

Analysis of Aesthetics and Cognition of Chinese Dance Videos Among Overseas Audiences: A Post-print Study Based on Reaction Video Analysis

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Date: 2023-03-24T00:00:00+00:00

Abstract

A wave of “Guofeng” fervor has emerged, with Guofeng dance videos and variety shows sweeping across the internet. The broadcast of film, television, and variety programs centered on Chinese dance has not only generated enthusiastic responses domestically, but has also garnered significant attention from overseas audiences. Overseas audiences’ understanding of Chinese dance is documented in reaction videos (i.e., “response videos”) uploaded online, capturing their cognition and aesthetic appreciation of Chinese dance. The transmission of symbols between communicators in cross-cultural communication may encounter barriers arising from cultural differences, reflecting multifaceted discussions on topics such as aesthetic culture, East-West divergences, identity construction, and social media memes. This study takes foreigners’ reaction videos to Chinese dance as its research object, combining knowledge graph analysis with textual analysis to explicate from samples, employing categorical coding to distill three interpretations, and theoretically establishing a foundation for their capacity to satisfy overseas audiences, thereby enabling overseas audiences to achieve varying degrees of appreciation and admiration based on their own contextual frameworks.

Full Text

Preamble

Title: An Analysis of Aesthetic Perception and Cognition of Chinese Dance Videos Among Overseas Audiences: Based on Reaction Video Analysis

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Abstract: The “Guofeng” (national style) trend has given rise to numerous domestic film, television, and variety shows centered on Chinese dance, which have not only sparked enthusiastic responses within China but also attracted the attention of overseas audiences who appreciate Chinese cultural elements. These overseas viewers’ understanding of Chinese dance is documented in reaction videos uploaded online, capturing their cognitive and aesthetic responses. However, understandings of Chinese dance differ across contexts, and symbolic transmission in cross-cultural communication creates barriers stemming from cultural differences, reflecting multiple discourses including aesthetic culture, East-West differences, identity construction, and social media memes. This study examines foreigners’ reaction videos to Chinese dance, combining knowledge graph analysis with textual analysis to interpret content pathways. Through categorical coding, three main categories are identified: “visual art,” “cultural misinterpretation,” and “digital imagery,” each theoretically grounded in its capacity to satisfy overseas audiences. Finally, the integration of technology and content yields strategic recommendations for “integrated choreography,” “others’ narratives of dance,” and “immersive dance appreciation,” aiming to tell China’s stories and amplify China’s voice through the medium of Chinese dance.

Keywords: Chinese dance; cross-cultural communication; reaction video; knowledge graph

1. Problem Statement

At the 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, General Secretary Xi Jinping articulated the future direction for China’s cultural work, stating that to achieve the great rejuvenation of Chinese culture, we must “prosper and develop cultural undertakings and industries, and produce more outstanding works that strengthen the people’s spiritual power,” while emphasizing the need to enhance the dissemination and influence of Chinese civilization by “upholding the Chinese cultural stance, distilling and showcasing the spiritual symbols and cultural essence of Chinese civilization, deepening cultural exchanges and mutual learning, and promoting Chinese culture to the world more effectively” [1]. The development of Chinese dance has been nearly synchronous with the birth of New China and constitutes an integral part of China’s magnificent culture. As a physical art form of ethnic culture and a medium for transmitting Chinese culture, Chinese dance plays a pivotal role in historical and cultural inheritance and exchange. Since its inception, Chinese dance has never ceased its external dissemination, and the dance community has continuously held seminars on promoting Chinese culture abroad, such as the ballet version of “The Red Detachment of Women.” As works have evolved from theater performances to film and television, and further to grassroots self-media, Chinese dance artists and scholars have persistently explored ways to overcome cross-cultural communication challenges, including cultural differences and understanding gaps, making the international dissemination of Chinese dance a crucial component of cross-cultural and dance communication research.

