

Cultural Identity in Museum Exhibits: Power Symbols in Intercultural Communication

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Abstract: The research provides a comprehensive investigation into the profound impact of museum exhibits, particularly those centered on potent symbols, on audience cultural identity and cross-cultural exchange, especially within the contemporary context of globalization. It elucidates the pivotal role played by museums as essential conduits of cultural expression, leveraging historical artifacts and symbolic representations not only to deepen audience appreciation of their own cultural heritage but also to foster empathy and appreciation for the diverse cultural perspectives prevalent worldwide. Through meticulous analysis of these exhibits, the study reveals the intricate cultural narratives they convey, thus emphasizing the critical role museums play in facilitating profound cross-cultural understanding, nurturing meaningful cultural dialogue, and shaping both individual and collective cultural identities. By showcasing objects rich in historical significance, aesthetic beauty, and societal values, museums emerge as dynamic platforms for cultural interpretation and exchange, effectively bridging cultural divides and promoting mutual understanding amidst the diverse tapestry of global cultures.

Keywords: Intercultural Communication, Cultural Identity, Power Symbols in Museum Exhibits

1. Introduction

With the advancement of globalization, cultural exchanges and cross-cultural understanding have become increasingly important themes in contemporary society. Museums are important venues for cultural transmission and exchange, not only because they represent various cultures and histories but also because they provide an important environment for audiences to understand culture, recognize history, and construct cultural identity.

Symbolic exhibits of power in museums have rich historical and cultural significance. These exhibits may symbolize the power, status, and values of a nation, an ethnic group, or a particular social group. Ancient crowns, royal costumes, and aristocratic objects are examples of symbolic exhibits. They are expressions not only of history but also of cultural identity.

In a society with diverse cultural backgrounds, museum exhibits have a profound impact on audiences' cultural identity and cross-cultural interactions. Through these exhibits, audiences can not only understand the history and traditions of a particular culture but also build awareness and empathy in cross-cultural interactions, promoting cultural understanding and respect.

The purpose of this paper is to explore the impact of museum exhibits on the audience's cultural identity and cross-cultural exchange through a detailed analysis of the symbolic exhibits of power displayed in the museum. Through recognition and observation of the exhibits, we hope to understand the cultural meanings implicit in cross-cultural exhibits and provide new perspectives and understanding of cross-cultural exchange and the construction of cultural identity.

2. Review of Literature

The process of cultural interchange, contact, and understanding is emphasized by emphasized the process of exchange, interaction, and understanding between different cultures. They state that they view interculturality as a broad interaction among multiple cultures, including different countries, regions, languages, and customs[1] . According to, the cultural iceberg is a useful tool for a comprehensive understanding of culture. This theory divides culture into two parts: surface and deep. Surface culture, which is easy to observe, includes language, clothing, and food. Deep culture is generally less clearly recognized and includes values, beliefs, customs, and thought patterns[2] .

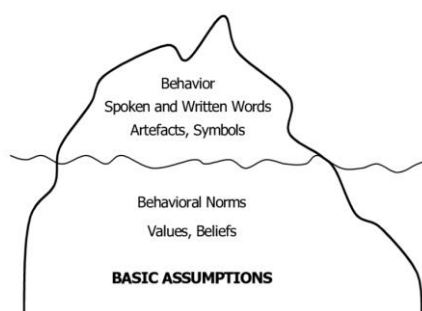


Figure 1: Applying the Metaphor of Culture as Iceberg

It has been suggested that museum exhibits have a multi-layered influence on cross-cultural interactions. Deep culture not only demonstrates history and cultural traditions, presents different perspectives, and promotes the experience of diversity and cultural exchange but also serves to convey the underlying values and beliefs of a culture. In addition, deep culture plays an important role in revealing cultural differences and deepening dialogue and understanding.

Similarly, (Figure 1) noted that in certain areas, different cultural groups form their own unique spaces, expressing and holding cultural differences with each other through their geographic arrangement. These cultural spaces are like "islands" scattered throughout the region, with each island representing a particular cultural community[3] .

It is important to note that the different cultural groups are not completely isolated, but that a certain amount of cultural interaction and exchange exists between these "islands." This interaction and exchange can manifest in a wide variety of forms, including cultural transmission, economic exchange, and social dialogue, emphasizing the coexistence and integration of cultural diversity in both geographic and social aspects[4] . states that museums are sites of cultural interpretation, and by displaying visual culture, culture, history, and identity, they encourage audiences to understand more deeply and actively participate in the cultural narrative.

3. Cultural identity and Power Symbols Exhibits

By displaying specific objects or symbols, a culture can focus on particular aspects of nature, religion, or human life. The design of the exhibits and the manner in which they are displayed also demonstrate

that different cultures have different understandings and perspectives of aesthetics and history. These differences allow the audience to better understand the concepts of other cultures and to stimulate cross-cultural dialogue and reflection.

In other words, exhibits convey not only material objects, but also cultural concepts and values, providing audiences with opportunities to understand and feel the concepts of other cultures. Exhibits include cultural symbols, art styles, historical narratives, and religious symbols that represent cultural values and concepts[5]. argues that museums play an important role in the formation and development of cultural institutions and their impact on society, perception, and identity; points out that museums are more than just places that display cultural artifacts[6]; they play an important role in the formation of power and identity. points out that museums play an important role in the formation of power and the construction of identity, rather than merely displaying cultural artifacts. Exhibits are not merely collections of objects, but are embodiments of past, social, and personal memories. Museum exhibits are an expression of cultural history.

