

The Construction of Shanghai's Cultural Image under Overseas

Media Reports



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ABSTRAC: This paper adopts a text analysis method based on media reports. The corpus comes from relevant reports on Shanghai of Google News from 2016 to 2020. There are a total of 64 relevant reports, of which 25, we believe, can deeply reflect overseas media's perception of Shanghai image. We classify, analyze, and select some typical sentences in an appropriate manner. Zhou Ning (2011) believes that "from the perspective of knowledge and imagination, the image of China contains three layers of meanings: first, western cognition and imagination of the reality of China to a certain extent; second, western self-recognition, anxiety and expectation of Sino-Western relations; third, the metaphorical expression of self-identity concerning Western culture". This kind of imagination is based on reflecting facts and is a kind of cognition of the objective world. At the same time, it requires people's mental intelligence to fill in the image with which is "absent" from reality (Belleretal, 1994). Due to the individual's subjective initiative, this understanding will inevitably lead to an impression that is deviated from the original image. When analyzing the reports of Shanghai by foreign media, we use fact-based informational descriptions as a supplement, and turn our perspective to foreign media's evaluation of Shanghai as a city and its urban culture for the aim of exploring the cultural image of Shanghai in the eyes of foreign media. The study will examine which of the reports reflect the western views and evaluations on the image of Shanghai, and which ones are a reflection of the image of Shanghai integrated with that of western countries. Based on the above, we divide the corpus of the Western media reports on Shanghai into two categories for study: overseas media's cognition of Shanghai's cultural image and the reflection of the image of Shanghai integrated with that of western countries western culture and their self-identity.

1. OVERSEAS MEDIA'S COGNITION OF SHANGHAI'S CULTURAL IMAGE

The corpus to be studied is classified into 3 sections: the affirmation of Shanghai's cultural tolerance; the impression of Shanghai as an international metropolis; and shaping the image of Shanghai society and Shanghainese.

(1) THE AFFIRMATION OF SHANGHAI'S CULTURAL TOLERANCE

Example 1: Few places have been subject to such a mix of cultural influences as Shanghai. Korea, Japan and Taiwan lie just across the sea, but when its port became a target for western governments seeking influence in the east in the 19th century, it became an international city.

Example 2: Shanghai Port recorded 43.3 m teu in container volumes in 2019, ranking it as the world's busiest container port for the 10th year.

Since the 1970s and 1980s, Shanghai has been an open port where foreigners have left many footprints, as well as many marks of Shanghai Culture. The inclusiveness of Shanghai Culture is obvious to all, which is reflected in the acceptance, absorption and appreciation of foreign cultures. In Example 1, the media expresses Shanghai's extremely high degree of cultural integration and influence in the 19th century, and believes that when the port becomes the target of Western governments seeking influence in the East, it becomes an international city. Shanghai is regarded as a port connecting Chinese culture with other cultures, and is affirmed

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its influence in China, which is determined by its unique geographical location and economic strength. Shanghai is regarded as a port city connecting China with overseas countries. The significance of its existence is not only the transportation of goods, but also the dissemination and integration of culture. Until now, Example 2 conveys to the world that the port of Shanghai is still continuously connecting with the world, realizing various exchanges including culture. Considering that these news reports have been reported in the past two years, it can be reasonably believed that Shanghai's cultural tolerance and integration have always been recognized in the eyes of foreign media, whether it is in the past or at the present.

2. THE IMPRESSION OF SHANGHAI AS AN INTERNATIONAL METROPOLIS

Example 3: This denser, farther cluster is Lujiazui, the financial district across the river in Pudong New Area, the special economic zone that Deng Xiaoping built from nothing beginning in the 1990s, which now stands as a symbol of China's embrace of free markets and unbridled wealth creation.

As an international metropolis, Shanghai has been the commercial centre of China for many years, and it is also a symbol that China has shown to the world. Shanghai's economic achievements have been obvious to all in the world since the reform and opening up. Over the years, Shanghai has proved its economic strength to the world time and time again, and its hosting of the World Expos and the China International Import Expos has declared its image as a metropolis to the world. There are many words such as "metropolis" and "international city" in the corpus to describe the city of Shanghai. In this example, Lujiazui is regarded as "a symbol of China's embrace of the free market and unlimited wealth creation". It is also an application of the whole instead of the part. Lujiazui is one of the most influential financial centres in China and the most attractive place in Shanghai. The discourse here undoubtedly uses Lujiazui to reflect Shanghai's economic status in China. Just as the questionnaire concerning foreigners' first impression of Shanghai, more than half of them chose the Oriental Pearl, which is not only a building or geographical coordinate, but also the inherent impression of Shanghai as China's commercial centre.

Example 4: While Hong Kong and Singapore have driven as Asian money centres, and Japan has tried to position Tokyo as the region's most important financial hub, the world's biggest sovereign-wealth fund says it's Shanghai that may prove the top dog.

Example 5: In addition, "life quality and internationalism" means that many foreign founders prefer Shanghai over other Chinese cities, WalenzaSlabe says. "No other city in Asia, or perhaps the world, has as many countries or Asia-Pacific offices for fortune 1,000 companies," he says. "It has an unmatched scale for partner and customer development."

