

An Investigation of Chinese College Students' Access to European and American Popular Music in the Social Media Environment

Dingchen Zhang*

School of Publishing, Beijing Institute of Graphic Communication, Beijing, 102600, China

Abstract. The purpose of this paper is to explore how Chinese college students acquire European and American popular music in the social media environment. With the popularization of the Internet and the development of social media, college students gradually tend to contact and acquire music resources through these emerging platforms. Through questionnaire surveys and case studies, the study found that social media not only became the main channel for college students to obtain information about European and American popular music, but also profoundly influenced their music preferences and choices. Specifically, college students access the latest information, popular singles and album recommendations of European and American pop music through domestic social media platforms such as Weibo, WeChat and Jitterbug, as well as international platforms such as Instagram and YouTube. In addition, they also pay attention to the official accounts of singers, official accounts of music programs, and music recommendation bloggers to get more comprehensive music information. At the same time, the forms of sharing, amenity, and video soundtracks on social media have greatly contributed to the spread of European and American popular music.

1 Introduction

In today's era of digitalization and globalization, cultural exchanges and integration are taking place globally with unprecedented speed and breadth. Music, as an important form of cultural expression, crosses borders and becomes an important bridge connecting different cultures and people. European and American popular music, as the name suggests, is popular music produced in Europe and America, which is a form of modern music. It uses sound as a carrier and is produced in the form of commodities, which is one of the best communication carriers of popular culture. It is popular and popularized, a free form of art and cultural expression with relatively civilian life as its core connotation.

With the deepening of globalization, cultural exchange and integration have become an irreversible trend. Music, as an important part of culture, has spread particularly across borders. European and American pop music, with its advanced production technology, unique musical elements and wide dissemination channels, has had a far-reaching impact on

* Corresponding author: pengyao@ldy.edu.rs

the global scale. In China, with the deepening of reform and opening up and the increase of foreign exchanges, European and American pop music has gradually penetrated into all corners of society, especially among college students, where it has been widely spread and accepted. The popularization of the Internet and the rise of social media have provided a brand-new platform and channel for music dissemination. As the main user groups of the Internet and social media, Chinese college students are experiencing profound changes in their music consumption habits and information acquisition methods. Social media platforms, such as Weibo, WeChat, Jittery, Bilibili Station, not only provide rich music resources and convenient access, but also promote the rapid dissemination of music information and in-depth communication through sharing, liking, commenting and other interactive methods. Through these platforms, college students can easily access the latest news of European and American popular music, popular songs, and music videos, as well as interact and share with other music lovers, forming a unique music culture community. As a special group in the society, college students have high cultural literacy, strong learning ability, and a wide range of interests. In terms of music, they not only pursue the entertainment and fashionability of music, but also pay attention to the artistry and cultural connotation of music. With its unique music style and rich cultural connotation, European and American pop music has attracted the attention and love of a large number of college students. They understand, share, and discuss these music works through social media platforms, forming a unique music aesthetic and cultural identity. In the social media environment, the music consumption habits of college students are undergoing profound changes. Traditional music purchasing and downloading methods are gradually replaced by streaming services. Streaming platforms such as Spotify, Apple Music, NetEase Cloud Music, etc., provide massive music resources and personalized recommendation services, which satisfy the diverse music needs of college students. They can listen to their favorite music anytime and anywhere through these platforms, and they can also discover new music works and musicians according to their preferences. In addition, music sharing and discussion on social media further promote the spread and popularity of music. For college students, music is not only a way of entertainment and pastime but also an important way for them to express themselves and seek cultural identity. European and American pop music, with its unique musical style and rich cultural connotation, provides a stage for college students to show themselves and express their personalities. They share their favorite music works and musicians through social media platforms, interact and communicate with other music lovers, and form a unique music culture community and identity. In this process, college students not only enjoy the fun of music, but also realize the needs of self-expression and cultural identity.

