

The Perception of Chinese Culture in Turkmenistan

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Abstract: Promoting Chinese culture globally, narrating China's story, and amplifying its voice are essential for enhancing China's cultural soft power and fostering the exchange and mutual appreciation of civilizations in contemporary times. Investigating the current awareness and acceptance of Chinese culture in Turkmenistan is significant for increasing China's cultural influence and communication strength, as well as for intensifying cultural exchanges between China and Turkmenistan. A questionnaire survey was conducted to examine Turkmenistan's perception of Chinese culture across four dimensions: willingness to learn, mediums of learning, content of learning, and the impact of learning. The respondents exhibit a strong willingness to learn about Chinese culture, visit China, and befriend Chinese people. Their overall perception of representative Chinese cultural symbols is positive. Awareness of contemporary cultural symbols such as high-speed trains, bicycle-sharing systems, and mobile phone brands is high. However, there is generally a lower awareness of cultural symbols related to art and traditional life.

Keywords: Turkmenistan, China, cultural perception, SPSS

1. Introduction: The Importance of Self-regulation in Students

Central Asia has a long-standing history of interaction with China. Serving as an essential passage along the ancient Silk Road, the region holds a significant strategic position as a vital junction for cultural and economic exchanges between China and the West. With the "One Belt, One Road" initiative reaching new levels, Central Asian countries are increasingly connected to China in terms of economics, politics, and culture. The economic and political bonds are deeply intertwined with cultural exchanges, making mutual cultural appreciation and people-to-people contacts an imperative for contemporary international relations.

This article aims to focus on Turkmenistan as the subject of study. As an important transport hub in Central Asia, Turkmenistan forms a critical link between the Asian and European continents and the Middle East, and its strategic importance is undeniable. In light of the burgeoning economic and trade cooperation between Turkmenistan and China, there is a growing necessity to enhance the exchange and mutual understanding between Turkmen and Chinese cultures. It is vital to investigate the ways and extent of the Turkmen people's perception of Chinese culture and to suggest appropriate measures to amplify the effectiveness of cultural perception of China in Turkmenistan.

2. Literature Review

For research on cultural perception to be conducted effectively, it is essential first to define what culture and perception entail. Cultural studies focus on the manners of phenomena and ideologies influenced by ethnicity, social class, or gender^[1]. Perception is the process of selecting, organizing, and interpreting sensory information, enabling us to understand the world^[2]. Cultural perception is inherently selective; it is through external stimuli that selected information enters our conscious field via sensory modes acquired through learning. There are considerable differences in cultural aspects within countries. Moreover, the cultural perception models of individuals vary significantly due to personal and external influences. The study of cultural perception differences among countries is an important field that has recently gained attention from researchers both domestically and internationally.

Concerning research on the relationship between my country (China) and Central Asia, most existing literature treats the five Central Asian countries as a general research object, with scant research focusing specifically on cultural awareness. There is a prevalence of studies on exploration

and exploitation, project cooperation, and other scientific and technological fields. For instance, Ma [3] discusses the current state of scientific and technological development, patent protection status, and the cooperation between China and Central Asian countries, with specific focus on the cooperation between Xinjiang and Turkmenistan in the realms of science, technology, and patents. Studies specifically targeting cultural fields remain relatively scarce.

3. Methodology

3.1 Questionnaire survey and SPSS platform analysis

Drawing upon the model of international influence surveys, this study employs a questionnaire survey approach. Following interviews with students from Turkmenistan to understand their cultural background and perspectives, the questionnaire was divided into two sections. The first part gathers demographic information such as gender, age, education level, occupational status, and whether respondents have visited China. The second part assesses the respondents' awareness, understanding of content, mediums, and effects of Chinese culture. The awareness section includes 38 representative Chinese cultural symbols across 7 categories. To verify the validity of the questionnaire content, a preliminary draft was distributed to five students from Turkmenistan for completion and feedback, leading to subsequent revisions.

