Research on Film Development and Innovation from a Cross-Cultural Perspective

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Abstract: With the acceleration of globalization, film, as an art form with wide influence, has become a bridge for cultural exchange and cognitive diversity. The purpose of this paper is to explore the role of cross-cultural communication in film artworks. Film is not only a carrier of culture but also an important tool for disseminating ideas, emotions, and social values. The study of cross-cultural communication reveals how film builds bridges between different cultures, helps audiences understand and embrace heterogeneous cultures, and promotes cultural identity and dialogue on a global scale. But at the same time, the development of cinema also faces some problems. First of all, the capital attribute of the film makes its development have a certain traffic theme situation, resulting in a certain convergence and lack of diversity. In addition, the content development of the film has also received restrictions. The homogenization of themes and content limits the development of films and the performance of cross-cultural responsibilities to a certain extent.

Keywords: Film, Cross-Cultural Responsibilities, Commercialization of Films

1.   Introduction

The acceleration of globalization has elevated the importance of films as a tool for cross-cultural communication. The cross-cultural dissemination of cinematic works has become a vital channel for cultural exchange between nations. In recent years, with the rise of streaming platforms such as Netflix and the increasing number of international co-productions, films have transcended traditional national boundaries, becoming a crucial bridge connecting different cultures. According to Crane, advancements in media technology have accelerated the spread of films, and the number of countries producing media content has grown, especially in Asia, contributing significantly to the diversity of global cultures [1].

However, issues related to commercialization and innovation have become increasingly prominent. Scholars such as Ravid have expressed concerns about the commercialization of films, arguing that they often function primarily as profit-generating tools [2]. Moreover, Davenport highlights the lack of innovation in films, pointing out that decades of reliance on fixed production models have hindered creativity and transformation within the industry [3].

This study aims to explore the theoretical and practical value of cinematic works in cross-cultural communication, analyze their responsibilities in the context of globalization, and examine the dual impact of commercialization and innovation on these responsibilities. Through a combination of

literature review and case analysis, this paper will investigate the historical evolution and current status of films' cross-cultural communication roles, as well as propose practical recommendations.

By delving into the developmental trajectory and current state of films in fulfilling their cross-cultural communication responsibilities, this research seeks to promote the positive effects of cultural understanding and inclusion. Ultimately, it highlights how cinematic works can serve as a widespread and effective tool in cross-cultural communication.

2. The Cross-Cultural Responsibilities of Film Works

2.1. Development

The development of cross-cultural communication in films can be traced back to the 1960s, a period influenced by socioeconomic contexts and academic advancements. Condon pointed out that the origins of cross-cultural communication studies roughly date back to the Kennedy era, driven by the establishment of the Peace Corps, the rise of academic area studies, and the conditions that allowed North Americans to travel abroad on a large scale for the first time. Meanwhile, works such as The Ugly American in 1958 and The Silent Language in 1959 laid the early theoretical foundations for cross-cultural communication [4]. This indicates that cross-cultural communication was initially driven by political, educational, and cultural interaction needs, with film, as a popular medium, gradually integrating into this trend to become a vital tool for cross-cultural exchange.

Although the concept of "cross-cultural" was systematically incorporated into film studies relatively late, the creation of cross-cultural films can be traced back to the early history of cinema. Jacobsson noted that from early travelogues to ethnographic filmmaking in the 1920s, films had already begun to depict cultural exchanges and cross-cultural processes, highlighting both the production methods and audience reception of cross-cultural elements [5]. This demonstrates that cross-cultural films have consistently played the role of a bridge in film history, helping audiences understand and engage with unfamiliar cultures through visual storytelling, while also providing a platform for dialogue between cultures.

The rise of non-Western cinema has made a significant contribution to global cultural diversity. According to Khan, the rise of Asian cinema, including industries such as India's Bollywood and South Korea's film industry, has enriched the global cinematic repertoire with diverse cultural narratives and artistic styles [6]. These films, through vivid visual language and emotional expression, bring the uniqueness of local cultures into the global context. This not only expands the audience's understanding of different cultures but also challenges the traditionally Western-dominated narrative modes, embodying the diversity of global cinematic culture.

Jacobsson further mentioned that African and Asian film industries have challenged Western mainstream perspectives by offering alternative narratives and contributing more diverse voices to global cinema [5]. These alternative narratives are often rooted in local cultural traditions, forming a sharp contrast with Western narrative frameworks, and providing audiences with new ways to understand and view the world. Such narratives enhance the visibility of non-Western cultures and create greater opportunities for global cultural exchange and integration.

