

# Intercultural Communication Analysis of Korean TV Dramas within China in the New Media Era

Liang Ze-Guang, Krirk University, Thailand; email: [liangze-guang99@gmail.com](mailto:liangze-guang99@gmail.com)<sup>1</sup>

**Abstract:** *This study uses literature review and comparative analysis along with historical research methods to investigate the intercultural communication process of Korean TV dramas within China. Firstly, this paper analyzes the intercultural process of Korean TV dramas in China by using the 5W model proposed by Lasswell. Subsequently, this study puts forward four suggestions on the basis of China's national conditions and the development status of the TV drama industry, namely, adopting a popular narrative pattern to disseminate universal values; integrating national culture into the art of teleplay; identifying audience positioning, and making full use of social media and, finally, establishing a complete operating system for the TV drama industry. The research on intercultural communication of Korean TV dramas within China provides certain references and inspirations for promoting the development and intercultural communication of Chinese TV dramas.*

**Keywords:** *5W model, intercultural communication, Korean TV dramas*

## 1. Introduction

Nowadays, with the background of globalization, TV dramas are rapidly spread around the world with the power of the Internet, providing a link of communication between different countries in the world, and realizing large-scale cross-country and cross-ethnic dissemination. In 1959, the famous American anthropologist Edward T. Hall (1959) first proposed the concept of cross-cultural communication, pointing out a new direction for intercultural communication. With the deepening of globalization, people with different cultural backgrounds communicate more and more, and intercultural communication becomes more and more frequent. As an important branch of communication research, intercultural communication theory has become a significant field of academic research.

This paper uses literature review, comparative analysis, and historical research methods to analyze the intercultural communication of Korean TV dramas within China so as to summarize the enlightenment and suggestions for the development of Chinese TV dramas and intercultural communication. The purposes and significance of the research are as follows. Since China's reform and opening up, both the production and export of TV dramas have increased significantly. However, according to the *China Statistical Yearbook 2022* (National Bureau of Statistics of China, 2022), the total import value of TV dramas in 2018 was 806.57 million Chinese yuan (yuan for short hereinafter), the total import value of TV dramas in 2016 was 815 million yuan, and the total export value of TV dramas in 2016 was 297.32 million yuan. In the overseas dissemination of Chinese TV dramas, the import was greater than the export, and there was an obvious trade deficit. Therefore, learning the successful intercultural communication model from foreign TV dramas can provide an important reference for the development of Chinese TV dramas, break the trade deficit dilemma of overseas dissemination of

---

<sup>1</sup> An earlier version of this paper was presented at the 6<sup>th</sup> International Conference on Sustainable Management at Krirk University in April 2023, and won the best paper award.

Chinese TV dramas, and further enhance China's national soft power and international influence. Hence, the elaboration of the intercultural communication of Korean TV dramas within China can serve as a reference for the development of Chinese TV dramas and can be conducive to promoting the spread of Chinese TV dramas in the world.

This paper has the following innovations. On the basis of sorting out the previous research results, this paper does not stick to the original conclusions but tries to make some innovations. This article uses Lasswell's 5W model (He, 2017) to analyze the communication mode of Korean TV dramas in China, so as to provide suggestions and directions for the development and intercultural communication of Chinese TV dramas, thus further enhancing China's national soft power, breaking the dilemma of trade deficit of Chinese TV dramas and facilitating the global dissemination of Chinese TV dramas.

## **2. Intercultural Communication**

Intercultural communication denotes the activities of information dissemination as well as cultural exchange (namely, information and cultural dissemination together with exchange activities) among individuals, organizations, and countries of different cultural systems (Tong, 2004). Intercultural communication maintains the dynamic balance of social structure and social system, connecting people from different regions, races, along with countries, and advancing the development and changes in human culture (Sun, 2015).

In 1959, the famous American anthropologist Edward Hall (1914-2009) published *The Silent Language*. He put forward the concept of cross-cultural communication for the first time, pointed out a new direction for intercultural communication, and systematically expounded the relations between culture and communication, marking the birth of the study of intercultural communication. Since then, Western scholars have taken culture and communication as their research objects, studied cultural communication and information exchange between people, organizations, institutions, or countries with different social backgrounds, investigated the diffusion, penetration, and migration of cultural elements in different cultural backgrounds, and explored how to achieve understanding, cooperation, coexistence, and common prosperity among different cultures.

Chinese scholars' research on intercultural communication began in the 1980s. After over 30 years of development, intercultural communication has initially formed a relatively complete discipline system in China. Intercultural communication is an important branch or extended field of communication. Besides, as a significant branch and expanded field of communication, intercultural communication also attaches great importance to the five basic elements of communication: "who" is the main body of communication, "says what" is communication content, "in which channel" serves as a communication channel, "to whom" is communication audience, and "with what effect" plays as communication effect. These five basic elements were proposed by Harold Dwight Lasswell (1902-1978) in 1948, namely, "Who says what in which channel to whom with what effect"; this definition was later called the "5W" communication model (He, 2017:18).

