

The Consumption and Cognitive Dilemmas of "Fuzhou Jasmine Tea Scenting Process" in the Context of Cultural Renaissance

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Abstract. Against the backdrop of cultural revival and the rapid development of new media technologies, the cultural connotations of the intangible cultural heritage "Fuzhou Jasmine Tea Scenting Process" face the problem of inappropriate extraction and over-consumption by capital through cultural labeling, leading to cognitive dilemmas among adolescents. This study analyzes the internal logic of the transformation of this intangible cultural heritage tea-making technique from cultural capital to economic capital, based on David Throsby and Pierre Bourdieu's theory of cultural capital. Finally, this paper explores the reasons why cultural labels hurt adolescents during the dissemination process, using Lasswell's 5W communication model. The study found that businesses, based on the tangible and intangible cultural value of intangible cultural heritage, simplify core terms such as "scenting" into cultural labels for commercial operations. This distorted cultural concept is disseminated to adolescents through digital channels such as milk tea ordering mini-programs, leading to conceptual ambiguity, product misjudgment, or a complete lack of understanding of the scenting process among this group. Based on the above issues, this article suggests strengthening cooperation between industrial and commercial administration departments and cultural departments, and incorporating cultural heritage-related courses into the education stage to avoid deviations in the dissemination of traditional culture.

Keywords: Cultural Consumption, Fuzhou Jasmine Tea Scenting Process, 5W Model Theory

1. Introduction

With the proposal of the concept of the revival of Chinese culture, the related concepts of cultural heritage have entered the lives of the masses through the rapidly developing digital media technology. Marx pointed out that "due to the independence of merchant capital, its movement is not restricted by the reproduction process within certain limits, and therefore, it may even drive the reproduction process to go beyond its various limitations" [1]. Liao Penghui and Zheng Yuhao showed in their research that "in the digital age, cultural consumerism has become more concealed and destructive under the empowerment of technology and the drive of capital" [2]. Since the "Fuzhou Jasmine Tea Scenting Process" was included in the list of representative projects of national intangible cultural heritage in 2014, terms such as "traditional scenting process" have

gradually appeared in all corners of society. It has not only attracted widespread attention from the academic community but has also been widely used in commercial activities. However, while Fuzhou jasmine tea products have been widely accepted by the public, the problem of cultural consumption has gradually emerged. In an effort to capitalize on the popularity of "intangible cultural heritage," many businesses are labeling their mass-produced jasmine tea in their online ordering apps with terms like "five-scenting" or "seven-scenting", which carry connotations of intangible cultural heritage. In other words, the cultural significance of the "scenting process" is being excessively extracted or improperly converted into economic capital by businesses.

A questionnaire survey revealed that this misuse of the intangible cultural heritage label in marketing has led over 80% of young people to misunderstand the cultural connotations of the "scenting process" for Fuzhou jasmine tea. Currently, the business world's focus on the scenting process of Fuzhou jasmine tea is on building corresponding brands or linking cultural heritage with tourism to boost sales and the local economy. The academic community's focus on Fuzhou jasmine tea is primarily on its tea-making techniques, historical culture, or commercial value, but it lacks attention to the issue of related cultural dissemination. Therefore, this paper aims to analyze the problem of the capital-driven consumption of the cultural connotations of the "Fuzhou jasmine tea scenting process," its impact on young people, and its underlying causes.

2. Theoretical basis and research methods

This study employs a combination of quantitative and qualitative research methods to explore the status of the cultural connotation of the intangible cultural heritage "Fuzhou Jasmine Tea Scenting Technique" in the context of cultural consumption during commercial dissemination, the inherent logic of its capital-driven labeling, and its impact on and causes among young people.

2.1. Case study

Based on the literature review and data comparison, this study found that there is a significant difference between the total output of Fujian jasmine tea as an agricultural product and the amount of tea used in the production of new Chinese-style tea drinks. Data shows that in 2025, the total output of Fuzhou jasmine tea was about 19,500 tons [3]. However, another set of data shows that Fuzhou, as one of the main jasmine tea supply areas for new Chinese-style tea drinks, had a total jasmine tea supply of up to 40,000 tons in 2024 [4]. There will be a difference in annual output between 2024 and 2025, but the authenticity of such a doubling difference still needs to be investigated.

