
| RESEARCH ARTICLE

Food Cultural Meme Construction of *A Bite of China* from the Perspective of Attitude System

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| ABSTRACT

Documentary is an art form based on real life that integrates various social semiotic resources. *A Bite of China* has been well-received for its perfect combination of local Chinese cuisines with related stories. This research selects this documentary as the research object and the attitude system of Systemic Functional Linguistics as the theoretical framework, and from the perspective of interpersonal meaning, it investigates the meme construction in *A Bite of China* through the analysis of semiotic resources of affect, judgement, and appreciation, the three subsystems of the attitude system. The study adopts a combined qualitative and quantitative approach, focusing on the semiotic and meme construction of the documentary series. The theoretical framework provided by the attitude system theory, coupled with the utilization of the analysis tool UAM 6.2 for data annotation and statistics, facilitates a detailed exploration of the configuration of semiotic resources. Results show: Firstly, in the affect subsystem, the un/happiness resources are the highest among the four types of affect resources. Through the selection of affect resources, the documentary producer portrays the complex emotions of ease and unease that people experience because of food. Secondly, in the judgement subsystem, the quantity of social sanction resources is much less than that of social esteem resources. From the choice of judgment resources, the documentary presents the qualities of Chinese people in the context of food culture, such as wisdom, resourcefulness, cleverness, diligence, resilience, honesty, generosity, and responsibility. Thirdly, in the appreciation subsystem, reaction resources account for more percentage than composition and social-valuation resources. With the retrieval of appreciation resources, the producer depicts the characteristics of Chinese food culture and outlines the intimate and harmonious relationship between people, food, life, and nature. Research indicates that this documentary reveals the three core memes: the culture of Chinese food, the emotion of home, and the cultural heritage. Theoretically, this study supports Systemic Functional Linguistics as an applicable linguistics. Practically, it offers a new perspective for interpreting cultural memes depicted in documentaries.

| KEYWORDS

Food culture; Cultural meme; *A Bite of China*; Attitude system.

| ARTICLE INFORMATION

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1. Introduction

A Bite of China is a documentary about food stories broadcasted on China Central Television (CCTV). It premiered on May 12, 2012, and immediately sparked a high viewership. Soon, the English version produced by CCTV also induced a strong response overseas, with high click-through rates. This documentary portrays the unique atmosphere and elements of Chinese food culture through multi-faceted depictions of Chinese food production, attracting more people to focus on traditional Chinese cuisine and explore its exquisite and rich connotations. The food culture, as a culture that is closest to the lives of the general public, is an extremely important part of Chinese national culture (Wu, 2012). This documentary not only reflects the traditional concepts of the Chinese people through food but also inherits the ideological concepts, ethics, and rituals of the Chinese nation through food. As a highly

efficient cultural transmission medium, this documentary deeply embeds the memories of Chinese people for food, loved ones, and hometown through classic food, festival customs, and traditional production methods, and is deeply rooted in the cultural meme of the Chinese nation. Richard (1976) created the concept of *meme*. Chinese researcher Mi (1988) was the first to apply this term in China. Different types of civilizations have different cultural memes, which have different impacts on social development. Inheriting cultural memes and enhancing cultural identity can establish and highlight the shared Chinese cultural symbols and national images, as well as promote national spirit. Therefore, the research on Chinese food cultural memes has profound significance.

