

# The Effectiveness of Chinese Cultural Transmission in Central and Eastern Europe — Taking Serbia as an Example

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**Abstract:** This study focuses on the actual impact and effect of Chinese cultural transmission in Central and Eastern Europe. Taking questionnaire analysis as the main research methods, combined with the theoretical perspectives of cultural identity and the external transmission of cultural "soft power" in cultural studies, this study focuses on analyzing the form, content and effect of the transmission of Chinese culture in Serbia as an example of the Central and Eastern European region. After analyzing, the study concludes that the transmission of Chinese culture in Serbia should pay more attention to the youth group and should also pay more attention to the digital technology in terms of the methods and forms to enhance the sense of experience and participation in cultural exchanges, and combine Chinese language with the local language and culture. This study provides effective references for the further enhancement of the transmission of Chinese culture in Serbia and the Central and Eastern Europe.

**Key Word:** Transmission of Chinese Culture in Serbia; Cultural Identity; Belt and Road Initiative

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## 1. Literature Review

### 1.1 Definition and measurement of Culture

Culture is a multidimensional, complex and widely discussed concept, and due to the vastness of its connotations, its definition has changed over time and across fields of study. Edward Tylor (1871) first defined it as any of the knowledge, beliefs, arts, laws, morals, customs, and other faculties and related experiences acquired by human beings as members of society. In the social sciences, scholars such as Clifford Geertz (1973). have proposed that culture is a function of "sign systems", i.e., systems of meaning shared by a group or society, through which human beings express, maintain, and transmit life experiences. In the 1980s, Geert Hofstede, through cross-cultural studies, defined culture as "collective mental programming" that distinguishes between members of different groups or categories.

The difficulty of cultural measurement lies in the abstract and subjective nature of culture. The influential theories of cultural assessment and measurement in quantitative cultural research that have been developed by scholars include Hofstede's theory of cultural dimensions, Fons Trompenaars and Charles Hampden-Turner's "seven cultural dimensions"(1997) et al. Scholars such as Geertz, on the other hand, have proposed a qualitative approach to measuring culture, advocating that culture be analyzed and understood through in-depth fieldwork to document and analyze in detail the lifestyles, customs, and rituals of specific cultural groups. This approach emphasizes the interaction between the researcher and the subject and the richness of cultural data obtained through long-term participation and observation.

### 1.2 Research on cultural communication

The study of cultural communication aims to examine how elements of culture spread and change globally through various means and mechanisms. Tylor (1871) pointed out that cultural diffusion is an important engine of cultural development. Several important theories of cultural communication include Edward Hall's (1973). theory of cross-cultural communication in high-context and low-context cultures, which identifies cultural differences in cultural communication and their effects on message transmission; Everett Roger's (1962, 1995) theory of diffusion of innovations, which states that the process of cultural diffusion can be viewed as a process of diffusion of innovations. The symbolic interaction theory of culture, proposed by Geertz (1973) argues that culture as a symbolic system enables cultural transmission through the exchange of signs and meanings.

With regard to the means and mechanisms of cultural transmission, the main divisions are linguistic transmission, media transmission and intercultural communication. Among them, language is an important tool for cultural transmission. With the development of science and technology, the role of media communication in cultural transmission is becoming more and more significant. Marshall McLuhan (1994) put forward the idea that "the medium is the message", emphasizing the important influence of media forms on cultural communication. Hofstede (2001) in his theory of cultural dimensions suggests that differences in cultural backgrounds affect people's communication styles and behavioral patterns.

In terms of its impact, cultural diffusion is not only a process of cultural exchange, but also a driving force for cultural change and integration. Cultural diffusion can promote diversity and innovation, but it can also lead to cultural conflict and homogenization.

### ***1.3 Research on Identity and Cultural Diffusion***

Identity refers to an individual's or group's understanding and orientation of themselves on a psychological and social level. Cultural transmission has a profound effect on identity formation and change. Erik Erikson (1968) believes that the development of identity is one of the central tasks of the individual in the process of socialization and is significantly influenced by social and cultural factors. Cross-cultural communication with cultural diffusion, while bridging the cognitive gap, may also lead to identity conflicts. Hofstede (2001) points out that there are significant differences in the values, beliefs and behaviors of people from different cultures, and these differences may lead to identity conflicts and cultural adaptation problems in cross-cultural exchanges. Anthony Giddens (1991) points out the two-way influence between cultural transmission and identity: on the one hand, cultural transmission influences the formation and change of identity through cultural products, language, customs, etc. On the other hand, identity also influences the way and content of cultural transmission. Identity is constantly reshaped in the process of globalization, which in turn affects the dynamics of cultural transmission.

The medium is the main vehicle of cultural transmission and has a significant impact on the formation of identity. Stuart Hall (1990) points out that the medium not only transmits information, but also influences the construction of identity through the processes of reproduction and symbolization. In the current era, the rise of the Internet and social media has brought about new modes of cultural communication and facilitated the formation of fluid identities. Manuel Castells (2011) points out that identity in the new media environment is characterized by networking, decentralization and mobility, which allows individuals and groups to freely switch and reconstruct their identities in different cultural spaces.

### ***1.4 Research on Chinese culture transmission to foreign countries***

The external transmission of Chinese culture refers to China's promotion of its cultural elements to the world through various means. With the enhancement of China's international status and the acceleration of globalization, the external transmission of Chinese culture has become an important field of cultural studies and international communication research. Its significance lies in enhancing China's cultural soft power and promoting international understanding and recognition of China.

#### ***1.4.1 Mainstreaming theories of cultural communication to the outside world***

The theory of soft power put forward by Joseph Nye is one of the mainstream theories for interpreting the external communication of culture. According to Nye, a country's soft power derives from the attractiveness of its culture, political values and foreign policy. This theory suggests that countries communicate through culture with a view to enhancing their international image and influence. Another mainstream theory is intercultural communication theory, which focuses on the exchange of information and interaction in different cultural contexts. Studies by scholars such as Stuart Hall emphasize the importance of cultural identity and symbolic meaning in intercultural communication. This theory helps to understand the reception and transmission of culture in different cultural environments.

