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## **A STUDY ON THE ATTITUDES AND MODEL OF CULTURAL EXCHANGE AMONG FOREIGNERS IN ORKHON AIMAG. FOCUSING ON THE CASE STUDY OF AMERICAN CITIZENS**

**Abstract:** in the context of globalization, Mongolia has adopted a multilateral and neutral international policy. Various institutions, including the Russian Center of Science and culture (RCSC), the Chinese Kunzi Center, the Japanese Mongolian Cultural Relations Center, and the American Center, play a vital role in promoting ethnic and cultural relations among nations. These institutions actively implement a “Cultural Soft Power Policy.” This article aims to present a comparative analysis of the American Corner located in Erdenet, which was established in 2024 as part of the diplomatic relations between Mongolia and the United States.

**Keywords:** cultural exchange, cultural Soft Power Policy, heritage, foreign citizens.

### **Rationale and necessity underpinning the study**

The strategic initiatives facilitated by the American Center encompass a range of programs designed to promote intangible cultural exchange, including:

- Dissemination of news, information, and cultural programs from the United States,
- Educational counseling services to support individuals pursuing studies in the United States,
- Initiatives for teaching and learning the English language,
- Skills development and capacity-building programs, with a focus on alumni leadership initiatives,

An English language teaching program that engages American volunteer experts – trained in the United States – to work with high schools, American Corners, and churches, delivering free programs that enhance English language education and cultural awareness.

Since 1991, a total of 1,450 Peace Corps volunteers have served in Mongolia, contributing to various fields such as education, culture, health, economics, English language teaching, and community development programs. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, 41 experts are set to return in 2022-2023.<sup>1</sup>, and of the 14 experts who arrived in 2023-2024, six are currently working and residing in Erdenet. Together, these volunteers represent more than 10 foreign citizens dedicated to providing English language education to government employees, teachers, and students.

The valuable reasons for the exchange of foreign policy and culture between our two countries are:

**Mutual Understanding:** Cultural exchange fosters mutual understanding and respect between nations. By exploring each other's cultures, traditions, and values, individuals can develop stronger and more empathetic relationships.

**Heritage Protection:** Engaging in cultural exchange aids in the preservation and promotion of intangible cultural heritage. By sharing traditional practices, arts, and crafts, we ensure that these cultural elements are acknowledged and appreciated on a global scale.

**Educational Opportunities:** Cultural exchange provides valuable educational opportunities for all participants. Students, educators, and professionals can acquire new skills, gain fresh perspectives, and enhance their knowledge through various exchange programs.

**Economic Benefits:** Cultural exchange can stimulate tourism and create economic advantages. Travelers from different countries are often drawn to unique cultural experiences, which in turn generate increased revenue for local communities.

<sup>1</sup><https://montsame.mn/>



**Diplomatic Relations:** Strengthening diplomatic ties through cultural exchanges facilitates improved political and economic collaboration. This, in turn, fosters trust and cooperation on numerous international issues.

**Innovation and Creativity:** Exposure to diverse cultures inspires innovation and creativity. By learning from each other's artistic and intellectual traditions, we can generate new ideas and solutions. Ultimately, Mongolian American cultural exchanges promote global peace and understanding while contributing to the preservation, sharing, and appreciation of diverse cultural heritage.<sup>2</sup>

Research on cultural exchange between America and Mongolia includes:

Studies on US-Mongolian cultural exchange cover a wide range of issues, including the role of diplomacy (Tumurbat, 2019), the influence of American culture (Smith, 2020), the effectiveness of educational programs (Lee, 2021), responsible exchange models (Kim, 2020), cultural conflicts and opportunities (Sandui, 2022), and the activities of US cultural centers (Ganbat, 2023), which emphasize the importance of deepening cultural relations and increasing mutual understanding between the two countries.

### **Hypotheses and Innovations Proposed in the Study**

Cultural exchanges between the United States and Mongolia, particularly in Orkhon province and Erdenet city, along with the implementation of the U.S. "Soft Power Policy," necessitate comprehensive research into the social adaptation of foreigners, the psychological challenges they face, and their interactions with local cultures. This includes the importance of Mongolian language training and broader cultural exchange initiatives.

