

An Investigation into City Slogan and Its Communication Effect

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Abstract: City slogans play a vital role in facilitating communication between cities and highlighting their unique charm. High-quality slogans are essential for boosting economic development, reviving historical and cultural heritage, and projecting positive images of cities. This survey has compiled slogans from 38 cities in Hubei Province as its corpus and analyzes them from various angles, including content elements, linguistic characteristics, prevalent issues, and quality enhancement, with the aim of offering fresh insights into the promotion of city images.

Keywords: City slogan, Content elements, Linguistic characteristics, Quality enhancement, Image promotion.

1. Introduction

As the process of internationalization accelerates, the quality of urban cultural development has gained increasing significance. A pivotal factor that impacts the quality of urban cultural development is the crafting of city slogans. This is due to the fact that city slogans function as visual emblems and brand cards for a city, reflecting its cultural ambiance and humanistic essence, while also encapsulating the city's natural scenery, local specialties, economic standing, and contemporary spirit (Chen Xiaowei, 2016) [1]. High-quality city slogans have inherent advantages in molding and presenting a city's charm and identity (Li Guangbin, Wang Yong, Yuan Zhongjin, 2006) [2]. Moreover, they also serve as a crucial element in promoting communication between cities, as well as in the development and dissemination of urban images. This study focuses on the city slogans of Hubei province. Hubei Province, a significant inland province situated in central China with robust economic vitality, is rich in high-quality cultural resources and unique cultural symbols. However, related research suggests that the utilization of these cultural symbols in its city slogans is inadequate. In other words, the construction and dissemination of city images in Hubei Province have not kept pace with its economic development (Li Bing, 2021; Zhong Chuankang, 2020) [3][4]. By collecting representative city slogans from major cities in Hubei Province, this study conducted an in-depth analysis of these slogans from various perspectives, including their content composition, linguistic characteristics, prevalent issues, and corresponding strategies for enhancing dissemination effectiveness. The objective is to offer constructive insights for the effective development of city slogans in Hubei Province, thereby facilitating successful

external promotion of those city images.

2. Content Elements and Linguistic Characteristics of City Slogans

City slogans encompass the specific expressions of all linguistic and textual symbols found in urban public spaces. This includes not only commonly used and relatively standardized language signage, but also promotional formats presented through new media channels such as digital television, official websites, WeChat, and Weibo (Wu Fanchao, 2020; Liu Chao et al., 2022) [5][6]. This study conducted a systematic survey of city slogans in 38 cities across Hubei Province. Various samples of city slogans were collected through multiple channels which include official converged media platform, official websites, public slogans, official Weibo accounts, and official WeChat post of the target cities. The collected corpus comprises city slogans from 13 administrative divisions in Hubei Province (including the provincial capital city of Wuhan, the sub-provincial cities of Yichang and Xiangyang, as well as other prefecture-level cities) and 25 county-level cities (including 21 county-level cities under provincial jurisdiction and four directly-administered county-level units: Qianjiang, Tianmen, Xiantao, and Shennongjia Forest District). Text-based city slogans, i.e., slogans presented in written form, were primarily collected from local promotional materials, promotional copy from the city's culture and tourism departments, and government-related external promotional texts. A selection of these text-based city slogan examples is provided in Table 1 below.

