

Article

Communication Strategies for Chinese Classical Dance in the Era of Big Data

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Abstract: In the era of big data, the communication of Chinese classical dance faces both unprecedented opportunities and significant challenges as digital platforms reshape how traditional art forms reach global audiences. This study examines communication strategies for Chinese classical dance through a multiple case analysis of three nationally recognized productions: Tang Palace Night, The Beauty Walk, and The Journey of a Legendary Landscape Painting. Drawing on communication theory, big data analytics, and cultural heritage studies, the analysis identifies three key findings. First, algorithmic recommendation systems amplify rather than determine cultural success, suggesting that content quality remains the primary driver of audience engagement. Second, personalization and broad audience exposure can coexist through sequenced multi-platform strategies that strategically deploy content across different digital channels. Third, authenticity drives algorithmic engagement when cultural elements are presented in accessible and visually compelling formats. The study concludes that big data serves as a strategic enabler for refining and scaling culturally valuable content, not as a substitute for artistic excellence. Practical implications include platform-optimized video production, dedicated digital infrastructure development, platform-specific content tactics, and online-offline integration models. These findings offer actionable insights for traditional art forms navigating digital transformation while preserving cultural integrity and artistic authenticity in an increasingly algorithm-driven media landscape.

Keywords: big data; chinese classical dance; communication strategy; digital media; cultural transmission

1. Introduction

1.1. Research Background

The dawn of the twenty-first century has witnessed an unprecedented transformation in how information is shared, driven by the rapid advancement and widespread application of big data technologies [1]. Data now permeates every aspect of modern society, influencing commercial decision-making, daily life, scientific inquiry, and artistic expression. Within this paradigm shift, the presentation and transmission of cultural heritage—particularly traditional performing arts such as Chinese classical dance—have entered a fundamentally new phase.

Chinese classical dance, a distinctive artistic form refined over centuries, embodies the aesthetic ideals and cultural memory of Chinese civilization. Rooted in traditional Chinese aesthetics, historical narratives, and philosophical principles, this dance tradition holds an important place within China's intangible cultural heritage [2].

The emergence of digital media platforms and algorithm-driven content distribution has significantly reshaped audience engagement with cultural content. Short video platforms have become widely used channels for presenting cultural material, delivering information and emotional resonance through concise, vivid, and highly engaging formats. These platforms employ recommendation algorithms that align content with user preferences, shifting from a model where audiences actively seek content to one where

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content is proactively delivered to relevant users [3, 4]. This technological capability presents both opportunities for broader audience access and challenges for preserving artistic authenticity.

At the same time, the integration of immersive technologies into mainstream media has expanded possibilities for cultural presentation [5, 6]. Television programs utilizing augmented reality (AR), virtual reality (VR), and naked-eye 3D techniques have demonstrated strong potential in reconstructing historical and cultural contexts for classical dance, as seen in certain nationally broadcast productions. Such technological enhancements have extended the reach of classical dance while reinforcing cultural connection among viewers.

1.2. Communication Challenges Facing Chinese Classical Dance

Despite the opportunities presented by digital transformation, the communication of Chinese classical dance in the big data era faces several significant challenges. Traditional communication channels are increasingly insufficient for engaging younger audiences, whose media consumption habits are predominantly digital. The abundance of information makes it difficult for any single cultural expression to sustain public attention. Mechanisms that improve communication efficiency—such as algorithmic personalization and user-generated content—introduce complexities in balancing artistic integrity with audience engagement [4]. Digital communication in dance must reconcile the dual expectations of broad appeal and artistic distinction, accessibility and authenticity. Studies on dance digitization indicate that an increasing emphasis on visual spectacle in digital formats may weaken the cultural depth and intrinsic artistic value of the art form. Scholarly attention to the integration of big data analytics and traditional dance communication remains limited. While research exists on dance digitization, intangible cultural heritage communication, and cultural identity in cross-cultural contexts, few studies have systematically explored how big data can inform targeted communication strategies for Chinese classical dance. Existing literature tends to focus either on technical aspects of digitization without addressing strategic communication frameworks, or on general cultural communication theories without applying them specifically to Chinese classical dance.

1.3. Research Questions and Objectives

This study seeks to address the identified gaps by examining the following research questions:

RQ1: What communication characteristics emerge for Chinese classical dance within the big data ecosystem?

