

Cultural Misunderstandings Caused by Misinformation and the Mitigation Strategies Through Cross-cultural Communication on Rednote

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Abstract. In the digital age, social media has also emerged as an intrinsic form of cross-cultural communication that allows people from different cultural backgrounds to converse and exchange ideas with each other. The same platform that unites human beings all over the world, however, also facilitates the rapid spread of misinformation that easily leads to cross-cultural miscommunications. rednote, one of China's most successful social media programs, is globally used by Chinese and foreign members alike, a rich environment with which to see the effects that misinformation has upon intercultural communication. A good case in point is the "TT Refugee" case in January 2025. Initially, the majority of users dealt with the situation with misconceptions based on earlier false news. However, through ongoing discussions and cross-cultural communication on rednote, the majority of misconceptions were gradually debunked. This case demonstrates the two-edged nature of social media—as both a tool for misinformation and an effective means of disproving false information through cross-cultural communication. The essay aims to investigate how disinformation contributes to cultural misunderstandings and how they may be addressed using best communication methods on platforms like rednote. Through analysis of user interaction and feedback, the research illustrates how social media can facilitate understanding and reduce cultural bias, prompting the creation of thoughtful and inclusive digital discourse in today's age.

Keywords: Cross-cultural communication, Misinformation, Social media, Cultural misunderstandings, Rednote

1. Introduction

In real-time digital communication, misrepresentation is a common process that goes beyond mere fact-inaccuracy—it has a tendency to form attitudes, solidify stereotypes, and reify cultural

cleavages. On social networking sites, especially those that encourage user-generated content, caricatures of cultural practice spread quick and wide. They may be ritualized out-of-place ceremonies, stereotyping oversimplification, or virtual social rituals. Such disinformation not only warps cultural facts but also builds walls of ignorance and miscommunication among cross-cultural consumers.

Rednote, the subject of this book, is a social site where humans exchange cultural know-how, life experience, and personal anecdote. Unlike those sites whose mission is viral content, rednote's people-centric model makes that storytelling potentially genuine and therefore enormous cross-cultural sharing possible. Those curious questioners politely asking about odd traditions or bringing their own stories of cultures are, indirectly, engaging in a form of people's diplomacy-dissolving myths and building mutual understanding on a more realistic and effective basis.

The general goal of this research is to explain how misinformation creates cultural misconceptions and provide effective solutions for combating these misconceptions through cross-cultural communication on rednote. Two problem-based research questions drive this research:

What are the negative impacts of misinformation on cultural user perception and knowledge across social media cultures?

This entails examination of how misinformation continues to feed into biases in culture, enables misconceptions, and prevents effective cross-cultural communication.

How does rednote cross-cultural communication minimize misunderstandings across cultures?

The study will identify the mode and mode of cross-cultural communication on the site, the character of cultural miscommunication addressed, and verify the efficacy of such communication in stereotypy reduction.

The significance of this study is that it will be capable of explaining the contribution of the common user towards becoming informal culture ambassadors. In valuing the excellence of common testimony and common social contact more than educational campaigns to break strong stereotypes more effectively, this study hypothesizes the value of user-generated websites towards intercultural communication. Second, this study attempts to offer practical advice in establishing online community relations and more thoughtful online communities wherein there are imaginized differences that are invitations to conversation instead of conflict.

2. Literature review

Misinformation on social media often leads to cultural misunderstandings. However, through cross-cultural communication, these misunderstandings can be alleviated, demonstrating the potential for social media platforms to mitigate the effects of cultural biases and foster better understanding.

2.1. Evaluation of previous research

2.1.1. The negative impact of misinformation on cross-cultural understanding in social media

There is a global problem of misinformation, especially on social media, where it easily and quickly spreads to affect different cultures. Several studies have been done to understand it better.

