

# A Study on Discourse Construction in the External Dissemination of Sea Salt Culture

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## Abstract

Yancheng, as an important birthplace and core area of Chinese sea salt culture, boasts a long and rich history of sea salt culture. However, with the deepening of globalization and increasingly frequent cultural exchanges, Yancheng's sea salt culture is also facing numerous challenges and difficulties in its external dissemination, including the immature communication discourse system and monotonous narrative methods. As a result, it is urgent to enhance its international dissemination power, influence, and recognition. The thesis relies on multi-modal discourse analysis theory and cross-cultural communication theory to construct its research framework. Besides, it Analyses the current situation of the external dissemination of Yancheng sea salt culture, including communication resources and carriers, communication modality and effect. Furthermore, the thesis also explains discourse construction strategies for external communication, which covers refinement of core discourse themes, multi-modal discourse collaborative construction, and cross-cultural narrative innovation. Finally, practical paths and policy suggestions are proposed to promote the external dissemination.

**Keywords:** Sea salt culture, Discourse construction, External dissemination

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## 1. Research Background and Significance Introduction

According to historical records, the history of sea salt production in Yancheng can be dated back over two thousand years, and it holds a pivotal position in the entire history of sea salt development in China. Currently, there are over 2,000 sea salt cultural heritage sites scattered throughout Yancheng, and these precious historical and cultural relics provide a solid resource foundation for Yancheng to establish a sea salt cultural brand and carry out the external communication.

At the theoretical level, by introducing multimodal discourse analysis and cross-cultural communication theory and combining with the specific practice of external communication of Yancheng sea salt culture, this study explores the discourse construction model of international communication of local culture. It can enrich the theoretical research on the international communication of regional culture and provide academic support for the localization narrative and globalization expression of "China's Stories". At the practical level, this study aims to address practical issues in the external dissemination of Yancheng's sea salt culture. Through the way of constructing a discourse system for external communication that not only highlights local cultural characteristics but also aligns with the cognitive habits of international audiences, it provides actionable strategic suggestions and content paradigms for Yancheng City and even Jiangsu Province to enhance the international influence of sea salt culture, promote the deep integration of culture and tourism, and strengthen the city's cultural soft power.

## 2. Research Theory and Methodology

### 2.1 Theoretical Framework

This study primarily relies on multimodal discourse analysis theory and cross-cultural communication theory to construct its research framework. One one hand, the multimodal discourse analysis theory emphasizes the collaborative encoding and meaning co-construction of such symbolic resources as language, images, sounds, and actions, which can effectively reduce "decoding barriers" in cross-cultural contexts and enhance the acceptance and resonance of cultural communication. This theory provides methodological support for analyzing various modal expressions in the external dissemination of sea salt culture. On the other hand, cross-cultural communication theory focuses on the cognitive differences and understanding mechanisms of

audiences with different cultural backgrounds in the process of information reception, and emphasizes the cultural adaptability of communication content and the effectiveness of symbolic translation, which can provide theoretical guidance for optimizing the discourse of sea salt culture in external dissemination.

In addition, this study also draws on relevant theories from cultural semiotics and narratology. Through a systematic analysis of sea salt cultural symbols and innovative design of narrative structures, effective paths are explored to enhance the external dissemination of sea salt culture. These theories complement and integrate organically, jointly forming the basic theoretical framework of this study.

## 2.2 Research Methods

This study adopts a mixed research methodology, and integrates various research methods, including literature analysis, field research, case studies, and text analysis:

- Literature analysis method: To grasp the theoretical research frontiers and practical developments, the study systematically combines academic literature and policy documents on sea salt culture, discourse construction, and cross-cultural communication.
- Field research method: The study conducts on-site investigations at such places as the China Sea Salt Museum in Yancheng and salt cultural sites, and obtains first-hand information through observation, interviews, and other methods.
- Case study method: Typical cases of the external dissemination of Yancheng's sea salt culture are selected for in-depth analysis.

Text analysis method: Text analysis on the promotional materials, media reports, and social media content related to Yancheng's sea salt culture is chosen to reveal its discourse characteristics and communication strategies.

By comprehensively applying the aforementioned research methods, the scientific rigor and practicality of the research outcomes are ensured.