In addition, according to the "China Intangible Cultural Heritage Network", there are only 21 national, provincial and municipal-level inheritors of the Fuzhou jasmine tea scenting process recognized in my country (data source: China Intangible Cultural Heritage Network), and the market price of five-scented jasmine tea made by the inheritors is about 1,000-1,500 yuan per kilogram [5]. Generally speaking, such high costs and low output are not suitable for milk tea shops that need to use a large amount of inexpensive tea leaves.

2.2. Theoretical basis

This study uses David Throsby's theory of the conversion between tangible and intangible capital and Pierre Bourdieu's theory of cultural capital to explore the internal logic of the transformation of "Fuzhou jasmine tea scenting process" into a cultural label by capital. David Throsby extended the

concept of "capital" in economics to the cultural field. He believes that cultural value will eventually form cultural capital after continuous accumulation, and cultural capital is divided into two forms: intangible and tangible [6]. Intangible cultural value refers to the immeasurable value of concepts, beliefs, traditional customs, or culture; while tangible cultural value refers to the measurable value of historical buildings, cultural relics, and works of art. Sociologist Pierre Bourdieu divides capital into five forms: cultural capital, knowledge capital, symbolic capital, economic capital, and social capital [7]. The theory points out that symbolic capital is an intangible asset, equivalent to a valuable identity or "brand"; economic capital refers to the quantifiable value of investment, cost, and other factors. The two types of capital are not clearly distinct, and they can be converted into each other under certain conditions.

2.3. Questionnaire survey on adolescents' knowledge of intangible cultural heritage

In order to understand more directly whether this phenomenon has led to cognitive difficulties among adolescents and to analyze the specific meaning of cognitive difficulties, this study adopted a questionnaire survey method for analysis. The questionnaire included two key variables and 12 questions. Variable 1: Adolescents' knowledge of "Fuzhou jasmine tea scenting process". Variable 2: Adolescents' product knowledge of "Fuzhou jasmine tea scenting process". Because adolescents aged 15-40 are the largest consumer group of milk tea, accounting for about 85% of the total milk tea consumption (data source: China New Style Tea Drink Industry Consumer Survey Analysis) [8]. The survey group in this study was university students, and random sampling was used for sample selection. Finally, 220 valid questionnaires were collected. The criteria for the validity of the questionnaire were whether the age of the person filling in the questionnaire was within the scope of the survey, whether the questionnaire was filled in completely, and whether the filling time was greater than 20 seconds (12 questions).

3. Results

Currently, teenagers face certain cognitive difficulties regarding the intangible cultural heritage of "Fuzhou Jasmine Tea Scenting Technique." These difficulties manifest in two main ways: informal sources of knowledge and unclear judgment of intangible cultural heritage products.

First, teenagers' sources of knowledge about the "Fuzhou Jasmine Tea Scenting Technique" are problematic. The questionnaire results show that 78.08% of teenagers first encountered the term "Fuzhou Jasmine Tea Scenting Technique" through "promotions from milk tea shops" and "social media videos of shop visits." Neither of these channels are formal means of disseminating cultural knowledge, and their promotional content is not regulated by education or cultural departments, easily leading to cognitive difficulties among teenagers.

Second, teenagers face obstacles in their product recognition of the "Fuzhou Jasmine Tea Scenting Technique." The questionnaire results show that 53.42% of teenagers believe that the "Fuzhou Jasmine Tea Scenting Technique" is closely related to milk tea shop products and possesses historical and cultural significance. 34.25% of teenagers believe that jasmine milk tea labeled with terms like "five scenting processes" or "seven scenting processes" is an intangible cultural heritage product, while 48.4% of teenagers said they didn't know. Only 10.05% of teenagers were able to correctly understand the use of labels like "intangible cultural heritage" and "scenting process" in milk tea shops, believing that "it's just a marketing tactic to enhance price and image, and shouldn't be taken seriously." Without formal cultural education, teenagers cannot naturally judge intangible cultural heritage products, and advertisements for new-style Chinese tea drinks and videos

showcasing tea shops are highly intrusive. Under the influence of these multiple factors, teenagers find it difficult to develop a correct understanding of intangible cultural heritage products.

