

Interpretation of the Multimodal Cultural Pattern of Urban Tourism Images of Shaanxi

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Abstract. The tourism images of Shaanxi contain rich multimodal patterns embodying Shaanxi's history, humanities and art and other local cultures. This paper aims to systematically analyze the multimodal coordination mechanism of Shaanxi urban tourism images and explore the ways and characteristics of promoting Shaanxi tourism culture based on the intersemiotic complementarity theory of Royce and visual grammar of Kress and van Leeuwen.

1. Introduction

In such a multimodal society, the construction of meaning is increasingly depending on the integration of various symbolic resources [1]. All modalities have the potential to express meaning while modality and meaning have its specificities in social and cultural aspects [2]. Social semiotics is closely related to cultural communication. Based on Saussure's observation that "language is a social fact", Halliday has put forward that language is a social symbol, saying that culture itself is interpreted as an information system in terms of social semiotics [3]. Hu Zhuanglin pointed out in *Multimodality in the Study of Social Semiotics*: "as Lemke said, what social semiotics investigates is the practice of symbols specific to a certain culture, which can generate various discourses and meanings in various contexts and meaningful activities. It also has a close relationship with discourse analysis, multimedia analysis, educational research, cultural anthropology, and political science" [2].

With closer cross-cultural communication, cultural soft power has gradually become an important form to reflect the national image. Faced with globalization, the inheritance and promotion of Chinese culture has become the focus of many scholars. Travel discourses with multiple symbol modalities such as sounds and images can not only attract people visually, but also bring auditory and spiritual pleasure. Tourism discourses, such as urban promotion films, tourism promotion posters, tourist images, and logos in scenic spots, not only help to promote cultural and natural landscapes among tourists, but also convey the local customs, history, and culture of the city. This paper explores the characteristics of the Shaanxi urban tourism images and the multimodal features of the cultural pattern using multimodal discourse analysis of social symbolism in systemic functional theory, aiming to emphasize the significance of multimodal interaction of tourism discourse to the promotion of Chinese culture in the context of digital media.

2. Multimodal Discourse Analysis

In social semiotics, Kress clearly defines the modality as the symbolic resource of creative meaning formed in social culture [4]. Any modality (images, gestures, and music) is a complete ideographic system with the same expression plane, lexigrammar, and discourse semantics as the language. Kress and van Leeuwen combined the systemic-functional grammar, the semiotic thoughts of Saussure and Halliday, and the theory of critical discourse analysis to develop social semiotics based on visual grammar, in which symbols beyond language are also included [5, 6]. Social

semiotics aims to discover the universal law of various symbolic modes, pay attention to social and cultural contexts, which is similar to critical discourse analysis, and reveal the power and ideology in communicative behavior. Social semiotics believes that the intentions and interests determine the choice of symbol of symbolic users, that is, meaning is the result of choice. Different modalities have different meanings. In the digital era, with the rapid development of media such as visual technology, social semiotics has been increasingly applied to the study of different kind of cultural phenomena. By combining social semiotics and systemic functional linguistics [7], intersemiotic complementarity theory proposed by Royce, studies the relationship between linguistic signs and visual symbols, with emphasis on the cohesive and complementary mechanism of images and texts in information dissemination. In *Reading Images* written by Kress and Leeuwen, the theory of multimodal analysis of social semiotics is comprehensively established [5]. In *Handbook of Visual Analysis*, visual analysis of anthropology, cultural study, psychotherapy, clan study, film and television works, content analysis of images, and social semiotic analysis are introduced [8]. Leeuwen and Jewitt have constructed a multimodal social semiotics analysis framework of representation, interaction and composition based on ideational, interpersonal, and textual function, using the method of analyzing the symbolicality of language in society adopted by Halliday.

Recent years have seen domestic scholars adopt multimodal research methods and take film posters, advertisements, comics, web pages, national image films and videos of songs to explore the graphic relationship between multimodal graphic carriers. However, there are relatively few multimodal studies on tourism discourse.

3. Multimodal cultural pattern of urban tourism images

The tourism image is the essence of the overall image of a city and a region. Recognizable, unique, creative and observable images reflect the basic connotation, typical characteristics, and cultural essence of the tourist city. It has clear visual image, simple composition, and is easy to identify and remember.

