

# Intercultural Communication of Liupao Tea in High-Context and Low-Context Cultures

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## Abstract

Tea culture is not only a representative of traditional Chinese culture, but also a valuable treasure of world culture. Liupao tea, originating from Liubao Town, Cangwu County, Wuzhou City in the Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, stands as an integral part of Chinese tea culture. This study investigates the intercultural communication strategies of Liupao tea in high-context and low-context cultures, employing a dual analysis of cultural theory and market practices. It analyzes the characteristics of high-context and low-context cultures and elaborates the unique properties of Liupao tea. This study aims to explore feasible and effective promotion methods for Liupao tea in intercultural communication, and puts forward corresponding suggestions for promotion of Liupao tea in both high-context and low-context cultures. This study aims to contribute to the intercultural promotion of Liupao tea in the global market, facilitating a deeper understanding of this remarkable tea in different cultural contexts. Through case studies on branding adaptation and digital storytelling, it proposes a framework for bridging cultural gaps and enhancing global consumer engagement. The findings aim to contribute to the sustainable internationalization of traditional Chinese tea products. Additionally, this study aims to provide insights for further research and practical efforts in promoting traditional Chinese tea culture and enhancing the international recognition of Liupao tea.

## Keywords

Intercultural Communication; High-Context Culture; Low-Context Culture; Liupao Tea.

## 1. Introduction

In era of globalization, intercultural communication has become an important force to promote mutual understanding, exchange and cooperation among different countries and nations. Among many cultural elements, tea culture, an ancient and charming culture, is becoming more and more important in intercultural communication with its unique flavor and profound connotation. Liupao tea, as one of the treasures of Chinese teas, is produced in Liubao Town, Cangwu County, Wuzhou City, Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region. Liupao tea has a long history and carries rich cultural connotations. In the history, Liupao tea is not only loved by people in China, but also spread to the world through trade and other ways, becoming an important bridge of Chinese and foreign cultural exchanges.

However, the effect of intercultural communication of Liupao tea may be different in different cultural contexts. The high-context and low-context cultures were proposed by American anthropologist Edward Hall. Edward Hall divided culture into two types: high-context culture and low-context culture. In high-context cultures, the transmission of information relies more on context, non-verbal cues and knowledge from cultural background, and people tend to express their intentions implicitly. On the contrary, in low-context cultures, the transmission of

information depends more on clear and direct linguistic expressions, and people are more inclined to convey their ideas and opinions clearly and explicitly.

Under the difference between high-context and low-context cultures, Liupao tea faces many challenges and opportunities in cross-cultural communication. On the one hand, cultural differences may lead to misunderstandings and communication barriers, affecting the promotion of Liupao tea in the international market; on the other hand, such differences also bring opportunities for Liupao tea to innovate and develop, prompting it to adapt to the needs of consumers from different cultural backgrounds.

Therefore, an in-depth study of intercultural communication of Liupao tea in high-context and low-context cultures is of great practical significance for promoting the internationalization of Liupao tea, facilitating cultural exchanges between China and foreign countries. This paper will focus on the intercultural communication of Liupao tea in high-context and low-context cultures. It will analyze its status quo, challenges and opportunities, and put forward corresponding development strategies, thus providing useful references for the successful communication of Liupao tea in intercultural communication.

## 2. Introduction of High-Context and Low-Context Culture

American anthropologist Edward T. Hall made significant contributions to the field of intercultural communication. In his book *Beyond Culture* published in 1976, he pointed out that culture has contextuality, namely high-context and low-context cultures. He believed that it was possible to assign a context level to any situation, ranging from low-context to high-context. The book *Beyond Culture* elaborates on the concepts of high-context and low-context cultures and explains how they affect people's communication styles and social behaviors.

Hall argued that in high-context cultures, most information is transmitted through non-verbal cues, environmental context, or individual internal understanding, while explicitly encoded and directly transmitted information constitutes only a small part[1]. In contrast, in low-context cultures, most information is contained in explicit codes, meaning people rely more on verbal and written language to convey information[1]. The difference between high-context and low-context cultures lies in the extent to which the participants in the communication process rely on context to convey meaning. Hall considered China, South Korea, and Japan to be high-context countries, while the United States, Germany, and Sweden were considered as low-context countries.

