

Study on the Path of Intercultural Communication of Television Drama

—Take Queen of Tears as an Example

Guanyi Wu^{1,a,*}

¹*School of Communication, Fujian Normal University, Fuzhou, Fujian, China*

a. jiyiing@ldy.edu.rs

**corresponding author*

Abstract: Korean film and television dramas are one of the important carriers of intercultural communication in Korean culture. The study of the reasons for the popularity of Korean dramas from the perspective of intercultural communication has received extensive attention, but there is still a lack of in-depth research on the latest explosive Korean dramas. This paper will take the Korean drama *Queen of Tears*, which exploded in the first half of 2024, as a sample to analyze the reasons for the popularity of the Korean drama *Queen of Tears* in China under the cross-cultural communication path. The paper analyses that the popularity of *Queen of Tears* is inextricably linked to the interplay of casting, plot, filming, and production. Based on this, this essay proposes that domestic TV dramas should pay attention to character suitability in casting, rich and diversified plots, and character settings, and focus on short-video marketing and other suggestions, hoping to shed some light on the production of domestic TV dramas, to promote the export of Chinese culture to foreign countries.

Keywords: Intercultural Communication, Television Drama, *Queen of Tears*

1. Introduction

Korean dramas have a large audience in China due to their exquisite production, delicate emotional portrayal, and compelling plots [1]. Since the end of the 20th century, with the popularity of dramas such as *Starky and Hutch* and *Winter Love Song*, Korean dramas began to become popular in China and quickly formed a cultural phenomenon.

The dissemination paths of film and television dramas, i.e. the various channels and methods experienced in the whole process from the completion of the production of the drama to the audience viewing, are not only related to the audience coverage of the work but also directly affect the market and cultural influence of the work. Understanding the transmission path is conducive to allowing researchers to better analyze the value of TV dramas, and at the same time helps TV drama producers and distributors to formulate more effective promotion strategies.

The Korean drama *Secret Garden* has received more than 20,000 views within an hour on the domestic broadcasting platform Sohu Channel alone. South Korean SBS TV waterwood drama *You Who Came From the Stars* in PPS, IQIYI two platforms synchronous broadcast, the first week of release broadcast volume exceeded ten million, only four episodes played in a fortnight, but easily

get 23 million broadcast volume, after breaking through the 1 billion clicks, become the hottest Korean drama [2].

The concept of intercultural communication was first mentioned in *The Language of Silence*, published in 1959 by American scholar Edward Hall. Intercultural communication refers to the exchange of information and cultural aspects between people of different cultural backgrounds and symbolic systems through a certain vehicle [3]. In 1981, China's Guangdong Television produced the television series *Shrimp Ball*, which was the first mainland television series spread to Hong Kong, Southeast Asia, and later 'Pearl Palace' hit, but also in Asia set off a wave of the *Little Swallow* craze, and even appeared in the Vietnamese version of *Little Swallow* [4].

Most of the popular Korean dramas have a positive ratio between the word-of-mouth of the plot and the overall word-of-mouth, such as *You Who Came From the Stars* and *Ghosts*, which have attracted a large number of viewers with their innovative plot settings. However, in 2024, some Korean dramas that have gained a lot of negative comments about their plots are still enjoying hot ratings. The plot of the Korean drama *Queen of Tears* is based on the story of a wealthy woman who suffers from amnesia after suffering from a terminal illness, some netizens have commented that the plot is not very impressive, but the ratings are still overwhelmingly positive.

Due to the lack of in-depth analyses of the latest Korean dramas in existing studies, little attention has been paid to the reasons why Korean dramas based on the classic interpretation of the three treasures of Korean dramas-car accidents, amnesia, and cancer are still loved by the public today, this paper will take the Korean drama *Queen of Tears* as an analysis sample to further summarise the reasons and feasible experiences of its explosion under the cross-cultural communication path in China, which will help audiences to deepen their knowledge and understanding of Korean dramas and Korean culture, and at the same time provide certain inspirations and ideas for the production of domestic TV dramas.

2. Case Study

In 2024, the Korean drama *Queen of Tears* caught fire across the internet, breaking its record for highest ratings every week since it started airing, and was followed by many netizens. On 28 April 2024, its ratings became the number one of all time on the Korean entertainment channel TV, surpassing the second-place finisher, *Crash Landing On You*, with 24.85%, and making it into the Top 3 in the Top 10 of all-time ratings on the cable channel. Based on this phenomenon, the use of questionnaires and semi-structured interviews to explore the reasons for the popularity of *Queen of Tears* in China and why Chinese viewers are still interested in the drama series framed by the 'three treasures of Korean dramas: car accidents, amnesia, and terminal illnesses' is of some research significance. This study is of some significance.

