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A Mixed-methods Study on the Matching Mechanism of Thai Films and New Media Platforms in Shanghai

Yang Yunjian[1] and Somdech Rungsrisawat[2*]

College of Communication Arts, Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University, Bangkok, Thailand

[1] E-mail: s64584946018@ssru.ac.th, ORCID ID: https://orcid.org/0009-0003-2785-8963

[2*] E-mail: somdech.ru@ssru.ac.th, ORCID ID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6985-6945

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Abstract

Background and Aims: With deepening China–Thailand cultural exchange and the rise of new media distribution, Thai films have become a visible carrier of cross-cultural interaction in China. Shanghai serves as a key regional hub, yet Thai films still face cultural-symbol barriers, uneven technical adaptation, and regulatory constraints. This study aims to clarify the mechanism shaping communication efficiency within Shanghai's platform ecology.

Methodology: A mixed-methods design was adopted. Quantitative data were collected from 511 valid questionnaires using stratified random sampling in Shanghai, and a 4 × 3 × 2 × 2 between-subjects quasi-experiment was conducted with 120 participants. Qualitative evidence included 12-month cross-platform observation of 32 films, 20 in-depth interviews, and analysis of 15 policy documents.

Results: Four findings emerged. First, genre, platform attributes, and regional audience differences jointly formed a "genre–platform–region matching" mechanism. Second, cultural symbol adaptation, technical tool calibration, and flexible regulatory strategies positively predicted communication efficiency (β = 0.41, $p < 0.001$), with technical adaptability compensation showing partial mediation (indirect effect = 0.17). Third, the Cultural Discount Index (CDI) demonstrated a significant inverted U-shaped effect (γ_1 = 2.87, γ_2 = −4.72, $p < 0.001$), with an overall threshold of 0.295 and genre-specific thresholds of 0.325 (romance), 0.310 (family ethics), 0.350 (historical), and 0.260 (religious). Policy transparency significantly moderated the high-CDI penalty (β = −0.32, $p < 0.001$). Fourth, a five-dimensional communication efficiency evaluation model—comprising cognitive understanding, viewing completion rate, sharing rate, emotional resonance, and recommendation willingness—demonstrated strong reliability (Cronbach's α = 0.91) and validity.

Conclusion: This study extends cultural discount theory by evidencing non-linear, genre-sensitive CDI effects and broadens tripartite collaborative governance theory by integrating policy transparency into cross-cultural film dissemination. The findings offer differentiated platform strategies and policy guidance for improving Thai film communication efficiency in Shanghai.

Keywords: Thai Films; Cross-cultural Communication; New Media Platforms; Communication Efficiency; Cultural Discount Index CDI

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Introduction

In an increasingly interconnected media environment, film has become a practical route through which audiences encounter unfamiliar cultures, values, and everyday social norms. China–Thailand film cooperation has expanded steadily over the past decade, providing institutional support for cross-border circulation and co-production. In 2015, the two countries reached a cooperation arrangement that streamlined approval procedures and encouraged culturally sensitive adaptation in content development and distribution (China Film Administration, 2023). Industry statistics also suggest sustained growth in the inflow of Thai films to China from 2015 to 2024, with Shanghai contributing a notable share of national viewing volume, which positions the city as a key testing ground for Thai films' reception and diffusion (Thailand Film Archive, 2025).

At the same time, platform-based distribution has reshaped how foreign films are discovered, discussed, and re-circulated. Video platforms and social media channels such as Bilibili, Douyin, and WeChat Channels do not simply replace cinemas; they reorganize viewing into algorithmic recommendation, short-form clipping, and socially embedded sharing. FIAPF (2025) reports that new media channels account for a dominant proportion of film viewing in China, indicating that platforms have become the main gateway through which many audiences access non-domestic screen content.

Despite these favorable conditions, Thai films still encounter visible barriers in Shanghai's cross-cultural communication process. First, culturally specific symbols—such as Buddhist ritual practices or royal etiquette—may be meaningful in Thailand yet remain opaque to many Chinese viewers, creating comprehension gaps. Second, technical support is uneven: AI subtitles can introduce errors, and the cultural explanation density within interactive comments may be insufficient to bridge context differences. Third, regulatory factors can affect both narrative integrity and timeliness when approval is delayed or when content is heavily edited (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Thailand, 2024).

