The Integration of Traditional Chinese Culture with New Media Design in 'Nezha: Birth of the Demon Child': A Cultural and Creative Analysis

Wei Yanan [1], Mohd Kipli Abdul Rahman[2]

[1]College of Creative Arts, University Technology MARA UiTM, Malaysia

[2]College of Fine Arts and Art Design, Hunan University of Science and Engineering, China

ABSTRACT

This paper explores the pathways for integrating traditional Chinese cultural elements with new media design in animated films, with a particular focus on the innovative strategies of cultural and creative transformation in Nezha: Birth of the Demon Child. It examines how traditional culture and new media design are combined in the film, analyzing how innovative cultural and design practices provide audiences with a unique cultural experience and promote cultural dissemination. The significance of this research lies in understanding how contemporary design approaches reinterpret and reimagine traditional cultural symbols, thereby contributing to the evolving discourse on cultural heritage and creative innovation in the digital age. The research aims to analyze the new media design elements and cultural symbols in the film, exploring their role in enhancing audience engagement and facilitating cultural dissemination. Specific objectives include identifying the new media design and cultural elements in the film, analyzing their impact on audience emotional resonance and cultural identification, and evaluating their overall effectiveness in cultural dissemination. This study adopts a qualitative research methodology, combining case analysis and audience feedback analysis. The case analysis focuses on the film's visual language, narrative structure, and the design logic of its cultural symbols, uncovering how traditional culture is integrated with modern design. Audience feedback analysis involves collecting data from social media platforms and conducting in-depth interviews to understand audience perceptions and emotional responses to the cultural elements in the film. The findings reveal that Nezha: Birth of the Demon Child successfully enhances audience emotional engagement and cultural identification through innovative applications of visual effects, narrative themes, and cultural symbols. Notably, the film has sparked cross-cultural dialogue and discussions on a global scale. These results highlight the critical role of new media design in advancing cultural dissemination and offer new practical directions and insights for the cultural and creative industries.

Keywords: Traditional Chinese Culture; New Media; Nezha: Birth of the Demon Child

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, with the acceleration of globalization, the influence of Chinese animation in international markets has significantly increased. Particularly in recent years, an increasing number of Chinese animated works have entered the global stage, garnering attention and recognition from international audiences. Nezha: Birth of the Demon Child is a successful example of Chinese animation in the globalization process. It transcends traditional animation narratives and forms of expression, leveraging modern technology and global dissemination platforms to seamlessly integrate traditional Chinese cultural elements. This demonstrates the innovative capacity and cultural confidence of Chinese animation.

New media design, particularly the application of digital technologies, has provided new pathways for the dissemination and innovation of traditional culture. The reinterpretation of traditional cultural symbols using

modern technological methods fosters emotional resonance with contemporary audiences, thereby promoting cultural preservation and innovation. For example, the modernization of cultural symbols, storylines, and character designs in animated films enables traditional culture to be disseminated globally and understood and appreciated by audiences from diverse cultural backgrounds.

Since its release on July 26, 2019, Nezha: Birth of the Demon Child has achieved remarkable box office success, becoming the highest-grossing Chinese animated film to date. Additionally, the film has made notable strides in global markets. The film performed exceptionally well in other Asian countries and regions, particularly in Southeast Asia, demonstrating the potential of Chinese animation in the international market.

As a milestone in Chinese animation, Nezha: Birth of the Demon Child successfully integrates traditional Chinese mythology with modern animation techniques, showcasing the seamless fusion of traditional cultural symbols and new media design. The film innovates in visual effects, narrative structure, and character design, while also revitalizing ancient mythological stories through the thoughtful reinterpretation of cultural elements. Its global success not only highlights the technical and artistic advancements of Chinese animation but also underscores the significant role of new media design in promoting cultural dissemination and fostering creative innovation.

