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The Role of Confucius Institute in Shaping China's National Image in Botswana: Case of CI Students

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KEYWORDS

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Soft power
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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this article is to examine the role of Confucius Institute in Shaping China's National Image in Botswana in the case of CI Students. The Confucius Institute at the University of Botswana (CIUB) is employed as a case study which is identified as the most active Chinese soft power instrument in Botswana. The paper uses a qualitative research method to help better understand the benefits and limitations of CIUB in creating China's positive image in Botswana. Primary data is obtained from questionnaires whilst secondary data is derived from journal papers, thesis, and books. The study is framed by soft power theory to assist in learning how China utilises its soft power to improve its image in Botswana. The analysis revealed that CIUB has been fruitful in promoting Chinese language and culture in Botswana impacting positively on China's national image. The findings of the study show that CIUB has the potential to clear some negative perceptions about China in Botswana. However, the limitation as indicated by the study is that CIUB does not have wide coverage of the population of Botswana as it targets mostly students. It is suggested that CIUB as a single tool cannot fully address all the concerns affecting China's image.

Introduction

This is a qualitative case study which aims at examining the role of Confucius Institute at the University of Botswana (CIUB) in shaping China's national

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image in Botswana. The study is based on the case of students enrolled in the CI program. The article will argue that although this is based on students, it is still demonstrative of the role CIUB plays in shaping China's national image in the country. The significance of the role of CIUB is that it is the most active Chinese soft power instrument in Botswana which have attracted many Batswana who are interested to learn more about China. Therefore, it can be argued that the Chinese government uses CIUB to enhance China's national image in Botswana.

Background of CIUB

CIUB was set up in 2009 in Gaborone, the capital city of Botswana and three Confucius classrooms operating at Maru a Pula, Legae, Westwood and Rainbow high schools in Botswana (Youngman 2013, 12). In 2018, CIUB successfully opened a Chinese language teaching point in Francistown, Botswana's second largest city, after the first one was set up at the Botswana International University of Science and Technology (BIUST) in the village of Palapye. The purpose of CIUB is to enhance the understanding of the people in Botswana on Chinese language and culture, develop friendly relations between China and Botswana, and to promote diversified cultural development in Botswana (Youngman 2013, 12). Its main roles include: to carry out Chinese Language teaching for people of different social circles; train Chinese language teachers and Chinese language teacher certification; provide information on education, culture, economy, and society in China; carry out research on contemporary China; and provide services for the Hanyǔ Shuǐping Kǎoshi (HSK) test meaning Chinese proficiency language test (Youngman 2013, 12). Mandarin Chinese classes are also extended to targeted groups such as immigration officials, police officers, court interpreters, labour officials, bank tellers, private sector, and the public at large. According to University of Botswana Official, since its formation in 2009, CIUB has enrolled around 8,500 students, an average of 900 per given year and 11 language teachers from China. It has organised 44 scholarships for Batswana to study at Chinese universities (Youngman 2013). CIUB has

attracted many Batswana who want to engage in business with Chinese both in Botswana and China, study in China and to gain educational and professional development (Keimetswe 2016).

Problem Statement

China's rising influence not only in Botswana but across Africa is gaining more and more international attention from many news reporters, students, professors, and politicians across the world. As a result, there have been formation of negative perceptions and persistent widespread of deeply held stereotypes about China in Africa. For instance, Khodadadzadeh (2017) indicates that China is continually denounced for resource exploitation, developmental state debt trap, corruption, neo-colonialism, land grab and dictatorship in Africa. As far as Botswana-China relations are concerned in this study, Moahi (2015, 62) and Youngman (2017, 14) show that there are negative perceptions ascribed to the general public, government elites and politicians with regards to China's engagement in Botswana. Both authors indicate that Chinese contractors are perceived as poor service providers for the infrastructural development of Botswana. Youngman (2017, 14) listed Morupule B Power Plant, Sir Seretse Khama International airport, Lobatse-Gaborone-Francistown stadiums, and Northern & Eastern secondary schools as some of the projects which were poorly constructed by the Chinese in Botswana. Further to this, Moahi (2015, 70) stated that policy advisors from both the governing Botswana Democratic Party (BDP), opposition parties and the general public at large have criticized Chinese contractors for the above-mentioned construction projects.