Existing studies often examine Thai film communication at the national level or isolate single drivers (e.g., culture or platform effects), leaving the combined influence of cultural adaptation, technical mediation, and policy conditions underspecified (Sucharitkul, 2024; Li & Zhang, 2023). Moreover, regional audience differences within China and the potentially non-linear impact of cultural discount remain under-tested. Focusing on Shanghai, therefore, offers both theoretical value for refining cross-cultural communication explanations and practical value for platform strategy and policy design. In response to these gaps, this study proposes an integrated analytical framework that examines the matching mechanism among film genre, platform attributes, and regional characteristics, as well as the interactive roles of cultural adaptation,

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technical mediation, and regulatory transparency. Specifically, the study aims to (1) identify the genre–platform–region matching mechanism shaping communication efficiency in Shanghai; (2) test the synergistic and mediating effects of cultural, technical, and policy factors; (3) examine the non-linear, genre-sensitive impact of the Cultural Discount Index (CDI); and (4) construct a multi-dimensional evaluation framework for cross-cultural communication efficiency. By doing so, the research seeks to bridge theoretical explanation and practical platform governance in the context of Thai film dissemination in China.

Objectives

1. To examine the matching mechanism between Thai film genres, new media platforms, and regional characteristics in Shanghai, and its impact on cross-cultural communication efficiency.

2. To verify the synergistic effects of cultural symbol adaptation, technical tool calibration, and flexible regulatory strategies, and to clarify the mediating role of technical adaptability compensation.

3. To analyze the inverted U-shaped effect of the Cultural Discount Index on communication efficiency, identify genre-specific thresholds, and examine the moderating role of policy transparency.

4. To develop a multi-dimensional evaluation framework for assessing the cross-cultural communication efficiency of Thai films.

Literature review

1. Cross-border Film Cross-cultural Communication Research

Research on cross-border film circulation has long focused on factors shaping audience acceptance across cultural boundaries. Hoskins and Mirus (1988) introduced the concept of cultural discount, arguing that differences in language, values, and symbolic systems reduce the attractiveness of foreign audiovisual products. Early studies generally treated cultural discount as a linear negative force, assuming that greater cultural distance inevitably leads to weaker reception.

More recent scholarship has begun to question this linear assumption. Li and Zhang (2023), for example, demonstrated an inverted U-shaped relationship between cultural discount and the cross-cultural communication of Southeast Asian films in China. Their findings suggest that moderate cultural differences can stimulate curiosity and engagement, whereas excessive difference produces cognitive resistance. However, their study did not identify concrete genre-specific thresholds, leaving uncertainty about how this non-linear effect varies across film types.

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Beyond cultural distance itself, scholars have emphasized adaptive strategies that may offset cultural discount. Chen et al. (2024) proposed an integrated framework combining cultural adaptation and technical support, showing that coordinated application of these strategies could reduce cultural discount by more than one-third. While this contribution highlights the importance of platform-level mediation, it largely overlooks the role of regulatory conditions, resulting in an incomplete explanation of the broader communication mechanism.

2. New Media Platform Communication Mechanism Research

Media Richness Theory provides a foundational lens for understanding platform differences in film dissemination. Daft and Lengel (1986) distinguished between rich media, which support nuanced and interactive communication, and lean media, which are more effective for transmitting simple and emotionally direct messages. In the context of new media, platforms vary substantially in how they structure content, interaction, and interpretation.

Empirical research has shown that platforms such as Bilibili function as relatively rich media environments. Their comment systems, secondary creation culture, and explanatory content foster collective interpretation, making them suitable for films with complex cultural or historical symbolism. By contrast, Douyin prioritizes short-form, visually striking content that emphasizes emotional immediacy, aligning well with romance-oriented narratives. Existing studies thus suggest a functional alignment between platform affordances and genre characteristics.

Nevertheless, several gaps remain. First, medium-rich platforms such as WeChat Channels have received limited scholarly attention, despite their growing role in socially embedded content sharing. Second, most studies focus on genre–platform matching in isolation, without considering films such as family ethics dramas that occupy a middle position in information complexity. Third, the role of regional audience characteristics in shaping platform effectiveness has been largely neglected, constraining the practical applicability of current findings.

