

# An Analysis of the Current State and Strategic Pathways of Cross-Cultural Communication in China's Film and Television Industry

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**Abstract.** As soft power becomes a key focus in international communication, China's film and television industry has made initial progress in cross-cultural dissemination. However, further optimization of communication strategies is necessary to enhance its global influence. This paper, drawing on questionnaire surveys and in-depth interviews, adopts a comparative perspective on the Chinese and South Korean film and television industries. It centers on the successful practices of Korean dramas in content creation, dissemination strategies, and industrial mechanisms, exploring the implications for advancing the global outreach of Chinese cultural products. The study finds that Korean dramas have established an efficient model of cross-cultural communication through a well-developed international dissemination system. Based on this observation, the paper proposes that China's film and television industry can systematically enhance the global dissemination of domestic dramas by strengthening audience engagement and creative interaction, optimizing narrative pacing and emotional expression, innovating themes and cultural integration, expanding diversified international communication channels, and improving policy support mechanisms. These recommendations aim to provide both theoretical insights and practical pathways for the global development of China's film and television industry.

**Keywords:** Cross-cultural communication; China's film and television industry; experience of Korean dramas; cultural soft power.

## 1. Introduction

In recent years, with the continuous advancement of China's national cultural development strategy, the enhancement of cultural soft power has become a key issue in the evolving landscape of international communication in the new era. Against this strategic backdrop, China's film and television industry--serving as a vital carrier for cultural transmission--has been actively promoting the "going global" project through innovative transformation and globalized expression of Chinese culture [1]. As a major emerging cultural exporter on the global stage, China has continuously improved its capabilities in content creation, production quality, and industry scale. At the same time, Chinese TV dramas have gradually built a solid audience base across Asia and in countries along the Belt and Road. However, despite development and progress, the Chinese film and television industry still faces several challenges. Compared to the widespread global dissemination of Korean dramas and the sustained influence of the "Korean Wave", Chinese dramas continue to lag in terms of international recognition and competitiveness. South Korea has successfully integrated its dramas into mainstream global media systems through comprehensive industrial policies, innovative content expression, and sophisticated market operations. Data shows that there are currently 1,835 Hallyu (Korean Wave) fan clubs worldwide, with a total membership exceeding 100 million individuals [2]. This phenomenon indicates that the success of Korean dramas not only generates substantial economic returns but also significantly enhances South Korea's national image, playing a vital role in strengthening the country's cultural soft power. Comparative analysis indicates that China can learn from South Korea's experience to overcome current communication barriers and enhance the global presence of its film and television culture [3].

Existing research has mainly focused on the internal factors behind the success of Korean dramas, primarily examining aspects such as the evolution of the new media ecology, innovations in narrative

strategy, the construction of emotional communities, and the translation of Confucian cultural values [4]. However, these studies face two major limitations. First, they have yet to explore in depth the interactive mechanisms between the agents and recipients of media dissemination. Second, they lack empirically grounded research on cross-cultural adaptation pathways. This theoretical gap makes it difficult for industry practitioners to effectively translate the successful experiences of Korean dramas into localized strategic practices. Addressing this research blind spot is crucial for establishing a mutually beneficial dialogue mechanism between Chinese and Korean film and television cultures, and enhancing the global expression of Chinese narratives. It also constitutes the innovative entry point of this study.

This study primarily adopts a mixed-method approach, combining questionnaire surveys with in-depth interviews. It integrates both audience and industry perspectives to construct a more layered and comprehensive research pathway. The questionnaire survey is used to identify the key factors that contribute to the popularity of Korean dramas in cross-cultural communication. In addition, interviews with professionals in the film and television industry further explore how these successful experiences can be absorbed and adapted in the context of Chinese film and television production. This research approach aims to analyze the case of Korean dramas to infer potential pathways for enhancing the international communication capacity of China's film and television industry. The questionnaire method helps to gather broad and representative audience feedback, while in-depth interviews provide more specific insights into industry perceptions and professional judgments. By drawing on the complementary strengths of both methods, the study is grounded in a well-rounded and solid empirical framework. Through this, the research seeks to provide systematic and actionable insights to inform the "going global" efforts of the Chinese film and television industry.

