

The Cross-Media Adaptation of Beijing-Style Aesthetics

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Abstract. As a profound artistic representation of Beijing's unique regional culture, Beijing-style aesthetics currently confronts both significant opportunities and complex challenges in the process of cross-media adaptation within the rapidly evolving digital era. Based on the practical explorations in multiple domains such as film and television production, dramatic performances, advanced digital technology applications, and public art projects, this study aims to systematically delve into the diverse cross-media transformation paths of Beijing-style aesthetics. The research findings indicate that the existing adaptation practices have successfully expanded the expressive dimensions of Beijing culture through strategic means like the vivid visualization of iconic regional symbols and the creation of technology-empowered immersive experiences for audiences. However, several prominent issues still persist, including the gradual dissolution of distinct regional characteristics, the noticeable weakening of literary depth, and the ongoing presence of the digital divide. These problems essentially stem from fundamental differences in media characteristics across various platforms, deviations in creative concepts among practitioners, and the improper application of technological tools in the adaptation process. In response to these challenges, this paper proposes constructing an innovative adaptation paradigm that emphasizes "content as the foundational core and technology as the supportive tool." It also advocates for strengthening the subjective role of dramatic art, establishing a comprehensive digital resource library for cultural heritage, and innovating community-based communication models. Through these measures, it is expected to achieve the dynamic inheritance of Beijing-style aesthetics and its contemporary innovative transformation in the digital age.

Keywords: Beijing-style aesthetics, cross-media adaptation, regional culture, digital technology, cultural inheritance.

1. Introduction

The core of Beijing-style aesthetics lies in the deep excavation and artistic transformation of Beijing's regional culture. Xing Ge pointed out in *Reflections on the Creation of Beijing-Style TV Dramas* that "Beijing-style" is not simply a genre classification or label but a holistic summary of Beijing's regional creative style [1]. The superficial layer of this style is embodied in tangible cultural symbols such as dialects, hutong life, and market customs, while the deep layer contains unique socio-cultural mentalities and individual psychological characteristics. Liu Hongjia's cross-media theory further clarifies that the essence of media adaptation is "complex relationships formed between different media," with its core lying in breaking through the expressive limitations of a single medium and pursuing comprehensive aesthetic effects through dynamic processes such as intercommunication, transformation, and mixing [2].

Current cross-media practices of Beijing culture have formed multiple paths: in film and television adaptation, *Love Full of Jiudaowan* vividly outlines the evolution of Beijing's urban spirit through the life ups and downs of hutong youth like Yang Shumao and Ye Fei over forty years of reform and opening up; in technological applications, the 2023 China International Fair for Trade in Services (CIFTIS) saw Dongcheng District using naked-eye 3D technology to recreate the grand scene of Qianmen Wupailou, while the Changping exhibition area restored Ming Tombs cultural relics with digital 3D technology, transforming static cultural heritage into dynamic contemporary experiences; in dramatic innovation, Li Liuyi's directed *Thunderstorm* reconstructed the spiritual core of Cao Yu's literary classic through digital stages by restoring the prologue and epilogue and excavating deleted lines [3-5]. Although related research is increasingly abundant, most focus on adaptation analysis of

a single medium, lacking a systematic review of the cross-media transformation of Beijing-style aesthetics. This paper will demonstrate from three dimensions: practical status, core problems, and optimization paths, exploring the inheritance and innovation mechanism of Beijing-style aesthetics in the era of media integration.

2. Current Status: Multidimensional Practices of Cross-Media Adaptation

2.1. Visual Translation of Regional Symbols

The essence of Beijing-style aesthetics lies in the transmission and regeneration of regional cultural genes. This process is particularly significant in character creation. In *Love Full of Jiudaowan*, characters like Yang Shumao, Shi Xiaona, and Ye Fei, though living in the same Jiudaowan Hutong, form distinct personality traits due to different family backgrounds such as citizens, merchants, and intellectuals. The grass-roots tenacity of Yang Shumao and the intellectual temperament of Ye Fei are sharply contrasted through details in clothing, language, and behavior, with their class imprints directly influencing life choices and becoming the core driving force of the narrative [1]. This regional coding has been multi-dimensionally extended with new technological support—at CIFTIS 2023, Dongcheng District presented *The Central Axis Dragon Vein scroll* with naked-eye 3D technology, allowing audiences to experience the spatial narrative from Yongdingmen to the Bell and Drum Towers through virtual walking; the Changping exhibition area also brought the golden winged crown, a cultural relic from the Ming Tombs' underground palace, into the exhibition hall through digital replication technology, with supporting dragon and phoenix crown color stamps triggering a photo-taking craze among young audiences [4]. Such practices confirm the core advantage of augmented reality technology proposed by Li Wei: extending the expressive dimensions of physical art through "precise superposition of virtual information and real scenes"[6]. When digital technology becomes a new language for cultural translation, the bucket arches of Qianmen pailou and the honeycomb coal stoves in hutongs together form the contemporary grammar of Beijing-style aesthetics.

