Research on the Enlightenment of Japanese Animation Culture Communication Strategy to the Development of Chinese Animation Industry from the Perspective of International Communication

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Abstract. The importance of cultural soft power is gradually increasing in today's world. Animation has become an important commodity carrying culture with its bright emotional appeal and aesthetic value. In recent years, the international influence of Chinese animation is on the rise, but there is still a gap between China and anime giants such as United States and Japan. This article focuses on the purpose of "going out" of Chinese animation, and analyzes the success and popularity of Japanese animation. Under the policy of "animation diplomacy" of the Japanese government, Japanese animation has built a complete industrial chain and diversified means of communication. At the same time, Japanese animation itself embodies the universal cultural value. The classification system of animation also helps it select its audience, which has important research significance in the process of cross-cultural communication. Based on this, this paper puts forward some suggestions on improving the cultural industry system, introducing animation classification and expanding the selection of animation themes for the international communication of Chinese animation.

Keywords: Animation; International Communication; Japan; Animation Diplomacy.

1   Introduction

As a new popular cultural carrier, animation has been deeply loved by people in different countries in recent years. In the process of globalization today, comprehensive national strength and cultural soft power have gradually become the new standard for competition between countries. From the perspective of international communication, animation products are also popular among different groups in different countries through various channels, across the differences in language and culture, and become an important way of cultural exchange.

The report of the 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China and the "14th Five-Year" cultural development plan have both pointed out the importance of

improving the influence of Chinese culture, and the "going out" of Chinese culture has become the focus of international communication of cultural industry at present. As a highly expressive and infectious product, animation is more likely to be popular among different regions. In order to serve the strategic goal of "going out" of culture, Chinese animation has also been supported year by year, and has made great progress in both quantity and quality, enhancing the leadership of Chinese culture on the international stage.

However, there is still a certain gap between the achievements in the field of Chinese animation and those of traditional animation powers. From the data statistics from 2006 to 2016, the import dependency of Chinese animation is more than 100%, while the export dependency is less than 50% on average[1]. Compared with the narrative dilemma of Chinese animation, the Japanese animation industry has maintained a leading position for decades since the 1960s. Its market share has continued to grow in the decade after 2010 and reached a new high in the overseas market in 2021[2].

The international popularity of Japanese animation has greatly enhanced Japan's cultural influence and international image while creating economic value. Animation as a cultural carrier has successfully realized the export of Japanese national culture, strengthened cultural soft power and promoted international exchanges, which is a successful case of international communication across national boundaries through mass media.

Among them, the development process of Japanese animation relies on the support of national policies and communication strategies suitable for foreign markets. Therefore, in the perspective of international communication, this paper examines Japan's "Animation Diplomacy" strategies and means from the strategic and cultural levels, analyzing the cross-cultural communication characteristics of the Japanese animation industry, in order to provide reference for domestic animation to further go global.

2 Output Strategy Under the "Animation Diplomacy" Policy

Since the 1970s, the social focus of Japan has shifted from political orientation to cultural orientation. Hence, Japanese Foreign Minister Masayoshi Ohira listed "cultural diplomacy" as one of the priorities of foreign policy in 1973[3]. Cultural diplomacy is a soft power tool and an element of public diplomacy used to showcase and promote one's own culture to other countries and to create a reliable environment for cooperation in international affairs[4]. In the 21st century, the "Content Business Revitalization Policy" released in 2004 established the policy of increasing Japan's international soft power through cultural commodities led by animation, thus Japanese animation was included in the international market and received extensive policy support. After Japanese animation was nationalized, "Animation Diplomacy" became a means for the Japanese government to pursue political and economic values[5]. Therefore, Japan has also built corresponding countermeasures for the goal of making animation go global.

2.1   Policy Overview and Industrial Structure

The cultural concept of "Anime Diplomacy" comes from Japanese Foreign Minister Taro Aso's speech "New Ideas of Cultural Diplomacy" in 2006, in which he proposed that Japan should vigorously promote the training of animation talents and actively promote animation overseas. Aso's speech made it clear to carry out "soft diplomacy" with animation as the carrier, and the use of cultural soft power has become Japan's diplomatic strategic orientation. The content of Japanese cultural exports has become increasingly specific, and anime which include manga, animation, derivative games, and other forms has been given more and more important political responsibilities[6]. In short, animation diplomacy is a way to establish Japan's international image, guide public opinion and promote public diplomacy by taking cultural export as an important diplomatic strategy[7].

