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Digital Mediation of Cultural Traditions: A Comparative Analysis of Chinese and Kazakhstani Online Media

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Abstract: This paper examines how cultural traditions are presented and how they evolve under the influence of digital technology, with a focus on mainstream online media in China and Kazakhstan. The content challenges the view that cultural traditions are static cultural entities, emphasizing their fluidity and transmission across different media, as well as their constant reinterpretation in the process. The text data is drawn from representative media reports in China and Kazakhstan from 2022 to 2025. The research employs qualitative analysis, including discourse analysis and framing analysis, to identify recurring patterns in the reports. Through comparative analysis, the study examines in detail how digital practices, including virtual exhibitions, digital preservation projects, and the development of online cultural products, are integrated into broader narrative frameworks.

The results indicate that approaches to cultural traditions are no longer confined to the realm of preservation, with significant differences in emphasis across different media environments. Chinese media often link cultural traditions to historical narratives, embedding them in new visual forms and interactive expressions while utilizing digital technologies for exhibition or entertainment purposes. In contrast, Kazakhstani media place greater emphasis on the visibility of cultural traditions and the efficiency of platform-based dissemination, focusing on the organization and dissemination of cultural heritage materials rather than profound cultural innovation.

Therefore, digital technology is not the sole driver of cultural transformation; it is influenced by multiple factors. The preservation and reshaping of cultural traditions require consideration of various factors and the employment of diversified strategies. Through a multi-perspective analysis, digital media facilitates an understanding of platform-mediated cultural exchange and offers a

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more nuanced perspective on the evolution of cultural traditions in contemporary media environments. The contribution of this article lies in its adoption of a cross-cultural comparative perspective, which elucidates the diverse pathways through which cultural traditions are presented and transformed in the digital media environment. The findings also provide media practitioners and cultural institutions with an objective reference for formulating digital strategies for cultural expression and dissemination, and offer new evidential support for analyzing the construction of cultural meaning in platform-based contexts.

Keywords: digital media, cultural traditions, media discourse, cultural transformation, China and Kazakhstan

Introduction

The emergence of digital media has reshaped existing patterns of cultural interaction. Digital experiences are increasingly reshaping how cultural heritage is disseminated, influencing both public engagement and interpretive processes (Yi et al., 2025). In the past, many activities that were carried out face-to-face are now mostly completed online through platforms, interfaces, and various digital communication methods. This shift implies that media are no longer merely tools for information transmission, but are actively involved in shaping the ways cultural relations within the public sphere are perceived and discussed (Papacharissi, 2014).

In recent years, media coverage of cultural exchange between China and Kazakhstan has increased. In specific regional contexts, such as the growing interaction between the two countries, these broader changes can be clearly observed. In addition to the steady development of economic cooperation, cultural activities, educational exchanges, and forms of everyday contact have also continued to expand and diversify. These interactions frequently appear in online media, and digital environments increasingly influence communication practices and public perception in Kazakhstan and beyond. It can therefore be seen that the way such interactions are presented is not neutral, but involves certain assumptions about the nature of culture and how it should be interpreted.

However, it is interesting that even when dealing with the same phenomena, different perspectives can produce quite different representations. In Chinese media, cultural exchange is often placed within a broader narrative framework. This framework connects present developments with historical ties and previous cooperation between different regions. Within this logic, cultural practices are rarely discussed in isolation, but exist as part of a larger narrative. In contrast, Kazakhstani media tend to emphasize how culture is displayed, circulated, and made visible, especially in international contexts. These differences are not only stylistic, but also reflect different ways of organizing cultural meaning. This situation raises a broader question: what role does digital media play in shaping cultural traditions? A review of existing studies indicates that scholars have often focused on geopolitical relations or the diffusion of technology, while less attention has been given to how cultural traditions are presented and transformed in digital environments, especially in comparative contexts such as China and Kazakhstan.

This paper places digital technology within the broader media environment, where cultural meaning is produced. Unlike studies that treat digital technology as an independent object, this study focuses on how cultural traditions are described, reorganized, and in some cases subtly

redefined in media discourse. By examining selected reports together, it becomes possible to identify patterns that are not easily visible in isolated cases. Therefore, the following discussion is based on specific media examples, while also considering how these examples can be understood in more general terms. What matters is not only what is reported, but also how different types of media influence culture in the process of communication.

Literature review

The emergence of digital media platforms has transformed the ways in which cultural heritage is preserved, presented and disseminated. Early cross-cultural communication research mainly focused on stable cultural structures and interpersonal interaction patterns, but later gradually shifted to a logical turn towards "media logic". Initially, the academic community focused on stable cultural traits and the shaping of communication. As can be seen from Hall's (1976) distinction between high-context and low-context cultures in "Beyond Culture," the theory emphasizes that the effectiveness of communication depends on how meaning is embedded in a specific context. In "The Consequences of Culture" Hofstede (2001), elaborated on how cultural differences affect communication through dimensions such as power distance and individualism. These studies have laid a theoretical foundation for understanding communication behavior and provided a strong argument for the article. "Communication is essentially shaped by a relatively stable cultural system".

With the development of digital technology, communication has gradually shifted from face-to-face interaction to interaction through digital platforms as the medium. The focus has also shifted towards the functional support that digital tools provide for cross-cultural adaptation. Pang (2020) found that active use of digital platforms helps cross-cultural adaptation, especially through perceived social support. Zhang and Zhou (2023) conducted a meta-analysis of technology-assisted intervention measures and pointed out that digital tools can enhance cross-cultural effectiveness, but the specific effects vary depending on the type of technology and the research design. The differences in technologies and communication methods among different countries will further lead to variations in the effects. The digital environment has created new conditions for cross-cultural communication. The protection and dissemination of traditional culture vary greatly. Such technology has also broken through the limitations of the traditional face-to-face mode. The research then underwent a deeper transformation, with platforms no longer being merely neutral channels of communication, but rather power entities possessing subjective initiative. Some studies have shifted their focus from users to the platforms themselves, finding that platforms are not neutral channels; rather, they play a dominant role by subjectively organizing visibility and constructing communication processes. This can be seen in the way data, algorithms, and interface design are collectively shaped in the way cultural content is disseminated and accessed, as pointed out by van Dijck et al. (2018) in Platform Society. Gillespie's (2014) research also emphasizes that algorithmic mechanisms determine which content is presented and which is hidden in the digital environment. Bucher (2012) and Beer (2017) also pointed out that algorithms have structural mechanisms of social power, which can implicitly organize the visibility of information and influence how cultural content is presented. Algorithms exercise power through the control of visibility (the politics of visibility). These studies indicate that cultural dissemination is increasingly constrained by platform logic and technological infrastructure. In recent years, some scholars have also studied how the digital environment reshapes cultural representations. In "The Mediatization