3. Cultural Discount Index (CDI) Research

The Cultural Discount Index has emerged as a key quantitative tool for measuring the impact of cultural differences on cross-border communication. Wang et al. (2023) developed a CDI model integrating cultural distance and symbol familiarity, providing a more operationalized approach to empirical testing. However, this model primarily emphasizes cultural distance and underestimates the potential positive value of cultural uniqueness.

Empirical classification of cultural symbols further complicates the picture. Research conducted by the Bangkok University team in 2025 categorized Thai film symbols into multiple types and found substantial variation in CDI values: religious symbols exhibited the highest CDI, while emotional symbols related to love and friendship showed the lowest. These findings imply that CDI is not a uniform attribute but varies systematically by symbolic content and genre.

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Policy factors also intersect with cultural discount. Pongsakorn (2024) noted that approval procedures and review standards significantly influence the effective CDI of Thai films in China. However, this work did not empirically examine whether policy transparency moderates CDI effects, leaving an important regulatory dimension underexplored. Addressing this gap requires identifying genre-specific CDI thresholds and clarifying how transparent policy environments reshape audience reception.

4. China–Thailand Film Communication Research

At the policy level, the Thai Ministry of Culture (2024) has emphasized differentiated export strategies, recommending universal emotional framing for romance films and adding cultural explanation for religious and historical productions. While these guidelines provide a general direction, they remain insufficiently tailored to specific regional markets within China.

Similarly, Shanghai's cultural development plans highlight clear differences between central and suburban audiences in cultural consumption patterns. Yet empirical research rarely examines how such regional distinctions should inform dissemination strategies for foreign films. By focusing on Shanghai as a localized yet internationally oriented market, the present study seeks to bridge this gap and offer more refined insights into cross-cultural film communication under platform-based distribution systems.

Conceptual Framework

This study carried out the process of constructing an integrated conceptual framework. This construction was done based on Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions Theory, Media Richness Theory, and Tripartite Collaborative Governance Theory. The independent variables were made up of film genre, platform type, tripartite synergistic effect (which was the result of cultural symbol adaptation multiplied by technical tool calibration and then multiplied by flexible regulatory strategy), as well as CDI. For the mediating variable, it was technical adaptability compensation (this was calculated by adding the AI subtitle retention rate, the bullet comment cultural explanation rate, and the algorithm recommendation accuracy). The moderating variables were platform type and policy transparency. As for the dependent variable, it was cross - cultural communication efficiency (this involved integrating the cognitive dimension, the behavioral dimension, and the emotional dimension).

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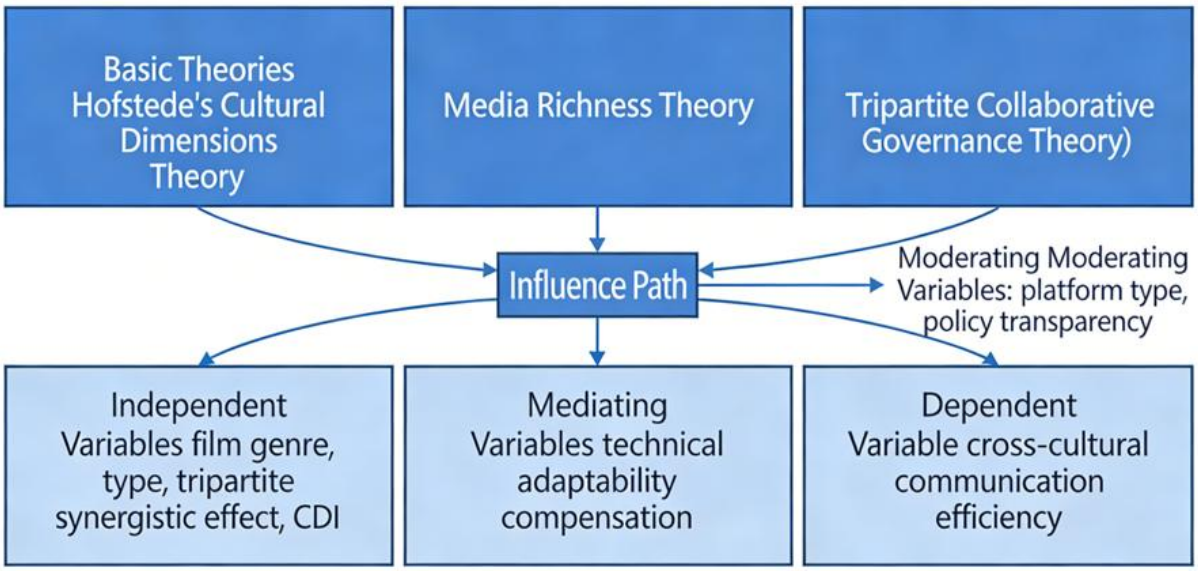