RQ2: How have recent successful productions utilized data-informed communication approaches to achieve broad audience reach?

RQ3: What actionable strategies can be derived from these case analyses to support future communication initiatives for Chinese classical dance?

The objectives of this research are threefold [3]. First, to identify and analyze the distinctive communication characteristics of Chinese classical dance in the era of big data, including dissemination speed, audience interactivity, and multi-platform integration. Second, to examine three representative case studies to understand the mechanisms through which these productions achieved significant cultural resonance. Third, to synthesize these findings into a set of strategic recommendations for practitioners, cultural institutions, and policymakers seeking to promote Chinese classical dance in the digital age.

1.4. Significance of the Study

This research contributes to existing scholarship in three principal ways [7]. Theoretically, it integrates communication theory, big data analytics frameworks, and cultural identity studies to develop an analytical framework for understanding traditional art presentation within data-driven media ecosystems. This interdisciplinary approach

provides a model for future research at the intersection of cultural heritage and digital communication.

Practically, the study offers evidence-based strategies for cultural practitioners, dance companies, and arts administrators [8, 9]. By analyzing successful communication practices through the lens of big data, the findings provide actionable guidance for optimizing content production, platform selection, and audience engagement.

Furthermore, the study addresses broader conversations about the preservation and revitalization of intangible cultural heritage in the digital era. As societies worldwide grapple with how to maintain cultural continuity amid rapid technological change, the case of Chinese classical dance offers insights potentially applicable to other traditional art forms facing similar challenges [10].

2. Literature Review

2.1. Communication Theory in the Digital Age

Communication theory has evolved from its origins in linear transmission models toward more complex frameworks that account for interactivity, mediation, and audience agency. Traditional models, such as Shannon and Weaver's mathematical theory of communication, conceptualized communication as a unidirectional process from sender to receiver. However, the emergence of digital platforms has significantly transformed this linear paradigm.

Contemporary communication scholarship recognizes that digital media environments are characterized by networked interactions, decentralized content production, and algorithmically mediated information flows [11]. Recent analyses indicate that dance communication in China is shifting from centralized to decentralized patterns, with communication participants becoming more diverse, pathways adopting nonlinear structures, and audience engagement increasing markedly. This transformation reflects broader trends in which digital technologies are reshaping global communication practices, including changes in communication participants, content forms, and delivery channels.

From a dance communication perspective, digital technologies have become deeply integrated into choreography, performance, presentation, and outreach, enabling new contexts that blend physical and virtual elements, immersive and interactive experiences, and individual creativity with shared cultural expression [3]. This technological integration has expanded the reach of dance beyond traditional spatial and temporal boundaries, substantially improving opportunities for precise cross-cultural and cross-regional exchange.

2.2. Big Data Analytics in Cultural Communication

The application of big data analytics to cultural communication represents a relatively recent but rapidly growing area of inquiry. Big data is characterized by what is commonly referred to as the four V's: Volume for massive scale, Velocity for high-speed processing, Variety for diverse data types, and Value for low-value density requiring extraction [12].

Within cultural communication contexts, big data enables three primary functions. First, through data extraction and analysis, cultural practitioners can identify target audience preferences and behavioral patterns. Studies indicate that the digital and intelligent presentation of traditional Chinese arts leverages big data and artificial intelligence to deliver artistic content that is innovative, personalized, and intelligent, meeting users' information needs and supporting precision recommendation based on individual interests. Second, algorithmic recommendation systems powered by big data analytics have become central to content distribution on social media platforms. Research examining dance content on short-video platforms developed a big data-driven model of communication potential, revealing that strategically simplifying movement complexity—such as through key-frame extraction—significantly enhances user engagement and network reach while preserving core cultural meaning [7]. This finding

is particularly relevant for Chinese classical dance, which often features complex, technically demanding movements that may not readily align with the format constraints of short-video platforms. Third, big data facilitates real-time monitoring and iterative optimization of communication strategies. By analyzing audience feedback—including engagement metrics, sentiment analysis, and viewing patterns—communication teams can dynamically adjust their approaches.

2.3. Cultural Identity and Traditional Dance Transmission

Cultural identity constitutes a central concern in the communication of traditional dance forms [2, 13]. As forms of intangible cultural heritage, traditional dances embody accumulated knowledge, aesthetic values, and social meanings that are integral to community identity.