Additionally, Condon emphasized the prominent role of African cinema in showcasing cultural diversity [4]. By presenting the richness of Indigenous storytelling traditions and their relevance in contemporary global discourse, African cinema has further expanded the boundaries of global cinematic culture. These narratives not only highlight the unique value of African indigenous cultures but also allow global audiences to appreciate the profound significance of cultural diversity, thereby fostering a deeper understanding and respect for cultural diversity on a global scale.

2.2. Cinematic Representation of Cross-Cultural Responsibility

Literature and film can enhance cross-cultural communication in two very important ways: first, by expressing relationships, values, communication styles, and other elements that represent the significance of the culture being portrayed; second, by making cross-cultural issues themselves the main theme of films or literary works, such as cultural adaptation, identity, and inter-ethnic relations. This suggests that films are not merely passive tools for cultural display but active carriers for exploring complex cultural phenomena. Through vivid storytelling and visual symbols, films allow audiences to gain a deeper understanding of the social structures and interpersonal dynamics of different cultural contexts while being entertained. Such expressions enable audiences to cross cultural boundaries and directly engage with and understand the cultural environments of others.

Furthermore, Condon pointed out that films offer possibilities for depicting and analyzing interpersonal relationships in ways that traditional social science writing cannot achieve [4]. He noted that films delve into the thoughts and emotions of characters, enabling audiences to witness their dreams, fears, frustrations, and decision-making processes as they navigate various challenges. This mode of expression transcends the limitations of traditional academic writing by intricately portraying cultural interactions and conflicts through visuals and narratives. For instance, films can use characters' linguistic choices, non-verbal symbols, such as body language and facial expressions, and narrative themes, such as inter-ethnic relations or identity reconstruction to convey complex cultural phenomena. This highly contextualized narrative style engages audiences emotionally and cognitively, thereby deepening their understanding of cross-cultural interactions.

Khan mentioned that moving into more recent history, the global dissemination of films in the 20th century provides another example of how art transcends cultural boundaries [6]. From Hollywood blockbusters to Bollywood musicals, Japanese anime to Iranian cinema, films have the power to resonate with audiences worldwide, transcending linguistic and cultural differences. This demonstrates that films, through their global distribution networks, have surpassed traditional cultural and geographical boundaries, enabling audiences to experience diverse cultural expressions. Such dissemination not only enriches global cultural exchange but also provides a broader platform for interaction and understanding among different cultures. According to Khan, filmmakers, through the universal language of visual storytelling, address themes such as love, loss, and human struggle, which resonate with audiences across cultures and foster cross-cultural understanding [6].

2.3. Current Situation

In the era of globalization, contemporary films exhibit a high degree of connected and extensive cultural influence. Lorenzen pointed out that the film industry has embraced globalization through international co-productions, outsourcing, and the rise of multinational corporations, forming a more interconnected global market [7]. This internationalized production model not only enhances the efficiency of filmmaking but also enriches narrative content through global collaborative mechanisms, enabling films to better align with diverse cultural contexts and cater to global audiences.

Additionally, the trend of globalized film consumption is gradually taking shape. Lorenzen argued that the globalization of film consumption has led to the emergence of global consumer tastes [7]. Films are increasingly targeted at global audiences rather than being confined to local markets and are often released simultaneously across multiple regions. This globalized distribution strategy has made films an important tool for cross-cultural communication, promoted the formation of global cultural identity, and reduced the regional limitations of cultural dissemination.

As the core of the global film industry, Hollywood is adapting to this trend by producing transnational content. Crane noted that Hollywood films are becoming increasingly transnational, incorporating themes and elements from other cultures to appeal to a diverse global audience [1].

This shift reflects a transition from single-culture content to multi-culture content, enabling films to transcend cultural boundaries and establish emotional connections with audiences from different countries.

This transition is further evidenced by the rise of transnational films. Crane further emphasized that the emergence of transnational films reflects the need to create culturally less specific but more universally appealing content to succeed in the global market [1]. While this cultural content format may diminish the local characteristics of films, it also creates possibilities for cultural integration within the context of globalization, allowing films to achieve success in multicultural markets.

At the same time, technological advancements have provided new opportunities for global film distribution. Lorenzen highlighted that streaming platforms and other new technologies have revolutionized film distribution, enabling even niche films to reach global audiences with minimal barriers [7]. This technological innovation has reduced the high costs of traditional distribution methods and allowed a greater number of culturally diverse works to enter the global audience's view, facilitating cultural exchange and understanding.

