

Research on Cross-Cultural Communication of Quanzhou's City Image

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This study adopts a “cross-cultural” perspective, focusing on the construction and communication strategies of Quanzhou's city image. With the core framework of the “city-subject-media” multidimensional relationship, the research systematically analyzes the communication characteristics of Quanzhou's city image in a cross-cultural context, the cross-cultural communication modes of communication subjects, and the construction of cross-cultural image cognitive schemas. At the same time, starting from the dimension of cultural identity, the study comprehensively sorts out the existing connotations of Quanzhou's city image, deeply examines its current status of cross-cultural communication, and accurately identifies the related issues existing in the communication process. On this basis, combined with the “cross-cultural” concept, the study explores the communication mechanism of a sustainable and dynamic city image and investigates its communication strategies, aiming to provide theoretical support and practical reference for the cross-cultural communication of Quanzhou's city image.

Keywords: Quanzhou city image, cross-cultural communication, cultural identity, urban symbiosis

Introduction

The city image encompasses the overall style and ambiance of a city, reflecting its strength and the quality of its residents. The emergence of the concept of “city image” is closely linked to the process of urbanization development and is considered an intangible asset of a city, serving as an important factor in measuring a city's comprehensive competitiveness. A good city image plays a driving role in enhancing the city's cultural soft power and sustainable development capabilities. Currently, there are generally two interpretations of “city image” in academia: One refers to the overall impression of a city, namely City Image; the other refers to the city identity system, namely City Identity. The former was first proposed by Kevin Lynch (2000) in his book *The Image of the City*, where he believes that a city has a series of public images recognized by the public, and summarizes the elements that constitute the city image into five basic elements: roads, boundaries, districts, nodes, and landmarkst. The latter had an impact in the field of city image after the introduction of “Corporation Identity” (CI design) into China in the 1990s, giving rise to specific perceptions, views, and evaluations of the city's internal and external comprehensive strength, future development prospects, etc. (Zhu & Zhang, 2011).

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As early as the Southern and Northern Dynasties period, Quanzhou had already gained considerable renown. Today, the construction of Quanzhou's urban image is constantly exploring the "right path" of development amidst twists and turns. It updates the urban image to encompass diverse connotations such as "World Heritage Quanzhou", "Maritime Silk Road Quanzhou", "Digital Quanzhou", and "Ecological Quanzhou", pushing forward the old and bringing forth the new in the inter-city competition. In terms of urban image communication, whether as "the largest port in the East", "the capital of brands", or as "a World Heritage City" and "the starting point of the Maritime Silk Road", how to break through the shackles of Quanzhou's "recency effect", integrate existing advantageous resources to spread Quanzhou, enhance citizens' sense of belonging, identity, and happiness internally, and enhance the city's popularity externally, making the city go global, is of utmost importance. Existing research has explored various aspects of Quanzhou's urban image. Some scholars have analyzed the key links in shaping Quanzhou's urban image from the perspective of urban image design; others have pointed out some problems in Quanzhou's urban image construction and communication, such as the lack of unique international competitiveness and systematicness.

The Formation of Quanzhou's Cross-Cultural City Image

Quanzhou, located on the southeast coast of China, has become a key node on the Maritime Silk Road due to its advantageous geographical location. It is a stage where various cultures converge and integrate, and its urban image and cultural integration have developed into a unique "historical scene". During the Tang and Song Dynasties, Quanzhou, as a world-renowned prosperous port, established extensive trade connections with many places, becoming a bridge for cultural exchanges between the East and the West. Arab and Persian merchants brought goods and Islamic culture, and the Qingjing Temple witnessed the integration of Arab and local cultures in the field of architecture; Indian Buddhist culture spread widely, and the Kaiyuan Temple integrated various religious elements, demonstrating the harmonious coexistence of diverse religions. During the Ming and Qing Dynasties, despite changes in overseas trade, cultural exchanges continued. Western religions such as Christianity and Catholicism were introduced, and church architecture reflected the integration of Chinese and Western cultures; traditional arts such as Nanyin, Liyuan Opera, and Gaojia Opera absorbed foreign elements and developed richly. Since modern times, social changes and globalization have pushed Quanzhou's cultural exchange and integration into a new stage. Urban construction retains historical heritage while introducing modern concepts, with commercial districts and public buildings becoming showcases of diverse cultures; various cultural activities are held to attract the world's attention, such as the Quanzhou Maritime Silk Road International Art Festival, which promotes the inheritance and innovation of diverse cultures. From the Tang and Song Dynasties to modern times, cultural exchanges and collisions in different periods have left a profound imprint in Quanzhou, enriching its cultural heritage and diverse cultural elements, which constitute its unique urban image and are valuable resources for cross-cultural communication. Liao Zhongyuan and Yu Jiarong (2020) pointed out that as a national-level historical and cultural city, Quanzhou's urban image elements are rich and diverse, integrating various foreign and local cultures.

