

Theoretical Logic and Realistic Possibility of Newsgames Helping Red Culture Communication

Cuiwan Yu

School of Journalism and Communication, Shaanxi Normal University, Xi'an, China

m15555352515@163.com

Abstract. As a new form of communication, newsgames can improve red culture education and increase the audience's acceptance of red culture. The interactivity and decentralization of newsgames make it easier for the audience to resonate through participation. Besides, the design of newsgames enables the audience to receive news information according to their game rules and established paths, thus skillfully realizing the process control and agenda advancement in news acceptance, which helps the red culture go global. However, newsgames have some problems in the red culture communication, which need to further tackle the symbiosis and sharing of news and games, the paradigm shift under new technologies, the coupling between seriousness and entertainment, etc., so as to bring more possibilities for the content production and presentation of red culture communication at present and in the future.

Keywords: Newsgames; Red Culture; Communication Strategy.

1. Introduction

Through a series of evolution from the “audio” news in the era of oral communication, the “visual news” in the era of written and printed communication, the “audio-visual” news in the era of electronic communication, and then the “experience-styled” news in the era of network communication, all the product forms supported by the original technology are undergoing cross-border and integration. With the improvement of production means and interactive methods, traditional news reports have developed from linear story presentation and one-way information dissemination to interactive construction of audience participation and control, which prompts the newsgames that integrate two narrative modes of “news” and “game”.

Up against the overwhelming media technology, red culture can be presented to the public in a three-dimensional, multi-level, and all-round way. Newsgames provide a new communication strategy, platform, and media for the red culture communication, which is undoubtedly a change and even subversion of information dissemination, conveying information to the audience by means of games. Reasonable development and utilization of newsgames will dig deep into the core values of red culture, enrich and expand its forms of expression, and promote its inheritance and innovation under the contemporary social background.

2. Necessity and Possibility of the Symbiosis Between Newsgames and Red Culture

The essence of the red culture is the red legacy and red spirit condensed by the Communist Party of China leading the people of the whole country during the realization of national independence and prosperity in the period of revolution, construction, and reform and opening up, with Marxism that has Chinese characteristics as the core [1]. Red culture shapes the history, social consensus, and values of the Chinese people. In contemporary society, carrying forward and inheriting red culture not only promotes national pride and cohesion, but also trains young people in the new era into promising ones with ideals, morality, culture, and discipline.

Up against the Internet big data, the development and application of technology constantly broaden the boundaries of news expression, for which the network has become a vital medium to promote the red history. According to a survey conducted by China Internet Network Information Center



(CNNIC), as of December 2022, the number of online game users in China has exceeded 522 million, accounting for 48.9% of the total netizens [2]. Games have become an indispensable part of the social media prospect and individual information exchange. In 2022, the National Press and Publication Administration implemented the *Leading Plan of Positive Energy for Online Games* to promote high-quality online games with distinct main themes and abundant positive energies. As a typical format of virtual cultural space, online games have been a new carrier of red cultural content under the digital trend. In this situation, newsgames came into being as a new way of news reporting, which uses the form of games to introduce news events, social phenomena comparison, and problem solutions to players, presenting news events or major social problems by setting situations and rules. To enhance the influence of mainstream values in communication, fit the evolution under the new media environment, advance agenda setting, and attract more audiences, newsgames, as a new mode of communication that enables subjectivity to a certain extent, make spiritual speech more practical and integrate into life, leisure, and study with perfect harmony.

With a profound historical background, cultural connotation, political value, and educational significance, red culture has a strong power in leadership, communication, and influence. In the era of media integration, the ways of information communication are increasingly diversified, and the traditional means of news reporting fail to meet the diverse needs of the public for information consumption, including red cultural information and values. As a new form of news presentation, newsgames have the advantages of information transmission, value transmission, and emotional experience in leisure, entertainment, and interactive participation, which can better inherit and publicize the red culture, providing more possibilities and development for the changing news communication under the new media environment.

3. Current Situation of Newsgames Disseminating Red Culture as a Medium

In recent years, mainstream media in China have been involved in the newsgames, which attempt to use newsgames as an effective medium to disseminate red culture. Such a trend reflects the innovative response of media communication in the development of the times and highlights the diverse expressions of red culture inheritance in the digital age. By integrating the news elements with the game mechanism, some newsgame works have achieved remarkable results in red culture communication.

