

Cross-cultural Communication and Audience Aesthetic Analysis of Chinese TV Series in Thailand (2014-2023)

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Abstract

This research aims to study Chinese TV series that gain popularity annually on mainstream streaming platforms such as Rakuten Viki, YouTube, Netflix, iQIYI, WeTV, and others. The study analyzes how Chinese TV series communicate and explores Thai audiences' perceptions of them. The sample group comprises Thai viewers who watch Chinese series on the mentioned platforms.

The data analysis employed both qualitative and quantitative methods. The quantitative analysis focused on identifying statistical trends by examining the distribution and popularity of Chinese series across platforms, using descriptive statistics such as frequency distributions, means, and standard deviations. Time-series analysis was also conducted from 2014 to 2023 to investigate changes in the number of Chinese series released each year, audience engagement metrics, and shifts in genre preferences. Furthermore, sentiment analysis was carried out based on viewer reviews and feedback collected from streaming platforms and social media using natural language processing (NLP) tools.

The findings reveal that Chinese TV series have become increasingly popular in Thailand due to their diverse content, deep storytelling, and high production quality. The availability of Chinese series on digital streaming platforms has made them more accessible to viewers, allowing them to engage with Chinese culture through relatable themes and symbols, which often align with Thai cultural values. Additionally, the growth

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of streaming platforms such as Netflix, iQIYI, and WeTV has broadened the reach of Chinese series, though it has also intensified market competition. Therefore, to maintain long-term viewer interest, Chinese series must continue to develop their storytelling, enhance presentation styles, and diversify genre offerings.

Keywords: Cross-Cultural Communication, Audience Aesthetics, Media Consumption, Digital Streaming Platforms, Cultural Influence

Introduction

In recent years, the popularity of Chinese TV series has surged in many countries, especially in Southeast Asia, including Thailand. These series are broadcast through both traditional television channels and major streaming platforms such as Rakuten Viki, YouTube, Netflix, iQIYI, and WeTV. This growing popularity has led to increased cultural exchanges between China and Thailand, presenting both positive and negative implications. (Somthawinpongsai, C., Zhou, F., Wiwitkunkasem, K., Chanwichian, J., & Xing, J. 2024). While these exchanges have fostered greater cultural understanding, challenges remain. Cultural differences—such as language barriers, differences in content interpretation, and distinct narrative styles—have caused some Thai viewers to hesitate or feel limited in their enjoyment of Chinese TV shows. (Appiah, K. A. 2006).

The importance of this research lies in the need to understand the nuances of these cross-cultural exchanges and the impact they have on Thai audiences. According to research and theories like Till and Busler's (2000) work on the influence of celebrity endorsements in advertising, studying the aesthetic attitudes of viewers can provide valuable insights into how Thai audiences perceive and respond to Chinese media. By examining whether the content of Chinese TV series resonates with Thai viewers, particularly in terms of cultural and social connections, this research seeks to identify how the growing consumption of Chinese media can be better tailored to fit the cultural expectations and preferences of Thai audiences.(Bao, Z. ,2002).



The main challenge that arises is that while Chinese TV series are being rapidly disseminated in Thailand, they often struggle to connect deeply with Thai culture. This disconnect may stem from differences in how stories, symbols, and cultural references are interpreted between the two countries, (Bao, Z., 2003). making it difficult for some Thai viewers to fully engage with or relate to the narrative. Additionally, language barriers and translation inaccuracies, as well as differences in pacing compared to Thai productions, further limit viewers' ability to enjoy these series.

This research is essential to deepen our understanding of cross-cultural communication through media. It explores the attitudes and expectations of Thai viewers toward Chinese content, offering insights into how Chinese TV series can be adjusted to better resonate with Thai audiences. (Chen, G. M., & Starosta, W. J., 2000). By understanding these dynamics, this study will contribute to improving the quality of Chinese TV series, enabling them to be more culturally relevant and accessible to Thai viewers. Furthermore, the findings of this research are crucial for enhancing cultural exchanges between China and Thailand, offering strategies for more effective promotion and distribution of Chinese TV series in Thailand.(Chen, S. (2009). Through improved translation, localization, and platform use, Chinese media can increase Thai audience satisfaction and acceptance, while also strengthening global awareness of Chinese culture and overcoming communication barriers in cross-cultural media dissemination(Chen, Y., 2007).