This shows that cultural labels distorted by capital have indeed led to a dilemma in teenagers' understanding of the intangible cultural heritage of "Fuzhou jasmine tea scenting process," causing them to misjudge the product and lack a clear or complete understanding of its connotations.

4. Discussion

Jasmine tea drinks in modern Chinese-style tea shops are labeled with cultural tags such as "traditional scenting craftsmanship," which, to some extent strengthens the two-way dissemination of traditional intangible cultural heritage and brand culture. However, the erroneous practices of some brands have distorted and weakened this culturally rich traditional tea-making technique, which involves infusing tea leaves with the fragrance of jasmine. This approach does create the impression for customers that they are drinking a culturally rich and healthy tea beverage, attracting more customers and generating more profits, even driving up the unit price of sugar-free jasmine tea drinks. However, behind the economic benefits brought by consuming culture, cognitive issues related to culture also arise.

4.1. The inherent logic of cultural consumption

This phenomenon reveals the problem of cultural consumption in the process of cooperation between intangible cultural heritage and commerce. Culture itself, as a symbolic capital, is capitalized into economic capital because of its differences, uniqueness, and symbolic value. The way to achieve this is through the "labeling" of culture. The concept of "label" originally originated from the marking of physical objects and mainly undertakes the objective identification and explanation function. With the evolution of social culture, its connotation has gradually shifted from pure factual description to symbolic carriers containing emotional attitudes and social judgments [9]. "Cultural label" refers to patterns, words, or symbols that have been endowed with cultural connotations and cultural values. The core of "Fuzhou jasmine tea scenting process" lies in "skill" and "process". Its value belongs to intangible cultural value. It is not only a tea-making process, but also represents the Chinese nation's pursuit of beautiful things, through the concept of drinking tea to cure diseases and maintain health, and the wisdom and superb skills of tea and flower integration. Its intangible cultural heritage products, namely jasmine tea made through the traditional scenting process, belong to tangible cultural capital. Many businesses extract the core term "traditional scenting process" from the "Fuzhou jasmine tea scenting process," extract its cultural connotations, and compress them into a cultural label with distinctiveness and premium value, thereby completing the transformation of cultural capital into economic capital.

4.2. Communication channels and cognitive dilemmas

Based on the current research questions and research groups, this study chose to use the 5W model to deeply analyze which links in the communication process of cultural labels caused cognitive dilemmas in adolescents. Lasswell's 5W model refers to the classic communication theory proposed by American political scientist Harold Lasswell in 1948. The model includes five core questions in the communication process, such as Who, Says What, In Which Channel, To Whom, and With What Effect, which can cover the entire process of information dissemination and encompass various factors and results involved in the communication process [10].

First, businesses are not suitable cultural communicators (Who), because their starting point is to make a profit by selling goods, not to spread cultural knowledge.

Second, it's about "Says What". These milk tea introductions are essentially advertisements. As a highly purposeful means of commercial profit-making, advertisements are characterized by being "eye-catching, easy to remember, and concise" [11]. In order to attract audiences, advertising slogans often use rhetorical devices such as metaphors and exaggerations. However, when these rhetorical devices are combined with cultural labels, they often distort or hollow out the cultural connotations. Such content inevitably leads to a cognitive dilemma for the audience regarding the true connotations of culture.

Then, in the "In Which Channel" section, the development of digital e-commerce and digital purchasing channels led to the widespread dissemination of information on the commercialization of cultural connotations. In 2017, WeChat mini-programs, which are similar to Apps but lighter and do not require downloading, were invented. Due to their simple system architecture, low development cost, and wide applicability, they have been widely loved by various merchants. Especially in the catering industry, ordering through mini-programs has become the mainstream method. Milk tea shops are no exception. The proportion of milk tea shops that use mini-programs to order is 100% among the top nine milk tea shops in terms of the number of stores nationwide. In order to attract customers, some merchants will give their products artistic names. When customers want to know the ingredients or taste of milk tea, they must read the product introduction in the mini-program. The product introduction of jasmine tea is full of words such as "traditional craftsmanship", "selected Guangxi double-petal jasmine flowers seven times scented with Fujian white tea", and "scented seven times". In the process of customers reading the product introduction, these words subtly instill the connotation of the "scenting" process in customers. As the target audience (To Whom), teenagers are placed in a pre-defined communication environment where their cognition is passively shaped by commercial logic. The final "With What Effect" is that "every order and every advertisement reinforces the concept that 'scenting = Chinese intangible cultural heritage tea,' making teenagers increasingly distant from understanding the true meaning of 'Fuzhou jasmine tea scenting process.'"