Many researchers have conducted research on Chinese food culture from various aspects, such as the differences between Chinese and foreign dietary cultures, the relationship between Chinese ancient dietary culture, literature, and life, the geographical factors that contribute to the differences in Chinese food culture, the essence and defects of Chinese traditional culture, the ritual construction of food culture in daily life, the philosophical thoughts contained in Chinese food culture, and the relationship between traditional Chinese festivals and food culture. Goody (1982), Paul, Eugene & Charles (2000), Sidney, Christine & Bois (2002), and Emma (2013) have used disciplines such as literature, archaeology, anthropology, and sociology to deepen the disciplinary system of Chinese food culture. The concept of the history of Chinese food culture research is deeply rooted. Many previous research results are based on the method of studying the history of different regions of Chinese food culture. In addition, early researchers tended to choose a specific dynasty for specialized research on food. The study of food history guided by the concept of the history of different periods is prone to make researchers overlook the development of food culture and the flow of ideas. Therefore, some researchers, including Hong (1984), Wu (2014), Yang (2014), Zhao (2014), Ji (2015), Li (2019), Zhao (2020), Liu, Zhao & Li (2021), Chen (2023) and Li (2023) have tried to break this situation and actively explore the structural system and research methods of the disciplinary characteristics of Chinese food culture. They examine the development of Chinese food culture from a more specialized and specific perspective, which also reflects the rejection of the research paradigm of food culture guided by the concept of the history of different periods in the new era. However, there is less research on Chinese food culture from the perspective of Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL). Therefore, this study uses the attitude system, a subsystem of the appraisal system in SFL, as a theoretical framework to study how *A Bite of China* constructs the Chinese food culture meme.

2. Research Methodology

The first season of *A Bite of China* in English version is produced by CCTV, with a total of seven episodes and a total of 30,898 words. They are respectively the first episode, *Gift of Nature* (4,070 words), the second episode, *The Story of Staple Foods* (3,925 words), the third episode, *Inspiration for Change* (3,553 words), the fourth episode, *The Taste of Time* (4,982 words), the fifth episode *Secrets of the Kitchen* (4,997 words), the sixth episode *Harmony of Five Flavors* (4,232 words), and the seventh episode *Our Field* (5,139 words). Therefore, the corpus of the first season of *A Bite of China* is sufficient to support the conduct of this study.

This study uses the UAM Corpus Tool 6.2 to conduct a combined qualitative and quantitative analysis of *A Bite of China* (see Fig. 1). Firstly, the author uses the UAM annotation software to manually annotate the attitude resources in all the language materials according to the framework of the appraisal system. Then, the annotations are reviewed by two colleagues in the same research field. Finally, the uncertain annotations will be discussed with the third researcher to ensure the relative objectivity of the annotation. Therefore, qualitative research mainly focuses on the annotation and analysis of the language materials, while quantitative research is mainly reflected in the detailed data obtained by UAM based on the distribution of attitude resources.

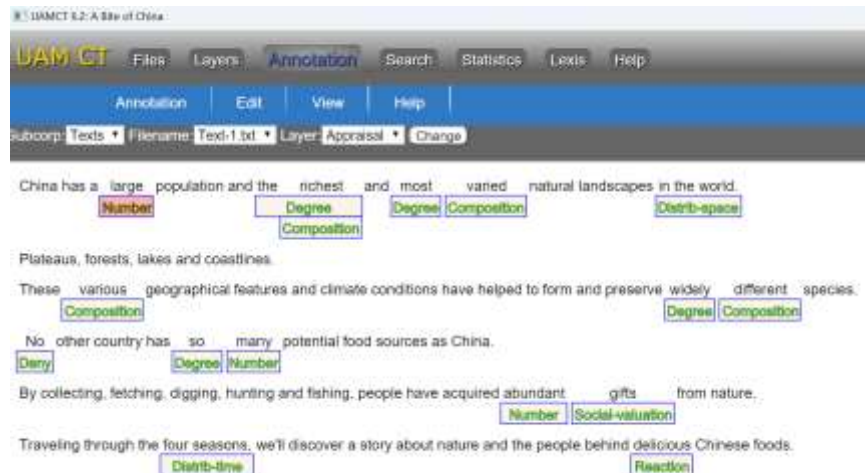


Fig. 1 The Annotation of the Corpus of *A Bite of China*

3. Theoretical Framework

The appraisal system was established by linguists Martin & White (2005), and it is based on the development of SFL (see Fig. 2) (Martin, 1992, 1995, 2000, 2013). It is a highly effective theoretical framework in the field of discourse analysis, showing strong research tension. SFL believes that language has the potential for meaning, and interpersonal relationships, as one of its functions, can be established and maintained through language. It not only allows individuals to influence others through language but also express their views of the world (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004).

