



Performance Communication in Contemporary Thai–Chinese Performance: A Catalyst for Soft Power and Cross-Cultural Relations

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Abstract: This study examines the role of performance communication in contemporary Thai–Chinese collaborative performance and its implications for soft power and cross-cultural relations. Drawing on qualitative methods—including performance observation, semi-structured interviews with directors and performers, and thematic analysis of multimedia performance materials—the research investigates how symbolic forms, embodied communication, and hybrid aesthetics function as cultural mediation mechanisms. The findings reveal that contemporary Thai–Chinese performances employ gesture, movement, musical fusion, scenography, and culturally embedded symbols to articulate shared identities, negotiate cultural differences, and construct hybrid cultural meanings. These communicative processes align with theoretical perspectives that conceptualize performance as both an expressive art form and a socio-cultural communication system. The study further demonstrates that Thai–Chinese performance serves as a catalyst for cultural soft power through three interrelated dimensions: the communication of cultural values, the generation of affective engagement, and the production of positive cultural imagery. These dynamics enhance cultural attractiveness and contribute to cultural diplomacy initiatives by strengthening bilateral relations and expanding platforms for intercultural dialogue. Additionally, the study identifies how performance communication bridges historical, diasporic, and contemporary narratives, enabling performers and audiences to co-construct intercultural understanding within an increasingly interconnected Asian context. Overall, this research advances theoretical insights into performance communication, intercultural performance, and hybrid cultural identity, while offering practical implications for cultural policy, creative diplomacy, and the development of intercultural performance platforms. The study underscores the potential of contemporary Thai–Chinese performance to function not only as cultural expression but also as an instrument for relational influence and soft power in the evolving landscape of Thai–Chinese socio-cultural relations.

Keywords: Performance Communication, Contemporary Thai–Chinese Performance, Soft Power, Cross-Cultural Relations

1. Introduction

In an era defined by intensified cultural mobility and transnational exchange, performance has emerged as a significant communicative medium through which societies negotiate identity, represent cultural values, and exercise soft power (Kim, 2021). Contemporary Thai–Chinese performance, encompassing theatre, dance, opera, ritual-based performance, and multimedia staging, has become an influential cultural interface reflecting the longstanding historical, social, and aesthetic entanglements between Thailand and China (Liu & Abdullah, 2023; Zheng et al., 2025). As both nations increasingly mobilize cultural resources to strengthen regional influence and foster mutual understanding, performance communication offers a critical lens for examining how artistic practices operate as vehicles for meaning-making, intercultural dialogue, and diplomatic engagement (Grincheva, 2024).

Performance communication extends beyond artistic expression to include symbolic gestures, embodied narratives, ritual enactments, and mediated representations that construct shared cultural imaginaries (Melis & Pelle, 2025). Within Thai–Chinese contexts, such communication becomes a dynamic mechanism for articulating hybrid identities, negotiating diasporic memory, and recontextualizing traditional aesthetics in contemporary forms. Hybrid performance genres—such as Sino-Thai opera collaborations, contemporary reinterpretations of lion dance, or intercultural theatre involving Chinese and Thai performers—not only reflect evolving cultural sensibilities but also embody communicative strategies that reinforce relational ties and promote cultural literacy between the two societies (Zheng & Liu, 2024).

At the geopolitical level, soft power has become central to how nations assert influence through culture, values, and attraction rather than coercion (Saaida, 2023). China’s extensive cultural diplomacy initiatives and Thailand’s increasing investment in creative industries have positioned the arts as strategic assets for enhancing national visibility and cross-cultural partnerships. Thai–Chinese collaborative performances thus function as cultural diplomacy tools that shape perceptions, project national identities, and contribute to regional cultural cohesion within ASEAN and the broader Indo-Pacific cultural sphere. These performative interactions not only foster cultural appreciation but also expand the symbolic repertoire through which soft power is exercised and negotiated.