Research on cross-cultural communication of Chinese ethnic dance indicates that successful transmission requires both maintaining authenticity and adapting to diverse cultural contexts [14]. Similarly, studies of Chinese classical dance in international settings highlight the importance of transcending cultural and psychological barriers while expanding communication pathways.

The digital mediation of traditional dance raises fundamental questions about authenticity in transmission. Does algorithm-driven content distribution inevitably lead to the simplification or distortion of cultural meaning? Some scholars caution that while digital technology enables broad reach, it may also risk cultural homogenization or superficial engagement [15].

2.4. Digital Media and Dance Communication of Previous Studies

The intersection of digital media and dance communication has attracted increasing scholarly attention. Recent studies have examined various aspects of this relationship, including cross-media design in Chinese dance from the perspective of digital aesthetics, revealing how digital technology promotes the transformation of Chinese dance and endows it with new vitality and multidimensional values; the role of short video platforms in international cultural exchange, examining how short video content can foster cultural recognition among diverse audiences; the use of extended reality (XR) technologies for the digitization and transmission of traditional dance, demonstrating how immersive technologies enable embodied interaction and gesture-based navigation to enhance engagement and cultural continuity; the digital inheritance of dance intangible cultural heritage through intelligent teaching, online platforms, and digital choreography; and a decentralized communication ecology perspective on dance outreach, identifying key trends such as diversified communication agents, nonlinear pathways, and frequent audience interaction [16].

Despite these contributions, existing research exhibits several limitations [17]. Most studies focus either on technical aspects of digitization or on general communication strategies, without integrating big data analytics into communication strategy frameworks. Research specifically addressing Chinese classical dance remains limited relative to broader categories of Chinese dance or intangible cultural heritage. Comparative analyses of multiple successful cases to derive transferable strategic insights are scarce.

2.5. Research Gaps

Synthesizing the literature reviewed above, this study identifies a clear research gap: while big data analytics and digital platforms have demonstrably transformed the landscape of cultural communication, systematic research examining how these technologies can inform strategic communication specifically for Chinese classical dance remains limited.

This study contributes to existing scholarship by: (1) integrating communication theory, big data analytics, and cultural identity studies to develop an analytical framework tailored to Chinese classical dance promotion; (2) employing a multiple case study methodology to examine three nationally recognized productions that achieved

significant cultural impact; and (3) deriving actionable strategic recommendations grounded in empirical case analysis. In doing so, the study aims to bridge the gap between technological affordances and strategic cultural communication practices, offering insights applicable both to Chinese classical dance and to other traditional art forms navigating digital transformation.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Design

This study employs a multiple case study research design to investigate the communication strategies of Chinese classical dance in the context of big data. Case study methodology is particularly appropriate when research questions seek to understand how or why contemporary phenomena operate within real-world contexts [15]. The multiple case design enables both within-case and cross-case analysis, facilitating the identification of patterns and divergences across different productions.

The selection of the case study approach is justified on three grounds. First, the phenomenon under investigation is context-dependent, shaped by platform affordances, audience characteristics, and production decisions that cannot be isolated from their natural settings. Second, the research aims to generate both descriptive depth and practical insights, which case studies are well-suited to provide. Third, by comparing multiple cases, the study enhances the external validity of findings beyond what a single case could offer.

3.2. Case Selection Criteria

Three cases were selected for inclusion in this study: Tang Palace Night, The Beauty Walk, and Poetic Dance The Journey of a Legendary Landscape Painting. The selection followed purposive sampling based on the following criteria: each production achieved widespread national recognition and significant cultural impact, as evidenced by media coverage, social media engagement metrics, and public discourse; the three cases represent distinct primary distribution channels—television broadcast with online amplification, social media-driven audience engagement, and multi-platform integration including CCTV Spring Festival Gala and streaming services; all productions emerged between 2020 and 2022, situating them within the mature phase of short-video and algorithmic recommendation platforms in China; sufficient secondary data—including audience metrics, media reports, and production team interviews—are publicly available for analysis.

Although The Beauty Walk has received comparatively less academic attention than the other two cases, its patterns of audience engagement on social media offer valuable insights into organic, user-initiated content circulation [18, 19].

