

Research on the Spread and Influence of Japanese Hot-blooded Animation in Mainland China——Taking *Demon Slayer* as an example

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ABSTRACT

Under the background of the rapid development of the Internet information age and subculture, hot-blooded animation achieves excellent cross-cultural communication in China and is well-loved. This article will take *Demon Slayer* as an example for case analysis, use the theory of use and satisfaction and the theory of 5W model, analyze the cultural communication content, audience and cultural industry of Japanese hot-blooded animation, and analyze the cultural content of Chinese animation. Through further comparative research, the path and method of cross-cultural communication are obtained.

Keywords: *Demon Slayer*, Cross-cultural communication, Anime, Culture Industry

1. Research background

Subculture, also known as collective culture and subculture, refers to the unique concepts and lifestyles of a certain region or a certain collective under the background of the main culture or comprehensive culture. [1]As a subculture loved by young people, Japanese manga has received extensive attention since its birth and has been loved by the public in the subsequent development. In today's era of rapid Internet development, many cultures and things began to spread based on the Internet, which promoted the further spread of culture on a large scale. With the development of cultural globalization, cross-cultural communication began to flow between countries. Animation has caught the limelight of the Internet in a cross-cultural context. With the continuous change and update of science and technology, the media has changed from newspapers, magazines and books to television and then to the Internet today. The form and content of comics have also changed and been affected.

At the beginning of the 21st century, when it comes to the Japanese kingly youth hot-blooded anime, people will think of the three classic animes, *Naruto*, *One Piece*, and *Bleach*. It lasted for 8 years, laying the foundation for the vigorous development of animation in the future. Since then, Japanese hot-blooded anime has shown a "patterned" fatigue, and it has been difficult

to surpass these works for more than a decade. Until 2016, *Demon Slayer* was serialized on Shueisha's *Weekly Shonen Jump*, and then adapted into an anime with the same name in 2019.

Demon Slayer due to its hot-blooded, exquisite story, vivid characters and rich plot, it quickly emerged as a "social phenomenon-level animation", which not only set off a frenzy in Japan, but also aroused heated discussion on a global scale. Under the leadership of *Demon Slayer* as of February 25, 2021, the size of the Japanese manga market reached 612.6 billion yen, a record high since statistics were available in 1978. [2] The author Gotouge Koyoharu was selected into the *Times* 100 people list [3], becoming one of the 100 most influential people in the world, and Japanese hot-blooded animation has once again been promoted to the public's focus.

In China, *Demon Slayer* is also a hot comic and has been loved by subcultural groups. As of March 10, 2021, *Demon Slayer* has 630 million views, 3.132 million coin-operated, and 427,000 forwarding volume, 364,000 people scored a high score of 9.8. There were 102,000 subscriptions to related topics at Bilibili, which resulted in 93,000 fan-made videos, with 1.57 billion views. [4]

Throughout the history of Japan's passionate animation development, under the influence of cross-

cultural communication, in addition to Japanese people's enthusiasm for animation, animation has also deeply influenced a large number of young people in China in the 1990s and after the 00s, and the subculture formed The group is huge, and at the same time, its accompanying animation and peripheral industries have promoted the further development of the manufacturing industry and produced joint economic benefits.

Therefore, studying the cultural communication and its effect of Japanese hot-blooded animation in China can help us better understand the cross-cultural communication mode and communication effect. This article will take Demon Slayer as a case to analyze and explore the success and cultural value of Japanese hot-blooded animation communication through the analysis of the cultural content, audience, industry and effects of Japanese hot-blooded animation.

2. CULTURAL COMMUNICATION CONTENT AND AUDIENCE ANALYSIS

2.1. Communication content

Demon Slayer tells the story of the Taisho period in Japan. It is said that after the sun goes down, demon haunt and eat people, and Demon slaying corps kill demon to protect people. The ordinary life of the charcoal boy Tanjiro changed drastically after the snowy night when his family was attacked by demon. His mother and four younger siblings were killed, and Nezuko, the only surviving sister, turned into a demon. In order to turn his sister Nezuko back into human beings, to crush the demon who killed his family, and to cut the chains of sadness, under the guidance of the ghost hunters, Tanjirou, who aspires to become a ghost hunter, and a ghost who is still sensible Nezuko embarked on a journey, and the battle between the boy and the ghost never stopped. [5]On the basis of continuation of Japanese traditional hot-blooded animation, this content adds many new elements to it, making the content no longer monotonous and poor.

