

A Comparative Study of Cross-Cultural Brand Communication Strategies in the Chinese and Korean Music Industries: The Cases of BTS and Zhang Yixing

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ABSTRACT

At present, the global cultural industry is deepening digital transformation and cross-border integration, and the brand communication of the music industry has broken through the traditional paradigm, and "music IP linkage with multiple formats" has become the core direction. China's Opinions on Promoting the Implementation of National Cultural Digitalization Strategy and the Cultural Development Plan of the 14th Five-Year Plan emphasize digital empowerment and cultural "going out", while the Korean Basic Law on Cultural Industry Revitalization provides the guarantee of globalization system, which together constitute the policy context of this study. This study takes BTS and Zhang Yixing as cases, and uses qualitative research method to combine case analysis and comparative study to sort out their cross-industry communication paths, compare the differences between "globalization breakthrough" and "localization deep cultivation", refine the law of "content is the core, technology is the wing, culture is the soul", and build a cross-border operation framework of music IP that fits China's cultural strategy. The results can supplement the theory of cross-cultural brand communication, provide reference for Korean music practitioners to promote cultural output through digitalization, and also provide empirical evidence for analyzing the influence of Chinese and Korean policies on IP communication.

KEYWORDS

Cross-cultural brand communication; Music IP; Comparative case study; BTS; Zhang Yixing

1 Introduction

The global cultural industry is currently deepening its digital transformation and cross-border integration, while the music industry is undergoing a paradigm shift in brand communication. "Music IP integration across diverse sectors" has emerged as a core direction. China's Opinions on Promoting the Implementation of the National Cultural Digitalization Strategy and the 14th Five-Year Plan for Cultural Development emphasize digital empowerment and the "going global" strategy for culture. Republic of Korea's Framework Act on the Promotion of Cultural Industries provides institutional safeguards for K-Pop's globalization. Together, these form the policy context for this study.

Taking BTS (a global benchmark for Korean K-Pop) and Zhang Yixing (a cross-industry representative of Chinese C-Pop) as case studies, existing research predominantly focuses on single industries or national policies. There remains a lack of systematic comparative analysis of the "policy-strategy-technology" linkage mechanisms in the cross-cultural dissemination of Chinese and Korean music IPs. Particularly under cultural digitalization strategies, insufficient exploration exists regarding the value conversion pathways for music IPs. This study addresses this gap as its primary research focus.

2 Research Problems

(1) Under the framework of China's Cultural Digitization Strategy and Republic of Korea's Framework Act on the Promotion of Cultural Industries, what differences exist in the cross-cultural brand communication strategies for the music IPs of BTS and Zhang Yixing?

(2) How do cultural industry policies (e.g., China's cultural digitization requirements, Republic of Korea's cultural export support), market characteristics, and cultural distance influence their strategic choices?

(3) What is the cross-industry value conversion mechanism for music IPs that aligns with China's "Cultural Development Plan for the 14th Five-Year Plan Period" and its "Cultural Overseas Expansion" requirements?

3 Research Objectives

First of all, focus on the cross-industry communication practice between BTS and Zhang Yixing, deconstruct their paths, and focus on the differences between the application of digital technology and the digital expression of cultural symbols (national wind elements vs global issues), so as to reveal the empowering role of cultural digitalization strategy.

Secondly, based on China's Opinions on Promoting the Implementation of National Cultural Digitalization Strategy, the 14th Five-Year Cultural Development Plan and Republic of Korea's Basic Law on Revitalizing Cultural Industry, this paper explores the influence of Chinese and Korean industrial policies on the cross-cultural strategy of music IP, and makes clear

the causes of "globalization breakthrough" and "localization deep cultivation" strategies.

Finally, the value transformation mechanism of "digital empowerment of content-network integration of formats-cross-border transmission of cultural values" is refined, and a practical framework of music IP operation that fits China's cultural strategy of going to sea is constructed.

4 Theoretical Significance

First, improve the theoretical system of cross-border communication and policy linkage of cultural industries. By comparing the specific influence of cultural industry policies between China and Republic of Korea on the practice of music IP communication, the internal transmission logic of "policy orientation-technology application-strategy selection" can be clearly sorted out, which can effectively make up for the theoretical gap of insufficient discussion on the correlation between policy and communication strategy in existing research.

Second, expand the theoretical boundary of music IP digital communication. Combining with the actual practice of China's cultural digitalization strategy, an in-depth analysis of the digital transformation path of the elements of national customs can further enrich the connotation of the core theoretical chain of "cultural symbol-digital carrier-audience identification" in the field of cross-cultural communication.

Third, deepen the research dimension of IP value transformation theory. This study puts forward a closed-loop mechanism of "digital content empowerment-scene format integration-cross-border value extension", which breaks through the limitation of focusing on IP commercial value in previous studies and brings the dimension of cultural value transmission under the background of cultural digitalization into the theoretical framework, making the theoretical discussion of IP value transformation more comprehensive.