With the popularization of new media technologies, the transmission of Chinese dance is no longer confined to theatrical stages. The application of AI, motion capture, and holographic technologies has transformed Chinese dancers into performers in virtual worlds, dancing on digitally constructed stages. This dance imagery has achieved widespread dissemination both domestically and internationally. For instance, the integration of virtual and real scenes in “Dance Through the Millennia” and the use of variable-speed camera techniques in “Dance Storm” have made the narrative content and settings of Chinese dance more immersive and technologically sophisticated, showcasing the technological innovations in Chinese dance communication to the world. Overseas bloggers record their immediate reactions to Chinese dance through reaction videos, embodying the fusion and collision of diverse cultures. These videos serve as important references for investigating the communication effects of Chinese dance videos on overseas audiences’ cognition in cross-cultural contexts.

Reaction videos have emerged as a popular new short-video genre online in recent years, documenting various reactions while watching specific content [2]. They possess remarkable immediacy, participation, interactivity, and feedback, with evaluative content encompassing both cognitive and emotional dimensions, thereby enhancing audience engagement and activity in watching Chinese dance. Since Chinese dance content is temporal in nature, real-time micro-expressions and paralinguistic reactions provide valuable references for future international dissemination of Chinese dance to grasp audience preferences. Simultaneously, reaction video bloggers’ opinions have promotional effects, stimulating viewers’ cognition and aesthetics and arousing their interest in watching the original videos, thereby influencing audience opinion tendencies toward Chinese dance. However, due to cultural differences between East and West, overseas audiences’ appreciation perspectives clearly differ from those of Chinese audiences. An examination of popular foreign reaction videos to Chinese dance reveals that overseas audiences often fail to notice or understand the historical allusions embedded in costume details, the full intended meaning of Chinese dance choreography, and the unique emotions expressed by Chinese dancers.

In light of this, this study employs CiteSpace knowledge graph analysis to map overseas audiences’ attention hotspots and main reaction trends regarding Chinese dance videos from 2020 to the first half of 2022. Based on a detailed reading of classic literature, this research focuses on data collection for overseas audience reaction videos from the perspectives of commonly used elements, research methods, and content in cross-cultural communication studies. The data collection primarily covers the following aspects: (1) What are the micro-expressions of foreign audiences when watching Chinese dance videos? (2) What are overseas audiences’ evaluations of Chinese dance? (3) What types of Chinese dance do overseas audiences prefer? (4) How would they rank their preferences? (5) What are the differences between what bloggers understand about Chinese dance and their own interpretations, and what are the reasons? Through comprehensive analysis from both macro and micro network perspectives, this study aims to grasp the overall communication logic and evolutionary pathways, providing

references for research and practical applications in the cross-cultural communication of Chinese dance.

2. Research Design

2.1 Data Sources

This study selected reaction videos of foreigners watching Chinese dance from major domestic and international video social platforms between January 1, 2020, and November 1, 2022, as the analysis objects. The analysis unit was each video related to Chinese dance. To optimize data coverage and accuracy, this paper utilized logical connectors “or” and “and” to establish a keyword chain related to Chinese dance, totaling five terms. Through combined searches, 136 videos were obtained. After eliminating samples irrelevant to the research theme and duplicate samples of reposted or forwarded content, 83 valid samples were ultimately retained.

2.2 Research Methods and Sample Selection

Knowledge graph analysis, which integrates theories and methods from graph theory and information science, visualizes and serializes literature information, enabling the depiction of dynamic development patterns in a research field and accurately revealing complex relationships between knowledge groups or units. This approach effectively addresses issues such as heavy workload and difficult literature screening in traditional literature analysis, offering scientific, convenient, and comprehensive advantages, and has become a widely used cutting-edge method in bibliometric analysis [3]. Simultaneously, this study utilized the DiVoMiner® platform—a cloud-based data mining platform centered on content analysis that employs machine learning and manual correction coding methods through a human-computer integrated research approach to complete the entire content analysis process online—to conduct text data mining and processing. Building upon this, the study conducted manual analysis and interpretation of data results and key samples, summarizing patterns in how Chinese dance is perceived among overseas audiences.

