand premium.

Folk narratives exhibit more fragmented, everyday, and emotionally expressive characteristics. Their creators include intangible cultural heritage inheritors, international students, Jingdezhen-based artists, and a vast number of self-media bloggers. National-level intangible cultural heritage inheritors use Douyin and WeChat Video Channels to document their daily ceramic-making practices. For instance, the descendants of Wang Xiliang's family share oral accounts of the legacy of the "Eight Friends of Zhushan", serving both as guardians of authentic craftsmanship and as a digital performance of family prestige. International student bloggers from South Korea, the United States, and France share their ceramic study experiences on Xiaohongshu and Bilibili, decoding the cultural codes of Chinese porcelain from an outsider's perspective, thus forming a distinctive type of cross-cultural translation narrative. Meanwhile, local grassroots bloggers active on Kuaishou present atypical content such as "kiln-opening mystery boxes" and "glaze-mixing bloopers", bringing traditional craftsmanship down from its pedestal and, through entertaining expressions, unexpectedly reaching younger audiences. The motivational spectrum of folk narratives is complex and diverse—some inheritors bear intergenerational responsibilities, international students naturally possess a willingness to engage in cross-cultural communication, and self-media bloggers constantly balance traffic monetization with content creation. This blending of motivations endows folk narratives with remarkable productive vitality and emotional resonance.

It is worth emphasizing that the three types of narrative agents are not isolated silos. Official narratives often draw on the personal stories of folk inheritors to enhance their appeal, as seen in CCTV documentaries that offer in-depth portrayals of the artistic careers of intangible cultural heritage inheritors. Market narratives extensively incorporate self-media bloggers as distribution channels or content creators, resulting in the integration of folk narratives into commercial traffic. Meanwhile, folk narrators consciously imitate the authoritative stance of official discourse or appropriate the stylistic elements of market narratives to enhance their own communicative effectiveness.

### 3.2 Diversification of Narrative Perspectives

The diversification of narrative perspective and focalization is a key mechanism through which the digital dissemination of Jingdezhen ceramic culture achieves meaning multiplication. Different modes of focalization not only determine what the audience sees but also profoundly shape how they see it and why they are moved. From the external focalization that devoutly depicts the ceramic object itself, to the internal focalization that gazes deeply into the lives of artisans; from the omniscient focalization that grandly traces the contours of civilization, to the integration of Chinese and Western perspectives that enables cross-cultural translation—these four layers of narrative perspective progressively build upon and interpenetrate one another, collectively constructing a perceptual spectrum and a matrix of meaning for ceramic culture in the digital age<sup>[4]</sup>.

External focalization is dedicated to the objective, precise material presentation of ceramic objects and technical processes. In the digital context, this documentary paradigm—traditionally belonging to museology and the study of crafts—has received unprecedented technological empowerment. High-definition macro photography transforms the molecular-level diffusion of cobalt blue pigment under the glaze, the glaze-flow marks left by kiln fire on the ceramic body, and the curvature of carving knives as they incise the clay surface into a visual archive that can be examined frame by frame. Three-dimensional laser scanning and photogrammetry convert the spatial structures of vases, jars, bowls, and cups into data models that can be rotated, sectioned, and proportionally scaled. 4K and even 8K ultra-high-definition imagery provides a linear, full-process documentation of the seventy-two steps of porcelain production—from the crushing of ore and the washing of porcelain stone, to throwing and trimming, glaze blowing and dipping, to kiln loading and firing, and finally kiln opening and piece selection. Each step is stripped of the mists of mysticism and restored to observable, replicable material practice. In recent years, the “Porcelain Gene Bank” project jointly carried out by the Jingdezhen Imperial Kiln Institute and Peking University, the digital reconstruction of ancient kiln sites in the CCTV documentary *Jingdezhen*, and the short clips of ceramic making casually filmed by artisans under the Douyin hashtag “This Is Jingdezhen”—all continue this ethic of external focalization: to bring ceramics down from the sacred shrine of scholarly refinement and return them to the simple truth of clay and fire. The value of this narrative perspective lies not only in providing high-fidelity digital archives for academic research and the transmission of craftsmanship, but also, with its near-scientific calmness, in accomplishing a contemporary affirmation of the dignity of traditional crafts. No emotional appeal is needed, no forced associations required—the object itself is a self-sufficient carrier of meaning.