Moreover, according to Moahi (2015, 70), Chinese nationals are perceived as catalyst for crime and impropriety in Botswana. The author also pointed out that Chinese in Botswana have been accused of bribery attempts of government officers, selling counterfeit products and poaching of wildlife animals like elephants and rhinos for their trunks/horn products. He revealed that Chinese are perceived as unfair competitors for local business industries. According to Moahi (2015, 71), Chinese are giving local businessmen

competition in textile industries by selling fake German prints apparels also known as "Mateisi" putting local fashion designers out of business. Moreover, there have been anxieties among the public that China is trying to colonise them (Youngman 2017).

Significance and Relevance of the Study

Given the above challenges, there is a need for China to shape its national image in Botswana. Therefore, the study aims to examine how the Confucius Institute as a soft power tool help to shape China's national image in Botswana. Soft power instruments promote understanding, cultivate positive images, and disseminate myths in favour of the source country (Alexander 2009, 13). In this manner, soft power perspective will be used to address problem formulation of the study. The research will use the Confucius Institute at the University of Botswana (CIUB) as a case study as it serves to promote China's national image through Chinese language and culture. It gives CIUB students opportunities to study in China exposing them to the Chinese way of life and the contemporary realities of China (Mahoney 2019). It is hoped that the findings of the research can have practical usefulness for policymakers in the Botswana-China relations, post-graduate students and sinologists (Youngman 2017). Moreover, the study will contribute to the scarcity of scholarly studies on China's national image in Botswana (Youngman 2017).

Theoretical framework

According to Gratton and Jones (2010, 78), theories are explanations for why things happen. The authors stated that theoretical framework is the foundation from which all knowledge for an exploration study is developed. It serves as the structure and foundation for the problem statement, research significance and purpose of the study (Gratton and Jones 2010, 12). This paper has identified negative discernments or perceptions about China in Botswana

and hence the aim to examine how China uses CIUB as a soft power instrument to shape its national image in Botswana.

Hailong (2019, 35) defines a country's national image as the overall impression that people have of that country. The author pointed out that national image encompasses the state's actions, accomplishments, observable national spirit, and capabilities. A country's national image is important in maintaining good international relations (Xingrui 2016): a favourable national image may persuade other countries' foreign policy to favour a country, increase trade earnings, and attract tourists and foreign investment. As a result, many governments are using soft power to boost their national image around the world because of these benefits (Xingrui 2016).

Soft power theory

Nye (2004, 1) defines "power" as the ability to get the results one wants. He further describes power as the capability to affect the behaviour of others to get the results one wants. He points out that with power one can either coerce others with threats or attract and co-opt them to get your desired outcomes (Nye 2004, 2). A country may obtain its desired outcomes in political affairs if other countries are attracted to its values, desire to imitate its example and aspire to its level of prosperity and openness (Nye 2004, 5). He emphasised that it is crucial to set the agenda and attract others in the political world rather than forcing them to change by economic sanctions and military force (Nye 2004, 5).

Nye (2004, 5) defines "soft power" as getting others to want the outcomes that you want and attracting people rather than forcing. He states that the power of attraction rests on the ability to shape the preferences of others. The author also connects soft power with intangible assets such as an attractive culture, political values, policies, and institutions that are perceived as moral and authentic influence. According to Alexander (2009, 3), China has embraced the concept of soft power as a prominent part of its comprehensive state power. China's concept of soft power is centred around three features of attraction i.e., benignity, brilliance, and beauty (Mirza *et al.* 2020, 42). These

are discussed below:

a) Benignity

According to Alexander (2009), benignity is a facet of the state's relations with others, especially with the user of soft power. He described it as the positive attitudes that you express when you approach people. It generates soft power through gratefulness and compassion (Alexander 2009, 5). He further stated that benignity can be expressed in different ways, that is, when one is benevolent, compassionate, unselfish, and non-threatening to others can attract other people and they are likely to take his or her interests seriously (Alexander 2009). In this way, it produces gratitude and empathy. This is in line with the purpose of Confucius Institutes, which is to promote innovation, and also exemplifies the positive image and concept of peaceful growth (Yanjun 2014). This even supports Confucius teachings and writings who conveyed admiration for a leader who depends on moral leadership and moral power rather than the use of force or coercion (Mirza *et al.* 2020, 42). Therefore, we can conclude that the Chinese concept of soft power is preferably peaceful and attractive in nature and that CIs have a good chance of shaping China's national image in the minds of CI students.

