Research on Cross-Cultural Communication Strategies for Ethnic Minority-Themed Film and Television Works

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Abstract: Amid the wave of globalization and the continuous expansion of media networks, cross-cultural communication has become increasingly frequent. Ethnic minority-themed film and television works, with their rich cultural elements and profound artistic expressions, are emerging as a significant field in international communication.[1] These works not only contribute to the preservation and promotion of ethnic minority cultural heritage but also provide a window for global audiences to understand and experience diverse cultures. This study examines the various challenges encountered by ethnic minority-themed works during cross-cultural dissemination, such as cultural misinterpretation, choices of business models, and limitations of communication mediums. Based on these challenges, the research proposes effective strategies to address these issues. By exploring approaches to effective cultural translation and adaptation, as well as innovative communication methods that respect the integrity of the original culture, this study aims to identify viable dissemination strategies for ethnic minority-themed works in the current global communication landscape. The research highlights the importance of balancing the uniqueness and universality of ethnic minority cultures in the process of global communication, as well as showcasing cultural authenticity and representativeness. These efforts aim to enhance the global acceptance and impact of such works.

1. Overview of Ethnic Minority-Themed Film and Television Works

1.1. Definition and Characteristics of Ethnic Minority-Themed Film and Television Works

Ethnic minority-themed film and television works refer to movies, TV dramas, documentaries, and other audiovisual media products that primarily depict the lifestyles, historical changes, cultural beliefs, artistic forms, and interactions between ethnic minorities and other groups. These works are not only carriers of cultural dissemination but also bridges for the coexistence and exchange of diverse ethnic cultures.

In terms of characteristics, ethnic minority-themed film and television works generally possess the following aspects: 1) Distinctive Cultural Features: Each ethnic minority has its own unique language, religious beliefs, customs, and traditional arts, all of which are imprinted in the film and television works, forming distinctive cultural features. 2) Strong Regional Identity: Most ethnic minorities are concentrated in specific geographical areas, and their natural environments and geographical characteristics are often reflected in the works. 3) Profound Historical Sentiments: Many ethnic minorities have long histories and rich legends, which are woven into the narratives, endowing the works with profound historical sentiments. 4) Reflection of Social Concerns: Ethnic minority-themed film and television works often explore issues such as social development, ethnic policies, and cultural heritage, demonstrating strong connections to reality and social value. 5. Diverse Artistic Expressions: In terms of artistic presentation, these works often combine ethnic music, dance, drama, and other art forms, showcasing high levels of artistic creativity and aesthetic value.[2]

1.2. Development of Ethnic Minority-Themed Film and Television Works

The development of ethnic minority-themed film and television works can be traced back to the

early era of ethnic films. Over the past decades, this genre has undergone a development process from inception to prosperity. In the early stages, ethnic minority-themed film and television works were limited in quantity and production quality. They were often created by local cultural institutions or ethnic culture researchers for the purpose of documentation and preservation. With technological advancements and market openness, these works began to receive wider attention, becoming a medium for showcasing the diversity of ethnic cultures at the national level. In the new millennium, ethnic minority-themed film and television works increasingly appeared in mainstream media and cinemas. With the promotion of international film festivals and the development of cultural soft power, these works began to enter the international stage, attracting the attention and appreciation of global audiences. In the course of their development, ethnic minority-themed film and television works have shown a trend of diversification. They have evolved from purely ethnic customs records to incorporating various elements such as historical legends, social realities, ethnic conflicts, and love stories becoming more comprehensive and multidimensional.

1.3. Cultural Value of Ethnic Minority-Themed Film and Television Works

Ethnic minority-themed film and television works play an irreplaceable role in cultural preservation and inheritance. The rapid transformation of contemporary society poses the risk of forgetting and losing many ethnic cultural characteristics. Through their unique artistic expressions, these works vividly present elements such as ethnic costumes, languages, music, dance, religious rituals, and daily life to audiences, serving the purposes of recording, preserving, and disseminating these precious cultural heritages. Through the screen, audiences can not only experience the aesthetics and emotional resonance of other cultures but are also inspired to consider how to protect and sustain these diverse and unique cultural forms.

