
**EXPLORATION ON TALENT CULTIVATION OF INTERNATIONAL BAIJIU
SOMMELIERS**

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ABSTRACT

Under the great picture of globalization, China has been standing on the international stage, affecting the international market and trade. With the development of China's comprehensive national strength, Baijiu, a unique distilled liquor in China, has gradually been introduced into the international market. However, it is undeniable that the process of Baijiu internationalization is still struggling. Therefore, there is an urgent need for international Baijiu sommeliers who have acquired both profound bilingual skills and been familiar with Baijiu professional knowledge. Through the methods of class experiment, investigation and social practice, this paper explores how to cultivate high-quality Baijiu international sommeliers, in order to solve a series of problems such as the lack of international recognition of Baijiu, and help Baijiu achieve the grand goal of internationalization.

Key Words: Baijiu, talent cultivation, international sommelier.

1. INTRODUCTION

As we all know that Baijiu is very popular among people in China. In modern times, a brand-new profession named Baijiu sommelier has emerged with the gradual promotion of Baijiu. In foreign countries, the profession of wine sommelier has a long history, which can be traced back to the 14th century in France. While in China, this profession started just about ten years ago, and there are only a handful of people who have actually received related professional training. A professional sommelier should not only have the basic skills and professional knowledge of all kinds of liquors, but also know how to match wine with dishes appropriately and have the ability to appreciate liquors. Therefore, the sommeliers are not waiters in our traditional concept who are responsible for drinks and beverages in the restaurant, but must possess basic aesthetic feeling, keen sense of fashion, noble taste, as well as a strong sense of perception and appreciation.

As for the concept of sommelier, the vast majority of Chinese people are currently ambiguous or misunderstood about it, and this profession is not yet known to most people as well. However, with the economic globalization and the rapid development of China's internationalization, many Western catering cultures have affected Chinese people subtly, and that's why China's catering industry urgently need to cultivate relevant talents. Under the initiative of the "Belt and Road" policy since 2013, Chinese Baijiu companies have set their sights overseas. Many liquor enterprises in China have been seeking for breakthroughs in the international market for many

years, and have achieved certain results. However, in terms of its global influence, it is not in line with the current international status of China's economic strength and cultural undertakings. Consistently, there is also a significant gap compared with the profound cultural heritage of Chinese Baijiu. In the past years, the silent performance of Chinese Baijiu in the world market was partly due to the fact that Chinese Baijiu companies mainly operate in the domestic market. Although they are well-known in the international market, the actual export volume is still very limited. Therefore, we should make full use of the current situation that the sommelier market in China is not well developed, combined with the inevitable trend of the internationalization of Chinese Baijiu, to cultivate capable, interested and enthusiastic international Baijiu sommeliers, and to open up the market where international Baijiu sommeliers are in short supply. In this context, Sichuan University of Science and Technology together with Wuliangye Group Co., Ltd. has achieved school-enterprise cooperation and jointly trained China's first international Baijiu sommelier in June 2018. This paper takes the class as the research object, and conducts research from four aspects of talent training program, curriculum development, teacher team construction and textbook compilation to explore the teaching mode and management of cultivating qualified international Baijiu sommeliers, so as to meet the growing demand of Baijiu consumption and promote the internationalization of Chinese Baijiu.

2. TALENT TRAINING PROGRAM FOR INTERNATIONAL BAIJIU SOMMELIER

Based on the analysis and investigation of the First International Baijiu Sommelier Class in China, this paper concludes what kind of talent training program should be formulated, including the curriculum setting and extracurricular practice of the class.