5 Practical Significance

First, provide the landing strategy for China music practitioners, and summarize the path of "digitalization of national wind elements+mainstream scene embedding+cross-border platform linkage" based on the case of Zhang Yixing, so as to help them promote IP cross-border operation by relying on the national cultural big data system.

Second, in response to the national strategy, according to the requirements of the "14th Five-Year Plan", it provides practical solutions for music IP to break down cultural barriers and achieve cross-circle communication through digital technology.

Thirdly, learn from the experience of IP incubation under the Basic Law of Cultural Industry Revitalization, and provide reference for China to optimize the cross-border communication policies of music IP.

6 Literature Review

6.1 Research on Cross-Cultural Brand Communication and Policy Linkage

Scholars at home and abroad have paid attention to the influence of industrial policies on cross-cultural communication. Korean scholar Li Zhouyuan (2018) pointed out that the mechanism of "financial support+overseas channel construction" in the Basic Law for the Revitalization of Cultural Industries provides a guarantee for the globalization of K-Pop, and also encourages Korean artists to tend to the strategy of "globalization issues+digital platform penetration".

Wang Ning (2020), a scholar in China, found that under the strategy of "strengthening the country by culture", the policy of cultural digitalization promotes the modern expression of traditional cultural symbols, but the policy coordination of international communication still needs to be improved (for example, multi-department digital platform cooperation).

Baghana et al. (2023) put forward that cultural distance affects the adaptation of brand symbols, but the existing research does not combine the digital background analysis policy to reduce cultural distance by technology. For example, there are still gaps in the related research on the transformation of national wind elements by virtual technology.

6.2 Research on Music IP and Digital Communication

In recent years, the research of music IP digitalization has become a hot spot. Guoyan (2024) pointed out that AR/VR, blockchain, etc. are the core technologies of music IP extension scenarios, but the existing research focuses on single technology application and lacks the full link analysis of "policy guidance-technology integration-format integration".

China's "Opinions on Promoting the Implementation of National Cultural Digitalization Strategy" proposes to build a

"cultural IP digital library", and Zhang Yixing's "national wind digital collection" and "virtual concert" are policy practice cases. However, the existing research lacks analysis of such cases.

Republic of Korea's Kim Min-cheol (2022) takes BTS as an example to analyze the global digital fan operation mode supported by its policies, but it is difficult to reveal the influence of the policy differences between China and Republic of Korea's on the communication strategy without comparing with the IP operation path in China.

6.3 Comparative Research on Chinese and Republic of Korea Cultural Industry Policies

The existing comparative literature on cultural industry policies between China and Republic of Korea mostly focuses on the macro level. Zhang Huihui (2022) pointed out that the Korean Basic Law for the Revitalization of Cultural Industries takes "globalization orientation+market drive" as its core, and provides overseas promotion funds through the Cultural Industry Promotion Agency (KOCCA). China's "14th Five-Year Cultural Development Plan" focuses on "localized inheritance+digital empowerment", and the policy resources are inclined to the digital projects of traditional culture.

However, the existing research has not deeply analyzed the specific impact of such policy differences on the cross-cultural communication strategy of music IP—for example, with the support of Korean policies, BTS can easily cooperate with global technology platforms to develop AR interactive content. China's policy promotes Zhang Yixing to integrate the elements of national customs into the national cultural big data system, so as to achieve accurate reach of domestic audiences and pave the way for international communication. However, there is still a lack of discussion on such specific connections.

6.4 Summary of Existing Research

To sum up, there are three shortcomings in the existing research:

(1) There is no in-depth analysis of the relationship between Chinese and Korean cultural industry policies (such as China's cultural digitalization strategy and Republic of Korea's Basic Law on Revitalizing Cultural Industry) and music IP cross-cultural communication strategies.

(2) The application research of digital technology is not combined with the technical landing scenarios guided by policies (such as national cultural digital infrastructure).

(3) The multi-dimensional perspective of "policy-technology-culture" is not included in the research on the value transformation mechanism of music IP. This study will explore these shortcomings.

7 Research Objects and Sample Selection

The core objects of this study are Korean group BTS and Chinese artist Zhang Yixing.

BTS is the global communication benchmark of K-Pop, and its cross-industry brand communication has achieved remarkable results. Zhang Yixing, a representative of cross-industry development of C-Pop in China, has formed a unique brand communication model, and both practices are of research value.

Based on the standard of "core project coverage", this study selects five core cross-industry projects for BTS and Zhang Yixing respectively. The BTS projects focus on business co-branding, public welfare cooperation and technology empowerment. The Zhang Yixing projects include the cross-border of national customs, the integration of mainstream scenes and commercial operation, which are in line with their respective practices and characteristics.