Considering the language preferences in Turkmenistan, the questionnaire was finalized in the Turkmen language. Translation assistance was provided by Turkmen international students in China, who translated the material from Chinese to Turkmen. To ensure a broad demographic reach and efficient response rate, we enlisted the help of Turkmen international students and offered an incentive of 5 yuan per completed questionnaire. The questionnaire was also disseminated through popular social media platforms used in Turkmenistan, such as Instagram and IMO. After 15 days of collection, a total of 245 valid questionnaires were retrieved. The data from the questionnaires were classified, and frequency analysis, descriptive analysis, and chi-square tests were conducted using the SPSS platform to explore the relationships between the data sets.

3.2 Sample distribution

The age distribution of the respondents varied from 5 to over 50 years old. Of these, individuals aged 5-16 years constituted 6.21%, those aged 17-28 years accounted for the majority at 65.3%, the 29-50 year age bracket represented 23.67%, and respondents over 50 years old made up 4.9%. This indicates a sample predominantly composed of younger individuals. The gender distribution was 57.55% male and 42.45% female. Occupational categories among respondents included workers, farmers, business people, teachers, government employees, professionals, service industry workers, religious figures, military personnel, police, students, and others. Education levels were classified into four groups: high school and below, vocational training, undergraduate, and postgraduate degrees. Out of the total 245 participants, 134 reported having visited China, while the remaining 111 had not^[4].

4. Data Analysis

This article divides the data into two main categories according to the data collected: Turkmenistanis who have been to China and Turkmenistanis who have not been to China, and then uses the SPSS platform to conduct frequency analysis and descriptive analysis in terms of cultural awareness intention and content. A cross-cardinal analysis of the 38 cultural symbols in the cognitive content was carried out in conjunction with the background information of the respondents, and finally a frequency analysis, a descriptive analysis and a comparative analysis of the cognitive medium and the cognitive effect were carried out.

4.1 Turkmen people's willingness to perceive Chinese culture

The questions in this part of the questionnaire concern the willingness to learn about Chinese culture, the willingness to visit China and the willingness to make friends with Chinese people. There are five levels of willingness: very reluctant, not very willing, not opposed, more willing and especially willing, with a score of 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 respectively.

4.1.1 The willingness of Turkmen people who have been to China to know Chinese culture

As can be seen from Table 1, in terms of the distribution of the degree of willingness to learn about Chinese culture, the majority of the sample was "especially willing", with a proportion of 38.06%. In terms of the distribution of willingness to visit China, the majority of the sample were "especially willing", with 71.0 choosing "especially willing", accounting for 52.99%. In terms of the degree of willingness to make friends with Chinese people, the highest percentage was "especially willing", at 44.78%. The percentage of those who chose "more willing" was 37.31%. On the whole, Turkmenistanis who have been to China have a high level of awareness of Chinese culture, with the highest level of willingness to make friends with Chinese people.

Table 1: The willingness of Turkmen people who have been to China to know Chinese culture

Frequency analysis results				
Name	Option	Frequency	Percentage(%)	Cumulative percentage(%)
The degree of willingness to understand Chinese culture	Very reluctant	5	3.73	3.73
	Not very willing	5	3.73	7.46
	Not opposed	40	29.85	37.31
	More willing	33	24.63	61.94
	Especially willing	51	38.06	100
The degree of willingness to travel to China	Very reluctant	5	3.73	3.73
	Not very willing	2	1.49	5.22
	Not opposed	31	23.13	28.36
	More willing	25	18.66	47.01
	Especially willing	71	52.99	100
The degree of willingness to make friends with Chinese	Very reluctant	3	2.24	2.24
	Not very willing	4	2.99	5.22
	Not opposed	17	12.69	17.91
	More willing	50	37.31	55.22
	Especially willing	60	44.78	100
Total		134	100	100

4.1.2 The willingness of Turkmen people who have been to China to know Chinese culture

Table 2: The willingness of Turkmen people who have been to China to know Chinese culture

