A Study on Modern Visual Narrative Design of the Northeastern Humanistic Spirit from the Perspective of Cultural Empowerment

Wentin Jin
Yanbian University

Abstract: The unique geographical environment, immigration history and industrial evolution of Northeast China have fostered a distinctive Northeastern Chinese humanistic spirit. As the core connotation of black soil culture, it embodies distinctive regional traits of pioneering perseverance, pragmatic dedication, pluralistic inclusiveness and unpretentious optimism. With the in-depth integration of culture and tourism as well as the rapid iteration of digital media, the communication context of regional culture and public aesthetic standards have undergone profound changes. At present, the visual expression of Northeastern humanistic spirit still has prominent deficiencies, including superficial symbolic presentation, monotonous narrative modes and insufficient contemporary implication. Solidified regional visual labels hinder the in-depth dissemination of Northeast culture and the reconstruction of regional urban images. Taking cultural empowerment as the entry point, this paper elaborates the core connotation of Northeastern humanistic spirit, analyzes the existing dilemmas of its visual narrative, and explores innovative optimization paths from four dimensions: symbol reconstruction, narrative reform, media upgrading and system construction. This study realizes the modern transformation of abstract Northeastern humanistic spirit into intuitive visual communication language, and provides theoretical reference and practical support for the innovation of regional visual design, the construction of cultural tourism brands and the revitalization of local culture in Northeast China.
Key words: cultural empowerment; Northeastern Chinese humanistic spirit; visual narrative; regional culture; design innovation

Introduction

Regional humanistic spirit is the core foundation of regional cultural inheritance and innovation. Relying on the cold-region environment, the immigration history of “Chuang Guandong”, the pattern of multi-ethnic integration and the course of heavy industry development, the Northeast region has fostered a distinctive humanistic spirit that combines pioneering perseverance, inclusive pluralism, pragmatic dedication and the warmth of everyday life, giving rise to diverse cultural forms such as land reclamation, industry, ice and snow, and folk customs, and forming a regional cultural system of profound depth.

Cultural empowerment and visual narrative are key paths for the revitalized dissemination of regional culture. Relying on creativity and digital technology, they can transform abstract humanistic spirit into intuitive visual content, break through the barriers of textual communication, and promote the popularized dissemination of regional culture.

At present, many regions in China have formed mature regional visual communication systems, whereas Northeast visual communication still has shortcomings: existing creations mostly focus on surface symbols such as ice and snow and folk customs, lacking deep humanistic cores such as pioneering and industrial responsibility; the content tends toward retro nostalgia and finds it difficult to present the new-era features of Northeast revitalization and urban renewal,

consolidating public stereotypes and wasting local cultural resources. Taking cultural empowerment as the perspective and combining design theories, this paper explores innovative paths for the modern visual narrative of the Northeastern humanistic spirit, so as to help Northeast regional culture achieve breakthrough dissemination and empower regional cultural revitalization and cultural tourism development.

1. Relevant Concepts and Their Internal Logic

1.1 The Core Connotation of Cultural Empowerment

Cultural empowerment is not simple cultural packaging and resource utilization but the in-depth revitalization and value reshaping of traditional culture. Through creative reconstruction, narrative upgrading and media expansion, it solves the development problems of traditional culture — outdated forms, limited dissemination and a niche audience — so that traditional culture fits modern aesthetics and communication scenarios. In the field of regional visual design, the role of cultural empowerment is mainly reflected in three aspects: first, the modern transformation of traditional visual symbols, retaining the core cultural recognizability while optimizing visual forms to suit modern design styles; second, the contemporary updating of cultural narrative, stepping out of a single nostalgic framework and enriching narrative content in light of contemporary development; third, the all-domain expansion of communication scenarios, relying on all-media platforms to achieve living and long-term dissemination of regional culture.

1.2 The Core Essence of the Northeastern Humanistic Spirit

The Northeastern humanistic spirit is a composite spiritual system accumulated over hundreds of years of regional development, rich in connotation and clear in hierarchy, mainly containing four core dimensions.