Accordingly, the process of intercultural communication includes the subject, the content, the channel, the audience, and the effect of intercultural communication. As a result, it is easy to produce a "cultural discount" (Hoskins & Mirus, 1988:501) in the process of communication, and even the

failure of intercultural communication due to cultural differences.

The diffusion process of Korean TV dramas in China, Asia, and even the world is the intercultural communication process of Korean TV dramas. The intercultural dissemination process of Korean TV dramas has increased people's sense of identity, intimacy, and favour with Korean culture, and enhanced the international status and international influence of South Korea (Korea for short hereinafter). Thus, the research on intercultural communication of Korean TV dramas not only has theoretical value but also has strong practical significance.

This study will combine the perspective of intercultural communication with the five elements of communication studies to conduct an investigation on the five elements of the Korean TV drama's intercultural communication process in China - "Who", "Says What", "In Which Channel", "To Whom", and "With What Effect". To be more specific, using the 5W model to analyze the intercultural communication process of Korean TV dramas in China can enable us to have a clearer and deeper understanding of the intercultural communication process of Korean TV dramas, and furnish important enlightenment for Chinese TV dramas' development and intercultural communication worldwide.

### **3. Intercultural Communication Analysis of Korean TV Dramas in China**

The dissemination of Korean TV dramas within China has a history of decades. From the original *Lovers of the Stars* to *Descendants of the Sun*, *Ghosts*, and *The Glory*, Korean TV dramas harbour a wide range of influence and loyal fans among Chinese audiences. This article attempts to analyze the current situation, characteristics, and influencing factors of Korean TV dramas within China from the perspective of intercultural communication, as well as the cultural effects and inspirations of Korean TV dramas on Chinese audiences. This paper maintains that the successful dissemination of Korean TV dramas in China is mainly due to the following aspects. First, Korean TV dramas have a high level of production and artistic quality, which can attract the audience's attention and interest; second, Korean TV dramas have a certain affinity and commonality, which can arouse the audience's recognition and resonance; third, Korean TV dramas are disseminated through multiple channels and platforms, which can meet the different needs and preferences of audiences; fourth, Korean TV dramas rely on social media and fan culture, which can help form a strong word-of-mouth effect and social influence.

This paper also points out that the cultural effects of Korean TV dramas on Chinese audiences are mainly manifested in the following aspects. Firstly, Korean TV dramas enhance Chinese audiences' understanding and cognition of Korean culture and society; secondly, Korean TV dramas promote Chinese audiences' reflection on their own culture and society; thirdly, Korean TV dramas stimulate the Chinese audience's interest and willingness in cross-cultural communication and cooperation; fourthly, Korean TV dramas influence the Chinese audience's aesthetic orientation and lifestyle. The intercultural communication of Korean TV dramas in China is not only a cultural phenomenon, but also a cultural opportunity, which is of great significance to the promotion of friendly relations and mutually beneficial cooperation between China and Korea.

This part uses the 5W model proposed by Lasswell (2017) to analyze the intercultural communication

mode of *Descendants of the Sun*, the hottest Korean TV drama within China in recent ten years. *Descendants of the Sun* was broadcast simultaneously on KBS and iQiyi on February 24<sup>th</sup>, 2016, whose themes include disasters, wars, medical care, and love. *Descendants of the Sun* set many records within China at that time, such as the Korean TV drama with the highest number of online broadcasts in China, and the Korean TV drama with the highest data on Weibo in China. As a consequence, *Descendants of the Sun* is one of the typical representatives of the *Hallyu* (or Korean wave) boom.

### 3.1. Intercultural Communication Disseminator (Who)

The disseminator is in the first stage of information dissemination and is the sender and controller of the dissemination content (Wang, 2016). The main disseminators of *Descendants of the Sun* are KBS TV station, N.E.W Film, and Television Company, screenwriters of Kim Eun-sook and Kim Won-seok, as well as directors Lee Eung-bok and Baek Sang-hoon, *inter alia*. N.E.W distribution company was established in 2008 and has a strong momentum of development. So far, it has been established for more than ten years and has become one of the major film production companies in Korea. Before making the TV drama *Descendants of the Sun* in 2016, it already had rich experience in making movies. In 2016, N.E.W produced a TV drama for the first time, which was *Descendants of the Sun*. Film production company N.E.W's film production experience and overseas shooting know-how exerted a key role in the production of *Descendants of the Sun*.