Frequency analysis results				
Name	Option	Frequency	Percentage(%)	Cumulative percentage(%)
The degree of willingness to understand Chinese culture	Very reluctant	4	3.6	3.6
	Not very willing	6	5.41	9.01
	Not opposed	35	31.53	40.54
	More willing	20	18.02	58.56
	Especially willing	46	41.44	100
The degree of willingness to travel to China	Very reluctant	3	2.7	2.7
	Not very willing	5	4.5	7.21
	Not opposed	21	18.92	26.13
	More willing	16	14.41	40.54
	Especially willing	66	59.46	100
The degree of willingness to make friends with Chinese	Very reluctant	3	2.7	2.7
	Not very willing	7	6.31	9.01
	Not opposed	22	19.82	28.83
	More willing	30	27.03	55.86
	Especially willing	49	44.14	100
Total		111	100	100

Table 2 shows that, in terms of the degree of willingness to learn about Chinese culture, a relatively high proportion of the sample, 41.44%, were "especially willing" to learn about Chinese culture. A further 31.53% of the sample were "not opposed". More than 50% of those who would like to visit China chose "especially willing". 44.14% of the sample chose "especially willing". The number of people who would be "especially willing" to make friends with Chinese people was 44.14% of the sample, while 27.03% were "more willing". On the whole, Turkmenistanis who had not been to China before were the most willing to visit China.

4.1.3 Turkmenistanis who have not been to China are more willing to visit China

Of the three categories of indicators on willingness, those who had not been to China ranked their level of willingness as follows: to visit China, to make friends with Chinese people and to learn about Chinese culture. In contrast, among those who have been to China, the highest level of willingness is to visit China and the lowest is to learn about Chinese culture. This shows that those who have not been to China are more willing to visit China, those who have been to China are more willing to make friends with Chinese people, and both show a lower willingness to learn about Chinese culture^[5].

4.2 Analysis of the perception and preference of Chinese cultural symbols

In this study, 38 cultural symbols in seven categories were used in the survey section, with six options: "Never heard of", "Dislike very much", "Dislike less", "neutral", "more like" and "very like", and were assigned the scores 0, 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 in that order, according to The degree of awareness of cultural symbols was determined by the proportion of "not heard of", and the degree of liking for each cultural symbol was determined by the sum of the proportions of more like and like very much.

4.2.1 Perception ranking

For those Turkmenistanis who have visited China, the top five cultural symbols in terms of awareness are: Bruce Lee, cheongsam, mobile phone brands, silk and the Great Wall. It is interesting to note that Confucius is unexpectedly ranked at the bottom of the list, at number 30. Tang poetry and Song lyrics and Gu Ailing ranked the lowest, with awareness levels of 88.06% and 85.07%. For those who had not been to China before, the ranking of awareness was from highest to lowest for high speed rail, panda, Chinese medicine, tea and mobile phone brands. Confucius remains at the bottom of the list at 27, while Tang poems and Song lyrics and Gu Ailing are at the bottom.

As can be seen from the above rankings, some modern technological cultural symbols are more widely known in Turkmenistan, such as the Chinese mobile phone brand and high-speed rail. These contemporary emerging elements have a great potential for cultural influence. The overall level of awareness of Tang poetry and Song lyrics and celebrity Gu Ailing is lower.

4.2.2 Preference ranking

The level of liking is derived by adding up the proportion of more liking and very liking, and for Turkmen people who have visited China, the top five are Bruce Lee (89.55%), bicycle sharing (88.06%), Alipay (88.06%), Bird's Nest (80.59%), and cheongsam (81.34%). Gu Ailing, Tang poetry and Song lyrics, and mahjong ranked at the bottom, with favourites of 50.75%, 48.55 and 41.04% respectively.

For Turkmen people who have never been to China, the top five favourites are: the Great Wall (79.28%), the Forbidden City (77.48%) the Bird's Nest (76.585), bicycle sharing (76.57%) and pandas (73.88%). The last three were; Beijing Opera (51.35%), Tang Poetry and Song Dynasty (50.45%) and Mahjong (39.64%).