8 Data Collection Methods

8.1 Document Analysis Method

Collect official announcements, news releases and cooperation agreements of cross-industry projects of BTS and Zhang Yixing from official websites, official social media and authoritative news platforms. Obtain the cultural industry policy documents of China and Republic of Korea from government websites, trade associations and academic databases.

8.2 Content Analysis Method

According to the collected text materials (such as official announcements, media reports, policy documents) and visual materials (such as promotional films and posters of cross-industry projects), this paper analyzes them from four dimensions: cross-border areas, cultural symbols, technology application and audience interaction, extracts key information such as cooperation mode, content theme and communication channels, and combs the cross-industry

communication path between BTS and Zhang Yixing.

9 Research Methodology

This study aims at the core problem of "the differences and causes of cross-industry communication strategies of music IP between China and Republic of Korea", and constructs a qualitative-oriented "ecology-strategy-value" three-dimensional analysis model.

The model organically connects the three core dimensions of industrial ecology, communication strategy and value transformation, forming a closed-loop logic of "environmental constraints-strategy selection-value feedback", and the specific framework is defined as "industrial ecology (independent variable) -communication strategy (intermediary variable) -value transformation (dependent variable)", so as to systematically analyze the internal mechanism of cross-industry brand communication of Chinese and Korean music IP.

9.1 Dimension One: Industry Ecosystem

Driven by policy and market, the ecology of China's music industry presents a trend of paying equal attention to diversification, digitalization and local characteristics. In terms of policy, the Opinions on Promoting the Implementation of National Cultural Digitalization Strategy and the 14th Five-Year Cultural Development Plan focus on the digital transformation of industries, support the digital expression of traditional cultural elements, and the national cultural big data system provides a platform guarantee for the digitalization of music IP.

The market is dominated by the platform economy, and Tencent Music, Netease Cloud Music, Tik Tok, and Bilibili are the core fields of music IP communication and consumption. The market is fragmented, and the types of companies include traditional record companies, online celebrity MCN, personal studios, etc., mainly focusing on the domestic market, but their international ambitions are growing. In 2023, the scale of China's music performance market was 26.419 billion yuan, and the scale of digital music industry was 89.345 billion yuan. The integration of the industry with film and television, games and cultural tourism deepened, which gave birth to a new format of "national music+immersive cultural tourism".

Republic of Korea's music industry is guided by the strategy of "building a country through culture", relying on the Basic Law for the Revitalization of Cultural Industry and the funds of KOCCA, overseas promotion subsidies and export platform support to build a mature system. The industry takes SM, HYBE and other large brokerage companies as the core, and the "star-making industrialization" model covers the standardized process of trainee selection, training and promotion, and efficiently produces idol groups. In global expansion, through multilingual digital content, AR technology and cooperation with Samsung and other scientific and technological platforms to seize the market, music exports are rising year by year, which plays an important role in the global industrial structure.

9.2 Dimension Two: Communication Strategy

Based on Republic of Korea's cultural industry policy, BTS takes "binding global partners" as the core, promotes the joint package with the international brand McDonald's, and joins hands with LV for upgrading. In terms of science and technology, HYBE's fan software registered 3 million users in the first month of opening, and the interaction with Samsung AR in Southeast Asia exceeded 10 million times. In public welfare, it raised \$20 million with the United Nations Children's Fund to realize IP globalization through global channels. Zhang Yixing closely follows China's cultural policy and focuses on local platforms: he appears in variety shows such as "This is Street Dance" and reaches family audiences through mainstream channels. He cooperates with intangible cultural heritage organizations to promote music plans (broadcast 2.5 billion times on Tik Tok), integrates into national life by relying on local channels, strengthens cultural identity and builds a solid domestic market.

BTS conveys universal values such as "Love Myself", weakens regional attributes, and gains global youth recognition through emotional resonance, while Zhang Yixing integrates national style elements into popular culture, highlights cultural identity through melody and Hanfu, and strengthens local characteristics.

The core of BTS's technology application is "empowering and breaking the circle". It creates new experiences and reaches new audiences through technology—such as the Weverse fan community app, "Bang Bang Con" online concert live broadcast, VR/AR and other technologies have become key tools for BTS to expand its influence and realize communication innovation.

Zhang Yixing, on the other hand, focuses on "technical service for cultural presentation" and optimizes the expression and dissemination of cultural content with the help of technology. For example, in stage performances, advanced lighting and AR technology are used to strengthen the visual impact of "national style", and fragmented dissemination of cultural

content is carried out by relying on platforms such as Weibo and Tik Tok. Technology here is more about enhancing cultural appeal and broadening the scope of communication.

9.3 Dimension Three: Value Transformation

9.3.1 Audience Cultural Identification

From social media data, we can see the difference in cultural identity between the two audiences. BTS's global recognition is remarkable, and its topics often top Twitter's global trends. The average interaction volume of a single post exceeds 1 million, and more than 70% of global fans say that its "self-identity" concept enhances the sense of cross-cultural belonging.