First of all, the requirements of the International Baijiu Sommelier students are as follows: 1. Love the profession relevant to Baijiu and have a strong desire to promote the internationalization of Baijiu. 2. Dignified appearance and temperament. 3. Good command of both English and Chinese, with good ability to express. 4. Strong cross-cultural communication skills, with abundant knowledge of Chinese and western etiquette. 5. Broad knowledge and high adaptability. 6. Have certain organizational coordination and management ability, and have strong teamwork spirit. Secondly, the curriculum of the International Baijiu Sommelier Class should be combined with the disciplines of liquor making, English, management, fashion design, education to develop a set of systematic and feasible courses. The courses should cover four major aspects: tasting, serving and matching Baijiu with dishes appropriately; etiquette, speaking and dressing; Baijiu culture, wine culture and history of sommeliers; oral English training, English speech and cross-cultural communication. The first major aspect is directly linked to the basic skills that a sommelier needs to possess. A qualified sommelier must have basic abilities of wine tasting, serving and knowing how to match Baijiu with dishes. The second major aspect is to start from the sommelier's words and manners, to teach from three specific aspects of etiquette, conversation, and dress, in order to cultivate the temperament and grace that a sommelier should have. The third major aspect is about culture. A qualified Baijiu sommelier should be familiar with the culture and history of Chinese Baijiu. At the same time, he must have a certain understanding of the culture and history of wine and the origin of this profession as well. The fourth major aspect is to cultivate students' bilingual language skills. International

Baijiu Sommelier, as the name suggests, requires students to be proficient both in their mother tongue and English or a minority language, so as to serve foreign customers better and promote Baijiu culture abroad. The course practice should include the specific practice of tasting and serving Baijiu, organizing and participating in various related competitions and activities, visiting famous wine Baijiu companies and cellars, as well as attending lectures by famous teachers, etc. Sichuan University of Science and Engineering takes full advantage of its ace major, the brewing profession, employing its faculty and experimental equipment in the school to carry out the specific practice of tasting and serving. At the same time, the school seized the important opportunity of school-enterprise cooperation and school-field cooperation to organize students to visit famous Baijiu enterprises like Wuliangye Group Co., Ltd. and domestic Baijiu cellars. In addition, it also organized students to attend lectures of famous teachers, for example the First International Baijiu Sommeliers has invited Professor Guo Wulin, vice president of Chinese Baijiu culture and liquor industry school of Yibin University, and Li Hang, the first Chinese sommelier of the royal family.

What sommeliers convey to customers is a kind of culture, which not only delights the taste buds of customers, but also makes customers know more about Chinese Baijiu culture. Therefore, by training Baijiu sommeliers, we can better publicize Baijiu culture, making it goes to the international stage, and also making domestic popular Baijiu brands to be famous abroad. By allowing customers to experience the most perfect taste and showing wonderful tasting performances, a sommelier makes customers' dinners more wonderful, so as to bring customers a dual experience of both spirit and senses. The sommelier recommends a kind of Baijiu that suits customer best by observing the guest's gender, age, dress taste, current mood and etc, so that the customer can truly understand the meaning of this kind of Baijiu. In this way, customers can have a perfect meal. And also, sommeliers would kindly answer any questions related to Baijiu, whether it is the type or the production process of Baijiu, or the local conditions and customs of the producing area. All of these require sommeliers to acquire professional knowledge and skills. However, this is undoubtedly a great breakthrough and challenge for the current situation of Chinese Baijiu sommeliers. Therefore, it is urgent to carry out the talent training of international Baijiu sommeliers. And such training should start from the school to carry out centralized training and assessment, cultivating qualified and high-end Baijiu sommeliers.

As an ancient profession, the spirit of the sommelier has not changed: the service is always the first, and the purpose of the service is to make the guests feel delightful. The significance of the study precisely lies in the integration of this spirit into the Baijiu culture. The purpose of this paper is to provide help and suggestions for the scarce sommeliers in China, so as to keep up with the pace of the times, meet the increasingly Baijiu consumption demand, and more importantly, let Chinese Baijiu be welcomed by the rest of the world. Many directors of large-scale Baijiu enterprises have profound experience and in-depth research on the internationalization of Baijiu, repeatedly calling on famous Baijiu enterprises to go international route as soon as possible. However, Baijiu is not only under serious threat at home, but also has not introduced into abroad yet. This has brought great problems to the internationalization of Baijiu. Therefore, how to promote the internationalization of Chinese Baijiu is an important issue at present. By training talents of baijiu sommelier, this problem can not only be solved but also expand the domestic market. At present, the domestic job market is tense, many college students are facing the problem of unemployment after graduation. Therefore, Sichuan University of