Power is symbolically represented in different cultures. Two specific examples are Imperial Seals and Crown. These symbolic exhibits are not only surface phenomena of a culture but also contain elements of its deeper culture. If one were to compare this to a "cultural iceberg," these exhibits would only scratch the surface, and the deeper culture would be the part of the iceberg that extends below the surface of Bingshan.

Denkoku-seals signify the authority of the sovereign in a particular empire or nation, and are usually inscribed with a distinctive coat of arms or design. However, these designs are more likely to reflect the beliefs and values rooted in deeper cultures. Seals symbolize the legitimacy of the power and authority to rule and are used in government documents and orders. Different designs exist for different empires and cultures, each encompassing its own historical background and source of authority.

Similarly, the crown, which is placed on the head of the king or monarch, varies in shape and decoration from culture to culture. The crown design is often imbued with historical meaning and expresses the deep culture's belief in sacredness and special authority. These symbolic exhibits convey not only formality, but also concepts and beliefs rooted in deep culture.

The role that imperial seals and crowns play in society, including elements of deep culture, visually and symbolically conveys the legitimacy and importance of power, thus making them a crucial part of the power structure. The deep cultural elements of these exhibits are important means of promoting cultural exchange, deepening understanding, and empathy between different cultures.

Exhibits may include culture-specific symbols, art styles, historical narratives, and religious icons that represent the values and concepts that the culture values. By displaying specific objects and symbols, a culture can focus on particular aspects of nature, religion, or human life. The design of the exhibits and the manner in which they are displayed also indicate that different cultures have different understandings and perspectives of aesthetics and history. These differences allow the audience to better understand the concepts of other cultures and stimulate cross-cultural dialogue and reflection. In other words, exhibits convey not only material objects but also cultural concepts and values, providing audiences with opportunities to understand and feel the concepts of other cultures.

Museums provide platforms for developing cross-cultural communication. First, as cultural symbols, exhibits encourage the audience to reflect on the similarities and differences between different cultures through their unique forms and symbolic meanings. Such reflections highlight the need for cross-cultural dialogue and facilitate interaction and discussion among viewers and with the bearers of culture. Second, the exhibits, as figurative representations of cultures, conveyed the core values and concepts of different cultures and provided the agenda and content for cross-cultural dialogue. Through the exhibits, audiences learned about the stories, traditions, and beliefs of other cultures, which facilitated dialogue and exchanges. Most importantly, the exhibits stimulated the

interest and curiosity of the audience, encouraging them to actively explore and examine the similarities and differences between different cultures, thereby promoting cross-cultural dialogue. The exhibits are not only static entities within the museum but also intermediaries of cultural exchange, facilitating the development of cross-cultural dialogue and understanding.

4. Impact of cross-cultural exchange

In the museum, these iconic exhibits are not only symbols of material culture, but also of culture, history, art, and science, providing audiences with an opportunity to gain a deeper understanding of the political systems, social structures, and dignity of the rulers of a particular era. These exhibit items are not only displayed within the museum but are also an important component of the museum as a platform for education and interpretation, serving as a bridge to promote cultural exchange and understanding.

Through these tangible items, not only do audiences gain a deeper understanding of the shifting functions and symbols of power in different cultures and social structures, but this deeper awareness also promotes deeper reflection on society, culture, and power relations among audiences and promotes intercultural dialogue and understanding. The exhibits are not only witnesses to history but also a starting point for social and cultural inquiry, providing a platform for audiences to gain a deeper understanding of the role and impact of power in different cultures.

The influence of cultural perceptions is also an important area of analysis, as differences in audiences' understanding and perceptions of symbolic exhibits of power in different cultural settings and different cultures' understandings and values of power mean that audiences may have different perceptions of symbols of power. For example, in Asian cultures, traditional monarchical systems may provide more authority symbols for royal symbols, while in Western cultures, the values of individual rights and freedoms may lead to different interpretations of symbols of power. By delving deeper into these cultural differences, museums can help their audiences better understand their perspectives on exhibits.

In addition, given the social realities of pluralistic cultures, audiences of different ethnicities, religious beliefs, and social classes may have different perceptions of power symbols. By investigating these social differences in depth, museums can better understand the cultural backgrounds and conceptions of each group and adopt an approach that better suits their needs when designing exhibits. For audiences of a particular ethnic or religious faith, museums can provide explanations of the relevant cultural backgrounds and help them gain a deeper understanding of the exhibits. This personalized exhibition and interpretation approach can help promote broader and deeper cultural exchange.

5. Conclusion

Symbolic exhibits of power play a special role in cross-cultural communication. They convey the history and power structures of different cultures through their material forms, providing audiences with a deeper understanding. Concrete exhibits, such as power symbols, convey cross-cultural identities in visual and tangible forms, providing a platform for audiences from different cultural backgrounds to share feelings and understandings.

These exhibits serve as a medium to promote dialogue and understanding in cross-cultural communication. When audiences from different cultures approach the same exhibit from different perspectives, empathy and sharing are created and cross-cultural communication is deepened. Through the exhibits, visitors can reflect on the values and belief systems of different cultures and deepen their understanding of cultural differences.

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