Through semiotic theory analysis, it can be seen that Demon Slayer contains a large number of cultural symbols with symbolic significance, among which the most distinctive feature is the haori of different colors on the members of the Demon slaying corps. Haori, as a distinctive symbol, can very well represent Japanese culture. It is a Japanese kimono jacket used for cold protection and decoration. The Taisho period of style change is exactly the period of intense collision between western clothes and kimono. "A haori on the outside of the Western-style student uniform was popular in the Taisho period. The villain "Demon" in "Demon Slayer" also contains a large number of ghost elements in history and culture, such as Fei Tou Man, the legendary long-necked monster, which originated from the Chinese writer Gan Bao's Sou Shen Ji, and Great tengu

and Hannya are ghosts from traditional Japanese mythology.

On the other hand, the animated version of Demon Slayer found the "Ufotable" for adaptation, and the excellent production team laid the foundation for it to become a "popular". This hot-blooded anime uses ancient overhead elements to establish a brand-new imaginary world. The protagonists' breathing methods with distinctive characteristics are a very unique combat system. Ufotable uses the style of Japanese Ukiyo-e to express Tanjiro's "breath of water", giving the audience a sense of visual impact that breaks through the two-dimensional plane. At the same time, it uses string music as a base and integrates Japanese folk music. It is revealed in the form of ethereal vocal singing and symphony's vigorous atmosphere, which fits the background of the modern and modern overhead world of ghosts, and also reveals Tanjirou's gentleness and strength. This seemingly contradictory but harmonious way of expression is just like Ruth Benedict's *Chrysanthemum and Sword* used the "chrysanthemum" which represents the pattern of the Japanese imperial family and the "sword" which symbolizes the identity of the samurai. [6] As a set of contrasting contradictory images, this animation also embodies the contradictory and non-contradictory gentleness and strength of the protagonist from all aspects and is loved by people.

2.2. Audience analysis

In the current era of rapid economic development, people are independent from the family model or family model in the traditional society, and they are constantly migrating from one city to another along with the change of personal working places. In the individual atomic age, family relations are no longer like the traditional society is so closely stable, more communication between people through the Internet. People's self-awareness becomes stronger, they tend to think that they are unique, and they want to highlight and develop their own personality. Therefore, young people are more pursuing pop culture and subculture, immersing in their own spiritual world, and reducing the social interaction with relatives and friends in the real society. As discussed in Shirley Turkle's book *Group Loneliness*, while information technology brings convenience to people's lives, it also weakens the relationship between people. [7] From a formal point of view People seem to be more relaxed and closer, but in reality they are more anxious and lonely.

According to the latest data from the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare of Japan, the number of suicides in 2020 was as high as 20,919, the first increase since the 2009 financial crisis. The data showed that 311 young people under the age of 20 committed suicide, an increase of 44%, and another 837 20 Suicides among multi-year-olds have risen by 32%. [8] In addition to

social failure caused by the epidemic and economic pressures such as unemployment, some mentally exhausted parents may ignore their children's negative emotional signs, fail to pay enough attention to their problems, and may even transfer their pressure to their children, leading to young people. The suicide rate is increasing year by year.

The purpose of people contacting the media is to meet their specific needs. Psychological emptiness and dissatisfaction have led to the endless enthusiasm of Japanese enthusiastic teenagers. Young people stay at home all the year round and do not communicate with the outside world. They pin their desire for friends and family affection on the protagonist of the hot-blooded young man, just like the protagonist Tanjirou of Demon Slayer always has several like-minded partners around him. The audience also hopes to meet their psychological needs by watching anime. Secondly, Japanese society has an atmosphere of "mourning culture". They place their passion for life on the protagonists of hot-blooded anime, watching their progressive struggle to inspire themselves who are tired of work and life in reality, and at the same time they play a role in regulating entertainment. The relaxing effect can forget the pain of reality in a short time.

2.3. Mental core

The spiritual core to be discussed in Demon Slayer is no longer limited to the expression of friendship and youth in the traditional Japanese kingly manga. The story takes place in a cruel world, where demon are rampant and cannibalism. In such a cruel world view, it is easy to reflect the elements of family affection, sadness and death. Tanjiro said: "I want to protect those lives, and never let unreasonable unilateral plundering happen again, and never let any human body experience the same sorrow as us." (Demon Slayer, 2020) This kind of fearlessness of the spirit allows the audience to better understand the spiritual core of Demon Slayer. It can be said that the interaction between the excellent adaptation and production, the exquisite characterization and the excellent spiritual core allows the audience to feel the excellence of Demon Slayer from different angles, let this anime shine in a short time.