2 Literature review

The academic world has achieved rich research results on the communication of popular music. In the field of communication, many scholars have studied popular music in the context of the development of media technology and the evolution of the media environment. Scholar Wang Yu, in his Study, compiles the main communication media, characteristics, and channels of contemporary popular music in China, and analyzes its negative impacts [1], which is a more comprehensive analysis and provides a few angles of entry to the study of the communication of popular music, but it is a shallow study. Scholar Han Mengwei analyzes the advantages of the development of media technology on the spread of popular music by taking the release of the third album of the South Korean boy group 2 PM as an example in her article [2]. The article is novel in its selection of cases, but it is too limited to reflect the advantages and disadvantages of the spread of popular music in a comprehensive way. Scholar Li Zihan analyzes the visual content production and audience of pop music on the Jitterbug short video platform as an example and summarizes the problems and

suggestions in the short video platform [3]. Scholars Donner and Thorson investigated people's digital music consumption behavior on streaming platforms and found that popular music on streaming platforms provides people with strong social value [4]. Scholar Xie Haichao analyzes the ecological characteristics and phenomenon analysis of popular music in a streaming media environment, the characteristics of streaming media platforms and music communication, the ecological structure of music platforms in a streaming media environment, as well as the phenomenon of "Chinese" music in China's streaming media platforms, which provides a relatively complete analysis of the communication ecology of popular music in the streaming media environment [5]. Zeng Hongzhi, in his article, looks at the communication of Chinese popular music in terms of traditional media and new media, and analyzes the characteristics and limitations of the two in a comparative manner [6]. Scholar Kong Jialing compares and analyzes the communication environments of traditional music and popular music in China according to the six dimensions of music communicators, music information, music communication media, music gatekeepers, music audiences, and the effects of music communication and the establishment of its feedback mechanism", which presents a clearer dimension of comparison [7].

Another part of scholars put the communication phenomenon of popular music in the perspective of different disciplines or fields, such as Liu Xiaobo, who analyzed the many problems of China's popular music and its industry in the communication process from the perspective of semiotics, the theoretical analysis of the use of the theoretical perspective of semiotics is very novel, and puts forward many new insights into the communication mechanism of China's popular music [8]. The use of semiotic theory is very novel, and it puts forward many new insights into the dissemination mechanism of China's popular music. Scholar Yu Mingchuan explores the relationship between the various social movements that took place in the United States in the 1960s and 1970s and the origins and development of different genres of Western popular music from a social and historical perspective and introduces the representative singers of different genres [9]. Scholars Keith Negus and Yuan Yu, explore the role and influence of Western popular music on the audience psychologically, socially, and culturally from the audience's point of view, which is a rare study of Western popular music from the audience's point of view [10]. Scholar Zhang Bin analyzes the phenomenon of crowdedness in popular music communication and believes that the internal reason for this phenomenon is the imbalance between the psychological development of young people at a certain age and their own cultural development, while the external factors are directly related to the active participation of modern mass communication media [11]. Huang Dejun summarized the social functions of popular music communication as the symbolic memory of historical moments, the publicity and promotion of major events, and the emotional resonance of public welfare activities [12]. Scholar Piedelu combines the contemporary cultural and social backgrounds and comprehends the new trends of popular music communication", and the article is of practical help to music industry practitioners in adapting to the communication and development of popular music in the new era [13]. Scholars An Jie and Liu Yang investigate the behavior and situation of Western pop music consumption in China through interviews, and find that Western pop music is hindered from spreading in China due to copyright factors and piracy, etc. The discovery of the problem is important for the improvement of the spread of Western pop music in China. The discovery of this problem is of great significance to the improvement of the spread of Western popular music in China [14].

In the existing studies on cross-cultural communication of popular music at home and abroad, scholars mainly study cross-cultural communication of popular music from the perspective of audience or market environment, and the focus of the studies is mostly on the influencing factors of cross-cultural communication of popular music. At the same time, the youth group is often taken as the target of research from the perspective of audience.

Therefore, this study will integrate the relevant theories of cross-cultural communication to study the dissemination of Western pop music among Chinese college students, its effects, and its influencing factors.

3 Methodology

In exploring Chinese college students' access to European and American popular music in the social media environment, this study adopts a quantitative research methodology, mainly through designing and distributing questionnaires to collect data. To ensure the representativeness and validity of the study, the sample selection followed the principle of random sampling and tried to cover college students from different geographical regions, grades, and professional backgrounds as much as possible to ensure the breadth and diversity of the sample.

The questionnaire design was based on a literature review and preliminary interviews, focusing on the frequency, preference, and specific behaviors of college students use of social media platforms (e.g., Weibo, WeChat, Instagram, YouTube, etc.), as well as the ways, types of attention and reasons for their attention to European and American popular music through these platforms. The questionnaire was created and distributed through professional online questionnaire platforms (Questionnaire Star), and widely disseminated using social media groups, university forums, and campus cooperation channels to ensure that the questionnaire could reach the target group.