This study aims to explore the integration of traditional Chinese cultural elements with new media design in the animated film Nezha: Birth of the Demon Child. By analyzing the film's new media design elements and cultural symbols, the research investigates how these components promote the dissemination and innovation of traditional Chinese culture within a globalized context. The specific research objectives are as follows:

1. To identify the new media design and cultural elements in Nezha: Birth of the Demon Child;
2. To analyze how these design elements enhance audience emotional resonance and cultural identification;
3. To evaluate the practical effects of these elements in cultural dissemination, particularly their role in cross-cultural communication.

The significance of this study lies in its in-depth analysis of the case of Nezha: Birth of the Demon Child, exploring how new media design facilitates the modern transformation of traditional culture in contemporary animation production. This research aims to provide new practical directions for the cultural and creative industries. Additionally, it contributes to understanding the relationship between cultural heritage and innovation in the digital age, offering theoretical support and practical insights for the future development of Chinese animation in global cultural dissemination.

LITERATURE REVIEW

1. Traditional Culture and Animation

With the acceleration of globalization, the dissemination and innovation of traditional culture have become critical issues for the development of cultural industries in many countries (Zhai, 2023). Chinese traditional culture, as a cultural system with profound historical depth, faces dual challenges of preservation and innovation in modern society (Liu & He, 2024). Animation, as a medium with significant potential for cross-cultural communication, has gradually emerged as an effective vehicle for the dissemination of traditional culture. In recent years, numerous Chinese animated films have integrated traditional cultural elements with modern creative techniques, promoting the global dissemination of Chinese culture (Zhang, 2024). For instance, traditional Chinese mythological figures such as Sun Wukong frequently appear in animated works, serving as important tools for cultural export.

Through visualization, animation simplifies and reinterprets complex traditional cultural symbols, enabling global audiences to understand and appreciate the essence of Chinese culture (Qin & Yin, 2024). Moreover, the expression of traditional culture has been increasingly modernized, particularly in narrative structures, character design, and emotional expression. Animation provides a novel form of representation for traditional culture, offering it a renewed vitality and relevance (Xie & Sun, 2024).

2. New Media Design in Animation

With advancements in technology and the advent of the digital era, new media design has assumed an increasingly significant role in animation production. Beyond being a mere application of technology, new media design represents an innovative mode of cultural expression, leveraging digital technologies to enhance audience immersion and interactivity. In animated works, new media design, particularly through the application of technologies such as visual effects, virtual reality (VR), and augmented reality (AR), has greatly enriched the viewing experience (Huang, 2023). The use of digital technology has made animation's visual effects more lifelike, captivating audiences through virtual environments and dynamic elements. Moreover, interactivity and multi-platform dissemination are critical manifestations of new media design in animation. Through social media platforms, animated works can engage in real-time interactions with audiences, further amplifying the effectiveness of cultural dissemination (Liu, 2024). New media design is not merely a supplement to traditional animation forms but a comprehensive innovation of its content and modes of dissemination (Deng & Hu, 2022). It redefines how animation can connect with audiences, making it a powerful tool for cultural communication in the digital age.

3. Nezha: Birth of the Demon Child

As one of the most representative Chinese animated films in recent years, Nezha: Birth of the Demon Child successfully integrates traditional cultural elements with new media design, establishing itself as a milestone in Chinese animation. Based on the ancient Chinese mythological tale Nezha Conquers the Sea, the film modernizes traditional cultural elements through contemporary storytelling techniques and high-quality animation production, transforming them into cultural and creative content that resonates with modern audiences (Lu, 2024).The film incorporates traditional cultural elements such as mythological figures, Daoist philosophies, and Feng Shui concepts into its narrative structure, character design, and emotional expressions. At the same time, it employs advanced new media design technologies, including 3D animation, virtual environments, and special effects, to present these traditional elements in a modernized format. These innovations not only captivated domestic audiences but also garnered significant attention in international markets, with the film's box office success underscoring its effectiveness in cultural dissemination (Ge & Yin, 2023). Furthermore, Nezha: Birth of the Demon Child sparked cross-cultural discussions worldwide, particularly in terms of promoting Chinese traditional culture. The film overcame linguistic and cultural barriers through its compelling visual effects and emotional resonance, achieving cultural recognition among diverse audiences. This cross-cultural success has paved the way for future Chinese animated films and provided valuable insights into the application of new media design in animation (Li, 2021).