#### ***1.4.2 Ways and means of spreading Chinese culture abroad***

The media is an important channel for cultural transmission. In recent years, Chinese cultural content has been disseminated to the world not only through the media of movies, television and the Internet, but also through evolving social media platforms, such as Weibo, WeChat and Tiktok etc.

Confucius Institutes are one of the important vehicles for the transmission of Chinese culture abroad. By setting up Confucius Institutes and Confucius Classrooms around the world, China promotes Chinese language teaching and Chinese culture. Research shows that Confucius Institutes have achieved remarkable results in promoting Chinese language learning and cultural exchange, but they also face challenges of cultural adaptation and localization. (Lahtinen, 2015).

International cultural exchange activities, such as the Beijing Olympics and the Shanghai World Expo are also important ways of displaying and spreading Chinese culture. In addition, international cultural festivals, cross-border exhibitions and international touring performances are also important ways of displaying Chinese culture.

### ***1.4.3 The Effectiveness of Chinese Cultural Communication to Foreign Countries***

With the continuous development of Chinese cultural transmission abroad, many scholars have conducted research on it. One group of scholars has explored the overseas transmission of Chinese culture from the perspective of foreign propaganda practice, and one representative study is Jia Shumei's *The Story of China Internationally Expressed* (《中国故事 国际表达》), which shows and analyzes 60 cases of foreign cultural communication, pointing out that although China's foreign cultural transmission activities are becoming more and more frequent, the actual effect and influence still face challenges. It is pointed out that in order to improve the communication effect, it is necessary to understand more deeply the psychology and needs of the audience in the target countries, and to formulate more precise communication strategies accordingly. Another group of scholars started from the Confucius Institutes (Wu & Shi, 2011). Through qualitative research on Chinese language learners in Confucius Institutes, they assessed the effectiveness of Confucius Institutes as a platform for the transmission of Chinese culture to foreign countries, pointing out that Confucius Institutes have achieved certain results in promoting Chinese language teaching and disseminating Chinese culture, but still need to be strengthened in terms of deep cultural exchanges and influence. There are also scholars who have explored from the perspective of cross-cultural communication, such as Xie Lunan and Yang Yong's (2017) research on countermeasures for Chinese culture going out in the context of Belt and Road Initiative. Xu Qing's (2021) research on the path and countermeasures for overseas cultural communication of Chinese Culture etc. These researches analyzed the overseas transmission of Chinese culture from the perspective of macro policy design and the international competitiveness of Chinese cultural products.

## **2. Raising questions, research methodology and sample profile**

### ***2.1 Raising of the research question***

Based on the above review of relevant studies, it can be found that the current research on the effect of Chinese cultural transmission abroad mainly focuses on the macro level of institutions and system design, and empirical research from the specific micro level is relatively scarce, and there are fewer relevant studies for Central and Eastern European countries. Therefore, this study asks the following questions based on existing research:

- Question 1: Under the current communication methods and approaches, how do audiences in target countries really feel about the Chinese cultural which they receive?
- Question 2: What is the actual demand for Chinese culture among audiences in target countries, and what are the cultural elements that could be the breakthrough points for Chinese culture transmission abroad?
- Question 3: Under the current development of science and technology, how could the effect of Chinese culture transmission in target countries be optimize?

### ***2.2 Selection of target countries***

China's Belt and Road Initiative has been proposed since 2013, with the aim of promoting closer economic partnerships and achieving common prosperity by facilitating cooperation in infrastructure construction, trade and investment, and cultural exchanges among countries along the route. Within the scope of this study, Serbia, an important partner country along the Belt and Road Initiative that has not yet been covered in such research area, was selected.

Serbia is an important partner of China in the Balkans. Cooperation between China and Serbia is mainly in the field of infrastructure construction, such as the Belgrade-Budapest railway project, one of the landmark projects under the Belt and Road Initiative, and the cooperation trend continues to be favourable, with the two countries' relations becoming increasingly close.

This study takes Serbia as the target country, in order to analyze the effect and experience of Chinese culture transmission on the ground, and to help China and the target countries to further broaden and deepen the level of cooperation, as well as to promote the construction of the Belt and Road Initiative.

### ***2.3 Methodology***

#### ***2.3.1 Quantitative and qualitative analyses based on questionnaires***

Based on the model of the previous study, this study further expands the scope of the research. While the research scope of the previous study is usually limited to language learners in Confucius Institutes or Chinese language institutions in the target countries, this study expands the scope of interviewee from Chinese language learners to all groups over 18 years old in the

target countries, i.e., weakening the influence of the respondents' preference for Chinese culture, breaking through the limitation of the single element of language learning, and investigating the panoramic feedback on the effect of the transmission of Chinese culture in the target countries.

Synthesizing the aforementioned established theories of cultural communication, this study designed a set of 26 questions based on the pre-existing impression of Chinese culture among audiences in the target countries, the communication media, the audience's knowledge of Chinese culture, identification, preferred cultural contents and products, contexts, linguistic channels, as well as the effect of Chinese culture communication, the challenges faced by Chinese culture communication, and suggestions for Chinese culture communication, etc. The open-ended anonymous Internet questionnaire covers the whole process of cultural communication.

In the distribution section, the questionnaire was delivered to the target country audience through language learners, private social relations, Confucius Institutes, teachers and students of partner institutions, etc. The surveyed population was not limited to Chinese language learners, but also included general audiences who have been exposed to Chinese culture or are interested in Chinese culture.

