

Analysis of International Communication Pathways for Traditional Sports Culture from the Perspective of Cultural Confidence

Zimei Hu*

Physical Education, Kashgar University, Xinjiang, Kashgar, China

**Corresponding author: Zimei Hu, E-mail: 16699991245@163.com.*

Abstract

From the perspective of “cultural confidence,” traditional sports culture, as a vital carrier of outstanding Chinese traditional culture, embodies rich historical value and national spirit while bearing the mission of disseminating national soft power and cultural identity. This paper first outlines the theoretical foundations of cultural confidence and traditional sports culture, thoroughly analyzing the primary models and obstacles faced in the international communication of traditional sports. Building on this, it proposes communication strategies centered on enhancing cultural identity and explores innovative pathways integrating new media and cross-cultural carriers. Finally, through case studies, it summarizes practical experiences to provide insights for further enhancing the global influence of traditional sports culture. The study shows that leveraging digital platforms and diversified communication channels, coupled with strengthened cross-cultural interactions, can effectively expand the depth and breadth of communication, promoting the global dissemination of cultural confidence.

Keywords

cultural confidence, traditional sports culture, international communication, communication pathways, new media integration, cross-cultural exchange

1. Introduction

In today’s world of increasing multipolarity, economic globalization, and cultural diversity, cultural competition on the global stage has grown more intense. As a significant component of outstanding Chinese traditional culture, traditional sports culture carries profound historical memories and national spirit, serving as a key vehicle for showcasing national soft power and cultural confidence. Driven by national strategies such as the “Belt and Road” initiative and “International Cultural Exchange Year,” Chinese traditional sports like martial arts, dragon boat racing, and Tai Chi have gradually gained international attention. However, challenges such as cultural misinterpretations, limited communication channels, and insufficient audience engagement persist, hindering the full realization of their international influence and cultural value. This paper, rooted in the perspective of cultural confidence, aims to examine the current state and challenges of international communication for traditional sports culture while exploring pathways aligned with China’s cultural strategy. The first section reviews the theoretical connotations of cultural confidence and traditional sports culture; the second analyzes existing communication models and barriers; the third proposes pathways

centered on enhancing cultural identity through integration with new media and cross-cultural carriers; and the fourth summarizes feasible experiences from case studies and offers optimization suggestions. Through systematic research, this study seeks to provide theoretical and practical guidance for promoting traditional sports culture globally and elevating national cultural soft power (S. Liu et al., 2023).

2. Theoretical Foundations and Literature Review

2.1 Connotation and Theoretical Evolution of Cultural Confidence

Cultural confidence refers to a nation or ethnic group's steadfast belief in and positive identification with its cultural values, traditions, and creative capabilities. It encompasses deep respect for historical classics and intangible cultural heritage, as well as confidence in creatively transforming and innovatively developing traditional culture to meet contemporary needs. Since the 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, the Party Central Committee, led by Xi Jinping, has repeatedly emphasized cultural confidence as part of the "Four Confidences" (confidence in the path, theory, system, and culture), viewing it as a more fundamental, profound, and enduring force that, alongside the other confidences, forms a critical ideological pillar for national development (Yang & Zhang, 2022).