The questionnaire distribution cycle was set at two weeks, during which the activity and participation of the questionnaire were maintained through regular reminders and social media promotion. In the end, a total of 55 valid questionnaires were received. These questionnaires were strictly screened to eliminate invalid questionnaires that were obviously illogical or not filled out carefully, such as having all the same answers or patterned answers. The judgment criteria of valid questionnaires were based on the completeness of answers, rationality, and logic of answers, which ensured the authenticity and reliability of the data. In the data processing stage, statistical software was used to quantitatively analyze the collected data, and descriptive statistics and cross-analysis were used to deeply analyze the status quo and characteristics of Chinese college students' access to European and American popular music in the social media environment and the influencing factors behind them, so as to provide data support for further research and practice.

4 Results

Based on a questionnaire survey of Chinese college students access to European and American popular music in a social media environment, the research comes up with the following key findings:

High usage of social media and access to music information: when asked whether they regularly use social media platforms, the vast majority of respondents (53, 88%) answered in the affirmative, showing the high popularity of social media among the college student population. In terms of accessing music information, domestic platforms such as Weibo (25 respondents), WeChat (shared, 24 respondents), and Jitterbug (33 respondents) were particularly favored, while QQ Music (26 respondents) and NetEase Cloud Music (37 respondents) also occupied an important position as music applications. It is worth noting that despite the relatively low usage of international platforms such as Instagram (15 people) and YouTube (7 people), a portion of students still utilize them to obtain information about European and American popular music.

Importance of social media for the promotion of Euro-American popular music: The vast majority of respondents (48, or 80%) found it relatively easy to access information about Euro-American popular music on social media, which suggests that social media are more efficient in disseminating information about music. Further, when assessing the role of social media in the promotion of European and American popular music, 36 respondents (60%) considered it to be “very important”, highlighting the central role of social media in facilitating the dissemination of music and culture.

Forms of music acquisition and the influence of social media: Respondents acquire European and American popular music in a variety of forms, with social media sharing (43) and video soundtracks (31) being the most popular. This shows the unique advantage of social media in driving music distribution through user-generated content and video platforms. Meanwhile, when asked about the influence of social media on listening to European and American popular music, 30 people (50%) said they were greatly influenced by “amenities”, 25 people (42%) thought the influence was average, and no one chose “very little”, which further proves that social media has a unique advantage in guiding music consumption preferences. This is further evidence of the significant influence of social media in guiding music consumption preferences.

Active Followers and Music Account Preferences: Although only 24 people (40%) said they follow European and American pop music on a regular basis, respondents showed a high degree of motivation in following music accounts. Official accounts of singers (38 people) and music recommendation bloggers (26 people) are the most popular types of attention, showing that the college student population relies heavily on official information and personalized recommendations. In addition, official accounts of music programs (27 people) and music websites (17 people) also received a lot of attention, indicating that diversified information sources have an important influence on college students' music choices.

In summary, social media has become the main channel for Chinese college students to obtain information about European and American popular music, and it plays an indispensable role in music culture dissemination, promotion and consumption guidance.

5 Discussion

Social media is highly popular among contemporary college students and has become an indispensable main channel for them to obtain music information. From domestic microblogging, WeChat, and Jitterbug to professional QQ Music and NetEase Cloud Music, these platforms not only meet the diverse music needs of college students, but are also favored for their convenience. Although international platforms such as Instagram and YouTube have relatively low usage rates, they still provide a rich source of information for student groups pursuing European and American popular music. The reason why social media can occupy such an important position in music information access is that it satisfies the socialization needs of college students and at the same time provides extremely convenient access to information. The rich and diverse music content on the platform, combined with personalized recommendation algorithms, enables college students to quickly find and immerse themselves in their favorite music world. In addition, social media also breaks down geographical restrictions and facilitates the rapid dissemination of global music culture, allowing Chinese college students to have instant access to music trends from around the world. However, the high usage of social media has also brought about a series of impacts. On the one hand, it greatly facilitates the dissemination and exchange of music culture, broadens the musical horizons of college students, stimulates their interest in and love of music, and provides new channels for musicians to publicize and promote their work, which promotes the prosperous development of the music industry. On the other hand, information overload, copyright issues, and undesirable information in network culture also bring

challenges that cannot be ignored. To this end, it is necessary to strengthen information literacy education and improve college students' ability to screen and identify music information; at the same time, it is necessary to strengthen the awareness of copyright protection and fight against copyright infringement; and it is necessary to strengthen the supervision of social media platforms, so as to create a healthy and positive online cultural environment and provide college students with a high-quality platform for acquiring and sharing music.

