

Practical Exploration on the Enhancement of International Communication Capability of Online Audiovisual Platforms

Siyue Chen

Dhurakij Pundit University, Beijing, China

Abstract: *At present, China's network audiovisual platform is actively going overseas with high-quality content and platform advantages, consolidating the Asian market through localised operation methods, adhering to the long-termism layout globally through scientific and technological support, actively participating in the competition in the international market, striving to improve its international competitiveness and enhancing the soft power of Chinese culture. This paper takes the enhancement of the international communication ability of network audiovisual platform as the starting point, firstly analyses the characteristics of the international communication of network audiovisual platform, and then analyses the international communication ability of network audiovisual platform with Aiqiyi as a practical case, and on this basis summarizes the strategy of the enhancement of the international communication ability of network audiovisual platform, so as to provide a reference for the practice in reality.*

Keywords: *online audiovisual platform; international communication capacity; practice*

1. Introduction

In recent years, the internationalisation attempts of China's online audiovisual platforms have been booming and in the ascendant, among which Aiqiyi is one of the earliest video platforms to start internationalisation exploration. Aiqiyi actively participates in international communication, and its overseas business grows at a high rate with the synchronisation of content going overseas plus platform going overseas. In 2017, Aiqiyi set up a special overseas distribution department to strengthen the overseas distribution of its content. In 2019, Aiqiyi stepped up its pace by officially launching the international version of its website, IQ.com, which serves users around the world, and an independent product, the Aiqiyi International Edition APP, to expand to more overseas markets. Over the past few years, IQ.com International Edition has achieved massive growth in users, and its social media matrix has exceeded 20 million fans^[1].

2. Case Study on the Practice of International Communication Capability of Network Audiovisual Platforms

2.1 Aiqiyi's two-step approach to going overseas: from overseas distribution of programmes to platform going overseas

Overseas distribution is the main business of many content production companies going overseas, and Aiqiyi also takes overseas distribution of content as one of the important tasks of content going overseas, distributing programmes to overseas TV stations or video platforms, or uploading them to the YouTube platform for sharing and cooperation. By the end of 2023, Aiqiyi had distributed more than 7,000 episodes of TV dramas, variety shows, documentaries, animation and other film and TV works, and more than 300 films to more than 200 countries and regions around the world, and massively exported original content in different categories, including suspense, costume, romance, etc., to mainstream TV stations and video platforms in many overseas countries, which were well received by the local users. In March 2022, Aiqiyi successfully launched the 'Misty Theatre' to the world. In March 2022, Aiqiyi successfully completed a new round of overseas distribution of some episodes of 'Misty Theatre' and several original suspense dramas, expanding the platform's 'overseas' content to Spanish-speaking regions for the first time^[2].

An autonomous platform has more strategic value because of its autonomy than a borrowed ship. By building an independent broadcasting platform, it can decide what programmes to broadcast, when to broadcast them, and how much to promote them. With its Beijing headquarters and Singapore international headquarters as its international business centre, Aqiyi has set up teams for content, product, technology development, membership, advertising and marketing to build an overseas-facing communication platform. At the same time, it has set up local offices in Thailand, Malaysia and North America for localised operations to reach out to local markets and users and promote the deeper development of its international business. Currently, the international version of Aqiyi covers 191 countries and regions around the world, and as long as the terminal equipment with Internet access can watch Aqiyi's content^[3]. More than 1,230 TV dramas, variety shows and anime contents and 3,300 movies have been launched on the international version of Aqiyi, with a steady growth in the scale of active users and the number of paid subscription members, and the search attention of Aqiyi's hot content in overseas regions continues to be high.

2.2 Tencent Goes Overseas: Progressive Development from Content to Platform

Tencent Video's documentary section reached cooperation with BBC, National Geographic and other internationally renowned documentary film labels during its infancy, and introduced documentary blockbusters with natural and humanistic themes such as 'The Story of Life,' 'Planet of the Humans,' and 'A Journey Through Space and Time,' in the form of copyright purchases, which has laid a good foundation for enhancing the standard of the platform's documentaries and the accumulation of resources. If new media documentaries want to seek new breakthroughs in international co-operation and dissemination and achieve significant development, they should not be satisfied with 'all for me', but should be 'used for me' as much as possible. Therefore, in the past two years, Tencent Video has begun to try to introduce overseas production models that are already very mature and localise them to produce stories about Chinese society and Chinese people. One of the more successful cases in this regard is the 72 Hours of Documentary (China Edition), which Tencent launched exclusively in 2018. Originally a documentary programme produced by NHK, Tencent imported the film's production model and sent the Chinese director to NHK to systematically learn the production process before returning to China for filming. The film has now received more than 200 million broadcasts on Tencent Video, and has also been successfully sold back to NHK, and has achieved good dissemination results in Japan. The purpose of introducing outstanding foreign documentaries and learning from their advanced production modes is also to serve the creation of Chinese-themed documentaries and lower the barriers to the dissemination of good Chinese stories^[4].