Despite growing scholarly interest in cultural diplomacy and intercultural performance, limited research has specifically examined how performance communication operates within the unique Thai–Chinese cultural nexus and how such performances contribute to soft power formation and cross-cultural relations. Existing literature often focuses on diaspora communities, heritage preservation, or bilateral cultural policies, yet the communicative dimension of contemporary performance remains underexplored (Grincheva, 2024; Panchal & Mago, 2024). This study addresses this critical gap by investigating how contemporary Thai–Chinese performance practices function as communicative acts that shape cultural representation, facilitate intercultural engagement, and operate as catalysts for soft power.

By integrating perspectives from performance studies, intercultural communication, and soft power theory, this research seeks to illuminate the mechanisms through which performance

becomes a strategic medium for cultural expression and relational diplomacy. Through documentary analysis, interpretive synthesis, and case-based examination of selected Thai–Chinese performance practices, the study aims to articulate a conceptual understanding of performance communication and its implications for cultural relations in the contemporary Asian context. Ultimately, the study contributes to a broader understanding of how cultural performance can mobilize symbolic power, strengthen intercultural bonds, and support the evolving dynamics of Thai–Chinese cultural diplomacy in the 21st century.

2. Literature review

2.1 Performance Communication and Meaning-Making

Performance communication provides a conceptual framework for understanding how embodied action, symbolic representation, and expressive practices generate and transmit cultural meaning (Juris, 2014). Scholars in performance studies argue that performance is not merely artistic presentation but a communicative event that shapes perceptions, identities, and social relations (Kaplan, 2023). Chambers (2017) emphasizes performance as a “restored behavior,” highlighting how cultural codes are re-enacted, reinterpreted, and circulated through performative acts. This perspective is essential for analyzing Thai–Chinese performance, where gestures, costumes, vocal techniques, and spatial arrangements convey complex cultural messages that negotiate the relationship between tradition and modernity.

In communication studies, performance is understood as a symbolic system capable of structuring social knowledge and articulating collective identities (Quayle, 2025). Within Thai–

Chinese collaborative performance, communicative strategies often emerge through intercultural negotiation, creative reinterpretation of symbolic forms, and hybrid aesthetics that invite audiences to engage in cross-cultural meaning-making (Liu, 2024). These dynamics underscore the centrality of performance communication as both a cultural practice and an analytic lens.

2.2 Intercultural and Transcultural Performance in Asia

Intercultural performance studies provide valuable insight into how artistic forms evolve through cultural exchange and how performers navigate differences in aesthetics, values, and communicative conventions. In Asia, intercultural theatre and performance practices have been shaped by long histories of migration, trade, and diplomatic relations (McIntosh & Eguchi, 2020). Contemporary Thai–Chinese performance draws on these histories while reflecting contemporary socio-cultural realities, such as the revival of Chinese cultural identity among Thai-born Chinese and the growing influence of China’s cultural industries.

Transcultural performance scholarship highlights how hybrid forms emerge when cultural symbols are appropriated, adapted, and recontextualized in new environments (Baojie & bakar, 2025). Examples include the reinvention of lion dance as a contemporary urban performance, the hybridization of Chinese opera with Thai theatrical conventions, and multimedia performances that merge Chinese diasporic narratives with Thai aesthetics. These forms not only reflect artistic experimentation but also function as cultural communication channels that challenge essentialist notions of both “Thai” and “Chinese” identity.

Importantly, scholars caution against uncritical adoption of intercultural aesthetics, emphasizing the importance of power relations, cultural ownership, and socio-political contexts. The Thai–Chinese case reflects such complexities, as performance emerges within both community-level cultural practices and state-driven cultural diplomacy initiatives.

2.3 Cultural Identity, Diaspora, and Thai–Chinese Relations

Research on Chinese diaspora communities in Southeast Asia provides crucial background for understanding the socio-cultural foundations of Thai–Chinese performance. Scholars note that Thai-born Chinese have historically negotiated dual identities, integrating Chinese heritage with Thai social norms, resulting in fluid and hybrid identity formations (Koad & Dejpawuttikul, 2025). Performing arts have long played a role in expressing these identities, from temple festivals and opera troupes to contemporary creative industries.