3. Main Research Results and Analysis

3.1 Overall Research Overview

Video volume on YouTube, Bilibili, and TikTok reflects the popularity of a topic on a given platform, while the types of primary publishing platforms indicate the topic’s focus and main direction . Note: Statistics only include original platform video counts; reposted or forwarded content is not counted.

In terms of video publication volume, relevant videos were primarily published on YouTube and Bilibili, totaling 66 videos. Among them, YouTube had the most related videos (46), accounting for 55.4% of the total and serving as the

main dissemination platform, mostly featuring foreigners who love Chinese culture. Douyin (20 videos) and Bilibili (15 videos) followed, with Douyin being China's primary short-video platform, mostly featuring overseas Chinese inviting foreign friends to film together or foreigners in China filming out of interest, accounting for 18.1% of total videos. Bilibili's promotion of the 2021 Chinese dance variety show "Dance Through the Millennia" led to collaboration with foreigners in China to produce reaction videos on this theme, making it a major dissemination platform, accounting for 24.0% of total videos. Finally, TikTok had only 2 videos, both filmed by foreigners passionate about Chinese culture. This indicates that reaction videos primarily develop on overseas mainstream video social media and domestic youth-oriented long-video platforms, with domestic platforms following the reaction video trend, featuring approximately 18 "foreigner reaction" accounts on Douyin and Bilibili. As China is the birthplace of Chinese dance with abundant video resources, Chinese dance appreciation reaction videos have emerged on social media frequently browsed by foreigners, presenting characteristics of Chinese culture colliding on overseas platforms.

3.2 Keyword Analysis

Keywords represent the condensed essence of content, with their frequency and burst intensity reflecting hot topics and development trends in a given area [4]. Using DiVoMiner software, this study generated a co-occurrence graph of action reaction keywords (Figure 1 [Figure 1: see original paper]) and an evaluation keyword co-occurrence graph (Figure 2 [Figure 2: see original paper]), extracting high-frequency action reaction keywords (Table 2) and high-frequency evaluation keywords (Table 3).

As shown in Figure 1 and Table 2, "appreciation" is the largest node in the action reaction keyword co-occurrence graph for foreigners watching Chinese dance reaction videos, appearing 67 times, followed by "amazement," "curiosity," "fascination," "admiration," and "analysis," each appearing more than 20 times. These keywords represent current hotspots in foreigners' reactions to Chinese dance, primarily involving appreciation and praise for Chinese dance works. In the videos, foreigners rarely exhibit exaggerated reactions, mostly showing quiet appreciation with fixed gazes, occasionally opening their mouths in surprise during brilliant moments. When watching ethnic folk dances such as Xinjiang and Mongolian dances, foreigners often imitate characteristic movements like neck movements and shoulder shakes, and are moved by clear beats and upbeat music.

As shown in Figure 2 and Table 3, "beautiful costumes" is the largest node in the evaluation keyword co-occurrence graph for foreigners' reaction videos to Chinese dance, appearing 43 times, followed by "visual technology," "scene construction," "styling," "music," and "professional difficulty," each appearing more than 22 times. Based on collected real-time reaction texts, costume styling constitutes the primary element of visual art. Chinese dance videos often feature gorgeous costumes, with high coiffures and long sleeves and skirts arousing

curiosity among foreign audiences. Second, Chinese dance styling primarily employs Chinese ink wash colors, with elegance and simplicity being the main impressions conveyed to foreigners. For example, in the video “Only This Green,” the striking use of azurite and malachite green colors from the Chinese painting “A Thousand Li of Rivers and Mountains” leaves foreign audiences curious and imaginative. Finally, technological interactivity is key to Chinese dance becoming reaction video material. Statistics reveal that after 2021, holographic interactive technology penetrated the Chinese dance field, with multi-dimensional, cross-scene dance imagery breaking foreign audiences’ traditional perceptions of Chinese dance. The presentation of the “Dance Through the Millennia” series and Henan TV’s “Tang Palace Banquet” combined real and virtual scenes, facilitating overseas audiences’ understanding of the works’ meanings.

