



Visualization Communication of Ethnic Music on Short Video Platforms

A Case Study of the Mongolian Music on Douyin

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Abstract. Ethnic music embodies the essence of ethnic cultures and its dissemination and protection are important in the era of short videos. Traditional minority cultures encounter corresponding communication difficulties in the new media environment. Based on the short video platform Douyin, this paper analyses the situation of ethnic music and its interaction with audiences and takes the Mongolian music as a specific case. Ethnic music short videos on this platform combine audio and visual elements, which makes the video contain more information about ethnic culture. Some representative cases are analysed in terms of their audio and visual content. Moreover, based on a survey of the users on Douyin, users' habit of using ethnic music and their attitudes have been reflected. Therefore, the trend of ethnic music can be predicted. In the future communication process, short video platforms and music producers should use different communication methods to preserve cultural diversity.

Keywords: Ethnic music, Short video, Douyin, Visualization, Media studies.

1 Introduction

Music, as an auditory element in a short video, enriches the information of the short video. With the emergence of smartphones and mobile applications, short video floods into all aspects of people's life. This makes people gradually accustomed to the sensory enjoyment of visual and auditory combinations. As for music communication, due to the change in media environment, music appreciation gradually relies on the form of short videos and turns to the direction of visual communication. Music, as a separate art category, its own production, transmission, and even inheritance may have more possibilities in the future.

The transmission of ethnic music is restricted by many factors such as region and nationality, which more or less increases the difficulty of expanding the communication network of ethnic music. Interpersonal communication was the most prominent characteristic of traditional ethnic music, but it changed today. In the current media environment, audiences' appreciation habits are different, especially in the context of globalization and urbanization. Young audiences have taken mobile applications as the main

way to appreciate and receive ethnic music. Therefore, this paper is devoted to exploring the future communication and development of ethnic music with the help of new media communication channels, especially short video platforms.

This study believes that short video platforms such as Douyin, spread information by combining audio and visual elements, and more importantly, they have strong social attributes, because they play the roles of cultural communication. The significance of this paper is that it explores the possibilities of popularizing ethnic music on short video platforms. This study analyzes the visual communication process of ethnic music and pays attention to its form and content characteristics. Through a questionnaire about the audiences' acceptance and usage of Douyin, it aims to demonstrate the future trend of Mongolian music's development.

1.1 Research Methods

This paper adopts qualitative and quantitative research. Firstly, short videos with ethnic music on Douyin are sorted out to analyse their characteristics of form and content. Secondly, the users of Douyin are taken as the main research group to conduct the questionnaire.

The main body of the questionnaire is divided into the following three parts: The first part (Questions 1-5) is about basic personal information of users, including gender, age, and education level of the respondents. The second part (Questions 6-10) is to understand their habits of using short video platforms and their content preference. This part can uncover how users spend their time, how often they use the short video platform, how engaged they are, and whether they care about music-related content. The third part (Questions 11-24) is to investigate their influence on ethnic music. At the same time, the questionnaire provides data and references for the follow-up study of countermeasures and suggestions.

1.2 Literature Review

In the field of music communication, researchers generally pay attention to the relationships between science, technology, and art. Especially in the process of urban modernization, mass culture in the modern mass communication environment has a strong impact on traditional culture. How to spread and inherit ethnic music in the era of new media has become a common concern for scholars from different disciplines. Most of the existing studies investigate music from various aspects. From a macro perspective, they summarize the communication characteristics of the new media and the current situation of the communication of ethnic music culture. At the same time, they deduce the communication strategy of ethnic music under the background of new media in the future [1-3]. Some studies focus on particular regions of ethnic music culture. [4,5]. Other researchers pay attention to the visual communication of music [6,7]. The process of visualization communication, which combines auditory elements with visual elements in videos, is an important factor affecting ethnic music communication on short video platforms [8,9]. The users' behaviors, preferences, and communication effects are analyzed in a specific music social platform [10]. Based on the research on regional

culture communication on short video platforms, the regional image construction methods have been discussed [11].