In summary, although existing research has partially explored the integration of traditional culture with animation, the application of new media design in animation, and the success of Nezha: Birth of the Demon Child, certain research gaps remain, particularly in the following areas:

The specific integration pathways of traditional cultural elements and new media design: Existing literature provides a broad discussion on the integration of traditional cultural elements with new media design but lacks an in-depth analysis of specific integration pathways.

The relationship between audience emotional resonance and cultural identity: While existing studies suggest that new media design can enhance audience emotional resonance, the relationship between emotional resonance and cultural identity within specific cultural contexts, particularly in the context of cross-cultural communication, remains underexplored.

The role of new media design in cultural dissemination: Existing research primarily focuses on the application and impact of new media technologies, but there is a lack of in-depth exploration regarding the specific role of new media design in cultural dissemination, particularly in the context of traditional culture.

The significance of this study lies in its in-depth analysis of the successful case of Nezha: Birth of the Demon Child, exploring how new media design facilitates the global dissemination of traditional culture through a

balance of heritage and innovation. It provides theoretical support for the creation of future Chinese animated films and offers practical guidance for the application of new media design in the cultural and creative industries.

METHODOLOGY

1. Research Design

This study adopts a qualitative research methodology to gain an in-depth understanding of the integration of culture and creativity in Nezha: Birth of the Demon Child. The research primarily employs two methods: case analysis and audience feedback analysis. The case analysis examines the new media design elements and cultural symbols within the film, while audience feedback is gathered through social media data and interviews to assess audience reception and emotional responses.

2. Data Collection Methods

Case Analysis: Data is collected through film viewing, frame-by-frame analysis, and secondary sources such as film reviews, creator interviews, and production notes. A detailed examination is conducted on the film's visual language, narrative structure, and cultural symbols. Frame-by-frame analysis focuses on the representation of character design, color usage, and visual symbolism. The analysis explores how the film integrates modern narrative elements within the framework of traditional mythology, such as character psychological development and the modernization of values. Innovations in narrative pacing, emotional buildup, and conflict resolution are also examined. Traditional cultural symbols in the film (e.g., yin-yang balance and reincarnation) are identified, along with their modern reinterpretations. The study further analyzes how these symbols, enhanced by new media technologies such as 3D animation and special effects, contribute to fostering cultural resonance and audience identification.

Audience Feedback Analysis: Social media platforms with global influence, such as Weibo, Twitter, and YouTube, were selected to collect publicly available comments and discussions related to the film. Relevant content was filtered using keywords such as "Nezha," "new media design," and "traditional culture," and a representative sample of comments was randomly selected for analysis. The analysis dimensions include audience emotional reactions to cultural elements (e.g., "moved," "proud"), evaluations of new media design elements (e.g., "visually stunning," "technological innovation"), and evidence of cross-cultural exchange (e.g., non-Chinese-speaking audiences' understanding and interpretation of Chinese cultural symbols).Additionally, 30 individuals who had watched Nezha: Birth of the Demon Child and participated in discussions about the film on social media were selected for semi-structured interviews conducted via online platforms such as Zoom. The interview content focused on participants' overall impressions of the film's new media design and cultural elements, emotional responses triggered by specific scenes or design features, and the film's impact on their cultural identity or cross-cultural understanding.

3. Data Analysis

This study primarily employs thematic analysis and narrative analysis to conduct data analysis. Through thematic analysis, the study identifies core themes within the film's text and audience feedback.

Modernized Translation of Cultural Symbols: Through the analysis of the film's visual language, character design, and narrative structure, this study extracts the modernized expressions of traditional cultural symbols (such as the Yin-Yang balance, the Fire Wheel, and the Hunyuan Ribbon). In conjunction with audience feedback, it identifies how these symbols are interpreted and evoke emotional resonance among viewers from diverse cultural backgrounds.

