

Research on Bruce Lee's Classic Film Image and Cross-cultural Communication

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Abstract: Bruce Lee was a well-known actor, martial artist, and philosopher who brought quality films to people. At the same time, he used his way to spread Chinese culture to the world. This kind of cross-cultural communication was undoubtedly very successful at that time. This paper introduces the influence of Bruce Lee, the symbol of the era on the cross-cultural communication mode and the combination of films through the literature summary. Bruce Lee's model of cross-cultural communication was based on the medium of film. Due to the popularity of the Internet and social media, the effect of movies on cultural communication is gradually diminishing. The achievements made by internet celebrities headed by Li Ziqi on social media are gradually forming a new and significant cross-cultural communication effect. Cross-cultural communication is based on media consistent with social development and use its characteristics to maximize the benefits of cross-cultural communication.

Keywords: Bruce Lee, movies, media, cross-cultural communication, digital media age.

1. Introduction

Driven by globalization, the cross-cultural communication of film and television culture makes the national culture of the world reflect incredibly profound and rich film and television culture. At the same time, the cross-cultural communication of film and television culture has also made the communication of national cultures more effective. Film-based cultural communication media has become a new way for countries to spread and shape artistic images. From the cross-cultural perspective, the development course of human beings is also a historical picture of human cross-cultural communication, which is also the case for Chinese martial arts immersed in the culture. In the 1970s, Bruce Lee made kung fu movies a household name through his martial arts. In an era when China's cultural influence was far inferior to that of Western countries and suffered from racial discrimination and oppression, Bruce Lee promoted the national spirit of the Chinese people through the combination of movies and China's unique martial arts. In addition, it also meets the spiritual needs of the public and establishes a firm and upright national image for the Chinese in the world. At the same time, Chinese culture and the idea of Chinese people are spread worldwide through movies. This paper will analyze Bruce Lee's films' successful cross-cultural communication mode and explore the path of cross-cultural communication in line with contemporary China's current digital media era.

2. Image Analysis of Bruce Lee's Films

Bruce Lee's fights are the hallmark of his action movies. Due to the fast speed of punching, the fighting scenes presented in the movie look good and visually stunning. On-screen, Bruce Lee's force took just six frames, the equivalent of a quarter of a second from out to the back. Moreover, his movements are very agile and preemptive, ending the battle in a short period without giving the opponent any reaction time or chance. This had a significant influence on many future action movies [1].

Secondly, most of Bruce Lee's films promote a spirit of perseverance and self-renewal. Furthermore, that spirit easily resonates with marginalized or underprivileged groups in cities, such as Chinese, Asian, African, and Latino Americans who have been marginalized in the United States.

2.1. Film Sample-The Way of the Dragon

Symbolism can be reflected in the choice of props, colors, music, and storylines. The rational application of braces and paints can use the tension of time and space and the variable thinking of signs. The same signifier has different signifiers at different times and distances, and other signifiers can have the same signifier under the association [2]. Bruce Lee used this in his film to interpret the philosophy of Tai Chi in Chinese culture through the symbols of characters, objects and scenes in the film.

One classic scenes in the Way of the Dragon, the Colosseum showdown in Rome, which is about Bruce Lee against Chuck Norris, an American karate champion. In the setting of the movie's plot, the two masters from the East and the West dressed in black and white, constantly tested each other in a circular arena. If the audience change the space from a bird 's-eye view, the scene setting is very similar to the Taiji diagram of China. The two masters symbolize the two poles of Yin and Yang of Chinese kung fu, and, the process of confrontation has formed the potential for transforming the two poles of Yin and Yang.