of Reality”, Couldry and Hepp (2017) point out that media is deeply embedded in social life and continuously participates in the process of meaning construction. Based on the same perspective, Couldry and Mejias (2019) further revealed how data-driven systems reconstruct socio-cultural processes. Cultural heritage is no longer merely preserved passively; instead, it undergoes reorganization through various media systems, which profoundly influence the ways of its interpretation and experience. This shift also provides a theoretical foundation for understanding intercultural communication from a “platform” perspective. However, these studies mostly remain at the theoretical level and lack empirical analysis based on specific media practices.

Research on digital cultural heritage has, in recent years, yielded more substantive insights into the transformative power of digital technology. Nappi et al. (2024) primarily focused on reconstructing knowledge systems using adaptive and easily accessible narrative models for digital systems, enabling cultural content to be rearranged for different audiences. Pesce and Franzè (2025) analyzed the “physical-digital fusion” interaction pattern, revealing how digital platforms connect physical cultural heritage with digital infrastructure. Build an integrated system that can create value for the institution and users. Recent developments this year saw Kusnick et al. (2026) further explore visual narrative-based expression in the field of digital humanities, pointing out that cultural narratives are increasingly being presented in a structured way through data visualization and interface design. These studies indicate that digital cultural heritage is not only about preservation, but also involves the reconstruction of cultural narratives and knowledge structures, as well as innovations focused on technological aspects and presentation formats, focuses on narrative models, interface design, and human-computer interaction mechanisms, but pays insufficient attention to the communication logic of digital platforms in cross-cultural contexts, especially lacking empirical analysis on how platforms specifically intervene in the process of cultural representation in media practices in different countries. Most studies focus on a single culture or institution as their research subject, and rarely adopt a cross-cultural comparative perspective.

Other studies focus on how technological applications have driven this transformation process. Dang et al. (2023) elaborated on the operational mechanisms of digital technologies in data acquisition, visualization, and practical applications. Research by Li et al. (2025) indicates that AI-based visualization technology can not only intuitively display the form of cultural relics in the field of cultural heritage, but also help to analyze the relationship between heritage elements. Zhao and Kim (2024) focused on the application of virtual reality technology in the field of intangible cultural heritage. These studies fully demonstrate the increasingly important role of digital technology in shaping the way cultural heritage is presented, interpreted, and disseminated. Another important research direction is the participation mechanism in the digital cultural environment. Zhang et al. (2024) constructed a framework for evaluating digital participation practices, demonstrating that various platforms can effectively promote youth participation in cultural heritage management. Wang and Wang (2025), through analyzing social media phenomena, found that digital platforms construct new cultural imagination spaces through live streaming functions and user-generated content. The research also indicates that because cultural elements are often simplified into visual forms that are easy to disseminate, the level of participation is often limited. Although this simplification process enhances the efficiency of dissemination, it reduces the complexity of the cultural connotations.

In addition to the general trends observed in these studies, there are also some that are

exploring the media representations between the two countries. Slamgazhy et al. (2024) analyzed Kazakhstani media coverage of China in the context of the Belt and Road Initiative, noting that media reports emphasized cooperation and geopolitical alignment. Dall'Agnola (2023) further explores how Chinese digital products, such as smartphones, can serve as image-building tools in Central Asia. Relevant studies in the Kazakh academic community have also provided supplementary explanations to this issue from a local perspective. These studies provide important insights into the geopolitical and communication dimensions of the relations between China and Kazakhstan, but they mainly focus on political and economic narratives rather than cultural representations in digital media.

Existing research suggests that while digital media broadens communication channels and enhances visibility, it also reshapes cultural connotations through platform architecture, technological systems, and participatory practices. But the aforementioned studies still have limitations. On the one hand, they mostly focus on analyses within a single cultural context or at the technical level; on the other hand, they rely heavily on theoretical deductions and lack empirical evidence based on specific media practices. In particular, there are still shortcomings in how media in different countries use digital technology to construct representations of cultural traditions. To address these shortcomings, this paper, through a comparative study of digital media cases in China and Kazakhstan, explores how digital infrastructure and algorithmic logic, from a platform perspective, reconstruct the presentation and meaning production process of cultural heritage in specific dissemination practices, and further analyzes the dual role of platform mechanisms in restricting and empowering cultural representation.

Methodology

This paper employs qualitative research methods to explore in depth the representation and transformation of traditional culture within the discourse system of digital media. Unlike quantitative research, which focuses on the frequency of data occurrence, this analysis centers on the internal mechanisms through which cultural content constructs and conveys meaning as it is disseminated via digital platforms.