It is worth noting that as new elements of contemporary life, bike-sharing and the bird's nest are highly popular with the Turkmen public, reflecting to some extent the increased international influence of modern Chinese technology. Representative classic Chinese elements such as the Forbidden City, the Great Wall and the panda are relatively well liked by the sample group. Mahjong and Tang poetry and Song lyrics are less popular among the sample group overall.

4.2.3 Analysis of the differences in perceptions and preferences

The analysis of the differences in the perceptions and preferences of Chinese cultural symbols among the Turkmen people reveals that although the respondents' perceptions and preferences of Chinese cultural symbols are relatively high, those who know Chinese cultural symbols are far more than those who love Chinese cultural symbols. Therefore, this section will focus on three categories of

cultural symbols, the first being those with a high level of awareness and a low level of liking, the second being those with a high level of awareness and an average level of liking, and the third being those with a low level of both awareness and liking.

The Great Wall was ranked 3rd (98.51%) in terms of awareness among the sample group who had visited China, and the Great Wall had a high level of awareness among the sample group. As can be seen from Figure 1, the respondents' liking of the Great Wall was 72.39%, which is an average level of liking. As the saying goes, "You are not a good man until you reach the Great Wall", and as the longest man-made structure in the world, the Great Wall, known as one of the Seven Wonders of the World, has become a representative symbol of Chinese culture. However, the degree of enjoyment is closely related to the respondents' knowledge of the cultural symbols. The cultural connotations and historical stories behind the Great Wall as a structure are not well understood by the foreigner community. Therefore, the Great Wall is not well liked by the respondents^[6].

4.3 Cross-tabulation analysis of demographic background information and Chinese cultural symbols

The data were divided into two groups: those who had been to China (Group 1) and those who had been to China in the future (Group 2). Gender, education level, occupation, etc. were analyzed as definite category variables with the degree of awareness and liking of Chinese cultural symbols by cross-cardinal test, and age was analyzed as a quantitative variable with the degree of awareness and liking of Chinese cultural symbols by correlation, and the results were as follows.

4.3.1 Gender

(1) Group 1

A chi-square test (cross-tabulation) was used to examine the relationship between gender and the differences in the 38 cultural symbols: Chinese, Tang poetry and Song lyrics, Confucius, Li Bai, Bruce Lee, Gu Ailing, Panda, Dragon, Golden Monkey, Bamboo, Peony, Great Wall, Mogao Grottoes, Big Wild Goose Pagoda, Forbidden City, Garden, Bird's Nest, Calligraphy, Chinese painting, Guzheng, Beijing Opera, Porcelain, Taiji, Go, Silk, Cheongsam, Chinese medicine, Acupuncture, Chinese New Year, tea, food, high-speed rail, mobile phone brands, Jitterbug, bicycle sharing, Alipay, 2022 Beijing Winter Olympics A total of 37 items would not show significance ($p > 0.05$), meaning that all 37 items showed consistency across gender teams and did not differ. Also gender sample for mahjong total 1 item shows significance ($p < 0.05$), meaning that different gender sample for mahjong total 1 item shows difference. Gender showed a 0.05 level of significance ($\chi^2 = 14.124$, $p = 0.015 < 0.05$) for mahjong, and by comparing the differences in percentages it is clear that the percentage of males choosing neutral was 50.00%, significantly higher than the percentage of females choosing it at 31.25%. The percentage of females choosing very much was 35.94% and the percentage of males choosing this option was 12.86%, significantly higher for females than for males. For the female respondents who had not been to China, their liking for mahjong was higher.

