

A Brief Discussion on the Promotion of Chinese Culture in Confucius Institutes

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Abstract: To better promote Chinese culture internationally, Confucius Institutes worldwide have launched online Chinese language courses and cultural lectures. This study examines the example of the University of San Tomas Confucius Institute in Chile. Since March 2019, the institute has conducted monthly online cultural lectures featuring different themes each month. These lectures were promoted through advance online publicity and delivered live-streamed to Chilean netizens. The author compiled all cultural lecture topics from the institute over a year and categorized them by theme. Comparative analysis of the total likes received by these cultural topics during advance promotions on Facebook revealed a gap between the content offered by Confucius Institutes and Chilean netizens' interests. Additionally, film recommendations exhibited issues such as limited thematic diversity and lack of representative content. To address these challenges, the author proposes strategies including actively utilizing social media for enhanced cultural promotion, fully considering local audience needs, offering diverse and representative works, and conducting statistical analyses of relevant online data to help Confucius Institutes improve their digital cultural dissemination.

1. Overview of the Confucius Institute at the University of St. Thomas

In recent years, Latin America has emerged as one of the fastest-growing regions for Confucius Institutes worldwide. In 2007, Anhui University and the University of San Tomas in Chile formally signed an agreement to establish a Confucius Institute. The institution was inaugurated in Vina del Mar, Chile, in 2008, with additional teaching sites subsequently set up in Santiago and other locations. By 2020, the University of San Tomas Confucius Institute had enrolled 17,602 students, while its Santiago campus alone reached 12,042 participants in cultural activities during 2019. The institute has been honored four times with the "Global Advanced Confucius Institute" title by the Confucius Institute Headquarters and once with the "Global Model Confucius Institute" award. Chilean authorities have also presented it with four commemorative medals, while two former presidents and numerous high-ranking officials have visited the institution multiple times. The University of San Tomas Confucius Institute has become a prominent platform for Chinese language education and cultural promotion in Chile[1].

2. Statistics on Topics of Network Culture Lectures

Table 1 Statistics of "E-Club" Cultural Topics from December 2020 to December 2021

December (2020)	Traditional Chinese music online concert
	Look at China from iconic cities
	China-Tajikistan relations: scientific cooperation to solve problems together
	The invention of writing and the Call of the Devil: The Civilizing Power of Chinese Mythology
	movie recommendation
January	Ethnic minorities and traditional dances in China
	Props, costumes and accessories in Chinese dance
	Traditional Chinese medicine and seven emotions
	How to strengthen the immune system
	First person: Chileans tell how to celebrate Spring Festival in China
	Dragon and lion dancing: the role and significance in Chinese Spring Festival
	How to Celebrate Spring Festival in China: The custom and practice of paper cutting
	Chinese zodiac: Year of the Ox
	Chinese Food Workshop: Learn to make a traditional Spring Festival dish
	Introduction to Chinese dragon and lion dancing
March	The Chinese Tour of Chilean Music
	We are Latin American rock singers: We will live forever
	No need to fear the giants
	China: A country full of opportunities
April	St. Thomas University Confucius Institute Scholarship
	Guangdong Tourism: City and Countryside
	Chinese Calligraphy
	movie recommendation
May	How to take the online HSK and HSKK exams
	Sweet and sour fillet
	Fried Rice \"Yangzhou\" Style
	spareribs braised in brown sauce
	Mapo Tofu
	Yunnan: Search for Shangri-La
	Chinese knot
	paper-cut
	movie recommendation
June	The ancient tradition and modern prosperity of Chinese science fiction
	Chinese rock music and contemporary poetry
	Mo Yan: The man who tells Chinese stories
	Li Qingzhao, a talented woman of the ages
	Jiangsu: A flexible and avant-garde city
	Chinese Films after 1979: Famous directors and their masterpieces
	Chinese food: Zongzi
	dragon boat
	movie recommendation
July	Confucius' thought and its embodiment in modern China
	Shaanxi: a window of multiculturalism
	The Book of Changes
	Nei Jing Su Wen
	Tao Te Ching
	The Art of War by Sun Tzu
	movie recommendation
September	On the theory of "successful imports from China"
	Evaluation and recommendations for successful imports

	China Innovation and Technology Conference
	Personal experience: Xi 'an-Samarkand, returning to the mysterious Silk Road
	Confucianism as a source of ideological reflection: From Latin America and in Latin America
	Feng Shui: the science of life
	Sichuan: Land of Abundance
	Mid-Autumn Festival
	movie recommendation
October	the construction of new China
	China's modernization drive
	technical image and concern for extreme poverty
	a politician on the international stage
	the vision of a community with a shared future
	Fujian Province: Between mountains and seas, the road to happiness
	movie recommendation
November	Hubei Province: China's showcase to the world
	Virus and Civilization-Using Chinese classics to reflect on modern society
	Why China is important to us
	movie recommendation
December	Territorial conquest and trade in the 13th century: Following in the footsteps of Kublai Khan and Marco Polo
	Online Chinese cultural heritage tour
	movie recommendation

Since March 2020, to enhance the promotion of Chinese culture, the St. Thomas Confucius Institute has launched an online "E-club" initiative each month. Utilizing ZOOM and Facebook live streaming platforms, this program reaches Chilean communities worldwide[2]. The monthly E-club covers a wide range of topics including politics, economics, culture, entertainment, traditional Chinese heritage, and modern China perspectives. Each session features a recommended Chinese film for Chilean audiences, with multiple cultural themes and guest speakers delivering live lectures while answering online questions. The author compiled E-club topics from December 2020 to December 2021 (excluding February and August 2021 due to school closures in Chile), which included 62 cultural lectures and 9 film recommendations as shown in Table 1.