3.1. Empathy Communication: Interactive Behavior and Decentralization

In the current era of man-machine symbiosis and embodied communication, great changes have taken place in the way of communication, and the red culture communication should take advantage of the trend, reflecting people's subjective status in communication, that is, people-oriented communication. In addition to the external effect and instrumental nature of communication, we should pay attention to the subjective experience, personal existence, and individual development in communication. According to William Stephenson's theory of communication game, there are three attributes of communication, that is, the occurrence of communication behavior is based on the subject's appeal of play and recreation, the fit of the communication process is the individual choice of self-pleasing, and the formation of communication effect is an interactive behavior based on game rules. [3] On the 100th anniversary of the founding of the Communist Youth League of China in 2022, "Spark Dreamer", produced by China Youth New Media Association and Tencent, aimed at ordinary young people in history, took real historical figures as prototypes, and adopted "narrative + interactive choice" as the presentation means, so that the audience could understand exciting Chinese stories from the perspective of six young people. Mainstream media disseminate red culture to the public in a more vivid and intuitive way through newsgames, which improves the attraction and appeal of red culture communication. By means of role-playing and situation simulation, newsgames enable audiences to feel the spiritual connotation of red culture more intuitively. In the process of the game, the audience establishes an emotional connection with the virtual characters, thus generating recognition and emotional resonance for the red culture. Moreover, in the consumption of newsgames,

players equal to news recipients choose the ways and paths of interaction, participation, and experience independently with great autonomy, which is different from the media-centered and one-way communication in the traditional mass media, such as “watch/listen what is broadcast” and “read what is presented”.

3.2. Procedural Rhetoric: Process Control and Agenda Advancement

According to *News Games: Journalism at Play*, Ian Bogost puts forward “the essence of newsgames is a kind of procedural rhetoric, a way to concretize ideology through the computational structure” [4]. Newsgames have an order, which strengthens the communication effect on the audience’s cognition, that is, “agenda setting”, or “procedural rhetoric”. Mass media often fails to determine people’s specific views on a certain agenda, while it can influence people’s attention to some agenda and their priorities by providing information and arranging related agendas. Newsgames, as an entertaining form of communication, can give the audience an in-depth understanding of news events and social phenomena in the personal experience through the situation setting and rule design in the games. This immersive experience can help them better understand the serious issues and profound meanings behind the news. In the mainstream media reports celebrating the 100th anniversary of the founding of the People’s Republic of China in 2021, China Daily published *Red Melody Resonating Nationwide & Party Spirits With Centurial Inheritance*, with four chapters in the order of China’s development, including “military-civilian unity”, “motherland builder”, “friendship guardian”, and “times pioneer”. The audience can find and light up eight revolutionary treasures in the picture and understand the red history in interactive forms. *Top Secret Mission: Boarding* produced by Tianjin Jinyun took the important historical event of the First Congress of the Communist Party of China as the background, selected three revolutionaries consisting of Dong Biwu, Deng Enming, and He Shuheng as the main characters of the story, which unfolded the plot from the perspective of the first person, selected key contents for re-editing and design, and built a logical framework structure, enabling the audience to follow the set agenda, the greatness of the century-old big party, and revolutionary ancestors in the trend of the plot. In the process of the game, the audience understands the history, characters, and events behind the red culture by completing tasks and solving problems on the established rules and narrative track, which strengthens their sense of substitution, mission, and honor. Combining emotional stimulation and cognitive stimulation through storytelling, game interaction, audio-visual, and other multi-sensory experiences, newsgames are easier to stimulate the audience’s interest and participation, thus realizing their better digestion, absorption, and remembrance of red culture.

3.3. Communication Effect: Facing the Mainstream and Going Global

With the popularity of mobile Internet, newsgames launched by mainstream media can be disseminated through various terminal devices such as mobile phones and tablets, effectively expanding the audience of red culture. With the development of the times, newsgames provide an expression that keeps pace with the times for red culture dissemination. Through the games, red culture can be integrated into modern society naturally, and closer emotional ties can be bound with the younger generation. This is helpful to realize the synchronous development of red culture in the changing times and last its vitality. In recent years, newsgames launched by mainstream media in China comprise revolutionary courses, development achievements, heroic deeds, classic literature, etc., so as to meet the cognitive needs of different audiences for red culture. At the same time, news games, as a media form with global popularity, can disseminate the red cultural information to the whole world. With the acceleration of globalization, newsgames provide a new way for red culture to go global. Through excellent game design and multilingual version support, red culture can be widely disseminated and recognized worldwide, thus enhancing China’s cultural influence on the international stage.

