

The Effective Path of Regional Cultural International Communication from the Perspective of Cultural Discounts--Taking Hui Culture as an Example

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Abstract: *Regional culture plays an important role in the inheritance and development of Chinese culture and serves as an important channel for international communication. Although the international communication of regional culture has received increasing attention in recent years, the results have been unsatisfactory due to cultural discounts. The main purpose of the article is to explore the cultural discount of international publicity translation of Hui culture from the three major transmission nodes. It then concludes with methods for the global communication of Chinese regional culture.*

Keywords: *Cultural Discounts; Regional Culture; International Communication; Hui Culture*

1. Introduction

In May 2021, President Xi emphasised the importance of strengthening China's international communication capacity to effectively convey China's voice and present an accurate image of the country. In order to enhance China's international reputation and influence, promoting Chinese culture overseas is crucial.

Huizhou, with its unique regional characteristics, is a precious heritage of Chinese history and culture. Along with Dunhuang and Tibetology, it is recognised as one of the three most important local studies in China. It is essential to broaden research perspectives and explore cross-cultural translation from the perspective of cultural discount in order to optimise the international promotion of Hui culture. This approach holds great potential for effectively communicating Hui culture in a changing landscape of cultural translation.

2. Connotation of Cultural Discounts

The concept of "culture discount" was initially proposed by Coin Hoskins and R. Mirus[1] in 1988, examining the reasons for U.S. dominance in the international market for television programs. It refers to the devaluation of a product or message due to cultural differences, resulting in a lack of understanding and acceptance by the audience.

In 2002, the concept of cultural discount was introduced into domestic theoretical circles. Cultural discounts are believed to reduce the effectiveness and attractiveness of messages due to shortcomings in information encoding, transmission and decoding. In order to reduce and eliminate cultural discounts, attention should be paid to three key communication nodes: the reach of information, the decoding of information and the identity of information. By improving communication in these areas, effective message understanding and acceptance can be attained, thereby reducing the impact of cultural differences.

3. Cultural Discounts in International Communication of Hui Culture

Understanding the key communication nodes of "information reach, information cognition, and information identity" is essential to effectively promote Hui culture. Identifying the devaluations in these communication nodes will help us to identify the challenges in the promotion of Hui culture from a cultural communication perspective. This understanding serves as a foundation for developing

effective solutions to address cultural devaluations and enhance the communication and promotion of Hui culture.

3.1 Discounts on Information Reach

3.1.1 Expression of communication channels: discounts brought about by single conservatism

The promotion of Hui culture heavily depends on showcasing Huangshan's scenic beauty and cultural in films. However, the majority of these productions lack foreign language translation like subtitles or dubbing, which affects the effective communication of Hui culture. Moreover, the international communication of Hui culture depends mainly on domestic media.

Therefore, diversifying communication channels and investing in accurate translation and localisation are crucial. These steps help to ensure that Hui culture can be effectively communicated to an international audience. Working with international media and online platforms can promote Hui culture and foster cross-cultural understanding. By adopting these strategies, Hui culture can be effectively communicated and promoted.

3.1.2 Modes of communication: discounts due to lack of innovation

The emergence of intelligent media technologies, including 5G, AI, AR, cloud services, and platforms such as TikTok, is attributed to data intelligence. These technologies have fostered new forms of data-driven information communication.

However, within Hui culture, intercultural communication is primarily limited to official communication, academic exchanges, and civil interactions. Cultural events, which incorporate mainstream media outlets like CCTV and China Daily, serve as the primary communication tool. However, the promotion of Hui culture often sticks to traditional standards, lacks innovation and fails to keep up with the changing times. This passive approach prevents the effective promotion of Hui culture and falls short of the effectiveness of active communication.

3.2 Discounts on Information Decoding

3.2.1 Cultural discounts caused by stereotypes

In his works *Public Opinion* and *Freedom and the Press*, American political commentator and opinion writer Lippmann introduced two crucial concepts: "pseudo-environment" and "stereotype" [2]. Pseudo-environment refers to the environment that communication media creates for people by selecting and processing information. On the other hand, stereotype is a fixed idea that individuals hold about a certain thing, usually with a subjective judgement attached.

Western audiences have developed dominant culture stereotypes within mimetic cultural dominance. These stereotypes have a direct impact on how these audiences perceive and respond to cultural information. Furthermore, the environment of cultural dominance primarily provides Western culture and values, thus narrowing the information channels for Western audiences. Xin'an medicine is a school of Chinese traditional medicine. Differences in culture and philosophy between the East and West have made it difficult for Western audiences to understand the basic elements of Chinese medicine, such as "yin and yang", leading to Western audiences' disapproval of Chinese medicine and the concomitant aphasia of Chinese culture. During the Xinguang epidemic, China's diplomacy on Traditional Chinese Medicine gained worldwide recognition for its success in combating the disease, leading to extensive appreciation.