Current Status and Characteristics of Cross-Cultural City Image Communication in Quanzhou

Visual State Propagation

The emphasis of pictoriality lies in conveying the image of a city through vivid and imaginative visual

representations, allowing the audience to intuitively perceive the charm and characteristics of the city. In terms of this communication feature, Quanzhou actively showcases its unique style through various visual art exhibitions, such as photography exhibitions, painting exhibitions, sculpture exhibitions, etc. These exhibitions attract audiences with intuitive visual images, allowing them to appreciate the city's culture and historical changes while enjoying the artworks. For example, the Quanzhou International Photography Exhibition has attracted numerous domestic and foreign photographers, who capture the beautiful moments of Quanzhou with their lenses and showcase the city's diverse culture and unique charm through their photographic works. At the same time, Quanzhou also makes full use of modern multimedia technologies, such as television, film, and the internet, to produce documentaries, commercials, microfilms, etc. that promote the city's image. These multimedia works, through vivid images, beautiful music, and exciting narrations, comprehensively showcase Quanzhou's tourism resources, cultural heritage, and urban development achievements. For instance, the documentary "Erythrina City" follows the thread of history, vividly recreating Quanzhou's glorious past as an important node on the Maritime Silk Road through a wealth of historical materials and on-site filming, providing the audience with a deeper understanding and recognition of Quanzhou. Furthermore, in urban construction, Quanzhou also places great emphasis on landscape design, striving to create a distinctive urban landscape. Taking Quanzhou's Maritime Silk Road Park as an example, the park, themed on the Maritime Silk Road, showcases Quanzhou's important position and contributions in the history of the Maritime Silk Road through sculptures, murals, landscape ornaments, and other forms. The landscape design within the park is not only beautiful and elegant but also rich in cultural connotations, becoming a popular destination for citizens and tourists to relax and entertain themselves, while effectively spreading Quanzhou's city image to the outside world.

Narrative Communication

Narrative focuses on conveying the image of a city through telling its stories, enabling the audience to resonate emotionally, and enhancing their sense of identity and belonging to the city. Quanzhou is well-versed in this approach, actively exploring its rich historical and cultural heritage and stories, and disseminating them in various forms. On the one hand, it carries out historical story inheritance work, compiling stories such as the legend of Kaiyuan Temple and the history of Qingjing Temple into books, scripts, animations, games, etc., and disseminates them through word of mouth and various media, making them an important component of Quanzhou's urban culture and attracting tourists to explore and experience them. On the other hand, it vigorously displays folk activities. Quanzhou's folk activities are colorful and diverse, such as the Lantern Festival lantern show, the Loong Boat Festival dragon boat race, and the Mid-Autumn Festival mooncake gambling. They are not only vivid reflections of the traditional life of the Quanzhou people but also important carriers of urban culture. By holding these activities and inviting domestic and foreign tourists to participate, they can experience the folk culture firsthand and feel the warmth and hospitality of the Quanzhou people. The annual Lantern Festival lantern show is a typical example, with various lanterns hanging in the streets and alleys attracting a large number of tourists, becoming an important platform for disseminating the city's image. In addition, it also focuses on the dissemination of character stories, deeply exploring and promoting the stories of historical celebrities and contemporary models in Quanzhou, presenting the city's image through their deeds and spirits. For example, Zheng Chenggong, a historical celebrity of Quanzhou, whose feat of recovering Taiwan demonstrates the patriotic spirit and national integrity of the Quanzhou people. Promoting his story can allow more people to understand Quanzhou's history and culture, enhancing their sense of identity and pride towards Quanzhou.

