Original Research Article

An analysis of cross-cultural communication paths in the digital media era: The interactive relationship between social media and multiculturalism

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Abstract: Social media has become a key channel for cross-cultural communication, enabling local cultures to overcome barriers of language and geography. Examples such as K-pop, Li Ziqi's videos, and Blackpink's collaboration with Selena Gomez show how platforms promote global cultural exchange while also raising issues of algorithmic bias, uneven visibility, and cultural commodification.This study revisits and adapts classical communication theories, integrating concepts of acculturation, glocalization, and cultural capital to explain the algorithm-driven context of social media. Through case studies of BTS, Li Ziqi, and Ice Cream, it reveals how online cultural flows both expand opportunities and reproduce inequalities. The paper provides recommendations to reduce bias, enhance dialogue, and foster more inclusive global communication.

1. Introduction

Driven by the digital wave, social media has become the core channel for global cultural communication with the rapid development of Internet technology. By 2023, the number of global social media users had exceeded 5 billion, and its high penetration rate has greatly improved the convenience of cross-cultural communication and expanded the scope of communication. Social media not only enables.
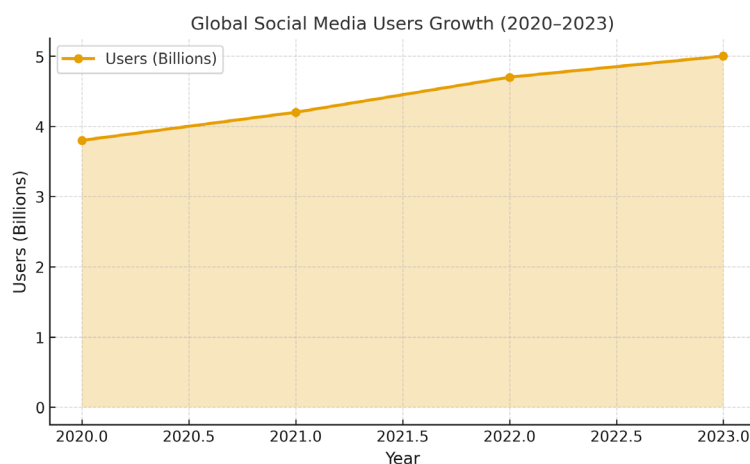

Figure 1. Global social media users growth.

Nevertheless, while promoting the exchange and integration of global cultures, social media has moreover exposed many problems. Factors such as platform architecture, algorithm recommendations, user behavior, and commercial interests have led to unfairness in cultural communication. The algorithms of some platforms tend to prioritize recommending mainstream cultural content and pay insufficient attention to the dissemination of content related to ethnic.

This study holds significant importance both theoretically and practically. Theoretically, traditional cross-cultural communication theories, such as Hofstede's cultural dimension theory, are mostly based on face-to-face cultural communication scenarios and can hardly adapt to the more diverse and fragmented character-

istics of cultural communication in the social media era. Thus, there is a need to update and expand existing theoretical frameworks.

2. Related research

2.1. Evolution of cross-cultural communication theory

Since the mid-20th century, cross-cultural communication theory has become an important direction in the field of cultural research. Early studies mainly focused on identifying differences between different cultures and their impacts on communication and interaction. Important achievements in this field include Hofstede's cultural dimension theory (covering six dimensions such as power distance, individualism, and collectivism) and Hall's high- and low-context.

With the acceleration of globalization and digitalization, new theories have emerged continuously. The theory of cultural imperialism holds that developed countries achieve cultural hegemony by controlling the output of media and cultural industries. However, in the social media era, its applicability has been challenged—the decentralized nature of social media allows diverse cultural elements to spread widely.

2.2. The reconstruction of cultural communication by social media

The emergence of social media has completely changed the traditional model of cultural communication. Unlike the centralized communication of traditional mass media such as television and newspapers, social media is decentralized and highly interactive. Users are not only consumers of cultural content however moreover can become producers. Gillespie's research on algorithm recommendation systems demonstrates that algorithms are not only technical.