## 3. Introduction of Liupao Tea

Liupao tea embodies the symbiotic beauty of the food culture of the Lingnan region[2]. In order to have a better understanding of Liupao tea and boost its popularity, it is very important to explore the historical background and characteristics of it.

### 3.1. The Historical Background of Liupao Tea

Tea, as a "national drink" in China, has a long cultural history and is closely linked to the daily life of the Chinese people. From the ancient tea-horse road to the modern tea art performance, tea culture has always been an indispensable part of Chinese culture. Liupao Tea, as tea in Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, embodies the essence and diversity of Chinese tea culture. Liupao tea, produced in Liubao Town, Cangwu County, Wuzhou City, Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, is a kind of tea with a long history in China. Liupao tea is named after the geographical name. According to historical records, the origin of Liupao tea can be traced back to the Ming Dynasty which has a history of hundreds of years. Liupao tea sprang up in the Tang and Song Dynasties, and flourished in the Ming and Qing Dynasties. During the Jiaqing period

of the Qing Dynasty, Liupao tea was selected as one of the 24 famous teas in China because of its unique fragrance of betel nut.

Wuzhou City has a subtropical monsoon climate with abundant sunshine, warm temperature, abundant rainfall and long frost-free period. The unique natural conditions breed the unique Liupao tea. Over a century ago, Liupao tea was one of the major commodities exported along the old maritime Silk Road to Southeast Asian countries, including Malaysia. In 1847 and 1880 AD, extremely rich tin deposits were discovered in Malaysia. A large number of Chinese workers successively went to Malaysia. In the hot and humid Malaysia, the properties of Liupao tea to relieve heat and dampness provided the Chinese workers with a natural healthcare choice, helping them fight against the harsh working environment and climatic conditions[3]. Liupao tea was relatively inexpensive, making it an economical choice for Chinese workers with limited financial resources. Liupao tea can be stored for a long time and brewed many times, which made it very suitable for long-distance transportation. In Southeast Asia, due to the humid and hot climate, Liupao Tea was highly favored by local residents for its excellent dehumidifying effect and became an indispensable drink in their daily lives. The most glorious period in the history of Liupao tea was when it was transported from Guangxi to Guangdong, Hong Kong, Macao and Southeast Asia via the famous "Ancient Tea Boat Road", and thus it was historically known as "Overseas Chinese Tea" .

### **3.2. The Characteristics of Liupao Tea**

Liupao tea is famous for its four unique characteristics, "red, thick, old and mellow", which respectively represent the unique properties of Liupao tea in color, taste, storage time and flavor. "Red" refers to the reddish-brown color of the Liupao tea soup, which is bright and transparent, like a brilliant red gemstone. This color is usually related to the degree of fermentation and the aging time of the tea leaves. "Thick" refers to the tea soup is rich in taste, with a rich flavor. This rich taste is from the fermentation and aging process of complex chemical composition of the tea. The caffeine and other components in Liupao tea could help people stay alert and energetic. "Old" refers to the pure aroma of Liupao tea. Aged Liupao tea is usually preferred by tea drinkers as they have a more distinctive aroma and taste. The term "mellow" refers to the sweet and smooth taste of Liupao tea, with a rich flavor and a long-lasting aftertaste. After aging, Liupao tea has a mellow and gentle taste without sharp bitterness, providing a comfortable drinking experience. Liupao tea is suitable for long-term storage. Liupao tea is easy to preserve and suitable for long-term transportation and storage in the hot and humid environment, reducing the people's concerns about the deterioration of the drink. It does not spoil overnight and is hailed as "a drinkable antique".

## **4. Challenges of Intercultural Communication of Liupao Tea**

There are many challenges in the intercultural communication of Liupao tea. In-depth study of the preferences of consumers in different cultural backgrounds should be handled, so as to develop targeted marketing strategies. Strengthen product innovation and quality control, and actively deal with the problems caused by cultural differences, thus receiving international consumers' recognition for Liupao tea.