After analyzing the data using the 5W model, this study found three main reasons why distorted cultural labels cause cognitive difficulties in adolescents. First, the power of dissemination is completely in the hands of the disseminators, and the meaning and dissemination method of the "traditional ink-making process" are completely controlled by them. Second, commercial advertising has exaggerated attributes and has the function of attracting consumers [12]. The inherent characteristics of commercial advertising make it unable to accurately disseminate cultural knowledge and are not suitable as content for cultural dissemination. Third, efficient dissemination platforms have amplified the scope and degree of dissemination of cultural connotations distorted by capital, that is, "cultural labels" used by capital are disseminated to consumers on a larger scale and at a higher frequency.

4.3. Recommendations

In the context of the rapid development of new media technology, the cultural revival initiative, and the widespread promotion of new-style Chinese tea drinks, the use of intangible cultural heritage (ICH) in commercial communication has, to some extent, broadened the public's awareness. However, given the profit-driven motives of commerce, it is not surprising that problems arise in the dissemination of cultural connotations. Young people are crucial to cultural inheritance. Their understanding and appreciation of culture should not be limited to processed and profit-driven advertising.

Therefore, it is recommended that market supervision departments regulate the use of ICH and related terms in commercial activities to prevent the distortion and inappropriate consumption of ICH connotations by capital. Market supervision departments can also cooperate with cultural management departments to unify the symbols used for ICH dissemination, improve its standardization, and enhance the likelihood of its accurate dissemination.

Meanwhile, it is hoped that the cultural and educational sectors will take action to create formal channels for disseminating accurate cultural knowledge to young people. Primary and secondary schools could offer aesthetic education courses related to intangible cultural heritage in their compulsory education curricula. This measure would not only enrich students' learning content but also cultivate their enthusiasm, responsibility, and sense of honor in inheriting Chinese culture. Furthermore, universities across the country should also take action. On the one hand, they should offer elective courses related to intangible cultural heritage to further popularize cultural knowledge. On the other hand, they should encourage university students to learn at museums and cultural centers or participate in activities such as becoming docents or volunteers, actively joining the work of disseminating social culture.

5. Conclusion

Jasmine tea beverages are beloved by contemporary young people for their unique taste and rich aroma, but their impact on the transmission of intangible cultural heritage cannot be ignored. Therefore, this study analyzes the problem of the commercialization of intangible cultural heritage, specifically the exploitation of its cultural connotations by capital. This paper finds that some businesses, in promoting their products, exploit the cultural label of "traditional scenting process" to distort the concept of the intangible cultural heritage "scenting process of Fuzhou jasmine tea," rendering the cultural connotation of this traditional tea-making technique hollow. Furthermore, the large-scale sales of new-style Chinese tea drinks and the unique features of ordering via mini-programs have led to the widespread dissemination of this erroneous cultural concept to young people, causing some to mistakenly believe that all tea drinks with jasmine aromas belong to intangible cultural heritage products made using traditional techniques. The academic innovation of this study lies in combining cultural capital theory with the characteristics of intangible cultural heritage based on craftsmanship, deeply exploring the underlying logic of the commercialization of intangible cultural heritage by capital, and filling a gap in current research.

The conclusions and research approach of this study apply to the commercialization of intangible cultural heritage related to crafts, but they cannot cover other categories of intangible cultural heritage. Furthermore, the questionnaires distributed in this study primarily targeted young people, such as university students and cultural studio staff, thus limiting the sample size and age range. Future research could expand its scope beyond craft-based intangible cultural heritage; it could also broaden the questionnaire distribution, selecting more samples and combining it with in-depth interviews to further investigate the mechanisms underlying cognitive difficulties.

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