The screenwriter Kim Eun-sook is the gold medal (ace) screenwriter, called the "Romantic Love Textbook". *Prague Lovers*, *Secret Garden*, *A Gentleman's Dignity*, *The Heirs*, and other excellent TV series were written by her. Known as the queen of golden sentences, she warms people's hearts with words. She is also a maker of romantic fantasy, depicting heart-pounding love with light-hearted humour. She is famous not only in Korea but also in China. The screenwriter Kim Eun-sook guaranteed the creation quality of the plot, lines, and story themes of the TV drama *Descendants of the Sun*.

Kim Won-seok, a Korean screenwriter and director, is the director of the workplace drama *Misaeng*, which was a hit in 2014. Li Yingfu is a well-known director with popularity and strength, who has directed idol dramas such as *Dream High* and *Secret*. Baek Sang-hoon is also a Korean director, whose main works include *Who Are You - School 2015*. Hence, the directors of *Descendants of the Sun* own the strength to present fully the content, theme, and artistic connotation of the script of *Descendants of the Sun* to the audience.

Consequently, as far as the disseminator of communication is concerned, powerful production companies and production companies guaranteed the excellent production of the Korean TV drama *Descendants of the Sun*, and talented screenwriters guaranteed the production of plots, lines, and story materials of *Descendants of the Sun*. Besides, well-educated and capable directors fully presented the script content, artistic connotation, and theme to the audience, ensuring the quality of *Descendants of the Sun*.

### **3.2. Intercultural Communication Content (Says What)**

Intercultural communication is the process of transmitting and exchanging information, concepts, values and beliefs under different cultural backgrounds through various media and channels. The purpose of intercultural communication content is to promote understanding, respect, and cooperation between different cultures, eliminate prejudice and conflict, and enhance cultural diversity and tolerance. There are many forms of intercultural communication content, such as literature, art, film, music, advertising, news and education, among others. The quality and effect of intercultural communication depend on many factors, such as the cultural literacy and sensitivity of the communicator, the cultural background and acceptance of the audience, the choice and use of media, and the social environment and system. Intercultural communication content is a complex and interesting field that requires constant research and exploration.

*Descendants of the Sun* is a pure love drama based on the grand patriotic concept and the broad mind of saving lives and healing the wounded. *Descendants of the Sun* breaks the traditional love triangle or quadrangle, and the two pairs of lovers harbour one-to-one emotional entanglements. It is also different from the love stories of previous TV dramas, so the stories of the two couples are concentrated. The subordinate male protagonist and subordinate female protagonist intersperse with flashbacks to recall the past of their love. One side is the past of the subordinate male protagonist and subordinate female protagonist, and the other side is the future of the leading male and female protagonists. The two love lines run parallel. Using work subtly to connect the four people together makes Chinese audiences feel very novel emotions. In addition, the protagonists of *Descendants of the Sun* show equal professional awareness and values, and advocate an equal view of love. Today, when equality between men and women is advocated, this “evenly matched” view of love is more likely to be accepted by Chinese women in the new era (Liu, 2017).

### **3.3. Intercultural Communication Channel (in Which Channel)**

Intercultural communication channels are the ways and means of conveying information and exchanging meanings under different cultural backgrounds. Intercultural communication channels can be divided into language channels and non-language channels. Language channels refer to channels that use written, spoken, or electronic language symbols for communication, such as books, newspapers, television, radio and the Internet. Non-verbal channels indicate channels that use non-verbal symbols such as body movements, facial expressions, clothing, colours, music, and art to communicate, such as dance, painting, sculpture and architecture. The choices and use of cross-cultural communication channels not only depend on the cultural differences between the disseminator and the receiver but also are affected by the purpose, content, occasion, and media of communication. The effective use of intercultural communication channels can promote understanding and communication between different cultures and can also avoid or reduce possible obstacles and conflicts in intercultural communication.

From the perspective of communication channels, TV dramas are no longer exclusive to TV. With the update of communication technology, the Internet has also become the main channel for TV drama dissemination (Yao, 2012). The communication environment of *Descendants of the Sun* is video websites and social media, which greatly reduce the constraints of time and space and greatly enhance

the freedom and flexibility of audience viewing. Moreover, the interactivity of online media and the high contact rate of mobile media maximize the communication effect. Under this environment, the audience's willingness to watch is more active, and the ways of watching are more flexible, diverse, and elastic. Before and during the broadcast of *Descendants of the Sun* on the online platform, Chinese netizens and online video users reached a certain base, which laid the foundation for the broadcast of *Descendants of the Sun* to acquire a large number of viewers on the online platform. In addition, before the broadcast of *Descendants of the Sun*, iQiyi had already accumulated a very large user base. Its large user base has provided a solid user base for the hit *Descendants of the Sun* (TechWeb, 2023-3-2).

Entering the era of Web 2.0, the emergence and development of social media make the dissemination of information no longer mainly rely on "one-to-one" interpersonal communication, but "one-to-many" group communication. Compared with previous media, social media has great advantages in dissemination, sharing, and communication. Social media represented by Weibo has become the most frequently used media form. In addition to disseminating information, social media, as an interactive platform, cannot be ignored. From Weibo to topics and then to hot topics, a powerful online word-of-mouth communication has been formed.