Tarasenko and Kulykova [1] explore misunderstandings in cross-cultural communication, identifying factors such as stereotypes, language barriers, and nonverbal misinterpretations. While their study does not directly address misinformation, it highlights the pre-existing cultural biases that misinformation can reinforce. In contrast, Cook et al. [2] focus on the cognitive mechanisms

behind misinformation, explaining why false beliefs persist even when corrected. Their study introduces concepts like the “backfire effect,” which can make misinformation more deeply ingrained when attempts are made to debunk it.

The role of social media in misinformation dissemination is extensively analyzed by Safieddine et al. and Muhammed & Mathew. Safieddine et al. use data modeling to simulate how misinformation spreads in online newsgroups, demonstrating the influence of digital networks [3,4]. Muhammed & Mathew [4] adopt a systematic review approach, proposing the AMIO framework to examine misinformation in sensitive areas like health and politics. While both studies emphasize the viral nature of misinformation, Muhammed & Mathew [4] go further by outlining strategies for mitigation, which aligns with Cook et al.’s [2] intervention-focused approach.

O’Connor & Weatherall and Siciliano shift the discussion toward the cultural consequences of misinformation [5,6]. O’Connor & Weatherall highlight how digital misinformation shapes societal norms and influences public understanding, indirectly affecting intercultural perceptions [5]. Siciliano [6], on the other hand, directly connects misinformation to cultural misunderstandings, providing case studies that show how false narratives exacerbate stereotypes and deepen divisions between cultural groups.

When bundled, the papers disclose the diverse impact of falsehoods. The endurance of misinformation is explained by cognitive and social factors. In addition, digital networks help the messages spread, and cultural predispositions determine how hatred is propagated. The future of misinformation, as depicted in this study, entails a mix of media literacy, algorithmic strategies and knowledge of cultural contexts.

Our study adopts Cook et al.’s [2] cognitive framework, particularly the “backfire effect,” to explain misinformation’s persistence, alongside Muhammed & Mathew’s [4] AMIO framework for analyzing its spread and mitigation. We define misinformation following O’Connor & Weatherall [5], emphasizing its role in shaping societal norms, and draw on Siciliano [6] to highlight its impact on cultural misunderstandings. By integrating cognitive, digital, and cultural perspectives, our research examines how misinformation reinforces stereotypes and deepens cross-cultural divides.

2.1.2. How cross-cultural communication helps reduce cultural misunderstandings

Cross-cultural communication is essential to reduce misunderstandings by providing insights, dialogue, and mutual understanding. However, cultural prejudices, mental differences, and digital media influence can impede successful communication. This review examines different communication models that address these challenges.

Beech [7] highlights that misunderstandings go beyond language barriers, involving cultural assumptions and relational dynamics. Understanding these factors improves cross-cultural engagement. Lu [8] analyzes Chinese web celebrities, such as Li Ziqi, showing how digital media fosters global cultural exchange while presenting challenges like misinterpretation. Russo [9] focuses on participatory culture in cultural institutions, emphasizing audience interaction as a tool for bridging cultural gaps.

Overall, these studies suggest that effective cross-cultural communication, combined with awareness of digital influences, is key to reducing cultural misunderstandings. Our study adopts Beech’s [7] perspective that cultural misunderstandings stem from assumptions and relational dynamics, not just language barriers. We incorporate Lu’s [8] analysis of digital media’s role in cultural exchange, using it to explore both opportunities and challenges in cross-cultural communication. Russo’s [9] focus on participatory culture informs our discussion on audience

engagement as a bridge for understanding. By integrating these perspectives, we examine how cross-cultural communication fosters understanding while navigating digital challenges.

2.2. Summary

Based on the classification and analysis of the above literature, we can see that misinformation can lead to serious cultural misunderstandings in cross-cultural communication. As China's leading social media platform, rednote is also facing the challenge of misinformation dissemination. In order to avoid cultural misunderstandings, we should adopt effective strategies for cross-cultural communication, such as increasing tolerance for different cultures, selecting proper topics, and making the best use of digital media introduction. In addition to that, improving user's cross-cultural understanding ability by means of education and training is also an excellent way to solve the problems caused by misinformation. Future research can further explore the specific manifestations and dissemination mechanisms of misinformation on rednote, as well as how to reduce its negative impacts through technological means and policy interventions.