3.1 Multimodal symbolic meaning of tourism images

Shaanxi, one of the most important birthplaces of the Chinese nation and the Chinese civilization, boasts a long history and a dazzling culture. Shaanxi culture is the legacy of spiritual and natural symbols of Chinese civilization, Chinese revolution and Chinese geography.



Figure 1 Tourism image of Shaanxi

The Tourism image of Shaanxi (Figure 1) is a multimodal discourse composed of various symbols such as images, texts, and colors. The design of tourism image of Shaanxi is based on Dayan Tower in Xi'an. The colors of yellow, orange, red, rose red and purple of Dayan Tower, the religious building in Tang Dynasty are put together with a flowing ribbon, making the image come to life. The ribbon is a kind of accessory of the women's clothes in Tang Dynasty and also a mark of the Silk Road in ancient China. This design shows the charm of the eight scenic spots of Guanzhong in Shaanxi. In the upper right of the image, there is a seal of Shaanxi. In the lower middle, there is "Shaanxi Tourism" in Chinese written in black and "SHAANXI" in English, highlighting that Shaanxi is going global in tourism. This image mixes the pictures, colors and texts of history, cultural relics, religions, and customs. As an overall symbolic system, it conveys profound internal connotations and helps to promote the tourism concept of Shaanxi.



Figure 2 Tourism image of Xi'an

Tourism image of Xi'an (Figure 2) with dark blue as the main color is mainly composed of the bronze chariots and horses of Mausoleum of the First Qin Emperor with "China * Xi'an * Tourism" in Chinese and "XI'AN TOURISM* CHINA" in English.



Figure 3 Tourism image of Baoji

The main body of Baoji Tourism City Image (Figure 3) is the initials of the "Baoji". Its background is Taibai Mountain, the main peak of the Qinling Mountains, and Weihe River, a tributary of the Yellow River. In the lower part, there is "To see China, Visit Baoji" in both Chinese and English. In the middle of the text, there stands He Zun, the treasure in Baoji Bronze Museum. The image has the shape of the chicken and the charm of the phoenix with Taotie design as the main texture and red and yellow as the main colors.



Figure 4 Tourism image of Xianyang

Tourism image of Xianyang (Figure 4) uses the seal to express "Xianyang", forming a unique city image with Chinese pinyin and calligraphy and the colors of black, the main color of Qin Dynasty and red, the traditional Chinese color.

3.2 Conceptual complementarity

Royce's inter-symbol complementarity theory is divided into ideational complementarity, interpersonal complementarity and compositional intersemiotic complementarity [9]. Ideational complementarity requires analyzing the visual elements first. Repetition, collocation, meronymy, hyponymy, antonymy, and synonym are the common relationship between the text and the visual elements.

Table 1 Conceptual complementarity of tourism text and picture

Text	Graphic relationship
Shaanxi Tourism	Meronymy and hyponymy
China*Xi'an*Tourism	Meronymy and hyponymy
To see China, visit Baoji	Meronymy and hyponymy
Xianyang	Repetition

Among the four tourist images, "Shaanxi" has scenic spots such as Dayan Tower, "Xi'an" has terracotta warriors and horses of the Qin Shihuang Mausoleum, and "Baoji" has Taibai Mountain, Weihe River, and He Zun, which all reflects the relationship of meronymy. The "tourism" in Shaanxi tourist image and Xi'an tourist image covers the tourism resources in the image, reflecting the relationship of hyponymy. "To see China, visit Baoji" takes Taibai Mountain and Baoji Bronze

Museum as the carrier, reflecting the relationship of hyponymy. In the tourist image of Xianyang, “Xianyang” and “Xianyang tourism” reflect the relationship of repetition. With the combination of texts and pictures, the characteristics of tourism resources are highlighted and a comprehensive tourism image is formed.

3.3 Meaning construction of images using visual grammar theory

Based on visual grammar theory proposed by Kress and van Leeuwen, and Halliday’s three metafunctions, three meanings of image, namely, representational meaning, interactive meaning, and compositional meaning are proposed [10].

