

# Exploring the Multi-dimensional Communication Path of Emei Martial Arts Culture

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## Abstract

**This study employs methods such as literature review and logical analysis to analyze the dissemination pathways of Emei martial arts. Taking the case of “Shaolin Kung Fu Stage Drama” as a starting point, this study focuses on the feasibility of selecting themes and utilizing stages for “Emei Martial Arts Stage Drama.” Furthermore, this study proposes the conceptualization and implementation steps for producing television dramas, films, and a series of micro-documentaries that center around Emei martial arts cultural elements. Additionally, it elaborates on the advantages of cross-media presentation for Emei martial arts and constructs a cross-media communication matrix, aiming to promote the expansion of diverse forms of Emei martial arts cultural representation and the construction of comprehensive dissemination pathways.**

## Keywords

**Emei Martial Arts, Dissemination Path, Martial Arts Dissemination.**

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Emei martial arts is a combination of martial arts brought by immigrants and local martial arts in Sichuan. It is a general term for foreign martial arts with distinctive local characteristics in Sichuan, formed through the collision and integration of local martial arts and Bashu culture. In the context of the accelerating globalization and the significant impact of Western sports culture on China's traditional sports culture, Emei martial arts, as one of the representatives of Chinese traditional culture, is facing unprecedented development challenges, with some boxing and weapon play even on the brink of extinction. Emei Martial Arts is an important component of traditional Chinese culture and serves as an external manifestation of the national spirit. The learning and mastery of Emei Martial Arts should be the right of the entire nation. Actively promoting and disseminating Emei martial arts culture is the requirement of the times to promote Chinese martial arts culture, develop mass sports, spread martial arts culture to domestic and international audiences, enhance the country's soft power in sports, and cultivate the unique cultural character of Bashu by integrating martial arts with ethics. Currently, relevant authorities have attached great importance to this matter by establishing the Emei Martial Arts Cultural Research Institute and Emei Martial Arts Cultural Promotional Centers. They have utilized various methods such as websites, Intangible Cultural Heritage Expos, targeted lectures, and incorporating Emei Martial Arts culture into wide streets, narrow alleys, scenic areas, walls, public facilities, screens, and “non-places” (supermarkets, ATMs, highway service areas, airport waiting halls, etc.) for multi-point displays. These efforts have made significant contributions to the promotion and dissemination of Emei Martial Arts culture. However, the final impact of the dissemination efforts has not met the expectations. The reason lies in the fact that the aforementioned methods fail to present the complete essence of Emei Martial Arts culture, which results in limited exposure of the core aspects to the general public. These approaches merely serve to create awareness of the existence of Emei Martial Arts as a

genre. Therefore, it is an urgent issue to contemplate and devise more diverse and effective means by which people can have comprehensive access to Emei Martial Arts culture in its entirety.

## **2. EXHIBITION-BASED COMMUNICATION PATHS**

### **2.1. Inspiration of Shaolin Kung Fu Stage Theatre**

Martial arts performances have a long history and tradition. With the rapid development of the era, the value and significance of martial arts performances have surpassed the limitations of mere leisure and entertainment, extending into various fields such as politics, economy, culture, and education. This not only facilitates the rapid global dissemination of martial arts but also greatly contributes to the progress and development of national traditional culture, economy, and related industries. However, currently, performances related to Emei Martial Arts still predominantly adhere to traditional forms and often take place on simple stages. In order for Emei Martial Arts performances to enter theaters and be appreciated by audiences, further innovation and creative approaches are required. In recent years, martial arts practitioners have made many changes and gradually introduced a new genre of kung fu stage theatre that integrate stage design, background music, and storytelling. Some of these kung fu stage theatre can be regarded as masterpieces. They not only showcase the profound cultural essence of the Chinese nation but also embody the vastness and sophistication of martial arts. Moreover, these productions serve educational, inspirational, and enlightening purposes. For example, a large-scale martial arts stage theatre play created in 1999, "Sha Mi Zou Jin Shaolin" [1]. This marked the first time that Chinese martial arts culture was showcased in the form of stage art performance. The entire plot revolves around a conversation between an old monk and a young monk, showcasing the temple life of Shaolin monks, including their martial arts training, scripture recitation, and meditation. This allows the audience to appreciate the integrated program that combines stage design, music, lighting, and plot, while also experiencing and understanding the fusion of Zen and martial arts in Shaolin's culture. The emergence of this martial arts stage production, which takes Shaolin martial arts elements as its main content and incorporates other art forms as supplementary, with a complete storyline, signifies a new stage in the development of martial arts performances [2]. After "Sha Mi Zou Jin Shaolin", numerous stage theatre based on Shaolin Kung Fu have emerged one after another. These include "Wheel of Life," "Soul of Shaolin", "Shaolin Xiong Feng", "The Story of Huiguang," "Legends of Shaolin", "Nine Volumes of Kung Fu Poetry," as well as the live-action stage play "Shaolin Zen - Grand Music Ceremony". Such performances, which showcase and promote martial arts culture, protect intangible cultural heritage, demonstrate the essence of Chinese traditional culture, and foster cultural confidence, possess unique value and functionality. Currently, this style of performance can undoubtedly be seen as an effective means to display Emei martial arts (its origins, development, cultural significance, technical characteristics, etc.) and promote the dissemination of Emei martial arts culture. Therefore, Emei martial arts can also learn from this experience and design stage productions that incorporate Emei martial arts elements to showcase its own essence and perpetuate its "life".