2.3. Research gap

Although the research on misinformation and cross-cultural communication is increasing, there remains a gap in studies focused on specific social media platforms, such as rednote. Existing research mainly examines the general impacts of misinformation, with limited exploration of its role in cross-cultural communication, particularly on platforms like rednote.

2.3.1. Lack of research on forms of cross-cultural communication

Existing studies rarely discuss specific cross-cultural communication modes on rednote, and there is a lack of exploration into how the platform's communication tools and features facilitate or hinder communication in the context of misinformation.

2.3.2. Limited analysis of types of cultural misunderstandings

Most studies focus on the general effects of misinformation without examining specific types of cultural misunderstandings, particularly within social media contexts. While both reviews recognize the role of biases and digital media in shaping misunderstandings, they lack a clear classification of these misunderstandings. They do not systematically differentiate between those arising from language barriers, social norms, historical perspectives, or misinformation, limiting their ability to address the nuanced ways cross-cultural communication is affected.

This study aims to fill these gaps by exploring how cross-cultural communication on rednote can help mitigate cultural misunderstandings caused by misinformation.

3. Methods

3.1. Research design

This study adopts a quantitative research approach using a survey method to collect quantitative data. The primary objective is to examine how misinformation contributes to cultural misunderstandings and to explore the role of intercultural communication strategies in mitigating these misunderstandings, particularly in intercultural interactions on platforms such as rednote.

3.2. Data collection

The data used in this study comes from a self-administered questionnaire, categorized as primary data. It is collected through an online survey, distributed via Wenjuanxing (Questionnaire Star). The questionnaire consists of single-choice questions, multiple-choice questions, and Likert scale questions, covering the following research dimensions:

Does misinformation on social media contribute to cultural misunderstandings, and how do these misunderstandings affect intercultural communication?

How do users assess the accuracy and reliability of culture-related content on social media?

Is social media, particularly rednote, effective in reducing cultural misunderstandings?

3.3. Data analysis methods

The collected survey data were analyzed using descriptive analysis and cross-tabulation analysis. Descriptive analysis was employed to summarize the basic characteristics of the respondents. Cross-tabulation analysis was used to examine the relationships between key variables, such as user demographics and their perceptions of intercultural communication on rednote, providing insights into potential patterns and correlations.

3.4. Participant characteristics

This study involves 105 participants, with the questionnaire distributed through various social media platforms, including TikTok and rednote. The demographic characteristics of the participants are as follows:

Age distribution: Primarily between 18 and 24 years old (representing young adult social media users).

Gender ratio: 80% female.

Cultural background: 96.19% of the participants are Chinese.

Education level: Most participants have a high school or university-level education.

Status: 83.81% of the participants are students, and 70.48% are single.

3.5. Ethical considerations

This study ensures informed consent, anonymity, and secure data handling, with all responses collected anonymously and used solely for academic research.

4. Discussion

4.1. Key findings of the study

This study provides several key insights into the role of social media in cross-cultural communication and misinformation. First, our findings highlight that young users (18-24 years old) are the primary participants in online cross-cultural interactions, with a strong preference for platforms such as rednote, WeChat, and TikTok. The data indicates that users are highly engaged with cultural content, particularly topics related to food, travel, and entertainment. However, while many respondents actively consume and interact with cross-cultural content, their engagement tends to be passive rather than deliberate, suggesting that exposure to different cultures often occurs incidentally rather than through intentional exploration.

Second, this examination exhibits a high level of skepticism regarding online cultural content, with 71.43% of participants agreeing that on-line cross-cultural content often tends to contain biases or false information. As has been stated before, there is a plethora of misleading information on the internet [5]. While various users are persuaded that social media promotes cross-cultural understanding, it can be observed that their apprehensions vis-a-vis the uncertainty of the content's authenticity and the presence of stereotypes and clichés mitigate the potential benefits.