Ethnic minority-themed film and television works effectively promote mutual understanding and harmony among ethnic groups. In today's multi-ethnic world, interethnic understanding is of great importance. By telling authentic stories and emotions of ethnic minorities, these works break cultural barriers, enabling audiences to experience and understand the lifestyles and values of other groups. This helps to eliminate prejudices and discrimination caused by ignorance, fostering communication and understanding among audiences from different cultural backgrounds and enhancing social harmony. Ethnic minority-themed film and television works also provide a platform for marginalized groups to voice their perspectives. Many works creatively transform these marginalized cultural stories into universally comprehensible and emotionally engaging narratives, granting a voice to these groups. This balance in cultural narrative contributes to strengthening the diversity and inclusiveness of social culture and enriching the layers of mainstream cultural expression.

2. Analysis of the Current Cross-Cultural Communication of Ethnic Minority-Themed Film and Television Works

2.1. Analysis of Domestic and International Market Reception

Ethnic minority-themed film and television works are generally well-received and welcomed in the domestic market. This phenomenon can largely be attributed to the nation's promotion of cultural diversity and the public's pride in the country's rich cultural traditions. Domestic audiences often exhibit a high level of cultural affinity and identification with these works, making films and television productions that incorporate ethnic elements more likely to resonate and garner support. These works are sometimes also utilized as tools for national cultural dissemination and ethnic unity, receiving strong official promotion.

In terms of market distribution, countries with minimal cultural differences, geographical proximity, or deep historical and cultural connections with China are more likely to accept Chinese ethnic minority-themed film and television works. For example, in East Asia and Southeast Asia, where certain ethnic cultures overlap geographically or have historical ties, audiences in these regions are better able to understand and appreciate the unique cultural elements and storylines present in such works. Professional platforms like international film exhibitions and festivals often adopt an

open attitude toward ethnic minority-themed film and television works, making them a primary channel for cross-cultural communication. In these settings, the professional background of audiences and jurors, their recognition of cultural diversity, and their interest in artistic exploration contribute significantly to the international dissemination and cultural exchange of such works.

2.2. Analysis of Successful Cases

One notable example is the 2011 film "*Under the Hawthorn Tree*", directed by Zhang Yimou. The movie tells the poignant story of pure love between two young people from ethnic minority backgrounds during the Cultural Revolution. As a Han Chinese director, Zhang Yimou devoted considerable time to on-site research and studying ethnic cultures to authentically depict their customs. The film's meticulous attention to detail in art direction, costume selection, music, and language successfully created an immersive ethnic cultural atmosphere. *Under the Hawthorn Tree* garnered widespread acclaim not only in Chinese mainland but also at international film festivals. Its success lies in using a universally resonant love story to build a bridge across cultures and borders, allowing foreign audiences to glimpse the humanistic charm of China's ethnic minority regions and enhancing its cross-cultural communicative power.

Another example is the documentary series "*A Bite of China*", produced by China Central Television (CCTV). Although the series does not focus exclusively on the culture of any single ethnic group, it includes in-depth exploration and detailed presentation of ethnic minority culinary traditions. In particular, the second season features the food customs and cooking techniques of several ethnic minorities, including the Mongolian, Uyghur, and Miao peoples, immersing viewers in their unique lifestyles and cultural worlds. This documentary series achieved tremendous success among Chinese audiences and, through dissemination via online and international media platforms, also attracted significant attention from overseas audiences. It effectively promoted the culinary culture of China's ethnic minorities and facilitated international understanding and appreciation of these traditions. As shown in Figure 1:
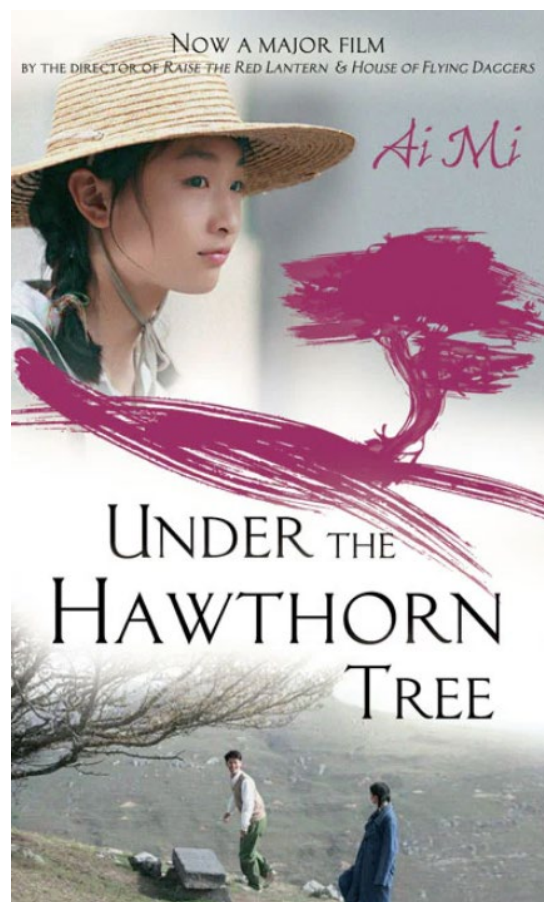

