



Influence Factors of International Communication Effects of Chinese Audiovisual Programs Among Overseas-Born Chinese Youth: A Grounded Theory Analysis Based on Indonesian Students in China

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Abstract

Based on grounded theory methodology, this study explored the international communication effects and influencing mechanisms of Chinese audiovisual programs among overseas-born Chinese youth through focus group interviews with 20 Indonesian Chinese students studying in China. The findings revealed: (1) Current communication effects of Chinese audiovisual programs among overseas-born Chinese youth are suboptimal, with specific program exposure rates below 20% and 45% of respondents indicating "rarely watch"; (2) Communication effects are constrained by multiple factors including channel accessibility, language barriers, and content localization, which operate through four types of mechanisms: foundational, constraining, facilitative, and innovative; (3) Although Indonesian Chinese youth exhibit low exposure to audiovisual programs, 55% expressed willingness to recommend and disseminate Chinese audiovisual programs, demonstrating potential for transformation from passive recipients to active communicators. The study

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extends the traditional 5W communication model, reveals mechanisms of audience agency transformation, and provides theoretical foundations and practical implications for enhancing international communication effectiveness.

Keywords

audiovisual programs, international communication, overseas-born Chinese youth, grounded theory

Introduction

The Third Plenary Session of the 20th Central Committee of the Communist Party of China proposed strategic requirements to "build a more effective international communication system" and "accelerate the construction of Chinese discourse and narrative systems to comprehensively enhance international communication effectiveness" (CPC Central Committee, 2024), providing direction for international communication work in the new era. In the context of the digital intelligence era, audiovisual programs, as important carriers of international communication, directly affect the effectiveness of communicating China's voice internationally. Particularly with the rise of short videos and social media, the global communication paradigm is undergoing profound transformation, presenting new challenges for communication effectiveness.

The foundational framework of communication research derives from Lasswell's 5W communication model, which decomposes the communication process into five basic elements: communicator (Who), message content (What), communication channel (Which Channel), audience (Whom), and communication effect (What Effect) (Griffin, 2006). This model provides a systematic analytical perspective for understanding communication processes and has been widely applied in cross-cultural communication research. Cross-cultural communication refers to information exchange processes between individuals or groups from different cultural backgrounds, which often involves complex issues such as language barriers, cultural differences, and cognitive biases (Kim, 2001). With the development of digital technology and changes in the communication environment, traditional linear communication models show limitations in explaining new communication phenomena, particularly in understanding audience active participation and feedback mechanisms, requiring new perspectives.

Method

Research Design

Based on grounded theory methodology, this study collected qualitative data through focus group interviews and in-depth interviews to explore the communication effects and influencing

mechanisms of Chinese audiovisual programs among Indonesian Chinese youth. Questionnaire surveys were used as supplementary data to understand respondents' basic characteristics and media usage patterns.

Participants

This study recruited Indonesian Chinese undergraduate students at Fujian Polytechnic Normal University as research participants. After preliminary contact and screening, 20 respondents (11 females, 9 males) ultimately participated in focus group interviews, with an additional 2 respondents (1 female, 1 male) participating in subsequent in-depth interviews to verify data saturation. All respondents were of Chinese ethnic background and capable of effective communication in Chinese.

Procedure

The research was conducted in groups by gender. Each group of participants first signed informed consent forms, then completed baseline questionnaires covering personal information, social media use, international communication effectiveness, and Chinese culture cognition. Subsequently, six categories of Chinese audiovisual programs were shown (including variety shows, films, animation, documentaries, TV dramas, and web series short videos), with selected programs having the highest category view counts on Indonesian short video platforms. Each category of program was shown for 1-5 minutes in the study, after which participants were asked to complete viewing feedback questionnaires and engage in group discussions. Discussions primarily focused on themes such as audiovisual program reception experiences, cultural cognition, and communication behaviors. To verify data saturation, one-on-one in-depth interviews were conducted with 2 new respondents after the focus groups, which produced no new information.

Data Analysis

Based on grounded theory methodology, NVivo 12 software was used to analyze and code transcribed texts from focus group interviews and in-depth interviews: (1) Open coding: Conceptualized labeling of raw materials to form preliminary categories; (2) Axial coding: Establishing connections between different categories within the 5W communication model framework; (3) Selective coding: Determining core categories and constructing theoretical models. Questionnaire survey data served as supplementary materials to complement and verify qualitative analysis results.