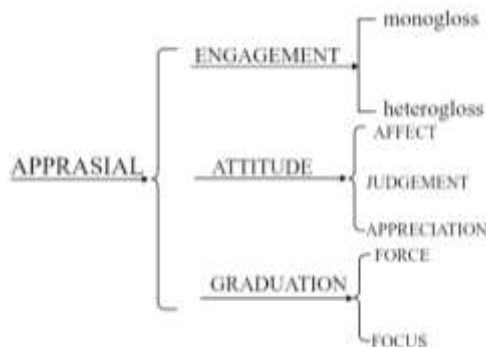


Fig. 2 An Overview of Appraisal System (Based on Martin & White, 2005, p. 38)

The appraisal system is a system of interpersonal meaning, which is a set of resources for expressing attitudes through language. Martin & Rose (2003, 2007, 2008) believe that the appraisal system deals with various attitudes, emotions, intensity, value sources, and ways of collaborating with readers in the negotiation of texts. This system includes three subsystems: the attitude subsystem, the engagement subsystem, and the graduation subsystem. Attitude system is the core and most complex part of the appraisal system, encompassing three subsystems: the affect system, the judgement system, and the appreciation system (see Fig. 3).

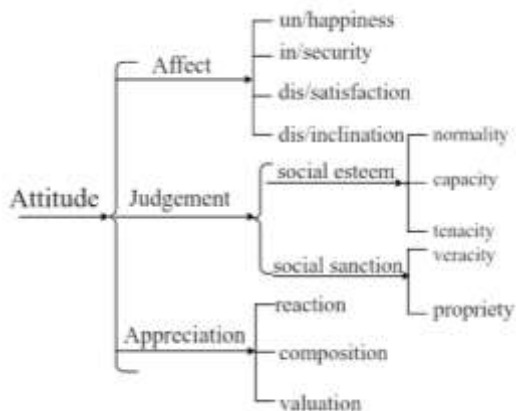


Fig. 3 An Overview of Attitude System (Martin and White, 2005, p. 40)

Affect is used to express emotions, representing a person's emotional response to things, behaviors, or phenomena. It effectively expresses the speaker's emotions and position and can be categorized into four aspects: un/happiness, in/security, dis/satisfaction, and dis/inclination. Judgement includes Social Esteem for people's behavior norms, capabilities, and perseverance, as well as Social Sanction on whether a person is genuine and reliable and whether their behavior is appropriate. Social Esteem mainly includes normality, capacity, and tenacity, while Social Sanction includes propriety and veracity. Appreciation reflects one's views and appreciation of things and objects, including reaction, composition, and valuation. These sub-attitudes are all reactions to people or things, and they can have both positive and negative (Martin & White, 2005).

4. Food Cultural Meme Construction of Attitude

In the first season of *A Bite of China*, appreciation, among all semantic resources, has the highest frequency and accounts for the highest proportion, appearing a total of 1980 times, accounting for 82.30%. This distribution characteristic highlights the objectivity of the documentary's narration. The judgment resource is the second most frequent, appearing a total of 233 times, accounting for 9.7%. The fewest in quantity is the affect resource, with only 193 occurrences, accounting for 8% (see Tab. 1).

Tab. 1 Semantic Resources of Attitude System

Attitude-Type	Positive	Negative	Inscribed	Invoked	Total (Percent)
Affect	176	17	190	3	193 (8%)
Judgement	213	20	229	4	233 (9.7%)
Appreciation	1879	101	1970	10	1980 (82.3%)
Total (Percent)	2268 (94.3%)	128 (5.7%)	2389 (99.3%)	17 (0.7%)	2406 (100%)

Through affect resources, the documentary producer portrays the complex emotions of ease and unease that people experience because of food. Through judgment resources, the producer presents the excellent qualities of Chinese people in the context of food culture, such as wisdom, resourcefulness, cleverness, diligence, resilience, honesty, generosity, and responsibility. Through appreciation resources, the producer depicts the characteristics of Chinese food culture and outlines the intimate and harmonious relationship between people, food, life, and nature. Besides, it is clear that 2268 resources expressed a positive attitude, accounting for 94.3%, far exceeding the resources expressing a negative attitude with a percentage of 5.7%. This reflects the documentary producer’s recognition of Chinese food culture and expresses admiration for China’s long-standing food culture through an optimistic attitude. Meanwhile, in the entire attitude system, 99.3% of attitude meanings are mostly inscribed, with only 0.7% of attitude meanings invoked. This characteristic is in line with the concise and easy-to-understand language of documentaries, which helps the audience clearly understand the content and emotions expressed, thus facilitating the dissemination of Chinese food culture.