Academic research on cultural confidence has evolved through three stages. The first, the stage of cultural awareness, began with the New Culture Movement in the early 20th century, when scholars called for awakening cultural agency, sorting through national cultural resources, and establishing core values like benevolence, righteousness, propriety, wisdom, and trustworthiness. The second, the stage of cultural self-respect, emerged in the mid-to-late 20th century amid Western cultural impacts. Chinese scholars explored ways to preserve and pass down outstanding national cultural achievements, advocating for a cultural stance of "coexistence of tradition and modernity" and "inclusiveness," emphasizing cultural equality and dignity in a global context (Davis, 2020). The third, the stage of cultural self-strengthening, began in the 21st century, particularly after the 18th Party Congress. Guided by cultural innovation and international communication, strategies like the creative industries, online platforms, and the "Belt and Road" cultural outreach have transformed traditional culture into soft power with global influence. Throughout this evolution, traditional cultures represented by Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism have continually adjusted their approaches. Scholar Tang Yijie proposed "inclusiveness and innovation while staying true to roots," while Yu Ying-shi emphasized the dual tasks of "historical critique and cultural reconstruction." Contemporary scholar Wang Huning, from a governance perspective, noted that strengthening cultural confidence helps build a cultural security system to counter harmful foreign cultural influences. Yu Qiuyu, through his writings, explored the spiritual essence of Chinese culture and the concept of a shared cultural destiny, providing rich case studies for empirical research on cultural confidence. In practice, cultural confidence has permeated education, media, arts, and heritage preservation. National policies like the Outline for Building National Cultural Soft Power and the Project for Inheriting and Developing Outstanding Chinese Traditional Culture have elevated cultural confidence to a national strategy. Local governments have established intangible cultural heritage protection lists, with projects like martial arts and traditional festivals included in UNESCO's lists, further highlighting cultural vitality. Additionally, leveraging the internet, big data, and AI technologies has enabled precise, multilingual content delivery and interactive cultural experiences for global audiences. Overall, the connotation of cultural confidence has expanded from initial cultural identity and value judgment to a comprehensive system encompassing historical inheritance, contemporary innovation, and international communication. It provides a theoretical basis for studying specific fields like traditional sports culture and offers robust support for China's cultural outreach, global discourse power, and promotion of mutual learning among civilizations in the new era (DeWitt et al., 2022).

2.2 Definition and Value of Traditional Sports Culture

Traditional sports culture refers to a comprehensive cultural phenomenon created and passed down by ethnic groups through long-term social practices, primarily expressed through physical activities and competitive games, integrating cultural concepts, aesthetic interests, and social customs. It includes folk sports with regional characteristics, such as dragon and lion dances, cuju (ancient Chinese football), and tug-of-war, as well as competitive and self-cultivation systems like martial arts and Tai Chi. As a key part of humanity's intangible cultural heritage, traditional sports culture not only serves athletic functions but also

embodies collective memory, clan identity, and ritual expressions. Culturally, traditional sports culture fosters social cohesion and strengthens cultural identity. Through events like festivals and competitions, it integrates inherited values and ritual experiences into community life, enhancing social unity (G. Liu et al., 2023). Educationally, its combination of skill training and physical exercise promotes the philosophy of “strengthening the body and cultivating the mind,” offering valuable lessons for modern society’s physical and mental health. In the context of international communication, traditional sports culture also serves as a form of “cultural soft power,” vividly showcasing national spirit and aesthetic characteristics to promote cross-cultural understanding and emotional resonance. Thus, thoroughly exploring and systematically organizing the connotations and values of traditional sports culture is not only a theoretical reflection of cultural confidence but also a practical necessity for implementing international communication strategies and enhancing national cultural influence.