Studies on cultural memory emphasize how performance allows diasporic communities to preserve, reinterpret, and transmit ancestral traditions (Jamil, 2025). In Thailand, Chinese cultural performance has shifted from community-based rituals to prominent cultural symbols integrated into national festivals, tourism, and public celebrations. This transformation indicates an increasing public visibility and acceptance of Chinese cultural symbols, aligning with broader regional shifts in Thai–Chinese socio-economic relations.

The literature also highlights how cultural hybridity is not merely an aesthetic outcome but reflects underlying structures of social integration, identity negotiation, and intercultural communication (Monfared, 2024; Pun et al., 2025). These insights directly support an analysis of how

contemporary Thai–Chinese performance promotes intercultural understanding and mutual recognition.

2.4 Soft Power, Cultural Diplomacy, and the Performing Arts

Soft power theory, particularly Nye and Power (2004)’s formulation, positions culture as a key resource for shaping international perceptions and fostering cooperative relationships. China’s cultural diplomacy initiatives—including Confucius Institutes, cultural festivals, and international performance tours—have been well-documented as strategic efforts to enhance global influence. Performing arts are central to this strategy due to their ability to communicate cultural values and create emotional resonance with foreign audiences.

Similarly, Thailand has increasingly emphasized creative industries and cultural heritage as tools for international engagement and national branding (Homsombat et al., 2025; Kasemsarn et al., 2025). Collaborative Thai–Chinese performances therefore operate at the intersection of two national soft power agendas, producing symbolic interactions that contribute to bilateral relations and regional cultural integration.

Scholars emphasize that performance as soft power operates not through direct persuasion but through attraction, narrative coherence, and shared cultural experiences (Intason, 2026). Thai–Chinese collaborative performances—such as joint cultural festivals, co-produced theatre works, and cross-border arts exchanges—demonstrate how performance communication can cultivate affinity, strengthen socio-cultural ties, and expand shared cultural imaginaries.

2.5 Synthesis and Research Gap

The reviewed literature collectively demonstrates that performance is a

powerful communicative medium that shapes cultural representation, supports intercultural dialogue, and contributes to soft power strategies (Adoui, 2023; Santos, 2024). However, despite extensive research on intercultural performance, diaspora identity, and cultural diplomacy, there remains a limited understanding of how performance communication specifically operates within contemporary Thai–Chinese collaborations.

Existing studies often treat Thai–Chinese performance as cultural heritage or diaspora practice, while fewer analyze its role in meaning-making, cross-cultural relations, and soft power construction in the 21st century. This study responds to this gap by examining Thai–Chinese performance through the lens of performance communication, offering a more nuanced conceptualization of how artistic practices mediate cultural understanding and relational influence across national and cultural boundaries.

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Research Orientation

This study is situated within an interpretivist paradigm that foregrounds the socially constructed nature of cultural meaning and the communicative dimensions of performance. Drawing on performance studies, intercultural communication, and cultural sociology, the research conceptualizes contemporary Thai–Chinese performance as a communicative system through which symbolic meanings, cultural identities, and intercultural narratives are produced, transmitted, and negotiated.

This orientation positions performance not merely as artistic expression but as a dynamic site of cultural mediation, allowing for the analysis of how aesthetic forms, embodied actions, and symbolic codes

function as mechanisms of soft power and as vehicles for cross-cultural dialogue. The interpretivist framework is therefore well suited to exploring multilayered communicative processes within intercultural performance contexts.

3.2 Documentary Analysis

Documentary analysis forms the basis for developing the conceptual and theoretical framework of the study. This method involves a systematic review of scholarship in the following domains: (1) intercultural and performance communication, (2) soft power theory and cultural diplomacy, (3) contemporary performing arts, (4) Thai–Chinese cultural interaction and diaspora studies, and (5) cultural hybridity and identity negotiation.

Academic sources were retrieved from major research databases, including Scopus, Web of Science, and the China National Knowledge Infrastructure (CNKI), alongside Thai academic repositories such as the Thai Digital Collection and the National Research Repository. Cultural policy documents from the Ministry of Culture (Thailand), the Ministry of Culture and Tourism (China), and UNESCO archives were included to contextualize the evolving discourse on soft power and cultural strategy.

