

Original Research Article

Cross-cultural adaptation in English-language promotional materials for Chinese intangible cultural heritage: A case study of Kung Fu and tea art

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Abstract: This paper focuses on the issue of cross-cultural adaptation in English promotional materials for Chinese intangible cultural heritage, using Kung Fu and Tea Art, two highly representative intangible cultural heritages, as case studies. By analyzing the performance of existing English promotional materials in terms of cultural connotation conveyance, linguistic expression habits, and audience reception, it explores how to make promotional materials more effectively disseminate Chinese intangible cultural heritage in cross-cultural contexts. The study finds that when translating and creating English promotional materials, it is essential to fully consider the characteristics of the target culture and adopt appropriate translation strategies and cultural interpretation methods to enhance promotional effectiveness and facilitate the global inheritance and development of Chinese intangible cultural heritage.

Keywords: Chinese intangible cultural heritage; English promotional materials; cross-cultural adaptation; Kung Fu; tea art

1. Introduction

With the acceleration of globalization, cultural exchanges have become increasingly frequent. Chinese intangible cultural heritage, as the crystallization of the wisdom of the Chinese nation, holds significant importance in its international dissemination and promotion. English, as a global lingua franca, plays a crucial role in disseminating Chinese intangible cultural heritage. However, due to significant cultural differences between China and the West, English promotional materials for Chinese intangible cultural heritage face numerous challenges in cross-cultural communication. How to achieve effective adaptation in cross-cultural contexts, accurately convey cultural connotations, and attract the attention and interest of foreign audiences has become an urgent issue. Kung Fu and Tea Art, as highly representative and internationally influential projects within Chinese intangible cultural heritage, possess typical research value in terms of the cross-cultural adaptation of their English promotional materials. This paper will delve into the issue of cross-cultural adaptation in English promotional materials for these two intangible cultural heritages.

2. Literature review

2.1. Research on the dissemination of intangible cultural heritage

Scholars at home and abroad have conducted extensive research on the dissemination of intangible cultural heritage. Domestic research primarily focuses on the protection, inheritance, and domestic dissemination strategies of intangible cultural heritage, emphasizing the promotion of its inheritance and development within China through various channels and methods. Foreign research, on the other hand, places greater emphasis on the role of intangible cultural heritage in international cultural exchanges and the challenges and countermeasures of cross-cultural dissemination, focusing on how to enable audiences from different cultural backgrounds to understand and accept the intangible cultural heritage of other cultures.

2.2. Research on cross-cultural communication and translation

Cross-cultural communication theory provides a theoretical foundation for studying the dissemination

effectiveness of English promotional materials for Chinese intangible cultural heritage. In terms of translation, many scholars have explored translation strategies for culture-specific items, emphasizing the need to fully consider the characteristics of the target culture and the receptivity of the audience during the translation process, adopting appropriate translation methods such as literal translation, free translation, amplification, and omission to achieve effective cultural transmission. Simultaneously, some studies have also focused on cultural interpretation in translation, arguing that supplementary explanations of cultural background knowledge are necessary to help audiences better understand the cultural connotations of the original text.

2.3. Research on Kung Fu and tea art

There is a wealth of research on Kung Fu and Tea Art both domestically and internationally. Domestic research covers various aspects such as the historical origins, cultural connotations, technical characteristics, and inheritance and development of Kung Fu and Tea Art. Foreign research primarily focuses on the image shaping, dissemination effectiveness, and integration with local cultures of Kung Fu and Tea Art in international contexts. However, there is relatively little systematic research on the cross-cultural adaptation of English promotional materials for Kung Fu and Tea Art, providing space for this study.

3. Research methodology

3.1. Sample collection

This paper has collected a large number of English promotional materials on Kung Fu and Tea Art, including official website introductions, tourism brochures, cultural exchange event materials, and subtitles from film and television works. The sample sources cover relevant institutions in China, international cultural exchange organizations, and foreign media reports on Kung Fu and Tea Art.

3.2. Analytical methods

A combination of qualitative and quantitative analytical methods is adopted. Qualitative analysis primarily involves in-depth interpretation of the content of promotional materials, analyzing the conveyance of cultural connotations, linguistic expression characteristics, and the application of cross-cultural adaptation strategies. Quantitative analysis, on the other hand, involves statistical analysis of translation methods for culture-specific items and the frequency of cultural interpretation usage in the samples to objectively reflect the performance of promotional materials in cross-cultural adaptation.

4. Analysis of the current state of cross-cultural adaptation in English promotional materials for Kung Fu and tea art

4.1. Cultural connotation conveyance

4.1.1. Kung Fu promotional materials

Kung Fu, as a representative of Chinese martial arts, embodies rich philosophical thoughts and cultural connotations, such as "harmony between man and nature" and "balance between yin and yang." In English promotional materials, some materials effectively convey these cultural connotations by quoting classical literature and explaining the philosophical meanings behind martial arts movements, enabling foreign audiences to understand that Kung Fu is not merely a combat technique but also a cultural inheritance. However, some promotional materials overly emphasize movement displays, neglecting the excavation of cultural connotations, resulting in foreign audiences' understanding of Kung Fu remaining superficial.