First, the pioneering and tenacious spirit of land reclamation. The severe cold natural environment of the Northeast created harsh living conditions; in modern times, immigrants of "Chuang Guandong" and frontier builders took root in the wilderness, opened up wasteland and built their homes with endurance and daring, forming a spiritual foundation of pragmatism, tenacity and courageous pioneering, which is the root of the Northeastern humanistic spirit.

Second, the inclusive spirit of absorbing diverse elements. The Northeast is a region where multiple ethnic groups have long lived together; Han, Manchu, Korean, Mongolian and other ethnic groups have coexisted for a long time, and folk culture, living customs and art forms have intermingled, shaping the sincere, simple, open-minded and tolerant character of Northeastern people and forming the regional cultural trait of pluralistic symbiosis.

Third, the industrial spirit of pragmatic dedication. As the cradle of New China's industry, the Northeast bore the important mission of national industrialization. Generations of industrial workers held their posts, pursued excellence and made selfless contributions, laying a solid foundation for the development of the country's heavy industry and condensing an industrial humanistic spirit of staying true to the original aspiration and taking pragmatic responsibility, which is the spiritual confidence of Northeast revitalization in the new era.

Fourth, the optimistic and open-minded spirit of life. Facing harsh natural conditions and phased development pressure, the people of Northeast have always maintained a positive attitude toward life, giving rise to vivid street culture and folk culture, which lend warmth and vitality to the profound Northeastern humanistic spirit.

1.3 The Internal Logic Connecting the Three

The Northeastern humanistic spirit, modern visual narrative and cultural empowerment support each other and are organically unified, forming a complete closed loop of cultural communication. Among them, the Northeastern humanistic spirit is the core entity, providing content support and value orientation for visual narrative and determining the cultural core of visual design; modern visual narrative is the communication carrier, transforming abstract spiritual traits into concrete visual symbols and story scenes and realizing its popularized implementation; cultural empowerment is the core driving force, effectively solving the problems of traditional visual narrative — superficial symbols, outdated content and narrow dissemination — and promoting the transformation of static cultural resources into dynamic

communication value and industrial value, thereby facilitating the long-term inheritance and innovative development of Northeast regional culture.

2. Existing Problems in the Modern Visual Narrative of the Northeastern Humanistic Spirit

2.1 Visual Symbols Remain on the Surface and the Humanistic Core Is Absent

Current regional visual design in the Northeast generally suffers from the problem of emphasizing form and neglecting connotation. Most creations merely stack superficial visual elements such as ice and snow landscapes, yangge performances and folk costumes, excessively magnifying the folk entertainment attributes of the Northeast while ignoring deep humanistic cores such as land reclamation and pioneering, industrial construction and dedication to the country and nation. Such one-sided symbolic expression greatly narrows the rich connotation of the Northeastern humanistic spirit, confining the public's perception of Northeast culture to the stereotype of the retro and the popular, so that the historical weight and contemporary value of black soil culture cannot be perceived and deep cognition of the Northeastern humanistic spirit is hard to form.

2.2 Fixed and Singular Narrative Perspective with a Serious Lack of Contemporary Attributes

At the present stage, the creative thinking of Northeast visual narrative is relatively conservative, mostly revolving around old industrial sites, traditional folk customs and retro life scenes, excessively rendering a nostalgic atmosphere with serious content homogenization. Against the background of the continuous advancement of the Northeast revitalization strategy, new breakthroughs have been achieved in urban construction, ecological cultural tourism, industrial transformation and youth entrepreneurship in the Northeast, displaying a modern and dynamic new appearance. Yet existing visual works rarely focus on new-era development scenarios; their narrative content is disconnected from current social development, cannot meet the aesthetic needs of contemporary audiences, and finds it difficult to evoke emotional resonance, greatly reducing the communication value of regional culture. At the same time, traditional visual narrative is mainly one-way output, lacking interactivity and experiential quality, and its communicative appeal is relatively weak.

