The Reflective Communication of Chinese Culture
Under Lasswell 5W Mode

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Abstract. This paper tries to make discussions from the perspectives of the subjects, contents, channels, audiences and feedback of the communication of Chinese culture by referring to the 5W communication mode of Harold Lasswell. It is found that the communication of Chinese culture has single subjects, superficial contents, narrow channels and deficient understanding on audiences and feedback. It is suggested that Chinese culture should take the economic globalization as an opportunity, and transform traditional cultures. Meanwhile, it should integrate contemporary cultural elements, develop cultural industry, analyze audience psychology, provide cultural products that meet the interest of audiences, expend information channels, strengthen communication with audience and improve communication strategies in time.

Introduction

In the second half of the twentieth Century, the political structure of the world changed greatly, such as the disintegration of the Soviet Union, the drastic change in Eastern Europe, the disintegration of the socialist camp and the end of the cold war. However, China has summarized the historical experience and lessons and adopted the policy of reform and opening up, achieving remarkable achievements and improving the overall hard power of China. Due to the rapid development of economy and the promotion of military strength, which result in much mental pressure for other countries, many western countries believe that the socialist ideology of China will be a threat to the capitalist ideology. Then they begin to advocate the “China threat theory”. Under such environment of siege, how to shape a national image of democracy, prosperity, development and friendship and to improve national soft power through cultural communication and foreign policy become particularly important.

The twenty-first Century is the era of globalization, the country, whose culture has absolute competitiveness, will have the initiative of the world discourse. In October 2004, the first Chinese Culture Promotion Organization “Confucius Institute” was established in Korea. In July 20, 2005, the first World Chinese Conference was held in Beijing and the phrase of “international promotion of Chinese” was confirmed and included into the national strategic development framework. The two events marked the transformation of Chinese from “bring in” to “going out”. It also means that Chinese begin to spread their excellent language culture to the world. For overseas teenagers, learning Chinese not only obtains a tool, but is also the exploration of the mysterious oriental cultural world behind the language. Therefore, in the international promotion of Chinese, language is the carrier of culture and culture is the core of communication. The paper tries to study the channels and strategies of cultural output during the international promotion of Chinese from the perspective of mass-communication.

The Evaluation and Analysis of Lasswell Model

In 1948, the American pioneers in communication, Harold Lasswell, published “the structure and function of social communication”. Harold Lasswell (1948) gave a definition of communication in that paper: “Convenient way to describe an act of communication is to answer the following questions: Who says what in which channel to whom with what effects?”[1], which was also called the “5W” mode. “Who” refers to the subjects of communication. It can also be understood as the
collector and exporter of information. It can be official institutions or individuals. “What” refers to the content of communication, such as news, historical stories, etc. “Which channel” refers to the channels or carriers of communications, such as language, word, pictures, video and network, etc. “Whom” refers to the objects of communication, such as readers, listeners, audiences, etc. “What effects” refers to the positive or negative effects of audiences after receiving information. The Lasswell mode belongs to the traditional linear propagation mode. Some critics believe that it is the propaganda mode of political communication, which is unidirectional and linear and lacks attention on the environment and effect of communication. HuYiqing (2012) believes that Lasswell mode is just a functionalism ideology and it is not available in current pluralistic society[2] . The criticism of Gao Haibo (2010) is sharper, He believes that it is a mode “used for design a way for disintegrating communist propaganda”[3]. However, the supporter, Liu Hailong (2009) argues that Lasswell definitely points out the influence of communication environment on communication effect and he believes that only adapting to the psychology and culture of the audience, can the communication achieve better effect[4]. The view of Lasswell keeps pace with the times and points out that the most important issue that should be paid attention to in the international promotion of Chinese culture. Therefore, the analysis of the current communication of Chinese culture with Lasswell mode is conducive to understanding the subjects, contents, channels, audiences and effects of the communication of Chinese culture, so that we can analyze the issues occurring in cultural communication and put forward strategies for improvement. The following chart is the structure map of the communication of Chinese culture under Lasswell mode.

![Figure 1. The structure of current communication of Chinese culture.](image)

### The Analysis of the Process and Strategy of the Communication of Chinese Culture

#### Who

The subject of the cultural promotion is the sender of Chinese cultural information and has a decisive influence on the process of cultural communication. In the past, the subject of cultural promotion is the government. Besides the government, enterprises, nongovernmental organizations and individuals have begun to promote the Chinese culture to the world. Under such a background, the subject of cultural promotion is led by the government and enterprises, social organizations and individuals coexist. Of course, different subjects of cultural promotion have different characteristics:

Firstly, as the core of the country, the government plays their own advantages, organizes large-scale activities for cultural exchange or hosts the world event, such as Beijing Olympic Games the effect of which effect cannot be achieve by other subjects of cultural promotion. The flourishing development of the Confucius Institute, to some extent, also shows the achievements of the government on cultural promotion.
Secondly, Enterprises vigorously promote their products by utilizing the increasing influence of China. It not only meets the needs of enterprises on development, but also indirectly promotes Chinese culture. For example, the film, produced by Film and Television Culture Company, integrates the elements of Chinese culture.