The data in this paper are drawn from online media reports published in China and Kazakhstan between 2022 and 2025. Based on the core research objectives, online media content was selected from the following media organizations: Xinhua, China Daily, as well as Kazinform and the Astana Times (Kazakhstan). These media outlets not only enjoy widespread public recognition but have also long been committed to reporting on cultural and digital issues, thereby providing representative material. Keywords such as "digital heritage," "cultural exchange," and "digital culture" were employed to precisely identify typical cases where digital practices and cultural traditions intersect. The data were drawn from reports published by Chinese and Kazakhstani online media between 2022 and 2025. The study employed a purposive sampling strategy to identify representative cases of the digital mediatization of cultural traditions. Media sources were selected based on their social influence and their sustained coverage of cultural and digital issues over time, including Xinhua News Agency, China Daily, People's Daily Online, Kazinform, and The Astana Times. Using keywords such as "digital heritage," "cultural exchange," and "digital culture," the study identified approximately 40 relevant reports. Rather than pursuing statistical representativeness, this study adopted a theoretically informed purposive sampling strategy to select information-rich and representative cases. Eight reports were ultimately selected because they represented diverse forms of digital cultural practice,

provided sufficient textual depth for discourse analysis, and enabled meaningful cross-cultural comparison between Chinese and Kazakhstani media contexts (see Table 2). Among them, four cases were drawn from Chinese media and four from Kazakhstani media to ensure balance in the cross-cultural comparison.

Within the scope of the research, eight reports were selected and analyzed as key cases, providing necessary support for the research while helping to identify recurring patterns in the data. The analysis process consisted of three stages. First, all selected texts were read repeatedly to identify recurring themes and narrative structures. Second, an open coding approach was adopted to categorize key concepts related to cultural representation, digital technology, and media narratives. The coding units included key narrative themes, technological descriptions, and discursive representations of cultural traditions appearing within each media report. Finally, these codes were synthesized into five analytical dimensions: cultural representation, digital technology, narrative frameworks, platform logic, and cultural transformation (see Table 1). The coding process was conducted manually and iteratively to ensure the consistency of the analysis and the reliability of the interpretations. When analyzing the reports, the cases were read in conjunction with one another to grasp their inherent connections comprehensively.

The article primarily conducts an in-depth analysis across three key dimensions: first, the thematic focus of the reports, aiming to reveal the core areas of media attention regarding cultural traditions in a digital context; second, the framing strategies used to position cultural content, exploring how media present cultural traditions through specific narrative frameworks; and third, digital technology, analyzing the role it plays in the dissemination and transformation of cultural traditions. Drawing on framing theory (Entman, 1993) and critical discourse analysis (van Dijk, 1998) as theoretical foundations, the study delves into how media texts prioritize specific interpretive approaches in the digital environment and construct unique cultural meanings.

The study follows a comparative analytical approach, shifting between individual case studies and broader patterns. Through this dynamic comparative analysis, similarities and differences between the two media environments can be accurately identified. This targeted sampling strategy enables a detailed and in-depth interpretation, while also providing scope for future research. Considering the limited number of research cases, the findings of this study should be understood as indicative evidence of trends in digital cultural transformation. Subsequent studies may extend the scope of analysis to other media environments, particularly the social media sphere, to yield more comprehensive and in-depth research findings.

In order to explore these issues more systematically, this study proposes the following research questions:

RQ1: How are cultural traditions represented in Chinese and Kazakhstani digital media?

RQ2: How do digital technologies influence the presentation and transformation of cultural traditions?

RQ3: What differences can be observed in the framing of cultural traditions in media reports between the two contexts?

Table 1.

Analytical Dimension	Research Question	Indicators
Cultural Representation	How is tradition represented?	heritage, identity, memory
Digital Technology	How is technology described?	AI, VR, platform
Narrative Framing	What narrative logic is used?	modernization, preservation
Platform Logic	How do platforms shape communication?	participation, dissemination
Cultural Transformation	How is cultural change interpreted?	reconstruction, adaptation

Table 2. Sample of media reports analyzed

N	Country	Source	Title	Year
1	China	China Daily	Technological innovation brings China's cultural heritage to life	2025
2	China	China Daily	Innovations help China become an international cultural powerhouse	2025
3	China	Xinhua	Headless Buddha in China's hit video game renews debate on art repatriation	2024
4	China	People's Daily Online	Digital innovation reshapes heritage frontier for Chinese museums	2025
5	Kazakhstan	Kazinform	Week in brief: 10 key developments shaping Kazakhstan this week	2024
6	Kazakhstan	The Astana Times	Kazakhstan digitizes cultural heritage through new e-museum platform	2025
7	Kazakhstan	Kazinform	Kazakh national museum relics on display at Google Arts & Culture exhibition	2024
8	Kazakhstan	The Astana Times	Kazakh creator introduces nomad yurt to Lego fans	2024

Results and discussion

Chinese Media Coverage

In mainstream Chinese online media, cultural traditions are not typically presented as isolated objects, but rather placed within a broader framework of historical continuity, cultural revival, and national communication. Major media outlets, including Xinhua, China Daily, and People's Daily Online consciously interpret digital technology as an important medium connecting traditional civilization, contemporary innovation, and global dissemination. This

indicates that in Chinese media discourse, the findings suggest that digitalization is represented not only as a technological process of technological upgrading, but also a mediating mechanism for reorganizing cultural meaning, expanding cultural visibility, and serving the national cultural narrative. This observation supports the interpretation that the idea in van Dijck et al. (2018) "Public values in a connective world" that the process by which platforms shape content visibility through structured mechanisms. Platforms shape content visibility through underlying structuring and digitization, and thereby reconstruct public value. This also echoes Slamgazy et al. (2024)'s observation in the Chinese media context of the "Journal of Eastern European and Central Asian

Research" that the "Belt and Road Initiative" is used as a narrative tool, with the media emphasizing transnational infrastructure construction and regional prosperity, thereby constructing a discourse system that serves bilateral strategies, as well as geopolitical cooperation and mutual trust. This mechanism appears to influence not only what cultural content is presented, but also how cultural issues are framed and interpreted within media discourse.

In fact, digital technology has been integrated into this narrative in many ways. Some reports describe it as a tool for expanding access to cultural resources, while others portray it as having a more positive role. A close reading of the report "Digital innovation reshapes heritage frontier for Chinese museums" (People's Daily Online, 2025) indicates that 3D modeling, high-resolution imaging, and immersive displays are described as enabling the "magnification and reconstruction" of the details of cultural relics. This statement emphasizes how technology enhances the quality of presentations and, more importantly, changes the way we experience culture at the narrative level. This shift aligns with Nappi et al.'s (2024) statement in "Heritage Science" that "cultural content is shifting from static information to dynamic, adaptable forms of expression, a view consistent with the case study approach. Viewers are no longer just spectators, but rather enter into an interactive relationship through interface operations. In other words, cultural heritage is redefined in media discourse as an operable and explorable digital object, and its meaning is gradually generated in the process of interaction between users and the platform.