3. Cultural industry analysis

3.1. Cultural industry positioning

The cultural industry is the first concept used by Adorno and Horkheimer in the book *Dialectics of Enlightenment*. [9] As a special cultural form and a special economic form, the main activity is the production and provision of spiritual products. To meet people's cultural needs as the goal, refers to the creation and sale of cultural significance itself. Among them, the

animation industry, as a branch, takes "creative" as the core, and takes animation and comics as the main forms of expression. It includes the development of direct animation products, such as cartoons, comics, movies, and new types of animation based on modern information dissemination techniques. Production, publishing and sales, as well as the production and operation of derivative products such as clothing, toys, and electronic games related to cartoon images. The popularity of Demon Slayer has made the characters in the animation widely circulated, and a series of image figures, character special badges and manga booklets have been produced as a kind of animation cultural products.

3.2. Cultural industry audience analysis

Chinese society is very similar to Japan because they are both in the Greater East Asian cultural circle. With the implementation of the "996" work system and the country's policy of delaying retirement, coupled with the prevalence of singleism and unmarried, the status quo of young people is very similar to that of Japan. Compared with going out, young people are more willing to stay at home to communicate through the Internet or watch anime to kill time.

In terms of the industry's audience positioning, the Japanese animation industry has been well developed. However, the domestic animation market is still showing a phenomenon of "younger age of audience". Chinese animation lacks high-quality IP, insufficient content appeal, and lack of cultural connotation. It still stays at the level of thinking that the audience of animation works are young children. A large number of domestic animation will be younger and younger. Children without spending power are the target group. In fact, the main force of consumption of animation in my country is concentrated in the 19-24 year-old youth group. As a young group with a mature aesthetic level and stable consumption ability, when there are no outstanding animation works in China, they have turned their attention to Japanese animation works. The emptiness of the domestic market in China made Demon Slayer quickly aroused widespread attention as soon as it was launched, and became the first comprehensive list of animation works of the year.

3.3. IP industry chain

In addition, Demon Slayer itself, as a mature big IP, has derived a series of peripheral industries such as physical figures, badge pendants, music, mobile games, and theatrical version. Bilibili's member purchase section has been selling animation peripheral products. Bilibili's love value is that users generate "love" through shopping, wanting, commenting, posting, and subscribing to IP, and the user himself contributes a

specific amount of love to the character. The love equivalent value received becomes the love value of the character or IP. The section of Demon Slayer has 146,000 subscriptions, and a total of 12.298 million love points. The character Shinobu surpasses the second place with 33.515 million love points. Nezuko has more than 10 million love points on the role guard list. In the first place, a single person contributes a love value of 9.505 million. Netease Games also took advantage of the popularity of Demon Slayer and announced at the NetEase 520 game press conference that the mobile game "Onmyoji: Baiwen Brand" will cooperate with the super popular Japanese teenager manga Demon Slayer.

The Demon Slayer : Blade Theater Edition Wireless Train, which was released on October 16, 2020, was a hit at the box office as soon as it was released. According to the official Twitter of "Blade of Ghost Slayer" on 2020.11.30, it was announced that the theater version of "Blade of Ghost Slayer: Infinite Train" was released for 45 days. A total of 20,532,177 people watched the movie, and the box office revenue was 27,512,438,050 yen. [10]In the future, the theatrical version is expected to be on the Chinese mainland, so it has always been expected by Chinese audiences.

4. CONTENT ANALYSIS OF CHINESE ANIMATION AND CULTURAL INDUSTRY

4.1. The development and status quo of Chinese animation

The Chinese animation industry started in Danaohuashi in 1926 with the dubbing of the three Wan brothers under the guidance of Wan Guchan. It is considered to be China's first animation work. Afterwards, China Animation has left a strong mark in the history of world animation with a series of unique national colors, rich cultural connotations and well-made films such as Iron Fan Princess, Little Tadpoles Finding Mother, and Breaking Out in Heaven. Since the 1960s, Chinese animation has entered a period of depression.