### ***2.3.2 Literature analysis***

This study will also adopt the literature analysis method and will combine the data of relevant research findings conducted by other institutions in recent years for comprehensive analysis. Through careful examination and comparison of these findings, this study will draw on existing research findings to supplement and improve the analytical interpretation of the findings in order to enhance the comprehensiveness of the conclusions. At the same time, it will help to identify potential deficiencies and research gaps in the existing studies and provide directions for more in-depth exploration in the future.

## ***2.4 Sample size and structure***

### ***2.4.1 Population of the target country and sample size for this study***

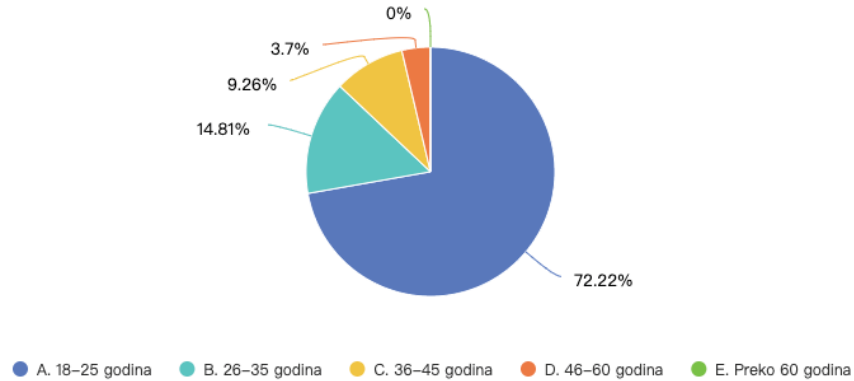
According to the 2020 census data released by the Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia in 2021, the total population of the country is about 6.9 million. By gender, 51.3 % of the population is female and 48.7% male. The process of ageing is continuing, with the percentage of young people in the country's total population continuing to decline and the percentage of elderly people high and increasing, with 21.1% of the population aged 65 and over and 14.3% of the population under 15 years of age in 2020.

By 30 June 2024, 54 valid questionnaires were obtained for this survey.

### 2.4.2 Sample structure

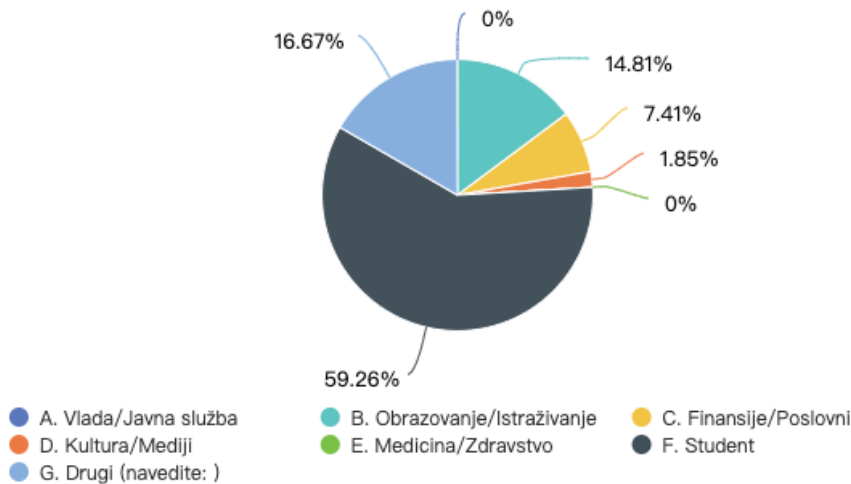
The nationalities of the valid fillers of this research were all Serbian, and the distribution of age groups was as follows: 39 persons aged 18-25, or 72.22%; 8 persons aged 26-35, or 14.81%; 5 persons aged 36-45, or 9.26%; 2 persons in the 46-60 age group, or 3.70 % and there were no fillers in the age group of 60 years or older. The participants of this research were mainly concentrated in the age group of 18-25 years old, followed by people in the age group of 26-45 years old.

Table 1. Age Structure of interviewees



In the distribution of educational and occupational structures, 27 participants, or 50 %, had a secondary school education or less; 18 participants, or 33.33%, had a bachelor's degree; 6 participants, or 11.11%, had a master's degree; 2 participants, or 3.7%, had a doctoral degree or higher; and 1 participant had a tertiary college degree. The data show that the proportion of participants who are in or have just completed basic education and those with a bachelor's degree or higher is about half each.

Table 2. Distribution of Interviewees by Educational and Occupational Structure



In terms of occupational distribution, 32 participants (59.26%) are students, 8 participants (14.81%) are employed in the education and research sector, 4 participants (7.41%) are employed in the financial and commercial sector, 1 participant is employed in the culture and media sector, and 9 participants (16.67%) are employed in other occupations. In other words, the participants are mainly students, education and research, and culture and media (75.92 %), and about 24% of the participants

in other professions are engaged in the following professions: interpreters, philosophers, administrators, chemical engineers and construction.