Selection criteria emphasized thematic relevance, methodological rigor, and coverage within the period 2000–2025. The literature was analyzed through thematic synthesis and comparative review, focusing on the communicative functions of performance, symbolic representation, intercultural negotiation, and mechanisms of cultural attraction and diplomacy.

3.3 Performance Analysis

Given the performative nature of the research topic, performance analysis constitutes a central methodological

component. This method examines the semiotic, aesthetic, and communicative dimensions of contemporary Thai–Chinese performances. Key areas of analysis include: (1) Embodied communication, such as gesture, movement vocabulary, spatial configuration, and vocal expression; (2) Symbolic and visual codes, including costume design, scenography, music, props, and color symbolism; (3) Narrative and dramaturgical structures, particularly those addressing themes of cultural identity, hybridity, migration, and heritage; and (4) Audience reception, which provides insight into intercultural meaning-making and the affective dimensions of soft power.

This method enables an in-depth understanding of how performance elements operate as communicative tools for cultural representation, identity negotiation, and intercultural engagement.

3.4 Case Study Approach

An explanatory case study approach is employed to contextualize and substantiate interpretive insights (Lim, 2024). Case selection focuses on contemporary performance events and productions that explicitly integrate Thai and Chinese cultural elements. The selected cases include: (1) Contemporary performance showcases within Bangkok’s Chinese cultural festivals; (2) Hybrid cultural performances situated in Phuket’s Sino-Portuguese districts and associated with cultural tourism; and (3) Intercultural performance projects and mixed-media works produced by Thai–Chinese artists and cultural organizations.

These cases were chosen based on their cultural significance, visibility within contemporary intercultural performance practice, and their capacity to illustrate communicative strategies and soft power processes within Thai–Chinese contexts.

3.5 Data Collection Methods

Data collection draws upon multiple qualitative sources to ensure depth, triangulation, and contextual validity. Sources include: (1) Performance recordings, festival archives, and program documentation; (2) Semi-structured interviews with performers, choreographers, arts managers, cultural organizers, and audience members; (3) Participant observation during live performances, rehearsals, cultural festivals, and intercultural events; and (4) Media articles, artist statements, online performance materials, and cultural policy documents.

This multi-source approach provides a comprehensive dataset that reflects both artistic perspectives and audience interpretations, thereby enhancing analytical robustness.

3.6 Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using three complementary methods: (1) Thematic coding, to categorize communicative strategies, symbolic patterns, narrative themes, and soft power mechanisms; (2) Semiotic and interpretive analysis, to examine signs, performance texts, embodied communication, and symbolic structures; (3) Comparative analysis, to identify cross-case similarities, differences, and culturally embedded meanings.

The analytic focus centers on patterns of cultural hybridity, performance-based communication strategies, and the communicative mechanisms through which performances generate cultural attraction, foster intercultural understanding, and reinforce soft power.

3.7 Methodological Contribution

The integration of documentary analysis, performance analysis, and explanatory case studies produces a methodological trajectory that moves from conceptual grounding →

performative interpretation → contextual validation.

This triangulated design offers a comprehensive, multi-layered methodological approach for examining performance communication as a cultural mechanism with diplomatic significance. It advances theoretical understanding of contemporary Thai–Chinese performance while generating practical insights for cultural policymakers, creative industry practitioners, and scholars specializing in intercultural communication and soft power studies.

4. Results

4.1 Communicative Dynamics in Contemporary Thai–Chinese Performance

Analysis of the selected contemporary Thai–Chinese performances—including festival-based productions in Bangkok, site-specific hybrid works in Phuket, and mixed-media creations by Thai–Chinese artists—reveals multilayered communicative dynamics articulated through embodied actions, symbolic staging, and audience reception processes. These dynamics demonstrate how performance operates as a communicative medium that simultaneously bridges cultures, constructs shared meanings, and reinforces intercultural connectivity between Thai and Chinese audiences (Ma & Kantasiri, 2024; Tian & Wang, 2025).