2.3. Communication characteristics of multicultural elements

Social media has accelerated the global flow of cultures and promoted the collision and integration of different cultures. Cultural symbols are constantly fragmented, reorganized, and recreated on social media platforms, and meme culture is a typical example. Memes are not only entertaining however moreover carry rich social, cultural, and political information, becoming a cultural language shared globally.

However, in the process of multicultural communication, some ethical issues have moreover emerged, with cultural appropriation being one of them. When some brands and individuals utilize symbols from other cultures for commercial activities or artistic expression on social media, they ignore the historical background and origin of these cultural symbols, triggering disputes over cultural property rights and cultural respect. Kim.

3. Methodology

3.1. Digital transformation of acculturation theory

The acculturation theory proposed by psychologist John Berry classifies acculturation strategies into four types: integration, assimilation, separation, and marginalization. Traditional acculturation research mainly focuses on the adaptation strategies of immigrant groups when facing foreign cultures. In the social media era, however, the way of acculturation has undergone significant changes. Social media has accelerated the flow.

3.2. Dynamic balance between globalization and localization

Roland Robertson proposed the concept of "glocalization" in 1995, arguing that globalization and locali-

zation are not mutually opposed however interdependent and interrelated processes. In the digital age, social media has become an important intersection for the interaction between the global and the local, promoting the emergence of the glocalization phenomenon.

The decentralized structure of social media means that cultural production is no longer monopolized by traditional media institutions. User-generated content has become an important driving force for cultural innovation and communication. Users participate in the construction and dissemination of global culture by uploading videos, sharing articles, and other activities.

3.3. Extension of cultural capital theory in digital space

Bourdieu's cultural capital theory holds that cultural capital includes various forms such as education, art, and knowledge, which play an important role in an individual's social status and cultural influence. In the social media era, the ways of creating and disseminating cultural capital have undergone major changes, no longer limited to social class.

The degree of accumulation of digital cultural capital can be expressed as $D = f(C\_Q, I\_D, N\_S)$, where D is the degree of accumulation of digital cultural capital, C_Q is the quality and quantity of content created and shared by an individual on social media.

4. Case studies

4.1. The BTS phenomenon: How K-pop breaks through cultural boundaries via social media

The global success of the South Korean boy group BTS (Bangtan Boys) fully demonstrates the important role of social media in cross-cultural communication. BTS's fans are distributed in many regions such as Asia, Europe, and America. Fans share BTS's music, videos, pictures, and their own creations through social media platforms such as Twitter, YouTube, and Instagram, forming a global cultural community.

BTS interacts directly with fans through social media, narrowing the distance with fans. The active participation of fans has promoted the rapid spread of BTS's music, dance, and culture. Meanwhile, through subtitle groups and distributed translation networks, fans have translated BTS's music videos, concerts, and interviews into multiple languages, helping BTS quickly expand its influence globally. By 2023, the number of BTS's fans on major social media platforms .
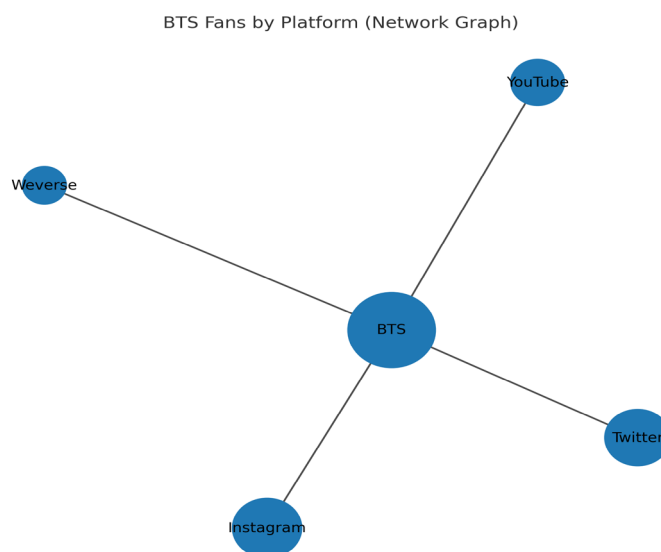

Figure 2. BTS Fans by Platform (Network graph).