3. Analysis of the Current State of International Communication of Traditional Sports Culture

3.1 Primary Communication Models and Channels

Currently, the international communication of Chinese traditional sports culture exhibits a multi-channel pattern characterized by government leadership, collaboration among diverse entities, and integration of online and offline approaches. At the national level, initiatives led by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, the “Chinese Culture Going Global” campaign, and joint efforts by the General Administration of Sport and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs have established major branded events such as the International Wushu Championships, Dragon Boat Races, and Tai Chi Exchange Week. These serve as significant platforms for expressing national will and soft power. Additionally, cultural and sports bureaus at provincial and municipal levels have set up special funds for overseas promotion, supporting distinctive local projects to reach mainstream media and community centers in Europe, North America, Southeast Asia, and Africa through cultural years and art festivals. Secondly, non-governmental organizations and grassroots efforts play a complementary and extending role. Confucius Institutes leverage their language teaching platforms to incorporate traditional sports like wushu and Tai Chi into extracurricular courses, collaborating with local schools and martial arts clubs to organize community competitions and summer study camps. Overseas Chinese communities and businesses actively organize events such as Dragon Boat Festival races and lion dance parades, fostering emotional connections among diaspora communities while inviting local participation to enhance cultural identity. Thirdly, new media channels have emerged as the most dynamic communication method. Short video platforms like TikTok (Douyin’s international version), YouTube Shorts, and Instagram Reels deliver concise, fast-paced content, condensing the essence of wushu routines or the excitement of dragon boat races into seconds-long clips. Equipped with multilingual subtitles and performances by local influencers, these videos achieve cross-time-zone, round-the-clock reach. Interactive live-streamed classes on platforms like Bilibili, Zoom, and Facebook Live, supported by real-time comments and check-in features, break geographical barriers, offering global instructor feedback and certification to learners. Furthermore, international academic forums and cross-cultural seminars provide intellectual support for communication efforts. Events like UNESCO’s Intangible Cultural Heritage Seminars, the Asia-Pacific Sports Culture Summit, and collaborative research projects between Chinese and foreign universities focus on localization, cultural translation, and sustainable development mechanisms, translating academic insights into practical communication strategies (Munezane, 2021). Lastly, translated publications and experiential projects are indispensable. Multilingual books, professional journals, and translated works bring wushu theories and combat manuals to academic bookstores in Europe, Latin America, and the Middle East. Collaborative initiatives between the Ministry of Culture and Tourism and travel agencies, such as the “Wudang Tai Chi Experience Tour” and “Dragon Boat Festival Cultural Study Program,” allow foreign tourists to engage directly in hands-on activities, experiencing the essence of traditional sports culture through observation and participation. Overall, while government leadership, grassroots efforts, academic support, media innovation, and tourism experiences operate in parallel, further improvements are needed in content depth, localization, and sustained interaction mechanisms to elevate the international influence and cultural identity of traditional sports culture (Gradellini et al., 2021).

3.2 Obstacles in the Communication Process

Language and cultural differences remain the primary and most challenging barriers in the international dissemination of traditional sports culture. When introducing projects to foreign audiences, terms like “Tai Chi,” “Wudang Martial Arts,” or “Dragon Dance” are often mechanically translated, neglecting their profound philosophical meanings, historical origins, and ritual protocols. As a result, audiences may only mimic surface-level movements without grasping core cultural values such as “overcoming hardness with softness,” “following the way of nature,” or “united in purpose.” This decontextualized approach weakens the cultural depth and reduces the likelihood of establishing lasting identification across diverse cultural contexts. Simultaneously, dual compliance requirements for sports and cultural activities under international legal frameworks often entangle organizers in complex approval and authorization processes. Regulations governing sports event organization, public activity permits, intellectual property protection, commercial sponsorships, and cultural performances vary widely across countries (Nam et al., 2023). For instance, obtaining outdoor event permits in Western countries may require submitting environmental impact assessments months in advance. Water-based events in certain Middle Eastern or Indian Ocean coastal nations must adhere to maritime safety laws, religious festival restrictions, and local tribal negotiations. On the copyright front, unauthorized use of music, costume patterns, or logos in traditional performances can lead to legal disputes and bans on dissemination. These compliance burdens slow the pace of communication and force smaller promotion teams to abandon or scale back projects due to cost and risk concerns during planning. Compared to large-scale, centralized events, sustained and routine promotion projects rely heavily on stable funding and localized operational support. However, many traditional sports culture projects face funding shortages and unstable partnerships once they go abroad. Initial special funds may support high-impact publicity, but the lack of follow-up budgets for maintenance, venue rentals, coach training, and localized promotion prevents projects from taking root in local communities. Additionally, local partners often join based on short-term commercial interests, lacking deep understanding or long-term commitment to cultural dissemination, which hinders experience-sharing and brand continuity, making it difficult to establish stable cross-cultural community networks. On another note, while new media channels offer unprecedented convenience for spreading traditional sports culture, content production and strategies that fail to align with local cultural contexts risk falling into “fast-food” or “stereotyped” traps. Many short video creators focus on flashy techniques, behind-the-scenes clips, or humorous background music, neglecting the spiritual essence and value interpretation of traditional sports. This leaves audiences with a superficial “spectacle” impression, failing to spark sustained engagement or deep interaction. The digital divide persists as well: in developing countries or remote areas with poor internet infrastructure, issues like limited access to quality online teaching resources and streaming delays widen the audience gap for cultural communication. Finally, the lack of specialized evaluation metrics and feedback mechanisms for traditional sports culture in international communication systems hinders optimization efforts. Current assessments often rely on broad metrics like event attendance, media exposure, or social media likes and comments, failing to quantify cultural identification, learning depth, or long-term impact. The absence of combined qualitative and quantitative analyses—such as public sentiment studies, audience satisfaction surveys, or evaluations of cultural value transformation—prevents organizers from identifying issues or adjusting strategies scientifically, thus weakening the potential for deep and lasting global communication and identification (Bican, 2021).