### **4.1. Low Brand Recognition**

The brand recognition of Liupao tea is relatively low in the international market, especially when compared to other Chinese teas such as Pu'er tea, which may be related to its promotion efforts, marketing strategy and international distribution network.

For a long time, Liupao tea is primarily sold to overseas Chinese communities in Southeast Asian countries. Although this model consolidates its position within specific regions, it limits its expansion into broader international markets, resulting in little recognition among non-

Chinese communities. Compared to some tea varieties with more mature commercialization, the invest on Liupao tea is less in international brand marketing, advertising, and participation in international tea exhibitions. It lacks a systematic overseas promotion strategy.

In recent years, with the revival and promotion of Chinese tea culture, the historical and cultural value of Liupao tea has been recognized. Local governments such as Wuzhou City in Guangxi are also actively promoting Liupao tea industry as an important cultural symbol and economic industry. At the beginning of the 21st century, driven by the prosperity of Pu'er tea and the promotion of local governments, Liupao tea began its "magnificent transformation" as a local business card. The popularity of Pu'er tea has to a certain extent improved consumers' awareness of dark tea, creating opportunity for the rising of Liupao tea. At the same time, the active promotion of the local government has also increased the popularity of Liupao tea and promoted the dissemination of Liupao tea. In 2014, the making technique of Liupao tea was included in the list of national intangible cultural heritage [4]. In 2022, traditional tea processing techniques and their associated social practices in China were added to UNESCO's Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity [5], and the processing technique of Liupao tea was one of the representative items, which has enhanced the international reputation of Liupao tea. Liupao tea has been successfully listed in the "Belt and Road Geological Indication Products for Promotion" issued by the China National Intellectual Property Administration, which signifies that Liupao tea's history, property and advantages will be promoted on the "Belt and Road" Cooperation Portal in both Chinese and English, enhancing the international reputation and competitiveness of Liupao tea.

Liupao tea keeps its popularity in 2024 and continues to rise in the future. On April 26, 2024, the launch ceremony for "Wuzhou Liu Pao Tea" entering the EU via the China-Europe Railway Express was held in Wuzhou City. The first batch of Wuzhou Liu Pao Tea boarded the China-Europe Railway Express in Shenzhen, Guangdong Province, heading towards the European market [6]. The novel combination of Liu Pao tea and French wine was well-received by many customers [7]. It not only receives wide attention in the domestic market, but also shows its unique charm and cultural value in the international market.

#### 4.2. Cultural and Preference Differences

Cultural differences in tea consumption practices pose significant challenges to Liupao tea's global penetration. There are differences in drinking habits of tea in different countries and regions, which affect the market performance of Liupao tea, so the promotion of Liupao tea needs to be adapted to the tea-drinking culture in different cultural contexts.

The way of tea drinking in different countries reflects their respective cultural characteristics. For instance, while East Asian consumers value ceremonial tea rituals, Western markets prioritize convenience, as evidenced by the dominance of tea bags in the US. Such divergence necessitates a dual strategy: preserving cultural authenticity in high-context regions while innovating user-friendly formats for low-context markets. Britain is one of the world's largest tea consumers, and the British are no less obsessed with tea drinking than the Chinese. The British have different names for tea-drinking behaviors at different times, such as early morning tea, breakfast tea tea break, afternoon tea, high tea and evening tea [8]. The British usually match different tea drinks with different teatime snacks. Russians primarily prefer black tea, often with lemon and honey. The United States is dominated by instant tea, such as "tea bag" and "ice tea" [9]. Recent trends indicate a growing preference for hot beverages among U.S. consumers. With the revival of tea culture in the United States and the influx of tea culture from all over the world into the United States, Americans are beginning to accept and try all kinds of teas and drinks, such as Chinese green tea and Pu'er tea, which means it is a good opportunity to promote Liupao tea. Maybe tea bag of Liupao tea can be invented to cater to American preference and provide consumers with great convenience. In France, people prefer

“flavored tea”. The so-called “flavored tea” is made by mixing tea leaves with mint, flowers, or dried fruit[10]. Flavored tea is a unique feature of French tea. The hot and humid climate of Thailand makes iced tea very popular in the region [11]. People in Thailand usually add ice cubes to hot tea to refresh themselves. In addition, they add mint or a variety of fresh juices into the iced tea.