The high exposure rate and high degree of discussion brought by social media such as Weibo and WeChat have made *Descendants of the Sun* a hot topic among Chinese people. Then the popularity of the topic is converted into ratings. Consequently, Weibo and WeChat, as a kind of social media, have also exerted a great role in the high ratings of Korean TV dramas within China and the flowering of *Hallyu* within China.

After the introduction of *Descendants of the Sun*, iQiyi integrated resources, sparked discussions on topics related to *Descendants of the Sun*, and expanded the influence of fans. Before *Descendants of the Sun* was broadcast, iQiyi launched a warm-up topic discussion on Weibo, predicting the direction of the plot, and the reading volume of the topic skyrocketed every day. The accumulated video views even exceeded 13 million times. On the official premiere day, it reached 3 million viewers in less than 24 hours. At the same time, it also left topics for plot discussion in various aspects. WeChat Moments had various topics related to *Descendants of the Sun*, and topics about *Descendants of the Sun* on Weibo ranked first in the hot search list, iQIYI's prime location also highly recommended *Descendants of the Sun*, which showed the popularity *Descendants of the Sun* in China (Liu, 2016).

Therefore, iQiyi not only has a huge user base, but iQiyi has shown strong operational strength in promoting *Descendants of the Sun*. Accordingly, *Descendants of the Sun* became popular within China before it was broadcast. After it was broadcast, topics related to *Descendants of the Sun* were created unceasingly and the popularity of the Korean TV drama was boosted continuously, thus further increasing viewership.

### **3.4. Intercultural Communication Audience (to Whom)**

#### **3.4.1. Audience Turning Younger**

Korean TV dramas have a wide audience around the world, mainly young people. This phenomenon

reflects the characteristics and influence of intercultural communication of Korean TV dramas. This paper analyzes the reasons and effects of Korean TV drama audiences being younger from the following three aspects.

First, the content and form of Korean TV dramas meet the aesthetic and psychological needs of young people. Korean dramas mostly focus on love, youth, suspense, fantasy, and other themes, showing young people's dreams, challenges, growth, and values. The production level of Korean TV dramas is very high, with exquisite pictures, beautiful music, and charming actors, which seize the eyes and ears of Chinese young people.

Second, the dissemination channels and methods of Korean TV dramas have adapted to the living habits and consumption patterns of Chinese young people. Korean TV dramas are not only broadcast on traditional TV stations but also provide online viewing and download services on online platforms, making it convenient for Chinese young people to watch them anytime, anywhere. Korean TV dramas also carry out secondary dissemination through social media, fan groups and word-of-mouth recommendations, thereby forming a strong topic effect and sense of community.

Third, the cultural value and significance of Korean TV dramas have aroused the recognition and resonance of Chinese young people. Korean TV dramas not only show Korean customs, history and culture, and social reality, but also convey some common humanistic care, moral concepts, and emotional expressions, allowing Chinese young people to feel the commonality and diversity across cultures. Korean TV dramas also stimulate Chinese young people's interest and curiosity in Korean and other countries' cultures, promoting cultural exchanges and understanding.

The turning younger of Korean TV drama audiences in intercultural communication is a phenomenon worthy of attention and research. It reflects the competitiveness and influence of Korean TV dramas in the global cultural market and also reveals the characteristics and needs of young people as major participants and consumers in intercultural communication.

Since *Descendants of the Sun* is broadcast on the Internet platform, and young people are the core users of the Internet, most of the recipients of *Descendants of the Sun* are young people. *Descendants of the Sun* takes love as the main line and is welcomed and liked by young people. The unswerving love performed by people of the same age as themselves (handsome male protagonist, beautiful female protagonist), coupled with romantic and touching lines as well as dreamy and beautiful scenes, arouses modern young people's desire for romantic love and pursuit of a better life. *Descendants of the Sun* has only 16 episodes. Compared with the previous TV dramas with dozens or even hundreds of episodes, it is suitable for the fast-paced lifestyle of young people today and also fits the mobile and fragmented network viewing environment.

#### 3.4.2. Cultural Tolerance

First, the process of globalization is accelerating, and China has been deeply involved in the wave of globalization. In contemporary society, more and more young people have the experience of travelling abroad, visiting foreign countries, and studying abroad, which is conducive to gaining a certain understanding of foreign cultures. There are also many foreigners who come to China to study and communicate, and the public also has the opportunity to get in touch with foreign cultures. In addition,

most modern Chinese young people are open-minded, have a strong ability to accept foreign cultures, and are willing and good at sharing and communicating. That is to say, they have the willingness and ability to communicate across cultures meanwhile.