Virtual museum environments are gradually moving away from being positioned as neutral exhibition spaces in reports and are being presented as systems with structured narrative functions. The report uses keywords such as "interactive," "immersive," and "accessible" to describe digital technologies. This choice of language presents technology as a positive and irreplaceable force for progress, thereby reinforcing the legitimacy of digital transformation at the discourse level. Its meaning is no longer predetermined, but is gradually generated through the combined effects of user operation paths, interface structure, and visual feedback. This transforms the process of cultural understanding into a cognitive activity organized by a platform mechanism. Related reports, when introducing virtual exhibitions, emphasized the use of spatial paths, interface layouts, and interactive logic to guide users in understanding cultural content. This shows that the reports suggest that cultural meaning is presented as being partially organized through platform structures, but is pre-organized within the platform structure. In Chen et al. (2025), Crafting museum narratives via spatial layout in creating customized virtual museums, it is also pointed out that the spatial design in virtual museums itself constitutes part of the narrative. Ariya et al. (2025)'s research, "Generative AI for heritage engagement in VR museums," further suggests that AI-powered interactive systems can influence users'

understanding of cultural content. From the perspective of media expression, these technologies are integrated into an interpretive mechanism, gradually transforming cultural heritage from an object to be viewed into a knowledge system that is guided for understanding.

Media coverage of Black Myth: Wukong provides a more representative case: Headless Buddha in China's hit video game renews debate on art repatriation (Xinhua, 2024). The report mentioned that the image of the "headless Buddha" in the game sparked "unexpectedly renewed discussion on art repatriation". The word "unexpectedly" in this statement carries significant discursive meaning. It describes the emergence of cultural issues as a "spontaneous" result, thereby weakening the media's dominant role in the narrative while reinforcing the naturalness and legitimacy of public participation. Through this choice of language, the media appears to transform cultural traditions from national-level issues into topics for public discussion, making them more accessible and engaging for diverse audiences. This has sparked discussions about the return of cultural relics. This "biased" statement itself has significant analytical implications, because the media's focus is not on the game technology itself, but on how digital cultural products trigger real-world cultural issues. The report also cited user comments on YouTube and WeChat, such as "our cultural relics will come home," amplifying individual emotions and incorporating them into the public discourse. Cheney-Lippold (2011) points out in *A New Algorithmic Identity* that algorithms can also construct 'algorithmic identities' by analyzing user behavior data, thereby modulating the relationship between individuals and cultural content at a deeper level.

This approach shifts cultural issues from professional discussion to public participation, constructing a multi-layered narrative structure. Using game graphics as a starting point, historical issues as background, and platform interaction as an amplification mechanism. In this process, cultural traditions are not merely objects to be reproduced, but also dynamic processes that are continuously activated and reinterpreted in digital communication. From the perspective of platform logic, this phenomenon is not accidental (van Dijck et al., 2018). Media reports also mentioned that players actively searched for relevant background information through platforms such as YouTube and WeChat. This process aligns with Gillespie's (2014) article, *Media technologies: Essays on communication, materiality, and society*, which argues that Algorithms are not just technical tools; they are the new gatekeepers that provide a 'calculated objectivity,' selecting what is most relevant and thereby shaping the public's sense of what is important or true. This also reflects how the media may utilize platform mechanisms to reshape patterns of cultural communication. This means that the path of cultural dissemination has changed, and the findings suggest that cultural significance is increasingly represented through interactions across multiple platforms. The platform not only carries content, but also influences users' focus through recommendation mechanisms, comment systems, and dissemination paths, thereby participating in the construction of cultural issues.

Digital reporting on archaeological sites places greater emphasis on the role of technology in knowledge reconstruction. China Daily (2025b) reported that technological innovation brings China's cultural heritage to life. The report on Sanxingdui, the Western Xia Mausoleum and Jiaohe Site pointed out that artificial intelligence and 3D modeling are not only used for the restoration of cultural relics, but also for analyzing the structure of cultural relics and building digital models. Archaeologists scan fragments of artifacts and use artificial intelligence to "analyze fragments and identify matching patterns," thereby achieving digital reconstruction and restoration of the artifacts. The description concretizes the technical process into operational actions such

as "analyze" and "identify," making cultural relic restoration no longer just a physical assembly, but a knowledge production process based on data analysis. This description suggests that the report represents cultural heritage not merely as a physical entity, but also as a computable and analyzable knowledge system. This aligns with the viewpoint of Dang et al. (2023) in "Digital twin applications on cultural world heritage sites in China," which discusses applied research in the protection of China's World Cultural Heritage, stating that "through precise mapping between the physical world and digital space, the dynamic reconstruction of heritage meaning is achieved. In addition, the research on AI-based experts' knowledge visualization of cultural heritage by Li et al. (2025) suggests that AI is not merely a tool; it appears to transform fragmented cultural information into a logically clear and interactive knowledge system through the structured processing of complex data. Through discourse analysis of the words "analyze" and "identify" in the text, this discourse tends to represent a deep cognitive shift, where the media, while justifying technological progress, also reshapes the public's understanding of the nature of heritage. Cultural heritage appears to be represented as shifting from a static and isolated entity toward an interactive knowledge-sharing system, a dynamic knowledge-sharing interface that can evolve more continuously through the influence and computation of digital technologies.