Table 2 Top 10 High-Frequency Keywords Table 3 Top 10 High-Frequency Keywords [4]

By synthesizing reactions from high-view-count reaction videos (>80,000 views) on this theme, and analyzing keyword co-occurrence graphs and burst word analysis results, this study found that filming motivations primarily concentrated on Chinese recommendations and personal interest in Chinese culture. Reaction hotspots focused on costume styling, music rhythm, and visual effects, forming thematic directions such as exquisite technique, difficulty in understanding, and visual splendor when combined with micro-expressions.

3.3 Overseas Audience Aesthetic Cognition Analysis of Chinese Dance Hegemonic Interpretation: Visual Art in Dance Decoding

Hegemonic interpretation manifests as recognition of Chinese dance, representing approval from foreign audiences. Through immediate reactions from foreign bloggers, this study identified two main decoding types: character appreciation and emotional resonance. First, character appreciation concentrates on affirming actors’ appearances, costumes, hairstyles, and color usage, as well as desire to imitate and learn Chinese dance, and even recognition of camera crew techniques. Examples include: “I also want to wear such beautiful skirts, so elegant,” “The girl pretty cute,” “Beautiful,” “I want to learn it,” “It’s hard to imagine how hard it is to dance underwater,” and “The movements and dancers and their outfits were so beautiful, I’m mesmerized every time I watch it and I’ve watched it a lot!” These demonstrate that audiences deeply appreciate the dance itself, showing 认同 and admiration. Second, emotional resonance appears in comments like “Seeing them smile makes me want to smile,” “Falling snowflakes make me feel like I’m entering a deeper state,” and “There’s a feeling of being an intoxicated immortal,” revealing that audiences are unconsciously moved by the dance and achieve emotional resonance. However, while Chinese audiences comment “This work made me cry,” overseas audiences show no similar reactions, indicating that such resonance currently remains at a superficial level for foreign viewers, not yet reaching the soul-level resonance experienced

by Chinese audiences.

Differentiated Interpretation: Cultural Misreading Under Cultural Differences

Differentiated interpretation occurs when audiences decode Chinese dance encoding intentions without understanding the connotative meanings of texts and symbols, presenting opposite interpretations. According to sample data, differentiated interpretation is inevitable due to comprehension abilities shaped by different cultural backgrounds. This is not a rejection of Chinese dance content but rather a form of cultural misreading. For example, when Noel Suonoi, a Spaniard in China, watched “Treading Song,” he mistook a strand of hair hanging down in the actors’ hairstyle as “the wig falling off,” unaware that this seemingly loose strand was intentionally designed by the choreographer to portray feminine charm and allure. Additionally, Chinese dance continues China’s traditional culture, encompassing both ethnic folk characteristics and symbolic elements from Dunhuang culture, opera, and martial arts, with expression and body rhythm being crucial components possessing unique aesthetic requirements. Sample data shows foreigners prioritize costumes, props, expressions, muscles, control, and difficulty, differing from Chinese dance choreography’s narrative purposes. Elements such as 留白 (negative space), 写意 (freehand brushwork), breath, and extension remain unnoticed. Similarly, classic stories, historical backgrounds, and ritual symbols from traditional culture remain blank areas for foreigners understanding Chinese dance. Such culturally-differentiated interpretations, directly presented through reaction videos, provide enlightening insights for mastering cross-cultural communication pathways.

