

Current Status of International Communication of Cantonese Culture: A Study Based on SWOT Analysis

Yan Dong

Guangdong AIB Polytechnic College, Guangzhou Guangdong 510507

Abstract: Cantonese Culture is a highly influential regional culture and an integral part of Chinese traditional culture. In the context of the "Chinese Culture Going Global" strategy and the "Telling the Chinese Stories Well" initiative, the international communication of Cantonese Culture holds an increasingly significant importance. Taking an international communication perspective, the present study utilizes the SWOT analysis to investigate the internal strengths and weaknesses, as well as the external opportunities and challenges, in the international communication of Cantonese Culture. By clarifying the existing issues, the study aims to provide a basis for relevant authorities to formulate corresponding strategies and promote the internationalization of Cantonese Culture.

Keywords: Cantonese Culture; International Communication; SWOT

1. Introduction

Since proposed in the "Eleventh Five-Year Plan for National Cultural Development" in 2006, the strategy of "Chinese Culture Going Global" has been practiced widely and considered a necessary path towards building a strong cultural nation. Since 2013, the innovative concept with Chinese characteristics for the international communication of Chinese culture has been proposed and interpreted frequently and widely in a couple more significant conferences and occasions, emphasizing the importance of "telling the Chinese stories well" and spreading the voice of China so as to promote outstanding Chinese culture and enhance the country's cultural soft power. Therefore, the international communication of Chinese outstanding culture has become a mission of our time.

Regional cultures in China are integral parts of traditional Chinese culture. Cantonese Culture is a highly influential regional culture in the Yue dialect region. As an ancient commercial hub, Guangzhou is the heartland and thriving center of Cantonese Culture. As a significant branch of the Lingnan Culture, Cantonese Culture is often regarded as a representative of Guangdong culture in various fields. Examples of Cantonese Culture include "Guangdong music", "Cantonese cuisine", "Lion dance", "Guang embroidery", "Guang ceramics", "Guang carving", "Lingnan painting style", "Huo'erwu architecture", "Lingnan gardens", "Cantonese opera" and "Cantonese music" etc.

In recent years, there have been some achievements in the international communication of Cantonese Culture, but there are still many issues that need to be addressed. Taking an international communication perspective, this study aims to clarify the current problems in the overseas-targeted communication of Cantonese Culture with an analysis of the causes, thus contributing to relevant academic research, and providing valuable insights for promotional strategies in the tourism and cultural sectors. Through the SWOT analysis, a comprehensive understanding of the international communication of Cantonese Culture is achieved.

2. A SWOT Analysis of the International Communication of Cantonese Culture

International communication refers to the flow of information, ideas, ideologies, and values between countries or across national boundaries, as well as the social, cultural, and political impacts caused by such flow (Schramm 1964). International communication is a form of communication that transcends national and cultural boundaries. The international communication of Cantonese Culture bears strengths and weaknesses from its internal as well as opportunities and challenges from external.

The SWOT analysis, a commonly used analytical tool in business development strategies, is used to assess the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats of organizations or individuals in a specific environment (David 1989). The "S" in SWOT stands for strengths, the "W" stands for weaknesses, the "O" stands for opportunities, and the "T" stands for threats. The SWOT analysis method combines internal and external environmental factors, with strengths and weaknesses being internal factors, while opportunities and threats being external factors.

The present study, based on previous literature research and field investigations, utilizes the SWOT analysis to probe into the internal strengths and weaknesses of the international communication of Cantonese Culture, as well as the opportunities and challenges presented by the external environment.

(1)S=Strengths

The inherent characteristics of Cantonese Culture determine that it bears obvious advantages in international communication, which are mainly reflected in three aspects. Firstly, the characteristics of Cantonese Culture itself, such as its migratory nature, openness, pragmatism, and innovation. Secondly, the vast overseas Canton/Guangfu population, with Guangdong natives being the largest group among overseas Chinese. Thirdly, compared to other regional cultures, Cantonese Culture has a better foundation for international dissemination (Chen 2007).

(2)W=Weaknesses

Despite having an abundant of advantages in international communication, the weaknesses of Cantonese Culture cannot be ignored.

Firstly, the distinctive features of Cantonese Culture are gradually diluting unavoidably in the process of integrating with other regional cultures abroad. Secondly, the awareness of international communication in cultural and tourism-related sectors is not very strong and thus there is a lack of top-level design for the international communication of Cantonese Culture. Furthermore, the existing international communication channels of Cantonese Culture are limited, the communication subjects are relatively singular, and the quality of English translations of related content is not high (Chen 2021).

