Chinese Milk Tea Brands and the International Communication of Chinese Tea Culture: An Analytical Study

N. G. D. Madhusanka

Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures, Tsinghua University, China

dilanmadhusanka2018@gmail.com

Abstract

Food serves as an important medium for the transmission of local culture and a key pathway for experiencing and understanding it. In the new era, tea has gradually become a representative cultural "calling card" of China. Against the backdrop of globalization, this study examines the role of Chinese milk tea brands in the international communication of Chinese tea culture. While existing studies have mainly focused on traditional tea culture, relatively limited attention has been paid to the role of emerging commercial brands as cultural intermediaries. To address this gap, this study adopts an analytical approach to explore how Chinese milk tea brands participate in and facilitate the global dissemination of tea culture. The findings indicate that Chinese milk tea brands promote the internationalization of tea culture through three main mechanisms. First, product innovation, particularly the adaptation of flavors and ingredients to local tastes, enhances accessibility and acceptance in different cultural contexts. Second, culturally embedded branding strategies, such as packaging design and the use of symbolic cultural elements, contribute to transforming traditional tea culture into modern and visually appealing forms. Third, digital marketing and social media engagement significantly expand the global visibility of tea culture, while the offline experience provided by overseas stores helps create immersive cultural encounters that deepen consumer understanding. However, several challenges remain. Cultural differences may hinder the effective interpretation of the core values of Chinese tea culture, while inconsistent brand positioning can weaken the depth of cultural communication. In addition, the overreliance on social media platforms tends to result in fragmented and superficial dissemination. Based on these findings, this study argues that Chinese milk tea brands function as hybrid cultural agents that integrate commercial value with cultural representation. To further enhance their role in international communication, it is necessary to strengthen cultural adaptation strategies, clarify brand positioning, and develop more integrated online–offline communication models. This study highlights the increasing significance of consumer brands in the process of cultural globalization and provides practical insights for improving the global communication of tea culture.

Keywords: *Chinese Milk Tea Brands, Chinese Tea Culture, International Communication, Cultural Representation*