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Cultural Value, International Communication and Cross-Cultural Adaptation of Zigong Dinosaur Lantern Festival

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Abstract. Zigong Dinosaur Lantern Festival is an important representative of China's intangible cultural heritage, and its cultural connotation, communication paths, and cross-cultural adaptation methods deserve extensive attention from the academic community. This paper sorts out the cognitive framework of existing research on the cultural value of Zigong Lantern Festival, analyzes the stages and mechanisms of its international communication, and discusses three major challenges it faces in combination with cross-cultural communication theories: symbolic understanding deviation, unbalanced discourse structure, and insufficient ecological guarantee. The value system of Zigong Lantern Festival is built on the inheritance of historical folk customs, the practice of artistic innovation, and the empowerment of industrial ecology. Its international communication has experienced a development process from cultural exchange attempts, brand output expansion to digital innovation breakthroughs. In terms of cross-cultural adaptation, it is necessary to improve the actual communication effect by optimizing symbolic translation, constructing communication networks, and improving institutional guarantees.

Keywords: Zigong Dinosaur Lantern Festival, cultural value, international communication, cross-cultural adaptation, intangible cultural heritage

1. Introduction

Against the background of globalization and the protection of cultural diversity, the international communication of intangible cultural heritage is a key to enhancing national cultural soft power and promoting cultural exchanges among civilizations, but it also faces problems such as the transmission of cultural connotations and contextual adaptation. As an intangible cultural heritage project with both historical heritage and contemporary vitality, Zigong Dinosaur Lantern Festival has developed from a local folk custom into a diversified cultural IP, showing unique value in international communication; however, it still faces dilemmas such as misinterpretation of cultural symbols and imperfect communication mechanisms. This paper will analyze its cultural value, sort out the context of its international communication, dissect the communication dilemmas, and put forward optimization strategies, so as to provide reference for its international communication and the cross-cultural communication of similar intangible cultural heritage projects.

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2. Cultural value of Zigong Dinosaur Lantern Festival

Academic research on the cultural value of Zigong Lantern Festival has formed a systematic cognitive framework, mainly analyzing from three dimensions: inheritance of historical folk customs, integration of artistic innovation, and empowerment of industrial ecology.

2.1. Historical and folk value

Academics generally believe that the core value of Zigong Lantern Festival is deeply rooted in the living inheritance of thousands of years of folk traditions. The custom of lighting lanterns in Zigong can be traced back to the description of "approaching the lantern display again" in Lu You's Qinyuanchun during the Southern Song Dynasty. The lantern festival has long carried regional characteristics such as salt culture and dragon culture, and shapes like the "Salt Crystal Pagoda" lantern set and dragon-shaped colored lanterns are material manifestations of regional culture [1]. Since Zigong Lantern Festival was included in the national intangible cultural heritage list in 2008, the standardization of traditional techniques such as "wire frame modeling" and "color-separated pasting" has been realized with the help of Specifications for Craft Lanterns of Colored Lanterns, making inheritance a typical example of the productive protection of intangible cultural heritage. Studies have shown that the close combination of the lantern festival with traditional festivals such as the Spring Festival and Mid-Autumn Festival makes it an important carrier for the creative transformation of folk practices in contemporary society.

2.2. Artistic innovation value

In terms of artistic innovation, existing research focuses on the integration of traditional crafts and modern technologies. Taking the "Qingcheng Twin Sisters" lantern set as an example, this paper analyzes its aesthetic transformation from "symbol stacking" to "the coordination of blank-leaving freehand brushwork and detailed carving". The creation of the lantern festival has broken through the limitations of traditional folk performances, forming an artistic expression that combines the essence of oriental aesthetics with the needs of modern aesthetics [2]. The application of digital modeling, 3D printing and other technologies in the modular production of large-scale lantern sets, as well as the creative combination of classical literary themes and contemporary trendy IPs, have greatly expanded the artistic expression scope of the lantern festival. The technical combination of environmentally friendly materials and dynamic light and shadow makes the artistic expression of the lantern festival retain traditional characteristics while having contemporary appeal.

2.3. Industrial ecological value

Research on industrial ecological value is mostly based on the conclusions of government public data and industry analysis reports, focusing on industrial chain construction and cultural tourism synergy effects. Zigong has formed a colored lantern industrial cluster with more than 20 core enterprises as the main body, covering the whole process of design, R&D, production and exhibition operation. Among them, technological breakthroughs such as "environmentally friendly waterproof lantern cloth" and "energy-saving light sources" have solved technical problems for the large-scale development of the industry. Tuo YanZhen explained that this industrial cluster not only achieves its own economic growth but also drives the development of related industries such as craftsman training, logistics and transportation, and cultural tourism consumption, forming a positive cycle of "intangible cultural heritage industrialization - regional economic empowerment" [3]. Zigong

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Lantern Festival has become the core driving force of cultural and tourism consumption in small and medium-sized cities, and its festival economy + intangible cultural heritage IP model provides a reference industrial development path for similar regions.

3. International communication of Zigong Dinosaur Lantern Festival

Existing literature on the international communication of Zigong Lantern Festival mainly focuses on two directions: development stages and communication mechanisms. There is a consensus on the basic framework, but there is still room for discussion on specific optimization strategies.