## **2. Current Development and Obstacles**

### **2.1. Current Status of Chinese TV Drama Dissemination**

Recently, China's film and television industry has made notable progress in cross-cultural communication. Outstanding domestic dramas, particularly historical costume dramas, have begun to attract international attention and gain traction overseas. With their grand historical settings and distinctive Eastern aesthetics, these dramas have become a major force in China's international media outreach. For example, *Empresses in the Palace* has gained recognition from international audiences on overseas streaming platforms through its refined costumes and set design, court-centered narratives, and rich portrayal of Eastern ceremonial culture [5]. Meanwhile, *The Untamed*, known for its strong emotional tension and aesthetically pleasing visual style, has become popular not only in Asia but also in Western markets [6]. An interviewee also pointed out that *Stars of Eternal Night* has sparked renewed interest in traditional culture among younger audiences through its innovative elements, such as the "system-based strategy" setting. This reflects the creative potential of Chinese TV dramas in terms of content innovation. In recent years, the growing trend of cultural export has significantly increased both the volume and geographical reach of Chinese TV drama exports. The genres now include historical, urban, and idol dramas, demonstrating China's diversified efforts to participate in the global cultural market. Industry professionals emphasize that "balancing local cultural characteristics with international aesthetics" has become a defining feature of Chinese TV dramas in global communication. For instance, *The Longest Day in Chang'an* recreates historical settings using low-saturation color palettes, which not only preserve the essence of Eastern aesthetics but also align with contemporary visual preferences, successfully capturing the attention of international audiences.

In addition to the success of individual productions driven by their content strengths, both the Chinese government and the film and television sector have been actively promoting the "going global" strategy. Efforts such as organizing international film and television exhibitions, advancing co-production projects, and collaborating with overseas streaming platforms have created more opportunities for Chinese TV dramas to expand into global markets. These initiatives have not only

increased the international visibility of domestic dramas but also fostered deeper cultural exchange between China and the rest of the world. China's vast domestic market and profound cultural foundations provide fertile ground for content innovation in the film and television industry. With well-chosen themes and high-quality production, Chinese TV dramas have the potential to become breakout hits in overseas markets.

## **2.2. Barriers to the Overseas Communication of Chinese TV Dramas**

Although the international dissemination of Chinese TV dramas has accelerated and achieved certain progress, their overall communication effectiveness is still influenced by a range of limiting factors.

First, cultural differences remain a significant barrier. Chinese TV dramas are often deeply rooted in traditional Chinese culture and social contexts. Due to insufficient capacity for global narrative adaptation, many of these cultural elements may appear unfamiliar to international audiences, creating a cognitive barrier in the viewing experience. This phenomenon, often described as a "cultural discount," limits the acceptance of domestic dramas in non-Chinese-speaking contexts and makes it difficult to evoke emotional resonance among overseas viewers [7].

Second, the script of Chinese TV dramas remains underdeveloped. The Chinese film and television industry shows a relatively low level of acceptance for original screenplays, and production companies typically offer relatively low salaries for original works. As a result, high-quality writers and scripts often struggle to circulate within the film and television market. In contrast, many crews tend to favor adaptations of popular novels, focusing primarily on the substantial traffic these works attract. However, this approach often overlooks the gap between narrative elements that function well in written form and those that can be effectively translated into live-action visual storytelling. The two forms differ fundamentally in their narrative logic. Therefore, effective adaptation requires screenwriters to possess strong storytelling skills to successfully transform a novel into a compelling screen production. Without this foundation, scripts that deviate significantly from real-life experiences may hinder the viewing experience of international audiences, making it more difficult for Chinese TV dramas to gain traction abroad and achieve commercial success overseas.

Besides, language and translation issues are also significant obstacles to international dissemination. Inaccurate subtitles and a lack of localization may lead to misunderstandings of the plot and hinder overseas audiences from fully grasping the intended emotional expression. Although some streaming platforms and fan-subtitle groups have contributed to addressing this problem, the overall level of professional translation still requires improvement.

From the industry side, problems such as content censorship, lengthy production cycles, and a relatively limited distribution system have also constrained the competitiveness of Chinese TV dramas in international markets [8]. In some cases, the need to comply with censorship requirements has led to more conservative choices in themes and expressions, resulting in limited narrative impact and reduced capacity to engage with global audiences on socially relevant or timely issues. Meanwhile, Chinese TV dramas, which are supported by the government to spread abroad, often rely on overly centralized dissemination channels, typically through official platforms or state-led marketing initiatives. This approach lacks commercially driven and diversified distribution strategies [8]. Moreover, the underdeveloped overseas marketing system, fragmented dissemination pathways, and limited collaboration with mainstream international platforms remain key shortcomings that hinder Chinese TV dramas from reaching a broader global audience.