Symbolic Communication

Symbolic emphasis is conveyed through representative symbols and images to convey the spiritual connotation and cultural characteristics of a city, enabling the audience to form an impression and cognition of the city subconsciously. In terms of the application of cultural symbols, Quanzhou skillfully integrates cultural symbols with strong local characteristics, such as Nanyin, Liyuan Opera, Gaojia Opera, Dehua porcelain, and Huian stone carving, into its city image promotion. These cultural symbols, as symbols of Quanzhou's urban culture, embody unique artistic value and cultural connotations. Their display in international cultural exchange activities, tourism promotion, and other occasions effectively helps the world understand Quanzhou's cultural characteristics and enhances the city's popularity and reputation. In terms of city logo design, Quanzhou has created representative city logos, such as city emblems and mascots. The city logo is designed with the concept of "Maritime Silk Road", using simple and freehand lines to depict the prosperity and splendor of Quanzhou during the Song and Yuan Dynasties, conveying the ultimate humanistic aesthetics of the Song style. The graphic part selects the "Maritime Silk Road and Stilbine Twin Towers" and is paired with the words "Song and Yuan China—Maritime Silk Road Quanzhou" and "Quanzhou China", vividly reflecting Quanzhou's historical and cultural characteristics as the starting point of the Maritime Silk Road. In terms of city brand building, Quanzhou strives to create internationally influential city brands, such as "Starting Point of the Maritime Silk Road" and "World Multicultural Exhibition Center". As a comprehensive reflection of the city image, city brands can integrate various resources of the city and enhance its competitiveness and attractiveness. By strengthening city brand building, conducting international cultural exchanges and cooperation, and hosting large-scale international events, the world can better understand and appreciate Quanzhou, thereby enhancing its status and influence on the international stage (Ren, 2023).

Cross-Cultural Communication Mode of Quanzhou's City Image

"Model Maintenance Game": Identity Adherence and Adjustment Under Cultural Differences

The concept of "pattern maintenance" originates from the structural functional theory of sociologist Parsons, referring to an inherent mechanism possessed by social systems to maintain their own stability and balance (Parsons, 1951). In cross-cultural communication, "pattern maintenance game" manifests as a dynamic process where different cultural entities adhere to the uniqueness of their own cultural patterns while making appropriate adjustments based on the influence of external cultures during cultural exchange.

Quanzhou boasts a rich and diverse array of cultural elements, such as the red brick architecture of southern Fujian, Nanyin music, and Liyuan opera. These cultural symbols embody the historical memories and values of the Quanzhou people. In international cultural exchanges, Quanzhou culture faces the impact and challenges posed by foreign cultures. On the one hand, the people of Quanzhou will maintain the uniqueness of their own culture through various means to preserve its "model". For instance, the Quanzhou government attaches great importance to the protection of historical and cultural heritage, introducing a series of policies and regulations to repair and protect historical sites such as Kaiyuan Temple and Qingjing Temple. At the same time, it actively carries out the inheritance activities of intangible cultural heritage, establishes inheritance bases for Nanyin music and Liyuan opera, and cultivates a group of young inheritors. On the other hand, Quanzhou culture also adapts appropriately based on the influence of foreign cultures. For example, modern art creation in Quanzhou often incorporates Western artistic expression techniques, such as the use of impressionist lighting techniques in oil painting, while retaining the core of southern Fujian culture, such as focusing on the local customs and practices

of southern Fujian in theme selection. This process of “model maintenance and adaptation” promotes the recognition and dissemination of Quanzhou culture in international cultural exchanges.

“Kindred Spirits”: Emotional Resonance and Identification Triggered by Cultural Commonalities

“Similarity attracts similarity” emphasizes the mutual resonance and recognition that arise between different cultures due to their commonalities or similarities. Despite the differences in geography, history, language, and other aspects among different cultures, they often share commonalities in basic human emotions, values, and social behaviors.