2.3 Insufficient Media Adaptability and Relatively Limited Communication Scenarios

In the era of digital media, visual communication has entirely new requirements for content forms and presentation rhythms. At present, visual works related to Northeast humanities are still mainly based on traditional static posters, flat display boards and other traditional carriers, and dynamic and interactive content adapted to short videos, social platforms, digital cultural creativity and immersive experiences is seriously insufficient. Traditional static visual content has a single form and fixed rhythm, cannot adapt to the fragmented and entertaining communication characteristics of new media, so that high-quality local humanistic resources find it difficult to achieve breakthrough dissemination, and the breadth and depth of regional cultural communication are clearly constrained.

2.4 Scattered and Chaotic Visual System Without Systematic Top-Level Planning

At present, regional visual design in the Northeast has not yet formed a unified and standardized narrative system and visual standard; various creative entities act independently, and symbol application, color matching and design styles are disorderly. Visual content such as ice and snow culture, industrial culture and folk culture is mutually fragmented and has not been uniformly incorporated into the core narrative framework of the Northeastern humanistic spirit, resulting in fragmented and scattered visual expression. The long-term lack of systematic top-level design means that the Northeast has never formed an exclusive humanistic visual IP with high recognizability and strong stability, cannot build a unified regional cultural impression in the public mind, and is not conducive to the long-term shaping and promotion of the Northeast cultural tourism brand.

3. Innovative Visual Narrative Design Paths from the Perspective of Cultural Empowerment

3.1 Deeply Excavating the Cultural Core and Building a Hierarchical Visual Symbol System

To address the problem of superficial symbols, it is necessary to rely on the revitalization concept of cultural empowerment to build a hierarchical transformation system of "spiritual core—cultural carrier—visual symbol". Taking the four humanistic traits of pioneering, inclusiveness, pragmatism and optimism as the core value orientation, creators should step out of the limitation of superficial folk symbols. They should systematically sort out local characteristic elements such as black soil textures, land reclamation scenes, industrial machinery, Changbai Mountain landscapes and ethnic minority patterns, and build a complete visual material library of Northeast humanities. Through modern design techniques such as simplification, abstraction and reconstruction, traditional elements are translated into modern forms, outdated stereotyped shapes are removed, and core cultural recognizability is retained. At the same time, an exclusive color system should be unified, with the earth tones of the black soil, the cool tones of ice and snow, and the warm tones of folk customs as the core palette, forming a regional visual symbol system with a unified style and distinctive features.

3.2 Innovating Narrative Logic and Building a Narrative Framework Integrating the Old and the New

Relying on the contemporary character of cultural empowerment, creators should break the fixed narrative mode of single nostalgia and build a two-directional narrative system of "historical inheritance + contemporary innovation". In the historical dimension, visual scenes restore the development picture of Northeast land reclamation, industrial construction and multi-ethnic symbiosis, inheriting the profound humanistic foundation; in the contemporary dimension, they focus on new-era scenes such as urban renewal, ecological governance, youth struggle and cultural tourism innovation, showing the dynamic appearance of the Northeast advancing with the times and gradually dissolving stereotyped regional labels. Instead of rigid symbol stacking, storytelling and scene-based narrative methods should be adopted; taking local development changes and ordinary people's stories of struggle as carriers, abstract humanistic spirit is integrated into concrete visual images, enhancing the story quality and empathy of works and narrowing the emotional distance from audiences.

3.3 Relying on Digital Media to Broaden All-Domain Communication Application Scenarios

Following the development trend of digital communication, media empowerment should be used to upgrade the form of visual narrative and adapt to the all-media communication context. Breaking through the limitations of traditional graphic design, creators should develop diverse content such as dynamic illustrations, visual short films, dynamic posters and interactive visual works, fitting the communication rhythm of new media platforms and enhancing the interest and communicability of content. At the same time, all-domain online and offline communication scenarios should be expanded: the humanistic visual system should be integrated into offline scenes such as urban public landscapes, subway spaces, cultural and creative products and city promotion, and cover online channels such as short videos and social platforms, achieving all-round communication. With digital technologies such as VR and AR, immersive visual experience scenes can be created, allowing audiences to intuitively feel the charm of Northeast humanities and enhancing the depth and quality of cultural communication.