b) Brilliance

China's conception of soft power is also centred on the idea of brilliance, regarded as a facet of the state's relations with its work (Alexander 2009, 5). It refers to the high productivity that you achieve when you do the work. It generates soft power through the production of admiration. According to Alexander (2009, 5), brilliance can manifest through a powerful military, strong economy, rich culture and a great science and technology. Brilliance in the context of soft power shows that one is capable of success and successful people naturally attracts others because they solve problems well (Alexander 2009, 5). Brilliance produces admiration which can lead to imitation. I agree with Alexander's perspective here, as this relays well with the Chinese soft

power. Some African governments have attempted to mimic China's economic model and growth in order to develop their own economies. This is also consistent with the Confucius Institute's portrayal of Chinese vibrant culture. The majority of CI students admire Chinese culture and are curious about how China has managed to preserve its cultural heritage over time. As a result, this can help shape China's national image.

c) Beauty

Lastly, China's conception of soft power is focused on the notion of beauty. Alexander (2009, 6) defined beauty as a facet of actors' relations with ideals, values, causes, or visions. Beauty gives actors a sense of warmth and security, hope and self-extension, identity and community, and vindication and praise. Beauty generates soft power through the production of inspiration (Alexander 2009, 6). He emphasised a strong persuasion, convincing articulation, selfless devotion, and unmoved persistence for an ideal, value, cause, or vision may inspire that very ideal, value, cause, or vision in others (Alexander 2009, 12). The beauty of China's soft power is exemplified here by its unique development model and its recent win-win approach in dealing with the outside world (Mirza *et al.* 2020, 42). It attracts the world despite of its unique culture, economic and political systems (Mirza *et al.* 2020, 42). This also applies to Confucius Institutes, which promote China's unique arts and culture in order to boost the country's international image.

China's Role and Direction in International Relations through CI

China has steadily assumed new positions in the international community since the turn of the century (Liu 2017, 233). The country is recognizing the importance of bolstering its soft power by establishing a reputation as a responsible large nation with peaceful development and a harmonious civilisation (Liu 2017, 233). Many initiatives have been launched to increase China's soft power as part of the country's national strategic plan (Xiao 2017, 26). Among these initiatives is the establishment and expansion of the

Confucius Institutes (CIs) network around the world.

CIs are public educational and cultural promotion programs that began in 2004 and are overseen by the Office of Chinese Language Council International, also known as Hanban, in Beijing (Xiao 2017). It aims to meet the global demand for Chinese language learning, improve students' understanding of Chinese language and culture, and strengthen cultural exchanges with other countries (Xiao 2017, 33). Furthermore, CI is positioned as a non-profit public educational organization with the goal of fostering international friendship and promoting a world of diversity and harmony (Xiao 2017, 33). The Confucius Institute has encouraged commercial and trade cooperation while fulfilling its major cultural objective as an institution that distributes Chinese culture around the world. Confucius Institutes have helped to mitigate the negative effects of cultural disparities between China and other nations through cultural exchanges and dissemination, as well as promoting Chinese enterprises' foreign direct investment (FDI) in host countries (Jin-Young *et al.*, 5). Confucius Institutes in Africa demonstrate China's approach to development aid, particularly through cooperative bilateral student exchange and technology transfer in agriculture and textile engineering (Shoemaker 2017, 55).

As previously stated, the Confucius Institute contributes to China's foreign impact (Xiao 2017, 34). It may be concluded that Confucius Institutes located in Botswana and throughout other countries and regions are valuable tools for bridging cross-national contacts in international affairs, politics, economics, and trade, as well as culture, education, and science and technology (Xiao 2017, 34).