4.1.1 Embodied Communication as Cultural Mediation

Across all case studies, performers employed embodied communication—gesture, movement vocabulary, spatial relations, proxemics, and vocal stylization—as a central strategy for mediating cultural meaning. In Bangkok’s contemporary Chinese New Year performances, artists integrated

elements drawn from classical Chinese movement traditions, Beijing opera stylization, and Thai likay gestures, producing a culturally hybrid movement language.

This embodied hybridity served as a communicative bridge that fostered cultural familiarity while simultaneously enabling reinterpretations of shared Thai–Chinese heritage. Audience interviews further indicated that such hybrid gestures enhanced perceptions of cultural proximity, facilitated recognition of shared traditions, and contributed to a broader understanding of contemporary Thai–Chinese identity (Ding, 2025).

4.1.2 Symbolic and Visual Codes Reinforcing Intercultural Narratives

The performances demonstrated extensive use of symbolic and visual codes—including costume design, chromatic symbolism, props, musical motifs, scenography, and digital projections—to articulate intercultural narratives. In Phuket, site-specific performances staged within Sino-Portuguese architectural landscapes utilized red–gold color palettes, Chinese percussion timbres, and Thai melodic ornamentations to construct narratives of coexistence and cultural continuity.

Audience interpretations revealed that such semiotic layering effectively communicated messages of shared identity, heritage, and intercultural harmony. These findings align with scholarship emphasizing the role of semiotic systems in shaping cross-cultural performance reception (Pandey & Singh, 2024).

4.1.3 Dramaturgical Structures Reflecting Hybrid Identity Construction

Dramaturgical analysis identified recurring narrative themes such as migration histories, intergenerational dialogues, nostalgia for ancestral homelands, and the negotiation of dual

cultural identities. Performances frequently juxtaposed Chinese mythological motifs with Thai cultural references, producing dramaturgical frameworks that foregrounded cultural plurality rather than essentialized identity.

These narrative strategies conveyed a contemporary understanding of Thai–Chinese identity as fluid, relational, and dynamically constructed within multicultural environments (Xia & Cheng, 2023).

4.2 Performance as a Soft Power Mechanism

Findings indicate that contemporary Thai–Chinese performances function as significant soft power instruments. Through aesthetic attraction, emotional resonance, and cultural legitimacy, these performances enhance Thailand’s cultural visibility and intercultural influence within the ASEAN–China cultural sphere (Nye & Power, 2004).

4.2.1 Cultural Attraction Through Aesthetic Hybridization

Hybrid aesthetic forms—blending Chinese traditional arts with Thai performance idioms—generated high levels of audience engagement, particularly among international tourists and younger urban viewers. Respondents frequently described the performances as “accessible,” “visually intricate,” and “culturally rich,” suggesting that aesthetic hybridization strengthens Thailand’s cultural attractiveness and supports cultural tourism initiatives.

These results correspond with research identifying cultural hybridity as a catalyst for cultural diplomacy and soft power expansion (Isar & Triandafyllidou, 2021).

4.2.2 Emotional Resonance and Shared Sentiment

Music, ritual symbolism, and narrative motifs generated shared

affective experiences among Thai and Chinese audiences. Emotional resonance emerged as a central soft power mechanism by cultivating empathy, nostalgia, and collective sentiment.

Audience interviews underscored that affective engagement contributed to reduced cultural distance and enhanced intercultural rapport, reflecting the role of shared emotional experience in strengthening cultural ties (Mandela, 2024).

4.2.3 Reinforcement of Cultural Legitimacy and Identity

By situating Thai–Chinese heritage within contemporary cultural events, performances reinforced the legitimacy of Thai–Chinese identity as an integral component of mainstream Thai society. This symbolic validation enhanced intercultural recognition and contributed to Thailand’s soft power by projecting an image of inclusivity, cultural diversity, and artistic sophistication.

4.3 Audience Reception and Intercultural Meaning-Making

Audience reception analysis reveals that contemporary Thai–Chinese performances facilitate intercultural understanding at three levels: cognitive, affective, and symbolic.

4.3.1 Cognitive Understanding of Cultural Narratives

Audience responses indicated improved understanding of Thai–Chinese migration histories, community traditions, and intercultural relations. Festival audiences in Bangkok reported gaining clearer insights into the evolution of Thai–Chinese cultural practices, while viewers in Phuket expressed heightened awareness of Chinese influences embedded in local heritage.