Under his advocacy, Japanese politicians used many resources to provide supportive policies for the development of the Japanese animation industry. The implementation of anime diplomacy is led by the Cabinet Secretary and coordinated by several government departments, while the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' popular culture diplomacy plays a major role. Initiatives implemented by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs include the creation of an "International Manga Award", the appointment of "animation cultural ambassadors" and "pop culture messengers", and the holding of the "World Anime Cosplay Summit". In addition, Japan's animation diplomacy has received support from many fields, from the prime minister down to private enterprises and Japanese academics. The government promulgated policies and invested funds to provide an environment suitable for the development of animation; The academic community is responsible for theoretical research and personnel training to help the industry better control market development; The industry will return part of the funds to the academic community[8]. Overall, multi-party cooperation serves the ultimate goal of animation diplomacy.

Thanks to the implementation of the animation foreign policy, the Japanese animation industry has a good foundation for development and prospects, thus obtaining a variety of opportunities to ensure the export.

Today, the Japanese animation industry chain has been perfect. The quite mature chain construction has promoted the animation works to spread to the market with excellent strength. There are various nodes in the Japanese animation industry chain, including but not limited to TV stations, publishing houses, advertising agencies, animation production companies, toy companies, and so on. Animation planning and production belong to different organizations, usually funded by the donor to commission the animation production agency, then set up a production committee to coordinate the contact between the parties. Different institutions participating in the industrial chain jointly support the production process of animation, while sharing inherent risks, reducing the loss of manpower and property in the case of failure such as ending in the middle for some reason. With the support of sufficient capital and technology, the animation works that are finally presented are subject to careful supervision, and often appear as high-quality works with dynamic fluency and beautiful pictures. The quality of the work itself is the primary condition for cross-cultural communication.

After the animation is completed, in addition to the broadcast income of TV stations and cinemas, it also adds immeasurable potential derivative value. The IP of animation has increased the profitability of copyright holders. The fan economy attached to animation IP has intensified the introduction and value-added of animation peripheral products. The surrounding categories involved cover from decorative goods such as acrylic stand and badge to living goods including branded clothing, cosmetics and even car vehicles. The product itself and additional products together play an important role in the process of Japanese animation going overseas.

Japanese animation has a huge scale advantage that 60% of the global animation market comes from Japan[9]. The numerical advantage has laid the tone of its animation power. Under the economy of scale, overseas countries have purchased a large number of animation products, which also makes Japanese animation works can be sold at a lower price and easier to occupy the market. In the face of the low purchasing power of developing countries, the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs used 2.4 billion yen of cultural assistance funds in 2005 to purchase animation Copyrights and put them in developing countries for free use by television stations. This move once again solidified the spread of Japanese anime in third world countries.

With the help of policies, the Japanese animation industry has obtained a large number of opportunities to spread overseas by virtue of its quality and quantity advantages.

2.2   Innovative Communication Methods and Practices

The mobile Internet has broken the boundaries of time and space in traditional animation broadcasting methods. Japanese animation has also obtained a larger number of views and comments with the help of the vast new media communication platform. Japanese animation has introduced many overseas websites in the way of transmission, so that local users can learn about Japanese animation products through common platforms. Bilibili, the Chinese largest anime streaming platform, has a separate section for "Japan" under its animation category, where the most streamed anime works reach 1 billion times. Sites such as Crunchroll in the United States and Wakanim in France also include extensive anime information. Japan's local website ANIMAX is supported by Toei Animation, Sunrise, TMS Entertainment, etc., and has covered Africa, America, Asia, Europe, and Australia in different forms, becoming an exclusive animation broadcasting platform.

Japan has also promoted its own anime products through a number of activities, many of which have received official support. For example, Tokyo International Animation Fair, referred to as TAF, is an international animation expo jointly promoted by the Tokyo city government and related animation companies. It is held at the end of March every year, and currently exists as the world's largest animation exhibition. In addition to large-scale exhibitions, Japanese animation IP also plays a role in linkage promotion through cross-field cooperation with different brand products. The co-branding of animation images and other brands integrates animation IP into the daily life of the masses, increases its sensitivity to animation characters to create potential users. Moreover, it also attracts animation fans, so that the sales of co-branded goods increase, achieving a win-win effect. At the beginning of 2024, the joint products of Chinese

milk tea brand LELECHA and Japanese anime *Jujutsu Kaisen* were sold out in online and offline stores. It can be seen that suitable joint activities show a trend of short supply in the market, and the penetration of animation culture into daily life should not be underestimated.

In conclusion, Japanese animation uses different communication channels to promote the development of Japanese culture in foreign countries from the level of government and market.

3   Cross-cultural communication Strategies of Japanese Animation

Cross-cultural communication mainly refers to the behavior of information transmission among groups with different cultural backgrounds. From the perspective of cultural context, some cultural phenomena are placed under the same context to eliminate cultural differences to achieve value identification, and cultural identification ultimately supports political legitimacy[10]. The process of spreading Japanese animation across national borders means that domestic cultural commodities need to be successfully accepted by overseas audiences across cultural barriers. Once animation works are created and disseminated, they are inevitably deconstructed and reconstructed by audiences and readers with their initiative, thus deepening the meaning they carry. The cultural characteristics of Japanese animation itself is also an important reason for its success in breaking cultural barriers. Therefore, exploring the cross-cultural communication strategy of Japanese anime under the cultural attribute can better deepen the understanding of its international communication process.