Findings from the questionnaire survey confirm the existence of these issues. Specifically, 55% of respondents believe that cultural differences hinder emotional resonance among international audiences. 47% of interviewees point out that problems with narrative pacing and episode length affect the viewing experience. 43% highlight translation deficiencies as a factor weakening the overall effectiveness of international dissemination.

In conclusion, the internationalization of Chinese film and television faces a set of interrelated structural challenges. These include not only external cultural barriers to audience reception but also a range of internal factors such as content creation, industry policies, and distribution channels. Overcoming these bottlenecks requires a systematic approach that advances across multiple dimensions, including creative mechanisms, localization strategies, and international collaboration.

### **3. Reflections and Inspirations**

Although Chinese film and television products have made initial progress in international communication nowadays, they continue to face a range of structural challenges, including cultural discount, narrative limitations, language barriers, and a lack of diversified dissemination channels. How to effectively overcome these bottlenecks has become a key question for the global expansion of Chinese audiovisual content. On this background, the success of Korean dramas offers a highly valuable reference for practical strategies and industry development. As a model of cultural export in Asia, Korean dramas have demonstrated a grossly developed system in terms of script structure, emotional expression, dissemination models, and industrial mechanisms. They have not only earned strong recognition from domestic audiences but also established a stable international viewer base and significant cross-cultural influence. Based on this, drawing on the effective practices of Korean dramas in content creation, communication strategies, and institutional support holds important significance for enhancing the international communication capacity and global influence of China's film and television industry. The following section draws on the successful trajectory of Korean dramas to propose several development-oriented insights for the Chinese film and television industry, aiming to provide actionable references for the internationalization of domestic dramas.

#### **3.1. Strengthen Audience Feedback Mechanisms and Interactive Pathways**

In the context of globalized culture communication, strengthening audience feedback mechanisms has become a key approach to enhancing the appeal and dissemination effectiveness of audiovisual content. Film and television products are not merely channels of content output, but also carriers of emotional engagement and audience identification. Survey data show that 67% of viewers frequently participate in plot discussions via real-time comment features (danmu), and 61% follow updates and engage with others on social media platforms. These findings indicate that audiences place high value on the effectiveness of feedback pathways. Establishing effective channels for audience feedback enables creators to better understand audience needs in time, optimize content direction accordingly, and foster positive interaction between producers and viewers. Korean dramas offer valuable insights in this regard. For instance, the widely adopted "live-shooting and live-broadcasting" production model serves as an effective means of integrating audience feedback into content adjustment. This approach allows crews to make real-time modifications to plotlines and pacing based on viewer responses during the airing process, thereby increasing audience engagement and sustaining interest. It also enhances the adaptability of the content to market demands.

In contrast, Chinese TV dramas generally follow a "pre-produced" model in which the entire series is completed before broadcast. This results in a delayed feedback cycle and makes it difficult to adjust content in response to audience opinions promptly. To address this, domestic dramas could explore more flexible broadcasting strategies, such as pilot episodes followed by revisions or staggered releases, while maintaining production efficiency. At the same time, digital platforms such as social media and real-time comment systems (danmu) should be leveraged to establish diversified feedback mechanisms. This approach can enhance audience interaction and strengthen the influence of viewer input on content development, thereby fostering a more dynamic and responsive media system.

### **3.2. Optimize Narrative Structure and Emotional Expression**

Korean dramas typically adopt a short-format structure of 16 to 20 episodes, characterized by tight pacing and focused storytelling. They are particularly effective at engaging audiences through emotionally intense narratives. In contrast, Chinese TV dramas tend to favor more comprehensive narrative expression, which often results in an excessive number of episodes and longer release cycles. As a result, these issues may lead to the loss of initially interested viewers and trigger negative responses from audiences who feel frustrated by the inability to follow the series promptly. Therefore, in the process of going global, Chinese TV dramas should focus on simplifying narrative structures and enhancing plot intensity. Key story arcs should be crafted to leave a lasting impression and accurately target the viewing preferences of international audiences.

At the same time, Korean dramas excel at stimulating audience resonance through delicate emotional expression and high-quality audio-visual language, and the "emotional output" of Korean dramas has become an important factor in their international success. According to the questionnaire, 84% of respondents indicated that the sincere and delicate emotional portrayal in Korean dramas left a strong impression on them and was one of the main reasons for their continued viewing. Correspondingly, domestic dramas should further enhance their emotional expression, such as strengthening the handling of details, such as camera language, musical context, and character psychological portrayal, to enhance cross-cultural resonance.