From 1995 to 2016, ordinary Chinese citizens had access to the Internet, with a history of more than 20 years. The two generations aged 10-19 and 20-29 have also been exposed to and used the Internet since childhood. They are two generations who grew up in front of computer screens. Through the Internet, they have had the opportunity to contact and understand other cultures from an early age. The Internet is (mostly) open and global, which also encourages its users to develop a broad vision and an inclusive cultural outlook. Therefore, compared with middle-aged and elderly people, these two generations of Chinese young people are more likely to accept and tolerate foreign cultures, and they are also more likely to accept Korean TV dramas.

The dissemination of Korean TV dramas within China holds a history of more than 20 years, and modern young people have grown up with the broadcast of Korean TV dramas in China. They have had the opportunity to come into contact with and watch Korean TV dramas since they were young, which greatly reduces the possibility of “culture shock”, and even does not cause cross-cultural barriers when they watch Korean TV dramas. Accordingly, it is easier for Chinese young people to accept intercultural communication of Korean TV dramas in China.

### 3.4.3. Use and Satisfaction

In 1973, Katz, Haas, and Gurevitch selected 35 needs from the literature on the social and psychological functions of mass media and divided them into five categories: cognitive needs (acquiring information, knowledge along with understanding); affective needs (emotional, pleasurable, or aesthetic experiences); personal integration needs (enhancing trustworthiness, confidence, solidity, as well as status); social integration needs (enhancing relationships with family, friends, exposure to the world, etc.); needs to relieve stress (escape and distraction) (Katz, Haas & Gurevitch, 1973).

Use and satisfaction is a process of interaction between the audience and the media. When the communication content can meet the audience’s needs, the audience will gain satisfaction and maintain the choice of accepting the communication content; however, when the communication content cannot satisfy the audience’s needs, the audience will be “dissatisfied” when using it, and they may choose not to accept related communication content to a large extent. Through the use and gratification mechanism, the audience realizes the choice of the content, which affects the effect of content dissemination.

*Descendants of the Sun* satisfied the audience’s needs and was a hit in China. On the one hand, it is because of its popular actors, innovative characters as well as exciting and compact plots, which render the target audience obtain the first “satisfaction”. On the other hand, the pace of modern life is very fast and the pressure is extremely high. When people are worrying about work and life, they can gain recreation and entertainment by watching Korean dramas, which can help them escape from the pressure and burden of daily life and provide emotional liberation for the audience. The needs of the audience group, mainly young people, have been “satisfied” in the process of “using” *Descendants of the Sun*, which has made *Descendants of the Sun* extensively popular within China.

### **3.5. Intercultural Communication Effect (with What Effect)**

In a broad sense, communication effects include all objective results caused by communication behaviours, including not only the realization of the intention of the communicator but also other influences and consequences on the surrounding society (Zhao, 2018). The intercultural dissemination of *Descendants of the Sun* in China is very successful. As of September 2020, the Korean TV dramas broadcast in China have not broken the broadcast volume and popularity of *Descendants of the Sun*.

Additionally, due to the popularity of *Descendants of the Sun*, it has also had a great impact on Korea's tourism industry. The fans of *Descendants of the Sun* go beyond their enthusiasm for the TV drama itself and then extend their enthusiasm for Korean tourism. Statistics from Ctrip show that after the broadcast of *Descendants of the Sun*, more than 100 well-known Chinese travel agencies launched more than 130 *Descendants of the Sun* travel products on Ctrip. Hallyu culture has become a major driving force for Chinese tourists to travel to Korea (Sohu, 2022-7-2).

In line with the data provided by the Korea Tourism Knowledge Information System (2020), the number of Chinese tourists visiting Korea in 2015 was 5.98 million and the number of Chinese tourists visiting Korea in 2016 amounted to 8 million, with an increase of 34.82% than 2015. The *Hallyu* boom caused by *Descendants of the Sun* made fans of *Descendants of the Sun* enthusiastic about traveling to Korea, which has had a certain impact on the surge of Chinese tourists visiting Korea.

Moreover, after the broadcast of *Descendants of the Sun*, the number of Chinese people buying Korean products through the Internet has soared. The clothes, shoes, hats, earrings, necklaces, etc. which the leading actor and actress of *Descendants of the Sun* "Song Hye Kyo" and "Song Joong Ki" on Taobao wore in the drama, as well as related items in their photos, set off a buying boom.

According to the March 2016 report on online shopping trends published by Statistics Korea, online overseas direct sales in the first quarter of 2016 were 478.7 billion won, an increase of 84.5% from 259.4 billion won in the first quarter of 2015. Chinese people are the overwhelming majority of purchasing consumers, and the purchase amount was 363.4 billion won, accounting for 75.9% of the total (Statistics Korea, 2021-7-2). The *Descendants of the Sun* craze also had an impact on China's online direct shopping frenzy in the first quarter of 2016.