Research Objectives

1. The study of the impact of demographic factors (such as gender, age, and language proficiency) on aesthetic preferences and the evaluation of Chinese series in Thailand.
2. To analyze the role of viewing behaviors (such as platform choice, frequency of watching, and motivations for watching) in determining viewers' overall satisfaction with Chinese series and their intention to recommend these series.
3. To examine the relationship between viewers' aesthetic preferences (e.g., plot, acting, visuals, and cultural value) and their overall satisfaction and future behavioral intentions regarding Chinese series.



Research Scope

This research focuses on Thai audiences who have experience watching Chinese TV series through various online platforms such as YouTube, Netflix, iQIYI, WeTV, and Rakuten Viki. The target group includes individuals aged 18 and above, encompassing a diverse range of genders, ages, and levels of Chinese language proficiency.(Chen, Y., & Lu, Y. (2020).

The content of the study will concentrate on contemporary Chinese TV series produced from the year 2020 onward, to align with current viewing trends. Other forms of Chinese media, such as films, variety shows, or animated content, are excluded from the scope of this research. The study is geographically limited to the context of Thailand and does not involve industrial or production-side analyses of Chinese media. (Cheng, S. (2007).

Research Hypotheses

H1: Demographic factors (such as gender, age, and Chinese language proficiency) have a significant effect on Thai viewers' aesthetic preferences toward Chinese TV series.

H2: Viewing behaviors (including platform choice, frequency of viewing, and motivation for watching) significantly influence overall satisfaction with Chinese TV series among Thai audiences.

H3: Aesthetic preferences (such as plot, acting, visual quality, and perceived cultural value) are positively correlated with Thai viewers' overall satisfaction with Chinese TV series.

Literature Review and Conceptual Framework

To establish a foundation for this study, a comprehensive literature review was conducted, focusing on key theories and research related to global cultural dissemination, cross-cultural communication, and the international spread of Chinese TV series. The concept of Marshall McLuhan's "Global Village" was explored in conjunction with Thomas Friedman's metaphor of the "electronic sheep" to illustrate the global flow and consumption of electronic cultural products. These metaphors help frame the way global audiences, including Thai viewers, receive and interpret foreign media. (Chinairn. 2022)

To understand the broader context of cultural influence, the study references Wang (2014), who noted that by 1996, U.S. global sales of software and entertainment products had reached \$60.2 billion, surpassing all other industries. (Fish, S., 1996; Heidegger, M. 2022) By the



end of the 20th century, U.S. exports consisted largely of mass-produced cultural products—films, TV shows, music, games, and software—rather than traditional goods. This shift led to concerns about cultural imperialism. Scholars such as Fernando Solanas (2002), Roman Guberne (2003), and Yu (2008) argue that this dominance has caused a decline in cultural diversity, especially in developing regions, as hegemonic media systems marginalize local voices and traditions.(Kraidy, M. M., & Murphy, P. D. 2009; Mei, M., 2011; Nielsen, J. (2012).

This study also reviewed recent scholarship on the rise of **Chinese TV series as global cultural products**. These works highlight how Chinese dramas, including web series, have emerged as significant elements of cultural trade and international communication. Since the beginning of the 21st century,(Sandlin, J. A., & Maudlin, J. G., 2012; Till, B. D., & Busler, M., 2000).The Chinese government has made efforts to support the export of cultural content through policies aligned with broader national strategies such as the "**Going Global**" policy and the **Belt and Road Initiative**. According to industry reports, by 2022, Chinese TV series had been broadcast in over 200 countries and regions, demonstrating a growing international footprint.

The literature also discusses internal shifts in the Chinese media landscape, especially from 2021 to 2022. Influenced by macro-level goals such as building a socialist cultural power by 2035 and directives from the 20th National Congress of the Communist Party (Wang, Y.,2014; Yuan, Z. (2009). the industry has implemented measures to reduce the quantity of production while enhancing quality and efficiency. These developments have been studied through governmental policy analyses, media production trends, and distribution strategy reports.