3.4 Unifying Visual Standards and Building a Cultural IP with Regional Characteristics

To address the fragmentation of the visual system, top-level systematic design should be carried out to unify the design style, color standards, symbol system and narrative logic of Northeast humanistic visuals. The fragmented state of various regional cultures should be broken; ice and snow, industry, land reclamation, folk customs and red culture should be organically integrated and uniformly incorporated into the core narrative framework of the Northeastern humanistic spirit, forming a serialized matrix of visual works. Visual design should be deeply integrated with the cultural tourism industry and the cultural and creative industry; through IP derivative development, urban visual image upgrading and

continuous output of serial works, an exclusive regional cultural visual IP of the Northeast should be built, transforming scattered visual content into a sustainably communicable cultural brand and continuously enhancing the influence and competitiveness of Northeast regional culture.

4. Design Practice Application and Research Value

4.1 Directions of Practical Application

Combining the above innovative paths, Northeast humanistic visual narrative can be applied in multiple fields. In graphic design, series posters, illustrations and albums can be created around themes such as land reclamation and struggle, industrial perseverance, pluralistic symbiosis and new-era revitalization, enriching the themes of visual narrative. In cultural and creative design, modernized humanistic symbols can be integrated into cultural tourism merchandise and daily cultural and creative products, realizing the integration of cultural value and industrial value. In urban space design, the systematic visual system can be applied to urban landscapes, public decoration and public welfare publicity, reshaping the visual image of Northeast cities in the new era. In digital communication, dynamic visual short films and interactive works can be produced to suit new media communication scenarios and promote the breakthrough dissemination of Northeast humanistic culture.

4.2 Analysis of Research Value

From the perspective of cultural value, by deeply excavating the Northeast humanistic core, this paper completes the modern visual translation of traditional regional culture, effectively activates the contemporary vitality of black soil culture, and realizes the creative transformation and living inheritance of excellent local culture. From the perspective of communication value, the new visual narrative system breaks the fixed regional stereotype, three-dimensionally presents the tenacious, enterprising and inclusive humanistic appearance of the Northeast, and effectively enhances the recognizability and communicative power of regional culture. From the perspective of social and economic value, visual innovation under cultural empowerment can help upgrade Northeast cultural tourism and build city brands, inject cultural impetus into regional revitalization, and at the same time strengthen local people's sense of regional identity and cultural confidence, consolidating the spiritual strength of regional development.

Conclusion

The Northeastern humanistic spirit is a precious spiritual wealth nurtured by the black soil and the most core cultural marker of the Northeast region, possessing both profound historical depth and distinct contemporary value.

This study sorts out the integration path of the Northeastern humanistic spirit and visual narrative and resolves the core pain points of current Northeast regional visual communication. In the context of the new era, visual innovation of the Northeastern humanistic spirit needs to continuously fit contemporary development and public aesthetics, constantly optimize design forms and narrative logic, and let the profound black soil humanistic spirit enter the public view in a more vivid, accessible and modern posture, providing lasting cultural support for Northeast cultural revitalization, cultural tourism industry upgrading and high-quality regional development.

References

[1] Shao Tianhua, Tan Qianwen, Shi Mingyu. Object Narrative and Pattern Expression: A Study of Visual Design Based on Intergenerational Identity of Regional Culture [J]. Screen Printing Industry, 2026(5): 91-93.

[2] Guo Xinyuan. Research on Narrative Strategies and Visual Presentation Optimization Paths of Cultural Tourism Short Videos [J]. Performing Arts Technology, 2026(6): 55-56+138.

[3] Lin Cheng, Li Linzhe. Exploration of Visual Design of Regional Cultural Brands from a Narrative Perspective [J]. Zhejiang Arts and Crafts, 2025(9): 117-120.
[4] Shen Liqin. Application of Regional Cultural Symbols in Visual Communication Design [J]. Teaching Reference of Middle School Geography, 2022(17): I0011-I0012.
[5] Huang Yaying, Wang Yuchen. Research on the Cultivation Path of Expanding Innovative Ability of Design Postgraduates Under AI Empowerment — Practical Exploration Based on Regional Cultural IP Development [J]. Journal of Art Design, 2026(10): 171-173.