3. Impact and Current Issues in the Cross-Cultural Development of Film

3.1. Impact

The commercialization of the film industry has demonstrated significant advantages in the context of globalization. Ravid noted that the film industry has embraced globalization through international co-productions, outsourcing, and the rise of multinational corporations, resulting in a more interconnected global market [2]. This globalized production and distribution model not only enhances the resource integration capabilities of the film industry but also provides greater opportunities for cross-cultural collaboration, enabling films to achieve broader dissemination and influence worldwide.

Additionally, blockbusters and high-budget productions have significantly expanded global reach, allowing film companies to maximize revenue through worldwide distribution [2]. This commercialization strategy enables films to reach a larger audience, offering high-quality entertainment experiences while generating substantial economic returns for the film industry. Such revenue not only supports the implementation of more commercial projects but also drives advancements in film technology and production scales.

3.2. Current Issues

However, the commercialization of films also comes with notable limitations. Ravid pointed out that blockbusters often prioritize global appeal at the expense of cultural depth, as studios focus more on universal themes rather than specific cultural narratives [2]. This suggests that the drive for commercialization may lead to content homogenization, diminishing the role of films as tools for cultural expression and limiting audiences' deeper understanding of cultural diversity.

Moreover, diversity in films is not always genuine or valued. Dhami argued that, at times, diversity is incorporated merely for financial incentives [8]. This superficial diversity not only fails to effectively promote cultural integration but may also reinforce stereotypes, undermining the potential of films to foster cultural exchange and understanding.

Additionally, the high production costs and star salaries associated with blockbuster films create economic pressures, limiting resources available for independent and culturally specific films [2]. This indicates that the commercialized film industry tends to invest in lower-risk, higher-revenue commercial projects while neglecting the importance of independent films in promoting cultural diversity and artistic innovation.

Commercial films have become the primary revenue drivers of the film industry, surpassing independent and art films in audience reach and financial success [9]. This indicates that commercial films achieve market scalability and revenue maximization by appealing to a broader audience. However, this profit center approach may partially undermine the market space for independent and art films, resulting in content homogenization within the film industry.

The driving force behind innovation in films is also influenced by market preferences for "safe choices." For instance, Kersten and Verboord noted that most popular films emphasize themes and narratives aligned with Hollywood norms to meet mass audience expectations. This tendency further leads to the homogenization of film supply, where films express emotions through a limited range of cultural, social, or psychological themes in conventional ways [10]. This viewpoint is supported by Davenport, who observed that producers in the British film industry tend to pursue "repeatable solutions" rather than breakthrough innovations [3]. This behavior stems from the project-based work model's emphasis on stability and financial more controllable, even though, in theory, such a model should foster innovation and flexibility.

This problem of homogenization of themes and content will affect the role of film cultural transmission to a certain extent, which will lead to the limitation of its cross-cultural responsibilities.

4. Conclusion

The role of cinematic works in cross-cultural communication has been profoundly shaped by the forces of globalization, commercialization, and innovation. Films have transcended traditional boundaries to become powerful tools for connecting diverse cultures, fostering understanding, and promoting cultural exchange on a global scale. Through their narrative and visual elements, films not only convey cultural values but also provide audiences with an engaging platform to explore complex cultural phenomena.

This study highlights the dual impact of globalization on the film industry. On one hand, advancements in media technology and the rise of international co-productions have enhanced the accessibility and reach of films, enabling them to cater to global audiences and bridge cultural divides. On the other hand, commercialization has imposed constraints on cultural depth and diversity, with the dominance of profit-driven narratives often sidelining independent and innovative works. Despite these challenges, the emergence of non-Western cinema and the continued evolution of storytelling and visual styles reflect the ongoing efforts to maintain cultural diversity within the global film market.

While the commercialization of the film industry has brought economic success and expanded audiences, it has also highlighted the need for a balanced approach to Commercialization and cultural representation. Innovation, though constrained by market demands, remains a vital driver of creative and meaningful storytelling that resonates with diverse audiences. By addressing the challenges of homogenization and promoting cultural inclusivity, the film industry can continue to fulfill its cross-cultural communication responsibilities in an increasingly interconnected world.

Ultimately, cinematic works possess the unique potential to transcend cultural boundaries, foster dialogue, and inspire understanding among audiences from different backgrounds. By leveraging their artistic and cultural significance, films can play an essential role in shaping a more inclusive and culturally aware global society.

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