Social media plays an irreplaceable and important role in promoting European and American popular music, and its influence is far-reaching and extensive. The vast majority of respondents indicated that social media has become the main way for them to obtain information about European and American popular music, and they generally believe that this platform is "very important" in the promotion of music. The importance of social media is due to its large user base and high degree of immediacy, which allows music information to be shared quickly and instantly across geographical boundaries and globally. Secondly, personalized recommendation algorithms and rich interactive features not only enhance the user experience, but also promote a close connection between musicians and fans, enhancing the spread of music. From the impact level, social media has brought many positive effects on the promotion of European and American popular music. It promotes the diversified development of music culture, enabling the wide dissemination of music of various styles and languages; at the same time, it also provides musicians with low-cost and high-efficiency promotional channels, helping them to rapidly enhance their popularity and become the best in the industry. In addition, the involvement of social media has also injected new vitality into the music industry, promoting the innovation and development of each link. However, it is necessary to see the problems of social media in promoting music. The flood of information and noise interference may confuse users and even create anxiety; false publicity and misleading marketing also occur from time to time, jeopardizing consumers' rights and interests; and copyright disputes and controversies are even more common, which need to be highly emphasized. To address these problems, it is necessary to take a series of measures to deal with them. First, social media platforms should strengthen the supervision of music content to ensure the authenticity and legality of the information; second, they should continue to optimize personalized recommendation algorithms to improve the accuracy and diversity of the recommendations; and lastly, they should also strengthen the copyright protection mechanism, fight against infringement, and safeguard the legitimate rights and interests of musicians and their creativity.

In today's music consumption field, respondents obtain European and American popular music through diversified channels, among which social media stands out with its unique user-generated content and video soundtrack format, becoming an important force in leading the music trend. Behind this phenomenon is a combination of factors such as high social media engagement, video content appeal, and social network connectivity. Users actively participate in sharing and recommending, forming a strong word-of-mouth effect; video soundtracks open up a new way for music dissemination through intuitive and vivid forms; and the extensive connection of social networks allows music information to spread rapidly and multiply its influence. Social media has had a far-reaching impact on the change of the form of music access. On the one hand, it promotes the diversity of music culture, so that a variety of styles of European and American popular music can be widely displayed; on the other hand, through the video soundtrack and other forms, it enhances the sense of experience of music, so that listeners enjoy a richer and more three-dimensional music feast. In addition, the promotional role of social media also promotes the prosperous development of the music industry and provides a stage for more outstanding musicians to show themselves. However, there are some problems with social media in music dissemination, such as information overload, copyright infringement, and misleading recommendations. To solve these

problems, the government should take various measures: improve the quality of content and encourage users to share high-quality music; strengthen copyright protection and establish a sound copyright protection mechanism; optimize recommendation algorithms to improve accuracy and diversity and reduce misleading recommendations. At the same time, it is also indispensable to strengthen user education and cultivate healthy music consumption habits. Through these efforts, society can better utilize the positive role of social media in music communication and contribute to the prosperity of music culture.

In exploring college students' preference for following European and American pop music accounts, despite the limited proportion of respondents who regularly and actively follow them, the college student group shows a high degree of positivity and diversified tendencies in their choice of music accounts. They tend to follow the official accounts of singers to obtain authoritative information, and rely on music recommendation bloggers to satisfy their personalized needs, in addition to extensively exploring multiple sources of information such as the official accounts of music programs and music websites. Behind this preference, the authority of official information, the attractiveness of personalized recommendations, and the need for diversified information are the main reasons. Official accounts provide college students with core information such as new song releases and concerts, which satisfies their pursuit of authoritative information; music recommendation bloggers, with their unique tastes and personalized recommendations, help college students explore more music works that meet their personal preferences; and diversified information sources further broaden college students' musical horizons, enriching their musical experiences. However, this preference also brings certain impacts. Information overload may cause college students to feel tired and confused when sifting through information, while over-reliance on personalized recommendations may weaken their autonomy and exploration. To cope with these problems, it is necessary to take corresponding measures. On the one hand, college students should be encouraged to develop the ability to choose music independently and reduce their reliance on recommendations; on the other hand, social media and music platforms should optimize the information screening mechanism to reduce the interference of invalid information. Meanwhile, it is also crucial to strengthen the construction and management of music communities, promote communication and interaction among college students, and create a positive music culture atmosphere. Through these measures, it can better guide college students to maintain their autonomy and exploration in music consumption and promote the healthy development of music culture.

