

Original Paper

An Analysis on the Cross-border Communication Strategy of Guilin Red Tourism Culture in ASEAN from the Perspective of Cross-cultural Communication Theory

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Abstract

Against the dual backdrop of deepening the China-ASEAN comprehensive strategic partnership and advancing the cultural-tourism integration strategy, Guilin, with its abundant red tourism resources and geographical advantages, possesses inherent conditions for disseminating red culture in ASEAN. However, it faces practical challenges such as significant cultural discount and difficulties in cognitive recognition. This paper employs literature review and case analysis methods, supported by intercultural communication theory, to construct an analytical framework from three dimensions: cultural context, communication objectives, and element adaptation. By considering the cultural differences between high and low-context ASEAN, it proposes adaptive communication strategies such as differentiated content expression, exploration of common values, and localization transformation. The aim is to break down cross-border communication barriers, enhance the international influence of Guilin's red culture, and provide theoretical references and practical guidance for the cross-border dissemination of regional characteristic cultures.

Keywords

Guilin Red Tourism Culture, ASEAN, Cross-border Communication, Intercultural Cross-border Communication

1. Introduction

With the deepening of the Belt and Road Initiative and the construction of the China-ASEAN community with a shared future, China-ASEAN cultural and people-to-people exchanges and cooperation have become the core support for consolidating the bilateral strategic partnership. The introduction of policy

documents such as the "China-ASEAN Strategic Partnership Vision 2030" and the "China-ASEAN Cultural and Tourism Cooperation Development Action Plan" has clearly identified the sharing and joint development of cultural and tourism resources as a key direction for regional cooperation, providing a solid policy framework and development opportunities for the cross-border dissemination of red tourism culture. Against the backdrop of the in-depth development of the domestic cultural and tourism integration strategy, red tourism, as an important carrier of revolutionary spirit and cultural essence, has been incorporated into the important practical path of building a strong cultural nation and promoting Chinese culture abroad. Guilin, as a frontier node city for China's opening-up and cooperation with ASEAN, not only possesses abundant red tourism resources but also has established a regular foundation for cross-border cultural and tourism exchanges through platforms such as the China-ASEAN Expo, giving it inherent advantages for the dissemination of red tourism culture in ASEAN.

However, due to cultural context differences among ASEAN countries and cognitive biases regarding red culture, Guilin's red tourism culture still faces practical challenges in the region, including significant cultural discount, low recognition, and difficulties in emotional identification. Compared to the international fame of Guilin's scenic tourism, the global reach and influence of its red tourism culture remain underdeveloped, failing to fully leverage its potential in fostering closer ties between China and ASEAN nations.

Based on this, this paper focuses on the core issue of "cross-border communication of Guilin's red tourism culture to ASEAN," supported by intercultural communication theory, to explore the cross-border communication pathways of Guilin's red tourism culture to ASEAN. The study aims to break down the intercultural barriers in the cross-border communication of red culture, enhance the international influence and recognition of Guilin's red culture, and provide practical guidance for promoting the international transformation and upgrading of Guilin's red tourism industry. At the same time, by focusing on the communication practices of red tourism and culture in specific regions and target markets, it enriches the theoretical research achievements in the cross-cultural communication of red culture and provides a reference case paradigm for the international communication of similar regional cultural resources. From a broader perspective, this study, by promoting the precise alignment of Guilin's red tourism culture with the ASEAN market, can further enhance ASEAN countries' understanding of China's historical culture and core values, consolidate the public opinion foundation for the construction of the China-ASEAN community with a shared future, and facilitate the deeper and higher-quality development of bilateral cultural and tourism cooperation.

2. Core Concepts and Theoretical Framework of Intercultural Communication Theory

Intercultural communication theory serves as the foundational paradigm for understanding information exchange patterns between diverse cultural groups and overcoming communication barriers. Its development has evolved through three key stages: from empirical observation to theoretical construction, and from a single-discipline approach to interdisciplinary integration. In 1959, American anthropologist

Edward T. Hall first introduced the term Intercultural Communication in his seminal work *The Silent Language*. By systematically analyzing how cultural contexts influence communication behaviors, Hall established this field as an independent academic discipline, earning him recognition as its founding figure. The theory examines the entire process of information encoding, transmission, and decoding across cultures, with its core focus on revealing how cultural differences affect communication outcomes and exploring effective strategies for cross-cultural exchange. These three key dimensions collectively form the theoretical framework of this study:

2.1 The Determinative Role of Cultural Context

Cross-cultural communication theory emphasizes that all communication behaviors are embedded within specific cultural contexts. These contexts constitute an invisible cognitive framework shaped by elements such as historical traditions, value systems, religious beliefs, linguistic symbols, and behavioral norms of particular groups. This framework directly determines the information encoding logic of communicators, their choice of communication channels, as well as the decoding methods and cognitive judgments of audiences. Due to inherent differences in cultural contexts across groups, cross-border communication often encounters decoding bias where audiences misinterpret or even develop opposing perceptions of transmitted information based on their own cultural contexts, ultimately leading to communication failure. Edward Hall further categorized cultural contexts into high-context cultures and low-context cultures: High-context cultures (e.g., Vietnam, Thailand) rely on implicit contextual cues, emotional resonance, and non-verbal symbols, where the core meaning of information is often embedded within the context; Low-context cultures (e.g., Singapore, Malaysia) depend more on explicit textual expressions and clear logical structures, prioritizing directness and clarity in information delivery. This classification provides a crucial analytical tool for accurately understanding the communication patterns of different cultural groups.

2.2 Core Objectives of Effective Communication and Cultural Mutual Learning

Cross-cultural communication theory explicitly rejects the single-culture export logic, with its core objective being to achieve effective communication, equal dialogue, and cultural mutual learning among different cultural groups. The theory posits that the essence of cross-cultural communication lies in two-way interaction rather than one-way indoctrination. The core value of communication lies in eliminating cultural barriers, reducing cognitive conflicts, enhancing mutual understanding and respect for each other's cultures, and ultimately achieving the coexistence and prosperity of diverse cultures. This goal-oriented approach requires communicators to abandon ethnocentrism, that is, to refrain from judging or imposing their own culture on other cultures. Instead, they should adhere to the principle of cultural relativity, respecting the uniqueness and rationality of different cultures, seeking common values in differences, and building bridges for cultural exchange.

2.3 The Precise Alignment of all Communication Elements

The key to effective cross-cultural communication lies in achieving precise alignment across all communication elements with the target cultural context, which serves as the core practical guideline of

cross-cultural communication theory. Specifically, adaptability requirements permeate the entire communication process: At the content level, it requires in-depth research into target audiences' cultural preferences, information needs, and cognitive habits to achieve localized adaptation of communication content, ensuring readability, comprehensibility, and relevance. At the channel level, it necessitates selecting appropriate communication vehicles based on media usage characteristics in target regions to achieve precise channel coverage. At the feedback level, it demands establishing dynamic monitoring and evaluation mechanisms for communication effectiveness, promptly collecting audience feedback, and making targeted adjustments to communication strategies to ensure continuous optimization of communication efficiency and outcomes. This all-element alignment logic provides a clear practical path to address the practical challenges of cross-border communication of red culture.

3. Cross-border Communication Strategies for Guilin's Red Tourism Culture in ASEAN

The core concepts in intercultural communication theory, such as cultural context, cultural differences and relativity, cultural adaptation, cultural discount, and encoding-decoding, precisely align with the practical needs of disseminating Guilin's red tourism culture to ASEAN, providing accurate theoretical guidance for constructing adaptive communication strategies. The key insight lies in: it is essential to orient towards the multicultural context of ASEAN, achieving localized adaptation of all elements including communication content, channels, methods, and subjects, shifting from China context output to ASEAN context adaptation, ultimately realizing effective dissemination and emotional identification of red culture. This can be elaborated from the following five dimensions:

3.1 Implementing Differentiated Content Strategies

Based on High and Low Context Differences Edward Hall's high/low-context culture classification provides a direct basis for precisely aligning communication needs with ASEAN countries. The eleven ASEAN nations exhibit distinct cultural contexts: Vietnam, Thailand, and Laos represent typical high-context cultures, where audiences prioritize contextual atmosphere and emotional resonance over straightforward theoretical explanations or politicized narratives. In contrast, Singapore and Malaysia, shaped by their multicultural integration history, lean toward low-context cultures, where audiences prefer logically clear, information-focused, and straightforward communication content.

To address this cultural gap, Guilin's red tourism promotion to ASEAN nations requires a differentiated content strategy. For high-context audiences like Vietnam and Thailand, the approach should abandon grand historical narratives and theoretical lectures, instead adopting a scenario-based storytelling plus emotional resonance model. This involves highlighting touching stories of ordinary soldiers in the Xiangjiang Campaign, showcasing local communities' support for the revolution, and integrating real-life footage of revolutionary sites to create emotionally charged narratives. Through this method, audiences can grasp the essence of red culture through emotional engagement. For low-context audiences such as Singapore and Malaysia, a logical organization plus precise presentation strategy should be implemented. This includes producing clear visual guides, red tourism product manuals, and core value

interpretations that highlight Guilin's unique resources, key experiences, and route planning. Supporting data and case studies will enhance readability and persuasiveness, ensuring audiences quickly and accurately understand the core values of red culture.