Figure 1: "*Under the Hawthorn Tree*"

2.3. Issues and Challenges

2.3.1. Cultural Differences and Interpretation Barriers

Cultural differences and the resulting interpretation barriers are the biggest challenges for the international dissemination of ethnic minority-themed films and television works. Due to a lack of understanding of the cultural background of ethnic minorities, international audiences may struggle to grasp the cultural elements and symbolic meanings in the films accurately, leading to misinterpretations of the plot. This not only diminishes the audience's appreciation experience but may also cause cultural misunderstandings, negatively affecting the work's international reputation.

2.3.2. Lack of International Promotion Strategies

Many ethnic minority-themed films and television works lack targeted international promotion strategies. Efforts in areas such as overseas market advertising, distribution channels, and participation in film festivals are often insufficient or ineffective. Consequently, these culturally rich works fail to receive the international exposure they deserve.

2.3.3. Inadequate Translation and Localization

High-quality translation is crucial for international dissemination, yet many ethnic minority-themed films and television works fall short in this regard. Literal or inaccurate translations can dilute the cultural expressiveness and artistic appeal of the original work, making it challenging for the audience in international markets to resonate with the content.

2.3.4. Limited International Perspective in Creative Teams

The creative teams behind these works often lack the necessary international perspective, restricting their ability to adapt the structure and narrative styles to suit global audiences. Subpar production quality and narratives lacking universal appeal can further hinder the performance of these films and television works in overseas markets.

3. Cross-Cultural Communication Strategies for Ethnic Minority-Themed Films and TV Works

3.1. Strategies for Cultural Proximity

Creating relatable bridges for audiences through universal emotions and experiences, such as friendship, love, family bonds, and personal growth, is key. Even in culturally specific scenarios or behaviors, efforts should be made to highlight their connections to shared human emotions. Including necessary cultural annotations in film and television works can help foreign audiences better understand the cultural customs and behavioral motivations of ethnic minorities. These can be in the form of direct subtitle explanations, supplementary written materials, or brief introductions at the beginning of the film.[3]

Language is one of the main tools of cultural dissemination. Therefore, high-quality translation is crucial. It requires going beyond literal translation to achieve cultural interpretation, thereby establishing effective communication bridges between different cultures. Subtle editing and adjustments to the original work are necessary while respecting its spirit and cultural characteristics. This includes modifying certain content, contexts, or even narrative structures based on the cultural background of the target audience to better suit international markets. As shown in Table 1:

Table 1: Cross-Cultural Communication of Minority-themed Film and Television Works

Strategy	Description	Example
Emotional Resonance	Build bridges for audience resonance through universal emotions and experiences (e.g., friendship, love, family, and growth)	Display friendship stories across different cultural backgrounds, emphasizing the universality of emotions
Cultural Annotation	Add necessary cultural annotations to help foreign audiences understand the cultural customs and behavioral motivations of minorities	Provide subtitle explanations of specific cultural customs; offer a brief cultural background introduction at the beginning of the film
Language Translation	High-quality translation that goes beyond literal translation to achieve cultural-level interpretation	Translate dialects or specific cultural expressions into language that is easily understood by the target audience
Content Editing	Make subtle edits and adjustments to the film while respecting the original spirit and cultural characteristics	Adjust dialogues, scenes, or narrative structures in the film based on the cultural habits of the target market
Cultural Adaptation	Change parts of the film's content, context, or narrative structure according to the cultural background of the target audience to better suit the overseas market	Adjust cultural symbols or customs in the film to align more closely with the cultural perceptions of the target market

3.2. Audience Targeting Strategy

It is suggested to conduct in-depth market research, including understanding the target audience's cultural background, values, viewing habits, and aesthetic preferences. The research should not only include data analysis but also collect audience feedback and suggestions, which can help make more targeted adjustments to future works. While preserving the cultural essence of the work, the storyline and characters should be appropriately innovated and adjusted to better align with the target audience's cultural expectations and visual habits. It can be done by adding elements related to the target culture or re-creating key plot points.[4]

Combine different regional media characteristics and use popular local media for film and television promotion. For example, in some regions, it may be through television ads, while in others, it may be through social media promotion. It is suggested to establish partnerships with film institutions, cultural exchange organizations, and film festivals in the target country. Through these organizations' channels, the film or television work can be more easily recognized and accessed by the target audience.