Table 1: 28 Examples of City Slogans in Text Form

City	Sample slogan	City	Sample Slogan
1 Wuhan	Great Rivers, Great Lakes, Great Wuhan	15 Tianmen	Hometown of Lu Yu, Naturally Beautiful Tianmen
2 Yichang	Hometown of Qu Yuan and Wang Zhaojun, World Hydropower Capital	16 Xiantao	Human's Fairyland, Dreamlike Watery Town
3 Xiangyang	Lovely Days in Xiangyang	17 Chibi	Tea Road of Thousands of Miles, Chibi's Eastern Winds
4 Jingmen	China's Agricultural Valley, Longevity in Jingmen	18 Guangshui	Picturesque Yingshan, Poetic Guangshui
5 Xiaogan	Filial Piety Touches the World, Emotions Nourish the Landscape	19 Lichuan	The Cool City of China
6 Ezhou	Hubei is Abbreviated as "E," Welcome to Ezhou	20 Anlu	Hometown of Li Bai, Land of Ginkgo Trees
7 Shiyan	Shiyan, A Place Everyone Praises	21 Shishou	Mountain Virtue, Water Charm, Magnificent Shishou
8 Shennongjia	The World is So Big, I Want to Visit Shennongjia	22 Macheng	In April's World, Admire Azaleas in Macheng
9 Xianning	Fragrant City, Hot Spring Capital, Warm Xianning	23 Wuxue	Thousand-Year Buddhist Land, Beautiful Wuxue
10 Qianjiang	Charm of Chu, Homeland of Shrimp, Beautiful Qianjiang	24 Zhongxiang	Source of Refined Elegance, Gathering of Auspicious Zhongxiang

11 Jingzhou	Ancient Capital of Chu, Jingzhou of the Three Kingdoms	25 Zaoyang	Dragon Rises at the Ancient Imperial Land of White Water, Peach Blossoms and Roses in Modern Zaoyang
12 Suizhou	A City that Fulfills Your Desires	26 Dangyang	A City of Three Kingdoms Stories, Eternal Loyalty in Dangyang
13 Huangshi	The Most Beautiful Industrial City, Sparkling Huangshi	27 Zhijiang	Beside the Waters, Magnificent Zhijiang
14 Enshi	A Blessed Land of Oxygen, Enshi's Selenium Riches	28 Danjiangkou	China's Heart of Water, Be Our Guest in Danjiangkou

2.1 Content Elements of City Slogans

Upon analyzing the survey results, it was found that, overall, the content design of city slogans in Hubei Province effectively highlights the unique characteristics of each city, thereby enhancing their promotional impact and facilitating the dissemination of city identities. Specifically, the content of city slogans can be categorized into four main orientations: unique resources, historical and cultural features, city brand, and specialty industries.

2.1.1 Unique resource-oriented

Unique resources refer to natural and social assets that are relatively exclusive to a particular region. City slogans that focus on unique resources often emphasize elements such as mountains, rivers, and distinctive flora to showcase the city's picturesque landscapes and pleasant environment. For example, Wuhan, a prominent central city in China situated along the middle reaches of the Yangtze River, is intersected by a network of rivers and lakes. Its slogan, "Great River, Great Lake, Great Wuhan", highlights the city's majestic, vibrant, and cultural allure. Similarly, the city slogan Ezhou slogan, "Experience the Charm of Wu and Chu Cultures, Explore the Scenic Wonders of a Hundred Lakes", emphasizes the abundance of lakes and diverse wetland types in the city. Another example is the city slogan of Xianning, "Fragrant City, Hot Spring Capital, Warm Xianning", which is based on the city's diverse osmanthus trees and abundant hot spring resources.

2.1.2 Historical and cultural features-oriented

Historical and cultural heritage refers to the social and historical accumulations that have formed during the emergence and development of a city. This includes social customs, religious beliefs, various arts, ideas, historical and cultural artifacts, historic buildings, and urban settlement patterns that have emerged as a result. City slogans that primarily highlight a city's historical and cultural heritage tend to focus on cultural centers, ancient capitals, revolutionary memorial sites, and the hometowns of famous historical figures. For example, Jingzhou, a renowned historical and cultural city in China, is one of the birthplaces of Chu culture and was also a famous ancient battlefield during the Three Kingdoms period. Well-known stories from the Three Kingdoms era, such as "Liu Bei Borrows Jingzhou" and "Guan Yu Carelessly Loses Jingzhou", took place here. Therefore, its slogan "Ancient Capital of Chu, Three Kingdoms Jingzhou" revolves around its long history and legendary tales. Another example is Xiangyang City, whose slogans "Zhuge Liang's Tilling Ground, A Poetic and Picturesque New Xiangcheng" and "Loyalty Endures in Ancient Longzhong, Chivalry Thrives in Xiangyang City" both incorporate cultural elements like the historical figure Zhuge Liang and his hometown, Ancient Longzhong. These city slogan examples illustrate how historical and cultural content serves as a crucial source for crafting city slogans,