Next, the distribution data of the sub-resources in the three subsystems of attitude resources, namely the affect system, judgment system, and appreciation system, will be illustrated and analyzed separately and systemically. Based on specific examples, underlines are used to indicate the corresponding attitude resources and illustrate the attitude meanings and food cultural meme implied by these resources.

4.1 Food Cultural Meme Construction of Affect

Affect resources are the most direct expression of people’s emotions. Among affect resources, the quantity of un/happiness resources is the highest, with a total of 106, accounting for 54.9% of all affect resources, 104 of which are positive affect resources. This indicates that *A Bite of China* primarily unfolds people’s happiness. On the contrary, the quantity of in/security resources is the lowest, with a total of 23, accounting for 11.9% of all affect resources (see Tab. 2). Additionally, more resources are expressing negative meanings related to in/security than those expressing positive meanings, which indicates that the documentary records many factors that make people feel uneasy or insecure, such as concerns about the health of loved ones, the crop yields, and the reduction of natural resources. Furthermore, among the four types of resources mentioned, there are both positive and negative expressions. The expressions with negative meanings are significantly fewer than those with positive meanings. This indicates that in the documentary, the evaluators hold a positive attitude toward the stories related to Chinese food culture, and it also demonstrates the filmmaker’s recognition and appreciation for Chinese food culture.

Tab. 2 Semantic Resources of Affect System

Affect-Type	Positive	Negative	Inscribed	Invoked	Total (Percent)
Un/happiness	104	2	105	1	106(54.9%)
Dis/satisfaction	26	1	27	0	27 (14%)
In/security	11	12	22	1	23 (11.9%)
dis/inclination	35	2	36	1	37 (19.2%)
Total (Percent)	176 (91.2%)	17 (8.8%)	190 (98.4%)	3 (1.6%)	193 (100%)

Using affect resources to express the evaluators' feelings can also resonate with the audience, thereby achieving the goal of uniting the audience and further contributing to the construction of the genetic makeup of Chinese food culture. Examples of affect resources are as follows.

- (1) I'm a little worried that one day, she might faint while in the mountain. She is getting old. (Text-1)
- (2) Others reaped many more matsutake than I did, so I'm quite uneasy and anxious. (Text-1)
- (3) The fishermen are working in silence. Anxiety and nervousness shroud the lake. (Text-1)
- (4) When he eats the bowl with all the long noodles carrying the villagers' best wishes, a birthday banquet can be regarded as complete. (Text-2)
- (5) No matter whether it's a personal anniversary or a public holiday, people here like to celebrate it together, enjoying the inexpensive but delicious food prepared by professional country banquet cooks. (Text-5)
- (6) We are amazed at the flavor and improvement of nutrition, and it's all thanks to the imaginative transformation of food. (Text-3)
- (7) People will never give up their desire for fresh food. (Text-4)