### **2.2. Construction of Emei Martial Arts Stage Theatre**

#### **2.2.1 Selection of topics**

Emei martial arts stage plays use a "demonstration" approach to narrate a story related to Emei martial arts. The subject matter can be selected from fictional and fantastical anecdotes, literary works, as well as historical events that reflect real-life situations. However, regardless of the source, the productions should adhere to the principles of not deviating, distorting, or misleading, in order to ensure authenticity. The main purpose of these stories is to promote and

disseminate Emei martial arts culture, enabling people to truly understand and appreciate Emei martial arts.

#### A. Historical Events

Emei martial arts stage productions select historically significant events that are widely known among the general public as their subject matter, adapting and bringing them to the stage. This allows for the portrayal of the origins, evolution, and development of Emei martial arts, as well as their inherent essence. Additionally, it enables people to understand the founders of different genres and the characteristics of Emei martial arts in various periods. For example, the stage productions may choose to depict the traveling experiences of the founder of Pan Po-men martial arts, or the historical event of Zhang Tianhu teaching his disciples in Sichuan. These productions cover various characters, customs, and religious beliefs. The main and subplot narratives in these stories are rich, providing a comprehensive representation of the development of Emei martial arts culture in different periods and the distinctive traits of its founders.

#### B. Anecdotes

Stories can be drawn from the interesting anecdotes and tales of the founders and inheritors of various genres within Emei martial arts. These stories can cover the ancient, modern, and contemporary periods. There are many interesting anecdotes and tales to choose from. For example, in ancient times, there is Lin Jun, who was revered by the Ba people; Zhang Daoling, the founder of the early Dao sect in Heming Mountain; Baiyun Zen Master, who developed "Linji Qigong". In more recent times, there are Li Jun, the inheritor of Zhao Men martial arts known as "Tie Tou Yao Zi"; Xiao Tianlu and Xiao Kemin, inheritors of Pan Po-men martial arts; and Ma Chaozhu, a propagator of martial arts within the monk community. In the modern era, there are figures such as Zheng Huaixian, the "Grandmaster of Martial Healing"; Lv Zijian, the "Great Hero of the Yangtze River"; Peng Yuanzhi, the "Quick Hands of Shu." Drawing material from their tales and anecdotes can reveal the background and subsequent development of Emei martial arts and showcase its "vitality" during different periods in society.

#### C. Literary works

Stage productions place importance on the adaptation of literary works. Theatre creators can search for literary works related to Emei martial arts, such as "Shu Shan Jian Xia Zhuan", "Nineteen Heroes of Qingcheng," "Seven Dwarfs of Emei," "Emei Jian Xiong", and "Pan Po-men." Although the characters and stories in these literary works are mostly fictional, they can still be adapted into stage productions. As long as the conceptualization is rigorous and continuously refined, they will ultimately become "masterpieces" that inspire and enlighten people.

#### 2.2.2 Stage application

##### A. Real scene stage

Emei martial arts can leverage the natural scenic platforms unique to Sichuan, such as Mount Emei, the Leshan Giant Buddha, and Qingcheng Mountain, which have been inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List, to create real scene stage productions. By collaborating with tourist attractions, a comprehensive tourism destination can be established, integrating cultural dissemination, ecotourism, and leisure entertainment. Through this approach, an innovative pathway is created for showcasing and disseminating Emei martial arts culture.

##### B. Multimedia Stage

In addition to considering the basic requirements of scenery, lighting, makeup, costumes, and props, the design of multimedia stages also takes into account the application of multimedia technologies such as virtual imaging, holographic projection, VR, and AR to enhance the visual effects on stage. The rational use of multimedia technologies in stage design creates a new viewing space and produces a highly impactful stage effect, providing an immersive visual

experience for the audience [3]. Based on this, Emei martial arts stage productions can draw inspiration from the design of multimedia stages. By adapting stories from folk legends and martial arts novels, and leveraging multimedia technologies such as virtual imaging, holographic projection, VR, and AR, an innovative and refreshing Emei martial arts stage production can be presented.