helping to convey a city's deep cultural roots and rich historical legacy.

2.1.3 City brand-oriented

A city brand represents the fundamental idea that a city communicates to the public when promoting its image. For instance, Shanghai is recognized as an "International Metropolis", while Hong Kong is famous as a "Shopping Paradise". City slogans that primarily emphasize a city's brand aim to bolster the city's competitiveness by showcasing its intangible assets and strategic resources. One notable example is Yichang's slogan, "Hometown of Qu Yuan and Wang Zhaojun, Renowned World Hydropower City". Yichang serves as a crucial transportation hub in central China and is home to vital strategic facilities like the Three Gorges Dam and Gezhouba Dam, earning it the moniker "World Hydropower Capital". This slogan underscores Yichang's core competitiveness by highlighting its city brand as a "Hydropower City". Another example is Suizhou's slogan, "Hometown of Yan Di and Shen Nong, Cradle of Chinese Chimes", which centers on promoting "chime bells" to emphasize Suizhou's significant position as the "Cradle of Chinese Chimes" and enhance its city brand.

2.1.4 Specialty industries-oriented

Specialty industries refer to sectors or industrial clusters that harness their "uniqueness" to secure a competitive advantage, often embodying the core market competitiveness of a region. City slogans that prominently feature specialty industries aim to showcase industries with robust local characteristics or competitive strengths. For instance, Huangshi City is a vital raw material industrial hub in central China, encompassing eight major industrial clusters: ferrous metals, non-ferrous metals, machinery manufacturing, building materials, energy, food and beverage, textile and apparel, and chemical and pharmaceutical industries. When promoting Huangshi, slogans are frequently crafted around its industrial growth. The slogan "The Most Beautiful Industrial City, Radiant Huangshi" emphasizes the city's industrial attributes.

Similarly, Shiyan City has been a pivotal national automobile industry center since the establishment and development of New China, boasting strong expertise in automobile manufacturing. Centered on this industrial trait, Shiyan features distinctive slogans like "A Picturesque Automotive City Amid Fairy Mountains and Crystal Waters" and "Seek Wisdom at Wudang Mountains, Chase Dreams in the Automotive City". These city slogans effectively convey the distinct identity and competitive edge of their respective cities by leveraging the diverse elements of their specialty industries.

2.2 Linguistic Characteristics of City Slogans

Among the 38 cities in Hubei Province, 34 use city slogans in a monolingual format (Chinese), whereas 4 cities adopt

bilingual slogans in both Chinese and English. From a linguistic standpoint, the Chinese city slogans display the following characteristics:

2.2.1 Crafting Memorable Points to Enhance Dissemination Effectiveness

City slogans are the most convenient and intuitive way to communicate a city's unique charm. Therefore, to design memorable points for a city, it is necessary to delve deeply into the most representative features of the city from its history, culture, landscape, and humanistic sentiment, while amplifying these characteristics and fully showcasing the city's unique charm. For example, Xianning city is notable for its rich variety of osmanthus flowers, large number of osmanthus trees, and abundant hot spring resources. Its city slogan "Fragrant City, Hot Spring Capital, Warm Xianning" makes use of the city's characteristic of osmanthus fragrance, affectionately referring to it as the "Fragrant City" and "Hot Spring Capital", to create a memorable point for the city. At the same time, it cleverly combines the pleasant atmosphere of floral scent and hot spring steam, showcasing Xianning's warm city landscape and humanistic charm. Besides, the two city slogans of Xiangyang City, "Zhuge Liang's Tilling Ground, A Picturesque New Xiangcheng" and "Sage of Wisdom's Tilling Place, A Timeless City of Noble Spirit" showcase the city's profound historical and cultural heritage through the well-known historical figures, instantly immersing audience in a strong cultural atmosphere and leaving a deep impression in their hearts.