Thus, the upsurge of Hallyu caused by Korean TV dramas such as *Descendants of the Sun* not only boosted the development of the Korean cultural industry, but also drove the development of other industries including clothing, food and tourism, bringing huge economic benefits to Korea, and has increased the favourability and love of people in the world towards Korea.

### **4. Enlightenment to Development of Chinese TV Dramas**

This paper analyzes the intercultural communication process of Korean TV dramas in China and proposes the following advice for the development of Chinese TV dramas.

#### **4.1. Adopting Common Narrative Mode to Spread Values**

Korean TV dramas have mainly focused on family dramas and romantic dramas. Romantic dramas adopt the narrative mode of “Prince and Cinderella” and innovate in combination with the real situation to pursue beautiful love. Family dramas focus on the ordinary lives of ordinary people, integrate positive and healthy life concepts, and a warm family atmosphere into the plot, and use the language of daily life to befriend the audience.

Although China also has some TV dramas that have successfully spread to the world, for example, the early *My Fair Princess* was translated into English, Korean, Russian, and other languages, creating a sense of Chinese TV dramas spreading abroad. The reason is inseparable from the adoption of the “Prince and Cinderella” narrative mode. However, in recent years, spy war dramas and military struggle dramas have become major types of TV dramas. Chinese spy war dramas and military struggle dramas are most closely related to the Anti-Japanese War, which are likely to cause cultural conflicts and are not easy to break through the barriers of intercultural communication. For this reason, Chinese TV dramas should also adopt a common narrative mode and spread universal values, so that they can be easily accepted by people from other cultures around the world.

#### **4.2. Integrating National Culture into TV Drama Art**

In Korean TV dramas, ordinary family dramas show the Korean people’s family ethics and life attitudes, and romantic love dramas show the Korean people’s self-improvement, independence, and sacrifice for love. Accordingly, the Korean national culture has been successfully integrated into Korean TV art, subtly establishing a good national image. Under the impact of Western industrial civilization, Korean TV dramas still spread traditional Confucian culture and universal values. While maintaining their daily routine and uniqueness, they actively adapt and absorb the essence of Western culture to form values in line with modern society. Korean TV dramas combine nationality and modernity, displaying the beauty of Eastern culture in the blending and collision with Western culture.

Chinese TV dramas do not fully display Chinese culture in TV art, which is a great loss to Chinese culture. Chinese TV dramas should also be based on the national culture of the country and integrate Chinese characteristic culture and people’s life philosophy into TV dramas, such as showing China’s multiculturalism, traditional food, and tolerance, so that the world can see the real life and beautiful spirit of the Chinese people. In this way, TV dramas can be close to life, spread “truth, goodness and beauty,” conform to the audience’s aesthetics, and can also eliminate foreign people’s misunderstanding of China, and establish a good national image. Moreover, while maintaining the national culture, we should also keep pace with the times, achieve the perfect combination of nationality and globality, and promote the intercultural communication of Chinese TV dramas in the world.

#### **4.3. Identifying Audience Positioning and Making Full Use of Social Media**

In the Internet era, Korean TV dramas are broadcast on the Internet, and the audience is targeted at the core young users of the Internet. The plot design of Korean TV dramas meets the needs of young audiences. Plus, Korean TV dramas make full use of the fast spread of social media, start publicity

before broadcasting, create hot topics during broadcasting, and easily achieve popular results. In contrast to Chinese TV dramas, when *The Heirs* and *You Who Came from the Star* became hits, 75% of TV dramas in China did not reach the 0.5% ratings (*People's Daily Online*, 2022-7-2). One of the reasons is that the positioning of Chinese TV dramas is vague and ignores the needs of the audience. There is little interaction with the audience and the content of the TV dramas cannot be adjusted in a timely manner in accordance with the audience's needs and tastes.

Chinese TV dramas should locate the audience in advance, use questionnaires or interviews to understand the needs of the audience, utilize social media to create topics after broadcasting, ask the audience to leave comments, and obtain the audience's true feelings and psychological demands. According to the needs of the audience, the content of the TV dramas is appropriately modified, so that the audience can feel multiple satisfactions with the content of the TV dramas, which can be transformed into a good reputation among the audience and continue to generate better ratings. In addition, the dissemination method of Chinese TV dramas is still mainly TV publicity, and social media should be fully utilized to create topics before broadcasting to attract a large number of audiences. Accordingly, before the TV dramas start broadcasting, make full use of social media to warm up the TV dramas, create topics, and convert the popularity into ratings after the TV dramas start broadcasting. To sum up, Chinese TV dramas should do well in audience positioning and audience demand investigation and actively use social media to spread, so as to promote the spread of Chinese TV dramas at home and abroad.