Imaged Interpretation: Understanding and Resonance Under Digital Technology

Holographic filming technology reconstructs the ritual sense of dance scenes through new technological and cultural approaches, providing audiences with realistic presence. Carol Meyrowitz noted in *No Sense of Place* that with the rapid development of electronic media (primarily television), information flow has long broken through physical spaces and fixed locations. Electronic media transitions people from old close-range scenes into broad scenarios spanning time and space, where vivid and concrete content enables faster circulation of universal cultural values, potentially eliminating original regional differences [5]. Following this logic, sample analysis reveals that new technologies reorganize performance environments, forming novel scene systems that enhance Chinese dance’s 观赏性和娱乐性. Second, imaging technology builds bridges for understanding different discourses, with lighting and editing becoming auxiliary languages for Chinese dance narrative, helping audiences comprehend conceptual meanings. For example, in the video “@jeandre reacts to Chinese dancer Tang Shiyi’s performance #dance #reaction,” two overseas bloggers discussed the significance of switching from imagined to real scenes, pondering the narrative meaning conveyed by sudden bright and dark lighting changes. Thus, scene systems under technological advancement form the foundation for overseas au-

diences' satisfaction from Chinese dance videos.

4. Conclusion and Discussion

4.1 Cultural Confidence: Aligning with

Establishing high cultural confidence is the foundation for disseminating Chinese culture. Only by rationally confronting cultural differences can we remain invincible. General Secretary Xi Jinping emphasized that literary and artistic work “should not blindly copy foreign elements; we must establish high cultural confidence” [6]. Currently, Chinese dance remains an “unfamiliar culture” on the world stage, with its reserved and 含蓄 expression inconsistent with overseas direct and passionate cultures—an existing reality. However, Chinese dance originates from China’s great and rich traditional and ethnic cultures, possessing profound connotations and inexhaustible creative materials. Therefore, creators must establish high cultural confidence, which means establishing ethnic confidence, inheriting and 发扬 the spiritual core of Chinese traditional culture. The strong output of Western culture poses severe challenges to China [7], and Western and Japanese-Korean cultures deeply influence Chinese youth. Overseas bloggers’ reaction videos to Chinese dance help enhance cultural confidence among China’s younger generation, primarily through generated self-identification and national identity. Whenever “others” in videos express high praise for Chinese dance, comments like “That’s how good Chinese dance is!” “Our great nation knowing some light-footed skills is normal,” and “This dance moves us because of its 承载的历史/文化/传承, its exposition and understanding of humanity and nature by Chinese civilization, which may be difficult for foreign friends to understand” appear. Therefore, the prerequisite for Chinese dance’s international dissemination is the disseminators’ own high cultural confidence, fully understanding and absorbing their national cultural connotations, deepening recognition of Chinese civilization, and actively discovering, cultivating, and reasonably guiding youth groups to present infectious, creative, and vibrant Chinese dance to the world.

4.2 Content Arrangement: Deepening Styling Features and Innovating World Dance

On the current cultural exchange stage, Chinese, Japanese, and Korean cultures share high similarities. In countries with large contextual differences from China, Chinese culture is easily confused with Japanese and Korean cultures. Combined with different high- and low-context cultures between nations, cultural misreading and cognitive differences are inevitable. Sample data confirms that praise for styling and music becoming the most frequent keywords in overseas bloggers’ reaction videos proves that visual and musical symbols are the most direct elements connecting with audiences in audio-visual works and the symbols most capable of presenting Chinese dance’s cultural characteristics. Therefore, maintaining and intensifying characteristic shaping of costumes and

styling, supplemented with text or movement symbol introductions, aids understanding.