2.2. The Big Boss

In 1971, Bruce Lee's The Big Boss is a film based on a true story. The file tells the story of Zheng Chao 'an, an Overseas Chinese living in Thailand in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. He came from Tangshan, China, and made outstanding achievements in fighting against bullies in Thailand [3]. After the movie was broadcast, Bruce Lee immediately became synonymous with hero because of his interpretation of the heroic character. The release of the Big Boss caused a sensation around the world. With the breaking of local box office records, Bruce Lee's heroic image was also introduced to the world. They are also warmly welcomed in foreign cities unfamiliar with Chinese culture and Kung fu, like Rome, Brute, Sydney, and Buenos Aires. Oriental Kung Fu films, packaged in the West, greatly satisfied the the Western world's exploration of the mysterious image of the ancient Oriental world [4].

3. The Cross-Cultural Communication

The commonness and particularity of cultures make it possible and necessary to communicate among different cultures. Cross-cultural communication is one of the driving forces for cultural progress and development. In the historical course of human civilization, cultures of other nations and regions have developed and improved through mutual learning, reference, and integration [5]. If a country's culture does not have the fusion of progressive foreign culture and the supplement of fresh factors, the trend of stagnation and backwardness may appear. Cross-cultural communication is the driving force of

cultural progress and development. In the era of globalization, no matter where people are in the global village, they are constantly experiencing changes. The changes brought about by cross-cultural communication brought about by globalization affect and change people's life and cognition of things. These changes put people in contact with people from diverse and group cultures. If people want to get along well in this world, they must have the ability to communicate with people with different cultural backgrounds, ways of thinking, and methods of acting [6]. Cross-cultural communication in the context of globalization is not only a realistic demand but also a shared opportunity and challenge faced by people in this era.

3.1. The Dilemma of the Cross-cultural Communication

3.1.1. The Cultural Differences

Cultural differences can easily lead to cultural misunderstandings when different cultures are contacted. People usually see and understand the world in their own way while interpreting other countries' cultures according to their traditions, ways of thinking, and needs. This is because people's knowledge and cognition determine how they discover and judge different cultures and how to recognize and understand them. As far as movies are concerned, the best way to express the image of Chinese people in Western countries is through the characters themselves. Most roles involving the Chinese are laundry workers, waiters, prostitutes, and other relatively lowly occupations [7]. The appearance of these movie characters is often ugly, especially the male characters, who lack masculinity and charisma, and are characterized by large pigtaileds, small stature, mustaches, small eyes (or even slanting eyes), long nails, pointed mouths, monkey gills, and buck teeth, etc. In addition to their external image, the inner surface is primarily annoying, either selfish, sinister, wily, ignorant, poor, numb, backward, etc.[8]

This characterization is in stark contrast to the tall, consequential, or handsome white characters. In the fictional world of the screen, it is still difficult for the Chinese to play leading roles and even harder to play positive roles.

Edward [9] proposed that the construction of self-identity involves the construction of the identity of the other, which is opposite to oneself. To build a positive identity and image of the country, Hollywood naturally needs to create a negative image of the Chinese through the screen to achieve the goal. To a certain extent, the deformed image publicity has affected the dissemination of culture and the mutual understanding between various nationalities. This abnormal situation has existed for a long time, but sooner or later, someone needed to break it, and the person who changed the status quo was a Chinese man named Bruce Lee.

3.1.2. Political Influence

During the Cold War period, especially in the 30 years after the founding of the People's Republic of China, China and the United States had differences in the social system, ideology, values, economic development level, and historical and cultural traditions. Stalemate and confrontation in international relations. As a representative of the capitalist camp, the United States imposed political isolation, economic blockade, and military encirclement on the newly established Chinese regime out of the need for political ideology. In this era, equal cross-cultural communication has become extremely difficult. The state of total confrontation between China and the United States lasted until the end of the 1960s. The conflict change between the two countries also depended on the domestic problems of the two countries and the subtle differences in the international situation at that time.