Results

Sample Characteristics

Through questionnaire surveys and interviews, research participants exhibited the following characteristics:

All 20 respondents were Indonesian Chinese international students, with relatively balanced gender composition (45% male, 55% female). Age distribution was primarily concentrated in those born in 2005-2006 (60%). In generational composition, third-generation Chinese had the highest proportion (35%), but notably, 40% of respondents indicated they were unclear about their Chinese generational status, reflecting a weakening trend in Chinese identity. Cultural background showed diverse characteristics: 50% practiced Buddhism, while Christianity and Catholicism each accounted for 20%, reflecting the multicultural background of Indonesian Chinese groups (see Table 1).

Language and Cultural Identity

The research found that respondents had complex language backgrounds: 85% of families used Indonesian, 55% used Minnan dialect, 30% used English, and 20% used Mandarin. 85% passed the HSK Chinese proficiency test. Regarding Chinese culture cognition, only 15% indicated "understanding Chinese culture," 65% indicated "uncertain," but 80% indicated "liking Chinese culture." This phenomenon of "liking but not understanding" reflects the gap between emotional identification and cognitive understanding of Chinese culture among overseas-born Chinese youth. Primary motivations for studying in China were improving Chinese language ability (80%) and obtaining educational resources (55%), while "exploring Chinese cultural roots" accounted for only 15% and "interest in Chinese culture" 30%, demonstrating that pragmatic orientation outweighs cultural root-seeking (see Table 1).

Table 1 Sample Characteristics (n=20)

| Variable | Category | n (%) |
|---------------------------|------------------|-----------|
| Gender | | |
| | Male | 9 (45.0) |
| | Female | 11 (55.0) |
| Birth Year | 2005-2006 | 12 (60.0) |
| Chinese Generation | | |
| | Third generation | 7 (35.0) |
| | Unclear | 8 (40.0) |
| Religious Belief | | |
| | Buddhism | 10 (50.0) |
| | Christianity | 4 (20.0) |
| | Catholicism | 4 (20.0) |
| Family Language* | | |
| | Indonesian | 17 (85.0) |
| | Minnan dialect | 11 (55.0) |
| | Mandarin | 4 (20.0) |
| HSK Level | Level 4 | 17 (85.0) |
| Study Motivation* | Improve Chinese | 16 (80.0) |

| Variable | Category | n (%) |
|-------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------|
| Cultural Understanding | Educational resources | 11 (55.0) |
| | Understand | 3 (15.0) |
| | Uncertain | 13 (65.0) |
| Liking Chinese Culture | Like | 16 (80.0) |

Note. * Multiple choice question, percentages sum to more than 100%.

Digital Media Usage Characteristics and Behavioral Patterns

Platform Usage Preferences

As shown in Table 2, the research revealed typical digital native characteristics: In social platform usage, WhatsApp and Instagram had high-frequency usage rates of 95% and 75% respectively; for video platforms, YouTube and TikTok had high-frequency usage rates of 100% and 85% respectively. In contrast, traditional social media platforms had lower usage rates, with Facebook showing 90% low-frequency usage. These usage preferences reflect the new generation's dependence on instant, short-video social platforms.

Content Creation and Sharing Behavior

As shown in Table 2, regarding content sharing, Instagram was the primary sharing platform (80%), followed by TikTok (40%). Shared content showed hierarchical characteristics: Campus culture: Campus activities (88.9%) were the most frequently shared content; Experience sharing: Travel scenery (88.9%) and holiday activities (72.2%); Life: Mainly food sharing (77.8%). In terms of social media language use, English (40%) and Indonesian (35%) were primarily used, with 30% mixing multiple languages and no one primarily using Chinese, reflecting the complex relationship between language use and identity (see Table 2).

Table 2 Media Usage Patterns

| Platform/Behavior | Category | n (%) |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------|------------|
| Social Platform (Frequent) | WhatsApp | 19 (95.0) |
| | Instagram | 15 (75.0) |
| Video Platform (Frequent) | YouTube | 20 (100.0) |
| | TikTok | 17 (85.0) |
| Sharing Platform* | Instagram | 16 (80.0) |
| | TikTok | 8 (40.0) |
| Sharing Content* | Campus activities | 16 (88.9) |
| | Travel scenery | 16 (88.9) |
| | Food | 14 (77.8) |
| | Holiday activities | 13 (72.2) |

| Platform/Behavior | Category | n (%) |
|-------------------|------------|----------|
| Language Use | English | 8 (40.0) |
| | Indonesian | 7 (35.0) |