Representational meaning reveals the relationship between the meaning participants and the process. Kress and van Leeuwen have divided it into the reproduction of concepts and the reproduction of narratives. The conceptual image represents the type, structure, and meaning of an image, expressing a generalized, stable, and space-free component. The narrative meaning refers to the movement, the process of practice and change, and instant spatial arrangement. Different from narrative meaning, the conceptualization of vision highlights that the tourism images of Shaanxi contain representative tourist attractions, such as the Dayan Tower in Shaanxi, bronze chariots and horses in Xi’an, Taibai Mountain and Weishui in Baoji, and the seal in Qin Dynasty in Xianyang, which bring the participants closer for participation, thereby realizing the promotion of tourism image.

Kress & van Leeuwen have pointed out that the images can create a relationship between the viewer and the world in the image, meaning that the image expresses not only its orientation to the recipient, but also the social relationship between the two, which is its interactive meaning. It mainly consists of four elements: contact, social distance, attitude, and modality. By adopting the distant and close view and using the flat view, the four tourism images use color harmony, color saturation, and the color discrimination to reflect the natural and cultural landscape of Shaanxi, and the uniqueness of Shaanxi tourism. On the other hand, social distance adds a sense of mystery to these tourist resources so as to attract more participants. The tourism images are rich in connotation and harmonious in color, making it easy to attract participants. The bronze chariots and horses in the Xi’an tourism image are vivid, highlighting the significance of Xi’an in China’s tourism culture industry and its vision of nationwide promotion. The slogan of “To See China, Visit Baoji” can attract participants to look for the word “China” that appeared as a phrase for the first time in the national treasure He Zun unearthed in Baoji so as to have a deeper understanding of China’s history and culture, the charm of China’s cities, China’s ecological civilization, and China’s manufacturing. In addition, it is also an invitation of appreciating Zhou Qin rhyme, bronze utensils, and the Chinese civilization as a whole. “Visit Baoji” also conveyed a warm welcome to all guests and participants.

The compositional meanings of multimodal discourse proposed by Kress and van Leeuwen fall into three categories: information value, framing, and saliency.

The tourism images of Shaanxi use the arrangement of different elements in different positions, foreground and background, relative size, hue value, and sharpness to link cultural and tourist elements of different time and space so as to highlight the profound historical and cultural heritage of Shaanxi. The tourism image of Baoji puts He Zun at its core and adopts “China” and “Baoji” in the form of fonts. In terms of saliency, it has two levels of landscapes: mountains and water. The frame of red and yellow represents the rich culture and development of Baoji, the hometown of Yan Emperor and the bronze. The form of seal shows the status of Xianyang in the long history of Chinese culture as an ancient capital. The unique and charming image expresses the core cultural value of Xianyang City. The urban tourism images of Shaanxi explain the characteristics of regional tourism and the diversified history and culture of Shaanxi from the perspective of culture, meaning, and content.

The multimodal research method of social semiotics provides a new perspective for analyzing tourism discourse. Analyzing the ways and characteristics of tourism culture promotion in Shaanxi is conducive to the design and production of tourism images, the promotion of city image, and the spread of Chinese culture worldwide, which is of great theoretical and practical significance. In

addition, it also provides a new way of thinking for inheriting Chinese traditional culture.

4. Conclusion

The tourism image is an important form reflecting the characteristics of local culture. As an art form with both social and symbolic features, it is inextricably linked with language, history, philosophy, and thought. With the development of digital media, exploring the construction model and way of dissemination of Chinese cultural with Shaanxi as a representative is conducive not only to the promotion of Shaanxi tourism culture, but Chinese culture's going global. This study adopts methods of linguistics, communication, and explores multimodal features in cultural model construction by interdisciplinary comparative analysis. Through comprehensive analysis of cultural patterns such as text, sound, image, color, layout, digital image and other modal symbols in Shaanxi tourism discourse, this paper offers its contribution to the promotion of Chinese culture. Exploring the multimodal characteristics of tourism discourse and tourism image in the aspects of language, media and culture can help to promote Shaanxi tourism culture and enhance the image and cultural influence of the city.

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