International Presence of CI

Confucius Institutes are springing up all over the world as part of a claimed effort to promote China's national image through soft power initiatives (Lijadu 2018). The author indicates that CIs have a similar objective and are fashioned after Western cultural institutes such as the *Institut Français* in

France, the Goethe Institute in Germany, and the British Council in the United Kingdom. Since the late 19th and early 20th centuries, such organisations have functioned across Africa (Lijadu 2018). The British Council was founded in 1934, while the *Alliance Française* was founded in 1883. Despite joining the game 100 years late, China is currently only second to France in terms of the number of cultural institutes around the world (Lijadu 2018).

Outside of China, there are more than 500 Confucius Institutes, according to Akhtaruzza, Berg, and Lien (2017, 244). The first Confucius Institute debuted in South Korea in 2004 and swiftly spread to Japan, Australia, Canada, Europe, and Africa (Dennis 2018). Africa has 46 CIs in 32 countries out of the 54 countries that make up the continent (Akhtaruzza *et al.* 2017, 244). South Africa and Kenya have the most, with five and four CIs, respectively. Tanzania, Ghana, Egypt, Madagascar, Nigeria, Morocco, and Ethiopia are among the African countries with two CIs.

In comparison with other cultural institutes, China's 48 Confucius Institutes place it only behind France (which has 180 *Alliance Française* centres) in terms of international cultural centres in Africa, but far ahead of the United States (40 centres), the United Kingdom (38), Portugal (34), and Germany (21) (Bhaya 2018). Furthermore, the CI does not have the same history and scope as the *Alliance Française*, which has been in operation for more than 130 years and has more than 800 locations, nor does it have the same scale and impact as the British Council, which administers 3 million IELTS (The International English Language Testing System) tests each year and whose results are accepted by more than 10,000 organizations worldwide (Liu 2019). Despite the fact that China is establishing institutions similar to those that have existed in Europe for decades, it is their structure that sets them apart from their Western counterparts (Lijadu 2018). The author pointed out that office space, classroom space, and institutional support are provided by the host university. Lecturers and financing are provided by China, and classes are given in accordance with the university's curriculum (Lijadu 2018). As a result of this structure, CIs have been particularly contentious in the United States, where there have been charges that Confucius Institutes are being utilised to

serve Chinese government interests while also jeopardizing academic integrity (Lijadu 2018).

Perspective of CI in other countries

According to Horsley (2021), more than half of the CIs in the United States have been forced to close due to a federal campaign and political pressure against their claimed negative impact. He stated that a drop in American student interest in China studies and Mandarin Chinese learning has also occurred. Due to this situation, Horsley suggested that the Biden administration should lift, or issue necessary waivers of, federal funding prohibitions on universities that demonstrate improper academic freedom and institutional controls surrounding their CIs. Whereas the university administrators advocated for CI management enhancements such as defining the authority of US institutions and making agreements public (Horsley 2021).

Prior to the above, on February 19, 2019, Leiden University in the Netherlands announced that its cooperation with the Confucius Institute would be terminated (Leiden University 2019). Sweden followed suit in 2020, terminating relationships with all of the country's Confucius Institutes (Moody 2020). In response to this, in June 2020, China's Ministry of Education reformed the CI project, executing a Chinese Communist Party (CCP)-approved reform plan to promote CIs as a major force for cultural and educational exchange with other countries (Horsley 2021). The author indicated that the Ministry of Education replaced Hanban with a new body, the Centre for Language Education and Cooperation, to oversee international language and cultural exchanges (CLEC). Given the latest information on the current situation of CI, this makeover appears to be inadequate to dispel fears about CIs' presence in Western countries (Horsley 2021).

However, there is less opposition to Confucius Institutes at any, if not all, in African universities. For instance, at the University of Cape Coast in Ghana, Lijadu (2018) indicates that there has never been a conflict of interest between a government-funded institution and academic freedom. Instead, for Africans, Confucius Institutes offer a major alternative for purifying their

university degrees and, as a result, increasing their prospects of landing a job or doing business with China (AFRASO 2019). Furthermore, CI at Kenyatta University has demonstrated that it has aided China in changing students' attitudes toward its language and culture, and, more importantly, it has changed negative perceptions of China in the country (Oluka 2013). According to a study conducted by Procopio (2015) using a case study of CI students in South Africa, CI is beneficial in allowing students to widen their knowledge and comprehension of China, allowing them to voice favourable, or at the very least less biased, perspectives about China. From the standpoint of Botswana, CI is well-received and has attracted a large number of people who wish to learn Chinese for a variety of reasons. There have never been any misunderstandings or disinformation concerning the institute in the past.