3.3. Data Collection and Sources

Data for this study were gathered from multiple secondary sources to ensure triangulation, encompassing peer-reviewed academic articles retrieved from China National Knowledge Infrastructure, Google Scholar, and dance studies journals; media reports from authoritative news outlets and entertainment industry publications; publicly available social media metrics from platforms including Weibo, TikTok, and Bilibili, covering view counts, likes, shares, and comments, with any inconsistent reporting of specific metrics noted as a limitation in the analysis; and published interviews with choreographers, directors, and technical staff sourced from media outlets and industry publications. A systematic search strategy was employed for each case, combining the production name with terms such as "communication," "audience engagement," "big data," "social media analytics," and "audience reception," with all searches conducted between January and March 2026.

3.4. Analytical Framework

The analysis proceeded through three integrated phases. In the first phase, each case was examined individually using a consistent framework structured around four

dimensions: (1) content characteristics, encompassing thematic elements, choreographic approach, and cultural references; (2) distribution channels, covering both primary and secondary platforms employed; (3) audience engagement mechanisms, including interactive features, user-generated content, and feedback loops; and (4) outcome indicators, measured by reach metrics, cultural impact, and legacy effects. The second phase involved cross-case synthesis to identify patterns and variations across the three productions, with particular attention to how each leveraged big data capabilities to achieve broad visibility and resonance [20]. In the third phase, findings were interpreted through theoretical perspectives reviewed earlier, particularly those concerning communication processes, big data analytics, and cultural identity formation. This structured analytical approach enables the study to systematically address the research questions while remaining firmly grounded in empirical evidence from real-world cases.

4. Case Study Analyses

4.1. Television-Driven Big Data Dissemination

Tang Palace Night, produced by Henan Satellite Television and first broadcast in February 2021, achieved widespread popularity by integrating traditional dance with augmented reality-enhanced visual storytelling. The production portrays Tang dynasty court musicians preparing for and performing at a night banquet, with choreography and costumes carefully reconstructed from historical records [21].

The first key finding concerns algorithmic amplification originating from a single television broadcast. Although Tang Palace Night was initially released as a linear television program, short video clips derived from it accumulated over 2 billion views across major digital platforms within 48 hours of its premiere. This rapid diffusion was driven by platform algorithms that prioritized the content based on early user engagement metrics—including completion rates, replay frequency, and sharing behavior—demonstrating how traditional media can effectively seed algorithmically driven digital circulation when designed for short-form adaptation.

The second major finding centers on authenticity strengthened through augmented reality technology. By leveraging 5G-enabled AR to overlay digitized Tang dynasty artifacts from the Henan Museum onto the live stage, the production created an immersive hybrid experience that simultaneously conveyed cultural knowledge and aesthetic appeal. Audience feedback frequently highlighted feelings of immersion and cultural resonance, indicating that technologically grounded authenticity—not solely data-driven personalization—can elicit strong emotional responses conducive to organic sharing [3].

4.2. Social Media Viral Mechanisms

The Beauty Walk, a classical dance piece excerpted from the larger production Song of Everlasting Regret, gained independent popularity after a performance video was uploaded to Bilibili in 2019. The dance reconstructs the elegant female figures described in Du Fu's poem "The Beauty Walk".

The third key finding is algorithm-driven resurgence through user curation. Although the dance was first presented in 2016, it experienced three distinct waves of popularity between 2019 and 2021, each triggered by different user-curated content: a fan-edited video, a compilation of celebrated Chinese classical dance moments, and a reaction video by a popular online creator. This pattern illustrates that in the big data era, content lifespan is not solely determined by original producers but can be extended through decentralized, audience-led curation.

The fourth key finding relates to how simplicity facilitates meme-ification. Compared to the complex ensemble choreography of Tang Palace Night, The Beauty Walk features a relatively simple, repeating movement phrase that became widely imitated on international short-video platforms. Dance movements that are visually distinctive yet technically accessible for non-professionals are more likely to generate user-generated

content, which in turn signals high engagement to algorithmic recommendation systems [20, 22].

4.3. Multi-Platform Convergence

The Journey of a Legendary Landscape Painting, a full-length dance poem inspired by the Song dynasty painting A Thousand Li of Rivers and Mountains, was first presented in 2021 and attracted widespread public attention following televised excerpts during the 2022 CCTV Spring Festival Gala [1].