Second, disseminating Chinese dance requires integrating popular cultural symbols and media at home and abroad, updating Chinese dance choreography methods, and strengthening Chinese culture's dissemination. According to sample data, Chinese dance integrating modern and contemporary dance elements is more easily accepted by overseas audiences because Chinese dance's emphasis on "breath" and "rhythm" requires audiences to have certain cultural cultivation backgrounds, making its original meaning difficult to understand and requiring careful consideration. In contrast, modern and contemporary dance styles originate overseas, focusing more on creative concepts, emotions, and strength, aligning better with overseas audiences' dance understanding and cognition. Today, dance scholars have proposed the concept of "Modern Chinese Dance," a choreography approach worth 借鉴 and deepening. Simply put, it involves creatively choreographing Chinese dance through modern understanding, unifying society, art, thought, and emotional environments while embedding profound traditional dance cultural connotations—both inheriting and innovating traditional Chinese dance. "Only This Green" represents this style, and its recognition in international dissemination proves that Modern Chinese Dance is a worthwhile approach. Therefore, when targeting overseas audiences, considering "others" acceptance and integrating common elements is a valuable choreography approach for Chinese dance's cross-cultural communication.

4.3 Audience Orientation: Distinguishing High and Low Context, Skillfully Using

Precise positioning and segmented communication are important methods in cross-cultural communication, also having reference significance for Chinese dance's international dissemination. Edward Twitchell Hall Jr., the proposer of "cross-cultural communication," initially proposed high- and low-context cultural theory in *Beyond Culture*, suggesting that cultures frequently using high-context information are high-context cultures (Eastern cultures), while those using less are low-context cultures (Western cultures) [8]. High-context cultures enjoy direct expression and better understand direct emotions. For example, folk dances like yangko, Mongolian dance, and Uyghur dance express emotions more passionately and directly, with clear musical rhythms and abundant emotional expression, fitting high-context culture audiences' aesthetics. For Eastern cultures, classical dance and Korean dance can combine 委婉 methods to express deeper emotions.

Second, Chinese dance's cross-cultural communication requires "other" narration from a third-person perspective. In videos of British mothers and children watching Chinese dance, young British individuals provide background introductions before reaction videos to facilitate understanding for mothers and audiences. In videos of Chinese and foreign friends watching Spring Festival dance programs together, Chinese individuals supplement information at any

time to help foreign friends understand. This shows that appreciating Chinese dance is challenging and requires comprehension abilities. Therefore, in cross-cultural communication, relying solely on foreigners' individual understanding of Chinese dance poses obstacles, requiring bridges for cultural communication. Through the "third-person identity method," using "bodily presence" to establish interpersonal relationships with foreigners and adopting an "other" stance for Chinese dance cognitive narration can effectively tell China's stories and amplify China's voice [9], timely outputting Chinese culture's characteristics and supplementing differentiated information across different aspects.

4.4 Technology Integration: Extending Scene Boundaries, Creating Immersive Dance Appreciation

Scene 既视感 (visual sensation) provides audiences with the most realistic presence [10]. Dance is not only a communication symbol but also influenced by presentation technology and content construction. In cross-cultural communication, different communication objects, due to their own technological logic and cultural biases, deeply affect content presentation and effects, while modern visual technology can help foreigners understand symbolic meanings. American sociologist Kevin Hogan believed that "interactive scenes formed by media can generate a landscape with shared storylines and 植入 common culture within scenes" [11]. Currently, Chinese dance's international dissemination mostly relies on single or even 唯一 media like theaters and reports, masking Chinese dance's deeper connotations. Advances in holographic and motion capture technologies have transformed Chinese dance videoization from single fixed-camera shots to comprehensive, multi-angle, cross-media presentations of dance concepts, building shared understanding spaces and making viewing experiences more comfortable and comprehension easier. In this study, the combination of stage and virtual scenes in "Tang Palace Banquet" received widespread praise, underwater filming of "Kun" became the most eye-catching dance work, and light switching in "Luoyang Divine Ode" became the "favorite work." Therefore, maintaining technology integration according to different dance concepts, creating diverse, artistic, and immersive dance works, skillfully using multi-media and cross-media communication tools, and cultivating Chinese dance works suitable for growth on overseas video platforms can achieve 传播 effects that are grounded, technologically aided, and heart-touching under different aesthetics at home and abroad.

Note: Figure translations are in progress. See original paper for figures.

Source: ChinaXiv — Machine translation. Verify with original.