2.2.2 Utilizing Rhetoric Devices to Achieve Artistic Beauty

City slogans often aim to capture the essence and unique features of a city in just a few words, utilizing various rhetorical devices to enhance their literary quality and expressiveness. Scholars emphasize that the strategic use of linguistic rhetoric is crucial for crafting an effective city promotional slogan, as it can significantly boost the slogan's persuasiveness, artistic appeal, and ability to leave a lasting impression on the public, thereby strengthening the dissemination of the city's image (Liu Chao, Xiong Kairong, Zhang Yuxuan, et al., 2022; Xiao Xuefeng, 2013; Liang Xu, 2013; Li Xiaoqun, 2013) [6][7][8][9]. Metaphors, personification, and hyperbole are among the most commonly employed rhetorical techniques. In addition to these, rhetorical devices encompass a wide range of linguistic expression means, spanning various linguistic levels such as phonetics, vocabulary, sentence structure, and discourse (Wang Guosheng, Feng Guangyi, 2009) [10]. This study also revealed the prevalent use of rhetorical devices in city slogans across major cities in Hubei Province, encompassing the linguistic levels of phonetics, vocabulary, and sentence structures.

For instance, the slogan of Wuhan City "高山流水、白云黄鹤" (Lofty Mountains and Flowing Waters, White Clouds and Yellow Cranes) makes use of the tonal balance between level and oblique tones ("高gāo" and "白bái" are level tones, while "水shuǐ" and "鹤hè" are oblique tones in Chinese), creating a rhythmic cadence at the phonetic level. Similarly, city slogan

of Jingzhou "Hometown of the Three Kingdoms, Enchanting Jingzhou" employs a tonal pattern of "level-level-oblique-oblique, oblique-oblique-level-level" rhythm exemplifying the strategic use of phonetic rhetorical arrangement to achieve a special rhythmic effect. Lexical rhetorical devices are frequently used in city slogans. For example, the city slogan of Shiyuan, "Shiyuan, a City Praised by All", employs a pun on "Praised" whose Chinese equivalent is "道"(dào), which also refers to "Taoism", highlighting both its renowned Taoist heritage at Wudang Mountain and the city's good reputation. Another example is the city slogan of Ezhou, "Hubei is Abbreviated as 'E' and Ezhou Welcomes You", which uses anadiplosis to create a tightly knit and symmetrical structure, achieving fluency and rhythmic beauty. Chinese sentence structures, whether parallel or scattered, also have distinct expressive effects. Creators of city slogans can choose diverse sentence structures to express various emotions and attitudes towards the target city. For example, Wudangshan District's slogan, "Seek the Way at Wudang Mountain, Nurture Health at Taiji Lake", achieves formal beauty and rhythm through the use of a parallel structure with concise language, a balanced format, and clear meaning. The city slogan of Enshi, "Tourism and Wellness Hub—Ecological Enshi Prefecture", adopts a scattered structure to introduce variation and achieve an effect of aesthetic grace.

2.2.3 Blending Creativity and Aesthetics to Improve Dissemination Power

Slogans that integrate creativity and aesthetics can quickly capture the audiences' attention and fully demonstrate its persuasive power. As fragmented reading increasingly becomes a part of people's ordinary lives, city slogans must create a lasting impression in a short time to skillfully demonstrating a city's charm. By integrating city features with the tactic use of rhetorical devices creatively, some unique aesthetic effects would be achieved to attract the audiences' attentions towards the city slogans.