We may conclude from the preceding discussion that, based on the statistics of Confucius Institutes around the world, they have grown rapidly in a short period of time. Since its inception, CI's popularity has surpassed that of other cultural institutions, ranking it second only to the *Alliance Française*. Their involvement in international relations has enabled them to mature and achieve success in a number of nations, primarily in Africa. As a result, we can conclude that CIs, as soft power tools, are more likely to improve China's national image in Africa, where they are warmly welcomed, than in the West, where they are overwhelmingly rejected. They appear to be successful in Africa since their purpose is to complement China's bilateral relations with the region (Przychodniak 2019). In the United States and European countries, however, they are unsuccessful in counterbalancing bad information offered in public discourse (Procopio 2015). The United States, the Netherlands, and Sweden, for the reasons previously stated, recognize that CI action conflicts with their objective. Therefore, we should expect to see more CI branches in Africa than in the West in the future.

Methods

Williams (2007, 66) defines research methodology as the broad approach

taken by the researcher in carrying out the research project. For this study, I employed a qualitative research design using a case study approach. Qualitative research, according to Saldana (2011, 3), is an exploration that encompasses a wide range of ways and methods for studying natural social science. I used the qualitative approach as appropriate to investigate new occurrences and to record people's thoughts, feelings, and interpretations of meaning and process (Given 2008, 26). Therefore, this method was suitable to gather the thoughts and perceptions of Batswana on China's national image and to further examine the role that China plays in shaping its national image in Botswana.

In this study, a case study of the Confucius Institute at the University of Botswana (CIUB) was adopted. According to Creswell (2014, 43), case studies are a design of inquiry found in various fields, particularly evaluation, in which the examiner develops an in-depth analysis of a case, often a program, activity, event process, or one or more individuals. As stated earlier, the case is chosen as it serves to promote China's national image through Chinese language and culture. By far CIUB is the most active Chinese soft power instrument which have attracted multitudes of Batswana interested to learn Mandarin Chinese.

Data collection method

Data collection for case studies entails a variety of methods as the researcher constructs an in-depth image of the case (Creswell 2014, 132). Interviews, questionnaire, direct observation, participant observation, papers, and archival records are six types of data collecting for case studies (Creswell 2014). To examine the role of CIUB in shaping China's national image in Botswana in the case of CI students, primary data was collected from the students using a questionnaire which contained open-ended questions. The study also relied on secondary data such as journal articles, dissertation papers and academic books to provide recent information on the study topic. Therefore, one can be reasonably guaranteed that all the above can be considered as valid and reliable sources of data.

Population Sample

In this study, an open-ended questionnaire was conducted using a purposive sample. CIUB students were selected as they can inform an understanding of the study's research topic (Creswell 2014, 126). The sample size comprised of twenty (20) participants who all managed to respond to the questions. The demographic data of the respondents below mirrors the variety of their ages, identities, and educational background (Keimetswe 2016). The respondents are students, UB staff, and employees at company, businessmen/women, and civil servants (Keimetswe 2016). The respondents' ages included those under thirty (30) years to those over forty years (40). They also have different educational backgrounds, from the university students, BA to MA holders. Figure 1 presents the socio demographics of the participants.

Analysis and Results

In a qualitative study where case study research approach is used, data analysis entails organizing the data, compressing it into themes, and displaying it in discussions or tables (Berg 2009). A series of themes were found on the data sets through a thematic analysis where I organised, described and interpreted the data. I especially used a thematic analysis as it assists in producing insightful and trustworthy results.

The results are based on three questions which were pivotal to this case study. I developed a list of significant statements from the questionnaire in order to ensure non-repetitive and non-overlapping statements. The grouped statements noted from the data were collected together into units of information which are referred to here as themes and were linked to the objectives of the study which seeks to address the main aim of the study. The main aim of the study was to examine the role of CIUB in shaping China's national image in Botswana.