3.1. Phased evolution of international communication

Most studies adopt a three-stage model to analyze its internationalization process. The initial stage of cultural exchange (1990-2007) started with the exhibition in Singapore in 1990. During this stage, the communication work was mainly led by the government with traditional folk lantern sets as the main content, and the communication scope was concentrated in the overseas Chinese communities in Southeast Asia, without systematic cross-cultural adjustment. Hou Mei and Dai Yanling summarized the characteristics of this stage as "cultural display overweighs value communication" [1]. The second is the brand expansion stage (2008-2017), with its inclusion in the national intangible cultural heritage list in 2008 as a key node. The communication model changed from a single cultural exchange to the dual-track development of "culture + industry". Data show that the number of overseas exhibitions increased significantly during this stage, and localized design was attempted, gradually attracting non-Chinese audiences to participate, and the "Global Lantern Festival" brand initially took shape. The third is the digital communication stage (2018 to the present). The popularization of short videos and VR technology has changed the communication logic, forming a new model of "online and offline linkage". Offline exhibitions continue to explore overseas markets, and online influence is expanded through the communication of popular lantern sets such as "Jingwei Goddess" and "Intangible Cultural Heritage Chinese Dragon" on social platforms [2]. The “Global Cloud-based Lantern Festival” VR platform is a typical example of this communication trend.

3.2. Mechanism characteristics of international communication

Existing studies unanimously believe that the international communication of Zigong Dinosaur Lantern Festival adopts a diversified collaborative model of "government-enterprise-community". The government is responsible for brand endorsement and resource integration, providing guarantees for the overseas landing of the lantern festival through special support policies and the "Belt and Road" cultural exchange platform. Enterprises have developed into an industrial cluster with a clear division of labor and cooperation, using differentiated market positioning to avoid vicious competition and thereby enhance the efficiency of market-based operations [1]. At the community level, participatory activities such as the "Global Call for Children’s Creative Lantern Designs" are carried out to cultivate folk communication forces as a supplement to official and enterprise communication.

4. Cross-cultural communication dilemmas of Zigong Dinosaur Lantern Festival

Combined with Hall's Encoding/Decoding Theory and Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions Theory, the cross-cultural communication dilemmas of Zigong Lantern Festival are concentrated in three

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dimensions: symbolic understanding deviation, unbalanced discourse structure, and insufficient ecological guarantee [4,5].

4.1. Decoding deviation of cultural symbols

The communication effect of colored lanterns of Zigong Dinosaur Lantern Festival as visual symbols shows polarization. Universal symbols such as "festival joy" and "visual aesthetics" easily trigger cross-cultural resonance, while symbols containing profound meanings of traditional Chinese culture (such as auspicious beasts in Shan Hai Jing and Sichuan opera facial masks) lead to core problems of understanding deviation due to cultural cognitive differences, mainly due to the lack of a multilingual cultural interpretation mechanism [2].

4.2. Unbalanced structure of communication discourse

The cross-cultural communicative discourse surrounding the Zigong Lantern Festival exhibits a pronounced structural imbalance. Official discourse is oriented toward cultural promotion, adopting a formal register but lacking in narrative depth, which makes it difficult to elicit emotional resonance among audiences. Grassroots discourse, by contrast, is marked by its everyday, life-oriented character yet remains highly fragmented, with attention directed mainly to surface-level visual spectacle while neglecting the transmission of deeper cultural meanings. Scholarly discourse is seriously underdeveloped: a search of the CNKI International edition as of 2024 reveals fewer than ten research articles on its international communication, most of which are concentrated in the field of industrial and economic studies. This significantly constrains the festival's visibility within the global academic community.

4.3. Institutional absence of ecological guarantee

Insufficient intellectual property protection and a shortage of professional talent constitute two major challenges at the ecosystem level. Studies indicate that overseas infringements involving the Zigong Dinosaur Lantern Festival occur frequently; owing to inadequate patent deployment and the high costs of rights protection, enterprises find it difficult to respond effectively. At the same time, there is a marked scarcity of composite professionals who possess both traditional lantern craftsmanship and cross-cultural communication capacities, which directly undermines the accuracy and innovativeness of its overseas communication [1].

5. Conclusion

In response to the above challenges, this paper proposes optimization strategies in three interrelated dimensions: content translation and adaptation, the construction of communication channels, and ecosystem-level institutional safeguards. First, symbolic reconstruction and thematic adaptation should be regarded as the core optimization strategy. It is advisable to focus on the unique "dinosaur + lantern" IP, develop multilingual narrative content, and forge connections between traditional cultural symbols and the cognitive frameworks of overseas audiences [6]. Cross-cultural themes such as "environmental protection" and "peace" may be incorporated to create a better balance between traditional and contemporary content, thereby reducing comprehension barriers arising from cultural differences. Second, channel optimization requires coordination among multiple stakeholders. At the governmental level, it is necessary to deepen cooperation with Belt and Road cooperation platforms and overseas cultural centers; at the industry level, consideration could be

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given to establishing a “World Lantern Development Alliance” to promote industry-wide coordination and the formulation of unified standards [7]. On the digital front, it is necessary to further develop multilingual immersive platforms so as to enhance interactive experiences and improve the effectiveness of dissemination via social media. Third, in terms of ecosystem safeguards, this paper recommends the establishment of a global patent database together with a coordinated rights-protection alliance to strengthen intellectual property protection. With regard to talent development, adjustments to university curricula and reforms of vocational training systems are needed to cultivate composite professionals who are both capable of inheriting and innovating traditional lantern craftsmanship and equipped with competencies in international communication.

Although existing research has formed a basic framework, there are still some deficiencies. Empirical research on cross-cultural audiences is weak, lacking differentiated analysis of the reception mechanisms of audiences in different regions; the communication effect evaluation system has not been established, and it is necessary to construct multi-dimensional indicators including exposure, cultural identity and industrial transformation; the integration of multidisciplinary theories is insufficient, and it is urgent to introduce theoretical perspectives such as cultural anthropology and international communication. If future research can make up for these deficiencies, it will provide more solid academic support for the international communication of Zigong Lantern Festival and similar intangible cultural heritage projects.

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