## 3 Analysis of the Current Situation of the External Dissemination of Yancheng Sea Salt Culture

### 3.1 Communication Resources and Carriers

Yancheng's sea salt culture boasts abundant and diverse resources for external dissemination, and it has increasingly diverse carrier forms. In terms of resource types, it mainly includes three categories: tangible cultural heritage, intangible cultural heritage, and contemporary cultural innovation.

Tangible cultural heritage is represented by Tang and Song salt warehouse sites, Ming and Qing salt import documents, and modern salt reclamation archives; intangible cultural heritage includes ancient solar salt techniques, salt farmers' customs, and salt-related folklore; contemporary cultural innovation is reflected in artistic creations, cultural and creative products, and digital content themed around sea salt culture.

From the perspective of communication carriers, Yancheng has initially established a diversified communication system encompassing museum exhibitions, festival activities, cultural creative products, and digital media platforms. As the core communication carrier, the China Sea Salt Museum not only showcases sea salt culture through permanent and special exhibitions but also actively innovates communication methods. For instance, it has launched a 3D digital guide named "Yan Xiaobo" and organized the "Hanfu Culture Month" event, which attracts participants from multiple countries and effectively enhances the international dissemination of sea salt culture.

### 3.2 Communication Modality and Effect

Currently, the external dissemination of Yancheng's sea salt culture has primarily established four modalities, including one-way propaganda modality, interactive experience modality, digital communication modality and cultural exchange modality. First of all, the one-way propaganda modality utilizes traditional media and outdoor advertising as the primary channels and conducts one-way information transmission of sea salt culture, achieving broad coverage but poor interaction. Secondly, through interactive exhibitions in museums and cultural experience activities, the interactive experience modality enhances the audience's sense of participation and experience and allows participants to understand the history of salt administration. Besides,

the digital communication modality utilizes such digital platforms and technologies as websites, social media, and virtual reality to expand the dissemination boundaries of sea salt culture, and restores the scenes of Tang Dynasty salt fields through virtual reality technology. Last but not least, in the cultural exchange modality, the external dissemination of Haiyan culture is promoted through international cultural exchange activities, academic seminars, and other ways.

Although the external dissemination of Yancheng's sea salt culture has achieved certain results, there are still some prominent issues. Firstly, the external communication discourse system is not mature enough; secondly, the translation of cultural symbols is insufficient, leading to cognitive barriers for international audiences; thirdly, the communication channels are scattered, lacking integration and coordination; fourthly, there is a lack of a communication effect evaluation mechanism, making it difficult to accurately grasp the needs and feedback of international audiences.

**Table: Overview of the Multimodal Communication System for Yancheng Sea Salt Culture**

Modality types	Typical cases	Characteristics Dissemination	Effect Evaluation
Visual Modality	3D digital human guide“Yan Xiaobo”, Hanfu Culture event	Intuitive and vivid	high audience acceptance
Auditory Modality	Huai Opera “Fan Gongdi”, sound samples of salt workers' work songs	evoke resonance	strong cultural appeal
Interactive Modality	exploration activities	Strong sense of participation	Deepen the cultural understanding
Digital Modality	XR Exploration Experience Exhibition	with a strong sense of immersion	a strong sense of technology

#### **4. Discourse Construction Strategies for External Communication**

##### *4.1 Refinement of Core Discourse Themes*

To address the issues of scattered narratives and unpronounced themes in the international communication of Yancheng's sea salt culture, this study proposes to construct an external communication narrative system centered around three core discourse themes.

The first is the narrative theme of “living heritage”. It challenges the traditional perception of sea salt culture as a static historical relic, and emphasizes its intrinsic connection with the contemporary lives of Yancheng people and the city's development. Through showcasing the contemporary inheritance of ancient solar salt-making techniques, innovative expressions of sea salt culture in contemporary art and design, and other content, this narrative theme constructs a continuous narrative of sea salt culture moving from history to modernity and from local to global, which allows international audiences to feel the vitality and contemporary value of sea salt culture.

The second narrative theme is “Ecological Wisdom”. Within this theme, the sustainable development concept of symbiosis between sea salt production and wetland ecology is highlighted, echoing global ecological issues. This narrative theme primarily showcases the wisdom accumulated by the ancestors of Yancheng in their long-term sea salt production practices, including the salt pan system that coexists with wetlands and sustainable salt production models. By linking this with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), it evokes value resonance and cultural identity among international audiences.