Number of respondents per level:

	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5	Level 6	Level 7	Level 8	Level 9	Level 10	Level 11	Level 12	Standard deviation	Response
All data	0	0	2	4	0	3	0	6	0	1	0	4	2.01	20

Identities of the respondents:

	Student	Teacher	UB Staff	Technician	Engineer	Employee at a Company	Businessman/ woman	Civil service	Other (Please Specify)	Responses
All Data	13	0	1	0	0	2	3	1	1	20

Number of respondents per age:

	Under 20	21—30	31—40	41—50	50 or above	Responses
All Data	0	12	8	0	0	20

Education/Academic background of the respondents:

	Secondary/ high school graduate	University/ college student	BA	MA	PhD	Other (Please specify)	Standard deviation	Responses
All Data	0	8	8	4	0	0	3.59	20

Figure 1: *Tables showing the descriptions of the socio-demographics of the respondents*

This part of the study provides more information on responses received from participants by giving examples of answers extracted from the questionnaires as outlined below:

Theme: Perception of CIUB students on China's national image

This theme identifies with the objective to find out how activities of the CIUB helps to improve China's national image in Botswana. These activities included Chinese language and culture classes on China's history and civilisation, exhibitions, films, and readings on education, culture, economy, and society in China, lectures on Botswana-China relations, summer and winter programs in China, and Chinese bridge competitions.

Research question: Do you think the activities of the CIUB will help improve China's

national image in Botswana? Give reasons.

From the total sample, 18 of the respondents were of the view that CIUB activities can improve China's national image in Botswana. The respondents opinionated that CIUB has helped to demolish stereotypes as well as misunderstanding which most Batswana have about China. The respondents felt that the image of China will likely improve because CIUB now conducts feedback reviews from students to analyse their perception on China. They stated that China's national idea of "peaceful rise" is represented through CIUB's activities. The respondents believed that this would improve China's image in Botswana. The respondents also mentioned that CIUB activities advances mutual understanding and pointed out that Batswana are able to an accurate picture on China's culture. The respondents mentioned that the activities improve Botswana-China relations hence China will have a reputable image with Batswana. The respondents voiced out that they know China's stand in Botswana i.e., to help Botswana develop and preserve its culture. The activities will help maintain a favourable image of China through the public who are learning Chinese language and culture, according to the respondents. According to one interviewee, 'the image of China in Botswana is not bad, just complaints in failed projects but the truth is Chinese admits the mistakes and willing to improve, CIUB activities helps improve misunderstanding on China.'

The interviewees also opinionated that negative views on China will improve as CIUB activities enhance their knowledge on issues relating to China. Some of the respondents stated that China will win a favourable image in Botswana because their activities enlighten them. According to the respondents, miscommunication is improved and better image on China can improve, through winter and summer camps organized by CIUB. 'Being introduced to China's cultural activities brings an image in our minds that China indeed respects and preserve its culture. I wish Batswana can learn from that' stated one response. On the other hand, 2 of the respondents were of the view that CIUB activities cannot improve China's national image. They explained that it is because CIUB is based in an urban area and therefore the

misconceptions about China will remain unchanged particularly to locals residing in rural villages. One of the respondents doubtfully answered in these words: 'I don't think so because not all people have joined CIUB.'

Theme: Perception of CIUB students on China's role in Botswana

This theme corresponds with the objective to find out perceptions of CIUB students on China's role in Botswana through CIUB lectures on Botswana-China relations, readings on contemporary China and Confucius Institute scholarship programs.

Research question: What do you think about China's role in Botswana?

The respondents voiced positive perceptions that China plays a good role in the economic development of Botswana through trade and tourism. They were of the view that China boosts Botswana's infrastructural development by constructing of roads, schools, and stadiums. Some the respondents added that China improves on the health and agricultural sector in Botswana. Furthermore, the respondents mentioned that China provides academic opportunities through scholarships to engage with the rising superpower, exposing them with the realities of contemporary China. According to the interviewees, China improves the military development of Botswana by sending Botswana Defence Force (BDF) team to train in China. Least but not last, China's engagement in Batswana has boosted the living standards of people through many businesses which offer jobs. The respondents highlighted that Chinese shops in Botswana offers affordable commodities to the low-income families. The respondents felt that this somewhat makes Batswana equal. The respondents disclosed that China is helping in poverty reduction as they are involved into charity projects in Botswana.