Science and Engineering, famous for its brewing profession, has carried out sommelier training program, which undoubtedly adds a lot of vitality to the sommelier market and provides a good consultation channel for many young people who are interested in this area but have no way out. Baijiu has a very special position in people's lives. For instance, workers and farmers in some industries, herders and residents in severe cold areas have certain professional and living needs for it. Moderate drinking can stimulate mood and promote blood circulation. It has the function of sterilization, deodorization and antiseptic, which has a long history in medicine. What's more, Baijiu has an indissoluble bond with the literati in the past dynasties, which is the spiritual food for the literati to express their feelings. In ancient times, Baijiu was also a sacred thing, using by the royal and noble families. Baijiu products have developed and accumulated a profound cultural and artistic value. In recent years, Baijiu collection has become very fashionable. Therefore, Baijiu is undoubtedly very valuable. However, the development of Baijiu industry has faced some troubles like the current sales mode is not appropriate, the order of Baijiu market is not good enough, the positioning of Baijiu itself is not clear enough, and the development route is not clear as well. Therefore, this project will find out the current deficiencies of Baijiu industry, and then objectively analyze and position the profession of Baijiu sommelier, so as to make a combination with Chinese unique liquor and sommelier.

2.1 Curriculum Development

Baijiu sommelier talents are emerging professions born in the new era, the formulation of their training models and training programs should be closely integrated with the market, and should not be restricted to traditional college talent training models. The traditional Baijiu culture and business etiquette that people often think of can only be regarded as the basic skills that a qualified Baijiu sommelier should master. The foothold of talent training should be placed on the research of what the enterprise needs and what the market needs.

To cater to the market, the first thing a Baijiu sommelier must do is to cater to the domestic market. At present, as a spirit, the output of Chinese Baijiu is one-third of spirits in the world, but its export trade accounts for only about 0.76%, less than 1% in the international trade market. This shows that the major consumer groups of Baijiu are still concentrated in Chinese market while the international markets for Baijiu is relatively weak. If the Baijiu sommelier wants to make a name for himself in the liquor industry, the first thing to conquer is the domestic market. In the new era, with the improvement of material life, people are yearning for a better life, pursuing a higher quality of life, focusing on the "sense of ceremony" of life, sommeliers known as the "soul" of the restaurant can just meet people's desire for the sense of Baijiu tasting. Moreover, with the changes in the modern consumer market and the younger consumer groups, in the next 5-10 years, the Chinese Baijiu market will have a great demand for professional talents such as Baijiu sommeliers. As a new type of comprehensive talent, Baijiu sommelier has huge development potential.

Although the acceptance of Chinese Baijiu in the international market is not high at this stage, in recent years, major domestic Baijiu companies have made many new attempts to accelerate their internationalization, which has promoted the internationalization of liquor to a certain extent. When Chinese Baijiu has a certain influence in the international liquor market, the domestic cultivation of Baijiu sommeliers has also formed a system. At this time, the cultivation of Baijiu sommeliers should shift its foothold to the international market. Such a gradual

progress can promote the stable and healthy development of Baijiu sommeliers from scratch, and from domestic to international.

Through preliminary research and market adjustments, this article believes that the focus of the cultivation of baijiu sommelier talents should be on the cultivation of comprehensive quality of talents. A qualified Baijiu sommelier not only needs to be familiar with professional Baijiu knowledge, but also need to understand the market, service, marketing, and integrate traditional Baijiu culture with the modern liquor market. International Baijiu sommeliers also need to have strong Chinese and English expression skills. In terms of personal quality, Baijiu sommeliers should at least meet the following conditions: unlimited love for the sommelier profession; high sense of service; high emotional intelligence; excellent professional skills. People need to realize that only by upholding high standards can they cultivate professionals who can stand the test of the times.

2.2 Teacher Team Building

If a university-enterprise cooperation mode is adopted to establish a vocational skill training class to train professional talents, the teacher team of the class should meet the following conditions:

First, high quality. To improve the quality of running a class, the construction of a teacher team is the key. Taking China's first Baijiu sommelier student class as an example, its teachers are equipped with senior experts and key teachers. These experts and teachers have been engaged in research in their own fields for many years, and have accumulated rich experience so as to answer students' doubts in their respective research fields in time.