### 3. Statistical analysis of questionnaire data

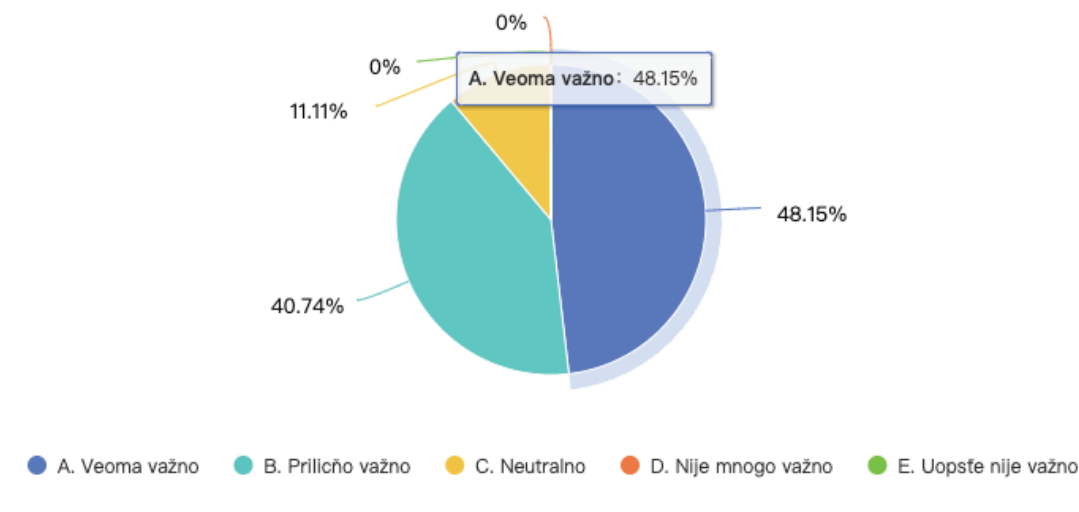
#### 3.1 Overall impression, perception and recognition

In terms of the overall understanding of Chinese culture, about 10% of the respondents chose "very well understood" and "fairly well understood", while two-thirds (66.67%) of the respondents thought that the overall understanding of Chinese culture among the people in their own countries was "not very well", and another 22.22% thought that it was "average". Two thirds of the respondents (66.67%) think that the general understanding of Chinese culture among the people in their country is "not very well", while 22.22% think that the level of understanding is "average". More than 70% of the respondents believe that the core connotations of the Chinese national spirit are "hard work" (77.78%) and "collectivism" (74.07%), while 50% chose "patriotism" (51.85%). Another nearly 20% of respondents chose "hard work and thrift". The rest of the respondents chose "respect for the elderly", "respect for authority", "modesty", "male values", and "pioneering and pragmatic spirit".

In terms of overall recognition, more than 90% of the respondents indicated that they were either "very interested" (72.22%) or "quite interested" (25.93%) in Chinese culture. Among them, the proportion of those who chose "very interested" to the total number of people in their age groups is in the following order: 100% for those aged 46-60, 77% for those aged 18-25, 60% for those aged 36-45, and 50% for those aged 26-35.

In terms of their views on the overall status of Chinese culture, more than 80% of the respondents believe that the status of Chinese culture in the world's culture is "very important" (48.15%) or "relatively important" (40.74%), and about 10% believe that it is "Generally important", and the number of choices for other options is 0. Among them, the proportion of those who chose "very important" to the total number of people in their age groups is in the following order: 100% of the 46-60 year olds, 60% of the 36-45 year olds, 50% of the 26-35 year olds, and 44% of the 18-25 year olds.

Table 3. Percentage of options for respondents' views on the position of Chinese culture in world culture



#### 3.2 Route of transmission

In terms of transmission channels, the respondents were first exposed to information related to Chinese culture mainly through the news media, cultural courses, books and newspapers, and other channels (social media and other applications). Among them, the largest number of respondents (27.78%) chose "other ways (new media and social software, the Internet, TV series and movies, Wikipedia, and work)", followed by "news media" and "Books and newspapers" (22.2% each). "Cultural courses" was chosen by 18.52%, while "travelling activities" had the lowest percentage (9.26%).

#### 3.3 Content and cultural product preferences

In terms of content preferences for Chinese culture, "history and culture" is the most popular area of interest (44.44%), followed by "folklore" (22.22%), "philosophy" (12.96%), "Chinese literature and art" (11.11%). Other areas of interest

provided by respondents are: "traditional customs", "values", "business culture", and "all of the above". When further broken down into specific periods of Chinese history, the "Modern and Contemporary" period received the most attention (50%), followed by the "Song, Yuan, Ming and Qing Dynasties" (27.78%), "Ancient China to Qin-Han period" (14.81%) and "Wei, Jin, Northern and Southern Dynasties, Sui and Tang periods" (7.41%).

As to the contents of traditional culture, nearly 60% of the respondents (59.26%) believe that "calligraphy and painting" can best reflect the characteristics of Chinese culture, followed by "poems and songs" (27.78%) and "opera and music" (12.96%). Among contemporary cultural contents, "films and TV series" are the most popular (62.96%), followed by "modern literature" (27.78%). Only fewer respondents chose "fashion design" (5.56 %) and "popular music" (1.85 %).

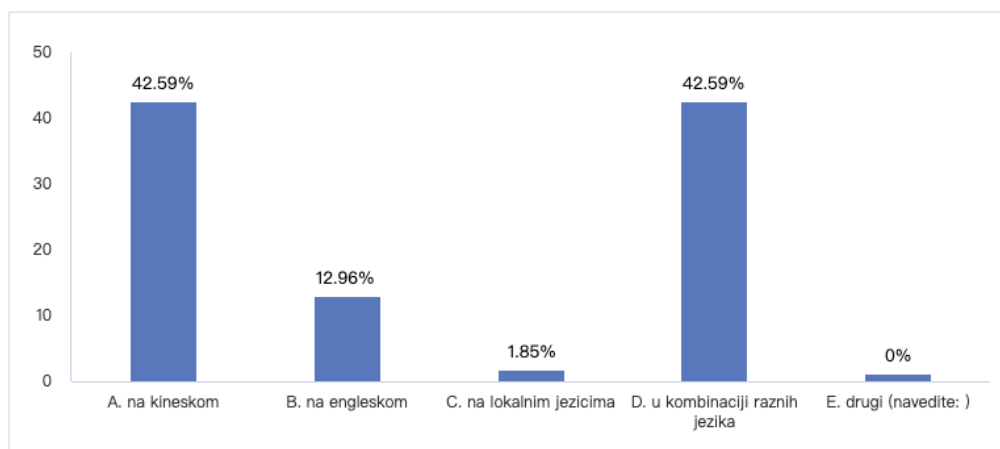
In terms of other specific cultural elements, the survey chose traditional skills, festivals and cities. Statistics show that "Peking Opera" is the most popular traditional skill (33.33%), followed by "Calligraphy" (25.93%), "Taiji" (20.37%) and "Tea Craft" (16.67%). While "Traditional Weaving" and "martial art" were the traditional skills that respondents gave feedback on outside of the questionnaire. Among traditional festivals, "Chinese New Year" was the most popular (42.59%), followed by "Lantern Festival" (25.93%) and "Mid-Autumn Festival" (16.67%). The popularity of "Dragon Boat Festival" was 14.8%, while no one chose any of the other options. In terms of city impressions, "Shanghai" is the most popular Chinese city (37.04%), followed by "Beijing" (22.22%). Xi'an, the ancient capital, and Guangzhou, the city famous for foreign trade, are also attractive (14.8 % each).