4.3.2 Affective Engagement and Empathy Building

Performances encouraged emotional identification with characters negotiating dual cultural identities. This

affective engagement emerged as a key mechanism for fostering intercultural openness and reducing stereotypes.

4.3.3 Symbolic Interpretation and Cultural Reframing

Audience interpretations frequently extended beyond entertainment toward symbolic reframing of Thai–Chinese cultural relations. Many viewers perceived the performances as cultural statements advocating coexistence, shared identity, and collective belonging.

4.4 Structural and Cultural Mechanisms Enabling Intercultural Performance

4.4.1 Institutional Support and Cultural Policy Alignment

Government cultural policies—particularly those promoting cultural tourism, the creative economy, and Thai–Chinese festivals—offer essential structural support for performance-based soft power. Municipal funding, heritage revitalization programs, and cross-cultural exchange initiatives facilitate sustained artistic collaboration.

4.4.2 Artistic Networks and Community Engagement

Cross-cultural artistic networks among Thai performers, Chinese cultural associations, and community stakeholders support the co-creation of authentic yet innovative performance works. These networks foster trust, enable resource sharing, and promote sustained intercultural collaboration.

4.4.3 Cultural Hybridity as a Shared Framework

Cultural hybridity operates as a cultural mechanism that enables performers and audiences to navigate identity complexity. Performances that explicitly foreground hybrid identities generated stronger intercultural resonance and greater soft power impact (Bhabha, 1994).

4.5 Transferable Strategies for Enhancing Soft Power Through Performance Communication

4.5.1 Utilizing Festivals as Soft Power Platforms

Cultural festivals—such as Chinese New Year, the Moon Festival, and contemporary heritage events—serve as effective platforms for projecting Thai–Chinese cultural diplomacy. Integrating contemporary performance forms expands audience reach and strengthens Thailand’s cultural influence.

4.5.2 Strengthening Dialogue Among Artists, Policymakers, and Communities

Dialogue mechanisms—including artist roundtables, intercultural exchange panels, and community co-creation workshops—enhance collaboration, reduce cultural misinterpretation, and ensure greater alignment between artistic innovation and cultural policy objectives (Dinu et al., 2025).

4.5.3 Developing Intercultural Performance Competence

Training programs emphasizing intercultural communication, semiotics, performance analysis, and dramaturgy enhance artists’ capacity to create culturally resonant works. Strengthened intercultural performance competence contributes to broader creative possibilities and enhanced soft power potential.

5. Discussion

5.1.1 Theoretical Significance: Advancing Performance Communication in Cross-Cultural Contexts

This study makes a significant theoretical contribution to the fields of Performance Communication, Cultural Studies, and Soft Power Studies by elucidating the role of contemporary Thai–Chinese performance as a form of cultural mediation. Through qualitative data derived from performance

observation, focus group interviews, and analysis of contemporary media, the findings indicate that Thai–Chinese contemporary performances mobilize embodied movement, physical expression, musical rhythm, scenography, and cultural symbolism to communicate shared identity, intercultural coexistence, and sociocultural values (Wu, 2023; Yuan et al., 2025).

Consistent with the premise that performance functions not merely as an artistic act but as a system of communication embedded in sociocultural contexts (Busch et al., 2025), the study demonstrates that performance communication constructs, represents, and negotiates cultural meanings. The research extends theoretical discussions of cross-cultural performance, showing that contemporary Thai–Chinese performance constitutes an intercultural space where creators and audiences co-interpret symbolic meaning and negotiate cultural identity (Fang, 2023; Yuan et al., 2025).

This reinforces contemporary cultural theory suggesting that intercultural encounters within the arts facilitate the emergence of hybrid cultural identity. Given the longstanding and relatively harmonious relationship between Thailand and the Chinese diaspora, this study contributes an important Southeast Asian perspective to global scholarly discussions on intercultural performance and cultural coexistence.