6 Conclusion

In summary, the discussion on forms of music access and the influence of social media reveals the centrality of social media in today's music communication, especially for the college student population. Despite the low percentage of respondents who actively follow European and American popular music on a regular basis, college students demonstrate a high degree of motivation and diverse preferences in their choice of music accounts, reflecting their thirst for musical information and their pursuit of personalized experiences. Social media, through user-generated content, video soundtracks, and extensive social networks, not only promotes the diversification of music culture, but also significantly influences college students' music consumption preferences. The authority of official information, the appeal of personalized recommendations, and the need for information diversification have combined to drive college students' attention to specific music accounts. This trend not only enhances college students' knowledge and understanding of music but also stimulates their desire to consume music, injecting new vitality into the music industry. However, the widespread use of social media has also brought some challenges. Information overload and misleading recommendations may cause college students to be confused when

sifting through music information, and even affect their music aesthetics. In addition, the issue of copyright is a topic that cannot be ignored. Unauthorized sharing of music may infringe copyright and lead to legal disputes.

To address these challenges, a series of measures can be taken. First, encourage college students to develop the ability to choose music on their own and reduce over-reliance on personalized recommendations in order to maintain the autonomy and exploratory nature of their music choices. Second, social media and music platforms should strengthen the supervision of content to ensure the authenticity and legitimacy of information and maintain a good network ecological environment. At the same time, optimize the recommendation algorithm to improve the accuracy and diversity of recommendations and reduce the flood of information and noise interference. In addition, it is crucial to establish a sound copyright protection mechanism to combat infringement and safeguard the legitimate rights and interests of musicians and their creative enthusiasm.

References

1. Y. Wang, A study on the dissemination of contemporary popular music in China. *Tomorrow's Style*, **17**,87-88 (2020).
2. M. Han, The influence of media technology on the dissemination of popular music. *News of the World*, **276**(04), 302-304 (2014).
3. Z. Li, Research on visualization communication of popular music on short video platform. Shandong University, (2021).
4. J. S. Turner, A. C. Tollison, The Evolving Communicative Value of Popular Music: Music Is Interpersonal Communication in the Age of Digital Media. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, **65**(3), 357-376 (2021).
5. H. Xie, Ecological characteristics and phenomenon analysis of popular music in streaming media environment. Shenzhen University, (2019).
6. H. Zeng, Trial analysis of Chinese popular music communication mode under the change of media form. *Communication Research*, **3**(36), 233-234 (2019).
7. J. Kong, Comparison of the communication environments of popular music and traditional music in China. *Music Communication*, **29**(02), 76-79 (2016).
8. X. Liu, Symbolic interaction and pan-symbolization: A mountain of research on the communication mechanism of popular music. *Modern Communication (Journal of Communication University of China)*, **44**(08), 105-111 (2022).
9. M. Yu, A study of social music forms in the United States in the 1960s and 1970s. Northeast Normal University, (2019).
10. K. Negus, Y. Yuan, Audience Theory in Western Popular Music Research. *Music Communication*, **02**, 113-118 (2015).
11. B. Zhang, The herd phenomenon in popular music communication from the perspective of social psychology. *Journal of Zhanjiang Normal College*, **01**, 74-77 (1997).
12. D. Huang, Explanation of Social Function of Contemporary Popular Music Communication. *Popular Literature and Art*, **526**(04),74-76(2022).
13. P. B. Tereero, J. H. Ruiz, New forms of distribution of popular music in contemporary culture. *methaodos, Revista de ciencias sociales*, **4**(1), (2016).
14. A. Cockrill, L. Yang, Western popular music consumption by highly involved Chinese music fans. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, **20**(3), 263-271 (2013).