Meanwhile, the application of augmented reality (AR) technology at the Jiaohe site has been described as enabling an "immersive experience" that makes visitors feel as if they are in a historical scene (Xinhua, 2024). Pesce and Franzè (2025) proposed that "digital technology should not merely be an 'appendage' or 'backup' of physical entities, but should be deeply integrated with the physical environment." The expression of the phygital model helps construct a completely new, hybrid experiential space that not only emphasizes visual presentation but also implies a shift in cultural understanding. Audiences participate in the cultural cognition process through interactive interfaces, shifting the cultural experience from information acquisition to participatory understanding. In other words, cultural meaning is generated through the interaction between physical heritage and digital interfaces. This also reflects the research of Kusnick et al. (2026) on visual narrative, which states that visualization has evolved from a static presentation of data into a structured narrative path that appears to transform information into user perception through visual guidance. The design constructs a creatively guided exploration, giving users the freedom to operate while accurately capturing cultural significance within a given narrative framework. It can be observed that in the digital age, the findings suggest that algorithmic logic is increasingly emphasized alongside traditional forms of human interpretation, and the technical framework has included narrative functional modules.

From a macro perspective, the media also links digital cultural phenomena with social development. According to a Xinhua (2024) report on museums, the number of visitors to museums nationwide reached 60.49 million during the May Day holiday. Within the media's interpretive framework, these figures transcend objective statistical significance, emphasizing their narrative function of expressing cultural participation and leapfrog improvement. As Wang and Wang (2025) pointed out in Constructing ideal wanhong villages on social media, platform-driven content production models are transforming cultural identity into a communicable and consumable symbolic form. This expression appears to transform cultural consumption behavior into an indicator of cultural identity, making digital visits not only an entertainment activity but also imbued with social significance.

The China Daily (2025a) case study, "Innovations help China become an international

cultural powerhouse," further suggests this through its coverage of projects such as "Digital Dunhuang." Chinese media discourse has transcended the simple logic of digital archiving, positioning digital technology as an important tool connecting cultural preservation and global communication. The report states that digital cultural products are increasingly "born global," emphasizing the potential for cultural heritage to spread on global platforms. In this process, virtual reality and digital museum systems not only preserve cultural content, but also reorganize it into a communicable and interpretable narrative structure. In the article Digital safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage, it is stated that "VR is not just a digital copy, it significantly enhances the cognitive effect of traditional cultural symbols by changing the way users engage" (Zhao & Kim, 2024). Meanwhile, Chen et al. (2025) further elaborated on the mechanism of this narrative reorganization in their study of VirtuNarrator: Virtual museums are not neutral display spaces, but rather spatial layouts as narratives. Organize fragmented heritage information into a knowledge stream with specific interpretive tendencies. This reveals that the circulation of cultural heritage globally is, in fact, a reorganization and reproduction of narrative structures in digital space. Driven by both algorithms and interfaces, it becomes a dynamic resource and value co-creation that can circulate globally.

It is clear from the above analysis that Chinese media do not regard digital technology as a neutral tool, but rather embed it within the overall framework of "cultural dissemination, national narrative, and global communication." In their book (The Mediated Construction of Reality), Couldry and Hepp (2017) proposed the concept of "deep mediation," which states that media are not only channels for disseminating information, but also elements that construct the underlying structure of the social world. Digital technology not only serves a dissemination function, but also acts as a structural intermediary mechanism, continuously intervening in the generation of cultural meaning through platform logic, interface design, and content distribution rules. In the continuous process of re-encoding and re-mediation, the meaning of cultural traditions is constantly reconstructed through platform logic and narrative methods. Cultural heritage appears to be represented in media discourse as moving from static objects of preservation toward reproducible, disseminable, and interactive digital resources, whose meaning is constantly being generated and reinterpreted in different media structures. This result indicates that, in Chinese media discourse, the digitization of cultural traditions is not only a technological process, but also a continuous process of recoding and remediation. This also provides a basis for comparison for the subsequent analysis of the media in Kazakhstan, which tends to focus on the "visibility and communication efficiency" model.

Kazakh Media Coverage

In Kazakhstani media discourse, digitalization is first defined as a state-level mechanism of resource integration. It is not treated as a primary driver of cultural meaning reproduction. A report by The Astana Times (2025), titled "Kazakhstan Launches Unified E-Museum Platform to Digitize Cultural Heritage," provides a typical example. The report uses the expression consolidates museum collections nationwide into a single digital platform. The words "consolidates" and "single platform" form a clear structure of centralization discourse. This choice of language indicates that digital technology is understood, in media narratives, as an institutional tool of integration. The main goal is to build a unified national system of cultural resources. It is not focused on reinterpreting or reconstructing cultural content.

At the level of discourse, the report repeatedly uses terms such as "heritage" and "preservation."

Terms like “innovation” or “transformation” appear much less often. This is not neutral. It positions digital technology as a tool serving cultural protection and resource management. It is not framed as a driving force for the reproduction of cultural meaning. In other words, digitalization is constructed as a way to “organize culture,” not to “reconstruct culture.”

From a theoretical perspective, this pattern can be explained through the concept of “infrastructures of visibility” proposed by van Dijck et al. (2018). In the media text, keywords such as “open access across regions” and “nationwide integration” do not point to the production of cultural meaning. They emphasize how platforms organize structure. They shape how culture is presented and how far it can be seen. The digital platform here is not only a technical carrier. It functions as an institutional structure. Through organization and ordering, it shapes cultural visibility.

The electronic museum primarily reflects the internal integration logic at the national level, but its reporting on international platforms emphasizes the outward extension of “visibility.” In Kazinform (2024a) report on “Kazakhstan’s National Museum Joins Google Arts & Culture Platform, the article emphasizes that it “makes Kazakh heritage accessible to a global audience.” Here, “accessible” becomes the core keyword, emphasizing the state of being “visible” and “widely disseminated” rather than delving into the cultural content itself. Unlike the expressions such as “interpretation” and “reconstruction” commonly found in Chinese media discourse analysis, this type of media reporting focuses more on how culture is incorporated into the global platform structure. Artifacts from the National Museum of Kazakhstan have been included in the Common Heritage of the Silk Road” virtual exhibition, which emphasizes that the platform “cooperates with more than 2,000 cultural institutions in 80 countries.” In this expression, “cooperates” and “global institutions” constitute a typical network embedding discourse, placing national cultural resources within a global platform structure. This expression reflects a typical “visibility-first logic.” In José van Dijck’s (2018) “The platform society,” the platform logic is highly consistent, stating that platform logic has reshaped the criteria for evaluating the value of content, shifting it from ‘intrinsic meaning’ to ‘network location. The value of cultural content is no longer determined solely by its intrinsic meaning, but rather by its visibility within the platform network and its connections. Cultural value does not depend on the depth of its meaning, but rather on its accessibility and reach within platform networks. This also illustrates that, in the context of Kazakh media, digitalization primarily changes the “position” of culture, rather than its “meaning.”