*Note. * Multiple choice question, percentages sum to more than 100%.*

Chinese Audiovisual Program Exposure and Communication Effects

Program Type Exposure Characteristics

In the survey of specific program exposure, the exposure rates for six typical program categories were generally low. As shown in Table 3, the short video program "Nyonya Gu" had an exposure rate of 20%, slightly higher than other types; the TV drama "Joy of Life," animation "Fox Spirit Matchmaker," and variety show "5th Anniversary" all had exposure rates of 10%; the documentary "Flavorful Origins" had an exposure rate of only 5%; and the film "Be Somebody" had 0% exposure. This difference reflects that short videos are more likely to reach target audiences in international communication. This type preference is highly correlated with respondents' media usage habits as digital natives. Short videos, due to their fragmented, socialized, and entertaining characteristics, better align with the viewing habits and needs of overseas-born Chinese youth.

Exposure Frequency and Platform Selection

Regarding viewing frequency, there was a clear low-frequency characteristic. As shown in Table 3, respondents' exposure to Chinese audiovisual programs exhibited low-frequency characteristics: 45% indicated "rarely watch," 30% indicated "a few times per month," and only 15% were "daily viewers" with high-frequency viewing. Platform selection primarily relied on localized channels: YouTube Indonesia (80%), TikTok (70%), and WeTV Indonesia (60%) were the main viewing channels. Chinese domestic video platforms such as Bilibili (40%) and Chinese social media (15%) had relatively low usage rates. This phenomenon reflects the significant impact of platform localization on communication accessibility.

Viewing Motivations and Impacts

Viewing motivations showed dual characteristics: entertainment and relaxation (75%) and improving Chinese language skills (70%) were the primary motivations, while understanding Chinese culture had a lower proportion (20%). Regarding viewing impacts, 80% believed it improved language ability, 50% enhanced understanding of China, 45% expanded cultural horizons, and 35% increased social topics, indicating that audiovisual programs play an important role in language learning and cultural understanding. Particularly noteworthy is that 55% of respondents indicated they would recommend Chinese audiovisual programs to others, showing potential communication agent characteristics (see Table 3).

Table 3 Audiovisual Program Exposure

| Assessment Dimension | Category | n (%) |
|-------------------------------|---------------------------------|-----------|
| Program Exposure | | |
| | Short video "Nyonya Gu" | 4 (20.0) |
| | TV drama "Joy of Life" | 2 (10.0) |
| | Animation "Fox Spirit" | 2 (10.0) |
| | Variety "5th Anniversary" | 2 (10.0) |
| | Documentary "Flavorful Origins" | 1 (5.0) |
| | Film "Be Somebody" | 0 (0.0) |
| Viewing Frequency | | |
| | Daily | 3 (15.0) |
| | Few times per week | 2 (10.0) |
| | Few times per month | 6 (30.0) |
| | Rarely watch | 9 (45.0) |
| Viewing Platform* | | |
| | YouTube Indonesia | 16 (80.0) |
| | TikTok | 14 (70.0) |
| | WeTV Indonesia | 12 (60.0) |
| | Bilibili | 8 (40.0) |
| Viewing Motivation* | | |
| | Entertainment | 15 (75.0) |
| | Improve Chinese | 14 (70.0) |
| | Understand China | 4 (20.0) |
| Post-Viewing Behavior* | | |
| | Recommend to others | 11 (55.0) |
| | Discuss with friends | 4 (20.0) |
| Viewing Impact* | | |
| | Improve language ability | 16 (80.0) |
| | Enhance understanding | 10 (50.0) |
| | Expand cultural horizons | 9 (45.0) |
| | Increase social topics | 7 (35.0) |

Note. * Multiple choice question, percentages sum to more than 100%.

Grounded Theory Analysis Results

Open Coding: Concept Extraction and Refinement

In the open coding stage, this study first organized and segmented focus group interview materials, distinguishing between interviewer and interviewee dialogue content. To ensure research objectivity and accuracy, the following measures were adopted: (1) Using respondents' original language as much as possible for initial concepts; (2) Using NVivo 12 software for coding, marking extracted content as "free nodes"; (3) Conducting line-by-line coding. Through focus group interviews with 20 Indonesian Chinese students, approximately 50,000 words of raw text were obtained. Through line-by-line coding and comparative analysis, 156 initial concepts were derived. These concepts primarily involved media usage behavior, cultural identity attitudes, content reception experiences, and communication willingness. Particularly noteworthy is that interview data and questionnaire survey data formed effective mutual verification: respondents' social media usage preferences expressed in interviews were highly consistent with

high-frequency usage data shown in questionnaires (such as YouTube 100%, TikTok 85%), and this triangulation improved research reliability.