Thirdly, social organization, which refers to civil institutions and social groups other than government and enterprises, is one of the subject of the cultural promotion. The nongovernmental environmental protection organizations can show a brand new, green, natural and harmonious road to foreign friends with the traditional Taoist thought of China. These social organizations are active in the society. They are flexible and extensive. However, as far as the status of China is concerned, the activities of social organizations, to some extent, still depend on the government, so we should utilize various ways to encourage nongovernmental organizations to promote culture and provide them with necessary support, helping them to be independent and strong.

Finally, the individuals who promote Chinese culture include overseas Chinese and foreigners who come to study, work or travel in China. The rapid development of China and the improvement of the life of people allows citizens to frequently have overseas tourism, study and working and communication. The populates cultivation affects the image of China in mind of the world. When Chinese contact foreigners, they silently promote Chinese culture. Therefore, the improvement of populates cultivation is also an important work that should not be underestimated for promoting Chinese culture. Besides, overseas Chinese are also an important group for promoting Chinese culture. Although tens of millions of overseas Chinese have become foreigners in law, the feeling to China or the political and social status in the country of residence is not only different from the citizens of the country of residence, but also different from the domestic compatriots. Now, there are tens of millions of overseas Chinese, and many of them have entered the mainstream of the country of residence, even some people have become influential elites. Foreigners often know China through overseas Chinese, so overseas Chinese can play a unique function of bridge and radiation. Strengthening ties and cooperation with overseas Chinese is a shortcut to promote Chinese culture.

**Say What**

Chinese culture has rich connotation. Cultural content can be divided into four levels according to the analytic hierarchy process of cultural structure[5]. State culture level refers to the sum of the material production activities of human and products, such as the national costume, various food, porcelain, furniture and garden architecture of China. Institutional culture level refers to various social norms and social organizations established by human in social practice, such as the patriarchal system and autocratic monarchy system in Chinese history and the contemporary socialist system with Chinese characteristics. Behavior culture level refers to habitual sets of human in social practice, such as folk customs and traditional festivals. Mentality culture level refers to the values, aesthetic taste and mode of thinking that have been accumulated in human social practice and consciousness activities, such as Confucianism.

Taking the culture communicated by Confucius Institute as the example, it has two problems. Firstly, it just focuses on the communication of traditional culture and the consciousness of contemporary culture is deficient. Secondly, the culture communicated by Confucius Institute is superficial. It has not excavated the connotation of traditional culture. The activities of annual Chinese Cultural Year are always acrobatics, Beijing opera, martial arts performance, paper cutting, which are superficial. The explanation of the cultural connotations contained in these art is deficient. In films and TV shows, it has an over emphasis on the dark side of human nature for rendering artistic effects. The promotion of Chinese culture should not only focus on traditional culture, and it should also discover contemporary cultures. Although the audiences all over the world like the traditional culture of China, they have little understanding and identity on the development of the culture of contemporary China. Compared with traditional cultures, the contemporary social culture of China can reflect and represent the image of China better. The contemporary social culture of China allows foreigners to understand the developing and changing China. For example, the “Wolf
Warriors II”, the films shown this year, to some extent, conveys the responsibility of China in maintaining world peace and the character of equality, friendship and mutual assistance, getting rid of the characteristics of the previous film which focuses on the story of the poverty and backwardness of China. The Chinese has always been a nation with high inclusiveness. In ancient times, our ancestors well absorbed foreign cultures, and transformed and developed he foreign cultures by combining with their own social production practice. Then they spread such new cultures with Chinese characteristics, such as the introduction and dissemination of Buddhism. Therefore, culture can be used for reference, and the formation of new cultures by absorbing the outstanding parts of foreign cultures, carrying out reasonable transformation and development is an important way for contemporary China to enrich and develop own cultures. The transformed new cultures are also important content of Chinese culture that we want to promote.

In Which Channel

The major channels of the communication of Chinese culture include Confucius Institute, the news media, such as “People’s daily” and “Global Times”, and various official or folk cultural communication activities, etc. Although they have high stability, wide range and high efficiency, the effect is not as good as expected. Official communication is inevitably influenced by political ideology, and it is easily psychologically excluded by foreigners. Therefore, the government should gradually weaken the role in cultural promotion and encourage civil cultural institutions, cultural organizations and individuals to actively participate in the promotion of Chinese culture, such as civil intangible cultural heritage organization and the film and television communication company. Our neighbors, South Korea and Japan, have provided us with successful experience in cultural output. Their idol dramas show the life, behavior and way of thinking of their citizens, such as diet, cosmetics, clothing, daily communications. The stars of South Korea and the anime of Japan have many fans in the world, which may the effect of the communication of such popular cultures. To a certain extent, it also promotes the development of cultural industry in these countries.