2.1. Questionnaires

Starting from the basic information of the respondents, the questionnaire survey was designed around the closed-ended questions on the possible popularity factors such as performance of the actors, plot content, filming techniques, cultural and fashion elements to find out whether the Korean drama *Queen of Tears* is popular among college students and the reasons for it, and distributed the questionnaires on WeChat, Weibo, and other channels. A total of 50 valid questionnaires were received. Among them, 82 percent were female and 18 percent were male. 48 percent of the respondents were between the ages of 18 and 20, 40 percent were between the ages of 21 and 23, and 12 percent were over the age of 23.

2.2. Semi-Structured Interviews

In this paper, the author combines interviews and questionnaires to collect basic information and attitudes through respondents' questionnaires and selects members of Sina Weibo's "Queen of Korean Drama Tears" super topic to conduct interviews according to the research objectives to gain a deeper understanding of the audience's true thoughts on *Queen of Tears*. The interview research method can help the researcher to get close to the target audience and deepen the research content to draw more accurate conclusions. The interviews mainly focus on questions such as 'Discussion topics of *Queen of Tears*' and 'What you think is outstanding about *Queen of Tears*', which are more convenient for the researcher to ask for more details than the questionnaire with options, allowing the researcher to find more unexpected perspectives to cut into.

3. Prevalence Factors

3.1. Specific Characters Come with a Large Fan Base

The appearance and acting of the hero and heroine give the audience a good match and a feeling suitable for establishing a love relationship. It attracted a large number of fans. The questionnaire survey data shows that 86% of the audience felt that 'the actors' high face value, good acting skills, and a strong sense of CP' were the most attractive reasons for them to watch *Queen of Tears*, and 76% of them started watching or continued to watch *Queen of Tears* because of a specific role in *Queen of Tears* (e.g., a certain actor/director/writer/producer, etc.). Writer Park Ji Eun, who has created classic Korean dramas such as *You Who Came From the Stars* and *The Legend of the Blue Sea*, is particularly good at portraying delicate emotional lines. Kim Soo Hyun has become an overnight sensation since his role as Do Min Joon in 'You Who Came From The Stars' and has been dubbed as 'Korea's Most Expensive Actor'. Kim Ji Won, the female lead, has repeatedly been recognized for her beauty and has become the avatar of many Chinese female netizens on social media platforms. These characters have several followers, which laid the foundation of fans for the Korean drama *Queen of Tears*.

3.2. Clever Way of Filming

The design of the shots, such as the standing position of the male and female leads, gives the audience the illusion of dialogue in space. The camera angles are chosen uniquely, such as some voyeuristic angles and monitor angles, to increase the diversity of the picture, and the composition is very beautiful. Questionnaire data showed that 68 percent of the audience found the filming techniques (e.g. transitions, camera aesthetics, narrative techniques, etc.) of *Queen of Tears* very appealing. Light and shadow are often seen in *Queen of Tears* being used to create emotional combinations, highlighting the subject and adding layers and storytelling to the image. The detailing is spot on, with even minor elements carefully arranged to support and enrich the main story, making for a neater overall picture. The Epilogue at the end of each episode echoes the ambush planted by the scriptwriter like a decryption, paired with the proper OST for emotional recursion, enhancing the desire to follow the drama.

3.3. The Role of the Plot in Setting up and Sublimation

The drama did not spend a lot of ink focusing on the female lead's terminal illness and memory loss, like a foil to set off the development of the male and female lead's relationship line. Such a plot makes the character roles in the drama more fleshed out and three-dimensional, which can boost the overall plot development and bring about ups and downs in the plot, making the audience reap the experience

of emotional climaxes and twists. In response to the male protagonist's elated reaction upon learning of the female protagonist's terminal illness, Internet citizens' comments were polarized. While many voices criticized the male lead's desperation, some thought that the male lead's persona was in line with real human nature, very fleshed out, and not a single, paper-thin perfect male lead. The writer referenced a lot of people's thoughts as well as actions in reality, which is closer to real life and is a reason why audiences can easily empathize with them.