Figure 1 Conceptual framework

Note: Constructed by the researcher

Methodology

This research primarily employed the following methods:

1. Mixed-Methods Design

This study adopts a mixed-methods research design that integrates quantitative and qualitative approaches to examine the cross-cultural communication mechanism of Thai films in Shanghai. Quantitative methods are used to test relationships among key variables and evaluate communication efficiency, while qualitative methods provide contextual interpretation of audience perception, platform practices, and policy conditions. This combination allows for both empirical measurement and mechanism-level explanation.

2. Questionnaire Survey

A stratified random sampling strategy was employed to collect data from Shanghai audiences across different platforms, film genre preferences, age groups, residential regions (central and suburban), and levels of exposure to Thai culture. To reflect the cultural diversity of Shanghai, the sample included respondents with varied regional origins (Shanghai natives and migrants from other provinces), educational backgrounds, and degrees of prior cross-cultural exposure (e.g., overseas experience, Thai cultural familiarity, frequency of foreign film consumption). Approximately 43% of respondents reported having lived outside Shanghai before relocating, and 38% indicated prior exposure to Southeast Asian media content, suggesting meaningful variation in intercultural familiarity.

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The questionnaire consisted of 48 items measuring cultural symbol barriers, technical adaptability, policy constraints, and cross-cultural communication efficiency. A pilot test with 30 respondents confirmed strong reliability (Cronbach's α = 0.94). In total, 511 valid questionnaires were obtained for analysis. The stratification across central and suburban districts further ensured representation of audiences with different socioeconomic and cultural consumption patterns within Shanghai's metropolitan structure.

3. Quasi-experimental Design

A 4 × 3 × 2 × 2 between-subjects quasi-experiment was conducted with 120 undergraduate participants. The independent variables included film genre (romance, religion, history, family ethics), platform type (Bilibili, Douyin, WeChat Channels), technical tool quality (high vs. low), and policy transparency (high vs. low). Cross-cultural communication efficiency was measured across cognitive understanding, emotional resonance, and behavioral intention. Age and prior Thai cultural exposure were controlled to reduce confounding effects.

4. Cross-platform Observation and Interviews

Thirty-two representative Thai films (eight per genre) were observed over 12 months across the three platforms. Key indicators included viewing completion rate, sharing rate, AI subtitle retention, and cultural explanation density in comments. In addition, 20 semi-structured interviews were conducted with general audiences and key informants, including policy officials, platform operators, and a Thai film producer. Interviews were transcribed verbatim and analyzed thematically.

5. Policy Text Analysis

Fifteen policy documents related to China–Thailand film cooperation and Shanghai's cultural industry development were analyzed using qualitative coding software. Coding focused on approval procedures, review standards, and cultural support measures, with high inter-coder reliability (Kappa = 0.89).

Results

1. Genre–Platform–Region Matching Mechanism

Analysis of the 511 valid questionnaires shows that audiences of Thai films on new media platforms in Shanghai are predominantly young, with 75.93% aged between 18 and 24, and a relatively balanced gender distribution. Students constitute the largest occupational group, followed by enterprise employees. Spatially, 60% of respondents reside in central Shanghai, while 40% live in suburban districts. When considering platform preferences, Bilibili was the most popular platform for watching complete Thai films (58%), while Douyin mainly served as a channel for short clips (30%). WeChat Channels accounted for 12% of usage and relied primarily

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on social sharing and acquaintance-based diffusion, a pattern consistent with platform user behavior reports (WeChat Data Center, 2024).