Sequential platform layering has proven effective for sustaining audience engagement. Unlike single-platform content that may achieve rapid but transient visibility, The Journey adopted a strategic multi-platform rollout: live stage performances generated initial grassroots interest; the televised excerpt on the Spring Festival Gala established broad national exposure; short-form video adaptations stimulated social media discourse; and full-length recordings on streaming platforms served deeper, sustained engagement. Each platform fulfilled a distinct function within the audience journey, collectively expanding reach while preserving artistic and cultural integrity.

Cultural symbolism functions as a key driver of audience interaction and data generation. Audience analytics indicated that discussions frequently focused on resonant symbolic features—the cyan-green color scheme, layered costumes evoking mountain topography, and the philosophical motif 'mountains are also people.' These culturally grounded elements prompted extensive commentary and interpretive analysis on platforms such as Zhihu and Weibo, yielding valuable insights for audience-responsive content development. This demonstrates that data-informed strategies can accommodate, rather than dilute, cultural complexity—particularly when complex ideas are rendered through accessible symbolic language.

4.4. Cross-Case Synthesis

Across the three cases, three common patterns emerge: Algorithmic recommendation systems disproportionately favor content that generates rapid, repeated, and varied engagement signals; Authentic cultural specificity—when presented through accessible formats—can enhance algorithmic visibility, challenging the assumption that simplification is required for broad reach; Effective content deployment is rarely unplanned but stems from intentional design that aligns platform capabilities with cultural expression, whether through AR enhancement, memorable movement phrases, or coordinated multi-platform sequencing.

5. Discussion

5.1. Big Data as an Enabler Rather Than a Determinant

The findings from the three cases clarify a recurring misconception in cultural communication discourse: that big data analytics and algorithmic recommendation systems function as deterministic forces dictating content success. The cases suggest a more nuanced relationship. In Tang Palace Night, algorithmic amplification followed rather than preceded the production's intrinsic cultural and technological appeal. The content was not algorithmically optimized during creation but proved highly amenable to algorithmic dissemination due to its strong emotional resonance, visual distinctiveness, and shareability [3, 23].

This finding aligns with established communication theory emphasizing that while platforms shape distribution, they do not fully determine audience reception. For Chinese classical dance, big data enables precision targeting and real-time feedback, yet it does not substitute for artistic excellence or cultural authenticity. Practitioners should therefore treat big data as a strategic enabler—a tool for refining, testing, and scaling culturally valuable content—rather than as a prescriptive blueprint for content creation.

5.2. The Paradox of Personalization and Cultural Fragmentation

One of the central promises of big data in cultural communication is personalization: delivering tailored content to individual users based on their behavioral profiles.

However, empirical observation reveals a notable tension. The Beauty Walk achieved viral success not through narrow targeting but through broad, cross-demographic appeal [24]. Its most engaged audiences ranged from dance enthusiasts to history lovers to users seeking aesthetically pleasing short-form content.

Overreliance on personalization algorithms may lead to audience segmentation, limiting opportunities for serendipitous discovery and shared cultural experiences. For cultural heritage forms such as Chinese classical dance—which embody historically rooted aesthetic values—maintaining moments of widespread exposure may be equally important as optimizing individualized content delivery [25, 26]. The Journey case illustrates an integrated approach: personalization supports deeper engagement at later stages, while broad-reach anchor events, such as the Spring Festival Gala, help sustain cultural continuity.

5.3. Authenticity Versus Algorithmic Optimization

A recurring consideration in digital heritage studies concerns whether traditional art forms require simplification or gamification to achieve broad visibility on algorithm-driven platforms. The Tang Palace Night case challenges this notion. Its AR-enhanced presentation—featuring meticulous costume reconstruction, historically informed choreography, and scholarly consultation—was central to its appeal, not a limitation. Audience engagement was driven by perceived authenticity, indicating that algorithmic systems, trained on human interaction patterns, can prioritize cultural depth when conveyed through visually compelling and emotionally resonant formats.

This insight supports an emerging perspective within digital cultural studies: simplification is not inherently required for widespread resonance. Instead, culturally specific content—when rendered in vivid sensory and narrative forms—can generate the high-intensity engagement signals that algorithms recognize and amplify. For the communication of Chinese classical dance, this suggests prioritizing production excellence and rigorous cultural research over content dilution based on assumed algorithmic preferences.