### C. Small Theatre Stage

Compared to real scene and multimedia stages, the small theater stage has its own unique advantages and characteristics. It utilizes its smaller space to bring the stage closer to the audience, enhancing their viewing experience [4]. This allows the audience to actively engage and immerse themselves in the performance, experiencing the richness and charm of Emei martial arts culture, and fostering a deeper understanding and appreciation of Emei martial arts. The small theater stage can serve as a subsidiary facility in museums, supporting the display of various branches and styles of Emei martial arts culture. By fully leveraging the low-cost advantage of small theater stage productions, it is possible to establish non-profit projects dedicated to promoting and disseminating Emei martial arts culture. Such endeavors aim to meet the spiritual and cultural needs of the public and garner their attention.

## 3. VIDEO-BASED COMMUNICATION PATHS

Film and television, utilizing mediums such as copies, tapes, and storage devices, and displayed on screens or monitors, represent an art form that combines visual and auditory appreciation. This is a comprehensive form of modern art, encompassing various formats such as movies, television dramas, programs, and animation [5]. It is a modern technological means that follows the principle of “visual persistence,” utilizing photography and recording techniques to capture and store images and sounds onto film or tape, thus forming continuous moving images [6]. The powerful communicative capability of this modern art form and technological medium plays a significant role in the preservation, promotion, dissemination, popularization, and development of Emei martial arts culture.

### 3.1. Television series and films

Wuxia action dramas and films have always been the main genres in Chinese film and television, enjoying great viewership. It is worth noting that the release of movies like “Shaolin Temple” and “Huo Yuanjia” and teleplay like “Xiao Ao Jiang Hu” and “Taiji Zongshi” sparked a trend of learning martial arts in China. Emei martial arts can leverage this trend by producing film and television series that revolve around elements of Emei martial arts culture, aiming to capture people’s attention. When producing TV dramas or films based on Emei martial arts, it is important to ensure the authenticity of the adapted “story” and also pay attention to reflecting Emei martial arts’ cultural significance, showcasing its educational function, and satisfying the spiritual and emotional needs of the audience. Only by doing so can the desire to protect, inherit, disseminate, and promote Emei martial arts be fulfilled. When selecting the “stories” to be told in Emei martial arts-themed TV dramas and films, one can choose from events in the origin and development of Emei martial arts or the stories of practitioners in a particular style. Emei martial arts offers a rich array of stories, making it highly favorable for continuous production of a drama series.

### 3.2. Micro-documentary series

Micro-documentaries are a new type of documentary that utilizes real-life experiences and events as creative materials and subjects for artistic expression. Micro-documentaries have evolved from traditional documentaries and not only inherit the visual and auditory artistic principles of documentary aesthetics but also innovatively explore narrative modes and modes of dissemination on this foundation. Communication scholar Marshall McLuhan once said, “The

media is the basic driving force of social development and a sign that distinguishes different social forms. The emergence and use of each new medium announce our entry into a new era". With the emergence and continuous development of new media, the "micro" era quietly arrives, and various forms of "micro-art" are highly praised by the public. In the current context where fragmented reading habits have gradually become the mainstream way of receiving information, media content has become increasingly diverse, with various social platforms, such as APPs, WeChat public accounts, and microblogs, permeating various aspects of people's lives. In the face of the declining love and attention towards traditional documentaries, micro-documentaries have swiftly captured the attention of documentary creators and audiences due to their smaller size, rich content, and convenient distribution on social platforms. The development of this artistic form, which combines traditional documentaries with new media, has been rapid, and in just a few years, many high-quality works that are beloved by people have emerged. After the release of micro-documentaries such as "Forbidden City 100" and "The Story of Capital," platforms such as Sina, Youku, and iQiyi have seized the opportunity to create related video sections with the theme of "micro-documentaries," resulting in a wave of micro-documentary creation. Therefore, while Emei martial arts can utilize television dramas and films to impact its own cultural development, it can also fulfill its cultural dissemination aspirations through the artistic form of micro-documentaries. In reality, the target audience for television dramas, films, and micro-documentaries is different. Therefore, by disseminating works in these three different formats, a broader audience can be reached. Adapting to people's new ways of information dissemination and reception, creating a series of micro-documentaries on Emei martial arts is currently an important means of disseminating and promoting Emei martial arts culture, and it will also become an important form of recording and preserving Emei martial arts culture. When this documentary that encompasses the essence of Emei martial arts is completed and presented to the world, Emei martial arts will become a cultural treasure accessible to people throughout the country and even the world.