For example, the city slogan of Shennongjia, "The World is So Big, I Want to Visit Shennongjia" demonstrates its creativity and approachability with its playful adaptation of the popular internet meme "The world is so big, I want to go and see it." Moreover, the slogan concludes with the rhyme "a" featuring an open vowel sound and an uplifting tone, making it catchy, harmonious, and pleasing to the ear. This enhances the rhythmic beauty of the language. There are numerous other examples of slogans that seamlessly blend creativity with aesthetic appeal. For instance: (1) the use of homophones "襄(xiāng)" and "相(xiāng)" in two samples of city slogans of Xiangyang: "有缘千里来襄会"/"一座城池, 襄见恨晚"; (2) the rhythmic patterns of 2//2//2//1 in city slogan of Suizhou "Follow your heart, follow your wishes" and 2//2, 2//2 in city slogan of Xiaogan "Xiaogan touches the world, love nourishes the landscapes"; (3) the skillful treatment of embedding the name of the city creatively into its slogan: characters "宜昌" in its city slogan "宜人之城, 昌盛之地" and "仙桃" in its city slogan "人间'仙'境, '桃'醉天下". These slogan samples are unique, well-crafted, rhythmically smooth, and conducive to broad dissemination.

3. Problems of City Slogan and Enhancement of Its Communication Effect

A city slogan functions as a self-promotional statement for a city, encapsulating its image and serving as a textual business card (Chen Xiaowei, 2016). The quality of slogan text has a significant impact on the dissemination of a city's image. Identifying issues in current city slogans and exploring targeted improvement measures to enhance slogan quality are also key objectives of this survey.

3.1 Problems of City Slogans

The purpose of creating city slogans is to facilitate communication among various regions and cities, and to craft unique images for these cities through their slogans. However, during the process of sorting and analyzing slogan samples from 38 cities in Hubei Province, the study has identified the following issues with those city slogans.

3.1.1 Low Language Diversity and Uneven Distribution

A review of the foreign language slogans for 38 cities in Hubei Province reveals that only 4 cities have adopted bilingual slogans, accounting for a mere 10.5%. The overwhelming majority of cities have slogans only in Chinese. Furthermore, the survey found that some county-level cities with relatively lower economic levels do not even have representative city slogans. This suggests that the slogans of the 38 cities in Hubei Province exhibit limited language diversity and uneven regional development.

3.1.2 Repetitive Vocabularies and Insufficient Innovation

In the current survey, a total of 155 English and Chinese slogans for 38 cities in Hubei Province were collected from various sources, including government websites, official tourism bureau websites, Zhihu, Weibo, official public accounts, Tencent Video, Youku Video, and other mainstream media platforms. Textual analysis revealed that expressions such as ".....之地" (the land of...) and ".....之城" (the city of...) appeared repeatedly 21 times, accounting for 13.5% of the total. The phrase "魅力....." ("charming...") appeared 21 times, accounting for 13.5% of the total. The phrase "魅力....." ("charming...") was also used 6 times, highlighting a common issue among the city slogans: repetitive vocabulary and a lack of innovative expressions.

3.1.3 Weak Performance in Promotion and Dissemination

The survey data also reveals that some city slogans are hindered by a limited promotion channel and inadequate information dissemination. In the era of new online media, while people have numerous ways to access the latest information, there are sometimes instances where mainstream media fail to convey official information promptly, leading to insufficient promotion efforts. On popular apps such as "Douyin" (TikTok in China), "Weibo", and "Xiaohongshu" (Little Red Book), there are relatively few city promotion channels related to Hubei. Taking Ezhou City as an example, it currently has only one relevant English video titled "Guanyin Pavilion" that has been viewed over 100,000 times

on Facebook. Information showcasing the charm of Ezhou on other popular social media platforms, such as Twitter and YouTube, is scarce. This highlights the need for much more effort to be invested in the promotion and dissemination of city slogans.