This echoes the view of Connectivity as a structural force in Couldry and Mejias’ (2019) *The Costs of Connection*. “By embedding themselves in global platforms, Kazakhstan’s cultural heritage has gained the possibility of transnational flow, but this visibility is predicated on conforming to the structured logic of the platforms.” The “visibility” of cultural heritage is achieved by transforming it into a data format that the platform can recognize and process. This means that the “right of interpretation” and “circulation logic” of Kazakh cultural relics are, to some extent, inseparable from the platform’s underlying algorithm. Cultural heritage has thus transformed from a “static national asset” into a dynamic digital resource that is constantly being repositioned.

In more participatory digital cultural practices, this platform logic emphasizes the flow and diffusion of traffic. The Astana Times (2024) provides a prime example of this with its coverage of the “Nomad Yurt Lego model”. The report states that the project aims to “introduce a global audience to the essence of nomadic life” and defines the yurt as a symbol of mobility, simplicity,

and harmony with nature. The juxtaposition of "global audience" and "symbol" here carries significant discursive meaning. "Global audience" presupposes that the cultural target audience is content intended for dissemination on international platforms; "Symbol" summarizes cultural practices with specific historical context and social functions into a visual unit, which has a highly recognizable and displayable function. It can be observed that the media appears to transform it into symbolic forms suitable for dissemination on its platforms, and then elaborates on the internal logic of nomadic culture. The emphasis on textual elements such as "Altybakan" and "traditional carpets" in the report also reflects the same platform-based approach. These contents are highlighted because they are easier to view, recognize, and remember, rather than focusing on whether these elements carry a more complete cultural context. Therefore, these elements play a role in the reporting that is more like visual markers. Cultural content is broken down into countless symbolic units with display value, and through the arrangement and integration of digital media, it forms a visual expression that is more suitable for widespread circulation across platforms. It can be seen that this narrative strategy places more emphasis on whether culture can quickly enter the public eye in a concise and intuitive form, and rarely emphasizes the unfolding of cultural significance.

This narrative structure can be understood in conjunction with the research by Zhang et al. (2024) Assess the degree to which digital engagement practices attract young people in cultural heritage management. It mentions that "digital participation mechanisms can transform cultural heritage into a more interactive and perceptible cultural resource by lowering the barriers to participation." In this case, the media actively enhanced its "participation" and "communication" in its narrative. In particular, the report mentioned that "the project needs to obtain 10,000 public votes before it can enter the production process," a requirement that makes the legitimacy of cultural dissemination inseparable from the quantitative participation of platform users. The smooth continuation of cultural content depends partly on the judgment of cultural institutions or experts, but to a greater extent on the attention, clicks, and support gained on the platform. Based on the above, it can be seen that the process of cultural dissemination has shifted from being dominated by relatively stable institutions to relying more on platform interaction and public feedback.

The report also cited Esquire Kazakhstan's claim that the potential audience exceeded "500 million people." This figure serves as direct evidence of the project's communicative value. In other words, the significance of cultural projects is partly translated into questions of the quantity and breadth of dissemination in the reporting. Cultural value appears to be increasingly represented as being measured by visibility, reach, and scale of dissemination, rather than by the depth of cultural context or the breadth of meaning interpretation. The figures presented in this case represent a cultural restructuring approach that is more in line with the platform's dissemination rules. By refining symbols, enhancing visual clarity, and increasing the scale of dissemination, the media organizes ethnic cultural content into a form of content that can be circulated on the platform. While this symbolic expression can improve communication efficiency, it may also lead to a simplification of cultural meaning. Studies in different cultural contexts have shown that "Social media platforms may simultaneously promote cultural visibility while contributing to the simplification and commodification of cultural practices" (Nwagbara, 2025). From this perspective, Kazakh media, in their coverage of digital culture, tend to frame cultural practices as content resources that are disseminated, pervasive, and participatory. And relatively less involved in the deep reconstruction of cultural meaning. This

aligns with the core findings of this paper: in the Kazakhstani media context, the involvement of digital technology primarily enhances the visibility and circulation of culture, rather than focusing on the narrative re-creation of cultural traditions.

This platform-centric approach to cultural presentation can be corroborated by broader media coverage. In Kazinform (2024b) report, "Week in brief: 10 key developments shaping Kazakhstan this week," cultural digitization and international platform cooperation were incorporated into national development agendas. The report presents the relevant projects as an important part of national-level development. This narrative logic can be understood as a typical framework construction process, described in Entman's (1993) *Toward Clarification of a Fractured Paradigm* as "through the selection and highlighting of specific information, the media guides the audience to understand digital practices from the perspective of 'national effectiveness' rather than 'cultural connotation'." This platform-centric presentation approach is validated in LEGO models, film and television examples, and macro-level policy reports.

These reports exhibit a clear tendency toward "de-semanticization": from a discourse structure perspective, they focus more on a macro-level overview of the "development process" and offer less explanation of cultural texts. Within this framework, cultural digitization is placed within the macro-narrative of national progress and international interconnectedness, thereby giving cultural heritage the attribute of a "manageable resource". This discourse strategy is reflected in the Kazakhstani media context, where digital culture is not seen as an isolated technological experiment, but rather as a systemic issue incorporated into the logic of national development through connective terms such as "included" and "cooperates." The significance of culture is consciously downplayed, and its legitimacy is gained through its "occupation" in policy systems and platform networks. This finding supports the core argument of this paper: in the digital context, the path to realizing cultural value is shifting from "meaning reconstruction" to a platform-based existence dominated by "visibility" and "connectivity".