In summary, the literature review for this study synthesizes academic articles, policy documents, and industry reports across three main themes:

1. Theoretical foundations of global media flow and cultural imperialism
2. The development and internationalization of Chinese TV series
3. Government policies and market changes shaping Chinese media production and distribution

This review provides the conceptual and contextual background necessary for analyzing how Chinese TV series are received in Thailand and how they function as tools of cross-cultural communication in the modern global media environment.



Conceptual Framework

Based on consulting a large number of literature such as Internet, books, academic journals, statistics, etc., and analyzing relevant data and information, the researcher formulated the following research conceptual framework as well as the conceptual framework visually illustrates the relationship between the independent and dependent variables: (as shown in figure 1.1):

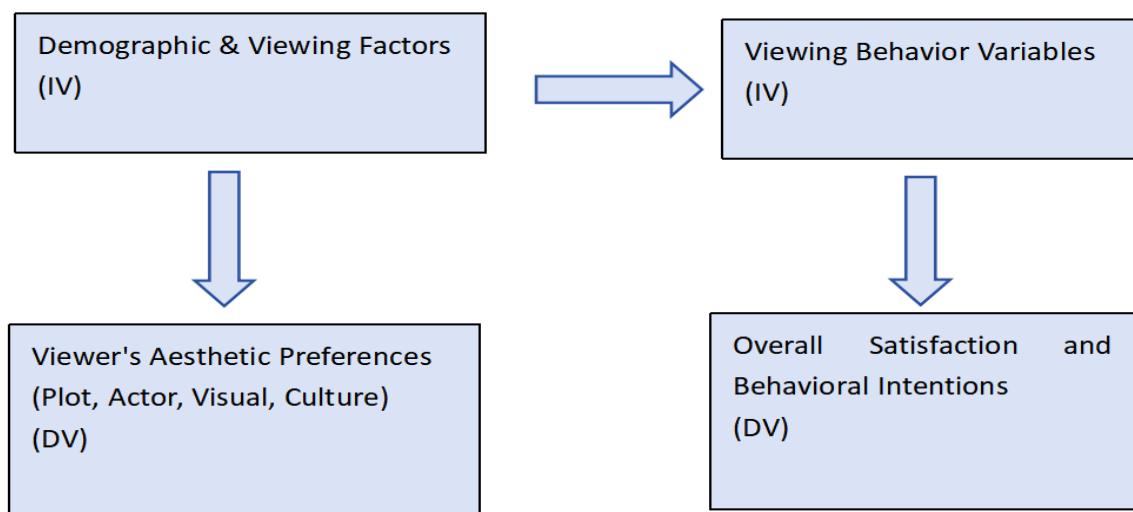


Figure 1.1 Conceptual Framework

Research Methodology

This research adopts a mixed-methods approach combining both qualitative and quantitative methodologies, with a focus on case study strategy as the core research framework. The objective is to explore the dissemination and reception of Chinese television series in Thailand between 2014 and 2023, and to understand the aesthetic preferences and cross-cultural interpretations of Thai audiences. The research design is structured into two primary phases: (1) the theoretical foundation through literature review, and (2) empirical investigation through case studies, interviews, surveys, and data triangulation.



1. Theoretical Foundation and Literature Review

The initial phase involved a systematic collection and analysis of academic literature from domestic and international sources over the past decade. The purpose was to establish a comprehensive background, identify key trends, and reveal gaps in the current research. This critical review provided the theoretical underpinnings for the study, guided the formulation of research questions, and contributed to the development of hypotheses related to the cross-cultural communication of Chinese TV series.

2. Case Study Implementation

The core empirical phase of the study employed a case study methodology, which is particularly suitable for in-depth investigation of real-world phenomena where contextual understanding is essential. This phase was divided into five key stages:

2.1 Case Collection Stage

Chinese TV series that gained popularity on major streaming platforms in Thailand, such as Rakuten Viki, YouTube, Netflix, iQIYI, and WeTV, were selected as primary case materials. The selection was based on viewership data, audience ratings, and engagement metrics from 2014 to 2023. This stage utilized quantitative techniques to analyze trends in genre, narrative structure, and platform-specific performance.

