

Research on the Strategies for the International Communication of Ceramic Culture in the Context of World Heritage Application

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ABSTRACT

Based on the theory of cultural discourse analysis, this paper selects 20 English news texts from Belt and Road Portal to explore the international communication strategies of Jingdezhen's ceramic culture in the context of World Heritage application. Through an analysis of communication participants, content, and cultural contexts, the study reveals several challenges in the international dissemination of ceramic culture, including authoritative dominance, insufficient diversity in expression, and a singular narrative perspective. The paper proposes the construction of a multi-agent participation mechanism, enrichment of content and forms of communication, and enhancement of cultural affinity and contextual adaptability, with the aim of improving the international influence and effectiveness of ceramic culture communication.

KEYWORDS

Ceramic culture; Cultural discourse analysis; International communication

1 Introduction

In recent years, the Chinese government has continuously strengthened its strategic layout for cultural dissemination and international exchange. In 2025, the General Office of the State Council issued the Several Economic Policies on Promoting High-Quality Cultural Development, which proposed support for the establishment of overseas cultural institutions and international cooperation in the field of cultural heritage, aiming to facilitate the global outreach of cultural products and services. This provides policy and institutional guarantees for the international dissemination of ceramic culture. The 14th Five-Year Plan for Cultural Development further emphasizes the integration of external publicity, cultural exchange, and cultural trade, with the goal of enhancing the global influence and discourse power of Chinese culture. Meanwhile, the Fifth Plenary Session of the 19th Central Committee of the Communist Party of China identified "building a culturally strong country and enhancing the global influence of Chinese culture" as a long-term goal for 2035, underscoring the strategic significance of cultural heritage.

Against the backdrop of favorable policies and growing cultural confidence, the international dissemination of ceramic culture is embracing new opportunities. In 2023, the historic city of Jingdezhen was officially included in the Tentative List of China's World Cultural Heritage Sites, covering key heritage areas such as the Imperial Kiln Site and the Ming-Qing Kiln District. The advancement of the heritage application process not only boosts the global visibility of Jingdezhen's ceramic culture but also serves as a vital opportunity to build a more robust international communication system for ceramic culture.

2 The theory of cultural discourse analysis

In the contemporary context of globalization, traditional paradigms of discourse analysis are facing dual challenges from cultural diversity and the call for more equitable knowledge production. In response to the limitations of Western-dominated discourse theories in explaining the communication of non-Western cultures, Chinese scholar Shi-xu proposed the theory of Cultural Discourse Studies (CDS). This theory seeks to construct a discourse research path that is both critically aware and globally oriented, rooted in local cultural perspectives. Cultural Discourse Studies emphasize that discourse is not merely a product of linguistic communication, but a form of social practice deeply embedded within cultural systems. It reflects not only linguistic forms and expressive strategies but also the value structures, power relations, and symbolic systems of identity within specific cultures.

To further clarify the complex structure of discourse as a form of cultural practice, Shi-xu proposed a model of six interrelated elements of discourse. Participants: The individuals or groups involved in discourse, whose social identities, statuses, roles, and interactions form the social foundation of discourse. Form and Intentionality: The dialectical relationship between the linguistic form (such as grammar, vocabulary, tone) and the speaker's subjective intentions. Signs and Channels: The types of language used, the media through which communication occurs (e.g., text, images, digital platforms), and the physical and social conditions upon which communication depends. Purpose and Effects: The

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motivations behind discourse and the expected or actual social responses and cognitive changes it triggers. Cultural Relations: The intrinsic link between discourse and specific cultural systems—particularly in terms of ways of thinking, value orientations, social norms, and underlying power dynamics. Historical Relations: The continuity and variation between discourse and its historical traditions, including inheritance, negation, reconstruction, and innovation. Through this analytical framework, Shi-xu draws attention not only to the linguistic forms of discourse but also to its cultural foundations and social functions, aiming to uncover how discourse reflects and reshapes cultural cognition in specific contexts.

3 Research design

The corpus used in this study was collected entirely from the official website “Belt and Road Portal”, which is jointly supervised by China’s National Development and Reform Commission and Xinhua News Agency, and co-hosted by Xinhua’s China Economic Information Service and the National Information Center. As an official platform for information release and international communication under the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), it serves as an important window for showcasing China’s achievements in foreign cooperation and cultural exchange.

Using the keyword “ceramic” as the search criterion, the study systematically screened relevant content published on the website up to August 13, 2025, retrieving a total of 129 English-language news articles. After an initial screening, 28 articles containing the keywords “ceramic” or “porcelain” explicitly in their titles were selected. These were then ranked in descending order based on their relevance to the research topic. Finally, the top 20 reports were chosen as the core research samples (see Table 1 for details).