3.1   Decentralized Cultural Strategy

Different regional cultures are bound to lead to differences in world outlook and values among different nations. The key point of cross-cultural communication lies in the audience's unconscious recognition of the cultural connotation carried by the commodity. Cultural centralism refers to the tendency to focus on one's own culture and judge other cultures by their own cultural values[11]. The decentralized communication strategy is bound to break the concept of exclusion between cultures and make it easier for them to enter the market of other countries.

The first step of decentralization is to choose the topic, and the core of Japanese animation focuses on showing the commonality and universality of human culture. This presentation weakens the inherent differences of different cultural backgrounds, and extracts the harmonious and unified values as the thesis of the work. Japanese animation is good at presenting the widely praised goodness and gentleness in human nature, giving the audience a soothing effect of spiritual healing. For instance, the series of animation works of Makoto Shinkai which are popular overseas, highlight the warmth and sincerity of people, arouse the resonance of the audience by depicting the valuable feelings of teenagers and girls. Under the global value perception, many Japanese anime consumers regarded Japanese anime as their "enlightenment" which led them to a "new

world with stunning imagination and profound self-reflection significance"[12]. on the other hand, Japanese animation continues to integrate the unique customs of its own nation into animation production. It does not forget to add loyalty, benevolence and justice to the value orientation with the great and national style in animation works, so as to publicize its own ideology. The rendering of "Bushido" in the feature-length animation *GINTAMA* is a great manifestation. In addition, other aesthetic orientations such as the *wabi-sabi* is relatively weakened, reducing the cultural barriers in the process of international transmission.

Another manifestation of Japanese animation works' decentralization is to carry out cultural pluralism and present the local customs of different regions together in the works. It abandons the color of a single nation state, and takes the initiative to integrate exotic feelings into the works and export them overseas. This can not only arouse the affinity of overseas audiences to their own culture and eliminate their strangeness to foreign cultures, but also make the coverage of themes more extensive and increase the different possibilities of story line development. *Heidi——a Girl of the Alps* is one of the representative works of Japanese animation master Takahata Isao. It is adapted from the Swiss novel "*Heidi*" series and is still played in relevant scenic spots in Switzerland [13]. *Hetalia world stars* is a typical example of different cultures blooming in one work. The works cover dozens of countries from all continents around the world, and get close to human life by personifying them, showing the unique customs of each country and replacing regional diet, living habits and national character into the national mock body, arousing the audience's thirst for knowledge of other cultures. Such works emphasize the cosmopolitanism of world cultures and the need for cultural coexistence in the development of cultural diversity. Finally, it transcends monoculture and builds cross-cultural identity.

3.2   Reasonable Audience Rating System

Japanese animation also carries out a more detailed division of the audience, in order to distinguish the works for children, adolescents and adults, in line with the cognitive level and psychological development of people of different ages. Japanese films are classified into four categories: general, P-G-12, R-15, and R-18[14]. The stratification of the target audience is very necessary in the field of animation. Animation is essentially a form of artistic expression for all ages. The images for the younger age groups are often dominated by simple images, rich colors and concise plots. With the continuous improvement of production technology, animation has the strength to create aesthetic value for adult groups with its extraordinary spatial construction ability. When the connotation of animation is profound enough, the classification of audience levels is more conducive to the formation of a corresponding reading mode, and only when it is put into different markets can it meet the corresponding market demand and facilitate the selection and appreciation of overseas people.

To sum up, the success and popularity of Japanese anime is also attributed to the cultural core content of and the audience rating system of anime works.

4   Enlightenment of Japanese Animation Communication Experience to China's Animation Industry

According to the above characteristics of Japanese animation in the international communication, this paper puts forward some suggestions for the dissemination of national cartoons.

4.1   Improving the Cultural Diplomacy System and Industrial Support

At present, the Japanese government regards the advantages established in the field of animation as one of the means to improve Japan's international image. The government has also issued a series of policies to actively promote the overseas dissemination of modern Japanese pop culture. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs provides many opportunities to promote popular culture, such as the establishment of the Ministry of Propaganda and Cultural Exchange, which is formed by the merger of cultural propaganda and foreign exchange, and is committed to promoting public diplomacy from a strategic level[5]. The International Manga Awards established by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs have also greatly promoted the exchange of popular culture around the world using Japan as a platform. In addition, the cooperation between the International Foundation and the Ministry of Education has also improved Japan's international image and won the trust of the international community.