Comparative Analysis

The comparative analysis of China and Kazakhstan in the context of digital media reveals that the ways in which cultural traditions are handled reflect two different inherent cultural logics. This difference manifests in the different content choices, as well as how media use digital technology to organize cultural meaning and communication structures. In A multidisciplinary approach, Teun A. van Dijk (1998) points out that media discourse constructs reality by selectively emphasizing different elements, which is reflected in the media practices of both countries.

In the Chinese media context of the above cases, the macro narrative system systematically integrates cultural traditions in specific cases. The core of what it represents is not the cultural content itself, but rather how to reconstruct the relationship between culture and history through digital media. In Chinese media discourse, digitalization is seen as a mediating mechanism for reorganizing cultural meaning and serving the national cultural narrative. Striphas (2015) proposed the concept of "algorithmic culture": "The process of cultural production and dissemination is increasingly embedded in algorithmic systems." Algorithms participate in content distribution and have a deeper impact on cultural content, participating in organizational methods and meaning construction. This can be seen from the analysis of cases such as "Black Myth: Wukong" and the digital legacy project mentioned earlier. The media reorganizes cases of technology application; then it becomes a cultural issue with a real-world

focus, achieving a leap from instrumental description to meaning construction. Cultural content can be continuously reinterpreted and reorganized in the process of dissemination. This process can be understood as the concept of "deep mediation" proposed by Nick Couldry and Andreas Hepp (2017) in their article "The mediated construction of reality". "Media infrastructure not only carries out the function of communication, but also participates in the generation of social meaning." In this context, digital technology appears not only as a tool of presentation, but also as a structural condition influencing the production of cultural meaning.

Compared to Kazakh media, relevant practices exhibit different orientations. The case of digital museums and the Google Arts & Culture platform suggests how cultural resources are organized and integrated into a content system that is easily accessible and widely disseminated. Media narratives also focus on platform scale, online collaboration, and access scope, rarely extending to the process of reconstructing cultural meaning. José van Dijck (2018) proposed that platforms, as "visibility infrastructures," influence cultural presentation by organizing the flow of information, rather than directly participating in meaning production. This is also evident in Kazakhstan's media narrative, where digital technology is primarily seen as an infrastructure. Its main function is to enhance the flow and international visibility of culture through the platform structure. This difference is further amplified in cases such as "Nomad Yurt Lego," where cultural elements are transformed into visual symbols and embedded in the platform's dissemination mechanism. The effectiveness of dissemination lies in the breadth of participation and the depth of diffusion, with a focus on building a scale effect triggered by multiple points. This process can be viewed as a deep mediation practice described by Couldry and Hepp (2017) in *The Mediated Construction of Reality*. The article proposes that "platform infrastructure is no longer merely a carrier, but rather a means of dissemination through its unique mechanisms." Kazakhstan's cultural content is re-encoded to suit different audiences in cross-platform dissemination, which is precisely due to this unique dissemination mechanism. Reconstructing cultural heritage into visual symbols that align with platform logic enhances its efficient embedding and broad visibility within the global digital landscape.

The two paths taken by China and Kazakhstan correspond to different media operation logics. Chinese media tend to participate in the production and reconstruction of cultural meaning through digital processes. Kazakh media focuses on organizing cultural resources through platform mechanisms to expand their reach. There are differences between the two countries in their modes of expression, as well as in the cultural construction of digital media in different contexts. Therefore, it can be seen that cultural significance does not possess any a priori nature independent of media channels, but is repeatedly negotiated within specific media infrastructure and discursive practices. Through visual translation and narrative simplification, the media may contribute to the reinterpretation of complex cultural traditions into more easily disseminated digital symbols and use platform mechanisms to solidify them into a universal understanding for a global audience.

Conclusion

This article compares digital media in China and Kazakhstan. This article compares digital media in China and Kazakhstan to explore the presentation and transformation paths of cultural traditions in a platform-based communication environment. Unlike previous studies that viewed digital technology as a neutral tool, this paper starts from media discourse and platform structure, focusing on the organizational mechanisms of cultural significance in the

process of dissemination. Research suggests that digital technology may exhibit differentiated development paths in different media contexts, rather than following a unified model of cultural representation. Overall, the findings suggest that cultural traditions in digital media are represented and reorganized within specific communication structures, rather than being limited to static forms of preservation. Different media outlets employ different framing strategies and technological approaches when processing cultural content, and these differences are closely related to their respective media systems, institutional backgrounds, and communication goals under platform mechanisms. The findings indicate that digital technology may indirectly shape the presentation of culture through platform mechanisms and discourse practices. This finding, when understood within the context of platformization research and mediation theory, aligns with the perspective pointed out in the literature review that "platforms not only influence the distribution path of information, but also participate in the process of meaning generation." Therefore, the findings suggest that the representation and mediation of cultural traditions in digital environments may be influenced by both technological structures and communication logic, constituting an ongoing process of re-mediation. In this process, cultural meanings appear to be re-narrated and reclassified; however, their specific forms still depend on how media organizations negotiate between "expression" and "organization." From a research perspective, this paper supplements existing research on digital cultural heritage by addressing its cross-cultural comparative perspective. Compared to studies that focus on technological applications or a single cultural context, this study suggests the existence of differentiated operational modes of platform mechanisms in media practices across different countries through comparative analysis. The significance of this research lies in its contribution to understanding the diverse representations and communicative constructions of cultural traditions in the global digital environment, and in providing an empirical basis for further analysis of cultural transmission and asymmetry in the context of platformization.

It is important to note that this analysis is primarily based on cross-cultural output influenced by mainstream media and digital technologies, and does not yet cover more fluid communication environments such as social media and user-generated content. Future research could build upon this foundation to explore how cultural meaning is continuously negotiated and reconstructed through user interaction within a more open platform structure, thereby gaining a more comprehensive understanding of the dynamic process of cultural dissemination in the digital age.

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Aiyyanan A. Y. – Conceptualization, data collection, formal analysis, original draft.