3.2. Bruce Lee's Breakthrough

3.2.1. Political Background

In the late 1960s, subtle changes occurred in the antagonistic relationship between China and the United States. President Nixon of the United States put out the "Nixon Doctrine" on his way to Visit Asia on July 25, 1969, aiming to extricate himself from the predicament of the Vietnam War and shrink the responsibility and obligation of the United States to defend free countries in the world. A reordering of America's foreign policy and its relations with China is also on the agenda. As a presidential candidate in 1968, Nixon sought dialogue with China and tried to bring change [10]. The relationship between China and the United States is moving towards a slight thaw, making it possible for Chinese films to appear on the American screen.

3.2.2. Personal Charm

Bruce Lee became a household name partly because of his charisma. As a master of martial arts, Bruce Lee established his own philosophy thinking and combined martial arts with philosophy. (referring to the philosophy of water in his related interview). This was difficult for other martial artists and actors of the time to achieve.

In terms of martial artist, Bruce Lee's kung fu on screen is more skillful and enjoyable than the average actor. In the film, Bruce Lee in an unbearable situation every time he used Kung fu, which laid a good psychological foundation for the characters to strike but also it also shows the idea of not using force to a certain extent.

At the same time, his screen image, such as muscular torso, chiseled muscles, ferocious movements, and confident looks, allowing the audience to follow the plot of the film at his rhythm. Combined with highly personal kicking, screaming, and highly ritualized bloodthirsty movements, it adds to the heroic of the characters and actors. And these unique qualities cannot be perfectly reproduced by any of Bruce Lee's imitators or doubles.

Furthermore, Bruce Lee's personal charisma is also reflected in the film through specific photography skills. When during the fighting, the main method of photography is to often use long shots or medium shots to show Li's movements in a relatively complete and coherent shot. In this way of expression, the audience can see Bruce Lee's most authentic and sophisticated martial arts skills. [11]

3.2.3. Bridging Cultural Barriers

Bruce Lee's contribution to cross-cultural communication is most directly reflected in his introduction of kung fu to the world. The film is a universal language because it mainly relies on visual images and auditory language to spread, which has a more extensive influence than literature. Besides, films rely on the transmission characteristics of film copy and the mass characteristics of multiple seats in a cinema, making films as cultural media more popular. The economic benefit of a movie has become an essential criterion for its film success. Love, comedy, and action become the three crucial elements of a successful film. The Kung Fu film genre has exported action as an entertainment element for world cinema [12]. Many Hollywood films, including "The Matrix" and "Kung Fu Panda," are based on the Oriental action system of Kung fu as the main selling point.

Moreover, captivate and fill the imagination of the audience. Bruce Lee did so through his off-screen roles as a martial artist and philosopher and his many vivid characters on screen [13]. He spread Chinese culture and philosophy worldwide to people of all nationalities through martial arts and movies.

Off-screen, Bruce Lee was the first Chinese to publicly teach Chinese martial arts to foreigners. Since he started teaching Chinese martial arts courses, his students are all from different ethnic groups and are located in many countries around the world.

Or this, he offended his Chinese martial arts peers. Because in the eyes of other Chinese martial artists, Wushu belongs only to the Chinese, and they cannot tolerate foreigners of different races to learn kungfu [14].

Moreover, with the help of film platform, Bruce Lee spread the philosophy behind Chinese martial arts to the world in English. Regarding his thoughts and philosophy, such as the metaphor of water that he used many times in public [15]. This metaphor is exactly to translate Chinese philosophy into English and explain it, eliminating the language barrier as much as possible.

4. Impact of Bruce Lee

In the 1970s, Bruce Lee shocked the world with his kung fu movies, which inspired a global craze for martial arts. Bruce Lee's success and the spread of Traditional Chinese culture have directly or indirectly enhanced the recognition of Chinese culture among overseas Chinese [16]. Bruce Lee's message and culture, through collective memory, through shared traditions, through a sense of shared history and heritage, is a unifying force of national or collective identity [17]. Moreover, its extensive dissemination of culture is conducive to enhancing the national awareness of family identity, strengthening the concept of loving family and patriotism, and strengthening national affinity. In an interview to mark the 40th anniversary of Bruce Lee's death [18], martial artists also expressed the power that Bruce Lee's films and words gave audiences. Bruce Lee changed the stereotype of Chinese people and gave Chinese people confidence.

