

[DOI: 10.20472/IAC.2015.018.137](https://doi.org/10.20472/IAC.2015.018.137)

YA-HSUAN WANG

National Chung Cheng University, TAIWAN

HSIN-JEN CHEN

National Chung Cheng University, TAIWAN

RE-BRANDING THE BRANDED? A SOCIOLOGICAL ANALYSIS ON TAIWAN'S INTERNATIONAL IMAGE BY ENGLISH-SPEAKING COUNTRIES

Abstract:

In spite of Taiwan's rapidly high development in manufacture and technology, it is somehow unknown to international students before they visited Taiwan; with the most confusion with Thailand. Addressing the policy of multicultural education with the focus of international literacy for teachers, this project explores the possibility, depth and width for developing the teaching materials, New Taiwan Image, of international education for English-speaking countries. Based on 24 individual interviews with Taiwan's international students from Australia, United Kingdom, Canada and United States, this study aims to explore Taiwan's international images in terms of its traditional culture, modern culture and popular culture.

According to the research results, the most impressive image for Taiwan is its traditional culture. The researched international students in Taiwan are best impressed by its preservation of traditional cultures, values, and heritages which are equated to Chinese culture. Yet, they are least impressed by its modern culture and popular culture though people in Taiwan are mostly carrying on modern life. The researched students feel ambivalent toward Taiwan's religious rituals like burning ghost money; and consider it as primitive and superstitious. Underneath the appreciation of old-fashioned traditional culture, the "othering" image subtly discloses their western mentality of cultural superiority. One of the most positive images is the reputation of Taiwanese hospitality. International students soon felt people in Taiwan are very kind to white people, yet unkind to non-white people. It is so-called "benevolent racism" because Taiwanese people favor "whiteness".

The above findings show that cultural imperialism is still prevalent; the embedded value of cultural superiority exists in students' projection on other culture. Positive images acknowledge great preservation of exotic old culture and good development of modernity and industrialization. Negative images continuously strengthen the otherness of local culture and construct local custom as backward, weird, or mysterious. Positive and negative images on Taiwan work together to ensure dominant culture superior to any other culture that developed far below modern standard. Mostly, traditional culture was seen a stumbling stone against globalization.

Hence, this article aims to rebrand the branded by suggesting that we shall develop international educational materials from the perspective of critical multiculturalism. International education should focus on constructing knowledge of new Taiwan image with the attitude of cultural equality and social justice towards cultural diversity. It is dedicated to transform and change the current situation of non-recognition or mis-recognition due to insufficient information about Taiwan.

Keywords:

Cultural Imperialism, International Education, National brand, New Taiwan Image