The underlined parts in Examples 1, 2, and 3 all belong to in/security resources, but the reasons for these affect resources are different, expressing the evaluator's concerns and anxieties about family, food quality, and work, respectively. Example 1 expresses Zhuoma's concern about her mother's health because her mother is old and in poor health, but their work environment is dangerous in the deep mountains. Example 2 is Zhuoma's concern about the quality of her matsutakes, as the quality of the matsutakes picked by others is better, so she is worried that her matsutakes will not sell for a good price. Example 3 is the anxiety that fishermen feel when they fish on the frozen lake surface. They are afraid of not catching anything, so there is a tense atmosphere during work. The phrase *working in silence* belongs to the invoked resource by describing the silence during work to highlight the tense atmosphere and better express fishermen's inner uneasiness. It also helps to satisfy the audience's emotional experience and evoke emotional resonance and sympathy. In Examples 4 and 5, the underline parts belong to un/happiness resources. Among them, *celebrate* belongs to the invoked resource. Example 4 expresses the traditional custom of Chinese people eating noodles on birthdays and the good wishes for the birthday person implied in it. Example 5 expresses people's inheritance and love for the country banquet. This helps the audience understand the traditional Chinese concepts and customs implied in food, thereby attracting the audience's interest, enriching and deepening the content of the documentary, and also reflecting the inheritance and dissemination of the Chinese traditional cultural meme through food. The underlined part in Example 6 belongs to the dis/satisfaction resource, expressing people's satisfaction with the taste of food after natural transformation, conveying positive emotions to the audience, and also showcasing the advantages of the traditional Chinese food production methods, helping the audience better understand the ancient Chinese food culture and promoting the inheritance of the Chinese food culture meme. The underlined part in Example 7 belongs to dis/inclination resource, showing the Chinese people's pursuit of freshness in food and also reflecting the Chinese food culture meme from ancient times to the present. This helps arouse the audience's resonance and immerse the audience better in this emotion. It will attract more and more people to pay attention to Chinese food culture and facilitate the dissemination of the Chinese food culture meme.

4.2 Food Cultural Meme Construction of Judgement

The judgment system refers to the evaluation of a person’s character (see Tab. 3). The distribution of social esteem resources in the judgment resources is the widest, with a total of 112 capacity resources, accounting for 48.1% of the judgment resources. The next is normality resources, accounting for 25.3% of the judgment resources.

Tab. 3 Semantic Resources of Judgement System

Judgement-Type		Positive	Negative	Inscribed	Invoked	Total (Percent)
Social Esteem	normality	56	3	59	0	59 (25.3%)
	capacity	101	11	108	4	112 (48.1%)
	tenacity	34	6	40	0	40 (17.2%)
Social Sanction	propriety	14	0	14	0	14 (6%)
	veracity	8	0	8	0	8 (3.4)
Total (Percent)		213 (91.4%)	20 (8.6%)	229 (98.3%)	4 (1.7%)	233 (100%)

The quantity of Social Sanction resources is much less than that of Social Esteem resources. Among them, the quantity of propriety resources is more than that of veracity resources. Moreover, among all judgment resources, the resources that represent positive meanings are the most, and these resources are mainly expressed through inscribed. This distribution characteristic indicates that this documentary focuses on affirming people’s abilities and praising and promoting the outstanding qualities of Chinese people. It helps the audience to better understand the precious qualities of Chinese people through food, resonates with Chinese viewers, and inspires the inheritance and dissemination of these excellent qualities and meme among Chinese people. Examples of judgement resources are as follows.

- (1) Despite a large variety of food from abroad available in Hong Kong, our preference for cured meat remains. The workers are always busy. (Text-4)
- (2) Chinese people are good at using bitterness in cooking, not only because they can enjoy the nuanced layers of taste but also because they utilize a variety of condiments that have a bitter taste, such as tangerine peel. (Text-6)
- (3) The Chinese believe that pleasure comes through toil, and one must hold on to their faith even in the face of adversity. (Text-6)
- (4) Each time she visits here, Liang Yihu feels kind and war. (Text-5)
- (5) Huizhou people who are gourmets can truly appreciate hairy tofu. (Text-3)