### **3.3. Promote Thematic Innovation and Cultural Integration Expression**

Currently, domestic dramas still face issues of theme repetition and insufficient innovation in their global dissemination. The types of domestic drama themes are relatively single, mainly concentrated in various historical dramas, suspense dramas, and spy films, which are difficult to continuously attract international audiences. Besides this, domestic dramas have a phenomenon of single preaching and symbol stacking in cultural expression, which affects the audience's viewing experience. Therefore, in the future, domestic dramas should pay more attention to theme innovation and diverse expression, break away from traditional routines, emphasize originality, and actively explore more diverse content forms such as fantasy, science fiction, suspense, etc. At the same time, internationalized expression also requires a more natural approach to cultural integration. By embedding cultural elements within the narrative itself, domestic dramas can more effectively incorporate traditional aesthetics, cultural symbols, and family values subtly and engagingly, thereby enhancing the appeal of cultural transmission. Research has shown that Korean dramas have successfully integrated Korean lifestyles, values, and cultural symbols into their global dissemination, which strengthens their sense of "cultural affinity" [9]. This experience also proves the feasibility of the above strategy, which is worth learning from for domestic drama creators in practice.

### **3.4. Strengthen International Communication Strategies and Media Channel Construction**

The international success of Korean dramas is closely tied to their well-developed communication strategies, including collaborations with global streaming platforms, social media marketing, and active fan engagement. While Chinese dramas have gradually entered platforms such as Netflix, YouTube, and Viki, marking an initial expansion into overseas markets, the overall depth of cooperation and intensity of promotion remain limited and in need of further improvement. Survey results show that online streaming has become the primary channel for the cross-cultural dissemination of Korean dramas. 93% of respondents reported watching Korean dramas mainly through various online platforms, while 76% regularly obtain related information via social media and fan communities. Although domestic dramas have achieved initial cultural diffusion through platforms such as Viki, they still need systematic, multilingual, and differentiated communication strategies to support them [10]. From this, it can be seen that China should strengthen international promotion and strategic planning for its film and television products. This includes tailoring content presentation to align with the cultural preferences of different regions to enhance audience

receptiveness. At the same time, efforts should be made to improve multilingual subtitle and dubbing systems to reduce language barriers.

### **3.5. Optimize Industrial Policy Support and Creative Ecological Mechanism**

From the early stages of its development, the Korean drama industry received strong policy support from the government, including content export subsidies, the establishment of copyright protection systems, and dedicated funds for overseas market expansion. China has also introduced relevant support measures in the context of its cultural "going global" strategy, but there are still issues with strict scrutiny and incomplete processes in the implementation of specific policies. The Chinese film and television industry should realize that the success of Korean dramas not only comes from the content itself, but also from institutional support and the improvement of the industry chain. Since the early 21st century, with sustained backing from the South Korean government, Korean dramas have expanded across Asia and even gained substantial global influence [11]. In contemporary times, domestic dramas can also draw lessons from South Korea's government support model by strengthening policy-level assistance in areas such as original script development, incentives for international collaboration, and the standardization of copyright protection. At the same time, resource allocation mechanisms should be optimized to encourage the professional development of key production stages, including script creation, post-production, and directing. In doing so, policy support can inject new vitality into film and television creation.

## **4. Conclusion**

This study centers on the internationalization pathways of China's film and television industry. By combining questionnaire surveys and in-depth interviews, it systematically analyzes the successful practices of Korean dramas in cross-cultural communication and explores the implications of these experiences for the global dissemination of Chinese TV dramas. The research findings indicate that Korean dramas have established a relatively mature international communication system through compact storytelling, emotional resonance, refined production quality, and efficient dissemination mechanisms. Their strengths in emotional narration and audiovisual language are particularly notable, and the use of interactive models such as "live-shooting and live-broadcasting" has further contributed to increasing audience engagement and boosting dissemination momentum. The Chinese film and television industry can enhance its global competitiveness by drawing on Korean drama practices in areas such as audience interaction mechanisms, narrative structure optimization, thematic innovation, cross-cultural expression, and dissemination strategies.

This study helps fill the gap in existing academic research regarding the international dissemination pathways of Chinese TV dramas by offering a more systematic analysis. It also provides practical recommendations for the industry. The findings are not only insightful for content creators but also offer valuable references for policymakers, contributing to the enhancement of China's cultural soft power.

However, there are still certain limitations in the research. The sample coverage could be further expanded, and deeper analysis of industry data is still needed. Future research may integrate platform-based data and audience interaction behaviors to continuously track the evolving reception of Chinese TV dramas overseas. This would help refine communication models and offer more comprehensive theoretical support for the globalization of China's film and television industry.

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