3.2 Respecting Cultural Differences and Relativity, Building a Bridge for Shared Value Communication

The concept of cultural differences and relativity emphasizes that the premise of cross-cultural communication is to respect the uniqueness and rationality of different cultures, abandoning the ethnocentric communication mindset. ASEAN countries not only have cultural differences with China, but also exhibit significant cultural diversity among their own nations due to differences in historical traditions, religious beliefs, and social systems—for example, Thailand and Myanmar are deeply influenced by Buddhist culture, Vietnam has a unique revolutionary historical memory, and Malaysia demonstrates the characteristics of coexistence of Islamic, Chinese, and Indian cultures. The core connotation of Guilin's red culture is closely related to China's specific revolutionary historical context. Directly communicating it in the China context may easily lead to cognitive biases and cultural conflicts. The key to resolving this dilemma lies in exploring the shared values between red culture and the cultures of ASEAN countries, thereby building a value bridge for cross-cultural communication. From a cultural perspective, most ASEAN countries belong to a collectivist culture and generally possess historical memories of anti-colonialism, independence-seeking, and development pursuits, which share a high degree of commonality with the spiritual core of collective cooperation, patriotic dedication, perseverance and people-first in Guilin's red culture. Accordingly, the communication content should downplay exclusive expressions of the China-specific revolutionary context and focus on universal themes such as national independence and people's happiness, resistance in adversity and striving forward and unity and common development. For example, the Red Army's spirit of fearlessness in the face of difficulties and overcoming challenges during the Xiangjiang Campaign can be linked to the resistance spirit in Vietnam's anti-French and anti-American wars and the anti-colonial struggle of the Thai people. Similarly, Guilin's practical cases of promoting rural revitalization through red culture can be aligned with the rural development needs of ASEAN countries, transforming red culture from a China cultural symbol into a resonant spiritual value. This approach effectively reduces cultural conflicts and enhances the recognition of communication.

3.3 Implementing a Phased Communication Strategy Based on Cultural Adaptation Theory

The four-phase model of honeymoon period, cultural shock period, adjustment period, adaptation period proposed by cross-cultural adaptation theory reveals cognitive and emotional patterns during intercultural contact, providing crucial guidance for the gradual dissemination of Guilin's revolutionary tourism culture in ASEAN. Audience cognitive characteristics vary significantly across stages, requiring tailored communication strategies: During the honeymoon period, that is the initial cognition stage, audiences exhibit curiosity about foreign cultures but lack deep understanding. The core objective here is to capture attention and establish preliminary cognition. Focus on lightweight, engaging, and visual content such as revolutionary-themed animated shorts, scenic video clips of revolutionary sites, and an engaging

question-and-answer format about revolutionary culture designed to make red culture topics more interactive and entertaining. Avoid complex historical theories and in-depth interpretations to lower cognitive barriers. In the cultural shock period, that is the cognitive divergence stage, audiences may develop confusion or even negative perceptions of revolutionary culture due to cultural differences. The key objective is to resolve misunderstandings and correct biases. Collaborate with local ASEAN media, scholars, and cultural institutions to produce localized interpretations, such as inviting Vietnamese historians to explain commonalities in Sino-Vietnamese revolutionary history, or leveraging Thai mainstream media for special reports on revolutionary culture. Address cognitive misconceptions while reducing the political propaganda label. During the adjustment period and adaptation period, audiences have formed basic understanding of revolutionary culture. The core objective shifts to deepening identification and promoting participation. We can launch in-depth experiential content and products, such as designing China-Vietnam Cross-border Red Tourism Routes, organizing red culture workshops, and carrying out red-themed cultural performances, so that the audience can change from information receivers to cultural experiencers, and promote the transformation from cognition to emotional identification and behavioral participation.

3.4 Mitigating Cultural Discount Effects and Enhancing Localization of Content

Cultural discount represents a core challenge in the cross-border dissemination of red culture, where the absence of cultural context or emotional resonance among target audiences significantly diminishes the communicative value and appeal of cultural products or messages. For ASEAN audiences, core elements of Guilin's red culture, such as the Xiangjiang Campaign and the Long March Spirit, lack cultural grounding. Without localization efforts, these elements risk experiencing cultural discount, potentially rendering the communication ineffective. Based on the insights of cross-cultural communication theory, localization transformation should be advanced from three dimensions: content mining, narrative approach, and presentation form, effectively avoiding cultural discounting. At the level of content excavation, achieve the innovative integration of red culture, regional characteristics and ASEAN perception; on the basis of the core connotation of red culture, supplement cultural elements perceptible to ASEAN audiences, such as incorporating the folk culture and festival activities of ethnic minorities like the Yao and Zhuang in Guilin into the communication content, combining red heritage sites with Guilin's landscape, and creating composite communication content of red culture, folklore and landscape to enhance the familiarity and recognizability of regional culture. At the narrative approach level, shift from grand narratives to micro-narratives plus emotional narratives, abandon the traditional narrative model centered on historical timelines, focus on ordinary people and specific stories in red history, and evoke audience resonance through delicate emotional descriptions, such as telling the deep bond between Red Army soldiers and local Guilin residents, or vivid cases of Guilin people inheriting red genes in the new era. At the presentation form level, adapt China style to ASEAN style, create suitable communication carriers according to ASEAN audiences' aesthetic preferences and information acquisition habits, such as producing red story picture books with Southeast Asian painting styles, shooting multilingual red-