President Xi emphasized the enhancement and reinforcement of foreign propaganda, utilizing diverse means to timely express messages in the international public opinion sphere. China's efforts in combating the epidemic were narrated, while exposing the actions of some individuals with the intention of spreading rumours and making trouble, and creating a favourable public opinion atmosphere for the prevention and control of the epidemic. Japanese filmmaker Ryo Takeuchi's short film, "Nanjing Anti-epidemic Scene," swiftly gained prominence on Yahoo Japan's front page following its release in Japan. The film was translated into 11 languages, including Italian, Korean, and German, and broadcasted on television networks across numerous countries, yielding favourable communication outcomes. The movie had the effect of eradicating, to some degree, the doubts of foreign nationals regarding Chinese medicine and China's social situation, and correcting the cognitive biases caused by stereotypes, thus realising the effectiveness of foreign propaganda.

3.2.2 Cultural Discounts due to Inadequate Translation of Hui Culture

Translation is crucial for audience comprehension in the communication of Hui culture. However, foreign language translation in the form of text, subtitles and dubbing is lacking in the current international communication of Hui culture, which mainly focuses on promoting scenic attractions such as Huangshan Mountain and Hongcun. This limitation is an obstacle to effective communication and weakens the impact of the message.

Anhui culture is rooted in Confucianism and strong family ties. It is a highly contextual culture. Relying on visual media alone, without translation, can make it difficult to convey the true essence and appeal of the Hui culture, let alone to facilitate a deep understanding of its rich cultural traditions.

3.3 Discounts on Information Identity

3.3.1 Discounts from information decoding

Communication is a cyclical process, according to Stuart[3], a British critic of media culture theory. The effectiveness of communication depends on the decoding activities of the audience, placing them at the centre of the process. Different audiences may decode information differently, resulting in preferred, compromised or confrontational interpretations.

Emblem culture, representing traditional Chinese values, carries deep meanings that can be interpreted differently depending on the audience's cognitive background. Hui culture is based on traditional Chinese Confucianism, with ideological overtones present in every aspect of daily life. The horse-head wall, a distinctive architectural emblem of Hui culture, offers a prime manifestation of this cultural heritage. The physical structure of the Horse Head Wall is well captured in its English translation, but the word "horse" has deeper connotations in Chinese culture that are not conveyed, including associations with success and leadership. The use of the word "horse" in the names of Huizhou people reflects their aspirations for a better life and their ideals. However, these meaningful connotations are difficult to express in short nicknames, which is a compromise in cultural communication.

Some translators have phonetically transliterated it as "Ma Tau Wall". This preserves its regional cultural essence and reflects local architectural characteristics, infusing a Chinese touch into the language. This translation preserves the distinctive culture of the region and captures the unique features of its architecture.

3.3.2 Discounts on high and low contexts

The concepts of "high context" and "low context" cultures were developed by Edward T. Hall to highlight the different styles of communication. In high context cultures, such as China, communication is often subtle and indirect, with an emphasis on connotation. In contrast, direct and unambiguous expressions with an emphasis on logic and clarity are valued in low context cultures, such as the United States.

Understanding and respecting different contexts and cultures is essential to successful cross-cultural communication. This requires awareness of cultural differences in the encoding, transmission and decoding of messages, as well as different interpretations of messages by different audiences. Recognising and adapting to these cultural differences can enhance intercultural communication, minimise cultural misunderstandings and achieve more effective and accurate cultural transmission.

The Bagua Village in Huizhou is over 1,800 years old. It was established during the Three Kingdoms period of the Eastern Han Dynasty. The village was sited and designed according to the Yin-Yang Bagua Theory of the Yi. It is named Chengkan, with Cheng representing Yang and Kan representing Yin. The Yi emphasises the unity of Yin and Yang. This village illustrates the spiral thinking and deliberate aesthetics of a high context culture. However, some translators have translated it as "Feng Shui Village" or "Chengkan Ancient Village", using a linear narrative with a low context, thereby losing the original contextual meaning. In order to minimize the cultural discount, it should be translated as "fengshui (beneficial environmental layout) village", which retains the Chinese terminology but transforms it into a low context form.