The third theme is “Rebirth of Creation”. This theme focuses on the modern expression and innovative vitality of sea salt culture in the fields of cultural and creative industries, art, and cuisine. By showcasing cultural and creative products, digital content, and contemporary art works developed based on sea salt cultural elements, the innovative transformation and artistic value of sea salt culture are presented, attracting the attention and affection of the younger generation of international audiences.

#### *4.2 Multi-modal Discourse Collaborative Construction*

Based on the theory of multimodal discourse analysis, and tailored to different communication channels and audience characteristics, a multimodal discourse coordination system for the external communication of sea salt culture is constructed.

In the construction of visual modality, a visual image system with high recognition and aesthetic value is developed around such core visual symbols as “salt crystal”, “salt field”, and “ancient salt field”. Drawing on the practical experience of the China Sea Salt Museum, professional cultural content is transformed into easily understandable visual language through the visual modality combination of “salt-related treasures + vast flower fields”, reducing the decoding difficulty for international audiences. At the same time, attention is paid to the cross-cultural adaptability of visual symbols to avoid misunderstandings or ambiguities caused by cultural differences.

In the construction of auditory modality, we collect and organize such “sound specimens” as salt workers’ chanting to build a soundscape archive of sea salt culture, and reproduce and innovate through modern audio technology. By integrating traditional salt workers’ chanting with modern musical elements, we create sound works that retain traditional cultural characteristics while conforming to the aesthetic habits of contemporary international audiences, forming a unique sound identity system that enhances the recognition and memory of sea salt culture.

In the construction of interactive modes, a variety of interactive experience activities with rich layers and strong participation have been designed. For example, the “Salt Mystery” immersive exploration activity launched by the China Sea Salt Museum allows international audiences to deeply understand sea salt culture through role-playing and scenario simulation. At the same time, online interactive projects have been developed in combination with digital technology, such as the ancient salt field experience activity based on VR technology, enabling overseas audiences who cannot visit the site in person to also enjoy an immersive cultural experience.

In the construction of digital modalities, we actively promote the digital transformation of sea salt culture, establish the “Yancheng Sea Salt Culture Metaverse”, integrate such resources as ancient salt field sites and intangible cultural heritage skills, and create an online cultural exhibition and experience space that never ends. Aiming to expand the dissemination and influence of sea salt culture in the digital space, digital collectibles of sea salt culture are developed through blockchain technology and organization of such activities as short video challenges on social media platforms.

#### *4.3 Cross-Cultural Narrative Innovation*

For audiences with different cultural backgrounds, innovating cross-cultural narrative methods for sea salt culture can enhance communication effectiveness.

Cultural symbol translation involves cross-cultural adaptation of specific concepts and unique symbols inherent in sea salt culture. For instance, “盐引” is translated as “Salt Certificate (an official document for salt trade in ancient China)”, which not only retains the original connotation but also lowers the threshold for comprehension. Simultaneously, by employing analogy, unfamiliar concepts from sea salt culture are linked to familiar cultural elements for the audiences. For example, comparing ancient salt merchants to spice merchants in medieval Europe aids international audiences in establishing cognitive connections.

Emotional storytelling breaks away from the grand narratives and official tones commonly seen in traditional propaganda, and instead embraces such micro-narratives as personal stories and emotional experiences. For instance, it might showcase the long history of sea salt culture through the story of a salt worker’s family heritage, or present the contemporary innovation of sea salt culture by telling the tale of a designer who integrates elements of sea salt culture into modern design. Through these narratives, international audiences can be triggered to resonate emotionally, thereby enhancing the narrative’s emotional impact. In empathetic

expressions, universal human values inherent in sea salt culture, including the pursuit of a better life, interaction between humans and nature, and the inheritance and innovation of skills, are unearthed. These universally meaningful themes evoke resonance among audiences from diverse cultural backgrounds, facilitating the transformation from cultural differences to shared values.

**Table: Translation Plan for Themes and Symbols of Discourse for the External Communication of Yancheng Sea Salt Culture**

Topics of Discourse	Core Cultural Elements	Symbol Translation Strategies	Target Audiences
“Living Heritage”	traditional solar salt production techniques, historic salt industry districts, and the memories of salt farmers’ lives	oral history of skill inheritance, comparison of ancient and modern images, and reproduction of life-like scenes	cultural tourists, lovers of historical culture
“Ecological Wisdom”	sea salt-wetland ecosystem, sustainable production method	visualization of ecological concepts, alignment with the United Nations SDGs, and interactive experience design	Environmental protection advocates, educational research institutions
“Rebirth of Creation”	salt-themed cultural and creative products, digital art featuring salt culture, and salt-themed cuisine	reconstruction of modern design language, cross-disciplinary integration display, and immersive experience	young people, art and design enthusiasts

## 5. Practical Paths and Policy Suggestions

### 5.1 Optimization of Content Production System

To enhance the quality and effectiveness of the content for the external dissemination of sea salt culture, it is recommended to optimize the content production system from the following aspects.