From the theoretical perspective of Cultural Discourse Studies, this paper analyzes the 20 selected news texts through three dimensions to explore the discursive construction of Chinese ceramic culture in international communication. Discourse Participants: Who are the sources of these reports related to ceramic culture? Discourse Content: What are the main themes of these reports? How is the content conveyed? Socio-Cultural Context: What cultural characteristics are reflected in the discourse of international communication?

Table 1 Titles of news reports on ceramic culture

Sample No.	News Title
1	Jingdezhen ceramics shine bright under BRI(2023/10/23)
2	Jingdezhen and Iznik's Ceramic Dialogue on the Silk Road(2025/6/12)
3	International ceramic fair for China's porcelain capital (2020/10/12)
4	Int'l artists explore ceramic heritage of ancient Chinese village (2025/5/8)
5	Turkish ceramic artist meets new opportunities in China's "porcelain capital"(2021/10/26)
6	Int'l ceramic art show held in Jingdezhen to promote cultural exchange between China, Britain (2022/9/13)
7	Exhibition on Dehua porcelain spurs ceramics craze in Malaysia (2023/2/14)
8	Xinhua Headlines: China's "porcelain capital" fosters intercultural exchanges to preserve ceramic heritage (2024/10/29)
9	Cross-millennium ceramics trade bears witness of China-Africa trade exchange (2023/6/26)
10	Chinese ceramic manufacturer aiding Kenya's affordable housing (2024/6/4)
11	Worldwide ceramic innovators drawn to Jingdezhen, China's porcelain capital (2024/6/11)
12	To the land of porcelain: Jingdezhen offers numerous opportunities for foreigners, says Turkish ceramic merchant (2023/10/24)
13	Exhibition on "Angkor and China: Ceramic Roof Tiles Tradition and Maritime Trade Road" held in Cambodia's tourist hub (2025/6/9)
14	Dehua porcelain international exhibition tour kicks off in Beijing, showing Chinese ceramics culture to world (2023/8/7)
15	Ancient Chinese ceramics in Philippine museum witnesses Quanzhou's glory along Maritime Silk Road (2021/7/26)
16	German ceramicist embraces East-meets-West experience in China's "porcelain capital" (2025/4/24)
17	China's porcelain capital nurtures dreams of global youth (2023/7/10)
18	German ceramist learns porcelain art in China's Jingdezhen (2025/4/22)
19	Dehua white porcelain attracts global visitors in Japan's Kyoto (2025/4/3)
20	China's porcelain capital showcases porcelain culture in London (2024/9/18)

4 Research findings

This section analyzes the current state of ceramic culture’s international communication from three aspects: discourse participants, content of dissemination, and socio-cultural context.

4.1 Communication participants and sources of information

The communication participant is the initiator and central figure in any act of communication, playing a dominant role throughout the dissemination chain. If we consider each communicative event as a form of discursive practice, then the communication participant is equivalent to the discourse subject, exerting decisive influence over information selection,

content organization, language construction, and modes of delivery. Consequently, communication participants not only control the narrative logic and dissemination strategies of news discourse but also indirectly shape the audience's perception and acceptance of the content. Table 2 summarizes the sources of the news reports on ceramic culture. According to the analysis, the sources of these reports from the Belt and Road Portal include: Xinhua News Agency, Xinhuanet.com, Belt and Road Portal.

Table 2 Sources of news reports on ceramic culture

Sample No.	Source of News Reports
1, 2, 4, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 16, 17, 18	Xinhua News Agency
3, 5, 15	Xinhuanet.com
6, 7, 14	Belt and Road Portal

Among them, reports from Xinhua News Agency dominate, accounting for approximately 65% of the total. This indicates that China's Belt and Road website primarily relies on the full reprinting of original reports from Xinhua when disseminating ceramic culture internationally. The dissemination content thus shows a high degree of concentration and dependence on source channels. Notably, these information sources all come from China's authoritative mainstream media system, demonstrating that the dominant control over ceramic culture's international communication remains firmly in the hands of state-level media institutions. In the process of promoting ceramic culture abroad, mainstream media continue to bear the core responsibility for information output and discourse guidance, while participation from grassroots or diversified communication participants remains relatively limited. This communication pattern ensures the authority and accuracy of information but, to some extent, also restricts the diversity of discourse expression and the pluralism of dissemination channels.

4.2 Discourse content in news communication

News reports, through continuous coverage of specific events, not only convey core information but also reflect the thematic focus and interpretive stance embedded in the discourse. Therefore, systematically summarizing and extracting the content of such reports helps to identify their key messages and analyze their discursive perspectives, intentions, and underlying value orientations.