4. Current Communication Dilemma of Newsgames as a Medium of Red Culture Communication

Newsgames provide innovative communication for media convergence, although they are accompanied by many hidden problems. On the one hand, it is the production barrier caused by sensitive subject matter. On the other hand, this kind of subject requires high political literacy and accurate control ability of political content for developers. More important is that whether the audience accepts and recognizes this news-based game content. As a medium of red culture communication, newsgames still face many development shackles.

4.1. Memory Construction: Reproduction and Interpretation

Considering the relationship among memory, culture, and media, memory construction refers to the construction that people's memory of past events is not an objective copy, but influenced by personal experience, social environment, and culture. Against this background, newsgames, as a media form, can affect and construct people's memory of red culture. Newsgames with their vivid and intuitive characteristics can attract more audiences to news events and improve information dissemination. Compared with traditional words, pictures, videos, and other ways, newsgames can use various cultural symbols to fully narrate according to the creator's intention, and then construct collective memory, which can better stimulate the audience's interest and encourage them to actively acquire and disseminate information. However, as an interpreter of major historical events, games as a medium may simplify complex historical events too much, which leads to the deviation of players' understanding of red culture. In addition, different players may have various interpretations and memories of the red culture in the game based on their backgrounds and viewpoints, which further deepens the subjectivity of memory construction. Thus, it is necessary to guard against the subjectivity and misleading of newsgames in the reproduction and interpretation of red culture, so as to ensure that the red culture communication can accurately reflect the historical truth in diverse manners.

4.2. Content Presentation: Profundity and Superficiality

At present, the quality of newsgame works in the market is various and some need to be improved in content and design, so as to promote red culture communication. Some newsgames pay too much attention to superficial phenomena and entertainment when spreading red culture, which leads to the superficial dissemination of red cultural information. In some newsgames, the form of times change and policy publicity is more embodied in the form of "copy + transition". However, this simple communication mode fails to go deep into the game mechanism and the shallow content expression is rather rigid, which only emphasizes the objective process of "information communication", instead of ensuring the narrative and interactivity of information in the communication. This superficial communication may limit the audience's understanding of red culture, which makes it difficult for them to deeply perceive its connotation and spirit. In this case, newsgames are more like an "interactive textbook" and make many spiritual symbols "empty signifiers".

4.3. Internal Contradictions: Seriousness and Entertainment

From the perspective of the opposite relationship between entertainment and seriousness, there is an antinomy between games and news itself. On the one hand, games, as an entertainment medium, have the main purpose of guiding players to obtain pleasure and enjoyment. As a serious historical culture, red culture aims to convey historical information, inherit ideological spirit, and arouse emotional experience. Hence, when games are combined with red culture, there will be a contradiction between the entertainment of games and the seriousness of red culture. On the other hand, news as a serious information medium mainly aims to disseminate accurate, objective, and true information to the public. As an entertainment medium, games are to provide a virtual world and immersive experience. Newsgames have the risk of dispelling objective and serious news issues, which triggers the

information distortion and the authenticity weakening, and then detracts from the factual value and cognitive value of news.

5. Strategies and Suggestions of Game Media to Help the Red Culture Communication

Newsgame is the product of news gamification, which is a way to report and interpret news texts. As a kind of news media, newsgames still focus on the news itself, while games are more auxiliary means of news dissemination, which can provide audiences with information acceptance hidden behind the game, so that news can keep its essential dissemination and seriousness in a brand-new form.

5.1. Symbiosis and Sharing of News and Games

Given that mobile social communication tends to be lightweight, fragmented, and scene-based at present, newsgames should make full use of the advantageous interactivity and narrative. Traditional news reports can be transformed into interactive game plots, where the audience can play the leading role in the game and experience news events in a deeper way. By paying attention to the setting of situations, we can lead the audience to deeply understand the red culture with vivid and real scenes and plots. By highly restoring historical events and vividly displaying revolutionary stories, we can guide the audience to have emotional resonance and identity. In addition, the narrative structure of the game should have rich emotions, conflicts, and turning points, and introduce mechanisms such as decision-making elements, choices, and consequences, so that the audience can have an impact on the development of the game plot. Meanwhile, putting the audience in the leading role of news events can make them experience the immersive feelings of events more deeply. It is necessary to create specific interactive elements for the audience in the game, such as role-playing, task challenge, teamwork, etc., and give them background, motivation, and emotion related to events, so as to better integrate into news stories and agenda, thus increasing the audience's sense of substitution and prompting them to reflect on different situations and results.