4. Building International Communication Pathways

4.1 Strategy Design Based on Cultural Identification

To enhance cultural identification in international communication, a systematic narrative and symbolic framework should be employed to present the core values of traditional sports culture in accessible, story-driven formats. For instance, using the lineage of Tai Chi masters, the spirit of martial artists, or the origins of the Dragon Boat Festival as narrative threads, universal cultural themes like “harmony and coexistence,” “balance of strength and softness,” or “united effort” can be highlighted. These can be showcased through documentaries, short videos, and other multimedia formats, enabling global audiences to naturally perceive their cultural significance through audiovisual experiences. Secondly, localized adaptations should be tailored to integrate traditional sports with local cultural symbols, infusing events with new cultural

relevance. When promoting Tai Chi, local artists could be invited to design costumes, and interactive open classes could be held during traditional local festivals. For dragon boat races, incorporating local water culture or festival elements along the racecourse can create a blended atmosphere, fostering emotional resonance among audiences. Thirdly, a “co-creation” mechanism should be strengthened to cultivate local communicators and cultural ambassadors. Training programs for local coaches and community leaders should equip them with both technical skills and cultural interpretation abilities, fostering decentralized communication networks. By establishing multilingual teaching teams and hybrid online-offline training platforms, talent localization can be achieved, deepening and broadening the understanding and identification with traditional sports culture (Dang et al., 2021).

4.2 Innovation Through New Media and Cross-Cultural Carriers

In the new media era, international communication of traditional sports culture must move beyond singular offline displays and embrace diverse formats like short videos, social media, live streaming, and virtual reality. Short video platforms like TikTok, YouTube Shorts, and Instagram Reels can use a “scene recreation + influencer demonstration” approach to narrate project origins, technical features, and modern applications in segments. Filming techniques can range from “micro-documentary” style, showcasing daily training routines and cultural stories of martial artists, to “humanistic documentary” capturing community participation in lion dances or dragon boat races, evoking emotional and aesthetic resonance in brief viewing experiences. Live-streamed interactive classes, hosted on platforms like Bilibili, Twitch, or Zoom, offer real-time teaching and deep engagement. Instructors can demonstrate techniques while interacting with audiences through comments, likes, donations, and Q&A sessions, addressing questions and sharing cultural insights. To boost participation, courses can be broken into serialized modules, with “cross-country” classes scheduled across time zones, encouraging learners to upload practice videos for global instructor feedback and scoring, fostering enduring learning communities. In terms of cross-cultural carrier innovation, collaborations with international museums, science centers, and art institutions can create “sports culture experience exhibitions.” These exhibitions, with immersive layouts, tactile interactive devices, and multilingual audio guides, transform elements like dragon boats, wushu, or Tai Chi into participatory scenarios. For example, visitors could wear sensor gloves to feel the force dynamics of martial arts or sit in motion chairs to simulate dragon boat paddling, with holographic projections recreating historical Dragon Boat Festival races, transcending traditional exhibition formats. Moreover, virtual reality (VR) and augmented reality (AR) technologies enable audiences to “step into” authentic settings like Wudang Mountain’s Tai Chi morning practice or Hong Kong’s Victoria Harbour dragon boat races from their homes or classrooms, overcoming geographic and time constraints. AR mobile apps can overlay real-time Tai Chi demonstration guides, technical tips, and performance feedback as users record their movements, enabling “anytime, anywhere” learning and check-ins. Finally, the dual innovation of new media and cross-cultural carriers requires data-driven precision operations. Big data and AI recommendation algorithms can analyze audience preferences and behavior to tailor short video themes, live class schedules, and experiential activities. Social media sentiment monitoring and interaction data can inform timely content and strategy adjustments. Synchronized online-offline theme challenges and check-in campaigns in project cities and digital communities can follow a “online buzz → offline immersion → community amplification → ongoing review” cycle, continuously expanding the depth, breadth, and multidimensional international influence of traditional sports culture, achieving true “zero-distance” cultural identification.