Clear genre–platform differences emerge in communication efficiency. Romance films achieve the highest share rate on Douyin (41.5%), reflecting the platform's suitability for conveying emotional intensity and narrative highlights through short-form video. In contrast, religious and historical films perform best on Bilibili, with viewing completion rates reaching 81.7% and 78.9%, respectively. This advantage is closely linked to Bilibili's interactive features, such as bullet comments and interpretive content, which facilitate audience understanding of complex cultural symbols. Family ethics films, which combine moderate cultural depth with everyday themes, show relatively balanced performance across platforms, with notable sharing rates on both Douyin and WeChat Channels.

Regional audience characteristics further shape communication outcomes. Viewers in central Shanghai demonstrate significantly higher acceptance of culturally complex genres, with completion rates for religious and historical films exceeding those of suburban audiences by 15–20%. This pattern is associated with higher educational levels and stronger interest in cultural exploration among central urban residents. Suburban audiences, by contrast, display a clearer preference for romance and family ethics films and rely more heavily on WeChat Channels, where dissemination through familiar social networks helps reduce cross-cultural cognitive barriers. These findings jointly indicate the existence of a structured genre–platform–region matching mechanism that conditions the cross-cultural communication efficiency of Thai films in Shanghai.

2. Tripartite Synergistic Effect and Mediating Role of Technical Adaptability

The tripartite synergistic effect of cultural symbol adaptation, technical tool calibration, and flexible regulatory strategies had a significant positive direct effect on cross-cultural communication efficiency (β=0.41, $p<0.001$), explaining 38% of the variance in communication efficiency. This effect showed differences across platforms and regions: it was strongest on Bilibili (β=0.58) and in central Shanghai (β=0.56), followed by Douyin (β=0.39) and WeChat Channels (β=0.35), and weaker in suburban Shanghai (β=0.32). This indicates that the combination of cultural adaptation, technical support, and flexible policies is more effective in promoting the communication of complex cultural content and among audiences with higher cultural demand.

Technical adaptability compensation played a partial mediating role in the relationship between the tripartite synergistic effect and communication efficiency, with an indirect effect of 0.17 (95% CI [0.12, 0.23]), accounting for 41.5% of the total effect. Among the three dimensions of technical adaptability compensation, bullet comment cultural explanation rate had the strongest mediating effect (indirect effect=0.07), followed by AI subtitle retention rate (0.06) and

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algorithm recommendation accuracy (0.04). The mediating effect also varied by platform: it was strongest on Bilibili (indirect effect=0.23), where technical tools such as bullet comments and cultural annotations can fully compensate for the cognitive barriers of complex cultural symbols; the mediating effect was weaker on Douyin (0.15) and WeChat Channels (0.13), as these platforms focus more on fragmented content dissemination and have relatively limited technical support for cultural explanation.

3. Inverted U-shaped Effect of CDI

3.1 Genre-specific CDI Thresholds

CDI exerted a notable inverted U - shaped impact on the efficiency of cross - cultural communication (where γ_1 is equal to 2.87, γ_2 is equal to - 4.72, and p is less than 0.001). In the situation where it had an overall threshold of 0.295, when CDI was at a level below this threshold, the occurrence of moderate cultural differences had the effect of stimulating the curiosity of the audience and enhancing the efficiency of communication. When CDI exceeded this threshold, the presence of excessive cultural differences led to the emergence of cognitive barriers and brought about a reduction in efficiency. There were significant differences among different genres in terms of CDI thresholds. Specifically, romance films had the highest threshold, which was 0.325. Then, family ethics films followed with a threshold of 0.310, and historical films had a threshold of 0.350. On the other hand, religious films had the lowest threshold, which was 0.260. This is due to the fact that romance films place their focus on universal emotional themes, and in such a case, the audience has a relatively higher level of tolerance for cultural differences. In contrast, religious films are rich in unique religious rituals and beliefs, and in the situation where there are excessive cultural differences, it quickly triggers the audience to abandon the films.

3.2 Chain Mediating Effect

The inverted U - shaped effect of Cultural Difference Intensity (CDI) on communication efficiency gets transmitted through the chain mediating the typical path that is "CDI then cognitive understanding then technical satisfaction then communication efficiency". In the case of romance films, the chain mediating effect takes up 38.2% of the total effect. And for religious films, this kind of proportion reaches 42.7%. This shows that the impact of cultural differences on communication efficiency is mainly realized by influencing the audience's cognitive understanding and their satisfaction with technical tools.