Second, a diverse professional background. In the new era, Baijiu sommeliers need to master various skills such as tasting, language, marketing, management, etc., so the teachers of Baijiu sommelier classes need to include outstanding people from different professions, working together to cultivate Baijiu sommelier talents having a strong comprehensive quality and market competitiveness. In addition to the liquor industry experts, the teachers of the first Baijiu International Sommelier Student Class in China also include translation experts, etiquette experts and key foreign language teachers, providing comprehensive knowledge for students in all aspects.

Third, the ability to closely link teaching and the market. The main purpose of the school-enterprise cooperation to create a vocational skill training class is to deliver professional talents for the enterprise and the market. Therefore, the teachers of this training class should not only pay attention to the transfer of theoretical knowledge, but also have an insight into the liquor market situation and promote the close integration of theory and practice.

Since the teachers in the teacher team come from different professions and are engaged in research in different fields, in order to prevent poor communication between teachers, the vocational skills training courses created by school-enterprise cooperation need to intensify the cooperation between teachers of different professions. Ye Shengtao, a famous educator in China has said: "Teachers must be united and cooperate with each other". Only through cooperation and communication can teachers better form a joint force and promote the improvement of the function of the education system, so as to better achieve the education goals of the training class.

2.3 Textbook Compilation

Textbook compilation of Baijiu Sommelier class needs to meet the following principles: Firstly, the principle of integrity. The teaching materials should form a complete system in terms of content, goals and requirements. The content of each subject should be combined, penetrated and supported by each other. Secondly, the principle of science. The compilation of textbooks must conform to objective laws, and the teaching arrangement should reflect the principle of gradual and orderly progress. The choice and arrangement of teaching material content should be close to real life and be guided by the liquor market. Finally, to keep up with the times. The language in the textbook needs to be authentic, modern and natural, reflecting the development trend of the market and society in the new era. Besides there are some precautions needs to be intensified: First of all, the compilation of textbooks should focus on the combination of Chinese and English, so as to broaden students' horizons, cultivate students' cross-cultural awareness, and train students' ability to communicate in both Chinese and English. Second, the presentation of textbooks should use the research results of contemporary cognitive psychology to mobilize students' vision, increase the fun of the classroom, and enable students to devote themselves to learning from all aspects. In addition, the content of the teaching materials should be gradually advanced from shallow to deep, not only to let students have knowledge, but also to guide students to divergent thinking. In addition to the precautions mentioned above, the compilation of textbooks should also comply with the regulations on the publication of textbooks, and prohibited content is not allowed to appear. The content of the textbook should be rigorous to determine the correctness of knowledge.

3. CONCLUSION

It is well known that the sommelier industry has been developing abroad for many years and has a relatively complete talent training system. It has long been a respected golden profession abroad. However, in China, sommelier is a new profession that has only quietly emerged in recent years. There is a lack of a complete talent training system. Unlike wine sommeliers who originated in France, as a profession, Baijiu sommelier has no long history of development in China and no direct training experience. Domestic exploration of Baijiu sommelier professionals requires time and unremitting efforts from various fields. It deems to be a long process, and this process is inseparable from the perseverance and dedication of the individual students, the courage of major Baijiu companies and restaurants, the ecologically sound Baijiu market, and the strong support of national policies. In general, the cultivation of Chinese international Baijiu sommelier and the international development of Chinese Baijiu still have a long way to go. Fortunately, the talent training model of school-enterprise cooperation has, to some extent, proved helpful in making the public learning more about this emerging occupation. Chinese first Baijiu international sommelier class, jointly created by Sichuan University of Science and Engineering and the Wuliangye Group and the students in this class have been reported by quite a few mainstream media from both home and abroad, including Washington Post, CGTN and so on. And it is said that some students of this class have become members of Wuliangye after graduated from college, making their own efforts to tell good Chinese Baijiu story.

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