The underlined part in Example 1 belongs to normality resource, expressing the diligence and busyness of the workers. This not only helps the audience to understand the working conditions of Chinese workers but also contributes to increasing the audience’s sense of identification with the workers, conveying the resilient qualities of the Chinese people and promoting the development of this excellent quality among the Chinese people. Example 2 belongs to capacity resource, expressing the wisdom and ability of Chinese people in cooking. Chinese people can use all resources and make them into unique delicacies, allowing the audience to fully understand the cooking ability of Chinese people and increase their praise and admiration for this ability, thus contributing

to the promotion of Chinese food culture meme. Example 3 is tenacity resource, expressing the excellent quality of Chinese people's hard work and endurance, and conveying the traditional concept of Chinese people that hard work leads to wealth. This helps to resonate with the audience and also motivates Chinese people to promote this excellent quality, contributing to the better dissemination of Chinese culture. *Toil* in Example 4 belongs to the propriety resource, expressing the kind quality of Chinese people, which helps the audience to feel the kindness and friendliness of Chinese people and creates a warm atmosphere for the documentary, thus bringing the audience closer. The underlined part in Example 5 belongs to the veracity resource, expressing the love of Huizhou people for hairy tofu. Through the expression of this sincere emotion, it helps to resonate with the audience, attract their interest in this food, and contribute to the dissemination of Chinese food culture.

4.3 Food Cultural Meme Construction of Appreciation

Appreciation resource is the evaluation of certain events, processes, and phenomena. Among attitude resources, appreciation resources have the largest quantity, fully reflecting the authenticity of the content of this documentary. Among them, the quantity of reaction resources is much higher than that of other resources, with a total of 1280 occurrences, accounting for 64.6% of all appreciation resources (see Tab. 4).

Tab. 4 Semantic Resources of Appreciation System

Appreciation -Type	Positive	Negative	Inscribed	Invoked	Total (Percent)
reaction	1240	40	1277	3	1280(64.6%)
composition	344	56	400	0	400(20.2%)
Social-valuation	295	5	293	7	300(15.2%)
Total (Percent)	1879 (94.9%)	101 (5.1%)	1970 (99.5%)	10 (0.5%)	1980 (100%)

This reflects the significant attitude of the documentary through the reactions of evaluators towards food and things, enhancing the objectivity, authenticity, and credibility of the documentary discourse. Furthermore, positive resources are far more numerous than negative resources among these three types of resources, and they are mainly expressed through inscribed forms. Examples of appreciation resources are as follows.

- (1) The all-inclusive and ever-changing Chinese cuisine allows diners to choose from a wide range of flavors. (Text-6)
- (2) On an August morning it is still chilly on the plateau. (Text-7)
- (3) To the Chinese, who historically had insufficient meat supply, the discovery was wisdom as well as luck. (Text-3)
- (4) The fluidity of steam enables the heat to be passed evenly and makes it possible to cook a pig as a whole. (Text-5)
- (5) The fish head dish is a favorite specialty of Chinese people. High quality fish heads are more expensive than fresh fish. (Text-1)
- (6) Meat is a luxury as livestock are too precious. Dairy products have almost become the main food on the grassland. (Text-3)

Both Example 1 and Example 2 contain reaction resources. In Example 1, *all-inclusive*, *ever-changing*, and *wide* as reaction resources emphasize the diversity of Chinese cuisine's types and flavors, highlighting the richness of Chinese food culture. This can attract viewers' interest in Chinese cuisine, contribute to the better dissemination of Chinese food culture, and enhance Chinese people's sense of pride. In Example 2, *chilly* indicates the climate environment of the plateau, helping viewers to have a better and more comprehensive understanding of China. Both Example 3 and Example 4 contain composition resources. *insufficient* in Example 3 indicates the development and changes in meat consumption in Chinese cuisine, highlighting people's wisdom and the improvement of their living standards. This helps viewers perceive the development of Chinese food culture from a dynamic perspective and also contributes to the dissemination of Chinese food culture. In Example 4, *evenly* and *as a whole*, express the situation during the food preparation process, helping viewers to have a more comprehensive understanding of the food preparation process and increasing the authenticity of the documentary. Both Example 5 and Example 6 contain Social-valuation

resources. *Specialty* and *expensive* in Example 5 highlight the value of the fish head dish and express the popularity of this traditional Chinese dish in China. This helps viewers to have a better understanding of this food tradition in China and also contributes to the global recognition of Chinese food culture. In Example 6, *luxury* and *precious* emphasize the value of meat in a certain region of China, highlighting the characteristic cuisine of that region. This facilitates viewers to understand the different food cultures in different regions of China and, therefore facilitates the dissemination of Chinese food culture worldwide.