5. Case Study Analysis and Insights

5.1 Case Study: International Promotion of a Traditional Sports Project

The Vancouver International Dragon Boat Festival, initiated in 1989 by the University of British Columbia’s Chinese Students and Scholars Association (UBC CSSA), serves as a prime example. It has grown into North America’s largest dragon boat cultural event. Held annually around the Dragon Boat Festival, the organizing committee collaborates with the Vancouver city government, the British Columbia Sports Bureau, and local Chinese business associations to set up a main racecourse at English Bay Beach Park, complemented by cultural exhibition zones, food streets, and family-friendly activity areas. The event attracts over 100 dragon boat teams from the United States, Canada, China, and Southeast Asia, drawing

nearly 20,000 athletes and over 50,000 spectators. In terms of communication channels, the organizers have established an integrated online-offline system. The festival's official website, multilingual promotional materials (in English, Simplified Chinese, and Traditional Chinese), and social media accounts on platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and WeChat regularly share event previews, team interviews, and post-race highlights. Partnerships with mainstream local media (e.g., CBC, Vancouver Sun) and Chinese-language publications (e.g., Vancouver Weekly, Ming Pao) facilitate news releases and feature stories. On-site, large-screen live broadcasts, volunteer-guided explanations, and VR experience booths offer immersive ways for audiences to learn about the origins of dragon boat racing, competition rules, and Dragon Boat Festival culture. Through these diverse promotional strategies, the Vancouver International Dragon Boat Festival not only conveys the excitement and teamwork spirit of dragon boat racing to local residents and tourists but also leverages the community influence of Chinese diaspora media to foster deep cross-cultural interaction and sustained engagement. This success provides a replicable model for the international promotion of other traditional sports projects.

5.2 Lessons Learned and Strategic Insights

The success of the Vancouver International Dragon Boat Festival stems from multi-stakeholder collaboration and resource integration. Government agencies, university associations, and Chinese community groups jointly develop event plans, clarifying organizational structures and operational responsibilities while incorporating cultural interpretation and international communication into the official agenda. This ensures smooth execution with policy support and professional guidance. Local governments provide venue access and safety oversight to ensure compliance, while academic and cultural institutions contribute to festival design, blending scholarly research with cultural displays. This transforms the event into more than a sports competition—it becomes a cultural celebration. This “government-academia-community” collaborative model offers a replicable framework for the international communication of traditional sports projects. Secondly, the integrated online-offline communication model enhances the event's lasting impact. Pre-event teasers, live broadcasts, and post-event highlights are shared via the official website, multilingual social media, and international mainstream media, maintaining a consistent communication rhythm across multiple platforms and timeframes. On-site, large-screen broadcasts, VR experiences, and volunteer-led explanations create immersive cultural encounters. Notably, the organizing committee uses interactive social media topics and lucky draws to spark enthusiasm among younger audiences, leveraging data analytics to refine content delivery strategies and improve precision and audience retention. Thirdly, localized operational mechanisms are key to long-term sustainability. The Vancouver Dragon Boat Festival recruits local coaches and cultural promoters to conduct training, cultivating bilingual ambassadors with both Chinese and Western cultural backgrounds. Collaborations with local art groups produce regionally inspired costumes and opening ceremony performances, enhancing inclusivity and participation. Partnerships with local food vendors introduce festival food fairs featuring Chinese sticky rice dumplings (zongzi) alongside local specialties, enriching the cultural experience. Regular dragon boat cultural workshops and community mini-races embed the sport in grassroots communities, achieving grounded and deep-rooted cultural dissemination. Finally, a robust evaluation and feedback system ensures continuous improvement. The festival's organizing committee collects audience feedback annually through surveys, social media sentiment analysis, and on-site interviews, compiling detailed reports. Quantitative metrics like participant numbers, local community involvement, and media exposure are used to assess and refine communication strategies. Other traditional sports projects should adopt this approach by designing evaluation plans in advance, setting clear target metrics, and tracking progress before, during, and after events. This closed-loop management enhances global influence and cultural identification.