Consumers in different regions have different preferences for the taste of tea, so innovations in Liupao tea drinking methods should be developed to meet different market demands. The consumption habits and preferences of the target market should be thoroughly studied to provide a basis for the market positioning of Liupao tea.

### 4.3. Language Difference

Language difference is an obstacle in intercultural communication, which may not only lead to inaccurate information transmission, but also affect the international promotion of Liupao tea. For example, when translating the name of tea, “红茶” (black tea) is mistranslated as “red tea”. Inconsistent translation of names can be an obstacle. For example, “六堡茶” is translated into “Liupao tea” “Liubao tea” and “Liupu tea”, which makes it difficult for consumers to have a clear perception of the product, thus reducing the brand recognition. Consumers may doubt the reliability of the product and think that the brand lacks standardization and rigor. The distrust will influence consumers’ purchasing decisions, affecting the brand’s market expansion and the establishment of customer loyalty. Therefore, it is vital to maintain the consistency of the translation. It helps to shape the brand image, improve market competitiveness and promote the internationalization of the brand. The most common and accepted translation of “六堡茶” is Liupao tea. There may be lack of equivalents when translating the terminologies of tea, such as the characteristics of Liupao tea, its unique processing techniques, taste and aroma. Liupao tea is not just a drink, it also carries the rich Chinese culture and history. Linguistic differences may cause a lack of these cultural contexts in translation, weakening the cultural appeal of Liupao tea.

## 5. Intercultural Communication of Liupao Tea in High-Context and Low-Context Culture

The promotion of Liupao tea often relies on rich non-verbal cues and deep cultural context in high-context cultures, thus building emotional resonance with consumers is of great help. However, when Liupao tea is promoted to low-context cultures, it may encounter challenges. Low-context cultures prefer direct and explicit communication. Therefore, how to adapt promotion strategies in different cultures has become a topic worthy of in-depth study.

### 5.1. Intercultural Communication of Liupao Tea in High-Context Culture

High-context culture emphasizes the critical role of nonverbal cues, situational cues, and shared knowledge of cultural background in the transmission of information. High-context culture usually attaches great importance to interpersonal relationships, traditions and cultural background. So intercultural communication of Liupao tea in high-context culture will focus on building interpersonal relationships and showing the Chinese cultural elements.

#### 5.1.1. Emphasizing Cultural Heritage

High-context cultures rely heavily on shared cultural knowledge and understanding. High-context communication is characterized by implicitness, indirectness, and subtlety.

In high-context cultural countries, participation in local cultural exhibitions, festivals and other activities can increase the popularity of Liupao tea. Malaysia Liupao Tea Association and the Chinese tea industry co-organized the International Liupao Tea Cultural Festival, which is the first Liupao Tea Cultural Festival held overseas. This has a pioneering significance in promoting

Liupao tea, enhancing the reputation of Liupao tea in a the international market. Therefore, tea culture festivals, tea tasting parties and other cultural activities can be held. Inviting consumers to enjoy colorful cultural journey can enhance their recognition for Liupao tea.

In high-context communication, most of the information is either in the physical context or internalized in the person, while very little is in the coded, explicit, transmitted part of the message. In high-context cultures, people often rely on their own cultural backgrounds and social experiences that have been passed down from generation to generation and shared by all people in the social development. People living in high-context cultures have been influenced by high-context cultures for a long time, so people from high-context countries can understand each other more easily in intercultural communication. Therefore, cultural symbols and traditional elements can be included in packaging design, which can convey the profound cultural value embedded in the product. In the process of product localization, cultural sensitivity and adaptability should be taken into account. The patterns, text and other elements on the packaging should be in line with local customs and habits. Any content that may cause misunderstanding or offense must be avoided. For example, Guangxi Wuzhou Tea Factory Co., Ltd. has shown an international foresight and keen market insight. It has a series of products exclusively customized for ASEAN customer groups. Its packaging is classic with the characteristics of "Overseas Chinese Tea". Many products of this company sell well in Malaysia, Singapore and other ASEAN countries.