2.2. Technology-Empowered Immersive Experiences

Digital technology is reconstructing the perceptual paradigm of Beijing culture. In the field of performing arts, the immersive Peking Opera *Yizhangqing* uses 3D interactive technology to recreate the "ritual archery" etiquette of the Western Zhou Dynasty, where audiences participate in the ritual process through motion capture devices, understanding the deep connotations of ritual civilization in the blend of virtual and real; Sichuan Opera *Face-Changing* uses holographic projection technology to project Sanxingdui bronze masks and Sichuan Opera facial makeup onto the stage, allowing the millennium-old Shushu civilization to dialogue with modern opera in light and shadow, endowing traditional art with shocking audio-visual tension [2, 7]. This immersive logic is further expanded in public art. Li Wei notes that augmented reality technology gives works "fun interactivity," where audiences trigger virtual information feedback through mobile phone scanning, shifting from passive reception to active exploration [6]. The Hanfu photography space at CIFTIS Beijing is a typical case: in an immersive environment constructed by light, shadow, and plants, young audiences interact with digital hutong backgrounds in Hanfu, completing the contemporary construction of cultural identity through social media sharing [4]. Such experiences precisely fit Xing Ge's emphasis on "the aesthetic needs of the internet generation"—when gamification and scenarization become new acceptance paradigms, technology-empowered immersive experiences become a cultural bridge connecting Beijing-style aesthetics with Generation Z [1].

2.3. Cross-Media Narrative of Literary Classics

Literary adaptation constitutes the cornerstone of Beijing-style aesthetics inheritance, with its core challenge being how to safeguard the spiritual core during media transformation. The film and television adaptation practice of *Teahouse* shows that successful cross-media transformation requires "faithfulness to the original spirit." The TV drama version accurately reproduces Lao She's portrayal

of small characters struggling in the torrent of time by preserving Wang Lifa's philosophy of survival and Qin Zhongyi's disillusionment with ideals; details such as window air conditioners, honeycomb coal stoves, and burnt mantou (steamed buns) construct the sensory memory of 1980s Beijing hutongs [8]. Li Liuyi's *Thunderstorm* provides another path: by restoring the prologue, epilogue, and Fanyi's monologue deleted in the 1936 single-volume edition, it returns to Cao Yu's literary exploration of the abyss of human nature. On stage, the father-son drama between Zhou Puyuan and Zhou Ping is upgraded from a passing scene to a highlight, with the psychological space cut by digital lighting transforming literary philosophy into theatrical energy [5].

Liu Hongjia's cross-media theory provides a methodological framework, proposing two adaptation paradigms: reproduction-style presentation emphasizes faithful transmission of the original essence, such as the stage adaptation of *Midlife* transforming Chen Rong's stream-of-consciousness descriptions into psychological monologues on stage, making Lu Wenting's torn feeling between family and career intuitively presented; reconstruction-style transplantation focuses on creative transformation of cultural standard, such as Wu Xingguo's Peking Opera *Prince of Revenge* implanting Shakespeare's *Hamlet* into the Northern and Southern Dynasties context, where Gongsun Yu (Hamlet)'s water sleeve skills and recitation formulas immerse the revenge proposition in Eastern aesthetics [2]. Both paths point to the core proposition of cross-media adaptation—guarding the spiritual root of Beijing-style aesthetics in the dialectical unity of literariness and theatricality.