Axial Coding: Constructing Relationships Between Categories

In the axial coding stage, based on the 5W communication model, this study performed specific and narrowed grouping of obtained initial concepts. Through analogical induction, initial concepts from raw materials were further processed to form higher-level categories. The research consolidated initial concepts into five main categories: Communicator (Who), Content (What), Channel (Which Channel), Audience (Whom), and Effect (What Effect). Particularly under the "Audience" category, the research discovered seven key subcategories: cultural background, language ability, content preference, cultural identity, viewing motivation, social support, and communication efficacy (see Table 4).

Table 4 Axial Coding Category Relationships

| Main Category | Subcategory | Initial Concepts (Examples) |
|---------------|----------------------------|--|
| Communicator | Media institutions | WeTV, Mango APP, Bilibili, TikTok |
| Content | Content type | Kung fu films, anime, food documentaries, short videos |
| | Content form | Videos without subtitles, videos with subtitles |
| | Competitive content | Korean dramas, American films, Japanese anime |
| Channel | Media usage | Social media, APP, Instagram, YouTube |
| | Usage restrictions | VPN, platform restrictions, video payment |
| Audience | Cultural background | Cultural heritage, local culture, Chinese culture |
| | Language ability | Family understands Chinese, language barriers |
| | Content preference | Good vs evil stories, dislike romance films |
| | Cultural identity | Value recognition, like Chinese culture |
| | Viewing motivation | TikTok has much knowledge, watch videos to relax |
| | Social support | Parents play videos, family watches Chinese programs |
| | Communication efficacy | Cross-cultural communication willingness |
| Effect | Information reach | Watched films, haven't watched, haven't watched Chinese programs |
| | Information decoding | Language barriers, Chinese difficult to learn |
| | Information identification | Very interesting, actively search, share on social media |

Selective Coding: Formation of Core Categories

Based on axial coding, through further comparison, induction, and clustering, core categories were formed. The research, based on five main categories, extracted "Influence Factors of International Communication Effects of Chinese Audiovisual Programs" as the core category (see Table 5).

Table 5 Selective Coding Categorization

| Core Category | Main Category | Category Attributes | Dimension |
|--|---------------|---|---|
| Influence Factors of International Communication Effects | Communicator | Content production | Sufficient-Insufficient |
| | Content | Type diversity Competition degree | Strong-Weak High-Low |
| | Channel | Form adaptation | High-Low |
| | | Accessibility | High-Low |
| | | Convenience | Strong-Weak |
| | Audience | Cultural identity | Strong-Weak |
| | | Language ability | High-Low |
| | | Exposure motivation | Strong-Weak |
| | | Communication efficacy | Strong-Weak |
| | Effect | Reach degree Understanding degree Identification degree | High-Low Deep-Shallow Strong-Weak |

Data Saturation Verification

To ensure research reliability, this study adopted an approach of conducting in-depth interviews simultaneously with coding. After conducting in-depth interviews with 2 new respondents (1 male, 1 female), no new concepts or relationships were discovered, indicating that data had reached saturation.

Theoretical Model Construction

Typical Relationship Structure

Through open coding, axial coding, and selective coding for gradual analysis of original interview transcripts, relationships between different categories also became clearer. Through analyzing relationships among categories, this study constructed the "Influence Factor Model of International Communication Effects for Chinese Audiovisual Programs" (Figure 1). Typical relationship structures in this model are shown in Table 6.