themed documentaries with Thai, Vietnamese, Malay dubbing, and creating short videos and graphic content suitable for ASEAN social media dissemination, thereby enhancing content adaptability and communication power.

3.5 Guiding the Audience to Interpret Positively Based on the Encoding-decoding Logic

Stuart Hall's encoding-decoding theory posits that communication effectiveness is not unilaterally determined by the sender, but rather depends on the audience's decoding approach. Audiences exhibit three decoding postures: dominant stance, i.e. identifying with the sender's intent, negotiated stance i.e. partial identification, and resistant stance i.e. refusal to identify. This theory suggests that cross-border dissemination of red culture should shift from a sender-centric to an audience-centric approach, employing optimized encoding strategies to guide audiences toward positive decoding postures.

Specifically, during the encoding process, it is essential to proactively incorporate cultural symbols, value systems, and emotional elements familiar to ASEAN communities to reduce decoding challenges. For instance, in designing promotional posters for red tourism, colors like gold, familiar to Thai audiences, and red, associated with Vietnamese identity, should be utilized. Narrative content should connect with the historical memories and cultural traditions of ASEAN nations, such as aligning the spirit of unity in red culture with the ASEAN community concept. Language expression requires not only accurate multilingual translation but also localized adaptations tailored to ASEAN linguistic habits, avoiding rigid literal translations. During the decoding phase, interactive communication platforms should be established to encourage audience participation in interpreting and recreating red culture through initiatives like launching Red Spirit and My Life discussions on local ASEAN social media, hosting red-themed essay contests, and conducting online questions and answers interactions, transforming passive reception into active engagement. Additionally, leveraging the secondary encoding capabilities of local ASEAN local cultural intermediaries, tourism professionals, and cultural scholars can help them interpret and disseminate Guilin's red tourism culture within local contexts. Their credibility and influence can guide audiences toward dominant or negotiated positions, effectively avoiding confrontational interpretations and enhancing communication effectiveness.

4. Summary

This study, grounded in intercultural communication theory, examines the cross-border dissemination of Guilin's red tourism culture to ASEAN. It systematically analyzes the cultural resources and ASEAN's communication practices, while identifying key challenges including content incompatibility, cultural discounting, and cognitive barriers. By integrating core concepts like cultural context, cultural differences, relativity, and adaptation, the research develops a multidimensional communication strategy encompassing differentiated content presentation, value alignment, phased dissemination, localized adaptation, and optimized encoding-decoding processes.

The core conclusions of the study can be summarized into three points: First, the dissemination of Guilin's red tourism culture to ASEAN enjoys dual advantages in resources and location, but cross-cultural

contextual differences are the core constraints. The key to communication strategies lies in achieving a shift from China context output to ASEAN context adaptation. Second, cross-cultural communication theory provides precise theoretical support for overcoming barriers in the cross-border dissemination of red culture. Among these, adapting to high and low contextual differences, building bridges of shared values, and advancing phased communication are critical pathways to enhance communication effectiveness. Third, the ultimate goal of cross-border dissemination of red culture is not singular cultural export, but rather mutual cultural learning through diversified adaptation, thereby solidifying the public opinion foundation for the China-ASEAN community with a shared future.

The theoretical significance of this study lies in expanding the research perspective on internationalizing regional red cultural tourism resources. It establishes an analytical framework comprising core theoretical concepts, practical challenges, and adaptive strategies, offering a replicable case paradigm for similar studies. Practically, it provides actionable guidance for promoting Guilin's red tourism culture in ASEAN, facilitating the international transformation of Guilin's red tourism industry and deepening cultural and tourism exchanges between China and ASEAN.

Future research can be further expanded in three key directions: First, strengthen empirical studies by conducting surveys and in-depth interviews to accurately understand the current perceptions and demand variations of ASEAN audiences regarding Guilin's red tourism culture. Second, focus on digital communication scenarios to explore the application pathways and effects of emerging media like short videos and live streaming in promoting red culture across ASEAN. Third, broaden research boundaries by investigating collaborative development and interactive dissemination models between Guilin's red tourism culture and ASEAN's red cultural tourism resources, thereby fostering a new bilateral cooperation framework in red cultural tourism.

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