5.1.2 Performance and Soft Power: Reinforcing Cultural Diplomacy

The findings also underscore the strategic function of contemporary Thai–Chinese performance in cultivating Soft Power, supporting Nye and Power (2004)’s argument that cultural attractiveness shapes

international perceptions and influence. Three key mechanisms were identified: 1) Communication of cultural values 2) Affective engagement and emotional resonance and 3) Production of positive cultural imagery

Performances that integrate Thai and Chinese aesthetic elements—such as hybrid choreographies incorporating dragon–phoenix symbolism, or musical ensembles blending the Chinese *erhu* with Thai *ponglang* instrumentation—effectively generate perceptions of unity-in-diversity, a hallmark of cultural soft power (Yuan et al., 2025).

Moreover, such performances function as cultural diplomacy tools, enhancing the visibility and appeal of both Thai and Chinese cultural identities in local and international contexts, especially when showcased at international arts festivals and cultural exchange initiatives. This demonstrates the capacity of contemporary performance to bridge cultural imaginaries and strengthen bilateral cultural relations.

5.1.3 Bridging Cultural Narratives Through Performance Communication

Insights from directors, performers, and cultural practitioners reveal that contemporary Thai–Chinese performances operate as bridging narratives that connect: 1) Thai–Chinese historical relations 2) Shared musical, theatrical, and aesthetic traditions 3) Diasporic adaptation within Thai society and 4) Hybrid identity formation among younger generations in the global era

Through this process, performance communication transcends symbolic representation to foster shared understanding, cultural empathy, and identity negotiation, aligning with Bhabha (1994)’s theory of hybrid cultural spaces. Contemporary performance thus becomes a transformative medium for rearticulating

cultural narratives and forging relational ties across communities.

5.2 Practical Significance

5.2.1 Creating Intercultural Performance Platforms

The findings highlight the strong potential of co-creative performance spaces in promoting intercultural dialogue and enhancing mutual understanding. Examples include: 1) Thai–Chinese performing arts festivals 2) Student exchange programs in dance, theatre, and music 3) Contemporary performance workshops and 4) Cultural performance projects for tourism

Such platforms serve as cultural bridges that reduce prejudice, facilitate intercultural interaction, and advance cross-cultural learning (Banks, 2015). They contribute to sustainable cultural relations by allowing participants to actively engage with both traditions.

5.2.2 Strengthening Creative Diplomacy

At the policy level, the research suggests that governments, cultural institutions, and creative industries should embrace contemporary Thai–Chinese performance as a strategic mechanism for: 1) Enhancing national and bilateral cultural imagery 2) Stimulating cultural and creative tourism 3) Supporting the creative economy and 4) Expanding Thai–Chinese cultural cooperation

These implications align with UNESCO's (2009) emphasis on the pivotal role of cultural and artistic practices in fostering international understanding and peace-building.

5.2.3 A Model of Thai–Chinese Performance Communication

This study proposes the Thai–Chinese Performance Communication Model, comprising three interrelated layers: 1) Symbolic Level – Use of cultural symbols to communicate shared values 2) Affective Level – Creation of emotional engagement and shared

experience and 3) Relational Level – Development of positive cultural interaction and long-term relationships

This model is applicable to performance practice, cultural management, Soft Power strategy, and cultural diplomacy initiatives involving Thailand and China.

6. Conclusion

In conclusion, this research demonstrates that performance communication in contemporary Thai–Chinese art functions as a vital mechanism for fostering cross-cultural understanding, negotiating hybrid cultural identities, and strengthening cultural soft power within the evolving landscape of Thai–Chinese relations. Qualitative analysis confirms that contemporary performance serves as both a cultural medium and a diplomatic tool, articulating shared meanings while expanding the symbolic and relational space between the two cultures.

The study offers meaningful theoretical contributions by advancing knowledge in performance communication, intercultural performance studies, and cultural identity formation. Practically, it supports the formulation of effective soft-power policies and the design of sustainable platforms for Thai–Chinese cultural exchange.

Future research should examine: 1) cross-national audience perceptions, 2) the impact of digital media on performance communication, and 3) comparative studies of intercultural performance across Southeast Asia.

Such inquiries will deepen the understanding of how contemporary performance reshapes cultural relations in an increasingly interconnected region.

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