(2) Group 2

A chi-square test (cross-sectional analysis) was used to examine the relationship between gender differences on 38 Chinese cultural symbols including Chinese language: different gender samples on Chinese language, Tang poetry and Song lyrics, Confucius, Li Bai, Bruce Lee, Gu Ailing, panda, dragon, golden monkey, bamboo, peony, Great Wall, Mogao Grottoes, Big Wild Goose Pagoda, Forbidden City, garden, bird's nest, calligraphy, Chinese painting, guzheng, Beijing opera, porcelain, Tai Chi, mahjong, Go, silk, Chinese medicine, acupuncture, Chinese New Year, tea, food, high-speed rail, mobile phone brands, Jitterbug, bicycle sharing, Alipay, 2022 Beijing Winter Olympics A total of 37 items would not show significance ($p > 0.05$), meaning that the different gender samples showed consistency for all 37 cultural symbols and did not differ. The other gender sample shows significance ($p < 0.05$) for a total of 1 item for cheongsam, implying that the different gender samples show differences for a total of 1 item for cheongsam. Gender showed a 0.01 level of significance ($\chi^2 = 17.533$, $p = 0.004 < 0.01$) for cheongsam, and by comparing the differences in percentages it is clear that the percentage of males choosing neutral was 25.35%, significantly higher than the percentage of females choosing this option at 5.00%. The percentage of males choosing to like it more was 28.17%, significantly higher than the percentage of females choosing this option at 22.50%. The proportion of females choosing very much like was 57.50%, significantly higher than the proportion of males choosing this option at 36.62%. For respondents who had not been to China, women were more fond of cheongsam^[7].

4.4 Cognitive media and cognitive effects

4.4.1 Cognitive media use

In terms of the frequency of use of official media, more than 30% of the sample group who had visited China "more than 3 times a week". The percentage of the sample who came to China 1-2 times a week was 32.84%. Of those who used the internet news media, 38.81% chose "more than 3 times a week". In terms of frequency of use of newspapers, 35.82% chose "more than 3 times a week". In terms of social networking software, 40.30% of the sample chose "more than 3 times a week". In terms of social media, the percentage of the sample who chose 'more than 3 times a week' was 40.30%. In terms of learning about China from Chinese documentaries and films, over 20% of the sample chose "more than 3 times a week". In contrast, 36.57% of the sample used documentaries and films about China from other countries "1-3 times a month". For those who used books to learn about Chinese culture, 29.85% of the sample used them "1-2 times a week". 38.06% of the respondents had more than ten Chinese friends.

In terms of frequency of use of official media, over 30% of the sample who had not been to China chose "more than 3 times a week". Of those who used the internet news media, 35.14% chose "more than 3 times a week". Of those who used newspapers, 36.04% chose "more than 3 times a week". In terms of social networking software, a relatively high proportion of the sample (33.33%) "more than 3 times a week". 31.53% of the sample "more than 3 times a week". 31.53% of people choose to watch Chinese documentaries and films more than 3 times a week to learn about China. In terms of documentaries and dramas about China from other countries, 36.94% of the sample watched them "1-3 times a month". The proportion of the sample that used paper books was 30.63%. For those using paper books, 27.03% of the sample chose '1-3 times a month'. In terms of the number of Chinese friends, over 30% of the sample chose "more than 10"^[8].

The frequency of learning about Chinese culture through the above eight channels was relatively even for both groups, with more than 30% of the respondents using them more frequently (more than 3 times a week).

4.4.2 Effectiveness of different media

Among the sample who had been to China, the highest percentage of those who chose "almost the same" was 38.06% for the question "How much the China you have seen is the same as the China you have learned about in China". 45.52% of the sample were "particularly active" in learning about Chinese culture through the official media, while 32.09% were "more active". 35.82% of the sample chose "Neutral" for the question "Perceived effectiveness of internet news media". For newspapers, the highest percentage of respondents (40.30%) was "particularly positive". In terms of the distribution of the perceptions of social media, the majority of the samples were "relatively positive", with 46.0 or 34.33%, and the proportion of neutral samples was 33.58%. On the question of the perceived effectiveness of documentary films and dramas produced in China, 35.07% of the sample chose 'neutral'. A further 32.09% of the sample were particularly positive. In terms of the perceived effectiveness of documentary films and TV dramas produced in other countries, a relatively high proportion of the sample (34.33%) chose "particularly positive". The proportion of the neutral sample was 32.84%. Awareness is more positive through official media and newspapers, and through internet news media and social networking software^[9]. Neutral and positive content accounts for the majority of what is learned about Chinese culture through documentaries and films and dramas made in China and in other countries. Overall, respondents who have been to China have a neutral and positive overall impression of China through a variety of sources.