### 3.4 Communication context (form) preferences

In terms of preferred forms of communication, "film and television productions" (70.37%) and "live experiences" (68.52%) were the most popular, followed by "reading text" (53.7%) and "reading books" (53.7%). Comparatively speaking, "expert explanation" was the least preferred, only 14.81%.

### 3.5 Language preferences

Table 4. Percentage of language options in which respondents want Chinese culture to be disseminated to the outside world



Overall, the majority of respondents would like to learn about Chinese culture through "Chinese" (42.59%) or "Chinese with other languages" (42.59%). In contrast, significantly fewer people chose to learn about Chinese culture in "English only" (12.96%) and "local language only" (1.85%).

### 3.6 Overall communications evaluation

In terms of the overall evaluation of Chinese cultural communication, the largest number of respondents (77.78%) think that Chinese culture has been communicated to the outside world "quite well" (31.48 %) and "generally well" (46.3 %). Among them, the 18-25 and 46-60 age groups are more specific: both respondents aged 46-60 had previously chosen to be "very interested" in Chinese culture. However, in this question, one respondent thinks that the transmission effect of Chinese culture is "very good" and the other thinks that it is "very poor". Among the 18-25 year olds, 2.56% think that the transmission effect of Chinese culture is "very good", 25.6% think that it is "good", and 51.3% think it is "average", 15.4% think it is "poor", and 5.1% think it is "very poor". In other words, 71.8% of the respondents in this age group are not satisfied with the transmission effect of Chinese culture.

In terms of evaluation of communication content, 55.56% of respondents think that the Chinese culture they encountered could resonate with them "quite well"; 18.52% chose "completely"; 20.37% chose "generally"; 63% of the option "generally" was chosen by 18-25 year olds and 27% by 26-35 year olds. 5.56% of respondents chose "relatively less resonates" and all of whom fell into the group of 18-25 year olds. None of the respondents chose "not at all".

In terms of attitudes during communication, most respondents believe that Chinese culture is "highly" respected (35.19%) or "objectively treated" (31.48%) in the process of overseas communication. However, 25.93% of the interviewees think that Chinese culture is "not sufficiently respected", and only a few interviewees think that Chinese culture is "completely respected" (3 people) or "not respected at all" (1 person) in overseas communication. The proportion of respondents choosing "highly respected" and "objectively treated" is 61.5 % for those aged 18-25, 75 % for those aged 26-35, and 100 % for those aged 36-45.

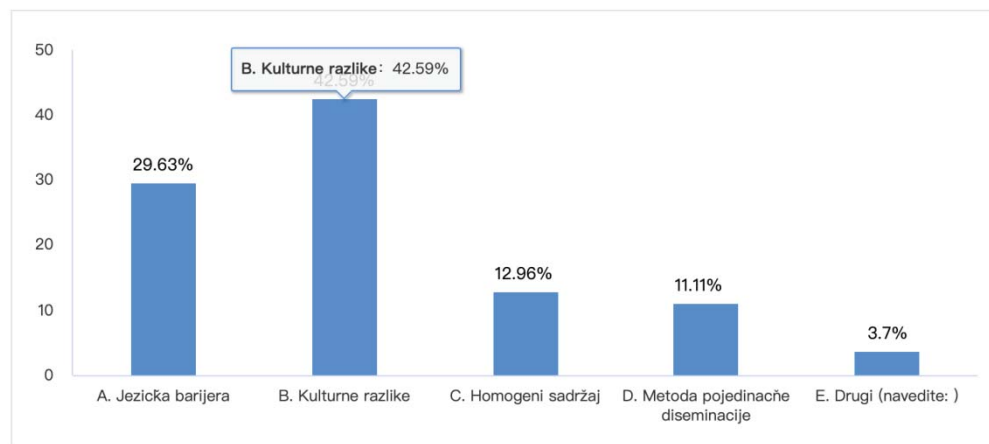
In terms of influence of communication, the majority of respondents think that the influence of Chinese culture in the world is "relatively strong" (46.3%) or "average" (37.04%), only a few think that the international influence of Chinese culture is "very strong" (11.11%) or "relatively weak" (5.56%), and no one thinks its influence is "very weak". Among the six people who chose "very strong", four were 18-25 years old, one was 26-35 years old, and one was 46-60 years old; the three people who chose the "very weak" were all 18-25 years old.

### 3.7 Main obstacles and recommendations for transmission

#### 3.7.1 Obstacles to transmission

In terms of barriers to communication, on one hand, when it comes to understanding Chinese culture, audiences in the target countries think that the biggest obstacles are the lack of channels for obtaining information (37.04%) and the language barrier (35.19%), followed by cultural differences (20.37%). 5.56 % of people think that it is more difficult to understand the content of Chinese culture. 46% of 18-25 year olds chose "lack of channels", a significantly higher proportion than other age groups, accounting for 90% of the total number of people who chose this option; 30% of 18-25 year olds, 37.5 % of 26-35 year olds and 60 % of 36-45 year olds chose "language barrier".