2.2 Data Analysis and Discussion Stage

Representative cases were subjected to in-depth analysis using both qualitative and quantitative measures. Key variables included viewing rates, completion rates, audience demographics, comments, and social media engagement. Thematic analysis was conducted to examine cultural relevance, narrative appeal, and genre preferences. Preliminary interviews with content creators, industry professionals, and Thai viewers were also conducted to inform the design of a structured questionnaire.

2.3 Hypothesis Formulation Stage

Drawing from patterns observed in the representative cases, hypotheses were formulated regarding Thai audience reception, aesthetic preferences, and the interpretation of Chinese cultural elements. A structured questionnaire was then administered to a diverse Thai audience sample to validate these hypotheses.

2.4 Verification and Conclusion Stage

Survey data were analyzed using statistical methods to verify audience behavior patterns and preferences. The results were synthesized with case study findings to draw conclusions about



the cross-cultural communication of Chinese TV series, particularly focusing on aesthetic reception and the resonance of cultural values.

2.5 Recommendation Stage

Based on empirical findings, strategic recommendations were developed for content creators and media distributors. These included the incorporation of universal themes, localized adaptation strategies, and enhanced cross-cultural communication techniques to improve the global competitiveness of Chinese TV series.

3. Data Collection Methods

Multiple data collection techniques were employed:

Literature review to establish theoretical grounding.

Semi-structured interviews with producers, content creators, and Thai audiences.

Structured questionnaires distributed to a wide demographic.

Observation and statistical analysis of viewership data and audience interaction.

4. Data Triangulation

To enhance the validity and reliability of findings, this study utilized data triangulation, combining various sources and types of data. The integration of qualitative insights from interviews, quantitative survey results, and secondary data from streaming platforms allowed for a comprehensive analysis of the phenomenon. This approach facilitated a robust understanding of the aesthetic, cultural, and communicative dimensions of Chinese TV series in a transnational context.

Result, Discussion, Conclusion, and Suggestions

Results

The results of this study reveal several significant trends in the dissemination and reception of Chinese television series in Thailand between 2014 and 2023: Popularity and Platform Penetration: Chinese TV series have shown a consistent rise in popularity across major streaming platforms such as Netflix, WeTV, iQIYI, and Rakuten Viki. Data analysis indicates that historical dramas, romantic comedies, and fantasy series are the most favored genres among Thai audiences. Narrative and Communication Elements: The narrative structure of Chinese dramas—featuring emotionally compelling plots, cultural symbolism, and high production quality—has been a strong factor in their appeal. However, certain idiomatic



expressions and cultural references occasionally cause misunderstanding due to inadequate translation or localization. Audience Demographics and Attitudes: Survey results show that the majority of viewers are female (over 70%) and fall within the 36–45 age range. Despite the language barrier (with 29% lacking Chinese language skills), viewers report high emotional engagement and appreciation for the cultural depth of Chinese dramas. Policy and Platform Support: China's Belt and Road Initiative and national media strategies have facilitated the global expansion of its television content. Simultaneously, the growing influence of digital streaming platforms has broadened access to these series, including in regional Thai markets. Challenges and Barriers: Viewers report several barriers, including substandard translation quality, cultural misalignment, and pacing differences when compared to Thai dramas. These issues may affect the audience's overall viewing experience.

Discussion

The findings of this study provide important insights into how Chinese TV series have gained traction in Thailand, especially among female viewers and in urban areas. To deepen the analysis, several key findings are discussed about previous literature: Female Audience Engagement and Emotional Narratives One of the most compelling findings is that 70% of respondents were female, with a clear preference for romantic and emotionally engaging storylines. This strongly aligns with Till and Busler's (2000) study, which emphasized the power of emotional appeal in shaping consumer and viewer behavior. It also supports Yu's (2008) observation that East Asian audiences, especially women, respond well to character-driven narratives and visual aesthetics. These emotional storylines help explain the sustained popularity of Chinese TV dramas among Thai women. (Zhang, B. 2010)

Language Barriers and Translation Needs

A second key result is the influence of language proficiency on viewer experience. With nearly 30% of viewers lacking any Chinese language knowledge, the importance of accurate and culturally nuanced translations becomes evident. Roman Guberne (2003) highlighted how linguistic inaccessibility can limit cross-cultural media understanding. This study confirms that poorly localized content can reduce viewer enjoyment, reinforcing Solanas' (2002) concerns about the loss of meaning when cultural products are not properly adapted for local audiences.