Most of the research made qualitative analysis. These papers describe, analyze and summarize the current music communication phenomena, and give suggestions for future development according to the characteristics of the existing communication environment. However, most of the existing research is prone to making macro-analysis. In the field of short video communication, the communication effect of short videos with ethnic music as background music (BGM) has not been widely discussed. The analysis of the unique phenomenon of ethnic music culture on the short video platform is of more practical significance to popularize ethnic music culture.

2 The Audio-Visual Combination Can Contain More Information about Ethnic Music

A short video is a fusion of auditory and visual elements, giving full play to the combination of sound and image. It meets audiences' social needs in the process of information dissemination on social media. On the one hand, the spread of ethnic music based on short video platforms can expand the impact of ethnic music. On the other hand, the transmission of short videos can enrich the cultural information about ethnic music and improve the enjoyment of ethnic music. From the beginning of its birth, ethnic music takes interpersonal communication as its main characteristic, combining audio and visual elements on site. From the perspective of mass communication, the empowerment of technology makes ethnic music no longer a sound art but a form inseparable from dancing.

2.1 Formal Categories of Ethnic Music Short Video

Taking Douyin as the main observation scope, the current video content with ethnic music elements can be divided into two categories, namely background music and performance music.

2.1.1. The Form of Background Music

Most of the videos on the Douyin platform with ethnic music in the form of BGM are user-generated. Either with representative songs or some ethnic music elements as the background music, they show daily life and teach something related to the ethnic groups. All of these short videos have no direct relation to the music.

For example, Douyin blogger Enke, with 8,517 million followers, has uploaded 794 short videos and received a total of 81,115 million likes [12]. In his short videos, the auditory elements mainly appear in the form of background music and "contemporaneous sound". The music is mostly pure music played by the morin khuur. The "contemporaneous sound" is about the conversations between Enke and his friends in daily life, that is, the sound source of visual elements. In terms of visual elements, his videos focus on the cooking of traditional Mongolian food by Enke and his family and friends.

Although Mongolian music is not the main communication content in these videos, it more fully shows a part of Mongolian traditional food.

Take another example, Ao Qi in Grassland, a blogger on the platform Douyin, has 469,000 followers and uploaded 257 short videos, which received a total of 5,110 million likes [13]. The auditory factors in his short videos include BGM, commentary, and “contemporaneous sound”. BGM mainly involves Mongolian traditional music, such as Humai, a Mongolian throat-singing technique, long-tune songs, and other forms. Commentaries mainly explain the content of the short videos. In terms of visual elements, they cover Mongolian daily life, such as Mongolian weddings, food, traditional clothing, and winter snow scenes, showing Mongolian culture from a richer perspective.

2.1.2. The Performance Form of Ethnic Music

Another category of short videos mainly focuses on ethnic music performance, including singing ethnic songs and playing ethnic musical instruments. However, the types of music can be further subdivided according to different audiences: traditional Mongolian songs, a combination of traditional Mongolian songs with modern orchestration, and contemporary Mongolian musicians’ works.

Some bloggers on the Douyin platform focus on Mongolian music and they have a certain number of fans and high-quality content. First of all, the content of their videos and the music styles are relatively fixed (see Table 1.).

Table 1. Mongolian music bloggers

The names of bloggers	The number of fans	The number of likes	Audio elements	Image elements
Buji. Morin khuur	37,000	370,000	Pop music songs	Modern clothes; Morin khuur.
Morin huur. Kuaikuai Sun	784,000	259,000	Traditional Mongolian music, such as <i>Beautiful Night on the Grassland</i> and <i>Meet in Ao Bao</i> ; pop songs; movie soundtracks.	Traditional Mongolian costumes; Morin Khuur music; on the grassland.
Mongolia	32,000	410,000	Mongolian adapted songs; original Mongolian songs.	Image of Mongolian music concert; song related to background introduction; Mongolian words.