Table 6 Typical Relationship Structures in Selective Coding

| Influence Mechanism | Action Path | Relationship Structure | Action Content |
|------------------------|----------------------|-------------------------|--|
| Foundational Influence | Communicator→Content | Production relationship | Program producers and media institutions determine content supply quantity and quality |
| | Content→Channel | Carrying relationship | Content type and form affect communication channel selection and effects |
| | Channel→Audience | Mediating effect | Platform accessibility and convenience affect audience exposure degree |

| Influence Mechanism | Action Path | Relationship Structure | Action Content |
|------------------------|---|------------------------|--|
| Constraint Influence | Localization→Acceptance | Negative effect | Insufficient content localization constrains audience understanding and identification |
| | Technical limits→Accessibility | Hindering effect | Platform restrictions reduce content reach possibility |
| | Language barriers→Understanding | Barrier effect | Language-culture differences affect content decoding degree |
| Facilitative Influence | Social support→Exposure | Promoting effect | Family and peer influence enhance exposure motivation |
| | Viewing motivation→Continuity | Driving effect | Intrinsic motivation promotes sustained exposure and understanding |
| | Cultural identity→Identification | Foundation effect | Cultural identity degree affects final acceptance degree |
| Innovative Influence | Communication efficacy→New role | Transformation effect | Audience potentially transforms into communication agents |
| | Bidirectional interaction→New mechanism | Breakthrough effect | From unidirectional communication to interactive communication |

Model Interpretation

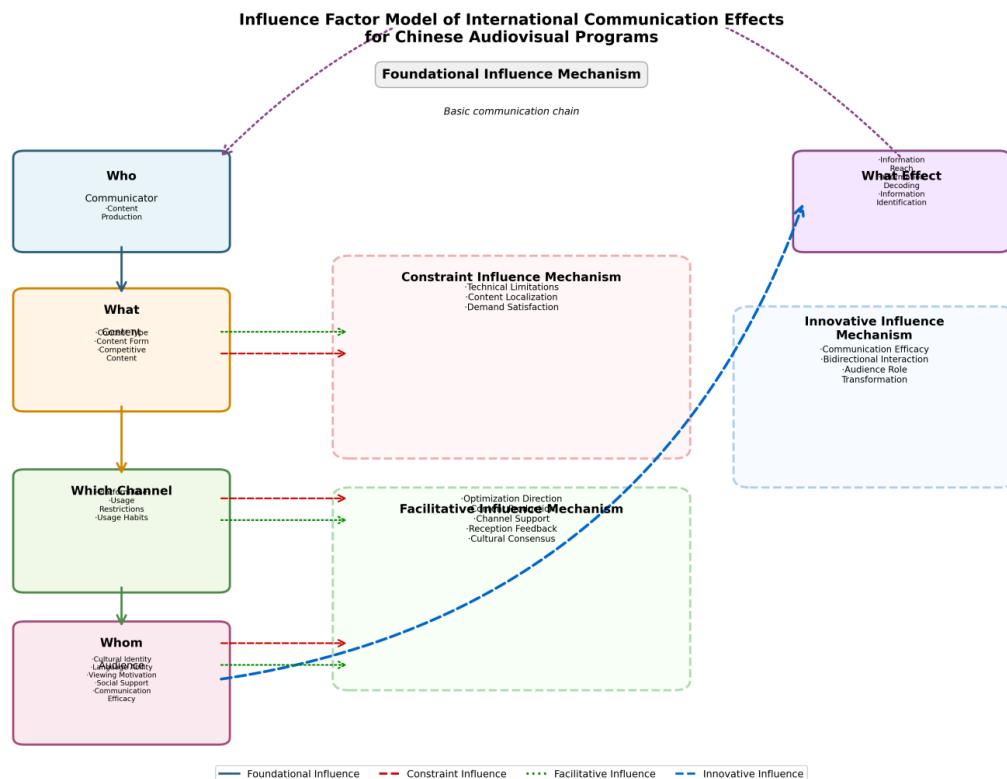


Figure 1 Influence Factor Model of International Communication Effects for Chinese Audiovisual Programs

Based on grounded theory analysis, the influence factor model constructed in this study reveals that audiovisual program communication effects are influenced by four types of key mechanisms. First, the foundational influence mechanism reflects the basic chain relationship in the communication process. In this mechanism, communication agents determine the quantity and quality of program supply through content production, content characteristics directly influence communication channel selection, and channel attributes further affect the degree of audience exposure. This linear communication chain constitutes the foundation of communication effect formation.

Second, the constraint influence mechanism reveals major obstacles faced in audiovisual program communication. The research found that insufficient content localization leads to difficulties in audience understanding and identification; technical limitations, such as platform access restrictions and VPN requirements, reduce content reach possibilities; while language-culture differences directly affect content decoding effects. These constraint factors form multi-level communication barriers.

Third, the facilitative influence mechanism embodies positive factors that help enhance communication effects. Family and peer viewing habits can enhance exposure motivation, forming social support networks; audience intrinsic interests and needs drive their sustained exposure and deep understanding of content; while existing cultural identity provides foundational support for content acceptance. These facilitative factors interact and collectively enhance communication effects.