In contrast, internal focalization shifts the narrative focus from the “object” to the “person”. It places the camera and microphone in the hands of intangible cultural heritage inheritors, master craftspeople, and veteran kiln workers, using their personal life stories, artistic journeys, and spiritual convictions as the main narrative thread. Within the story structure of “one person, one craft, one lifetime”, it constructs a contemporary interpretation of the spirit of craftsmanship. The image of Wang Xiliang, a national-level intangible cultural heritage inheritor, still painting at his drawing table well into his nineties, has been widely circulated on social media. What viewers contemplate is not only the pastel landscape beneath his brush but also the profound depth of a life spent alongside porcelain for over eighty years. Huang Yunpeng, an inheritor of blue-and-white porcelain techniques, recounts in short videos his younger days forty years ago, picking up porcelain shards at archaeological sites and repeatedly comparing cobalt blue pigment formulas across different dynasties. In doing so, knowledge points of ceramic history are transformed into the narrative tension of an individual’s quest. Younger-generation Jingdezhen-based artisans use first-person vlogs to document their ten-year journey, from graduating from art academies to putting down roots in the porcelain capital, reshaping the traditional master-apprentice transmission of skills into a cross-temporal dialogue between contemporary youth and ancient crafts. The emotional mobilization efficacy of internal focalization is remarkable. When viewers, through their phone screens, lock eyes with an artisan and hear them speak of the discarded drafts piled up behind a particular work or the sleepless nights following a failed firing, ceramics are no longer silent aesthetic objects inside display cases. Instead, they become a medium of emotion, condensed with sweat, tears, and obsession. This narrative strategy of “personifying craftsmanship” not only significantly enhances the communicative power of content but also quietly reshapes society’s perception of traditional artisans’ identity. They are no longer marginalized figures on the periphery of industrial civilization, but rather heroes of contemporary life who use focused dedication to resist obsolescence and hand-craftsmanship to push back against homogenization.

Omniscient focalization abstracts ceramics from individual experience and material detail,

embedding them within the long-term trajectory of Jingdezhen's ceramic cultural evolution. This perspective is no longer content with narrating "how a piece of porcelain is made" or "how an artisan perseveres". Instead, it inquires "How does porcelain become a spiritual symbol of Chinese civilization"? From the literati aesthetics and Neo-Confucian cosmology embodied by Qingbai ware of the Song Dynasty, to the early globalized landscape of Yuan blue-and-white porcelain as its cobalt pigment traversed the vast desert; from the state will and ritual order manifested by the imperial kilns of the Ming and Qing dynasties, to the ceramic industry experiments of the Republican era driven by the ethos of "saving the nation through industry"; from the collective memory carried by the "Ten Major Porcelain Factories" after the founding of the People's Republic of China, to the conceptual breakthroughs of contemporary artists using ceramics as their medium—omniscient focalization uses the history of objects to trace the history of culture, and the history of technology to map social history, ultimately constructing a grand narrative that spans from "clay and fire" to "China and the West".

Of particular note is the narrative practice of integrating Chinese and Western perspectives. The "other's eye" as seen in overseas bloggers' study vlogs and Sino-foreign co-produced cultural documentaries offers a new mode of focalization for the international dissemination of Jingdezhen's ceramic culture. Canadian blogger Jay, on his Bilibili channel "Porcelain Capital Odyssey", documents his six months of learning to throw clay in Jingdezhen in the style of anthropological field notes. On camera, he clumsily attempts to center the clay on the wheel and self-deprecatingly displays his first lopsided teacup. This "beginner's eye" unexpectedly dismantles the reverential posture and cultural distance commonly found in traditional craft communication. In the Sino-foreign co-produced documentary *Jingdezhen: Porcelain for the World*, a British host stands before the remains of a dragon kiln and reflects, "My ancestors once traded silver for these porcelains", situating Jingdezhen within an egalitarian framework of global material exchange history. Such narrative practices no longer equate the "Western perspective" simplistically with cultural misunderstanding or Orientalist exoticism. Instead, they transform it into a creative resource for cross-cultural translation. Overseas bloggers explain the composition of cobalt blue pigment in their native languages and reinterpret the experiential knowledge of Chinese artisans through Western logical frameworks. Co-production directors deliberately employ narrative genres familiar to Western audiences—such as biographical portraits, archaeological mysteries, and travel adventures—embedding ceramic culture within cognitive schemas accessible to international viewers. This narrative experiment of integrating Chinese and Western perspectives not only reflects a shift in China's cultural international communication from "I want to tell you" to "Please come and see", but also, through concrete cases, responds to the question of how cultural dialogue is possible in a globalized context. It is neither the erasure of difference through convergence nor the entrenchment of essentialist opposition, but rather, within an inter-subjective gaze, allowing the luster of porcelain to illuminate humanity's shared love of beauty and collective will to create.