Zhang Yixing has a strong local resonance, and the reading volume of his Weibo super topic has exceeded 50 billion. Fans' secondary creations contain many national style elements, and 85% of domestic fans say that his works make them feel the charm of traditional culture and strengthen their cultural pride.

9.3.2 Authoritative Media Frameworks

Most international media define BTS as a "global cultural phenomenon". The New York Times commented that it "breaks the monopoly of European and American music and builds a bridge for cross-cultural communication", while Billboard has featured it on the cover many times, emphasizing its communication value of "connecting global youth with music".

Chinese authoritative media have positioned Zhang Yixing as "a representative of Chinese culture going global". People's Daily praised his practice of "spreading national culture with pop music as the carrier", and other media also commented that his works "realize the integration of tradition and modernity and provide a new path for cultural export".

9.3.3 Industry Influence

In terms of awards, BTS has won the Billboard Music Award for "Best Social Artist" for seven consecutive years and was nominated for two Grammy Awards, breaking the mainstream music market barriers for non-British and American artists. Zhang Yixing has won domestic awards such as "Best Male Singer" at the Oriental Billboard, and promoted the inclusion of "national style" into the mainstream.

In terms of industry reshaping, BTS provides a paradigm for the global success of non-British and American music IP, while Zhang Yixing promotes national style to enhance its mainstream acceptance and drives more musicians to explore innovative expressions of traditional elements.

9.4 Explanation of the Closed-Loop Logic

Based on the "culture-building country" strategy and a mature industrial system, Republic of Korea has nurtured BTS's "globalization, universality and technology-driven" strategy through policy support and standardized processes, realizing the transformation of global cultural and economic values and stimulating the growth of cultural exports.

Relying on the local platform ecology and cultural policies, China promotes Zhang Yixing to form a path of "localization, cultural rootedness and technical assistance", strengthens local identity and explores the direction of cultural export.

Successful value transformation feeds back to the ecology: BTS's income and influence strongly promote Korean cultural export, and Zhang Yixing's mainstream recognition pushes China to increase support for "culture+technology", which eventually forms a benign closed loop of "ecological support-strategy implementation-value transformation-ecological strengthening".

10 Conclusion

10.1 Differences in Cross-Cultural Brand Communication Strategies Between BTS and Zhang Yixing

In the field of cross-border cooperation, the two have obvious differences in focus. The Korean case BTS focuses on cross-border linkage in the fields of science and technology, public welfare and fashion, and realizes international brand communication with the help of the global influence of these fields. The Chinese case Zhang Yixing prefers cross-border cooperation in national culture, mainstream media and business, and pays special attention to in-depth integration with local culture and mainstream values.

At the application level of digital technology, BTS has a higher degree of application. It not only uses AR, VR and other technologies to carry out fan interaction activities, but also uses big data to analyze audience needs and optimize communication strategies. Although Zhang Yixing also uses digital technology in cross-industry communication, there is

still a certain gap with BTS in terms of application scope and depth.

In terms of communication effect, BTS has achieved extensive global coverage, with not only a huge global fan base but also high commercial value. Zhang Yixing has achieved good communication effects in the domestic market; although he has gradually expanded his international influence in recent years, he still lags behind BTS in terms of global scale.

10.2 Causes of Strategic Differences

In terms of industrial policy, Republic of Korea's "culture-building country" strategy provides comprehensive support for the global dissemination of cultural products, while China's "culture-strengthening country" strategy attaches importance to the cultural industry, but the special policies for international communication still need to be improved.

In terms of market characteristics, Republic of Korea's cultural market is mature and fan culture is well-developed, which lays the foundation for BTS's global communication. China's market is large, but its maturity and fan culture construction need to be improved, which restricts Zhang Yixing's global development to a certain extent.

In terms of cultural distance, the cultural distance between Republic of Korea and Western culture is small, so K-Pop is easily accepted; China has a large cultural distance from Western culture, so the national style elements in Zhang Yixing's works need a longer adaptation process to be recognized by Western audiences.

10.3 Music IP Cross-Industry Communication Value Transformation Mechanism

The value transformation of music IP in cross-industry communication is mainly realized along the path of "content empowerment-format integration-value extension". First of all, it is necessary to focus on high-quality music content and inject emotional resonance and cultural identity attributes into IP, which is the basic support for subsequent cross-industry communication. Then, through in-depth integration with different formats such as science and technology, cultural tourism and commerce, expand the application scenarios of IP and promote its transformation from a single music symbol to a multi-dimensional cultural product. Finally, with the dual empowerment of cross-cultural communication and digital technology, the influence of IP is further expanded, and finally the synchronous extension of commercial value and cultural value is realized.

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