#### **4.4. Establishing Complete Operating System for TV Drama Industry**

The success of Korean TV dramas is not just the success of TV dramas, but the success of a national cultural brand. Behind this success is the promotion of a complete TV drama industry operation system. Korean TV dramas adopt the production mode of "writing while filming and broadcasting" and Korean TV dramas attach great importance to the role of screenwriters. The various departments of TV drama production are highly coordinated, the cycle is short, the efficiency is high, and manpower and material resources are saved. During the broadcasting of TV dramas, it also actively interacts with the audience, adjusts the plot in a timely manner according to the audience's feedback, and integrates with the market to the greatest extent.

As far as Chinese TV dramas are concerned, it is a long process from script creation and then filming to marketing promotion for a TV drama, and they are disconnected from each other. This mechanism of separation of production and broadcasting is divorced from the market. Moreover, in the production of Chinese TV dramas, directors and actors are "kings," and the rights of screenwriters are not taken seriously. Therefore, in the production process of Chinese TV dramas, it is essential to improve the ability to cultivate screenwriters and pay attention to the status of screenwriters. Make high-quality TV dramas with wonderful stories and great impressions on the audience, not idol dramas that only rely on stars to become popular. During the broadcasting of TV dramas, it is significant actively to interact with the audience, adjust the content and ending of the TV dramas according to audience feedback in time, and integrate with the market to the greatest extent. At the same time, the review time for TV dramas should be shortened, and the production and broadcasting cycle of TV dramas should be reduced.

Furthermore, it is of great importance to improve the financial investment mechanism to support the development of TV dramas, improve the incentive mechanism for the export of TV dramas, and increase the support and rewards for the export of TV dramas. Besides, it is essential actively to carry out international exchanges and cooperation in the field of film and television, strengthen international cooperation and co-production of TV dramas; build the brand of “Chinese TV dramas,” promote the “going out” of excellent TV dramas and related film and television organizations, and enhance the competitiveness and influence of Chinese TV dramas. In a word, under the leadership of the Chinese government, Chinese TV dramas should strive to create a brand culture of Chinese TV dramas, establish a complete and efficient TV drama industry operation system, and actively promote the development and intercultural communication of Chinese TV dramas.

## 5. Conclusion

This study uses literature review, comparative analysis, and historical research methods to probe into the intercultural communication process of Korean TV dramas within China, which are the representative of *Hallyu*. *Hallyu* is a cultural phenomenon that takes Korean TV dramas, movies, music, games, Korean clothing, Korean food, etc. as the carriers and spreads in Asia and even the world. However, judging from the influence in China, Korean TV dramas are the most prominent carrier of *Hallyu*. Hence, this paper used the 5W model proposed by Lasswell (2017) to conduct an intercultural communication analysis on Korean TV dramas.

The paper summarized the reasons for the success of Korean TV dramas within China from the perspectives of the disseminator, communication content, communication channel, audience, and communication effect. Disseminators of Korean TV dramas are powerful distribution companies, production companies, screenwriters, and directors. Korean TV dramas’ communication content is the popular narrative mode - Cinderella, which has been innovated combined with the times. As far as the communication channel of Korean TV dramas is concerned, in the Internet age, Korean TV dramas rely on online video dissemination, coupled with the fast spread of social media, effectively promoting the speed and popularity of Korean TV dramas. Concerning the communication audience, Korean TV dramas target young audiences, who are the main users of the Internet, and with the growth of the Internet, they have an international perspective. With the acceleration of the globalization process, they have more exposure to foreign cultures and a high degree of tolerance, who have grown with the broadcast of Korean TV dramas within China, with a high acceptance and recognition of Korean TV dramas.

Finally, through the analysis of the intercultural communication process of Korean TV dramas within China and the summary of the success factors of Korean TV dramas within China, it provides important enlightenment and influence on the development and intercultural communication of Chinese TV dramas. Based on the actual situation of Chinese TV dramas combined with Chinese culture and national conditions, multiple suggestions have been put forward.

To begin with, it is essential to adopt a common narrative mode to spread values, so as to avoid cultural conflicts and promote the intercultural communication of Chinese TV dramas in the world. Second, it is of significance to integrate national culture into the art of TV dramas. Chinese TV dramas should display China’s multiculturalism, traditional cuisine, and be close to life, eliminate foreign

people's misunderstanding of China, and establish a good national image. Third, it is important to identify audience positioning and make full use of social media. Chinese TV dramas should have a clear audience positioning, actively interact with audience groups, understand the audience's needs, meet the audience's needs, actively use social media to spread, and increase the topicality of TV dramas and popularity, thereby boosting the ratings and promoting the spread of Chinese TV dramas at home and abroad. Fourth, it is beneficial to establish a complete operating system for the TV drama industry. Under the leadership of the Chinese government, it is requisite to form a brand culture of Chinese film and television dramas, create an operating system for the TV drama industry, and actively promote the "going out" of Chinese TV dramas.