From a global perspective, Bruce Lee's films and martial arts have profoundly impacted. The documentary titled *I Am Bruce Lee* even named him the father of MMA [19]. It can be seen that Bruce Lee's influence on the world's martial arts is very profound. The famous American boxer Mike Tyson also spoke highly of Bruce Lee's martial arts achievements in an interview [20]. The current phenomenon of this situation is that part of the audience's impression of Chinese people is that they are martial artists. Bruce Lee also had a profound influence on directors and movie stars. "Kill Bill" director Quentin Tarantino is a fan of kung fu movies. He designed a black striped tracksuit with a yellow background for Uma Thurman as a physical tribute to Bruce Lee. Action star Donnie Yen, who starred in the TV series *Fist of Fury*, mimics the mannerism and martial arts design of Bruce Lee's film version of *Fist of Fury*. Donnie Yen appeared in the film *IP Man*. He plays IP Man, Bruce Lee's master. Some filmmakers tend to let Chinese actors add martial arts elements to their performances. In a street interview, the respondents generally commented that The Chinese were trained in martial arts and capable of fighting. This phenomenon is indeed a solution to racial discrimination compared to the past. However, to some extent, there is a new stereotype that Chinese people are synonymous with kung fu.

5. The Integration of Cultural Industries and Bruce Lee

After his death, Bruce Lee's image and kung fu elements were widely used in the cultural industry, such as in movies, games, and animation.

5.1. Movies

There are many references and adoption of Bruce Lee elements in the movie. For example, in Quentin Tarantino's 'Kill Bill,' The Bride studies Kung fu and saves her life by using Bruce Lee's one-inch fist, a classic martial art technique, in scenes where she is buried alive. The Bride fights in Bruce Lee's

classic costumes in the fight scene at the martial arts studio. Another example is the Wing Chun style of Chinese kung fu that Robert Downey Jr used when filming Iron Man 3. In an interview with Robert Downey Jr., he also said that his hard work and the guidance of his master had a profound influence on him. There are far more examples in movies and TV dramas. Bruce Lee's contribution to cross-cultural communication is reflected in the cultural integration of different countries. These films received critical acclaim and successfully introduced audiences to Chinese culture.

5.2. Video Games

As two major cultural styles in the cultural industry, film and game are two completely different forms of artistic expression, but they are as inseparable as twin brothers, promoting the derivative of peripheral products in the cultural industry chain. Many classic movies have been adapted from games, including Tomb Raider, Prince of Persia: Chronicles of Time, Resident Evil, Final Fantasy, and Silent Hill. Game companies add cultural elements to the content they produce. Bruce Lee has also been added to the games as a household name. For example, League of Legends is a Video Game in the Asian Games. Riot has also added skin items with Chinese cultural elements, such as the characters' skins in The Three Kingdoms series. Riot designed a standalone Skin not part of a collection, Dragon Fist Lee Sin Skin. The skin is based on Bruce Lee and has received positive reviews from players [21]. This skin is a limited edition on the Chinese server and is even rarer.

The 'Honor of Kings' has been mentioned frequently to study cross-cultural communication between games and traditional culture. This may be because most of the nearly 100 characters in the game are from conventional Chinese stories or historical figures. The Honor of Kings has recently been working with the Chinese government on several cultural events. Liu [22] points out that many elements in Honor of Kings bear the mark of Traditional Chinese culture. The whole game structure takes Traditional Chinese culture as the spiritual core to create characters, stories, and activities. It starts from the integration of traditional culture, emphasis on social culture, and the creation of competitive culture. Analyze the shaping and spreading of its game culture. As one of the carriers of cross-cultural communication in the era of digital media, games can make good use of things in images, background music, and character lines to spread the cultures of different countries. Similarly, Honor of Kings has a Bruce Lee-themed limited game item [21]. Bruce Lee's image has been used as a symbol and cross-cultural communication.