#### **4. CROSS-MEDIA COMMUNICATION MATRIX CONSTRUCTION**

With the rapid development of the Internet and communication technology, the era of multimedia coexistence has emerged. The medium through which people receive information is no longer limited to just television, newspapers, and radio. The Internet has become the primary channel for information dissemination and reception. Various forms of content presentation, such as online novels, web dramas, web films, and web documentaries, have emerged and gained a large number of fans. At the same time, some high-quality content has begun to demonstrate a tendency towards "transmedia storytelling," displaying characteristics of "gamification," "animation," and "new media" [7]. Transmedia storytelling differs from traditional narrative theories, as it advocates fully considering the characteristics and content experience needs of audiences on different platforms during content production. It unfolds interrelated yet independent storylines across different media platforms. The process of transmedia storytelling involves various components of a story being disseminated through multiple channels, such as films, television, novels, animation, and games. In an ideal state, each medium contributes in its unique way to the development of the story. These independently presented yet interconnected stories on different platforms create a better immersion for the audience. In order to achieve the aspirations of inheritance, dissemination, and promotion of Emei martial arts culture, it should not only focus on the use of stage plays, films, and micro-documentaries as media. It should also make full use of mediums such as online games, web videos, books, newspapers, picture books, comics, mobile phones, blogs, and QQ [8]. Only with the full utilization of various media can the effectiveness of transmedia be realized, achieving the multidimensional dissemination of Emei martial arts culture.

Emei martial arts has a “unique advantage” in terms of transmedia communication. Emei martial arts has multiple branches, rich “stories,” diverse characters, and intersects with religious culture, making it highly adaptable. While utilizing movies, TV dramas, and micro-documentaries to showcase Emei martial arts on the screen, also can design the “online games,” “web games,” and “mobile games” with Emei martial arts as the main element. Additionally, various information, technical videos, and basic knowledge related to Emei martial arts are disseminated through information publishing platforms such as blogs, WeChat public accounts, social media apps, and QQ. This form of communication that combines multiple forms of media will form a vast information network and create a transmedia communication matrix.

The construction of a transmedia communication matrix is of significant importance to the overall development of Emei martial arts culture. This study will attempt to construct a transmedia communication matrix for Emei martial arts, aiming to provide new insights for future exploration in this field. The transmedia communication matrix of Emei martial arts revolves around Emei martial arts as its core, constructing a “ripple” spread of collaboration across multiple media platforms, including films, TV dramas, stage plays, animation, and novels. Firstly, Emei martial arts is disseminated through each medium, with each medium’s product becoming a part of Emei martial arts culture. The two mutually build, share, coexist, and prosper together. Secondly, different media represent different market niches, providing diverse experiences for the audience. The greatest allure of novels lies in their vast imaginative space and their relatively unrestricted narrative style. Games focus more on user participation and experience. Players can assume a role in the game, witnessing the story from a first-person perspective. This sense of “exploration” transforms the passive acceptance of experiences into active engagement, allowing users to wholeheartedly embrace Emei martial arts culture. As the inheritors of future outstanding Chinese traditional culture, it is crucial for young people to understand and familiarize themselves with traditional culture. Animation is a preferred method of information consumption among teenagers. Therefore, embedding Emei martial arts culture within animated works can be an effective form of communication. Stage plays emphasize the power of live performances, similar to movies, creating a “ritualistic” watching experience that immerses the audience in the story. TV dramas are a popular and widely consumed art form that accompanies viewers with delight. The relaxed viewing environment allows Emei martial arts culture to gradually soak into the hearts of the audience. Alongside the development of the aforementioned media, attention should also be given to the establishment of official websites, official WeChat accounts, official Weibo accounts, and other social media platforms. These channels can provide distribution and promotional avenues for different media products and serve as crucial platforms for disseminating Emei martial arts culture. In summary, Emei martial arts, through the utilization of various media platforms and the creation of diverse media products, aims to increase accessibility and attract a wider audience, achieving a synergistic effect where “1+1 > 2” in terms of communication impact.

## 5. CONCLUSION

Emei martial arts is an important component of Chinese traditional culture. Actively promoting and disseminating Emei martial arts culture contributes to the promotion and inheritance of Chinese excellent traditional culture and the cultivation of the Chinese national spirit. Therefore, fully exploring the dissemination channels of Emei martial arts culture is not only a necessity for enhancing the spiritual civilization of the people but also a demand of the times. This study draws on the case of “Shaolin Kung Fu Stage Play” and analyzes the selection of themes and stage utilization in “Emei Martial Arts Stage Plays”. This study explores the filming of TV dramas, films, and series of micro-documentaries centered around elements of Emei martial arts culture, as well as the construction of a cross-media dissemination matrix for Emei martial arts culture. These will be the working directions for choosing the dissemination

channels for expanding Emei martial arts culture in the coming years. Although this study has its limitations, it is hoped that it can provide some ideas and references.

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