3. Problems: Analysis of Dilemmas in Cross-Media Adaptation

3.1. Dissolution of Regional Cultural Characteristics

The cultural discount phenomenon in cross-media adaptation is centrally reflected in the "de-regionalization" crisis of Beijing-style aesthetics. Xing Ge pointed out a typical case in research: young audiences showed strong incomprehension of the 1970s concept of marriage in *Love Full of Jiudaowan*, regarding Yang's mother's interference in her children's marriage as "absurd and ridiculous," which sharply contrasts with the widespread resonance at the drama's premiere [1]. This intergenerational aesthetic gap is further amplified in digital communication—short opera videos on Douyin are often disseminated in 15-second fragments, intercepting the beautiful singing of *Drunken Concubine* while stripping away its court narrative context, reducing the performance to a visual spectacle. Worse still, the spoof video *Li Haiyan's Tongue* distorts the facial features of Peking Opera actress Li Haiyan through special effects, dissolving the implicit beauty of Cheng School art in the name of "technological innovation" [7]. Li Hanyu defines such phenomena as "cultural misinterpretation and loss": when digital technology strips away cultural context, the aesthetic essence of Peking Opera such as stylization and freehand brushwork is simplified into superficial sensory stimulation [7]. This stripping is particularly dangerous in global communication—the 3D image of Lugou Lion IP "Fengfeng" at CIFTIS attracted young people to take photos, but its symbolic lion shape could not convey the historical weight carried by the Lugou Bridge stone lions, with the deep texture of regional culture quietly erased in technological revelry [4].

3.2. Imbalance Between Literariness and Theatricality

Cross-media adaptation often falls into the dilemma of losing artistic subjectivity. Liu Hongjia's cross-media theory points out the essential difference between drama and film: drama relies on the principle of "fictionality," stimulating audience imagination with virtual space; film pursues "authenticity," reconstructing time and space through montage [2]. The deletion of Lu Gui in the stage version of *Thunderstorm* sparked such controversy. Director Li Liuyi did not explain the motive for deletion, intending to guide audiences to independently interpret character relationships [5]. Although this move strengthened the blank space aesthetics of theatrical expression, it weakened the crucial role of Lu Gui as a symbol of class oppression in the original work—when the class contrast between the Zhou and Lu families was weakened, Cao Yu's critical edge against feudal ethics was also blunted.

Similar problems can be seen in the adaptation of the *Teahouse*. Some film and television versions overly rely on CGI technology to restore teahouse scenes: digital modeling accurately reproduces eight Immortals tables and lidded tea sets, but fails to convey Lao She's portrayal of "bird enthusiasts resting and chatting" marketplace liveliness [8]. Liu Duan sharply pointed out: "Environmental restoration must serve the expression of social fables" [8]. When technological showmanship replaces literary meditation, Wang Lifa's sigh of "reform, reform, the more you reform, the colder it gets" loses its historical depth. This imbalance is more prominent among young creators. Li Hanyu observed that short video creators, in pursuit of "opera + technology" innovation, mix the sword dance from *Farewell My Concubine* with electronic music, deconstructing Yu Ji's tragic death into rhythmic visual fragments, with the literary core disappearing under technological packaging [7].

3.3. Digital Divide and Audience Disruption

The flip side of technology empowerment is the new barrier to cultural reception. Li Hanyu's research reveals a severe reality: 56% of rural areas in China have not yet completed digital infrastructure, and only 12% of grass-roots opera audiences can skillfully use smartphones to watch live broadcasts [7]. Although the digital exhibitions at CIFTIS attracted urban youth to queue up for naked-eye 3D central axis experiences, elderly Peking Opera fans in hutongs were separated from this cultural feast by not knowing how to operate scan-code navigation systems [4]. This fragmentation confirms the theoretical essence of the "digital divide"—unequal access to technological resources is leading to class differentiation in cultural participation rights [7]. As Bourdieu pointed out, differences in cultural capital allocation will reproduce social divisions [9]. When technology becomes a new threshold for cultural consumption, the audience of Beijing-style aesthetics is invisibly divided into "technical elites" who master digital skills and traditional groups forced to the margins.

A more profound crisis lies in the intergenerational aesthetic disruption. When a short video of Huangmei Opera *The Female Horse Doctor* on Douyin received millions of likes, the average age of audiences for full-length performances in traditional theaters exceeded 60 [7]. Xing Ge's research found that young audiences' evaluations of Song Dacheng in *Longing* changed from "ideal husband" to "mama's boy," and they scoffed at the plot of "giving up further education for love" in *Love Full of Jiudaowan* [3]. When the collective memory carried by Beijing-style aesthetics fails to resonate with digital natives, the inheritance of its cultural genes faces the risk of breakage. The "Lugou Lion" IP created by Fengtai District tried to attract young people with the 3D image "Fengfeng," but its cute design dissolved the historical weight of the stone lions as witnesses to the War of Resistance, with the technology-pandering strategy instead accelerating the erosion of cultural depth [8].