3. Theme Division of Cultural Topics and Statistical Analysis of Likes

Through summarizing and analyzing cultural lecture topics, the author categorized them into nine themes based on thematic perspectives: Modern China (politics, economy, society, technology, tourism, etc.), Traditional Culture (paper-cutting, calligraphy, traditional festivals, etc.), Arts (music, film and television, dance, etc.), Literary Classics, Chinese Language Courses, Chinese food, History, Traditional Chinese Medicine, and Others[3]. The number of related lecture topics for each theme was statistically analyzed and ranked, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2 Statistics of the Number of Topics in Cultural Propaganda

The theme of the cultural lecture topic	Quantity
Modern China (politics, economy, society, technology, tourism, etc.)	21
Traditional culture (paper cutting, calligraphy, traditional festivals, etc.)	15
Literary classics	9
Arts (music, film and television, dance, etc.)	6
Chinese food	4
History	2
Chinese language courses	2
Traditional Chinese medicine	2
Others	1

As shown in Table 2, the "E-Club" online cultural lectures at the University of San Marcos Confucius Institute predominantly feature modern China-related topics (21 titles), followed by traditional culture (15 titles), totaling 36 topics. These two themes account for over half of the total 62 topics. Clearly, from the Confucius Institute's perspective, they believe content about modern China best represents Chinese culture and attracts Chilean netizens, with traditional culture being the second most popular. Therefore, these two themes form the core focus of cultural promotion. Zhen Zhen and Wang Dake (2021) suggest that while teaching traditional Chinese culture, institutions should increase the proportion of lectures on contemporary Chinese experiences, characteristics, and values[4].

The Confucius Institute regularly releases promotional posters for its monthly "E-Club" cultural lectures through its official Facebook account, featuring previews that Chilean users can like to show interest. As shown in Table 3, the author has compiled statistics on likes for all related promotional content across the account.

Table 3 Statistics of Total Number of Likes for Cultural Topics

The theme of the cultural lecture topic	Number of likes
Modern China (politics, economy, society, technology, tourism, etc.)	2943
Traditional culture (paper cutting, calligraphy, traditional festivals, etc.)	1274
Literary classics	825
History	485
Arts (music, film and television, dance, etc.)	313
Chinese food	108
Others	99
Traditional Chinese medicine	67
Chinese language courses	49

Three themes—Modern China, Traditional Culture, and Literary Classics—top the list in total likes. This indicates that more lecture topics correspond to higher total likes, reflecting Chilean netizens' heightened interest in these subjects. Notably, the art theme garnered 313 likes across six topics, while the history theme received only two mentions despite having more entries. The history topic even surpassed art in total likes, demonstrating netizens' greater interest in historical content. This reveals a gap between the cultural content perceived as popular by Confucius Institutes and actual public preferences. The fact that Confucius Institutes have allocated more cultural themes doesn't necessarily mean they align with Chilean audiences' interests[5].

In order to further clarify the existence of this gap, the author calculated and ranked the average number of lecture topics and the total number of topic likes for each topic, as shown in Table 4.

Table 4 Statistics of the Number of Topics and Average Number of Likes of Cultural Propaganda Topics

Theme of Cultural Week	Number of presentations	Total likes	average value
History	2	485	242.5
Modern China (politics, economy, society, , technology, tourism, etc.)	21	2943	140.1
Others	1	99	99
Literary classics	9	825	91.7
Traditional culture (paper cutting, calligraphy, traditional festivals, etc.)	15	1274	84.9
Arts (music, film and television, dance, etc.)	6	313	52.2
Traditional Chinese medicine	2	67	33.5
Chinese food	4	108	27
Chinese language courses	2	49	24.5

As shown in Table 4, the historical theme demonstrates the highest average score of 242.5. This

clearly indicates Chilean netizens' strong interest in historical topics. Despite only two cultural lecture topics related to history being proposed, they garnered significant likes during previews. However, the limited number of lecture topics offered by the Confucius Institute fails to meet public demand for this most popular subject. The ranking of average interest levels for other themes also shows no positive correlation with the quantity of cultural lecture topics released by the University of San Tomas Confucius Institute as depicted in Figure 1. These findings further demonstrate a noticeable gap between the cultural content provided by the Confucius Institute and public interest levels[6].