4.2.1 Promoting cultural exchange and mutual learning through ceramic culture

Among the 20 news reports analyzed, 9 focus on ceramic culture as a medium for intercultural exchange, emphasizing its role in fostering dialogue and mutual learning between China and countries along the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). These reports not only showcase ceramics as an artistic form but also highlight its unique value as a historical memory and cultural symbol, positioning it as a bridge for multicultural integration.

Based on the sample analysis, the keywords in reports reprinted from Xinhua News Agency highlight the role of ceramic culture in connecting different civilizations and promoting friendly cooperation. By featuring cases such as ceramic culture dialogue events, traditional craft inheritance programs, and cultural heritage preservation collaborations, the news not only conveys the artistic value of ceramics but also emphasizes its strategic importance in fostering mutual understanding and people-to-people bonds.

4.2.2 International exhibitions and brand promotion: showcasing global influence of ceramic culture

Five of the sampled reports focus on international exhibitions, cultural festivals, and global tours as promotional events for Chinese ceramic brands. These reports highlight how such exhibitions serve as vital platforms for cultural dissemination, enhancing the global visibility of Chinese ceramics and promoting international cooperation in cultural industries. By introducing large-scale exhibitions and themed cultural events, the reports emphasize the prominent role of Chinese ceramics on the world stage and the growing global impact of Chinese ceramic brands. At the same time, the reports highlight the integration of cultural communication with economic benefits, stressing that ceramic brand-building not only strengthens China's cultural soft power but also boosts related industrial chains, providing strong support for China's cultural export strategies.

4.2.3 Foreign artists' personal stories: humanizing and softening the image of ceramic culture

Four articles tell the personal stories of foreign artists, designers, and ceramic traders living, studying, or creating in China. These human-interest stories enhance the affinity and international appeal of ceramic culture by emphasizing individual experiences. In addition to showcasing the transmission of ceramic artistry, the stories highlight the unique value of individual perspectives in cross-cultural exchange. Direct quotes and personal reflections from foreign artists enhance the authenticity and emotional resonance of the discourse. This narrative approach not only makes ceramic culture more relatable and vivid but also closes the emotional distance between international audiences and Chinese

cultural heritage, promoting deeper cultural identification and intercultural communication.

4.2.4 Industrial cooperation and economic development: highlighting the dual value of culture and industry

Another two reports focus on the role of the ceramic industry in supporting economic cooperation and social development in BRI countries. Topics include the contribution of ceramic products to infrastructure projects, livelihoods, and industrial collaboration. These stories demonstrate the practical impact of the ceramic industry in improving local economies and living conditions. These types of reports enrich the narrative of ceramic culture dissemination by showcasing the synergy between cultural soft power and economic strength. By promoting an image of coordinated development between culture and industry, they enhance the relevance and influence of cultural communication, providing solid support for the integration of BRI cultural and economic cooperation.

4.3 Socio-cultural context

According to Cultural Discourse Studies theory, the linguistic expressions and underlying value orientations in specific discourse events reflect the cultural characteristics of the discourse participants. Drawing on Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory (Hofstede et al., 2010), this section interprets the socio-cultural context of ceramic culture communication in the selected news reports from five dimensions.

(1) Power Distance: Most of the analyzed news reports originate from Xinhua News Agency, China's mainstream official media, or cultural institutions closely linked to the government. This reflects the high power distance characteristic of Chinese culture.

(2) Collectivism: The recurring references to the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and Sino-foreign collaboration on ceramic culture reflect the collectivist orientation of Chinese culture. The reports emphasize themes such as cooperation, mutual benefit, and civilizational exchange.

(3) Uncertainty Avoidance: Ceramic culture, as an integral part of Chinese civilization, is often portrayed in the news as having a long-standing history and stable lineage, reflecting characteristics of low uncertainty avoidance.

(4) Long-Term Orientation: The reports consistently highlight the integration of ceramic culture's historical significance with contemporary innovation, demonstrating the long-term orientation of Chinese culture. This long-term perspective conveys a strategic outlook for sustainable cultural development, presenting a positive image of continuous progress and enhancing the long-term impact of China's cultural soft power.

(5) Coexistence of Rigid and Flexible Cultural Traits: Although Chinese culture is traditionally seen as rigid, emphasizing rules and structure, the news reports also display elements of flexible culture.

Therefore, in the socio-cultural context of these news reports, China's international communication of ceramic culture reflects a discourse system with Chinese characteristics, shaped by high power distance and collectivism, aligned with low uncertainty avoidance and long-term cultural values, while balancing both rigid and flexible cultural elements.