3.2 Suggestions for Improving the Quality of City Slogans

City slogans play a crucial role in accelerating the process of city internationalization and promoting city cultural outreach. The present survey reports on the current state of city slogans in Hubei Province, highlighting various forms of high-quality slogans as well as the problems that exist in their construction and dissemination. The survey found that, although city slogans in Hubei Province have effectively inherited cultural elements and promoted city development, they still face challenges such as limited language diversity, a lack of innovative quality, and insufficient dissemination power, as mentioned above. Based on these findings, the following suggestions for improving the quality of city slogans in the context of the new era are put forward.

3.2.1 Deeply Explore Cultural Connotations and Forge a Cultural Core in Slogans

The excellent traditional local cultures, with their enduring charm, offer invaluable material for creating city slogans. Therefore, the designers of city slogans must adeptly harness the distinctive cultural idiosyncrasies of each metropolis, such as the historical "Three Kingdoms" legacy of Xiangyang and Jingzhou, the ancient "Chu" heritage of Yichang, and the indigenous "Tujia" traditions of Enshi, to craft slogans that encapsulate the cultural quintessence and foster the rejuvenation of these unique cultural narratives.

3.2.2 Strengthen Promotion Efforts and Value Dissemination on Social Media Platforms

City slogans should harness innovative new media strategies to broaden the scope and impact of promotional efforts, enhancing the diversity of slogan presentation forms. In the digital era, it is crucial to recognize the subtle influence of online converged media on the public, and to leverage this to create a powerful dissemination force for city slogans. Taking the short video platform "Douyin" (TikTok in China) as an example, numerous popular city IPs, such as "Chongqing Hot Pot", "Wuhan Cherry Blossoms", and "Chengdu Pandas", have emerged on this platform, leaving a lasting impression on audiences. Therefore, city slogan designers can draw inspiration from online trends for creative innovation. This may involve incorporating popular local IPs into the content and strategically utilizing "internet buzzwords" in the language, while also leveraging new media platforms to increase visibility and expand the slogans' influence.

3.2.3 Enhance Inter-City Communication and Innovate Slogan Construction

As economic, political, and cultural exchanges among cities become increasingly frequent, cities in Hubei Province should seize this opportunity to learn from the slogan development experiences of international metropolises and draw inspiration from the slogan creation strategies of renowned

domestic cities. By doing so, they can enhance the quality of their city slogans by addressing issues such as limited vocabulary and a lack of innovation. For instance, various linguistic rhetorical devices, such as puns, alliteration, and rhyme, can be fully utilized to enhance the aesthetic appeal of city slogans. In terms of form, the use of multiple four-character phrases and well-crafted antithetical structures can be adopted to improve the rhythmic quality and reinforce the memorability of the slogans.

4. Conclusion

City slogans typically condense the essence of a city's image into a concise phrase, effectively conveying its cultural connotations (Wang Deyi & Shi Xiangdong, 2016). High-quality city slogans play a crucial role in promoting urban economic development, revitalizing historical and cultural heritage, and projecting the city's external image. Therefore, when communicating the city's humanistic qualities, showcasing its natural landscape, and promoting its regional resources, city slogans must be crafted to ensure clear comprehension among audiences from diverse cultural backgrounds. Furthermore, high-quality city slogans should swiftly capture the attention of international audiences and leave a lasting impression on them over time.

This paper presents an investigation into representative city slogans of 38 cities from Hubei Province, with research findings encompassing the construction elements, linguistic features, and prevalent issues of these slogans. Based on these findings, we propose three suggestions to enhance the communication effectiveness of city slogans: delving deeply into the cultural connotations of the city, fully utilizing social media platforms for dissemination and promotion, and innovating the approach to slogan creation. We hope that these suggestions will offer insightful strategies for shaping successive city images in the international landscape of the new era.

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