Firstly, it is necessary to establish a multilingual corpus. Based on the multilingual advantage of the Yancheng Local Cultural International Communication Center, we have systematically organized the multilingual translation of core concepts and professional terminology of Haiyan culture, and compiled the “Haiyan Culture Keyword International Expression Guide” to provide standard references for the production of various external publicity content, ensuring the accuracy and consistency of communication content. The core content of “The Legend of Haiyan” should be translated into multiple languages and accompanied by cultural annotation manuals to provide popular explanations of such unique concepts as “salt introduction” and “Fan Gongdi”.

Secondly, a hierarchical content system should be developed. Gradient and differentiated communication content tailored to the cultural backgrounds, audience characteristics, and communication needs of different countries and regions can be developed. For areas with low awareness of Haiyan culture, visual content and experiential activities that are intuitive and easy to understand should be the main focus; Targeting regions with a certain cognitive foundation, in-depth historical and cultural content and professional exchange activities can be added to achieve precise dissemination.

Finally, a content innovation workshop can be created. To systematically develop content around Haiyan Culture IP and form a multimedia content ecosystem covering documentaries, short videos, anime, games, cultural and creative products, a Haiyan Culture Content Innovation Factory in collaboration with universities, cultural and creative enterprises, and international communication agencies should be established. Drawing on the dissemination model of “1-minute culture”, we have extracted such concrete symbols as “salt grain crystallization” and “string field river”, and launched a series of short videos to reduce the cognitive load on overseas audiences.

### 5.2 Platform Construction and Resource Integration

An efficient and collaborative communication platform system should be constructed to integrate resources from all parties and form a joint force for the external dissemination of Haiyan culture.

For the construction of offline platforms, we can rely on the autumn tourism season to establish an international salt culture forum and invite salt culture scholars from such countries as Germany and Japan to participate in discussions. Simultaneously, we can hold a salt culture workshop and set up such interactive projects as ancient salt drying and salt carving production. Besides, cooperation with member units of the National Salt Culture Venue Alliance can be strengthened, and the domestic and international dissemination channels of Yancheng Haiyan culture can also be expanded through joint exhibitions, touring exhibitions, and other means.

For the construction of online platforms, we can build an online dissemination matrix of Haiyan culture that integrates official websites, social media accounts, and digital museums. Adaptive content can be developed based on the characteristics and user habits of different overseas social platforms, with Instagram focusing on visually impactful images and short videos, Twitter emphasizing the quick dissemination of informative content, and YouTube stressing the complete display of documentaries. Moreover, the “Global Salt Story” topic challenge can be launched to encourage overseas users to share their local salt culture and form a content co creation ecosystem.

## 6 Conclusion and Prospects

Guided by multimodal discourse analysis and cross-cultural communication theory, this study systematically analyzes the current situation and problems of the external dissemination of Yancheng Haiyan culture, , and constructs an external dissemination discourse system that includes core discourse theme extraction, multimodal discourse collaborative construction, and cross-cultural narrative innovation. Furthermore, specific practical paths and policy recommendations are also proposed. The research believes that the key to the discourse construction of the external communication of Yancheng sea salt culture is to realize the transformation from resource orientation to value orientation, from one-way propaganda to two-way dialogue, and from single mode to multi-mode coordination. Through the systematic, refined, and international discourse construction strategy, the international communication power and influence of sea salt culture will be improved.

In the future, the external dissemination of Yancheng Haiyan culture needs to continue to deepen in the following aspects. First of all, we should strengthen in-depth research on international audiences, and further improve the accuracy and effectiveness of dissemination. Secondly, we need to keep up with the forefront of technological development and fully utilize such new technologies as artificial intelligence to expand the boundaries of dissemination. Lastly, a long-term working mechanism should be established to ensure the continuity and stability of the external dissemination of Haiyan culture.

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