Niyazgulova A. A. – Supervision, writing – review and editing, correspondence.

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The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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Цифровое посредничество в передаче культурных традиций: сравнительный анализ китайских и казахстанских онлайн-медиа

Аннотация: В данной статье рассматривается, как культурные традиции представлены и как они эволюционируют под влиянием цифровых технологий, с акцентом на основные онлайн-СМИ в Китае и Казахстане. Автор оспаривает представление о том, что культурные традиции являются статичными культурными явлениями, подчеркивая их изменчивость и передачу через различные медиа, а также их постоянное переосмысление в ходе этого процесса. Текстовые данные взяты из репрезентативных материалов СМИ Китая и Казахстана за период с 2022 по 2025 год. В исследовании используется качественный анализ, включая дискурс-анализ и анализ фреймирования, для выявления повторяющихся паттернов в публикациях. Посредством сравнительного анализа в работе подробно изучается, как цифровые практики, включая виртуальные выставки, проекты по цифровой консервации и разработки онлайн-культурных продуктов, интегрируются в более широкие нарративные рамки.

Результаты показывают, что подходы к культурным традициям больше не ограничиваются сферой сохранения, при этом в разных медиасредах наблюдаются значительные различия в акцентах. Китайские СМИ часто связывают культурные традиции с историческими нарративами, воплощая их в новых визуальных формах и интерактивных выражениях, одновременно используя цифровые технологии в выставочных или развлекательных целях. Напротив, казахстанские СМИ уделяют больше внимания видимости культурных традиций и эффективности их распространения через платформы, сосредоточиваясь на организации и распространении материалов о культурном наследии, а не на глубоких культурных инновациях.

Таким образом, цифровые технологии не являются единственной движущей силой культурных преобразований; на них влияют многочисленные факторы. Сохранение и преобразование культурных традиций требуют учета различных факторов и применения разнообразных стратегий. Благодаря многостороннему анализу цифровые ме-

диа способствуют пониманию культурного обмена, опосредованного платформами, и предлагают более тонкий взгляд на эволюцию культурных традиций в современной медиасреде. Вклад данной статьи заключается в использовании межкультурной сравнительной перспективы, которая проливает свет на разнообразные пути, по которым культурные традиции представлены и трансформируются в среде цифровых медиа. Полученные результаты также предоставляют специалистам в области медиа и культурным учреждениям объективную основу для формулирования цифровых стратегий культурного самовыражения и распространения, а также предлагают новые доказательства для анализа конструирования культурного смысла в контексте платформ.

Ключевые слова: цифровые медиа, культурные традиции, медийный дискурс, культурная трансформация, Китай и Казахстан.

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Мәдени дәстүрлердің цифрлық медиациясы: Қытай және Қазақстан онлайн медиасының салыстырмалы талдауы

Аңдатпа: Бұл мақала мәдени дәстүрлердің қалай ұсынылып, цифрлық технологиялардың ықпалымен қалай дамитынын Қытай мен Қазақстандағы негізгі онлайн БАҚ-қа назар аудара отырып зерттейді. Мақала мәдени дәстүрлердің статикалық мәдени нысандар екендігі туралы көзқарасты сынай отырып, олардың әртүрлі медиа арқылы ағымдылығы мен таралуын, сондай-ақ үнемі қайта түсіндірілетінін ерекше көрсетеді. Мәтіндік деректер 2022–2025 жылдар аралығындағы Қытай мен Қазақстандағы өңірлік БАҚ-тың көрсеткіш есептерінен алынды. Зерттеуде есептердегі қайталанатын үлгілерді анықтау үшін дискурс талдауы мен шеңберлеу талдауын қамтитын сапалық талдау қолданылды. Салыстырмалы талдау арқылы зерттеу виртуалды көрмелер, цифрлық сақтау жобалары және онлайн мәдени өнімдерді дамыту сияқты цифрлық тәжірибелердің кең ауқымды әңгімелеу шеңберлеріне қалай біріктірілетінін егжей-тегжейлі қарастырады.

Нәтижелер көрсеткендей, мәдени дәстүрлерге деген тәсілдер енді тек сақтау аясымен шектелмейді, әртүрлі медиа орталарында басымдықтарға айтарлықтай айырмашылықтар бар. Қытай БАҚ мәдени дәстүрлерді тарихи баяндаулармен жиі байланыстырып, оларды жаңа визуалды формалар мен интерактивті өрнектерге енгізіп, көрме немесе ойын-сауық мақсатында цифрлық технологияларды пайдаланады. Ал қазақстандық БАҚ мәдени дәстүрлердің көрінімділігі мен платформалық таралым тиімділігіне баса назар аударып, терең мәдени жаңашылдықтан гөрі мәдени мұра материалдарын ұйымдастыру мен таратуға басымдық береді.

Сондықтан цифрлық технология мәдени трансформацияның жалғыз қозғаушы күші емес; оған бірнеше факторлар әсер етеді. Мәдени дәстүрлерді сақтау және қайта қалыптастыру әртүрлі факторларды ескеруді және әртүрлі стратегияларды қолдануды талап етеді. Көпперспективті талдау арқылы цифрлық медиа платформалар арқылы жүзеге асатын мәдени алмасуды түсінуге мүмкіндік береді және қазіргі медиа ортада мәдени дәстүрлердің дамуына қатысты анағұрлым нәзік көзқарас ұсынады. Мақаланың үлесі – мәдени дәстүрлердің сандық медиа ортасында қалай ұсынылып, өзгертетінін анықтайтын мәдениеттер аралық салыстырмалы көзқарасты қабылдауында. Зерттеу нәтиже-

лері медиа мамандары мен мәдени мекемелерге мәдени өрнек пен таратудың сандық стратегияларын әзірлеуге объективті сілтеме болып табылады және платформалық контексте мәдени мағынаны құруды талдауға жаңа дәлелдер ұсынады.

Түйін сөздер: сандық медиа, мәдени дәстүрлер, медиа дискурс, мәдени трансформация, Қытай және Қазақстан.

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