Thirdly, the people who use rednote are impacted by cross-cultural interactions and they believe that the effectiveness of online cross-cultural exchange is highly influenced by the accuracy and reliability of the information that is shared. They also emphasize that the management of the platform should be strengthened to prevent the spread of false information and stereotypes. These users, who have been influenced by the contents of other countries and cultures or have contacted people of different cultures, have received good reviews. Some of the contents have deepened their understanding of the other culture, while others have changed their doubts and misunderstandings about a certain culture.

Fourthly, people who use platforms like Reddit, WeChat and TikTok are likely to be influenced by cultural misunderstandings and fake news, but they are still more likely to believe that online interaction can help with understanding. Also, participants who are friends with others from different cultures are more likely to agree that online platforms reduce cultural misunderstandings, which strengthens the role of direct communication.

Lastly, users who trust information provided by official sources, professional institutions, or content from individuals within that cultural group or residing in that country/region are more likely to correct misinformation when they encounter inaccurate descriptions of their own culture online.

4.2. Interpretation and explanation

The report is similar to the article of Cook et al. that describes the backfire effect, which attempts to explain the reasons for continued misinformation despite providing sufficient correction strategies [2]. The cultural bias of the users can make them reject correction and continue to believe in the misconceptions. It can be the reason for the continued display of cultural misinformation.

Also, the findings back Muhammed & Mathew's [4] AMIO theory on Disinformation areas like culture and politics. It can be inferred that the digital socializing platforms, including but not limited to rednote and TikTok have a big part in dispersing the cultural talks, both correct and incorrect. These platforms (rednote and TikTok) get large interactions, which can logically be interpreted as they are the main grounds where cultures are developed. The culture on these platforms is developed through the automated systems and it is possible that the culture may have an effect on the already existing norms, beliefs and values through the computerized culture.

Furthermore, our results have shown a double-edged role of social media for intercultural communication. On the one hand, this role is in great understanding of the culture of other nations representatives, it has been mentioned as looking for information from representatives of other nations. On the other hand, this is in increasing cultural ignorance, the fact that social networks sometimes only reinforce existing misconceptions and stereotypes and do not allow for looking critically at stereotypes. For instance, the same idea of the magazine will be far-fetched on the example of a dress in the Egyptian style, which is a matter of course in everyday life.

4.3. Comparison with existing research

Compared to the previous studies, our results confirm already known facts and add some new information on the cross-cultural issues in the digital world. Tetiana and Kulykova [1] noted that language and stereotypes are the obstacles to efficient interaction between representatives of different cultures, and this also supplements our results, as information provided in the network can also amplify these issues. More than half of the informants have doubts about the objectivity of the information given about the culture of their people, which is consistent with Siciliano [6], according to which the influence of the network promotes the spread of incorrect images of individual ethnic groups.

Our research also supports Lu's [8] analysis of digital media's role in global cultural exchange, particularly in the case of rednote, where Chinese influencers and content creators present curated cultural narratives to a global audience. This aligns with the broader discussion on participatory culture [9], where user-generated content plays a key role in shaping cultural perceptions. However, our findings suggest that while participatory culture fosters engagement, it also introduces challenges related to content authenticity and selective representation.

4.4. Solutions and research significance

Based on our findings, we propose the following solutions to address the challenges of misinformation and cultural misunderstandings in online cross-cultural communication:

4.4.1. Enhancing media literacy and critical thinking skills

People who are using social media should be taught on how to critically assess cultural content and identify fake news.

Media literacy programs could be used in an educational curriculum to help young people become better at determining the trustworthiness of online content.

4.4.2. Strengthening platform regulation and content verification

Social media platforms such as rednote and TikTok should have more thorough content moderation policies and fact-checking systems.

Algorithm transparency should be improved to avoid the amplification of biases through echo chambers.

4.4.3. Encouraging meaningful cross-cultural interactions

The media should promote appropriate communication opportunities amongst people from various cultures.