#### **Research objectives:**

- I. What constitutes the soft power policy?
- II. What theoretical frameworks underpin soft power policy?
- III. Which foreign countries are employing American experts through the same U.S. soft power policy as Mongolia?
- IV. An examination of the current status of foreign cultural exchange in Orkhon aimag.
- V. Conclusion

#### **Theoretical part**

##### **I. What is the soft power policy?**

Soft power policy refers to the approach by which a country aims to positively influence other nations through non-coercive means such as culture, art, science, sports, and diplomatic relations. Scholar Joseph Nye first introduced this concept in 1990. In Mongolia, researchers suggest that soft power policy can be effectively implemented through initiatives like Mongolian studies, cultural ambassadors, attracting foreign students, cinema, media, and sports. They emphasize that showcasing cultural heritage to the world is a critical component of this effort.

##### **II. Cultural Exchange Theory**

Cultural exchange theory explains the interactions that arise through the sharing of cultural elements, values, behaviors, knowledge, and various cultural expressions among individuals, groups, and societies. This theory aids in understanding the new cultural elements that emerge from such interactions. Research on the cultural exchange outcomes of American citizen volunteer professionals working in rural communities abroad has revealed significant positive effects. These benefits extend not only to the personal development of the volunteers themselves but also to the social, cultural, and economic well-being of the host community.<sup>3</sup>

A collection of works by international scholars highlights the following key areas:

Cultural Knowledge and Understanding (Knowledge Capital): The engagement of volunteer experts enhances the understanding of diverse cultures, international relations, and policies within rural communities. Volunteers, in turn, also gain valuable insights into the local culture of the host country.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>2</sup> <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/4033623>

<https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/>

<http://ec.europa.eu/eden>

<sup>3</sup> Journal for the **Theory** of Social Behavior . Jun2022, Vol. 52 Issue 2, p315-335. 21p.

<sup>4</sup> *Journal of Aging & Social Policy* . 2024, Vol. 36 Issue 3, p443-459. 17p.



**Social Capital:** Increased collaboration fosters stronger relationships between the community and volunteer professionals. This relationship-building leads to the formation of social connections, which positively influence areas such as international cooperation, business opportunities, and travel.<sup>5</sup>

**Cultural Capital:** An appreciation for diverse cultures grows among community members, leading to improved relationships. This nurturing of respect contributes to the development of globally minded citizens who are more receptive to intercultural communication.<sup>6</sup>

**Economic and Civic Capital:** Volunteering equips individuals with skills and resources that enhance the quality of life for local communities. For instance, volunteer educators play a crucial role in improving the quality of education in their respective regions.<sup>7</sup>

### III. Results of Local Cultural Exchange Experiences in Foreign Countries

The following UNESCO benchmarks have emerged from a study exploring the outcomes and experiences of American volunteer experts engaged in cultural exchange in various countries, as part of soft power initiatives aimed at enhancing cultural heritage awareness. (<sup>8</sup>Citations from the English report) These findings include:

#### **Finland: "Adopt a Monument" program<sup>9</sup>**

**Action:** his initiative, implemented in the city of Tampere, actively engaged citizens and volunteers in the protection of local historical monuments. As a result, volunteers not only safeguarded these monuments but also raised awareness of their historical and cultural significance, thereby supporting tourism. This project serves as an exemplary model of cultural heritage conservation involving both local citizens and international volunteers.

#### **Matera, Italy: European Capital of Culture (2019)**

**Action:** Within the framework of the "Capital of Culture" program, volunteers participated in the preservation and restoration of local history and culture, leading to a marked increase in tourism and contributing significantly to economic development. Volunteers also immersed themselves in the local culture and promoted it globally.

#### **Kenya, Maasai Mara: Green Culture Program**

**Activities:** In efforts to preserve the traditional lifestyle and cultural heritage of the Maasai tribe while maintaining ecological balance, volunteers focused on environmental protection, supported the local economy, and promoted the significance of Maasai culture worldwide.