Table 5. Percentage of options where respondents think Chinese culture is currently facing the biggest problem in spreading overseas



On the other hand, respondents think that the biggest problem faced by Chinese culture in foreign communication is "cultural differences" (42.59%), followed by "language barriers" (29.63%), "homogenization of content" (12.96%) and "not enough means communication" (11.11%). Other issues listed by respondents outside of the options were "negative impression of China due to political opinions and influence of propaganda received before" and "political opinions and inherent bias".

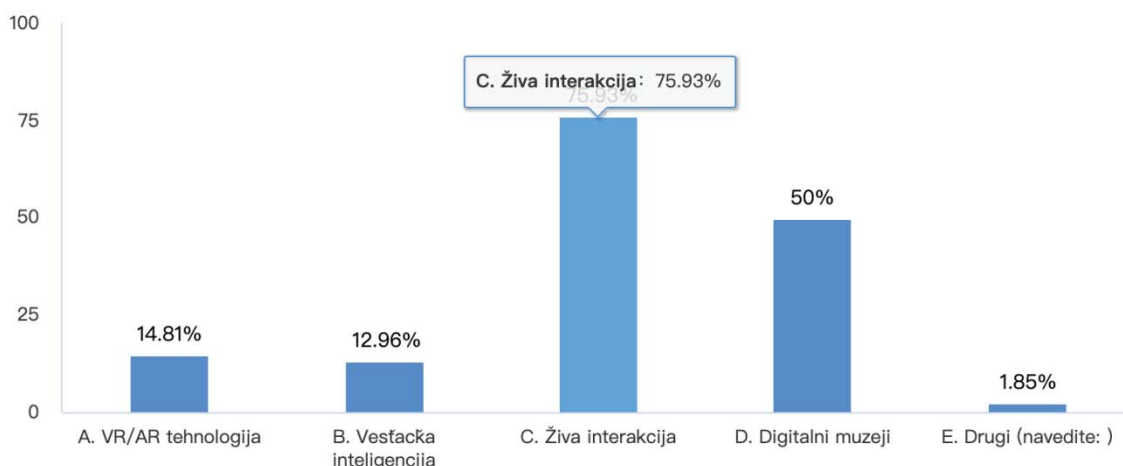
#### 3.7.2 Transmission recommendations

In terms of communication content, 72.22% of the respondents think that the "entertainment content should be enhanced"; 57.41% suggest "enhancing interaction with audiences"; 44.44% suggest "attaching importance to cultural differences"; 20.37% suggest "enriching the diversity of products"; and outside of the options, "enriching the content of popular culture" was given by respondents.

In terms of means of transmission, the most popular choices were "cultural institutions"(66.67%) and "tourism projects" (61.11%), followed by "mainstream media" (55.56%) and "cultural and creative products" (53.7%). Outside of these options, respondents suggested "social media" and "strengthening links with local audiences".



Table 6. Percentage of respondents identifying options for ways to combine Chinese culture with modern technology



In terms of communication contexts (forms), 90.74% of the respondents chose "cultural exchange activities" to enhance their understanding of Chinese culture, followed by "cooperative education programmes" (70.37%), "sports events" (37.04%) and "economic and trade exchanges" (27.78%). Outside of these options, respondents suggested "cultural research" and "interpersonal communication".

With the development of digital technology, 75.93% of respondents considered "live broadcasting" to be the most useful technology for spreading Chinese culture, followed by "digital museums" (50%). Virtual Reality/Augmented Reality" and "Artificial Intelligence" were chosen by 14.81% and 12.96% respectively. One respondent, aged 18-25, specifically stated that he/she was "not interested in modern technological means".

In terms of the audience, most respondents believe that promoting Chinese culture overseas should focus on "university students" (85.19%) and "primary and secondary school students" (74.07%), followed by "cultural practitioners" (35.19%) and "tourists" (25.93%). Outside of the options, respondents suggested the following recommendation: "There should be appropriate communication methods for each age group".

In addition, respondents dedicated specific suggestions such as: "It is very important to present Chinese culture as a culture that the audience can identify with. China and Serbia are very similar cultures despite their distance. Through idioms and phrases we can see similarities in worldviews, through ways of eating we can see differences, and through different ways of functioning of the education system we can learn from each other .....". "More attention should be paid to the communicability of culture. For example, South Korea and Japan are expanding their cultural influence through products such as popular music and anime. China should also think about it so that Chinese cultural products will become popular and people will become interested in Chinese culture." and "China should be more involved in (cultural) interactions with other countries."

#### 4. Synthetic analysis and findings

Among other polls on how Serbian people perceives China, the Institute for European Affairs (Institut za evropske poslove) and Ninamedia and the periodical *New Serbian Political Thought* (Нова српска политичка мисао) conducted polls on the local population's perception of China in Serbia in 2022 and 2023, respectively. Combining the data published in these surveys allows for a better synthesis and interpretation of the results of this research.

##### 4.1 Pre-existing impressions and identities

Among other opinion polls on how the Serbian public perceives China, the survey conducted by the Institute for European Affairs in cooperation with the Ninamedia in 2022 showed that, in terms of overall perceptions, from the scale of 1 to 5, 43% of respondents rated Sino-Serbian relations as "5" or perfect; 31 % rated it as 4 and 17 % as 3; 80% respondents considered "China is a friend of Serbia"; 72 % believe that the relationship between Serbia and China will be better in the future. According to the results of this survey, the larger group of respondents who gave higher scores were male respondents who were above 60 years of age and below 30 years of age.

In the opinion poll conducted by the periodical *New Serbian Political Thought* in October 2023, statistics showed that in the question "Whether to support the establishment of the 'strongest relations' with Russia, China and the BRICS countries", 41.2% of the respondents chose "support" and 26.9 % of respondents chose "yes" more than 'no' ", and about 18.4% of respondents had a more negative attitude towards it.