Emotional Triggering Effects of New Media Design: This study synthesizes how new media design elements in the film (such as dynamic visual effects and innovative 3D animation techniques) enhance the emotional engagement of the audience. By extracting emotional responses from interview data regarding specific scenes (e.g., the water-and-fire confrontation between Nezha and Ao Bing), the study analyzes the design logic underlying these emotional reactions.

Cross-Cultural Communication and Reception: By analyzing social media data and interview content, this study identifies the key factors contributing to the film's success in cross-cultural communication, such as the universality of visual elements and the global resonance of narrative themes (e.g., the theme of defying fate). It also examines the process through which non-Chinese-speaking audiences understand and accept the cultural elements of the film.

Narrative analysis is employed to understand how audiences experience the modernization of traditional culture through the film's narrative. This study conducts narrative analysis from the following perspectives:

Cultural Embedding in Narrative Structure: This analysis examines how the film combines traditional mythological frameworks with modern narrative elements to achieve the recreation of cultural stories. It compares the narrative pacing, conflict resolution, and differences between the film's narrative and traditional mythological archetypes, revealing the innovative significance of these elements in cultural transmission.

Diversity in Audience Narrative Experience: This analysis extracts narrative experiences from interview data, examining the emotional responses of viewers to the film's plot, characters, and cultural elements. It explores how audiences form emotional connections through the narrative and characters, establishing links in cultural identity and cross-cultural understanding.

To ensure the systematic and reliable analysis, this study will organize the case analysis and audience feedback data into text format, including frame-by-frame descriptions of the film text, categorized social media comments, and transcriptions of interview recordings. The data will then undergo open coding to extract keywords and phrases related to the research objectives (such as "emotional resonance," "cultural symbols," and "cross-cultural communication"). A combination of manual and software-assisted coding (e.g., NVivo) will be employed to ensure the reliability of the coding results. Finally, a cluster analysis will be conducted on the preliminary coding results, grouping similar codes into themes (e.g., "cultural identity" or "design innovation") to refine the major themes that reflect the core content of the data, providing a framework for subsequent analysis.

FINDINGS

This chapter, based on case analysis and audience feedback, elaborates on how Nezha: Birth of the Demon Child enhances audience emotional engagement and cultural identity through innovative uses of visual effects, narrative themes, and cultural symbols, while also sparking cross-cultural communication and discussion globally. The findings about that are referring to the follow figure 1:
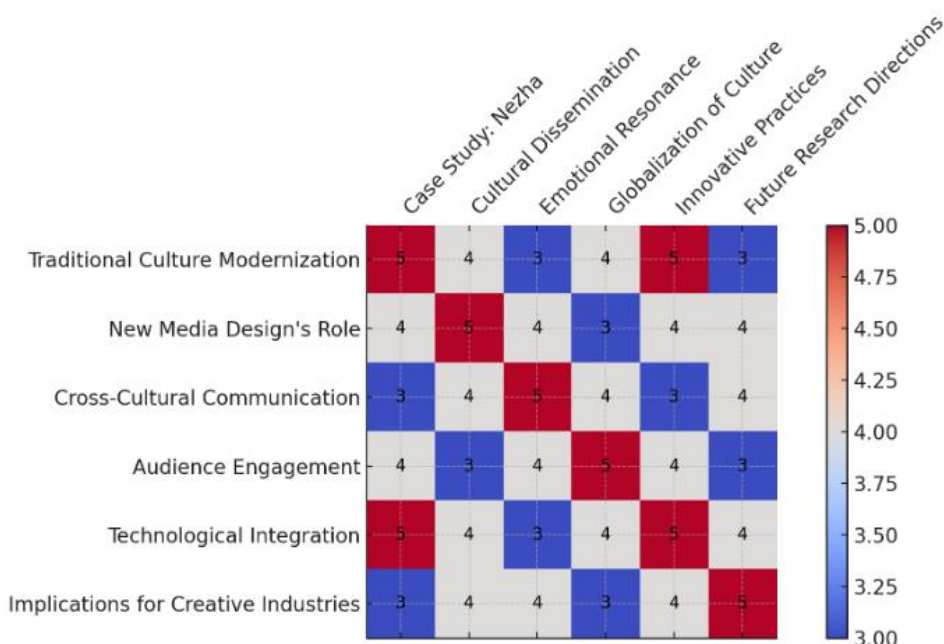