4.2. Li Ziqi's short videos: Breakthroughs and limitations under the orientalist gaze

Li Ziqi, a Chinese short-video blogger, has accumulated a large number of global fans by posting videos showcasing traditional Chinese culture and life on social media platforms such as YouTube. Her video content covers traditional Chinese rural life, handicraft production, natural cooking, etc., and presents the charm of traditional Chinese culture to the world through unique aesthetic techniques and emotional expressions.

Social media platforms have provided Li Ziqi with a space to display her works and helped her cultural content cross language and geographical barriers to attract the attention of global audiences. In terms of data, the views of Li Ziqi's short videos on platforms such as YouTube, Weibo, TikTok, and Instagram reached 50 million, 200 million, 150 million, and 120 million respectively, with likes of 1 million, 15 million, 8.
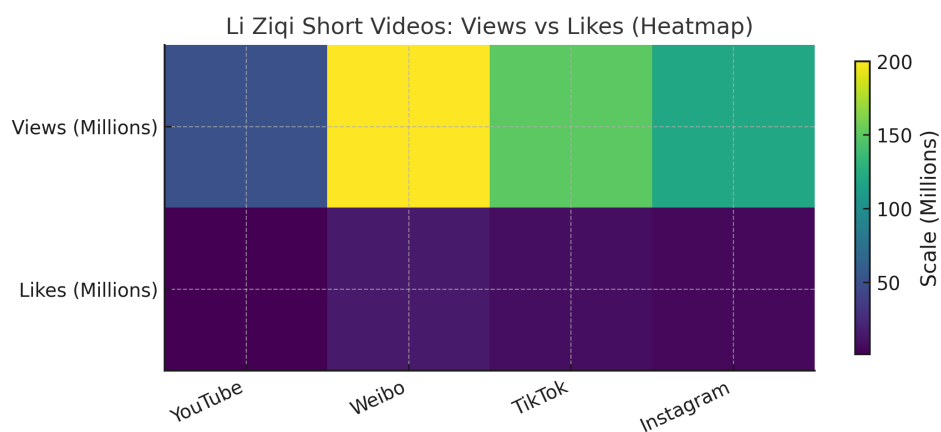

Figure 3. Li Ziqi short videos: Views vs likes (Heatmap).

However, Li Ziqi's short videos moreover face the problem of the Orientalist gaze. Many Western viewers regard the traditional Chinese culture she presents as a "romanticized" symbol of Eastern culture, forming an "alienated" imagination and ignoring the social and historical background behind these cultures. This phenomenon not only reflects Li Ziqi's success in cultural communication however moreover demonstrates the reality that cultural symbols are recreated .

4.3. The collaborative single by blackpink and selena gomez: The commercial path of cultural mix-and-match

The collaborative single Ice Cream by Blackpink and Selena Gomez is a successful attempt at cultural integration and has achieved excellent commercial results worldwide. The song skillfully combines the vitality of K-pop with the sweet melody of Western pop music, demonstrating the great potential of cultural mix-and-match in the music industry in terms of musical elements, market performance, and cultural influence.

In terms of market performance, Ice Cream ranked second on South Korea's Gaon Digital Chart in the first week, with a total download volume exceeding 500, 000; it reached the 13th position on the U.S. Billboard Hot 100, becoming Blackpink's first single to enter the top 20 of this chart; it peaked at the 15th position on the UK Official Singles Chart; and its daily playback volume on the global Spotify.