In the situation where CDI is within the optimal range, when there are moderate cultural differences, these differences can enhance the audience's cognitive interest and their satisfaction with technical tools (for example, AI subtitles and bullet comments). As a result, the communication efficiency can be improved. When CDI exceeds the threshold, when there are

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excessive cultural differences, these differences will reduce the cognitive understanding and the technical satisfaction, which leads to a lower level of communication efficiency.

3.3 Moderating Role of Policy Transparency

Policy transparency exerted a remarkable moderating influence on the inverted U - shaped effect of CDI. To be specific, the value of β was -0.32, and p was less than 0.001. High - level policy transparency, which includes elements such as public approval processes, clear cultural adaptation guidelines, and standardized review standards, played a role in weakening the negative effect that occurs when CDI exceeds the threshold. In doing so, it led to an expansion of the optimal CDI interval. The expansion rate was within the range of 15 to 20%.

For instance, when policy transparency reached a high level, or to put it more precisely, in the situation where high - level policy transparency was in effect, the optimal CDI interval for religious films went through a change. It expanded from an interval of 0.20 to 0.26 to an interval of 0.20 to 0.31. This change allowed religious films to retain a greater number of unique cultural symbols. At the same time, it also had the effect of reducing the cognitive barriers that the audience might face.

The reason for this phenomenon is that transparent policies offer assistance to film producers and platforms. They enable these parties to accurately grasp the cultural adaptation standards. Additionally, transparent policies provide the audience with clear information regarding the cultural background. By doing these things, they can alleviate the negative impact that is caused by excessive cultural differences.

4. Multi-dimensional Communication Efficiency Evaluation Mechanism

The five-dimensional cross-cultural communication efficiency evaluation mechanism that has been constructed encompasses cognitive understanding (where the weight is equal to 0.22), viewing completion rate (with a value of 0.25), sharing rate (which is 0.23), emotional resonance (amounting to 0.18), and recommendation willingness (being 0.12). When reliability and validity tests were carried out, it was shown that this mechanism has good internal consistency (specifically, Cronbach's α is equal to 0.91) and convergent validity (in other words, the average variance extracted AVE is greater than 0.5 for each dimension). The correlation between the comprehensive evaluation score and platform objective data (such as the actual completion rate and the sharing rate) reached 0.78 (where p is less than 0.001). This indicates that this evaluation mechanism is capable of effectively measuring the cross - cultural communication efficiency of Thai films. This mechanism integrates the cognitive dimension, the behavioral dimension, and the emotional dimension. In the process of doing so, it overcomes the limitations of single - indicator evaluation that exist in the existing research and provides a scientific measurement tool for the subsequent research on cross - cultural film communication.

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Discussion

This research systematically explores the cross-cultural communication mechanism of Thai films on Shanghai's new media platforms and offers several theoretical implications.

First, the identified "genre–platform–region matching" mechanism extends Media Richness Theory. Prior studies emphasized the alignment between genre characteristics and media richness (Daft & Lengel, 1986). This study further shows that regional audience characteristics condition communication efficiency. In Shanghai, central urban audiences—who typically possess higher educational levels and stronger exposure to international media—display greater tolerance for symbolic complexity and stronger demand for interpretive tools, which makes richer platforms such as Bilibili more effective for religious and historical films. By contrast, suburban audiences rely more on socially embedded platforms such as WeChat Channels, where trust-based diffusion reduces interpretive uncertainty.

These findings suggest that media richness is not solely a technological attribute but also shaped by regionally embedded cultural habits. Platform effectiveness results from the interaction between affordances and audience cultural capital rather than from richness capacity alone (Daft & Lengel, 1986).

Second, the confirmation of the tripartite synergistic effect expands Tripartite Collaborative Governance Theory. While Chen et al. (2024) emphasized the synergy between cultural adaptation and technical support, this study incorporates policy transparency into the analytical framework. Transparent approval procedures and clear adaptation guidelines reduce uncertainty for producers and audiences, thereby mitigating the negative effects of high CDI levels.

The mediating role of technical adaptability compensation (41.5%) further clarifies how governance and technology interact. Tools such as AI subtitles and culturally informative bullet comments help bridge cognitive gaps created by cultural differences. This suggests that governance theory should consider not only institutional coordination but also perception-level effects shaped by policy signaling (Chen et al., 2024).