Consequently, the study of the successful intercultural communication process of Korean TV dramas in China retains certain reference significance for boosting the sustainable development of Hallyu in China. It has implications for the international intercultural communication of Chinese TV dramas. Meanwhile, it is a means of exploring more experiences for future cultural exchanges between China and Korea.

Additionally, this investigation also furnishes multiple academic contributions. To be more specific, the first contribution to academic knowledge is that this study adopts the 5W model as well as Use and Satisfaction Theory to explore the intercultural communication process of Korean TV dramas in China, offering new research perspectives for the intercultural communication studies on (Korean) TV dramas, and supplementing research literature on intercultural communication of (Korean) TV dramas. Moreover, this study also contributes to extending the research methods of intercultural communication research on (Korean) TV dramas by means of combining several research methods (i.e., literature review, comparative analysis, and historical research methods) to probe into the intercultural communication process of Korean TV dramas.

Although this study yields a number of academic and practical implications and contributions, yet the research also harbours several limitations. For instance, this study only analyzes the intercultural communication process of Korean TV dramas, but the intercultural communication processes of other countries' TV dramas, such as American TV dramas, Thai TV dramas, and Chinese TV dramas, have research value and are worth deep exploration as well. Therefore, in future research, the intercultural communication processes of other countries' TV dramas, e.g., American TV dramas, Thai TV dramas, and Chinese TV dramas, ought to be delved into, which can be conducive to expanding the database of the research content. Further, a comparative analysis of the intercultural communication processes between two or more countries' TV dramas, such as Korean TV dramas, American TV dramas, Thai TV dramas, and Chinese TV dramas, can be conducted, which is beneficial for summarizing effective and valuable suggestions for intercultural communication of TV dramas via comparing the intercultural communication processes of TV dramas in different countries. Besides, this study only utilizes qualitative research methods without adopting quantitative research methods to examine the intercultural communication process of Korean TV dramas. As a result, quantitative methods in future research as well ought to be used so as to enrich the research methods of studies on intercultural communication and TV dramas.

## 6. References

- Hall, E.T. (1959). *The silent language*. Garden City, NY: Doubleday.
- He, D. (translation) (2017). *The structure and function of social communication* (Original author: H. D. Lasswell). Beijing: China Media Press.
- Hoskins, C. & Mirus, R. (1988). Reasons for the US dominance of the international trade in television programmes. *Media, Culture & Society*, 10(4), 499-515.
- Katz, E., Haas, H. & Gurevitch, M. (1973). On the use of the mass media for important things. *American Sociological Review*, 38(2), 164-181.
- Korea Tourism Knowledge Information System (2020-3-20). Major indicators of tourism statistics at a glance, available at: <http://www.tour.go.kr>.
- Liu, W. (2016). The explanatory significance of the popularity of the Korean TV drama *Descendants of the Sun*. *Drama House*, (24), 123-124.
- Liu, Y. (2017). The marketing method of *Descendants of the Sun* from the perspective of communication theory. *Journalism Studies Guide*, 8(3), 141.
- National Bureau of Statistics of China (2022). *China statistical yearbook 2022*, available at: <http://www.stats.gov.cn/sj/ndsj/2022/indexeh.htm>.
- People's Daily Online* (2022-7-2). In 2013, the ratings of 75% of domestic dramas were lower than 0.5%, making it difficult to find good dramas, available at: <http://culture.people.com.cn/n/2014/0221/c172318-24425863.html> (in Chinese).
- Sohu (2022). Hundreds of travel agencies in China are vying to promote the *Descendants of the Sun* tour group, available at: [https://www.sohu.com/a/71006775\\_376259](https://www.sohu.com/a/71006775_376259).
- Statistics Korea (2021). Online direct overseas sales by country (continent), available at: <http://kostat.go.kr/portal/korea/index.action>.
- Sun Y. (2015). *Intercultural communication studies*. Beijing: Peking University Press.
- TechWeb (2023). *Descendants of the Sun* is exclusively launched on iQIYI VIP members to enjoy the experience of watching the drama without time difference, available at: <http://www.techweb.com.cn/news/2016-02-22/2282014.shtml>.
- Tong, B. (2004). Analysis of the misunderstanding in cross-cultural communication. *Journalism University*, 3, 20-24.
- Wang, M. (2016). Communication interpretation of popular Korean TV dramas - Taking the popular Korean TV drama *Descendants of the Sun* as an example. *Western Radio and Television*, 8, 111-112.

Yao, Y. (2012). *Research on the value dissemination and impact of popular American TV dramas*. Master's Thesis, Beijing: Minzu University of China.

Zhao, J. (2018). *Research on the communication effect of music reality show based on uses and gratification theory*. Master's Thesis, Chongqing: Chongqing University.