From the point of view of fashion elements, the heroine's many sets of clothing are top luxury goods, such clothing with help deepen the audience's understanding of the character's personality and identity, the image of the 'chaebol daughter' interpretation is very accurate, reflecting the Korean upper-class fashion trends, but also drive a certain amount of consumption. A study found that celebrity worshippers may even trust their favorite celebrities more than their friends [5]. Korean outfits are usually at the forefront of fashion, often with attention to detail, balancing dramatic effect with a sense of the every day, both artistic and practical, in line with domestic women's aesthetic preferences, and suitable for imitation by the Asian population. In *You Who Came From The Stars*, the lead actress, Jeon Ji-hyun, wears an average of 5 to 10 outfits per episode. In *The Heirs*, Lee Min-ho, the male lead, changed 68 outfits in the first 12 episodes. In *Crash Landing On You*, Son Ye-jin, the female lead, changed a lot of big brands even though she was forced to land in a small village in a remote part of North Korea. During the airing of *Crash Landing On You*, the Chinese Taobao website Sun Yejin's same style has also become a keyword for merchants to attract customers [6]. In terms of cultural differences, the drama *Queen of Tears* features many scenes of the daily life and work of the wealthy family, which is often a symbol of power and wealth, a relatively unfamiliar area to the general audience, and full of mystery to the general public, which can satisfy the audience's curiosity about the upper class. The story of the wealthy family often carries a certain degree of fantasy, giving the audience the space and experience to temporarily escape from reality. The viewer can forget the troubles of the real world for a while and escape into the excitement of a fictional life.

4. Suggestions

4.1. Focus on the Selection of Roles

The actors themselves need to have certain acting skills, be able to portray the characters according to the requirements of the script, match well with the characters, have a strong sense of camera, and express their lines and actions naturally. The director also needs to consider market factors when casting, such as the actor's popularity, fan base, and so on. Especially for romantic dramas, when selecting the male and female leads or even the other 'couples' in the drama, it is important to consider whether the appearance is a good match and whether it can attract the attention of the audience. The popularity of a drama is related to the number of fans who show a high level of interest and support for a particular on-screen couple or co-star, as well as the level of discussion on the topic. In recent years, 'Ship the Coupling' has become a highly discussed topic on social media. It's an emerging fan cultural practice aimed at the pursuit of happiness, and the generation and creation of emotional space involved in CP(coupling) fandom has certain specificity [7]. Shipping the Coupling can enable them to temporarily detach themselves from the boring real life, search for details for further interpretation in CP texts full of uncertainty, give meaning to the text by exercising creativity, and gain a sense of satisfaction and achievement [8].

4.2. Diversity of Characters and Plot Settings

Both the main and supporting characters in *Queen of Tears* have very distinct personalities and unique backstories. The male lead's parents have been neglected and even despised by the plutocratic in-laws in the past, but due to the goodness of their nature, they are still full of sincerity in accepting and

helping the plutocratic in-laws and their family who have fallen on hard times after bankruptcy, which enriches the level and depth of the plot and satisfies the audience's demand for depth and emotional richness of the characters, so it is important to focus on the diversified and three-dimensional characterization in the setting of the characters, which enhances the overall attractiveness of the episodes. By depicting the life of a chaebol family and its marital crisis, *Queen of Tears* combines elements of realism and romance, which inspires emotional resonance in viewers while fulfilling their fantasies of a better life. Domestic film and TV dramas can consider combining realistic and emotional elements in scriptwriting so that the plot is close to life itself without losing its appeal. In addition, the episodes can reflect some hot topics in society and trigger discussions among the audience. South Korean TV dramas have ideologically transcended the work/family equilibrium typical of Western neoliberal feminist discourse. Hence, the main female characters must address their relative superiors--often older and/or wealthier men--using the formal speech style, while bowing and absorbing the wisdom of elderly men, and perhaps Buddhism and Confucianism, elements that are typical of Korea and the wider East Asian region, but absent in the West [9]. In *Queen of Tears*, although the hero is the underdog in the heroine's family, in the capacity of the traditional family's wise wife, his dignity is thwarted by the fact that he lives in a patriarchal society, where men are usually in charge, while the heroine is the heiress of the family, and he, as a man, is the woman's subservient servant. The difference between the two environments creates a subtle sense of contradiction, in that one wants to sympathize with the weak, but the weak are men. Such a characterization of the social issue of gender rights will inevitably lead to a wide range of discussions. Female-led dramas create an illusion of women's dominant position in society, gradually constructing a media landscape of gender equality and plunging feminist exploration into a 'false victory', and women's consumption of female-led dramas is an escape from the realities of the dilemma [10].