4.4 Meme Construction of Chinese Culture

Based on the analysis of the above cases, by integrating the distribution characteristics of all the attitude resources in this documentary, it is clear that *A Bite of China* contains abundant attitude resources. It mainly expresses positive attitudes towards food, things, and people through the appreciation resources, making the whole documentary appear objective, authentic, and persuasive in language. Furthermore, based on these attitude resources, the cultural content and spiritual connotation conveyed by this documentary can be further summarized. Cultural transmission can be classified into material culture and spiritual culture, while spiritual culture, specifically the food cultural meme, is more concealed and represents a deeper level of cultural content that requires our contemplation and comprehension.

First, the documentary consistently embodies the food culture. In a narrow sense, it can be divided into regional cuisine, festival cuisine, welcoming cuisine, and gift cuisine. The regional cuisine in this documentary is reflected in the eight major Chinese cuisines, namely Shandong cuisine, Sichuan cuisine, Cantonese cuisine, Suzhou cuisine, Fujian cuisine, Zhejiang cuisine, Hunan cuisine, and Anhui cuisine. Based on the differences in food between the north and the south of China, the documentary introduces the staple foods and characteristic foods of each region, such as focusing on the wheat-based food in the north and the rice-based food in the south. Festival cuisine introduces corresponding delicacies according to Chinese festivals, such as dumplings during the Spring Festival, Zongzi during the Dragon Boat Festival, and the village feast held in Shunde, Guangdong, during the Double Ninth Festival. Welcoming food is a way for people of all ethnic groups in China to express their friendship, such as Zhang Guichun, a typical representative of Chinese hospitality, inviting neighbors to taste the vegetables he grows and deepening friendship. Gift cuisine is common in China. On occasions such as gatherings, birthdays, and festivals, people often give food as a way of expressing blessings. For example, in Guizhou, when a newborn baby is born, female relatives of the same ethnic group will come with food in baskets to congratulate them. Therefore, *A Bite of China* approaches Chinese food culture from the perspective of ordinary people, showcasing the vast and profound Chinese food culture behind each exquisite dish and the connection between individuals and nature.

Secondly, the home culture is also an important content conveyed by this documentary. Behind every food story in *A Bite of China* is a connection to home. In each story, not only the process of food preparation is described, but also the documentary creator's understanding of home and their family care. What truly touches the audience is the emotions that human beings are familiar with but rarely reflect upon. Dumplings symbolize the passing of time and are an essential staple food for Chinese people during the Spring Festival. No matter how the year has been, the New Year's Eve dinner with the whole family eating dumplings is an irreplaceable year-end feast. This is the continuation of traditional Chinese family values and the inheritance of Chinese people's memories and meme related to food from generation to generation. Besides, Ju Changlong, the head of a household who has lived in Japan for more than 20 years, returned to his hometown, Yangzhou, and tasted the Yechun tea once again. The familiar feeling spread and his longing for his hometown instantly revealed itself in front of the camera. The taste on the tip of his tongue is a unique flavor of his hometown, a sense of emotional belonging, just like Wuhan hot, dry noodles and Chongqing spicy hot pot, which can remind people of their own hometown when seen on the streets. Seeing hometown delicacies in a foreign land brings back memories of the taste of home and the flavors of childhood with their mothers. The meaning of food is no longer just deliciousness but also beautiful memories and strong sentiments that have been sealed in time. It is the taste that brings tears to the eyes of countless wanderers, and this is the charm of food as an emotional bond.