Food is a topic of common concern to all mankind. Therefore, documentaries on this kind of topic have a natural advantage in international communication. Tencent Video, led by Chen Xiaoqing, launched the food documentary 'Flavours of the World' in 2018. After the film went online, it had more than 1 billion hits on Tencent Video and was successfully distributed to 8 TV stations around the world, covering many regions in Asia Pacific and North America; at the same time, it was also broadcast on 9 airlines around the world, basically realising a comprehensive cover of major routes. The success of 'Flavours of the World' has led to the international dissemination of the entire food category of documentaries. Tencent Video has also created the 'Flavour Origin' and 'Flavour Lab' series, which together with 'Flavour of the World' constitute a classic food IP. 'Flavour Origin' has been produced for three consecutive seasons, and in 2018, Netflix purchased the global rights to 'Flavour Origin - Chaoshan', which will be broadcast simultaneously on Netflix in more than 190 countries and regions on 12 February 2019, which is the first time that Netflix has purchased the global rights to 'Flavour Origin - Chaoshan', which will be aired in over 190 countries and regions. This is the first Chinese original documentary series purchased by Netflix. This is the first Chinese original documentary series purchased by Netflix. Since then, 'Flavour Origin - Yunnan' and 'Flavour Origin - Gansu' have also been broadcast globally through Netflix. The 'Flavour' IP has become an important reference model for the international dissemination of Chinese documentaries. Firstly, the production has an international vision. In the topic planning stage, the film focuses precisely on food, a common language of mankind; in the pre-production stage, the film was shot across six continents and involved more than 30 countries and regions. Secondly, the film adopts the internationally accepted classic narrative mode and audio-visual language of spectacle to achieve international expression in terms of content and form. Secondly, the programme follows international practices in terms of dissemination and promotion. Before the official launch of the programme, pre-sales are conducted in the international market, and the communication effect of the programme is predicted accordingly; different forms of IP Matrix products are casted on different platforms, such as the feature film series is more suitable for overseas TV stations that mainly focus on the family viewing scene, while the short film series gives priority to international streaming platforms

that have a better compatibility with the market and a higher degree of flexibility^[5].

In co-production, Tencent Video will flexibly adjust the details of co-operation according to the specific conditions of different projects, and choose appropriate production methods. In terms of independent dissemination, in 2019, Tencent Video's overseas version, WeTV, will be launched in Thailand, Indonesia, the Philippines, and India, becoming a streaming service platform specialising in mainland content in these countries and regions. WeTV will provide high-quality Chinese-language audio-visual content to local users through subtitle translation and dubbing, and carry out three-dimensional content marketing and promotion both online and offline, breaking the trend of providing only Chinese-language content to local users. WeTV provides high-quality Chinese audiovisual content to local users through subtitle translation and dubbing, and carries out online and offline three-dimensional content marketing and promotion in the local market, breaking the industry barrier that Chinese content is only available to Chinese people. The creation of an independent platform for overseas editions has pushed forward the internationalisation of its own content, and in April 2020, during the premiere of the second season of *Flavours of the World*, it was opened up for global broadcast, so that users at home and abroad can watch it globally as long as they turn on Tencent Video or WeTV^[6]. This is shown in Table 1.

Table 1: International Distribution of Tencent's Self-produced Documentaries on Chinese Subjects (Part)

| film title | certain year | Hourly/Minute | Method of production | co-producing agency | International dissemination |
|--|--------------|---------------|----------------------|---------------------|--|
| Flavours of the World Season 2 | 2020 | 400 | improvised | none | WOWOW TV (Japan), China TV (Korea), TVB (Hong Kong), TVB (Taiwan), Astro (Malaysia), Astro (Serbia). |
| Flavour origin. Gansu | 2020 | 100 | improvised | none | Netflix, Hong Kong Region, Singapore Region |
| The Great Powers of the Warring States of Wind and Cloud | 2020 | 420 | improvised | none | Japanese DVD maker MAXAM |
| The Chronicle 72 Hours (China Edition) | 2018 | 325 | improvised | none | NHK Japan |

3. Analysis of Strategies to Enhance the International Communication Capability of Network Audiovisual Platforms

3.1 Focusing on Content and Serving Global Customers

Audiovisual platforms going overseas means entering a brand new international market, facing competitors such as leading global technology enterprises, such as Google's YouTube, global head video platform Netflix, the world's oldest media enterprises Disney (Disney), Warner, and so on, as well as outstanding local media enterprises. It is not easy for Chinese audiovisual platforms to survive and have a place in the harsh competitive environment. Therefore, domestic audiovisual platforms should be positioned as video platforms with Asian content as their core content according to their content strengths and weaknesses, as well as cultural proximity and geographic situation, to advance into the Asian, especially East and Southeast Asian markets. By analysing and studying the global acceptance of film and television content from various countries, it can be found that the content with the most international spreading power is still American English content, and Asian Korean music, film and television dramas and Japanese animation also have high acceptance in the global context. In contrast, Chinese-language content is the weaker content category. However, Chinese-language content, especially content produced

in China, is rising strongly. In response to the above situation, online audiovisual platforms can build two new categories of Korean dramas and Japanese comics, which in turn will drive the broadcast of Chinese-language content and enhance the influence of Chinese-language content^[7].