The data of this research, combined with the data of the above researches, may reflect that the majority of the Serbian population, although do not consider themselves to be very familiar with Chinese culture, have a high level of favourability and recognition of Chinese culture, and a positive attitude towards the development of cooperation with China, and believe that the Chinese culture has a high level of importance in the world's culture.

There also shows a positive correlation between the age of the target population and their favourability and regard of Chinese culture. Consistent with the data from the above studies, in this study, the 46+ age group has the highest positive and important attitudes towards Chinese culture, followed by the 36-45 age group and the 26-35 age group, which show a stable and high level of positive and important attitudes towards Chinese culture. On the other hand, the 18-25-year-old group's level of interest in Chinese culture and perception of the status of Chinese culture varied considerably, reflecting that the youth groups in the country have a high desire to explore Chinese culture, but have different views on the importance of Chinese culture.

#### **4.2 Transmission route**

In terms of channels of communication, one third of the respondents (33%) in the study conducted by the Institute of European Affairs and Ninamedia in 2022 said that they learnt about Serbia-China relations through "television", followed by "portals" (27%), "social networks" (16.5%) and "print media" (10%), while 7.8 % said they learn about relations between Serbia and China through "family, friends and colleagues" and 3 % from "radio". Compared to data from the year prior to the study, the percentage of respondents who get China-related information through television has decreased, while the percentage of audiences who get their information through web portals and social media has risen.

This is also consistent with the trend reflected in this research, indicating that with the development of new media and social software, people in the target countries are gradually shifting their access to information from mainstream media and books to Internet platforms and social media. At the same time, it should be noted that traditional news media, books and newspapers are still important communication channels in the target countries.

In this study, although the proportion of respondents who chose "cultural courses" as a way to get in touch with Chinese culture for the first time was relatively low, the proportion of respondents who chose "cultural education institutions" was the highest among the preferred ways to get to learn Chinese culture, which reflects that this approach has advantages in terms of systematicness and professionalism. Tourism activities were less frequently chosen as a means of communication, probably due to higher costs of money and time.

#### **4.3 Transmission of content**

In terms of content, when analyzing the two sets of data on preferences for traditional and contemporary cultural content, and in terms of time period, audiences in the target countries were most interested in contemporary cultural content, with Beijing Opera and Chinese New Year being the most popular traditional performing arts and festivals, and Shanghai being the most popular Chinese city, followed by Beijing.

It is interesting to note that "classical music", which is similar in nature to "opera", was not selected, and that movies and TV series were the most popular choices for modern cultural content, compared to literature and pop music. This comparison may reflect a general preference for Chinese cultural content that is presented in a visual way.

#### **4.4 Transmission context (form)**

In this study, film and video and on-site experience are the most popular forms of communication, followed by reading, with expert lectures accounting for the lowest proportion. This set of data may reflect that audiences in the target countries have a higher degree of subjectivity and independence in acquiring knowledge, and they are more inclined to acquire information independently, personally and proactively than in the passive traditional classroom format, so as to form their own independent cultural experience and cognition.

In terms of specific options, cultural exchange activities and cooperative education projects are the most recognized methods, while live interaction and digital museums are considered to be the most helpful technological avenues, all of which reflect the preference and importance of authentic human interaction among audiences in the country. At the same time, however, it is important to note that there are respondents are not interested in modern technological means.

#### **4.5 Languages of communication**

In terms of language preference, the findings differ from the traditional emphasis on full localization, i.e., the use of the target country's language exclusively to introduce Chinese culture. Most respondents of this research preferred to learn about Chinese culture through "Chinese" or "Chinese combined with local languages" rather than "English" or "local languages only". This result shows the demand and recognition of the importance and authenticity of Chinese language in cultural communication. Language is an important tool for cultural communication. Language is not only a carrier of information, but

also a reflection of cultural connotations and values. This choice may at the same time reflect the respondents' psychological belief that understanding Chinese culture requires direct contact with Chinese language, so that they can understand the Chinese culture more deeply and accurately.

#### **4.6 Target of transmission**

From the data of this research, respondents believe that the transmission of Chinese cultural should give more importance to primary and secondary school students and university students, while multi-level transmission methods should be developed for different occupations and age groups.

#### **4.7 Overall communications evaluation**

In terms of the overall evaluation of Chinese cultural communication, a combination of data from this study and other related studies shows that most audiences in the target country have a neutral or high evaluation of the effectiveness of Chinese cultural communication, cultural resonance and attitudes, but the proportion of those who are dissatisfied with this is not small, especially in the 18-25 age group, which shows a large difference in attitudes in this age group. Similarly, there are also big differences in the views of youth audiences in the target country on the influence of Chinese cultural communication overseas.

This suggests that Chinese cultural content can be understood and agreed upon by the audience to a large extent in the target country, but among the youth population, the extreme negative propaganda content may have influenced some people's stereotypical impression of China, leading to greater variability in the youth population's evaluations of Chinese culture. The fact that a larger proportion of young age group chose the option of complete affirmation or complete denial may reflect a greater degree of intensity of the expression of opinions in this group.

### **5. Conclusion and outlook**

#### **5.1 Recommendations for the transmission of Chinese culture in Serbia**

Based on the analyses of the data from this research and the results of other related studies, this study makes the following suggestions for the transmission of Chinese culture in Serbia:

**In terms of overall impression**, more attention should be paid to the youth group, so that they can better experience and understand the real Chinese culture through various forms such as social media and cross-border exchange programmes. Secondly, cross-border cooperation with famous brands and IPs of the target countries could be carried out, and Chinese cultural elements can be promoted through films, animation, music and other forms. For example, through cooperation with films or short films in a foreign country, audiences in that country can build up a more in-depth and vivid perceptual understanding of Chinese culture.