As an important port city on the Maritime Silk Road, Quanzhou has had extensive trade and cultural exchanges with various parts of the world throughout history. This historical background has led to commonalities between Quanzhou culture and the cultures of many other countries. For example, Quanzhou people value family, kinship, and friendship, which are similar to the cultural values of many Asian countries. In Quanzhou's traditional festivals, such as the Spring Festival and Mid-Autumn Festival, the scenes of family reunions and sharing family happiness are similar to the festive atmosphere of other Asian countries. Quanzhou's maritime culture emphasizes adventure, exploration, and inclusiveness, which is also similar to the spirit of exploration in Western maritime culture. Historically, Quanzhou's maritime merchants bravely sailed to the vast sea, opening up overseas trade markets. This spirit of adventure echoes the exploratory spirit of Western navigators.

In cross-cultural communication, by exploring and showcasing the commonalities between Quanzhou culture and other cultures, emotional resonance can be triggered among international audiences, enhancing their identification with the image of Quanzhou city. For example, during international cultural exchange activities held in Quanzhou, the production process and cultural connotations of traditional Quanzhou cuisine and similar foreign cuisines are displayed. The Quanzhou Runbing dish and Vietnamese spring rolls share similarities in ingredient selection and preparation methods. Through comparative display, international audiences can feel the commonalities between different cultures, thereby narrowing the distance between them.

“The Beauty of Harmony”: Harmonious Coexistence and Identity Sublimation in Cultural Integration

“The beauty of harmony” is an important concept in traditional Chinese aesthetics, emphasizing the harmonious unity and mutual integration of different elements to achieve a state of beauty (Ye, 1985). In cross-cultural communication, “the beauty of harmony” manifests as different cultures absorbing and learning from each other in exchange and collision, achieving cultural integration and innovation, and thus enhancing the level of cultural identity.

Over the course of its long historical development, Quanzhou has formed a unique landscape where diverse cultures coexist. Islamic culture, Indian culture, Southeast Asian culture, and other cultures have blended with Minnan culture, jointly shaping Quanzhou's unique urban style and cultural characteristics. For example, the Qingjing Temple in Quanzhou is one of the oldest existing Islamic temples in China, and its architectural style combines Arab architectural elements with Minnan architectural features. The main gate of the Qingjing Temple adopts the typical pointed arch shape of Islamic architecture, while the internal architectural structure draws on the traditional wooden frame form of Minnan architecture, reflecting the harmonious coexistence of different cultures.

In cross-cultural communication, by showcasing the “beauty of harmony” inherent in Quanzhou culture, international audiences can be made to appreciate the charm and value of cultural integration, thereby enhancing

their recognition and admiration for the city's image. For instance, in Quanzhou's city promotional videos, scenes are displayed of people from diverse cultural backgrounds living, interacting, and collaborating together in Quanzhou. The footage includes elderly individuals dressed in traditional Minnan attire, believers adorned in Islamic garb, and merchants hailing from Southeast Asia. They coexist harmoniously, jointly creating a thriving cultural landscape in Quanzhou, embodying the city's spirit of inclusiveness and harmony.

Communication Strategies for Constructing Cross-Cultural Image Cognitive Schemas

Communication Strategy Based on "Dimension-Modeling Game": Emphasizing Both Adherence and Innovation

In cross-cultural communication, it is essential to uphold the core values and unique charm of Quanzhou culture. By showcasing Quanzhou's historical and cultural heritage, traditional art forms, and folk customs through various channels and methods, international audiences can gain an understanding of the profound heritage and distinctive style of Quanzhou culture. For instance, producing feature documentaries, such as "Quanzhou: The Starting Point of the Maritime Silk Road", showcases Quanzhou's historical sites, traditional arts, and folk activities through the lens, disseminating Quanzhou's cultural characteristics to the international community. Simultaneously, advertising Quanzhou culture on internationally renowned media can enhance its international recognition.

At the same time, we should actively innovate the content and forms of cultural dissemination, combining the needs and aesthetic habits of international audiences to modernize and innovatively develop Quanzhou culture. For example, we can develop anime, games, film, and television works with Quanzhou cultural elements, and disseminate them through new media platforms to enhance the attractiveness and appeal of Quanzhou culture. For instance, we can produce an anime work set against the backdrop of Quanzhou's history on the Maritime Silk Road, showcasing Quanzhou's maritime culture and open spirit to international audiences through vivid and interesting storylines and exquisite visuals.