(3)O=Opportunities

From an external perspective, the international communication of Cantonese Culture faces significant opportunities, mainly including the national strategic initiatives of "Chinese Culture Going Global" and the new concept of "Telling the Chinese Stories Well" in overseas-targeted communication. Additionally, the rapid development and application of intelligent and smart new media technologies, as well as the developed and outward-oriented economy of Guangdong Province with its significant international influence, contribute to the opportunities for communication (Liu 2017).

(4)T=Threats

The international communication of Cantonese Culture also faces challenges, including the weakening of regional cultural characteristics under the backdrop of globalization, competition with other regions that have more distinct cultural features in external communication, and the negative impact of unstable international relations on cultural exchange (Chen 2020).

3. The Problems Existing in the International Communication of Cantonese Culture

International communication refers to the flow of information, ideas, ideology, and values between countries or across national boundaries, as well as the social, cultural, and political impacts that result from this flow (Schramm 1964). International communication is a cross-national and cross-cultural form of communication. The international dissemination of Cantonese Culture, or the overseas-targeted dissemination, refers to the cross-cultural communication with non-Chinese nationals and non-Chinese overseas Chinese as the target audience. Based on SWOT analysis, a comprehensive analysis of internal, external, positive, and negative factors reveals that the international dissemination of Cantonese Culture has internal strengths and weaknesses, as well as opportunities and challenges from external sources.

In 1948, Harold Lasswell, one of the four founding fathers of communication studies, proposed the communication process and its five basic elements in his article "The Structure and Function of Communication in Society". These five elements are: who, what, in which channel, to whom, and with what effect, known as the "5W model" (Laswell 1948). These five elements constitute the five major areas of communication research: control analysis, content analysis, media analysis, audience analysis, and effect analysis.

Within the framework of the 5W communication model, combined with the results of SWOT analysis, the following problems are identified in the current international dissemination of Cantonese culture:

(1)Overall, the international communication efforts are relatively weak and do not match the regional economic development level and international status of the area where Cantonese Culture originated and prevails.

(2)Considering "In which channel" in the 5W model, the communication channels of Cantonese Culture have failed to keep up with the times. As for another factor "who" in the "5W model", the communication subjects of Cantonese Culture are relatively singular. Currently, the communication channels domestically targeting foreign audiences and using English as the target language include: Southern English Website, Guangzhou Government Website English version, Guangzhou Lifestyle English Website, Guangzhou Tourism English Website, English introductions of various tourist attractions, Guangdong Radio and Television International Channel. The quantity of international dissemination of Cantonese Culture through mainstream domestic and foreign new media platforms is very limited (Tang 2020). The main communication subjects are still official, and the participation of non-governmental forces is low (Liu 2018), and the content selection and expression style are not grounded enough.

(3)The textual presentation of Cantonese Culture is mainly monotonous in modes, with a predominant use of English language text and very little adoption of other modes (Tang 2020), which result in reduced fun, vitality, and sensory impact and hence reduced communication effect.

(4) The quality of English translation of the items of Cantonese Culture is not high, with a significant number of Chinese-style English, Verbose and stiff English language expressions, and even incorrect translations. The poor translation undoubtedly lessens the communicative effect among the target audience.

(5) The target audience of the communication of Cantonese Culture is mainly focused on European and American countries, neglecting the dissemination of Cantonese Culture in neighboring countries and regions along the "Belt and Road" initiative.

4. Conclusion

Against the background of the strategy of "Chinese Culture Going Global" and the initiative of "Telling Chinese Stories Well", the study of the international dissemination of Cantonese Culture has both practical significance and academic value. By utilizing the SWOT analysis method, the present research explores the internal strengths and weaknesses, as well as the external opportunities and challenges, of the international dissemination of Cantonese Culture, clarifying the existing problems. This provides a basis and reference for relevant departments to develop response strategies, thereby promoting the internationalization of Cantonese Culture. At the same time, it stimulates

the enthusiasm of domestic and foreign scholars for the study of Cantonese Culture and has certain reference value for interdisciplinary research related to it.

Due to the limited time, energy and knowledge for the author, the present study may lack depth and comprehensiveness in theoretical aspects. It is hoped that more in-depth researches will be conducted further on topics such as the interaction between smart media and the international dissemination of Cantonese Culture, as well as the empirical study of the overseas dissemination effect of Cantonese Culture.

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About the author: Yan Dong(1978-09), female, HAN Chinese, born in Baoji, Shaanxi Province, Lecturer, Master's Degree, Specializing in the research of culture & translation, English teaching.

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