**From the viewpoint of communication channels**, with the advent of the digital era, the preference of audiences for real-time interaction grows, and the role of social media and the Internet in cultural transmission and identity forming becomes more and more important. Attention should be paid to the application of modern technological means in cultural transmission. On the one hand, the development of cultural websites and applications in local languages should be developed to provide richer cultural content. On the other hand, by encouraging the operation of multi-language accounts on mainstream social media platforms, it can enrich the display of short videos, live interactions, graphics and other contents.

At the same time, there can also be more cooperation with well-known news media and social media opinion leaders to launch special reports and columns on Chinese culture, so as to increase the depth and breadth of the reports; and publish high-quality books in local language, especially works introducing the culture and daily life of modern and contemporary China. In addition, MOOC and other Internet platforms and online education resources can be used to provide free Chinese culture courses and attract the participation of scholars and culture enthusiasts from around the world.

**In terms of communication context (form)**, there could be more cooperation with educational and cultural institutions to provide more exchange study programs, enriching the cooperation of bilateral cultural research projects. It is also suggested to design more tourism routes and projects with strong cultural characteristics, and promote them through platforms such as well-known travel agencies and tourism portals in the target countries to attract tourists from the target countries to come and experience Chinese culture. What's more, to develop virtual tourism projects by using VR/AR technologies and promote them through social media, so that foreigners who are unable to visit China in person can also experience Chinese culture; international cultural exhibitions, art exhibitions, performances, cultural interactive experience workshops, exchanges and other activities can also be organized on a regular basis, and scholars and enthusiasts could be invited to participate in these activities, so as to enhance the experience of cultural exchanges and the sense of participation.

**In terms of content**, as cultural content combined with visual presentation is more favored by audiences in the target country, it is recommended to increase the display of Chinese culture in social media through videos, online short films, film and TV dramas, and to increase the proportion of content that introduces China's modern and contemporary history and daily life. To display the culture and life in Shanghai and Beijing, which are of greater interest to audiences in the target countries, as a starting point, so as to draw closer to the audience. This might attract more people to explore and understand Chinese culture.

While highlighting the uniqueness of Chinese culture, care should be taken to ensure that the content is not too obscure and esoteric, and that it is organically linked to the culture and daily life of the target country, so as to present Chinese culture in a way that is easier for the audience to understand and accept. In addition, cultural experience activities related to traditional Chinese festivals and traditional skills, such as Chinese New Year celebrations and Peking Opera performances, can be carried out.

Chinese language learning can also be added to the content of communication, enriching language learning and language support resources, helping audiences learn and use Chinese more easily, and increasing their sense of acquisition.

**In terms of the language during cultural communication**, due to the respondents' demand and recognition of the importance and authenticity of Chinese, Chinese should not be totally localized or borrow English as a communication medium in the communication of Chinese cultural content, but should be organically combined with local language and culture, so that it can effectively convey the content while taking into account the highlighting of the Chinese language's individuality and characteristics, and enhance the audience's sense of experience. This also helps to enhance the accuracy of the audience's understanding of Chinese cultural content. Multilingual content should also be encouraged, such as original Chinese soundtracks with subtitles in local languages and other auxiliary forms.

**In terms of target audience groups**, it should be pointed out once again that more attention should be paid to the construction of cultural content for young people, and the enrichment of cultural products for young people. In view of the inherent differences in the needs and preferences of this group, in terms of content construction, on the one hand, emphasis should be placed on providing richer entertainment content, including games, animation, pop art, short videos and so on; on the other hand, it is necessary to provide in-depth cultural experiences and professional explanations, for example, by organizing activities such as cultural lectures, performances, workshops and cultural exchanges, so as to enhance the depth of cultural transmission.

Overall, the overseas transmission of Chinese culture needs to strengthen brand awareness, and iconic Chinese cultural brands should be built, and super symbols of Chinese culture should be created. At the same time, the influence of international platforms should be utilized to actively participate in and organize international cultural events, such as international film festivals, music festivals, animation festivals, book fairs, etc., so as to attract audiences of target countries by enhancing Chinese culture's international recognition and influence.

**In terms of overall planning**, it is recommended that attention be paid to the systematic and sustainable nature of cultural communication, that long-term cultural communication strategies and plans be formulated, and that special institutions for cultural communication be set up for overall planning and implementation. Regular research should be conducted to assess the effectiveness of cultural communication, so as to make timely adjustments to communication strategies and contents.

### ***5.2 Limitations and outlook of the research***

Inevitably, there are limitations in this research. Firstly, the sample size of the research is relatively limited, which makes it impossible to analyze more accurately the differences in the attitudes and perceptions of audiences of different ages, occupational backgrounds, cultural backgrounds and regions of the target countries towards Chinese culture. Second, the questionnaire was designed with a limited number of options, which may not fully cover the real thoughts of all respondents. In addition, the complexity of cultural communication channels makes the questionnaire options may not be able to fully present the real situation, and the respondents' perception and attitude towards Chinese culture are subjective, which may be limited by their personal experience, educational background and media influence, resulting in a certain degree of deviation between the data results and the real situation.

Looking ahead, based on this research, the sample size and diversity will be further expanded, the questionnaire design will be improved, and the coverage of open-ended questions and options will be increased to ensure that diversified perspectives and suggestions can be captured. Combining quantitative and qualitative research, we will further increase the number of research avenues, aiming to obtain richer data through interviews, focus groups and other methods.

In future studies, more attention will also be paid to research targeting digital communication channels, such as social media, virtual reality and digital museums, to analyze their role and impact in cultural communication.

The current study involves only one country, but this study will be used as a basis for a multi-country cross-cultural comparative study to explore cross-cultural differences and commonalities in the transmission of Chinese culture, in order to enhance the knowledge of Chinese culture's effect of transmission and the rules of influence building in the international arena.

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