3.2 Create Chinese IP and drive internationalisation by branding

After several years of development, China's online audiovisual platforms have initially possessed a production level and platform system that is comparable to international standards. However, in the video globalisation landscape synonymous with Netflix, the production and promotion of global content under the internationalisation model is the current shortcoming of Chinese new media platforms. The major documentary film labels around the world all have their own niche areas of expertise and a mature system to match. For example, the BBC's blue-chip natural history blockbusters and NHK's 72 Hours of Reality even have a complete set of Bible (programme operation manuals) in stock. These production models have been introduced by domestic new media platforms and used to produce content with Chinese characteristics according to local conditions. Domestic new media platforms have accumulated a lot of operational experience in the field of Chinese-themed documentaries, especially in 'light' subjects such as history, humanities, food and tourism, and need to focus on their strengths, strengthen the creation of globally-focused IP products, and implement branding and commercialisation-driven internationalisation strategies. If Chinese online audiovisual platforms want to gain sustainable momentum in the process of international dissemination, they should establish a standardised production model for local content with the support of their platforms, and try to promote this model to the overseas documentary market.

3.3 Establish its own overseas platform and implement localisation strategy

In the process of China's online audiovisual platforms 'going out', domestic new media platforms mainly use market-based means, which is in line with the international mainstream paradigm. However, it is worth thinking about how to incorporate international communication considerations into the top-level design, and how to balance the original Chinese content and the acceptance psychology of overseas viewers in the context of cultural differences. In recent years, domestic new media platforms have effectively exported high-quality and diversified documentary content by 'borrowing ships to go to sea', and at the same time, they have also begun to build their own international communication platforms to create a spontaneous communication advantage that is different from that of traditional media. For example, Mango TV, Aiqiyi, Tencent Video, and Beilizoli have launched international APPs to provide high-quality content for overseas users. Domestic native video sites in the relatively unfamiliar overseas market landing, in the pioneering period will inevitably appear 'not suit the soil' situation. At present, the problem of Chinese media competitiveness is not in its hardware facilities, but in its soft power, i.e. localisation strategy. The launch of the overseas version of the independent platform of the domestic head video website is one of the important attempts of Chinese media to further expand to overseas markets. In order to truly implement the localisation strategy, it is not just based on the non-differentiated output of Chinese local content, but also to change the mindset, pay attention to the experience of overseas users, and really put into practice the precise communication and operation strategy for each country and region, and even consider 'one policy for each region' and 'one policy for each country', so as to enhance Chinese content's quality. We even consider 'one policy for one region' and 'one policy for one country', so as to enhance the international expression of Chinese content, lower the threshold of acceptance by overseas users, and improve the effectiveness of international communication. At the initial stage of 'building ships to go to sea', it is possible to practice the localisation of geographical segmentation, focusing on breaking through the less developed countries and regions such as Africa and Latin America, where the head streaming platforms are not deeply cultivated, as well as Southeast Asia, Japan and South Korea and other areas where the Chinese culture flourishes or the Chinese are densely populated, to target the placement of content, and to increase the investment of resources in the areas of translation and precise marketing.

4. Conclusion

Telling China's story, spreading China's voice, and presenting a true, three-dimensional and comprehensive China' is not only the work of foreign propaganda departments, but also the common endeavour of diversified subjects under the strategic vision of international communication capacity building. Over the past decade or so, domestic online audiovisual platforms have continued to make great efforts to promote Internet-driven international cooperation and dissemination from multi-line

procurement to joint production and broadcasting, and Chinese-foreign cooperation has entered the norm and deepened, while the ability of self-produced products and platforms to go to the sea has also been continuously improved. In the international market, domestic new media platforms have changed from 'buyers' to 'sellers', from passive receivers to active disseminators, and from 'borrowing ships to go to sea' to 'building ships to go to sea'. In the international market, domestic new media platforms have changed from 'buyers' to 'sellers', from passive receivers to active communicators, from 'borrowing ships to go to sea' to 'building ships to go to sea', and from a weak to a strong discourse and autonomy, so that they can tell a good story about China and disseminate Chinese culture in the 'era of the Internet.

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