In addition to this, in some other short videos, they teach the singing skills of Mongolian music and the technique of playing Mongolian instruments and popularize relevant music culture. Due to certain ethnic and cultural boundaries and limitations of

professional art background, most of these short videos have a small fan base and therefore have little influence.

As Rudolf Arnheim observed in his book *Art and Visual Perception*, moving images greatly enhance the expressiveness of abstract art [14]. In order to spread more information about ethnic music in a limited time, the Mongolian music transmitted by short video must maximize the function by combining sound and image. An audience can comprehensively and meticulously obtain the cultural information behind short music videos.

2.2 Interpretation of Content Attributes of Ethnic Music Short Videos

Basically, there are two major attributes of the short videos about ethnic music. One focuses on selling products while the other aims to spread cultural information.

2.2.1. Attributes of Commerciality

On the platform Douyin, most of the bloggers who upload short videos with Mongolian music mainly aim to sell Mongolian goods. For example, Enke, as mentioned above, is a Mongolian blogger who is selling Mongolian food on the platform for a living. His home page says that he is part of the “we-media” of agriculture and farmers. He enables the commercialization of agriculture and animal husbandry in new media ways. In this business model, the target audience is more accurate. They have the same ethnic background as the blogger, and they search for the same cultural identity. Consumers buy not only food but also the cultural identity from the mass media environment.

In the meantime, because they have the same ethnic and cultural background, they have more interaction in the process of selling and buying. In the webcast with the goods marketing campaign, on the one hand, bloggers can carry out direct communication with consumers who have the same ethnic and cultural background. On the other hand, for non-ethnic consumers, the webcast not only shows the products but also satisfies their unfamiliar experience of different ethnic cultures, which can stimulate their consumption behaviour.

2.2.2. Attributes of Culture

In the context of short video transmission, the music produced by mechanical reproduction technology satisfies the entertainment and sensory needs of the rapid consumption of mass culture. In other words, with the richness of current information, a modern cultural industry will lead to the assimilation of ethnic music, therefore, audiences will listen to music with ethnic elements, such as melody and rhythm. When artistic works appear on the music stage under the background of globalization, the more connotation with the ethnic spirit that the artistic works have, the easier they can attract audiences. Music can be treated as a commodity that creates huge economic value. However, it is not only a commodity; its artistic aesthetics and spiritual connotation beyond the material and secular world need to be paid more attention by researchers.

In the context of post-modern culture, ethnic culture is integrated into Han culture and is impacted by foreign cultures. Therefore, at this time, more protection and inheritance of ethnic minority culture is also of significance. As the scholar Jin Song said, music education disseminated by mass media and live performances will influence ordinary persons' habits of enjoying music. The public will passively accept the music in the mass media. Music education blurred the boundaries of cultural background more and more [15]. If the public is exposed to more music without ethnic and cultural characteristics, they will increasingly lack awareness of their own nations.

3 Short Videos Play a More Important Role in Promoting Ethnic Music

The questionnaire survey reveals the dissemination of ethnic music on Douyin and its reception, and it is helpful to summarize and analyse the problems that ethnic music may encounter in the dissemination process on short video platforms.

3.1 Analysis of Users

3.1.1. Users' Preferences for the Short Video Platform

Audiences' frequency of use is proportional to the length of time. On the other hand, 78.57% of the users choose to use Douyin once a month and use it for less than one hour a day. For those who spend most of their time on short video platforms, their daily usage time is also relatively high. The change in the social communication environment leads to the change in ethnic music communication. Audiences no longer enjoy the ethnic music directly through the singers, but receive more ethnic music fragments through short videos. Moreover, the customs and habits on which ethnic music depend have been simplified by urban life. The short videos bring more pop music styles rather than ethnic music, therefore ethnic music located in remote areas is easy to be ignored.