### **5.1.2. Leveraging Trust-Based Networks**

High-context cultures emphasize interpersonal relationships, trust, and long-term cooperation. The traditional tea culture is no longer confined to itself. Tea culture need to comply with the needs of the times and the world market, and gradually integrated into more modern elements, such as modern tea beverage brands, tea culture-related cultural and creative products[12]. With the development of the economy and the improvement of living standards, consumers in the new era are no longer satisfied with the traditional drinks. Consumers are more obsessed with the personalized and diversified drinks, which gives rise to a series of novel tea drinks such as milk tea and fruit tea, greatly enriching the choices for consumers. CHAGEE (a Chinese tea drink brand) takes Chinese tea as the core element, combining traditional tea culture with modern tea drinking methods, and bringing Chinese tea to consumers with a new look[13]. The hot climate in Southeast Asia ensures a stable demand for the cold beverage market. CHAGEE takes this chance to establish stores in Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand and other Southeast Asian countries.

High-context countries place emphasis on background, tradition and interpersonal relationships. People tend to trust individuals with whom they have established relationships or highly respected authorities. Therefore, in high-context cultures, social connections and community influence are extremely important. In 2022, CHAGEE invited Malaysia's national badminton icon Lee Chong Wei to be their spokesperson [14], which effectively boosted brand affinity and market penetration in Malaysia.

Nowadays, beverage market is developing strongly. Therefore, Liupao tea can actively seek cooperation with various types of beverage stores, in order to get a broader space for development. Beyond partnering with local beverage shops, we can expand collaborations to include high-end restaurants, specialty cafes, wellness centers, and cultural institutions. Leveraging partners' established trust networks, we will seamlessly introduce Liupao tea to their existing customer base. Establishing partnerships with local beverage stores inherently involves building trust and strengthening relationships. At the same time, leveraging local social networks for word-of-mouth promotion and fostering cultural affinity can enable deeper market penetration. In today's competitive market, this mode of cooperation may help Liupao tea to win the favor of more consumers.

By learning from CHAGEE's successful promotion cases in Southeast Asian countries such as Malaysia, Singapore and Thailand, Liupao tea is expected to open up a broad space for development in the market of high-context countries, realizing the brand's internationalization goal, and allowing more consumers appreciate the unique charm of Liupao tea.

## **5.2. Intercultural Communication of Liupao Tea in Low-Context Culture**

In low-context culture, people pay more attention to the precise communication of information and clear expression. In such cultures, intercultural communication of Liupao tea needs to focus on the unique and practical value.

### **5.2.1. Enhance Visual Content Communication and Reducing Reliance on Text**

Chinese culture and ideas can be "restored" to low-context cultures through video blogs and photo blogs to enhance the proximity to and recognition of Chinese society by people in low-context countries through the transformation of narrative perspectives.

As a subject that is global and shared, food can break through both cultural and linguistic barriers. In the field of food-related video creation, the threshold of it is relatively low, which makes it possible for the majority of viewers to understand the information presented when watching such videos. China is a country in high-context culture, but Li Ziqi's short videos are widely recognized internationally. Li Ziqi takes advantage of this by reducing the proportion of conversations in her videos. Therefore, viewers around the world who are not familiar with the Sichuan dialect can break through the language barrier and easily get the gist of the videos. Through such an ingenious way, Li Ziqi's short videos successfully realized the natural transition from high-context to low-context culture [15], allowing viewers from different cultural backgrounds with different life experiences to understand the romantic and idyllic life in Li Ziqi's short videos as well as the spirit of hard work, simplicity conveyed in the videos, and achieving intercultural communication.

Li Ziqi's short videos avoids complex language communication and relies on actions. Therefore, visualized and immersive contents about Liupao tea can be created. For example, film the growing environment of Liupao tea, and present the texture of the tea leaves. Or record the tea master's concentration and unique tea-making process. So the natural growing environment and craftsmanship of Liupao tea are shown to the viewers, eliminating the language barrier. With the help of the Internet, Li Ziqi has broken through the geographical limitations and spread her works all over the world. So online resources should be utilized. Make full use of overseas mainstream social media platforms to upload eye-catching short videos. Showcase consumption scenarios through short videos and imagery to minimize reliance on text.