3.3. Media Integration Strategy

3.3.1. Combination of Traditional and New Media

In cross-cultural communication of ethnic minority-themed films, the strategy of combining traditional and new media is to maximize audience reach through multi-channel coverage and content distribution. Traditional media, such as television, cinemas, and DVDs, have their own audience groups and distribution channels, providing a formal and concentrated viewing experience. Especially the big-screen display in cinemas offers an immersive viewing experience, which is beneficial for fully showcasing the audiovisual charm of the work. Additionally, television broadcasting has fixed schedules, which provides viewers with convenient viewing options in their daily life.

New media, such as social networks, video-sharing platforms, streaming services, and official websites, offer broader paths for content dissemination and audience engagement. These platforms are flexible and interactive, allowing audiences to access content anytime and anywhere and participate in the dissemination process through comments, sharing, and discussions. New media platforms also provide data feedback systems, allowing the production and promotion teams to monitor the spread of the work and audience responses in real time, adjusting strategies accordingly. Combining the advantages of traditional and new media can achieve resource complementarity and maximize the effect of dissemination. For example, promoting the work through traditional channels while initiating related topic discussions on social media can attract more viewers to watch and share the work through online platforms. This combination strategy also helps achieve widespread exposure and coverage among audiences from different regions, languages, and cultural backgrounds.

3.3.2. Interactive Communication on Multimedia Platforms

Implementing interactive communication on multimedia platforms is crucial to improving the effectiveness of cross-cultural communication. This involves not only content distribution but also

audience feedback and participation, forming a two-way, dynamic communication flow. Multimedia platforms provide a range of interactive tools and features, such as live chat, bullet comments, user ratings, and forum discussions, through which viewers can share their views and understanding of the work, promoting cultural exchange and understanding. Interactive communication can also be realized through direct interactions between content creators and audiences, such as online Q&As, live interviews, and audience surveys. Direct conversations between producers, directors, or actors and audiences can allow viewers to gain a deeper understanding of the cultural meanings and creative concepts behind the work, reducing cultural misunderstandings and enhancing the emotional appeal of the work.

3.4. Brand Building Strategy

The core of brand building lies in creating a distinctive cultural label, which requires the work to not only have profound cultural connotations but also reflect the uniqueness of ethnic minority cultures. This can be achieved through clear visual styles, consistent thematic elements, and coherent emotional appeals. Strengthening the connection between the work and the culture it represents helps create a symbolic cultural image.[5] By participating in international film festivals, film awards, and various cultural exchange activities, the work can gain international recognition and accolades, further consolidating its global reputation. This is also an effective way to showcase the artistic achievements and cultural values of the work.

Through collaboration with other cultural brands, tourism agencies, educational institutions, and more, the film and television work can be integrated into a broader range of cultural and commercial activities. This cross-industry collaboration not only expands the brand's influence but also provides audiences with a richer cultural experience. Expanding from film and television works to books, games, comics, exhibitions, and other fields can form a complete storytelling universe. This cross-media storytelling offers audiences opportunities for deep participation, making the brand image more three-dimensional and vivid.

4. Conclusion

This paper explores the core communication strategies for cross-cultural dissemination of ethnic minority-themed films, including the cultural proximity strategy, audience targeting strategy, media integration strategy, and brand building strategy. Through analysis, we conclude that although ethnic minority-themed films face a series of challenges on the international stage, such as cultural differences, limited acceptance, and promotional strategy limitations, these works have the potential to achieve greater success worldwide through careful planning and innovative dissemination methods.

To enhance cultural proximity, it is necessary to gradually eliminate cultural barriers, provide contextual explanations, and ensure that the content can be easily understood by global audiences. The audience targeting strategy focuses on profound insights into different cultural habits and preferences, along with precise market analysis, ensuring the work can touch the hearts of the target audience. The media integration strategy emphasizes the effective combination of traditional and new media, using diverse interactive methods to attract and expand the audience base. Brand building rises to a strategic level, aiming to shape the work into an international symbol representing ethnic culture, enhancing its global influence.

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