4. Reducing Cultural Discounts in International Communication of Hui Culture

4.1 The Value-Added on Information Reaching

4.1.1 Communication Channels: Downward Mobility

More Hui cultural stories using grassroots wisdom can be promoted through the use of new media channels. Li Ziqi has achieved remarkable success in spreading Chinese culture through her captivating videos. A Guinness World Record for the "Most Subscribed YouTube Channel for Mandarin Content" was set by Li Ziqi with 14.1 million subscribers on 25 January 2021. This significant number of subscribers demonstrates the acceptance and recognition of the content, overcoming language and cultural barriers while attracting significant attention and appreciation from an international audience. A greater understanding and appreciation of Hui culture can be fostered by sharing the unique perspectives and creative approaches of the grassroots.

4.1.2 Innovative Modes of Communication

- Innovative communication model of "5G+culture+technology"

International communication can benefit from the integration of culture and technology through various online platforms in the era of data intelligence. This reduces cultural barriers that may arise from information decoding and high-context communication, allowing Western audiences to engage with and appreciate the appeal of Hui culture.

For example, an innovative approach combining culture and technology has been used to promote Dunhuang Culture, one of the three famous regional cultures, including Huizhou. Using digital computer technology to recreate and create interactive experiences of Dunhuang culture through virtual reality (VR), online exhibitions and other digital platforms lays a strong foundation for international communication. The success of this popular communication model for Dunhuang culture serves as an exemplary model, highlighting the importance of using technology-enabled communication methods that meet the demands of the modern age. Therefore, individuals and organizations that are responsible for sharing the richness of Hui culture should make full use of digital technology and explore innovative techniques to effectively promote and communicate Hui culture to an international audience.

- Brand Benefits Creation

Culture, as the essence of a cultural product, profoundly impacts the success of a new product or service in international markets[4]. J. Straubhaar, in his exploration of cultural proximity, suggests that certain audiences are more inclined to prefer transnational or cross-regional cultural products[5]. Hence, it is crucial for the communication of Hui culture to prioritize the creation of brand value and awareness. To do this, cultural brand images and creative centres that embody the essence of Hui culture must be established by delving into the spiritual core and values of Hui culture. At the same time, Huizhou also has a number of brand images and Netflix products to build. Cultivate new cultural industries and create famous brands of cultural products and services. Combining Huizhou's history and merchants' entrepreneurship with music, film and other cultural industries, integrating technology and innovative design, creates a technology and cultural innovation powerhouse. The aim of this endeavour is to foster renowned brands that will facilitate foreign exchanges, increase the international popularity of Hui culture, and expand the global influence of Chinese culture.

4.2 Value-added on Information Decoding

4.2.1 Breaking Stereotypes with Direct Contact

Stereotypes lead to discounts in communication. The "mimetic environment" is a dynamic reflection of the "real environment". If the mimetic environment is positive, it will also affect real life positively, and may even help to change stereotypes. Channel is an important way of communicating content. It helps to build a positive "mimetic environment". Communication for all has become inevitable in the digital age of the Internet. Three-dimensional, diversified and multi-level communication breaks the traditional "mimetic environment". It changes audience stereotypes and promotes cultural communication.

- Direct Access through Official Communication Channels

To improve government-led international communication, expanding channels beyond traditional media and reaching audiences directly is crucial. This is due to the fact that individuals who have been

exposed to foreign cultures are more likely to appreciate cultural products from those cultures[6]. It is also important to avoid content that reinforces cultural stereotypes and self-promotion. The establishment of dedicated social media accounts on popular platforms such as Facebook and YouTube, which are familiar to the audience, can facilitate the spread of content. It is also important to take advantage of emerging platforms such as TikTok, which has become effective communication channels in recent years. TikTok, for example, has already attracted over 100 million monthly active users in the United States. Mainstream media like People's Daily, China Media Group and Xinhua News Agency have joined TikTok, and even traditional media like The Washington Post have embraced it. By using these trending platforms, Hui culture can be brought directly to Western audiences. It can be promoted in a more targeted and efficient way.

▪ Multimodal Value Expression

At the heart of cultural communication lies the conveyance of values. The nuanced cultural connotations of high-context Chinese language may not be fully understood in the Western world, necessitating the use of multimodal approaches to effectively communicate these cultural values. Gottlieb[7] emphasizes the importance of considering four simultaneous channels of communication, including the verbal-auditory channel, visual channel, etc., when it comes to translation. For instance, in Li Ziqi's videos, Chinese values like filial piety and wisdom are not conveyed through didactic or humanistic explanations, but rather through the portrayal of food, nature, and the changing seasons. This approach captures the essence of these cultural values in a more experiential and immersive manner.