### **5.2.2. Using Scientific Data in Advertising**

Advertising language can reflect the context of culture. Considering the differences, between high-context communication and low-context communication, different advertisements will be demonstrated in each context[16].

As a type of dark tea, Liupao tea exhibits pharmacological effects such as anti-oxidation, antibacterial action and improving appetite and aiding digestion, especially its lipid-lowering function has been proved from the cell, animal and human body and other aspects[17]. Intestinal flora is a crucial part of the human micro-ecosystem, and its balanced state has an important impact on the human physiological functions such as nutrient absorption, energy supply and immune regulation. Dark tea can regulate intestinal immunity, improve human gastrointestinal function and promote fat reduction. Drinking dark tea can stimulate the formation of beneficial intestinal microflora, increase intestinal microbial diversity, helping to maintain the balance of intestinal microbial structure. So in advertising, these reliable data and functions of Liupao tea can be shown to attract potential consumers.

In advertising, provide consumers with clear, detailed and precise information about the product, such as efficacy and processing techniques. Use straightforward words and reduce vague and implied expressions to enhance the readability of the information. Cite research data or expert opinions in the promotion to enhance the trust and recognition of Liupao tea. It is necessary to emphasize the product's functions and instructions in the packaging to meet the consumers' demand for direct information. At the same time, attach the detailed guide with intuitive illustrations, such as the brewing temperature recommendations, the amount of tea and the brewing time. Even a novice who first comes into contact with Liupao tea can easily brew a cup of delicious tea according to the instructions. For example, promotion of Liupao tea can focus more on its health attributes. The health benefits of Liupao tea, such as antioxidants and improved digestion, are clearly noted in online advertising and social media. Data and scientific studies can be also utilized to support the promotion of Liupao tea to meet the market's quest for product transparency and scientific data.

## 6. Conclusion

There are many challenges in intercultural communication of Liupao tea. However, there are also opportunities. With the deepening of globalization, people's inclusiveness of different cultures are increasingly enhanced, and the unique charm and health value of Liupao tea has gradually been noticed and recognized by international consumers. According to the cultural characteristics of different contexts, it is very important to adopt corresponding communication strategies for the intercultural promotion of Liupao tea. Looking ahead, there is a broad prospect for the promotion of Liupao tea. With the deepening communication and integration of global tea culture, Liupao tea is expected to become a link between different cultures and promote mutual understanding and respect between Chinese and other cultures. The intercultural communication of Liupao tea in high-context and low-context cultures is a challenging process, which requires us to explore and innovate in practice. By fully understanding and respecting the characteristics of different cultures and adopting effective communication strategies, we can make Liupao tea, a treasure of traditional Chinese culture, go to the world.

Although this paper provides a discussion on the intercultural communication of Liupao tea in high-context and low-context cultures, it still has limitations. First, this paper mainly focuses on the theoretical analysis and case study, and lacks the support of large-scale empirical survey data. Secondly, due to the complexity and diversity of culture, it is difficult to cover all situations in all high-context and low-context cultural countries. In addition, intercultural communication is a dynamic process, with the changes of time and the market, strategies and effects of Liupao tea's intercultural communication may be different, and it is difficult to fully predict and track these dynamic changes. Future research can be carried out in the following directions. First, further empirical research should be carried out to analyze the key factors affecting Liupao tea intercultural communication, so as to provide data support for the formulation of more accurate and effective intercultural communication strategies. The second is to strengthen the research on emerging markets to explore personalized intercultural communication strategies suitable for different market segments. Third, tracking research on the dynamic process of Liupao tea intercultural communication, and optimizing intercultural communication strategies to adapt to the changing market. Fourth, expand the research field by combining with other related disciplines, and study the inner mechanism and influencing factors of intercultural communication from a multidisciplinary perspective, so as to provide more comprehensive and in-depth theoretical support for the internationalization of Liupao tea.

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