Fig.1 Topic Matrix Diagram

1. Innovation in Visual Effects and Emotional Resonance

Nezha: Birth of the Demon Child combines traditional cultural symbols with modern visual language through advanced animation techniques and design concepts. The film creates an immersive visual experience by dynamically visualizing traditional symbols and designing captivating scenes. Cultural symbols such as the Universe Ring and Fire Wheels are reimagined as dynamic, modern visual elements, retaining their cultural significance while intensifying the sensory impact on viewers. Audience feedback indicates that these designs not only deepen the film's cultural layers but also bridge the gap between traditional culture and modern audiences.

2. Universality of Narrative Themes and Cultural Identity

Nezha: Birth of the Demon Child features highly universal narrative themes that transcend cultural and linguistic barriers, evoking emotional resonance among global audiences through character development, emotional connections, and the metaphorical expression of philosophical ideas. Nezha, as a rebellious yet kind-hearted character, reflects the inner struggles of individuals facing societal prejudice. This character design is particularly popular among younger audiences, especially those who encounter similar challenges in their own lives.

The storyline between Nezha and Ao Bing, moving from opposition to reconciliation, not only enriches the narrative layers but also conveys universal values of reconciliation and friendship. The film explores themes such as Yin-Yang balance, self-identity, and the struggle against fate, imbuing the story with profound philosophical meaning. Many viewers noted that these themes helped them understand and appreciate the uniqueness of Chinese culture, while also triggering strong emotional resonance on a personal level.

3. Cross-Cultural Communication and Global Reception

The success of Nezha: Birth of the Demon Child is not only reflected in the domestic market but also in its global cross-cultural communication and reception. Social media played a crucial role in the global dissemination of the film. Trailers, short video clips, and fan-created content were widely shared across platforms, attracting significant attention from non-Chinese audiences.

Viewers noted that through social media, they not only learned about the film but also participated in discussions about cultural symbols and narrative themes, further promoting cross-cultural exchange. Non-Chinese audiences generally expressed that, despite being unfamiliar with Chinese traditional cultural symbols, the film's clear narrative and captivating visual design helped them overcome cultural barriers.

DISCUSSION

The discussion section of this study is based on the research findings and provides an in-depth analysis of the successful integration of traditional culture and new media design in Nezha: Birth of the Demon Child, as well as the implications of these experiences for cultural dissemination and the creative industry.

1. Modern Transformation of Traditional Culture

The research findings highlight that Nezha: Birth of the Demon Child effectively modernized traditional cultural symbols through innovative visual effects and narrative themes. This transformation offers valuable insights for the creative industry:

Visualization Innovation of Cultural Symbols: Traditional symbols, such as the Universe Ring and Fire Wheels, were reimagined as dynamic visual elements in the film, blending traditional aesthetics with modern design language. This demonstrates that, in the digital age, traditional culture can gain renewed vitality through new media design, making it more accessible and appealing to younger audiences. Similar approaches can be observed in cultural products like Kung Fu Panda, where traditional Chinese elements are modernized to resonate with global audiences.Universal Expression of Cultural Connotations: The film transcended cultural boundaries by integrating universally resonant themes such as self-identity, resilience, and friendship. This

suggests that traditional culture, when paired with universal values, can achieve global appeal. Comparatively, Japanese anime like Spirited Away has successfully employed similar strategies, demonstrating the replicability of this approach for other cultural products.