4. Statistics and Analysis of the Movie Recommendation Section

The Confucius Institute at the University of San Tomas not only broadcasts monthly cultural lectures but also promotes Chinese films to Chilean audiences. By sharing lecture topics on Facebook in advance to boost engagement, the institution has tracked the likes of nine recommended films on Facebook. The researcher conducted searches on Douban Movie's official platform, identified key themes for each film, and compiled ratings as shown in Table 5.

Table 5 Statistics of ratings, keywords and likes of recommended movies

name	Douban rating	keyword	Facebook likes
" Mount Maoshan "	3.1	Costume, fantasy, action	30
"Zhang Tianshi of Longhu Mountain: Qilin"	No score	Costumes, action	25
Immortal Legend: The Sword	4.7	Costumes, martial arts	20
The Fox on Both Sides	No score	Costume, fantasy	15
The Legend of the Nirvana of Zhaoyao	No score	Costume, fantasy, love	14
The Wild Knife	No score	Costumes, action	13
Soul Ferry: Huang Quan	7	Costume, fantasy, horror	13
" The Bride with White Hair "	3.7	Costume, fantasy, action	10
The Legend of the Wilderness: The Soul Sword	No score	Costume, fantasy, drama	10

As shown in Table 3, five films lack ratings on Douban, with the highest-scoring film receiving 7 points while the other three have low scores (totaling 10 points). Regarding Facebook likes, compared to previous cultural promotion topics, the recommended films received minimal likes (maximum 30), indicating low public interest in Chilean audiences. In terms of thematic keywords, the recommended films share nine distinct themes from previous cultural campaigns, yet all are ancient costume dramas—a monotonous selection. Notably, when searching for "pelicula china" (Chinese films) on the YouTube official website using viewership rankings, only "The Bride with White Hair" appears among Confucius Institute-recommended films, and it's not even the official Confucius Institute version. These findings reveal that the films recommended by the Holy Thomas Confucius Institute Cultural Week neither represent Chinese cinema's mainstream works nor popular productions in domestic or international markets. Their repetitive styles, content, and presentation fail to comprehensively showcase Chinese film culture, hindering Chilean audiences' understanding of Chinese cinematic traditions[7].

5. Inspiration for the Promotion of Chinese Culture to the Outside World

Firstly, in today's media landscape dominated by internet-based new media, which boasts immediacy, diversity, interactivity, and convenience, these platforms have rapidly claimed cultural communication media territory and become the most favored channels for global audiences. Confucius Institutes should prioritize the application and management of social media, actively establishing accounts on popular platforms like YouTube, Facebook, and Instagram in host countries to directly disseminate vibrant and diverse cultural content to local communities[8]. Tang

Jinghua (2018) argues that to better fulfill their cultural dissemination responsibilities, Confucius Institutes must emphasize diversified communication channels while prioritizing new media engagement. This is because new media participants serve dual roles as both recipients and creators of cultural transmission, with their effectiveness significantly impacting the authentic impact of Confucius Institutes' cultural outreach. Beyond live-streaming via Facebook as mentioned in this paper, multi-platform collaborative broadcasts could be explored to expand audience reach and enhance cultural promotion efforts. During online campaigns, real-time monitoring of viewer numbers and analysis of data metrics like likes should be conducted. Collecting feedback and suggestions will help promptly understand evolving public interests and enable proactive adjustments to subsequent cultural promotion strategies[9].

Secondly, when organizing cultural promotion activities for Chinese heritage, it's crucial to consider local communities' interests and needs. Cultural programs should feature diverse themes, rich content, and varied formats that resonate deeply with the public. Before launching cultural initiatives, conducting surveys and online polls can help directly engage communities and better understand their cultural aspirations. As Zhen Zhen and Wang Dakuo (2021) emphasized, cultural excellence isn't self-perceived but requires international recognition. While foreign audiences may not fully grasp China's profound traditions or see them as representative of modern China, we must carefully balance showcasing the nation's dynamic development with preserving its cultural essence. When selecting recommended works, it's essential to balance diversity and representativeness. Diverse genres highlight the breadth and depth of Chinese culture, while representative pieces demonstrate quality and significance in their respective fields. Avoid relying solely on fantastical elements or obscure concepts that cater to superficial curiosity[10].

6. Conclusion

When promoting Chinese culture internationally, Confucius Institutes should not only engage in one-way cultural lectures but also strengthen collaboration with local cultural institutions and relevant departments to facilitate two-way exchanges. This approach highlights the uniqueness of Chinese culture while demonstrating its inclusiveness and cultural integration. Ma Mengzhen (2018) noted that the Goethe-Institut's strategy of "cooperative exchange and integrated development" offers valuable lessons for reference. The cultural dissemination efforts of Confucius Institutes must target all age groups from children to seniors across society, while also achieving social integration in host countries to realize China's "cultural presence." This requires mutual benefits for both Chinese and local communities, creating a win-win scenario. In practical implementation, institutions should strategically advance content aligned with the host country's cultural context.

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