Third, the identification of genre-specific CDI thresholds develops cultural discount theory from a non-linear perspective. While Li and Zhang (2023) confirmed an inverted U-shaped relationship, this study specifies different thresholds across genres. Religious films exhibit lower tolerance for high CDI due to dense symbolic content, whereas romance films sustain higher CDI because of universal emotional themes. The moderating role of policy transparency indicates that cultural discount is dynamic and context-sensitive rather than uniformly negative (Hoskins & Mirus, 1988; Li & Zhang, 2023).

Fourth, the five-dimensional communication efficiency evaluation model improves measurement precision. Compared with single-indicator approaches commonly used in earlier

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research (Hoskins & Mirus, 1988), the integration of cognitive understanding, completion rate, sharing rate, emotional resonance, and recommendation willingness captures the multidimensional nature of cross-cultural communication outcomes.

Several limitations shape the boundaries of these findings. The sample is limited to Shanghai and dominated by young respondents, which may overestimate cultural tolerance and the effectiveness of interactive platforms. The cross-sectional design reflects current policy and technological conditions only; changes in regulatory transparency or platform algorithms may alter CDI thresholds over time. Moreover, Shanghai's relatively high cultural openness may limit generalizability. While the identified mechanisms may be transferable to other major cities such as Beijing or Guangzhou, the magnitude of effects should be interpreted cautiously.

Overall, this study refines Media Richness Theory by incorporating regional audience factors (Daft & Lengel, 1986), extends Tripartite Collaborative Governance Theory through the inclusion of policy transparency (Chen et al., 2024), and advances cultural discount theory by identifying genre-sensitive CDI thresholds (Li & Zhang, 2023).

Conclusion

This study employs a mixed-methods approach to examine the cross-cultural communication mechanism of Thai films on new media platforms in Shanghai. The findings identify a genre–platform–region matching pattern: romance films perform best on short-video platforms, whereas religious and historical films require richer interpretive environments, refining Media Richness Theory. Cultural adaptation, technical tools (e.g., AI subtitles and bullet comments), and flexible regulatory strategies jointly enhance communication efficiency, with technical adaptability compensation acting as a partial mediator, extending Tripartite Collaborative Governance Theory. The Cultural Discount Index shows an inverted U-shaped effect with genre-specific thresholds (0.325 for romance and 0.260 for religious films), and policy transparency mitigates high-CDI penalties. The five-dimensional framework—cognitive understanding, completion rate, sharing rate, emotional resonance, and recommendation willingness—offers a reliable tool for evaluating cross-cultural film communication.

Recommendation

1. Theoretical Recommendations

First, cross-cultural communication research can be strengthened by extending Tripartite Collaborative Governance Theory beyond state–platform–industry interactions to include social-level actors. Integrating audience-generated content, participatory commentary, and scholarly

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cultural annotation into analytical frameworks would allow a more complete understanding of how meaning is negotiated and stabilized during cross-cultural film circulation.

Second, cultural discount theory should further adopt a non-linear perspective that emphasizes genre-specific CDI thresholds. Rather than treating cultural distance as uniformly negative, future theoretical work should account for contextual moderators such as policy transparency, which can regulate how cultural difference translates into either attraction or resistance. This approach broadens both the explanatory depth and practical applicability of cultural discount theory.

2. Practical Recommendations

From a policy perspective, approval procedures for Thai films could be differentiated by genre. Establishing expedited approval channels for low-CDI genres such as romance and family ethics films would improve distribution efficiency, while standardized cultural annotation guidelines could support religious and historical films. Regional policy differentiation is also recommended, with greater support for culturally complex genres in central Shanghai and community-based dissemination strategies in suburban areas.

At the industry and platform level, Thai producers should adopt genre-sensitive adaptation strategies, emphasizing universal emotions in romance films while preserving core symbols in religious and historical productions through subtitles and explanatory content. Platforms can further optimize functions according to genre: interpretive tools on Bilibili, emotionally driven short clips on Douyin, and socially embedded sharing mechanisms on WeChat Channels.

3. Future Research Recommendations

Future studies may expand the sample to other Chinese cities to compare regional mechanisms, incorporate additional variables such as star power and marketing strategies, and employ longitudinal designs to capture dynamic changes in cross-cultural communication under evolving policy and technological conditions.

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