4.3. Emphasis on Filming Skills

In *Queen of Tears*, the director likes to use close-ups to capture the facial expressions, eyes, and subtle movements of the actors to show the inner world of the characters and enhance the emotional resonance of the audience. There is also the use of some slow-motion shots to enhance the visual impact and emotional depth, creating a sense of romantic atmosphere. A series of backlight shots in the drama create many classic scenes and enhance the impact of the scenes. Daytime scenes are not bound by logical concepts. The use of direct light, night scenes combined with artificial light, and highly reflective props, costumes, and so on to create detail-rich images enriched emotional expression. The interactive construction of film-quality TV series and audience aesthetics is a mutually reinforcing process, which not only enriches the artistic expression and depth of the work but also enhances the audience's aesthetic ability and cultural taste, opening up broader possibilities for development [11]. Therefore, the production of domestic dramas should pay attention to the communication of the beauty of filming and enhance the visual effect of the picture.

4.4. Promote the Publicity of Film and Television Dramas with the Help of Network Power

Maximizing the dissemination of content in the shortest possible time is one of the important features of short video dissemination, and the advantage of short video platforms over traditional promotional platforms lies in the fact that short videos can be targeted according to big data statistics to recommend some clips that users are interested in for focusing on promotion and to achieve accurate push so that short videos can get more clicks, and have more high-quality publicity and marketing effects on TV series [12]. The reason why *Queen of Tears* has such a great influence in China cannot be separated from the edited videos pushed by video broadcasting platforms such as TikTok, bilibili, and so on. Most of the domestic distribution of *Queen of Tears* relies on short-video platform editing

video push, which inspires a large number of viewers to watch, indicating that the popularity of social media is conducive to the dissemination of Korean dramas in China, and has a certain degree of influence.

5. Conclusion

The popularity of the Korean drama *Queen of Tears* in China is related to the excellent cast and production team, which has triggered a high degree of discussion and emotional resonance. Korean dramas have always been oriented to the audience's needs from the perspective of cross-cultural communication, with rigorous considerations in casting, plotting, and production. The production of domestic dramas can refer to the 'short and concise' presentation mode of Korean dramas so that the plot is compact does not drag, and does not easily let the audience produce aesthetic fatigue. At the same time, the cost savings can be used in the costume, to provide the audience with a beautiful feeling, and to strengthen the strength and effect of internal and external communication.

References

- [1] Han, G. Y., & Jo, S. C. (2019). *The Influence of Korea's National Image on Intention to Use Korean Wave Contents and Mediating Effect of the Korean Wave Fandom Identification: Focusing on Asian Consumers*. *J. Korea Contents Assoc*, 19, 296-305.
- [2] Yang, X. X. (2021). *An Analysis of the Foreign Communication Path of Domestic TV Dramas - A Comparison Based on the Cross-Cultural Communication of TV Dramas in China and South Korea*. *Sound Screen World*, (03), 5-8+27.
- [3] Huang, P. P. (2021). *An Analysis of the Communication Capacity of Korean Drama 'Crash Landing On You' in China From the Perspective of Intercultural Communication*. Beijing Foreign Studies University.
- [4] Zhong, K. L. (2021). *Research on Intercultural Communication Strategy of Chinese Film and Television Dramas*. *Chinese Newspaper Industry*, (12), 58-59.
- [5] Singh, R. P., & Banerjee, N. (2019). *Exploring the Influence of Celebrity Worship on Brand Attitude, Advertisement Attitude, and Purchase Intention*. *J. Promot. Manag*, 25, 225-251.
- [6] Li, P. Q. (2020). *Reasons for the Popularity of Korean Dramas in Intercultural Communication and Revelations--Take the Korean drama 'Crash Landing On You' as An Example*. *Science and Technology Communication*, (08), 30-31.
- [7] Xu, G. W., & Zhang, H. (2023). *'Ship Coupling': Creative Emotional Experiences of Young Female Fans*. *Journal of Women's Studies*, (01), 102-116.
- [8] Zhao, X. Y. (2024). *A Study On the CP Behaviour of Real-Life CP Fans in Weibo Super Talk*. *Journalism Research Guide*, (01), 250-253.
- [9] Boman, B. (2022). *Feminist Themes in Hallyu 4.0 South Korean TV Dramas as a Reflection of a Changing Sociocultural Landscape*. *Asian Journal of Women's Studies*, 28(4), 419-437.
- [10] Cheng, C. L., & Liu, Z. Z. (2024). *On the Portrayal of Women In the Explosive Online Drama Crime Hunting Illustrated*. *News Communication*, (07), 102-104+108.
- [11] Gao, Y. (2024). *The Influence of Cinematic Texture Images in the Image Creation of Domestic Drama from 'Flourishing Flowers'*. *Journal of Culture*, (04), 42-45.
- [12] Feng, L. F., & Chen, X. R. (2022). *Characteristics, Problems and Countermeasures of Short Video Marketing of TV Dramas*. *China Journal of Radio and Television*, (06), 86-88.