#### **Peru: Cusco and Machu Picchu Tourism**

**Action:** Through the collaborative efforts of residents and volunteers, the foundation has successfully restored archaeological sites and leveraged them for tourism. This vibrant tourism sector has played a crucial role in boosting the local economy and has actively involved volunteers in safeguarding cultural heritage. These instances highlight the experiences of countries that have effectively engaged volunteer participation in the preservation of cultural heritage. Not only has this initiative helped to maintain local culture, but it has also generated significant economic and social benefits.

### IV. Research section

The sample of respondents represented 85% of the foreign citizens in Orkhon province. The following conclusions were drawn by comparing the cultural heritage, tourism development, and service needs of Erdenet city with the results of cultural exchanges among foreign citizens in various cities worldwide:

#### **1. Knowledge about Erdenet city**

46% of respondents are familiar with Erdenet, with many accessing information about the mining industry through English-language internet sources. However, 40% are entirely unaware of the city and have expressed an interest in learning more, highlighting the need for enhanced cultural presentations and tourism information.

<sup>5</sup>Journal of Aging & Social Policy. 2024, Vol. 36 Issue 3, p443-459. 17p.

<sup>6</sup>ResearchGate

<sup>7</sup>USC Center on Public Diplomacy

<sup>8</sup><https://culturalheritageinaction.eu/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2021/11/CH-a-powerful-catalyst.pdf>

<sup>9</sup><https://culturalheritageinaction.eu/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2021/11/CH-a-powerful-catalyst.pdf>



## 2. Source of information

56% of respondents obtain information from their Mongolian colleagues, but there is a notable lack of official sources available in English. This underscores the need to develop comprehensive information platforms—such as websites, brochures, and guides—for foreign visitors.

## 3. Experience visiting the Ger complex

38% of survey participants reported visiting the Ger complex in Denj but did not receive exceptional service during their experience. This highlights the necessity of presenting cultural heritage more engagingly and interactively.

## 4. Recommending Erdenet to foreign friends

An impressive 90% of respondents indicated they would recommend Erdenet to their friends in America. This underscores the importance of enhancing tourism opportunities in the region.

## 5. Service needs for foreigners

Foreign visitors have expressed a need for cultural heritage awareness programs, marketing services, and tourism development. Consequently, it is vital to create multilingual content to effectively promote the cultural heritage of Erdenet.

The findings highlight the importance of promoting the cultural heritage of Erdenet on an international scale, fostering tourism development, and enhancing access to information. To successfully showcase Erdenet's cultural heritage globally and establish its tourism development as a model for neighboring countries, the following strategies should be implemented:

1. **Enhance Access to multilingual information** – Create content, travel guides, and digital platforms in English, Russian, and Chinese to ensure broader accessibility.

2. **Interactively Present Cultural Heritage** – Transform Ger complexes, museums, and cultural events into more participatory, digital, and immersive experiences.

3. **Increase Foreign Participation** – Introduce a tourism strategy that facilitates cultural exchange programs between foreigners and local businesses.

4. **Expand Tourism Cooperation** – Organize collaborative cultural festivals and heritage promotion initiatives with neighboring countries.

5. **Train Guides and Interpreters** – Provide specialized training for guides and interpreters, focusing on accommodating special needs and enhancing foreign language skills for tourism.

These initiatives aim to enhance Mongolia's cultural heritage at the regional level and bolster cultural and tourism collaboration with neighboring countries. In alignment with the "Cultural Creative Industries 2024" objective outlined in the Mongolian Northern Regional Development Forum's action plan for 2030, a cultural program has been proposed that engages foreign citizens. This program seeks to generate economic value through cultural tourism by creating spatial clusters that maintain local characteristics. By promoting local heritage and developing tourism, akin to the successful practices seen in other countries that have effectively utilized volunteer involvement in the preservation of cultural heritage, we aim to foster economic growth and increase income.

Russian citizens residing in Erdenet significantly contribute to the mining sector and local businesses, with many of them employed in the area alongside their families. Most residents express a preference for information in Russian and highlight the importance of multilingual content to enhance tourism and promote cultural heritage.

Moreover, the study highlights the significance of introducing Erdenet's cultural heritage to Russian citizens and enhancing their involvement, as this is crucial for promoting cultural exchange and boosting the tourism sector. The experiences of Russian residents will contribute to broader awareness and appreciation of the city's culture and history.

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