### 3.3 Multidimensionality of Narrative Discourse

Narrative discourse and rhetorical strategies constitute the micro-level practical domain of meaning production in the digital dissemination of ceramic culture. From a linguistic dimension, language serves as the most fundamental semiotic carrier for ceramic cultural narratives. Within the context of digital communication, the linguistic practices surrounding Jingdezhen's ceramic culture exhibit pronounced characteristics of multilingual juxtaposition and code-switching. In offline cultural tourism settings, core spaces such as the Jingdezhen China Ceramics Museum, the Imperial Kiln Institute, and the Taoxichuan Ceramic Art Avenue have largely achieved signage coverage in Chinese, English, Japanese, and Korean. Exhibit labels, guidebooklets, and audio guide devices

adopt bilingual or even multilingual presentation formats. This visible bilingual semiotic system not only responds to the service needs of foreign tourists but also constitutes a potential gesture of cultural openness. In the realm of digital content, code-switching phenomena are even more dynamic<sup>[5]</sup>. For example, Bilibili content creator “Ceramic Artisan Lao Zhang”, while demonstrating the blue-and-white water-splitting technique, explains the craft essentials in Chinese but concludes with a brief English summary: “This is the magic of underglaze blue”. International student bloggers on Xiaohongshu often write their long-form posts in their native languages while embedding hybrid Chinese-English hashtag strings. On Tiktok’s overseas version, TikTok, high-engagement videos under Jingdezhen ceramic-related topics frequently employ English voiceover narration paired with original Chinese scene audio, creating a polyphonic effect of multiple stacked audio tracks. Keyword frequency analysis further corroborates, at a data level, the concentrated mobilization of specific discursive resources.

From the visual dimension, visual rhetoric serves as the most evocative carrier of meaning in the digital dissemination of ceramic culture. At the level of cinematic style, digital content centered on Jingdezhen presents two parallel visual paths: documentary realism and traditional Chinese artistic expressionism. The former, represented by documentaries, intangible cultural heritage video records, and craft tutorial videos, employs natural lighting, handheld follow shots, and long takes to pursue a textural reproduction of clay moisture, kiln temperature, and glaze fluidity. The latter, commonly found in cultural tourism promotional videos, brand advertisements, and guofeng short videos, uses slow-motion shots to capture the ethereal diffusion of cobalt blue pigment as it enters water, and high-speed cinematography to freeze the rising heat at the moment a kiln is opened, accompanied by the sounds of the guqin, xiao flute, or electronic guofeng music, thus achieving a contemporary translation of traditional aesthetic conception. At the level of symbolic elements, blue-and-white patterns, kiln fire, and landscape imagery constitute the frequently mobilized visual motifs. Blue-and-white decoration is not only presented as a decorative language on the surface of objects but has also been extracted as an independent visual symbol—the entire process of cobalt blue pigment gathering at the brush tip, diffusing across the clay body, and solidifying under the glaze itself forms a micro-ritual of Eastern aesthetics. The imagery of kiln fire carries both physical reality and metaphorical tension, from the leaping flames at the firemouth of a wood-fired kiln to the temperature curve on the control panel of a gas kiln; fire is simultaneously a technical parameter and a visual metonymy for vitality. Landscape elements more often appear in the juxtaposition of ceramics with natural settings: a plum vase placed beneath the interior courtyard of a Hui-style building, a teapot resting quietly on a stone table amidst a tea garden—such environmental narratives accomplish a semantic binding between the object and its native soil.

From the emotional dimension, emotional rhetoric serves as the core pathway through which the digital dissemination of ceramic culture achieves value identification. The empathy-driven narrative of the spirit of craftsmanship represents the most mature model of emotional mobilization—the widely circulated “Ceramic Artisan Series” on short video platforms often follows a similar story script: an elderly intangible cultural heritage inheritor with silver hair bends over the potter's wheel, his calloused hands kneading the clay, a close-up shot capturing beads of sweat on his forehead, while a first-person voiceover speaks of “devoting sixty years to this single craft”. Such narratives transform technical mastery into temporal duration, and craft complexity into life commitment, using a commensurable emotional language to accomplish a contemporary affirmation of the value of traditional craftsmanship. Nostalgia narratives, in contrast, operate intensely on Jingdezhen natives both at home and abroad, as well as on “Jingpiao” returnees. The short video “Kiln Fire, Ancestral Home”, released by the “Jingdezhen Release” account before the Mid-Autumn Festival, takes as its main thread an elderly couple who once worked in a porcelain factory returning to their former workshop. The old kiln car tracks, the weathered downdraft kiln, and the production slogans

still legible on warehouse walls serve as material triggers of collective memory. The densely clustered comments—“My grandfather worked in the firing workshop”, “My family used to live on East Second Road”—complete a resonance between individual recollection and local narrative.

#### 4. Conclusion

Ceramic cultural narrative serves as the core mechanism through which Jingdezhen’s ceramic culture transforms from material heritage into spiritual symbol, and extends from historical memory into contemporary value. In the dual contexts of cultural-tourism integration and digital dissemination, the connotation of ceramic cultural narrative is no longer confined to the static depiction of objects and techniques. Instead, it has evolved into a dynamic system of meaning production characterized by the participation of multiple agents, the interpenetration of diverse perspectives, and the coexistence and competition of various discursive strategies. A systematic analysis of narrative connotation is not only an epistemological prerequisite for understanding the contemporary logic of Jingdezhen’s ceramic cultural communication but also a methodological foundation for constructing pathways of digital dissemination.

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