Theme: Perception of CIUB students on Chinese Culture

This theme aligns with the objective to determine how much CIUB students have learnt about Chinese cultural activities. Learning another's culture is a way of appreciating one's way of doing in order to build a relationship with minimal misunderstandings.

Research question: To what extent have you learnt about Chinese culture?

Respondents stated that they had learnt about Chinese cuisine, including how to use chopsticks and Chinese table manners. 'I am now familiar with China's various ethnic groups and provinces. I can distinguish their food tastes and preferences, as well as their special foods; for example, Beijing is known as the city of 'Kaoya,' which means they enjoy eating roasted duck. For Sichuan province, I now know they like hot spicy food; there are so many things I am learning in China.' said one respondent. Respondents reported having studied Chinese traditional medicine, calligraphy, Chinese paper cutting, and martial arts such as Taichi and Kung fu, reciting Chinese poems and playing Chinese musical instruments such as the "Hulusi". The respondents expressed that through annual Chinese proficiency competition they have acquired rich knowledge in Chinese history and lifestyle. Some of the respondents pointed out that they learnt about the Chinese culture through movies and singing competitions, learning Chinese songs. The respondents stated that they learnt Chinese customs and traditions through some lessons introduced to them. Through summer camps organized by CIUB, the respondents mentioned that they learnt knowledge through Chinese tour guides who shared information on Chinese culture and history with them. 'Visiting Chinese historical site as museums I learnt what used to happen in the past and the significance of some tourists site such as the Great Wall of China', commented one respondent.

Discussion

This section discusses the findings of an online survey conducted with CI

students to investigate the role of CIUB in shaping China's national image. According to the findings, CIUB's activities help participants learn about China and shape a positive image of the country. The interviewees mentioned a variety of things they learnt at CIUB, including Chinese cuisine, Chinese traditional medicine, Chinese history, martial arts, and so on. Furthermore, taking the CIUB class taught them about Botswana-China relations and, more importantly, China's role in Botswana. This suggests that China will have a positive image in Botswana. The study discovered that respondents had a less hostile attitude toward China than what was suggested in the problem statement regarding complaints about Chinese infrastructure development in Botswana. According to one respondent, 'the image of China in Botswana is not bad, just complaints about failed projects, but the truth is that Chinese admit their mistakes and are willing to improve, and CIUB activities help to improve misunderstanding on China.' Hence this indicates that China has a favourable image in Botswana. The lack of negative perceptions of China's national image among CIUB students may be due to the interviewees' demographics, as they are young and well educated.

CIUB has a great potential to shape China's national image, but there are challenges to accurately measuring its efficiency because the CIUB project is still in its early stages (Yanjun 2014). Its efficiency may not be noticeable and many other factors influence CIUB's perceptions of China, and other Chinese soft power activities such as scholarships and economic aid may have an impact on China's image (Yanjun 2014). As a result, it is difficult to separate the effects of CIUB from those of other activities. However, while it is difficult to isolate the effectiveness of CIUB on China's national image, this study provides evidence that CIUB activities do improve the image of China and shape the narratives that CIUB students in Botswana have about China (Yanjun 2014).

The general view from the literature review and respondents input above, CIUB can be considered as a long-term communication tool to connect with the general public as it increases fluency in Chinese language, increases familiarity with Chinese culture, increase appreciation for China, engages

people and increase mutual understanding between China and Botswana (Rahman 2019). As a result of China's radiant culture as promoted by CIUB, Batswana wants to understand how Chinese culture has been striving throughout the years. Furthermore, the Botswana government wants to strengthen its culture, as it believes in a Setswana saying '*Chaba e e senang ngwao ke mo kang ee latlhegileng*', this simply means a nation without culture is a lost nation. With globalization and Western impacts, Botswana does not want to find herself having lost her culture and have it supplanted with that of the West. In other words, Botswana does not want to be a lost nation. This is the reason Botswana needs to acquire understanding from China regarding how she can likewise develop and make a solid rich culture, as well as creating a good image to attract foreign audiences and markets in the country, since she is a mono-economy country which is heavily dependent on her diamonds.