Thirdly, this documentary contains rich ethnic and spiritual culture, namely ethnic meme. Hard work, bravery, optimism, and positivity have always been the traditional virtues of the Chinese people. Chinese people rely on their wisdom to obtain food from the land and pursue a happy life through their hard work. They are confident and optimistic. In the face of difficulties, they overcome them with an optimistic attitude and face them with a positive mindset. The filming of *A Bite of China* tells the stories of ordinary people from the angle of everyday diet. It is through these ordinary stories that the optimistic, positive, hardworking, and brave spirit of the Chinese people is revealed. Based on the concept of human-centeredness, harmonizing with nature and unity, *A Bite of China* changes the traditional mode of filming food documentaries. It doesn't start with the traditional dishes themselves but instead focuses on the ingredients behind the dishes, uncovering stories of ordinary people and presenting the most authentic emotions of real characters. *A Bite of China* tells stories of people and nature, and in the process of storytelling, it also elucidates the cultural concept of China's harmonious relationship with nature. In the documentary, Zhuoma covers the matsutake pit with pine needles immediately after picking matsutake to protect the mycelium from being damaged. People in the mountains and forests not only accept the gifts from nature but also abide by the rules of the mountains and forests. The fishing

season on Chagan Lake begins, and there are no small fish in the fishing nets, only large fish weighing over 2 kilograms. This is a strict rule passed down among the fishermen of Chagan Lake. The fishing nets used in winter are 6 inches in mesh size, which can only catch fish that are over 5 years old. Sustainable hunting is the survival wisdom of the people of Chagan Lake and a harmonious way of adapting to nature.

5. Conclusion

A Bite of China deeply explores Chinese food culture and innovatively expresses the unique Chinese food culture and other aspects of culture reflected behind it. In the attitude system, through many appreciation resources, seemingly casual expressions become the cultural tone that attracts audiences throughout the documentary. It conveys not only food but also the core values of the Chinese people and the food culture meme of ancient China. *A Bite of China* has great significance in inheriting and shaping Chinese culture. It opens a window for the audience to understand Chinese culture and promotes the dissemination and exchange of Chinese culture.

The documentary primarily portrays people's positive emotions toward food by positively affecting resources. Through articulating the reviewers' sentiments, it resonates with the viewers, achieving the objective of unifying them and thereby contributing to the construction of the Chinese food cultural meme. In terms of judgement resources, the documentary filmmaker unveils the exceptional attributes of the Chinese people within the realm of food cultures, such as sagacity, prowess, nimbleness, assiduity, tenacity, integrity, and magnanimity. Validating individuals' capabilities and extolling the extraordinary virtues of the Chinese facilitates the audience's deeper comprehension of the invaluable qualities embodied through food, harmonizes with Chinese spectators, and fosters the international dissemination of the documentary. In terms of appreciation resources, the author delineates the distinctiveness of Chinese food culture, delineating the intimate and harmonious interplay between humans, food, life, and nature. By articulating the reviewers' perspectives and meanings through their responses to food and various elements, it accentuates the objectivity, authenticity, and credibility of the documentary's discourse. Furthermore, the core of the documentary lies in the food cultural memes that are epitomized through food. The documentary consistently embodies food culture, approaching Chinese food memes from the vantage point of ordinary individuals. Behind each meticulously dish and the visceral connection between individuals and nature lies the profound and expansive realm of Chinese food culture. The documentary also serves as a conduit for conveying the essence of Chinese home culture. Behind every culinary in *A Bite of China* is a tether to the notion of home. This documentary encapsulates the rich national spiritual culture, namely the national essence, showcasing the sanguine, industrious, and intrepid spirit of the Chinese people.

However, due to the richness of appraisal resources, this study could not exhaust all appraisal elements, which is one of its limitations. The selection of the documentary was limited to the first season of *A Bite of China*, which also constrained the widespread applicability of the research results. The study focused on the analysis of verbal texts and did not delve into the combined effects of visual and verbal elements; therefore, it may not have fully reflected the complexity of multimodal narrative.

For future research directions, it is recommended to expand the research sample to include different types and styles of documentaries and explore the other two subsystems of engagement and graduation of the appraisal system to verify the applicability of the appraisal theory more comprehensively. At the same time, the appraisal system can be combined with other theories, such as narrative theory or cultural studies, to further enrich the theoretical framework of text discourse analysis. Additionally, researchers can explore how cultural differences affect narrative strategies and effects by comparing different documentary production styles and techniques.

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