4. Paths: Cross-Media Innovation Strategies for Beijing-Style Aesthetics

4.1. Constructing an Adaptation Paradigm of "Regional Core, Technological Application"

4.1.1. Content deep cultivation: Contemporary coding of regional genes

Xing Ge emphasizes that the vitality of Beijing-style aesthetics lies in the deep implantation of "regional genes" [3]. The reason why the conflict scene where Yang's mother threatens suicide in *Love Full of Jiudaowan* is moving is that it reveals the core contradiction of Beijing-style family ethics—the tear between parental love and individual freedom. The shadow of the window lattice when Yang Shumao climbs over the wall to leave home, and the mother's silence sitting alone on the kang (traditional brick bed), these details form cultural metaphors beyond time. Cross-media adaptation needs to continue this narrative wisdom, such as the film and television version of *Teahouse* using symbols like "the hum of window air conditioners" and "burnt mantou on coal stoves" to transform the material scarcity of 1980s Beijing into perceivable spatial memories [8]. In new technological applications, the CIFTIS exhibition model of "Peking Opera helmet + naked-eye 3D" provides a demonstration: young actors wear traditional phoenix crowns to perform *Farewell My*

Concubine, with digital screens behind them simultaneously displaying abstract light and shadow of Yu Ji's sword dance, forming an aesthetic intertext between physical craftsmanship and virtual imagery [8].

4.1.2. Technological adaptation: Aesthetic balance of virtual-reality integration

Technological intervention must follow the principle of "virtual serving reality." Li Wei proposed the golden rule of augmented reality technology: virtual elements must be deeply integrated with physical elements such as traditional materials and colors [4]. In the stage design of *Thunderstorm*, holographic projection did not directly present ghost images but shrouded Zhou Puyuan's study in shimmering blue light and shadow, externalizing the character's inner guilt [2]. In public art, the AR navigation system design on Qianmen Street is inspiring: scanning the stone pillars of the pailou triggers virtual images of Qing Dynasty commercial caravans, but the image transparency is controlled at 30% to ensure the real building always remains the visual subject [8]. This restraint demonstrates the essence of Beijing-style aesthetics—technology should be a lens to amplify cultural spirit, not a curtain covering the realnomenon.

4.2. Strengthening the subjectivity of dramatic art

Cross-media adaptation needs to establish a clear primary-secondary relationship between media. Liu Hongjia's "media subjectivity thinking" has methodological significance: literature-adapted dramas should take stage characteristics as their noumenon, using the advantages of other media such as film and digital technology to empower rather than subvert artistic essence [2]. Two pillars need to be grasped in practice.

4.2.1. Anchoring literariness: Safeguarding the spiritual core

Xiong Yuanwei defines the literariness of drama as containing three dimensions: literary philosophy, literary structure, and literary language [2]. The breakthrough of Li Liuyi's *Thunderstorm* lies here—restoring Fanyi's monologue of "hot iron branding flesh" transforms this rebellious woman from a plot symbol into an existential tragic subject [5]. Film and television adaptation also needs to safeguard literary depth. The TV drama *Teahouse* uses a long shot to present Wang Lifa's solitary walk after the teahouse is occupied: the camera sweeps past sealed doors and windows, finally freezing on a dusty lidless tea bowl in the corner, conveying Lao She's compassion for the passing of the old era through wordless images [8].

4.2.2. Theatrical innovation: Boundaries of technological empowerment

Digital technology expands dramatic expression without replacing performance noumenon. *Chongqing-1949* is inspiring: the stage is divided into three spaces—prison, market, and command post—by montage, with revolutionary group images collaged on giant circular screens through holographic projection [2]. When the bloody light and shadow of Sister Jiang's martyrdom scene sweep across the audience, technology becomes a medium for emotional mobilization, but the core of the drama still lies in the physical tension when the actor shouts "Truth lies within the range of bullets." This boundary awareness is equally critical in opera live broadcasting—the Douyin account "Xi You Ji" (Remembering Opera), operated by professional troupes, showcases Cheng School's vocal skills of "voice like a floating thread" through complete arias, refusing fragmented adaptation, making mobile phone screens a new form of opera stage [7].