According to the survey, the top three categories of short video content are food, dance and music, and comedy. Meanwhile, among 88.74% of the users who choose to pay attention to short video music, 62.44% of them have paid attention to ethnic music content, as shown in Figure 1. Therefore, it is worth the attention of musicians and researchers to take short video platforms as the communication channels of ethnic music.

3.1.2. Current Situation of Using Ethnic Music to Make Short Video

When users create content on the short video platform, 51.8% of them choose the music automatically matched by the system, while 13.51% choose to upload their own original music, as shown in Figure 2. Also, this is inversely proportional to people who use ethnic music as BGM in their short videos. That is, users who are accustomed to using original music are more likely to use ethnic music in short videos as BGM. On the contrary, users who are accustomed to using the music provided by the system seldom choose ethnic music as BGM for their short videos. This reflects that most of the

short videos with ethnic music content are uploaded by music producers who are concerned about the development of ethnic music and have the ability to create music, while ordinary people with non-musical backgrounds rarely use ethnic music as BGM in their short videos.

Commercial culture dominates the short video platform, and cultural diversity also impacts the inheritance and dissemination of minority music. Under the impact of pop music around the world, the preference for ethnic music decreases continuously. At the same time, Douyin, as a communication platform, plays the role of “gatekeeper” and its social responsibility for the protection of traditional ethnic culture needs to be further improved. Although civic groups and independent musicians have been doing this, their influence has been minimal.

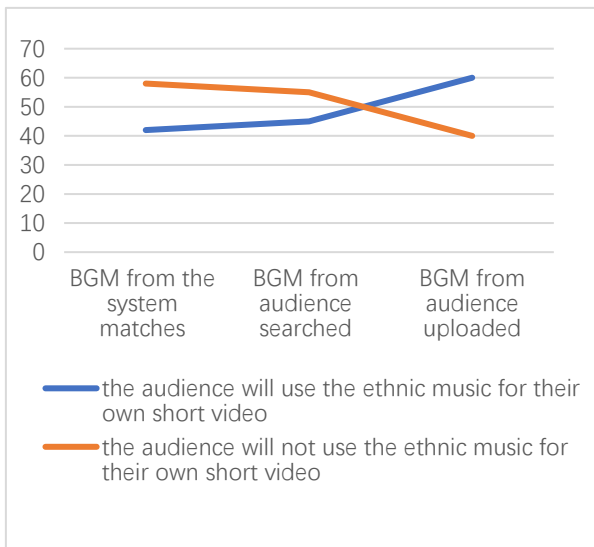


Fig. 1. Audiences' interest in the music of short videos and ethnic music

3.2 Audiences' Positive Attitude towards the Dissemination of Ethnic Music.

According to the questionnaire, most audiences have a high acceptance level for the dissemination of ethnic music on the short video platform. At the same time, after they receive the music transmitted on the short video platform, the secondary transmission process of ethnic music may be generated. They will become the starting point of a new round of communication, as shown in Figure 3. In this survey, the audiences have a high degree of recognition for the dissemination of ethnic music through new media channels. Therefore, researchers can explore more specific methods of transmission.