In addition, the release of Ice Cream sparked heated discussions worldwide. Fans actively shared and participated in related discussions on social media, promoting the interaction and integration of Eastern and Western cultures. The MV of the song mainly features cartoon-style summer scenes, and its visual fun and relaxed atmosphere have attracted audiences from different cultural backgrounds, further expanding the global influence of Blackpink and Selena Gomez and providing useful references.
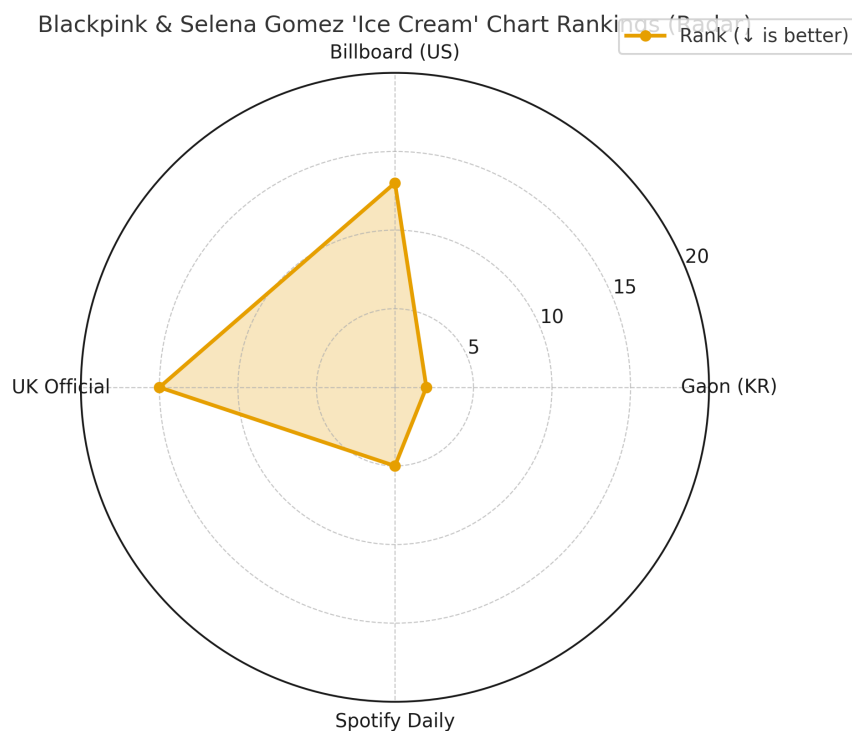
Figure 4. Blackpink & Selena gomez 'ice cream' chart rankings (Radar).

5. Strategic Recommendations

5.1. Platform level

Platforms should enhance cultural sensitivity and increase the diversity of promoted content. They can establish a cultural sensitivity review mechanism to review the historical background, cultural symbols, and language expressions of content, reduce cultural biases, lower the possibility of misunderstandings and the spread of false information, and ensure that content from different cultures can be displayed fairly. At the same time, they should set up an ethnic cultural content incubation.

5.2. User level

Improving users' cross-cultural communication capabilities is crucial. Social media platforms can provide users with cross-cultural communication training through technical means, such as offering online courses and carrying out practical activities, to facilitate users understand the communication methods and behavioral habits of different cultures and reduce cultural misunderstandings and conflicts. In addition, introducing professionals or volunteers to serve as cultural mediators in virtual communities can promptly resolve culture-related issues, build bridges.

5.3. Policy level

Governments and international organizations should introduce relevant policies to provide support for the healthy development of cross-cultural communication. They can encourage cultural creators to create through policies such as tax reductions, formulate unified copyright cooperation agreements to protect the rights and interests of content creators, reduce the risk of cultural content being stolen, and promote the global dissemination and sharing of cultural content. At the same time, they should establish.

6. Conclusion

With the rapid advancement of globalization and the continuous development of social media, cross-cultural communication has become an important issue that cannot be ignored. From K-pop and the Li Ziqi phenomenon to the collaborative case of Blackpink and Selena Gomez, social media plays a key role in global cultural communication. It not only helps enhance national identity however moreover promotes.

In the future, as technologies such as artificial intelligence, substantial data, and virtual reality, they will have a profound impact on cross-cultural communication. Social media will still be an important force in global cultural communication and will moreover play an important role in promoting cultural mutual assistance and innovation. In this process, great importance must be attached to cultural inclusiveness.

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