Similar multimodal approaches should be applied to the international promotion of Hui culture. Various means should be used. Phenomena such as "micro-videos" and "internet celebrities" have emerged in the new media era. Hui culture should take full advantage of these features by creating cultural products and symbols that are suitable for online distribution, thus promoting various "Internet celebrity brands" with Hui cultural characteristics that resonate with modern audiences.

The values of Confucian merchants, which emphasize education and human relations, are often expressed through the couplets carved on buildings. For example, the couplet "Remember a two-word lifestyle: diligence and frugality; follow two lifestyles: hard work and reading" has profound meanings and reflects the rich humanistic heritage. The essence of Confucianism, such as filial piety, learning, virtuous deeds, diligence and frugality, may not be fully conveyed if it is simply translated into written form as it. By combining various modes such as text, visuals and short videos, audiences can engage with Hui culture through different modes and achieve effective international promotion.

4.2.2 Cultivating Innovative and Well-rounded Applied Talents

Talent is the key to improving the quantity and quality of translations and communicating cultural icons, and is the core and foundation of all industries. A wealth of talent is essential to drive innovation and modernization. First, deepen our understanding of cultural content and develop cultural self-awareness. Recognising culture is essential for innovation. Second, Language skills should be emphasized, alongside innovation and entrepreneurship. An industry perspective is needed to create a cultural brand with Huizhou characteristics. Thirdly, there is a need for the cultivation of a group of teachers with high quality and comprehensive talents.

4.3 Value-added on Information Identity

4.3.1 Improving Content Readability

In 1948, the American researcher Fletch proposed the Reading Ease Formula. It pointed out that the length and difficulty of the text would influence the audience's reading. In addition, enjoyment is also a factor that affects the audience's reading.

In Li Ziqi's videos, there is not much textual content, and even some of the videos do not come with English explaining. By finding content with common values, and using pictures to make the text more enjoyable and easier to see, has been successful in attracting viewers.

Hui opera and Mulian opera have had a significant impact on cultural development. However, audiences face a great reading barrier due to the linguistic complexity of traditional opera music. In this case, adapting Hui opera into an audience-friendly video presentation, combining multimodal means such as music, pictures and video, reduces the difficulty of opera and improves readability. This will help to deepen the audience's interest in and understanding of Hui opera.

4.3.2 Mitigating Contextual Constraints

Historically, Hui culture has often been promoted with a primary focus on landscapes and human elements, overlooking its cultural essence. This highlights the need for innovative communication models. President Xi has emphasized the importance of promoting the creative transformation and innovative development of traditional Chinese culture. This includes encouraging the exploration of commonalities between different cultures and fostering emotional connections. It is important to note that audience perceptions and judgments are largely shaped by emotional attitudes[8]. When resonance occurs, audiences evaluate external information more positively if it is in line with this orientation[9]. Therefore, exploring emotional resonance can help to reduce cultural bias and help to understand diverse culture.

The capacity for empathy is widely recognized as a core capability of human beings[10]. Decety proposes two elements: emotive infectiousness and emotive attentiveness. The former refers to the arousal of emotions within an individual, and the latter to interpersonal emotional feedback and sharing[11]. In light of this, international communication adopts simplified and adapted cultural contents of emblems to ensure better empathy and emotional feedback from the audience. This is because low-context Western cultures prefer direct and concise expressions. For example, words such as integrity and sincerity can be used to summarise the principles of Huizhou merchants, or storytelling can be used to reduce contextual barriers when communicating their ancient teachings.

By adopting innovative approaches and adapting content to international audiences, promoting Hui culture can effectively bridge cultural gaps and foster greater appreciation and understanding of its profound essence.

5. Conclusion

Hui culture is one of China's regional cultures. It is a treasure of traditional culture. However, cultural discount is an important influencing factor in the process of international communication of regional culture. This paper analyses the problem of cultural discount at three key information nodes in the process of regional culture international communication, taking Hui culture as an example. Innovative thinking and developmental vision can be used to promote regional culture to the outside world at the same time as building cultural self-confidence. So that young people can see the traditional Chinese culture in a diverse way from a linguistic point of view, delve deeply into the charm of the regional culture, and show the unique flavour and value connotation of the Chinese culture.

Acknowledgements

The paper is the research outcome of the projects funded by Anhui Xinhua University and the Education Department of Anhui Province (Projects SK2020A0593, 220900630200405, 2020SJXSK1303, 2021cxy024)

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