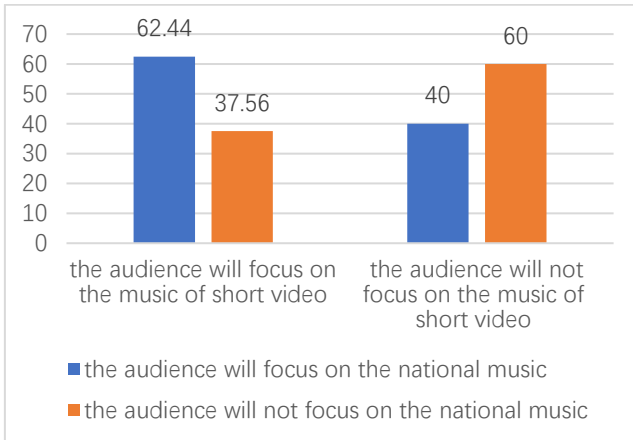


Fig. 2. Audiences' use of ethnic music

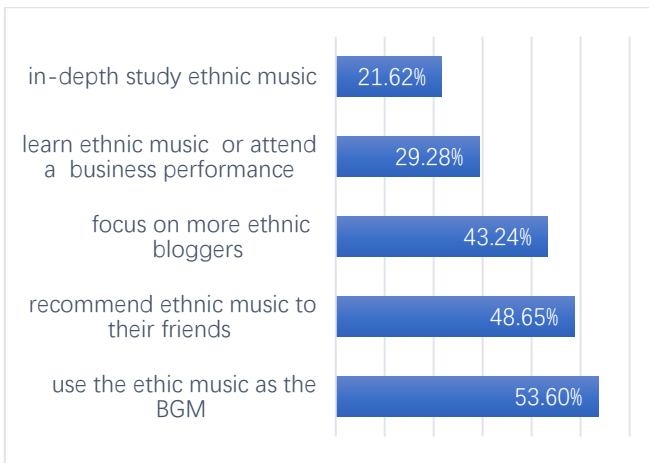


Fig. 3. Audiences' interaction with ethnic music

4 Ethnic Music on Short Video Platforms in the Future

On the one hand, ethnic art in China has a positive impact on the enrichment of the diversity of the whole ethnic culture. On the other hand, it also plays a positive role in the preservation of minority culture. A nation is based on its culture, as Melliam says in *Anthropology of Music*, in human culture, music undoubtedly plays a symbolic role on the level of emotional meaning or cultural meaning. People around the world assign a symbolic role to music that connects it to other elements of their culture [16]. Ethnic music on short video platforms should be taken as a window into the culture of various minorities in China. Only by opening this window a deeper understanding of the cultural connotation behind it can be possible.

From the perspective of preserving cultural diversity, ethnic music culture can be taken as the main content of the official media account on short video platforms. They can popularize ethnic music culture and produce heat topics.

Non-governmental organizations and independent musicians can organize some cultural and artistic activities offline and cooperate with online platforms. In this way, ethnic music culture can be more widely known, rather than just in the oral history of descendants of ethnic groups.

From the perspective of commercial culture, ethnic music can be a commercial project, and commercial performance companies can cooperate with the cultural department of the local government. Most ethnic music art contains visual characteristics, such as the legend or stories of the minorities. It is a combination of “poetry, music, and dancing” and, these contents can be adapted into a large-scale musical. Ethnic music can be included in the local tourism industry and cultural industry. Moreover, the whole process of creation, rehearsal, and backstage performance can also be uploaded on short video platforms. In the market economy environment, a more diversified ethnic music culture can be spread to more audiences.

The aesthetics of modern music is different from that of the past. Therefore, more and more music producers try to take the melody and other elements in traditional minority music as the motivation for their own creation and integrate them into the richer and more integrated modern music styles, such as pop, rock, and rap, so as to make it more in line with the aesthetic habits of the contemporary audiences.

5 Conclusion

Ethnic music, as a concentrated reflection of the cultural connotation of a nation, has more possibilities in the future. It not only retains the traditional Mongolian music style but also absorbs the contemporary music styles of different countries and regions, injecting fresh blood into the inheritance of local minority culture. On short video platforms, the visual communication of music cannot be ignored. Rich visual information can bring a more intuitive cultural experience to the audiences. It can help the audiences understand the ethnic music easily.

At the same time, ethnic music is advancing with the change in the communication environment and integrating into the short video platforms, which play an important role in the inheritance of ethnic music and culture. Although urban life is still dissolving the traditional culture, music will not disappear as a life necessity of human’s spiritual world. As creators, disseminators, and receivers of music, people create and perform excellent classical ethnic music in the era of short videos.

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