4.1.2. Tea art promotional materials

Tea Art reflects the Chinese people's refined pursuit of life and reverence for nature. In English promotional materials, there are differences in the conveyance of Tea Art's cultural connotations. Some materials provide detailed introductions to tea varieties, origins, production processes, as well as tea-tasting etiquette and cultural implications, allowing foreign audiences to appreciate the profoundness of Chinese tea culture. However, some materials merely provide a simple description of the Tea Art process without delving into its cultural value, making it difficult to resonate with foreign audiences.

4.2. Linguistic expression habits

4.2.1. Vocabulary usage

In English promotional materials related to Chinese intangible cultural heritage, there are some vocabulary items with Chinese characteristics, such as "Kung Fu," "Tai Chi," and "Longjing." For these vocabulary items, most promotional materials adopt transliteration or free translation methods, which can generally be understood by foreign audiences. However, for some culture-loaded words, such as "Qi" and "Dao," translation is more challenging, and some promotional materials fail to accurately convey their meanings during translation, leading to misunderstandings among foreign audiences.

4.2.2. Sentence structure

Chinese expressions emphasize parataxis, with relatively flexible sentence structures, while English expressions emphasize hypotaxis, with relatively rigid sentence structures. In English promotional materials for Kung Fu and Tea Art, some materials directly apply Chinese sentence structures, resulting in unnatural and fluent English expressions that affect the reading experience of foreign audiences.

4.3. Audience reception

Surveys of foreign audiences reveal that they have a strong interest in Kung Fu and Tea Art but encounter difficulties in understanding their cultural connotations. Some promotional materials fail to fully consider the cultural backgrounds and cognitive levels of foreign audiences, using excessive technical terms and cultural allusions that make it difficult for foreign audiences to comprehend. Additionally, the presentation format of promotional materials also influences audience reception, with video promotional materials being more attractive than textual ones.

5. Strategies to improve the cross-cultural adaptation of English promotional materials for Kung Fu and tea art

5.1. In-depth excavation and accurate conveyance of cultural connotations

5.1.1. Strengthening cultural research

Creators of promotional materials should conduct in-depth research on the cultural connotations of Kung Fu and Tea Art, understanding their historical, philosophical, and religious aspects to accurately convey this cultural information in promotional materials. For example, when introducing Kung Fu, one can incorporate philosophical thoughts from Chinese traditional culture to explain the symbolic meanings and training purposes of Kung Fu movements.

5.1.2. Adopting diversified conveyance methods

In addition to textual descriptions, various forms such as images, videos, and audio can be utilized to convey cultural connotations. For instance, when producing Kung Fu instructional videos, explanations of the philosophical meanings behind movements can be included in the videos. In Tea Art promotion, the growth environment and production process of tea leaves can be showcased to allow foreign audiences to more intuitively appreciate the charm of Chinese tea culture.

5.2. Optimization of linguistic expression

5.2.1. Vocabulary translation strategies

For vocabulary items with Chinese characteristics, appropriate translation methods should be selected based on specific circumstances. For widely recognized vocabulary items like "Kung Fu," transliteration can be adopted. For culture-loaded words, free translation combined with annotations can be used to ensure foreign audiences accurately understand their meanings. For example, "Qi" can be translated as "qi (vital energy in Chinese philosophy)."

5.2.2. Adjustment of sentence structures

When translating and creating English promotional materials, adherence to English expression habits is essential, and sentence structures should be adjusted to make sentences more natural and fluent. Avoid directly applying Chinese sentence structures; instead, techniques such as sentence division and merging can be used to enhance English readability.

5.3. Consideration of audience needs and cultural backgrounds

5.3.1. Understanding audience characteristics

Before creating promotional materials, the cultural backgrounds, interests, and cognitive levels of foreign audiences should be fully understood. Based on audience characteristics, appropriate content and expression methods can be selected. For example, for audiences with limited knowledge of Chinese culture, simple and easy-to-understand language and vivid cases can be used to introduce Kung Fu and Tea Art.

5.3.2. Cultural adaptation adjustments

In promotional materials, some cultural elements familiar to foreign audiences can be appropriately incorporated to enhance the affinity and attractiveness of the materials. For instance, in Kung Fu promotion, comparisons between Kung Fu movements and Western sports can be made to help foreign audiences better understand the characteristics and advantages of Kung Fu.

6. Conclusion

This paper has conducted a study on the cross-cultural adaptation of English promotional materials for Chinese intangible cultural heritage, using Kung Fu and Tea Art as examples. The study finds that current English promotional materials for Kung Fu and Tea Art have certain issues in terms of cultural connotation conveyance, linguistic expression habits, and audience reception. To enhance the cross-cultural adaptability of promotional materials, it is essential to deeply excavate and accurately convey cultural connotations, optimize linguistic expressions, and fully consider audience needs and cultural backgrounds. By adopting these strategies, English promotional materials for Chinese intangible cultural heritage can be more effectively disseminated in cross-cultural contexts, facilitating the global inheritance and development of Chinese intangible cultural heritage. Future research can further expand the sample scope and delve into the cross-cultural adaptation of English promotional materials for other Chinese intangible cultural heritages, providing more comprehensive theoretical support and practical guidance for the international dissemination of Chinese intangible cultural heritage.

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