

A Comparative Semantic Network Study between Chinese and Western Festivals

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Abstract : With the expansion of globalization and the increment of market competition, the festival, especially the traditional one, has demonstrated its vitality under the new context. As a new tourist attraction, festivals play a critically important role in promoting the tourism economy, because the organization of a festival can engage more tourists, generate more revenues and win a wider media concern. However, in the current stage of China, traditional festivals as a way to disseminate national culture are undergoing the challenge of foreign festivals and the related culture. Different from those special events created solely for developing economy, traditional festivals have their own culture and connotation. Therefore, it is necessary to conduct a study on not only protecting the tradition, but promoting its development as well. This study conducts a comparative study of the development of China's Valentine's Day and Western Valentine's Day under the Chinese context and centers on newspaper reports in China from 2000 to 2016. Based on the literature, two main research focuses can be established: one is concerned about the festival's impact and the other is about tourists' motivation to engage in a festival. Newspaper reports serve as the research discourse and can help cover the two focal points. With the assistance of content mining techniques, semantic networks for both Days are constructed separately to help depict the status quo of these two festivals in China. Based on the networks, two models are established to show the key component system of traditional festivals in the hope of perfecting the positive role festival tourism plays in the promotion of economy and culture. According to the semantic networks, newspaper reports on both festivals have similarities and differences. The difference is mainly reflected in its cultural connotation, because westerners and Chinese may show their love in different ways. Nevertheless, they share more common points in terms of economy, tourism, and society. They also have a similar living environment and stakeholders. Thus, they can be promoted together to revitalize some traditions in China. Three strategies are proposed to realize the aforementioned aim. Firstly, localize international festivals to suit the Chinese context to make it function better. Secondly, facilitate the internationalization process of traditional Chinese festivals to receive more recognition worldwide. Finally, allow traditional festivals to compete with foreign ones to help them learn from each other and elucidate the development of other festivals. It is believed that if all these can be realized, not only the traditional Chinese festivals can obtain a more promising future, but foreign ones are the same as well. Accordingly, the paper can contribute to the theoretical construction of festival images by the presentation of the semantic network. Meanwhile, the identified features and issues of festivals from two different cultures can enlighten the organization and marketing of festivals as a vital tourism activity. In the long run, the study can enhance the festival as a key attraction to keep the sustainable development of both the economy and the society.

Keywords : Chinese context, comparative study, festival tourism, semantic network analysis, valentine's day

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