For those who have not been to China, the highest percentage of respondents who have been to China is 36.94%, in terms of the perception of the official media as "particularly positive". In terms of the perception of internet news media, over 40% of the sample were 'neutral'. In terms of the perception of newspapers, 36.94% of the sample were 'particularly positive'. In the case of social software, 38.74% of the sample would choose 'neutral'. In the question on the perceived effectiveness of documentary films and TV dramas filmed in China, 35.14% of the sample chose "particularly positive" and 33.33% chose "neutral". More than 30% of the sample chose "neutral" for the question on the perceived effects of documentary films and dramas made in other countries. A further 33.33% of the sample chose "particularly positive". The effect of learning about China through official media, newspapers, documentaries and films made in China and in other countries was positive, while the effect of learning about China through internet news media and social networking software was positive and neutral^[10]. On the whole, the impressions of those who have not been to China through these channels are neutral

and positive.

All in all, the analysis of the above data shows that the majority of the sample group's perceptions of China through the above means are "neutral" and "positive".

5. Conclusion

The realm of education, at its core, extends beyond mere academic pursuits. It delves into the realm of character development, life skills acquisition, and the cultivation of holistic individuals equipped to navigate the multifaceted challenges of the world. Among the myriad skills students are encouraged to acquire, self-regulation stands out as one of paramount importance. Its implications transcend classroom walls, playing a pivotal role in determining success in both personal and professional spheres. As the world continues to evolve at an unprecedented pace, the need for self-regulation becomes increasingly evident. We live in an era characterized by information overload, constant technological innovations, and shifting societal norms. For students to not just survive but thrive in such a dynamic environment, resilience, adaptability, and a keen sense of self-awareness are non-negotiable.

The case studies highlighted, along with numerous others around the globe, provide a glimpse into what's possible when educators prioritize the cultivation of self-regulation. They illustrate the tangible benefits that emerge when students are equipped with the tools to manage their emotions, control their impulses, and navigate challenges with a balanced perspective. However, the journey is far from over. The field of self-regulation, like all aspects of education, is ever-evolving. As we look toward the future, several directions and implications emerge:

The strategies and techniques that are effective today may require tweaking or even overhauls in the future. As new research emerges about the human brain, learning processes, and the impact of external factors like technology on self-regulation, educators must stay abreast of these findings. There's a need for ongoing research, both at the macro and micro levels, to refine our understanding and approach. No single educator, institution, or even country has all the answers. The challenges of modern education are universal, transcending geographical and cultural boundaries. Sharing best practices, pooling resources, and collaborating on research initiatives can expedite the process of discovering and implementing effective self-regulation strategies^[1].

Every student is unique, with distinct strengths, challenges, and learning preferences. While overarching strategies provide a solid foundation, there's a need to tailor self-regulation techniques to individual needs. This calls for a more personalized approach to education, where educators play the role of facilitators, guiding students in their self-regulation journey rather than imposing a one-size-fits-all model. While the onus of self-regulation falls on students, educators play a pivotal role in this journey. Therefore, teacher training programs must incorporate modules on self-regulation, equipping educators with the knowledge and tools to foster these skills in their students effectively.

In conclusion, the journey toward fostering self-regulation is both promising and challenging. The stakes are high, as we're molding not just students but the future citizens of our world. However, with a commitment to continuous learning, collaboration, and adaptability, the vision of creating a generation of self-regulated, resilient, and adaptable individuals is well within reach. As educators, parents, and stakeholders in the educational process, the task might be daunting, but the rewards, both for the individual and society at large, are immeasurable.

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