Through some reports, we can find that the reason why Shanghai enjoys the reputation of an international metropolis is mainly that it has great economic strength. As is in Example 4, the world's largest sovereign wealth fund said, Shanghai may become the bellwether of Asian financial centre. In Example 5, it is more straightforward to express the reason why many foreigners like Shanghai better, which is that there is more business cooperation and development in Shanghai. We can find that most of the keywords appearing together with the image of Shanghai as an international metropolis are about its "economic strength". There is no doubt that the economic strength has great influence. However, it is undeniable that the cultural image of Shanghai as an international metropolis is not enough compared with its economic influence. Earlier, we mentioned that Shanghai culture has a great degree of tolerance, but we did not specifically mention which cultural products in Shanghai have spread to the world. On the contrary, we can deem that while Shanghai accepts cultural blending, cultural export is not enough.

3. SHAPING THE IMAGE OF SHANGHAI SOCIETY AND SHANGHAINESE

Example 6: For a service like ours, Shanghai, with its big international community, is the best entry point into a huge, completed market like China. People here are completely open to trying new things and want to experience the next digital development.

Example 7: It looks that Costco is a hit in Shanghai. On Tuesday, the U.S. Wholesale chain opened its first location in Mainland China and was so inundated with eager shoppers that the store closed early owing to "security concerns".

The occurrence of an incident may often be accompanied by the appearance of characters. Here we study the discourse on social events and civic behaviour in Shanghai in reports. Through these reports, we find that foreign media recognize the openness and tolerance of Shanghainese for one thing, they shape the image of Shanghainese through social events for another. The report here on Shanghai's social events is not as optimistic as it is on Shanghai's cultural tolerance and economic strength. For instance, reports on celebrating Costco's opening of a new store in Shanghai, which should have been mutually beneficial, focus on that it is forced to close earlier due to the safety problems caused by the hungry Shanghainese swarming into the shopping malls. In addition, another

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report analyzes the luxurious social life in Shanghai.

Example 8: Hong Kong, Shanghai, and Tokyo are the costliest cities to maintain a luxury lifestyle, particularly for high-end residential property and luxury cars, according to Julius Baer's annual report, Global Wealth and Lifestyle report, released Wednesday.

This report has repeatedly mentioned the high-end commercial housing and luxury cars enjoyed by Shanghainese to express their extravagant style. It can also be regarded as an embodiment of Shanghai's economic strength.

4. THE REFLECTION OF THE IMAGE OF SHANGHAI IN OVERSEAS MEDIA OF WESTERN CULTURE WITH SELF-IDENTITY.

Example 9: As the 1930s dawned, Shanghai became a jazz city for the cosmopolitan, international crowd and the wealth of the Chinese population.

This report tells people that with the advent of the 1930s, Shanghai has become a city of jazz, serving people from all over the world and a few wealthy Chinese. The media compares Shanghai to a jazz city. We know that jazz, a combination of African black culture and European white culture, is a piece of very representative music in Western music. Foreign media here recognizes Shanghai's international characteristics and even describes it with a word that originally does not belong to Shanghai's characteristics. We think that the media is actually taking a critical standpoint to describe Shanghai in the East with their culture and value. This is not only an expression of western culture, but also a practice of Western countries identifying their own culture and projecting it to Shanghai culture. In a word, "Westernization". In the eyes of foreigners, the Westernization of Shanghai allows Shanghai to communicate with the international community, recognize the tolerance of Shanghai culture, and does not hesitate to import Western culture into Shanghai. However, Shanghai, as the commercial centre of the ancient oriental country, has no less cultural input than any other city in China, but it still moves slowly on the road in terms of cultural output.

Example 10: Shanghai's status as a start-up capital comes from its combination of investor and government support, foreign-friendly culture, and its important free-trade zone. But while its keen consumers, low overheads and hi-tech environment make it sound like a start-up utopia, failures, like anywhere, are still common.

The report expresses very modestly that the reason why Shanghai has become the capital of entrepreneurship is that there is the support of investors and the government, friendly foreign culture and important free trade zones. Most of these reasons can be attributed to its "openness", which implies that the outside world has a major influence on Shanghai's prosperity.

Throughout all these reports, the appraisal and impression of Shanghai by the overseas media mainly focus on Shanghai's "commercial value". In terms of shaping the city's cultural image, the dissemination of cultural heritage or the output of cultural characteristics needs to be strengthened.

Western countries will build and export their own country's cultural image through media reports, and also reflect that of other cities in some reports. This will also affect overseas people's impression of other countries' urban cultural images in a subtle manner. In the relationship between self-image and the image of others, the West brings a sense of self-cultural identity and projects it to the cultural image of Shanghai, which actually reflects a sense of cultural superiority, and the media also intends to spread this sense of Western cultural superiority to the world. The West also appreciates and affirms, of course, the cultural image of Shanghai. Coupled with the influence of Shanghai Culture, the West's attitude towards Shanghai is actually complicated.

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