5.4. Limitations of Big Data in Evaluating Cultural Impact

While big data provides valuable metrics, these indicators do not capture the full spectrum of cultural impact. None of the three cases could have had their long-term significance assessed solely through real-time analytics. One initiative sparked renewed public interest in Tang dynasty history and increased museum visits; another led to sold-out stage performances and heightened appreciation for the classical painting *A Thousand Li of Rivers and Mountains*; a third inspired amateur dance covers that, although simplified, introduced foundational classical dance vocabulary to broader audiences.

These outcomes suggest that evaluating cultural communication requires mixed methods: quantitative metrics for reach and engagement, complemented by qualitative assessment of cultural learning, attitude change, and behavioral outcomes. Big data serves as a powerful starting point, yet remains insufficient as a standalone tool for understanding how traditional arts achieve enduring cultural transmission in the digital age.

6. Strategic Implications

6.1. Platform-Optimized Video Production

Algorithmic recommendation systems prioritize content with high completion rates and rapid engagement. For Chinese classical dance, this necessitates generating multiple video formats from a single performance: full-length archival versions for specialized platforms, 60–90 second highlight reels for general audiences, and 15–30 second micro-clips optimized for vertical short-video platforms. Even brief clips must preserve distinctive movement phrases or aesthetic motifs that immediately convey the essence of Chinese classical dance. High-resolution cinematography, professional editing, and

spatial audio design are essential strategic components—not optional enhancements—for achieving algorithmic visibility.

6.2. Dedicated Digital Infrastructure

Social media platforms provide broad reach but rely on algorithmic curation, which constrains direct engagement between artists and audiences. A dedicated website or mobile application offers a controlled environment for presenting in-depth content—including full performances, historical documentation, movement analysis, and scholarly commentary—that cannot be accommodated by short-form formats. Such platforms also support first-party data collection, enabling transparent audience analytics. This infrastructure should complement, rather than replace, social media presence: brief clips serve discovery purposes, while the dedicated platform functions as an archival repository and primary destination for deeper engagement [10, 27].

6.3. Platform-Specific Algorithmic Strategies

Each platform operates under distinct algorithmic logics: TikTok prioritizes video completion rate and re-watches; Bilibili rewards high-quality user comments and longer average session durations; Weibo amplifies content that generates rapid early engagement, particularly from verified accounts [28, 29]. Effective content distribution therefore requires platform-specific approaches: for TikTok, visually compelling and repeatable movement phrases suited to meme or challenge formats; for Bilibili, performance clips accompanied by explanatory annotations to encourage extended viewing; for Weibo, strategic collaboration with influential users for initial visibility, followed by demographic-targeted advertising. Continuous monitoring of real-time metrics supports iterative optimization.

6.4. Online-Offline Integration through Cultural Tourism and Museum Partnerships

Digital virality can translate into tangible cultural outcomes. The Tang Palace Night initiative demonstrated that online engagement significantly increased museum visitation and cultural tourism revenue. A hybrid model is therefore recommended: online content drives awareness and initial interest, while offline experiences deepen engagement and generate new shareable content [14]. Specific implementations include museum-dance collaborations featuring QR-coded exhibit links, pre-visit social media campaigns using location-based targeting for heritage site performances, and co-branded cultural products promoted through influencer unboxing videos. Integrating offline transaction data with online behavioral profiles enables refined audience segmentation and personalization for future campaigns.

7. Conclusion

This study examined how big data informs communication strategies for Chinese classical dance through three case analyses. Algorithmic systems amplify—rather than determine—success; content quality remains decisive. Personalization and broad exposure can coexist via sequenced, multi-platform strategies. Authenticity and algorithmic optimization are not mutually exclusive: cultural depth drives engagement when presented accessibly. Practically, big data serves as an enabler for refining content, not a substitute for artistic excellence. Key strategies include platform-optimized production, dedicated digital infrastructure, platform-specific tactics, and online-offline integration with cultural tourism. Limitations arise from reliance on public data and limited generalizability. Future research should adopt comparative and experimental designs. Big data offers powerful tools, but cultural authenticity and audience engagement remain paramount.

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