6. Cross-cultural Communication in the Digital Media Era

6.1. The Inspiration and Disadvantages

After the third industrial revolution, with the continuous development of the Internet industry, the world has gradually entered the era of digital media, which has promoted the development of visual culture. Globalization is closing the gap between people all over the world, which means that the media era dominated by newspapers, radio, film and television has been replaced by the products of the Internet. Due to the popularity of smartphones and 4G technology, social media platforms led by Facebook and Twitter and video platforms led by TikTok and YouTube have become new media. Compared with the network platform model, the cross-cultural communication model used by Bruce Lee faces challenges in terms of communication efficiency. Due to the proliferation of communication media, the efficiency of film alone has been severely diluted. At the same time, the popularity of social media and video platforms means that audiences are spending less and less time with movies. This situation shows that the cross-cultural communication model needs to be updated and iterated.

6.2. Li Ziqi

In 2017, with the increase of social platforms, Liziqi has become the focus of continuous attention in academic and industry with her unique video content. By 2020, Liziqi's videos on YouTube had more than 17 million subscriptions. The big data survey shows that its rise in subscriber quantity presents a growth curve. From this point of view, the digital platform is one of the important media for cross-cultural communication. In the era of big data, social media plays a positive role in exporting Traditional Chinese culture [23].

Liziqi's video shows traditional Chinese traditional culture to the world in a flexible, innovative and dynamic manner. This directly stimulates the desire of people around the world to understand Chinese traditional culture.

The biggest obstacle to the cross-cultural communication of Chinese culture is the differences in cultural backgrounds and diversified values so that overseas audiences can understand and accept Chinese culture [24]. The video content released by Li Ziqi has constructed a systematic external communication strategy from the aspects of communication symbols, communication positioning, and communication concepts. Thus, the content can adapt to the information environment and communication ecology of YouTube, an overseas social media platform. In the era of digital media, the technological empowerment and accessibility brought by video and social media platforms have the inherent individual-oriented cross-cultural communication ability. In the decentralized communication context of digital media, individuals as communication subjects can obtain greater communication rights in the Internet field. Thus, it can cross different countries and cultural backgrounds, break cultural boundaries, dissolve cultural barriers, and form its communication influence. With the power of social media, Li Ziqi's short video focuses on the rural lifestyle of an ordinary Chinese girl through the expression of individualism. Li Ziqi's video has become a new generation transmission carrier of vivid and concrete Chinese culture.

The communication mode of Li Ziqi and Bruce Lee is similar, which is to find suitable media based on the development of The Times and carry out cross-cultural communication in a way that is deeply rooted in people's hearts. To some extent, they all promote Chinese culture in a way that transcends language. This strategy is indeed one way to break the shackles of cross-cultural communication in China.

7. Conclusion

In the span of his films, Bruce Lee's appeal has grown, and his personality has changed more. The thread running through all of Bruce Lee's films is the content of Chinese culture, which contributes to the presentation of cross-cultural communication. Bruce Lee's films reinforced Chinese national identity, connected the eastern and western world-views, and acknowledged and corrected certain historical and social injustices. Bruce Lee's influence in his films has been profound, and there are still avid fans who study him. Bruce Lee's cross-cultural communication will be remembered as a totem and symbol. With the deepening of globalization in all fields of human activities, people have gradually realized that globalization, as an objective existence, is not just an abstract concept but involves political, economic, military, cultural, and other levels. Extensive international exchanges and cooperation have become indispensable for a country to maintain sustainable, stable, and healthy development in these areas. Cross-cultural communication has become the focus of attention in the process of globalization. In the context of globalization and the digital media era, cross-cultural communication has become very important in achieving mutual understanding and developing the cultural industry among people worldwide.

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