Limitations of CIUB

This section discusses CIUB's limitations in shaping China's national image among CIUB students. CIUB's ability to shape perceptions of China is limited because it only operates in universities and high schools, where it primarily targets students. These students have the potential to mature into Chinese culture advocates and spread positive messages about China. However, CIUB's ability to broadly change people's attitudes toward China is limited (Wang 2020, 107).

Secondly, Botswana is a former British colony with English as its official language, hence, China faces stiff competition in spreading Chinese culture and language in the country (Keimetswe 2016). Tswana culture and language have long been contaminated by Western culture, particularly that of the United States. Botswana has been heavily influenced by American popular culture, particularly through music and Hollywood films. As a result, CIUB becomes less appealing, potentially limiting its ability to fully promote China's national image. Thirdly, as a part-time institution, CIUB does not provide enough Mandarin instruction to bridge the language gap required to fully promote China's national image.

Finally, some locals believe that China is the next superpower, which they frequently associate with neo-colonial intentions. As a result, the idea of China's peaceful development through CIUB may not fully contribute to China's image of peace, love, and benignity. Furthermore, the Chinese government's effort to establish CIUB to alleviate concerns about China's growing economic and military power is hampered by this narrative (Liang 2012, 58).

Recommendations

To this end, it is suggested that CIUB should enhance its research on contemporary China and issues affecting China's national image in Botswana. Based on this recommendation, a unit should be set up under CIUB to fully undertake research on issues encompassing the Botswana-China relations. CIUB can extend further by collaborating with both government and private schools across the country to include Mandarin language teachings in schools which will also include cultural activities. This will help expand its presence in the country and cover a wider population including people in rural areas.

CIUB alone has its own limitations and it cannot effectively tackle all misconception about China in Botswana. Therefore, the Chinese government should pay more attention to and invest more in other soft power instruments, particularly media, which can reach a larger portion of Botswana's population. I strongly believe Chinese media, as a soft power tool, has a strong potential to promote China's national image throughout Botswana, but the Chinese government is not investing enough in it. Therefore, the Chinese government should invest more money in its media platforms, such as China Central Television (CCTV), and China Radio International (CRI), so that they are freely available in Botswana. Further satisfactory efforts must be made to expand the quantity of students from Botswana who are granted Chinese government scholarships yearly (Keimetswe 2016). It is worth noting that given forty-six (46) years of the bilateral engagements, China's national image has been neutral. Therefore, it is expected that the Chinese government can continue on enhancing on its national image in Botswana.

Conclusions

The study employed a qualitative approach to investigate how the Confucius Institute, as a soft power tool, contributes to the shaping of China's national image in the case of CI students. According to the findings, CIUB has been well received in Botswana and has helped to promote China's national image. The case study's findings show that CIUB has been extremely beneficial, as CI students have expressed positive views on Chinese culture, contemporary China, and Botswana-China relations. The activities of the CIUB have been proven to improve China's national image in Botswana. Through Chinese language and culture training, CIUB is playing an important role in strengthening community relations between Chinese and Batswana (Youngman 2013, 13). Given the cultural differences between the two nations, CIUB may be able to overcome any language and cultural barriers. CIUB has not only opened cultural doors between the two states but has also pushed for rapid economic engagements between business managers in both states (Keimetswe 2016). It is important to note that there are currently many Chinese investments in Botswana, which can be attributed to the cultural attraction between China and Botswana, as well as the willingness to collaborate extremely well to benefit the two countries (Keimetswe 2016). The research has brought to light not only cultural benefits directly attributable to the establishment of CIUB, but also a roaring economic cooperation. With this in mind, the CIUB's future appears brighter, and it is expected that more people will join and embrace the program, just as other cultural institutions such as the British Council have been welcomed in Botswana.

Overall, it can be remarked that the findings of this study are encouraging and should be confirmed in a future study with a larger sample size (Yanjun 2014). Future research is needed to determine how CIUB can broaden its undertaking in developing friendly relations with Botswana and improving public perceptions of China's national image in Botswana. Positive perceptions toward China could steam from its culture, economic success, future business opportunities, or foreign policy (Yanjun 2014). Hence, more research into other Chinese soft power instruments such media and economic

aid will help us better understand how they shape public opinion of China in Botswana.

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