4.3. Establishing an Inclusive Communication System in the Digital Age

4.3.1. Resource integration: Building a cultural gene bank

Systematically rescuing digital assets of Beijing culture is urgent. Li Hanyu proposes establishing a hierarchical opera resource library: tag and store audio-video, scripts, and body movement atlases by opera types such as Peking Opera and Pingju [7]. The practice of cloisonné Peking Opera facial makeup digital collections is groundbreaking—Beijing Industrial and Art Group has made 3D dynamic models of facial makeup like Guan Gong and Qingyi (female role), with blockchain

technology ensuring artistic authenticity [10]. Such digital libraries need to extend to hutong ecosystems: record Beijing dialects, courtyard house construction techniques, and make "construction formulas for window lattice screens" and "hawking sounds of douzhi (fermented mung bean juice) and jiaoquan (fried dough rings)" permanently preserved.

4.3.2. Community-based services: Bridging the digital divide

Smart communities are a key scenario for solving intergenerational gaps. Li Hanyu proposes an "online + offline" dual-track model: community opera workshops invite elderly fans to teach body movements, while simultaneously developing AI voice navigation systems to interpret librettos [7]. Dongcheng District's "Hutong Metaverse" project provides a practical sample: elderly people wear lightweight AR glasses to scan hutong brick walls, triggering holographic images of 1950s peddler carts; young people collect virtual intangible cultural heritage badges through mobile apps to exchange for physical douzhi coupons [4]. This design makes technology a translator for intergenerational dialogue.

4.2.3. International expression: Global narrative of local aesthetics

Beijing-style aesthetics need to transcend regional limitations and participate in civilizational dialogue. Li Hanyu's proposed international communication path was validated in *The Legend of the White Snake Love*: the Cantonese opera film magnifies the flutter of water sleeves through 4K technology, enabling overseas audiences to understand the Eastern aesthetic essence of "telling stories through song and dance" [2, 7]. CIFTIS can be upgraded to an international platform—set up holographic opera stages in the "Birthplace of Peking Opera" exhibition area, where overseas audiences can scan codes to generate personalized Peking Opera facial makeup; supporting English versions of the digital scroll *Thirteen Masters of the Tongguang Era* can make Mei Lanfang's melodious singing a worldwide cultural symbol [4].

5. Conclusion

The cross-media adaptation of Beijing-style aesthetics is essentially a dialogue between regional traditional culture and digital civilization. Current practices have expanded the expressive dimensions of Beijing culture through visual translation, technological immersion, and narrative innovation, but problems such as regional dissolution, artistic imbalance, and the digital divide profoundly reveal the cultural discount risks in media transformation. The root causes lie in the extrusion of humanistic spirit by technological rationality, aesthetic disruptions caused by intergenerational experience gaps, and the erosion of cultural depth by instrumentalism.

Future adaptations need to reconstruct the Beijing-style aesthetics system based on three principles:

1) Aesthetic Dimension: Adhere to regional genes as the content noumenon and position digital technology as a means of expression. For example, naked-eye 3D central axes should present the auditory memory of pigeon whistles, making technology a key to activating collective memories.

2) Narrative Dimension: Balance literary depth and theatrical innovation. Drama adaptations can learn from *Thunderstorm*'s guardianship of literary philosophy, while film and television creations should continue *Teahouse*'s excavation of social fables, making technology serve human nature exploration.

3) Communication Dimension: Build an inclusive ecosystem. Avoid "art loss with human death" through opera digital libraries, bridge intergenerational gaps through smart communities, and promote local aesthetics globally through CIFTIS.

When the smoke from hutong kitchens emerges as holographic imagery in international exhibition halls, and the melodies of elderly fans' huqin are preserved in the digital cosmos via blockchain technology, Beijing-style aesthetics can achieve creative transformation amid the fragmentation of media. The essence of cross-media adaptation lies in safeguarding the cultural bond that connects history and the future, allowing Beijing-style aesthetics to maintain their vitality by integrating regional traditions with digital innovation. This process requires continuous exploration of how to

balance technological advancement with cultural authenticity, ensuring that the unique charm of Beijing's regional culture not only survives but thrives in the digital civilization era. By anchoring itself in historical depth while embracing contemporary communication paradigms, Beijing-style aesthetics can radiate enduring appeal, bridging temporal and spatial divides to become a vibrant component of global cultural diversity.

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