6. Conclusion and Outlook

6.1 Summary of Research Findings

Grounded in the perspective of cultural confidence, this study has traced the theoretical origins and value connotations of traditional sports culture, thoroughly analyzed the primary models and obstacles in its international communication, and proposed innovative pathways centered on enhancing cultural identification through new media and cross-cultural carriers. Through case studies like the Vancouver

International Dragon Boat Festival, it has identified key strategies: multi-stakeholder collaboration, integrated online-offline communication, localized operations, and robust evaluation feedback. The findings demonstrate that only through coordinated efforts in content storytelling, channel design, stakeholder development, and sustained operations can audiences naturally perceive the historical depth and national spirit behind traditional sports, achieving effective dissemination and realization of cultural confidence.

6.2 Directions for Future Research and Practice

Future research and practice can be deepened in several areas. First, comparative cross-national studies on localization strategies in different cultural contexts could uncover mechanisms of project adaptation and cultural acceptance. Second, leveraging big data and AI technologies, a quantitative evaluation and visualized feedback system for the communication effects of traditional sports culture could be developed to support dynamic strategy optimization. Third, exploring cross-disciplinary integrations—such as with contemporary art, digital gaming, or health and eldercare—could expand the application scenarios of traditional sports culture. Fourth, strengthening the development of local communicators and establishing a multilingual, interdisciplinary global talent network would provide long-term support for the sustained global dissemination of traditional sports culture. Through iterative innovation in theory and practice, traditional sports culture will radiate enduring and profound appeal on the international stage in the new era.

References

- Bican, G. (2021). Enhancing the cross cultural competence of prospective language teachers. *Journal of Curriculum and Teaching*, 10(3), 47-57. <https://doi.org/10.5430/JCT.V10N3P47>
- Dang, Q., Luo, Z., Ouyang, C., Wang, L., & Xie, M. (2021). Intangible cultural heritage in China: A visual analysis of research hotspots, frontiers, and trends using CiteSpace. *Sustainability*, 13(17), Article 9865. <https://doi.org/10.3390/SU13179865>
- Davis, M. (2020). The “culture” in cultural competence. In J. Frawley, G. Russell, & J. Sherwood (Eds.), *Cultural competence and the higher education sector: Australian perspectives, policies and practice* (pp. 15-29). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-15-5362-2_2
- DeWitt, D., Chan, S. F., & Loban, R. (2022). Virtual reality for developing intercultural communication competence in Mandarin as a foreign language. *Educational Technology Research and Development*, 70(2), 615-638. <https://doi.org/10.1007/S11423-021-10074-9>
- Gradellini, C., Gómez-Cantarino, S., Dominguez-Isabel, P., Molina-Gallego, B., Mecugni, D., & Ugarte-Gurrutxaga, M. I. (2021). Cultural competence and cultural sensitivity education in university nursing courses. A scoping review. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 12, Article 682920. <https://doi.org/10.3389/FPSYG.2021.682920>
- Liu, G., Ma, C., Bao, J., & Liu, Z. (2023). Toward a model of informal digital learning of English and intercultural competence: A large-scale structural equation modeling approach. *Computer Assisted Language Learning*, 36, 1-25. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09588221.2023.2191652>
- Liu, S., Gallois, C., & Volcic, Z. (2023). *Introducing intercultural communication: Global cultures and contexts*. Sage Publications.
- Munezane, Y. (2021). A new model of intercultural communicative competence: Bridging language classrooms and intercultural communicative contexts. *Studies in Higher Education*, 46(8), 1664-1681. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03075079.2019.1698537>
- Nam, B. H., Yang, Y., & Draeger, R. (2023). Intercultural communication between Chinese college students and foreign teachers through the English corner at an elite language university in Shanghai. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 93, Article 101776. <https://doi.org/10.1016/J.IJINTREL.2023.101776>
- Yang, F., & Zhang, J. (2022). Traditional Chinese sports under China's health strategy. *Journal of Environmental and Public Health*, 2022, Article 1381464. <https://doi.org/10.1155/2022/1381464>

Funding

This research received no external funding.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Acknowledgment

This paper is an output of the science project.

Copyrights

Copyright for this article is retained by the author(s), with first publication rights granted to the journal. This is an open-access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).