Finally, the innovative influence mechanism reflects unique characteristics of the digital intelligence era. The research found that communication efficacy promotes audience role transformation, enabling their shift from passive recipients to active communicators; simultaneously, bidirectional interaction breaks the traditional unidirectional communication model, forming a new communication ecology. This mechanism's discovery enriches traditional communication theory, revealing new characteristics of communication forms in the digital intelligence era.

These four types of mechanisms are interrelated and jointly function, forming a complete influence factor network (as shown in Figure 1). The model not only reveals specific action mechanisms of various factors but also displays systematic characteristics of audiovisual program communication in the digital intelligence era.

Discussion

This study explored the international communication effects and influencing mechanisms of Chinese audiovisual programs among Indonesian Chinese youth. Through grounded theory methodology, an influence factor model of audiovisual program communication effects was constructed. Research findings not only deepen understanding of communication mechanisms in the digital intelligence era but also provide new perspectives for expanding traditional communication theory.

The research found that despite overseas-born Chinese youth having dual cultural backgrounds and digital media usage advantages, the actual communication effects of Chinese audiovisual programs are suboptimal. Specific program exposure rates are generally below 20%, with 45% of respondents indicating they "rarely watch" Chinese audiovisual programs. This phenomenon reflects deep challenges in international communication.

Through systematic coding analysis based on the 5W communication model framework, the research revealed four types of mechanisms affecting communication effects. Among these, the constraint influence mechanism is most significant, manifested in platform accessibility and language barriers. Data shows that respondents highly depend on localized platforms (YouTube Indonesia 80%, TikTok 70%), while usage rates of Chinese domestic platforms are lower. This channel selection directly affects content reach effects. Meanwhile, although 85% of respondents have HSK Level 4 proficiency, they completely avoid using Chinese on social media, reflecting the disconnect between language application and cultural communication, also embodying obstacles in cultural communication.

However, the research also discovered positive turning points. Facilitative and innovative influence mechanisms show that although overseas-born Chinese youth are low-frequency recipients of audiovisual programs, they demonstrate significant communication potential. 55% of respondents indicated they would recommend Chinese audiovisual programs to others, with high proportions participating in cultural activity sharing (campus activities 88.9%, holiday activities 72.2%). This communication willingness and behavioral pattern suggests potential trends in audience role transformation.

Research findings raise new considerations for the traditional 5W communication model. First, in the digital intelligence era, relationships among communication elements have broken through linear models, presenting complex interactive characteristics. Second, audience roles show potential for transformation from passive reception to active communication, which enriches traditional model understanding of audiences.

Conclusion

This study derives three main conclusions:

First, current communication effects of Chinese audiovisual programs among overseas-born Chinese youth are suboptimal, characterized by low exposure rates and low-frequency viewing. This situation is primarily constrained by factors such as channel accessibility, language barriers, and content localization degree.

Second, although overseas-born Chinese youth show limitations in audiovisual program reception, their communication agent potential should not be overlooked. Their dual cultural backgrounds, digital media affinity, and sharing willingness provide new possibilities for improving international communication effects.

Third, enhancing international communication effects requires systematic solutions. Efforts should coordinate across multiple dimensions including reducing channel barriers, strengthening content localization, and cultivating communication agents, fully leveraging the bridging role of overseas-born Chinese youth.

These findings have important implications for international communication practice. International communication activities should fully recognize the communication agent potential of overseas-born Chinese youth, stimulate their participation motivation through reasonable mechanism design, while strengthening localized construction of communication channels and innovating content production models, thereby enhancing the international communication effects of Chinese audiovisual programs.

Research Limitations and Reflections

This study also contains methodological reflections. First, as researchers, we also reflect on possible influences of our own cultural positions on data interpretation, improving research reliability through multiple coding comparisons and member checking. Second, research participants were limited to Indonesian Chinese students studying in China, and this specific context may affect the generalizability of conclusions. Additionally, focus group interviews may influence individual opinion expression due to group effects.

Future Research Directions

Future research can deepen in the following directions: First, expand sample scope, such as extending research to overseas-born Chinese youth groups in other Southeast Asian countries; second, conduct longitudinal research to explore dynamic changes in influence mechanisms; third, deeply examine new characteristics of communication elements in the digital intelligence era context. These studies will help further improve the theoretical system of audiovisual program communication effects.

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