We should learn from the s Cultural industry is the embodiment of national soft power, and China cannot ignore the industry in the road of peaceful development. Without cultures, the demand and added value of tourism, entertainment and industrial products will be reduced. China should strengthen the independent innovation of knowledge and cultural products, strengthen the development of cultural industry and reduce the deficit of cultural trade. [6]” International cultural trade is conducive to spreading the ideas of Chinese culture, to promoting the understanding of the world on China and to establishing a friendly image of China. Besides, it should reform media, broaden the entry criteria of media, introduce the market competition mechanism of survival of the fittest and cultivate a group of competitive media organizations. Finally, it should make good use of the Internet which is a low-cost and efficient communication platform for delivering culture information.

To Whom

The current mode of official communication is mainly unidirectional communication, which just focus on what I’m going to output and never have detailed analysis on what foreigners need to know. The analysis of the interests of audiences is deficient. We should refer to the marketing concept used by enterprises for selling products. They sell cultural products with the forms loved by audiences. When we promote Chinese culture, we should not only recognize the particularity of cross-cultural communication, but should also distinguish the different audience groups.

Firstly, we should distinguish the target countries. Asia Pacific region is the key area for our cultural promotion, because Chinese culture once deeply influenced Asian countries, such as Japan, Korea, Vietnam, etc. China and many Asian countries have the similar cultural tradition. Taking Asia Pacific region as a breakthrough to promote Chinese culture can conveniently and quickly improve the influence of China and Chinese culture. Europe and America are the difficult areas for our cultural promotion, because the historical and cultural of Europe and the United States are greatly different from that in China. Besides, they also have deep prejudice against China. Therefore, we should take the initiative, holding the principle of “peaceful coexistence”, and emphasize the
introduction of the political, economic, social and cultural aspects of contemporary China while publicizing Chinese history and culture. Meanwhile, we should also focus on the cultural promotion in developing countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America. The good image of China for the countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America provides a good environment for cultural promotion. Secondly, we should distinguish target people. We should pay more attention to ordinary people while focusing on people belonging to the middle and upper class. There is no doubt that the upper class people in target countries are the key targets of cultural promotion, including politicians, businessmen and intellectuals. They either hold the great rights of the country, or affect the ideological public opinion of the country. Therefore, they the information conveyed by them can be widely trusted and accepted by the people of the country. However, cultural promotion is not political diplomacy. The promotion of culture relies on its charm and subtle influence. Strengthening the civil communication and propaganda is the persistent way to promote Chinese culture. The single and general ways should be avoided.

With What Effects
With the rapid development of Chinese economy and science and technology, China has been increasingly involved in the international affairs and the international image has greatly improved compared with the past. However, as China close itself for a long time and some western media makes false reports, China now is still a mysterious eastern country for many western people. “The western people who do not understand China believe that China is always connected with the negative vocabulary such as ignorance, backwardness, corruption, autocracy, counterfeiting, etc. [7] These communication effects are caused by the blocked channels, single communication methods and others. It will be a journey for China to change such impression through cultural promotion. Moreover, cultural promotion is not unidirectional, and we should pay attention to the communication with the audience, and establish a convenient and efficient communication channel for understanding the effect of communication timely, receiving feedback of audience and carrying out improvement.

Conclusion
Through the analysis of the communication of Chinese culture, we can know that the communication of Chinese culture mainly depends on the government with the complement of civil promotion. Only China gradually weakens the role of the government and encourages enterprises and non-governmental organizations to participate in cultural communication, can such status be changes. The excavation of the connotation is deficient in traditional cultures which just focus on the surface cultures. Meanwhile, the common understanding of Chinese contemporary culture has not been established. In the future communication, communication content should focus on the ideological and epochal characters. Traditional cultures should focus on the excavation of ideological connotation and contemporary culture should focus on the characteristics of progressiveness and openness. The proportion problem on “traditional culture” and “contemporary culture” should be well solved. It should construct diversified channels of communication, establish a cultural communication system from the government to citizens, strengthen cooperation with foreign media and make full use of the advantages of Internet convenient and quickly communication. Besides, it should actively develop cultural industries, innovate cultural brands, and encourage enterprises to make cultural trade by taking the strong economic competitiveness as the basis. It should also carry out the comprehensive and detailed analysis of audiences, pay attention to cultural marketing strategies, study the acceptance psychology of audiences, abide by the principle of “seeking common ground while reserving differences”, establish the tracking feedback system, improve communication channels, understand the ideas of audiences in time, improve communication strategies and strive for the discourse power in the cultural field.
References