5 Strategies and recommendations for the international communication of Jingdezhen ceramic culture

In the context of global cultural pluralism and interaction, the international communication of Chinese ceramic culture faces structural challenges such as cognitive gaps, discursive barriers, a monolithic communication structure, content limitations, and insufficient audience adaptation. From the theoretical perspective of Cultural Discourse Studies, there is an urgent need to systematically optimize mechanisms of communication, modes of expression, and content construction to enhance affinity, precision, and discursive efficacy.

First, a diversified communication ecosystem should be built to broaden international dissemination channels. Currently, the international dissemination of ceramic culture remains highly dependent on mainstream state media such as Xinhua News Agency, forming a communication structure marked by centralized power. While this top-down and unidirectional model ensures authority and political correctness, it also restricts the diversity of content and the multiplicity of channels, making it less compatible with the multi-centric, multi-context global communication landscape. Therefore, it is imperative to construct a pluralistic communication model led by the government, coordinated by industry, participated in by civil society, and supported by international interaction. For instance, local governments can collaborate with ceramic enterprises, industry associations, and art institutions to establish platforms such as the Jingdezhen International Ceramic Communication Center or residency programs for Sino-foreign ceramic artists, thereby enhancing the discursive agency of the ceramic industry. Simultaneously, it is crucial to involve third-party communicators such as foreign ceramic artists, international students, and cultural experiencers in content co-creation. Their experiential and everyday narratives can significantly increase the relatability and emotional resonance of ceramic culture. Moreover, leveraging social media, international video platforms, and podcasts, individual users and cultural enthusiasts can become "micro-communicators" of ceramic culture, shifting the discourse model from government-led to

co-created, thus enabling a decentralized reconstruction of discursive power.

Second, enhancing narrative detail and cultural intimacy is key to effective communication. At present, the portrayal of ceramic culture in media tends to rely on macro-level policies and official discourse, often lacking rich, lived experiences and human-centered perspectives. This results in abstract and ceremonialized expressions that struggle to trigger emotional resonance with global audiences. Cultural discourse theory emphasizes that the construction of cultural meaning is often rooted in sensory detail and personal experience. Therefore, communication content should incorporate narrative structures that combine characters, context, and emotion—for example, featuring foreign artists interacting with Chinese artisans, resident artists' creative processes, and the everyday cultural contexts of ceramic craftsmanship.

Detailed descriptions such as the tactile feel of shaping clay, the smoke and fire of wood-firing kilns, or the daily use of ceramics in local markets allow the culture to be visually and emotionally perceived, fostering a deeper understanding. Additionally, it is necessary to optimize the translation of technical ceramic terminology through cultural contextualization and visual aids, helping international audiences appreciate the aesthetic systems and philosophical underpinnings of Chinese ceramics. This shift from "narrating" to "experiencing" marks a significant advancement in cultural communication.

Third, context-oriented adaptation mechanisms are essential for audience-specific precision and localization. Traditional one-size-fits-all communication models can no longer meet the needs of globally diverse audiences. Within the framework of cultural discourse analysis, effective communication requires a triangular model of context–audience–discourse, supported by tailored strategies. On one hand, audience profiling and cultural preference analysis are essential. For example, Western youth may be more interested in ceramic design and sustainability, whereas Southeast Asian audiences may respond better to historical narratives linked to the Maritime Silk Road. On the other hand, a multi-language, multi-platform matrix should be established. Beyond English-language mainstream media, content should be extended to Spanish, French, Arabic, and other major languages, with short videos, infographics, and podcasts developed for diverse digital platforms to enhance reach and engagement.

6 Conclusion

This study finds that the current dissemination of ceramic culture heavily relies on state-run mainstream media, with content primarily focused on Sino-foreign cultural exchange, international exhibition promotion, foreign individual experiences, and industrial cooperation. The communication displays strong cultural confidence and an official orientation. The discourse integrates deep-seated cultural values such as high power distance, collectivism, and long-term orientation, while also reflecting openness to multiculturalism and strategic flexibility in the international context. However, it also exposes practical challenges such as a singular communication participants, formulaic content expression, lack of narrative warmth, and insufficient contextual adaptation. Therefore, enhancing the effectiveness of international communication of ceramic culture hinges on building a diversified, multidimensional, and context-sensitive communication system. This requires shifting from single communication participants to multi-agent collaboration, extending narrative styles from grand discourse to detailed empathy, upgrading content expression from static output to dynamic co-creation, and adjusting communication strategies from authority-driven transmission to audience-oriented engagement. Moreover, it is essential to achieve deep integration of communication content with international audiences' cognitive logic through contextual adaptation, terminology standardization, and cross-cultural connection mechanisms, thereby strengthening cultural identification and realizing effective communication.

Funding

This research was financially supported by 2025 Jingdezhen Municipal Social Science Planning Project "Research on the Strategies for the International Communication of Ceramic Culture in the Context of World Heritage Application" (NO: 25SKGH082)

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