Nowadays, with the trend of global cultural integration, Chinese animation has begun to reorganize its own market and absorb talents extensively. Coupled with the emergence of new media under the Internet, the spread of new media is faster and wider, and China's animation industry has made a huge leap from comics to animations to animation movies. In 2015, the explosion of The Return of the Great Sage ignited a new era of Chinese animation movies, followed by Big Fish and Begonia, White Snake: Origin and Nezha: The Devil Boy exceeded 5 billion box office for audiences to watch. Now the Chinese animation is on the rise. On Bilibili, domestically produced original dramas such as

Fox Fairy Little Matchmaker, Under One Person, Assassin Wu liu qi and other domestically produced original dramas have also attracted widespread attention and heated discussions. The subject matter is more diverse, from the family category to the popular science category to the ghost and legend category, making China's animation industry usher in new opportunities and challenges.

4.2. The advantages and disadvantages of Chinese animation

The advantage of Chinese animation lies in the better use of Chinese traditional culture and modern society in the first point of content, the second point of technological progress has brought a leap in the quality of animation, and the third point is that the audience has increased and the market has just become broader. In the 21st century, China has strengthened its support for the animation industry, focusing on starting from restricting foreign animation in 2018 to actively supporting and guiding Chinese animation in 2019. In terms of content, Chinese animation has been good at using traditional Chinese culture since its inception. China's five thousand years of history has given birth to countless excellent folk tales and legends of gods and monsters. These stories are well absorbed and accepted by Chinese animation. In terms of technology, today's technology continues to develop. Chinese animation uses 3D special effects technology to combine Oriental Shen Yun's martial arts design with well-known mythological themes. It can be seen that China's CG animation technology is becoming more mature. In terms of plot, it is no longer a flat hero image, and the characters are more three-dimensional and rich. In terms of audiences, post-00s in China are a group of sub-cultural groups with unique characteristics. Their consumption ability has gradually matured, making them the main force of animation users. New consumers will inevitably bring more new demands and encourage the development of animation in China.

However, China's animation industry also has many inherent problems. The first is that the consumer positioning is narrow, and the second is that the infringement problem in the Chinese market has not yet been resolved. Among them, the consumption positioning is narrow and the adult market is neglected are still existing problems. There has always been a phenomenon of infancy in Chinese animation and animation, and its consumers are targeted at young children. However, in fact, young children do not have the ability to consume independently, leading to a situation of market emptiness for young people aged 19-24, the main force in the Chinese animation consumer market. At the same time, there are still copyright problems of piracy and infringement in the Chinese market. These problems affect the original author's

creation, and rampant piracy will only affect the interests of the original author. At present, the national law does not fully control this phenomenon, and there is no clear definition and punishment for plagiarism. This makes the animation market very chaotic and uneven, and it fails to feed back the economic benefits brought by animation to the original author for re-creation.

5. CONCLUSION

Through the previous analysis, the content of Japanese animation is of high quality, the digging of stories is deep, and the combination of modern life and ancient myths is emphasized. Excellent audience positioning fits the psychological and spiritual pursuits of contemporary young people, and has formed a mature cultural industry. After decades of hard work, Chinese animation has made progress to a certain extent, but the content is not well explored. The repeated adaptations of classic film and television dramas such as *Journey to the West* and *Nezha* are not suitable for modern life; The audience is still dominated by young children. As China's mainstream media, CCTV still broadcasts mainly *Pleasant Goat and Big Big Wolf* and *Bear Infested*, excellent domestic animation is mainly spread on a small scale in Bilibili; There is no good policy control over the chaos in the cultural industry, and the market is still in a mixed state.

If Chinese animation wants to better go overseas for cross-cultural dissemination, it must be based on the excavation of the five thousand years of outstanding Chinese culture, the content and modern life need to be closer and logically more in-depth, and get rid of the "younger audience" phenomenon, to produce animation that meets the audience's psychological expectations and meets their needs. In terms of technology, we will support and promote the excellent animation production team, and attract more excellent talents to join the animation production. The chaos in the cultural market should be regulated by policies to form a mature industrial chain. Each big IP operates in an independent development model, and strives to shape the cultural value of the IP's own image, thereby expanding the entire animation market.

In the context of relying on cultural globalization, our country's animation should fully consider the differences and convergence between cultures of various countries, and use new media such as integrated media for diversified communication. By grasping the cultural content, accurately positioning the audience and shaping the image of the big IP, supplemented by the support of technology and policy can make Chinese animation better realize cross-cultural communication.

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