China should also start from the system, enhance the importance of animation in both economic and political aspects, and set up special institutions for cultural industry, so as to promote cultural exchanges with foreign countries. In this regard, it is necessary to note the correlation within the animation industry, and set common development goals among institutions. Building a cooperative community can avoid independent development in the market to intensify competition. All nodes in the Japanese animation industry chain share market risks to promote the overall progress of animation. While China has established a long-term cultural management mechanism and formed a mature animation industry chain to cause economic benefits, relevant departments should introduce corresponding cultural exchange policies to support industrial development and enhance the discourse power of Chinese culture on the world stage.

4.2   Establishing an Animation Rating System in Line with International Standards

The broadcast of animation needs to select its audience, so as to meet the psychological safety of teenagers' growth and development.

In order to improve the youth group, Chinese animation products have been subjected to strict audit. As a result, foreign animation works are often edited or blurred after being introduced into China through legitimate channels. The endless deletion of genuine animation is not conducive to the audience's perception, and the viewing rights obtained from the channels that respect the copyright may gain a poor experience. Furthermore, Chinese animation also more or less to avoid the positive portrayal of some

bloody scenes, have to cut the picture or use other obscure depiction to pass the audit system. To some extent, such actions make the animation lost part of the expressive force, weakening the impact. As for the import of animation, the decrease in the number of broadcasts of legitimate works is not beneficial to the exchange and mutual learning with foreign cultural goods. On the export level, the Chinese animation works are limited and the creativity is insufficient.

Japan, France and other countries have implemented age classification of animation works. The introduction of the animation rating system is a way to maintain creative freedom in the field of animation. Animation production can jump out of the restrictions for the public, from the public reading group image subdivided into different groups, which is more conducive to the production according to the preference of the target portrait. What's more, the animation picture, dubbing, soundtrack will also be improved due to the clarity of the goal, and the overall presentation is more high-quality.

This system has helped Chinese animation manufacturers understand market dynamics, balance demand, and explore a wider audience, mining the adult elements of animation from the content and making animation more thoughtful.

4.3   Diversity of Creativity and Subject Matter

Chinese animation can also be further expanded in the choice of subject matter and expression methods. Thanks to the long history of China's ancient civilization, many Chinese animation choose fantasy themes with Chinese elements as the story background, and a great number of them are adapted from mythological plots. However, pure Chinese elements often encounter some resistance in the process of being popular overseas. Cultural differences make overseas audiences unable to understand the original story and painting details, so the charm of exotic scenes is hindered to a certain extent. Two popular animation works in recent years, *White Snake 2: Green Snake* and *New Gods: Nezha Reborn*, have earned a global box office of 76 million US dollars and 56.088 million US dollars respectively. After their release in the Chinese mainland, the two were also released overseas, while *New Gods: Nezha Reborn* earned only 57,000 US dollars overseas, and the overseas spread of *White Snake 2: Green Snake*: Capture is even weaker[15]. This phenomenon also reflects the limited acceptance of other cultures by overseas audiences.

In order to better "going out", Chinese animation can tend to choose more universal themes. For example, Makoto Shingai series' portrayal of youth and Hayao Miyazaki series' presentation of the truth, kindness and beauty of human nature reveal the commonality of human culture. Both of them have won sufficient support in the international market. According to Cat's eye application, the global box office of *Suzume* has reached 286 million US dollars and *Spirited Away* earned $347 million.

Chinese animation can also expand the source of subject matter. In the theme selection from multiple angles, such as reasoning, travel, food, science, literature, and so on. These fields are relatively weak of Chinese animation. The number of related animation works is small and the well-known IP is lack. There still have a lot of gaps worth digging.

In addition, Chinese animations can also properly integrate foreign cultures and add elements of exotic colors into the creation. There are a large number of works involving western fantasy background in Japanese anime, such as *Wandering Witch: The Journey of Elaina* and *Frieren: Beyond Journey's End.* The combination of eastern and western cultures has brought a new impact, making the works more interesting, but also triggered a sense of familiarity with overseas audiences and enhanced cultural tolerance.

5   Summary

The international communication of animation works has a practical significance that cannot be ignored in today's world. The popularity of Japanese anime in the world provides a realistic and intuitive case for this kind of research. From the perspective of international communication, with the purpose of "going out" of Chinese animation, this paper first analyzes the communication advantages of Japanese animation with the support of national policies. The animation industry with a large number of policy supports has formed a complete development chain and been able to practice many new communication means, connecting different social classes from the prime minister to the common people. Then it summarizes the cultural strategy and classification system of Japanese animation. Based on the analysis results, this paper believes that the overseas communication of Chinese animation can learn from the excellent process of Japanese animation communication. In the following part, it puts forward suggestions to improve the relevant system of cultural industry, introduce the animation rating system, and increase the selection of material content. In the future, with the needs of the process of economic globalization, Chinese culture will also be more actively exported to overseas markets with the help of animation and other carriers to enhance China's power in the international community.

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