2. The Role of New Media Design in Cultural Dissemination

Enhancing Audience Emotional Engagement: The film's innovative use of visual design, scene rendering, and dynamic narrative techniques significantly enhanced emotional engagement. Social media platforms amplified this effect by enabling audiences to share fan creations and emotional responses, creating a ripple effect that extended the film's reach. This aligns with the uses and gratifications theory, which emphasizes the role of media in fulfilling audience needs, including emotional resonance and self-expression.

Promoting Cross-Cultural Communication: By leveraging social media and global distribution, Nezha: Birth of the Demon Child facilitated cross-cultural dialogue and understanding. The interactivity of platforms like TikTok and YouTube enabled audiences to discuss and reinterpret Chinese cultural elements. Future strategies could explore more immersive technologies, such as augmented reality (AR), to deepen cultural exchanges. For instance, the use of AR in cultural heritage applications has already shown promise in enhancing global audience engagement.

3. Implications for the Cultural and Creative Industry

Global Dissemination of Cultural Content: To achieve global reach, cultural creative products must balance modern design language with cultural authenticity. This dual strategy not only enhances appeal but also preserves cultural distinctiveness. For example, Korean dramas have successfully integrated local cultural elements with modern storytelling techniques, gaining worldwide popularity.

Deep Integration of Technology and Culture: New media technologies are no longer just tools for dissemination but are evolving into mediums for creative expression. Technologies such as artificial intelligence (AI) and virtual reality (VR) hold significant potential for integrating traditional cultural content into innovative formats. For example, VR experiences that recreate historical settings or AI-driven storytelling platforms can provide audiences with deeper, more interactive engagements with culture.

Future Directions for Innovative Cultural Dissemination: Building on the success of Nezha, future cultural products could explore hybrid models that combine physical and digital experiences. For instance, gamification of cultural narratives or creating metaverse spaces centered on traditional culture could offer novel ways to engage global audiences. Additionally, partnerships between cultural institutions and creative industries could drive sustainable innovation and ensure the longevity of traditional culture in the digital era.

By situating the findings within broader theoretical frameworks and drawing comparative insights from other cultural products, this study not only enhances its relevance but also offers actionable strategies for the creative industry. The analysis underscores the transformative potential of integrating traditional culture with new media design, paving the way for more inclusive and innovative cultural dissemination in the future.

CONCLUSION

1. Research Summary

This study analyzes the integration of traditional culture and new media design in Nezha: Birth of the Demon Child, revealing the critical role of new media design in cultural dissemination. The findings are as follows:

Modern Expression of Traditional Culture: Through innovative visual effects and narrative themes, the film successfully modernized traditional cultural symbols, providing audiences with a fresh cultural experience.

The Role of New Media Technology: New media design enhanced the emotional engagement of viewers, facilitated cross-cultural communication, and offered new pathways for cultural dissemination.

Practical Value for the Cultural and Creative Industry: The success of the film provides a valuable case study for the cultural and creative industry, demonstrating the potential of deeply integrating traditional culture with modern technology.

2. Research Significance

This study provides a successful example of the integration of traditional culture and new media design, offering theoretical support for cultural inheritance and innovation in the digital age. It explores the role of new media design in cultural dissemination and provides practical guidance for the development of the cultural and creative industries. Furthermore, it emphasizes the importance of cross-cultural communication and offers new insights for the global dissemination of Chinese culture.

3. Research Limitations and Future Directions

Despite the significant findings of this study, the data collection primarily focuses on the case of Nezha: Birth of the Demon Child, which limits the scope of the research. Future studies could extend to other cultural creative products to verify the generalizability of the research conclusions.

Future research could focus on the following directions: exploring the integration models of traditional culture and new media design in other cultural creative products; investigating the impact of emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence and virtual reality on cultural dissemination; and further analyzing the acceptance and preferences of audiences from different cultural backgrounds towards Chinese cultural creative products, providing more specific guidance for cross-cultural communication strategies.

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