Communication Strategy Based on "Like Attracts Like": Seeking Cultural Commonalities and Emotional Resonance

Quanzhou has delved into the cultural backgrounds and values of international audiences, seeking commonalities and similarities between Quanzhou culture and other cultures, and evoke emotional resonance among international audiences by disseminating these common elements. For instance, when promoting Quanzhou's food culture, emphasis can be placed on the similarities between Quanzhou cuisine and foreign cuisine in terms of ingredient selection, cooking methods, and taste characteristics. Quanzhou's sea worm jelly shares similarities with Japanese seaweed jelly in terms of texture, both being refreshing, delicious, and cooling foods that can relieve summer heat. Through comparative display, international audiences can develop a sense of familiarity and identification.

At the same time, by narrating the stories and emotional experiences of the people of Quanzhou, we aim to showcase the humanistic brilliance and emotional power inherent in Quanzhou culture, allowing international audiences to feel the warmth and charm of this culture. For instance, we can produce microfilms or short videos centered around themes of family, friendship, and love in Quanzhou, and disseminate them on international social media platforms. We can tell the story of a Quanzhou family's struggles in the trade along the Maritime Silk Road, highlighting the diligence, bravery, and unity of the Quanzhou people, thereby evoking resonance and attention from international audiences.

Communication Strategy Based on “The Beauty of Harmony”: Showcasing Cultural Integration and Harmonious Coexistence

Quanzhou city exhibits the achievements of Quanzhou culture in its historical development process, where it has integrated and coexisted harmoniously with other cultures, conveying the inclusive, open, and diverse urban spirit of Quanzhou culture. For instance, in the city's promotion, government highlights Quanzhou's historical status as an important node on the Maritime Silk Road, showcasing historical relics and cultural phenomena where different cultures have interacted and integrated in Quanzhou. Cultural exhibitions can be held to display artifacts unearthed in Quanzhou related to the Maritime Silk Road, such as Arabic-style porcelain and Indian spices, allowing international audiences to intuitively perceive the diversity and inclusiveness of Quanzhou culture.

Meanwhile, we should actively promote the exchange and cooperation between Quanzhou culture and international culture, organize international cultural exchange activities, art exhibitions, etc., and promote mutual understanding and appreciation among different cultures. For example, we can invite foreign artists to Quanzhou for creation and exchange, combine foreign artistic elements with Quanzhou culture, and create internationally influential art works. We can hold an international sculpture art exhibition, invite well-known sculptors at home and abroad to create works with the cultural theme of Quanzhou, integrate artistic styles from different cultural backgrounds, and enhance the international influence of Quanzhou culture.

Conclusion

This article conducts an in-depth study on the cross-cultural communication model of Quanzhou's city image. Through the research on cross-cultural identity forms, it reveals the role and mechanism of “model maintenance game”, “sympathy between like-minded people”, and “the beauty of neutralization” in cross-cultural identity. By studying the symbiotic structure, it proposes strategies for constructing a cross-cultural communication ecology for city image based on the cultural symbiosis model. On this basis, it constructs a communication strategy for cross-cultural image cognitive schemas based on identity forms.

The cross-cultural communication of Quanzhou's city image is a long-term and complex process that requires the joint efforts of the government, enterprises, media, non-governmental organizations, and citizens. By implementing communication strategies that emphasize both persistence and innovation, seek cultural commonalities and emotional resonance, and demonstrate cultural integration and harmonious coexistence, it is possible to effectively enhance the international reputation and recognition of Quanzhou's city image, promote the international dissemination and exchange of Quanzhou culture, and achieve sustainable development of Quanzhou city in the context of globalization. In the future, it is necessary to further study the laws and characteristics of cross-cultural communication of Quanzhou's city image, and continuously optimize communication strategies and methods to adapt to the constantly changing international communication environment. At the same time, it is important to strengthen the evaluation and feedback of communication effects, adjust communication strategies in a timely manner, and improve the relevance and effectiveness of communication.

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