Digital Platforms and Soft Power Expansion Lastly, the role of platforms like Netflix, iQIYI, and WeTV—combined with policy-driven support under the Belt and Road Initiative—demonstrates how China is actively exporting cultural content. Wang (2014) noted that cultural goods have overtaken traditional exports in economic and symbolic value. The study's findings support this shift, showing that Chinese dramas are not just entertainment but instruments of cultural diplomacy, echoing McLuhan's “Global Village” concept of media as a global connector. (Zhao, D.,2015)

Conclusion

This study concludes that Chinese TV series have become increasingly prominent in Thailand's entertainment landscape, driven by digital platform accessibility, emotionally engaging narratives, and supportive media policies. Female audiences and middle-aged viewers represent the largest consumer base, underscoring the genre's broad demographic appeal.

Despite their growing influence, Chinese series face ongoing challenges in cross-cultural reception, particularly related to language barriers and the localization of culturally specific content. Addressing these issues through improved translation, culturally responsive adaptation, and targeted marketing strategies will be essential for sustaining and expanding Chinese media influence in Thailand and beyond.

The findings of this study offer practical recommendations for content creators and media distributors, advocating for a balance between cultural authenticity and accessibility. By fostering mutual understanding through transnational storytelling, Chinese television series have the potential to serve as a powerful medium of soft power and cultural diplomacy in the Southeast Asian region.

Suggestions

1. Cross-Cultural Perception and Adaptation Studies Future research could focus on studying how Thai audiences perceive the cultural elements within Chinese TV series, exploring how they adapt to cultural symbols, themes, and narratives. This would provide insights into how well Chinese content resonates with Thai audiences and how it can be better tailored to align with local cultural expectations.



2. Impact of Streaming Platforms on Viewing Behavior Future studies should investigate the impact of streaming platforms like Netflix, iQIYI, and WeTV on Thai viewers' viewing habits. This research could explore how these platforms influence the choice of Chinese series, viewer preferences, and content discovery, as well as the effectiveness of algorithm-based recommendations and marketing strategies used by streaming services.

Psychological and Emotional Effects of Chinese Series Future research should explore the psychological and emotional effects of watching Chinese TV series on Thai audiences. This could involve studying how these series influence viewers' feelings, thoughts, and attitudes, particularly in terms of social values like family, loyalty, and personal growth. Such studies could offer insights into how Chinese media shapes societal norms and individual perceptions in Thailand (Zhou, Y., & Chen, J. 2021).

Research Knowledge

This study contributes key insights into the dissemination and reception of Chinese TV series in Thailand, highlighting several important aspects of cross-cultural communication and media consumption.

1. Audience Engagement: The study reveals that Chinese TV series are particularly popular among Thai female viewers and those aged 36-45. Emotional storytelling, narrative structure, and visual aesthetics are key factors driving engagement, offering valuable insights into audience preferences in a cross-cultural context.

2. Challenges in Cultural Translation: While Chinese dramas have resonated with Thai viewers, some cultural references and idiomatic expressions pose translation challenges, leading to partial misinterpretation. This emphasizes the need for improved localization, including subtitles and dubbing, to enhance audience understanding.

3. Role of Digital Platforms: Streaming platforms such as Netflix and iQIYI play a crucial role in making Chinese TV series accessible to Thai audiences, acting as key facilitators of cultural exchange. This underscores the growing importance of digital ecosystems in the global dissemination of media content.

4. Impact of Media Policy: China's Belt and Road Initiative and state-supported media strategies have significantly influenced the global reach of Chinese television. These policies



enhance the visibility and quality of Chinese content, highlighting the role of media as a tool for cultural diplomacy.

5. Methodological Contribution: The study's mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews, offers a comprehensive framework for future research on international media reception and cross-cultural communication.

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