5.2. Communication Optimization of Truth and Experience

The news expression norms of traditional media are restrained with much seriousness, while the content that attracts audiences nowadays is warmer and more grounded. To a certain extent, people's favorite reporting methods often fit the "rules of the game" with the strong attraction of "gameplay". New media technology provides a technical basis for the emergence of newsgames, which are constantly changing the representation of news reports. Supported by virtual reality (VR) and augmented reality (AR) technology, newsgames can create virtual news experience, so that audiences can be immersed in news events. Realism and immersion are created to provide a more realistic news experience. For example, through 360-degree video, stereo sound, and tactile feedback, the audience can feel that they are at the scene of the event. This experience allows them to understand the background and influence of events more profoundly and enhance their emotional resonance by simulating the actual scene. Technical improvements such as graphic details, interaction methods, and deployment mechanisms can be applied to provide a smoother, more realistic, and comfortable virtual experience. From the viewpoint of watching to subjective experience, an imagination of aggregation on the spot is provided to narrow the psychological distance with the audience and reduce the resistance to the communication content.

5.3. Organic Coupling of Seriousness and Entertainment

Apart from enough entertainment and attraction, newsgames should also provide sufficient information and depth to achieve the purpose of news communication and education. Combining serious news content with entertaining game elements organically, an educational, enlightening, and participatory experience in newsgames can be built, which not only disseminates news information, but also provides entertainment and attraction. "The game is just a "pretended" consciousness that never prevents the expansion of its extreme seriousness in any case." According to *Homo Ludens Study of the Play Element in Culture* put forward by John Huizinga, "games can turn to seriousness

and seriousness also turns to games. Games can rise to beautiful and lofty heights, while seriousness is far from commensurate with this height” [5]. A glimpse of the two-way interactive relationship between the entertainment of games and the seriousness of news can be obtained. In this case, it is necessary to uphold journalism professionalism and find a balance between games, red culture, and news communication. On the one hand, in game design and production, we should pay attention to the inheritance and publicity of red culture, so as to enhance players’ cognition and understanding of history and culture. On the other hand, we should emphasize the accuracy and objectivity of information in the development of news games, and avoid over-rendering and false publicity. Only by taking news truth as the core, news reports as the main line, and video games as the carrier can we help red culture communication through newsgames.

6. Conclusion

In the current digital age, newsgames, as a treasure of integration, interaction, and communication, can become an effective medium to promote the inheritance and development of red culture, heralding a brand-new journey for the red culture inheritance. With the charm of the game, we have the opportunity to interweave history with reality and inject the red spirit into the public. However, this is not only the red culture communication, but also an exchange of emotions and thoughts as well as a profound dialogue with history. Under the guidance of innovation, newsgames will continue to publicize the red culture communication to a wider world and stimulate people’s infinite thinking about history, faith, and the future. Besides, the news in the future will no longer stop at “games”. From the world of games to the reality of life, the red culture will glow with the help of newsgames.

References

- [1] Shen, C. F. & Lian, W. M. (2018). Research on the present situation and countermeasures of the inheritance and development of red culture in southern Hebei. *Teaching and Research*, (01), 97-104.
- [2] China Internet Network Information Center. (2022). 51th Statistical Reports on Internet Development in China [EB/OL]. Retrieved from <https://www.cnnic.net.cn/NMediaFile/2022/0926/MAIN1664183425619U2MS433V3V.pdf>.
- [3] Zeng, X. M. & Dong, H. X. (2021). Research on the innovation strategy of red audiovisual communication--Based on the analysis of media reports in celebrating the centennial founding of the party. *Media*, (21), 4.
- [4] Bogost, I., Ferrari, S. et al. (2010). *Newsgames: Journalism at play*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press.
- [5] Huizinga, J. (1966). *Homo Ludens Study of the Play Element in Culture*. China Academy of Art Press.