A community-driven initiative, such as round table talks with leading experts in the field of culture, can help in demystifying issues of culture.

4.4.4. Promoting positive engagement in online discussions

Users must be encouraged to engage in constructive discussions rather than confrontational debates when addressing misinformation.

Comment sections must be monitored to curb the dissemination of fake cultural statements while promoting healthy communication.

4.5. Research significance

This study contributes to understanding how social media impacts cross-cultural communication and misinformation. The research we conducted centered on the participatory culture of social media, especially on mediums like rednote, where users actively create and distribute content. However, the findings also demonstrated the issues of authenticity in content and the reinforcement of stereotypes.

In the context of reducing cultural misunderstandings, our research suggests that having purposeful online discussions and verified sources can enable mutual understanding. This has implications on how social media platforms, politicians, and teachers can change their cultures for positive growth.

Overall, this study underscores the complex connection among social media, misinformation, and cultural understanding, providing us with the necessary information on how digital platforms can help break the cultural divide and reduce the risks of misinformation.

5. Conclusion

5.1. Research limitation

5.1.1. Narrow sample range

More than 95% of the sample in this study's respondents were from China, and 60% of them were young adults (18-24 years), and 80% of the participants were women. Thus, the study sample has less diversity within the sample members, which means the study results would only apply to users from the same group, in this case, young adult women, and not to users from different age groups, genders, gender identities, races, and ethnicities. Thus, the findings of the study are potentially less representative of how users from different groups would perform in an intercultural context.

5.1.2. Single research method

Only survey and quantitative analysis methods were used in this study, and there was no supplement of qualitative research methods, such as in-depth interviews or case studies. As a result, the research fails to deeply explore the subjective experience and emotional response of users, and fails to fully understand the details and complexities of cross-cultural interaction. Quantitative data provides overall trends, but ignores individual differences and an understanding of the emotional level.

5.1.3. Respondents' cultural subjective bias

Respondents' responses may be influenced by their cultural biases, especially when discussing disinformation and cultural misconceptions. Since most of the interviewees come from the same cultural background (China), their cognition of other cultures may be influenced by their own culture, resulting in data bias, and it is difficult to ensure the objectivity and accuracy of the results.

5.2. Suggestions and prospects for future research

5.2.1. Expand the scope of the research platform

Future research could be further extended to other social media platforms (e.g., Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, etc.) for cross-platform comparative analysis. By comparing the characteristics and effects of cross-cultural communication on different platforms, we can more comprehensively understand the transmission mechanism of cultural misunderstanding and false information, and explore the similarities and differences between platforms and their roles in cross-cultural communication.

5.2.2. A broader cultural sample

In order to overcome the limitations of the narrow sample size, future studies could include respondents from more countries and cultural backgrounds, especially considering the globalization potential of rednote as a platform, increasing the diversity of the sample across cultural groups and contributing to a comprehensive analysis of misconceptions and mitigation strategies in different cultural contexts.

5.2.3. Explore the source and spread path of false information

Research can explore the sources and routes of disinformation, identify which types of information are more likely to lead to cultural misunderstandings, and analyze how such information is spread and accepted on platforms like rednote. Consider studying the effects of different types of disinformation (e.g., images, videos, text) on users' cultural perceptions.

This study examines the cultural misunderstanding caused by false information and the role of rednote platform in mitigating this problem. The study found that while social media has facilitated cross-cultural communication, disinformation and cultural bias remain major challenges. Actively interacting users were more likely to recognize the potential of social media in reducing cultural bias, but the limitations of the sample affected the broad applicability of the findings. Future studies should expand the sample range, compare multiple platforms and combine qualitative analysis to further understand the spread path of false information and the effect of cross-cultural communication. At the same time, social platforms should strengthen content supervision and information verification mechanisms.

Overall, this study provides an important perspective for understanding the role of social media in cross-cultural communication and provides valuable theoretical and practical guidance for future research and platform development.

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