

Research on Animated Films Incorporating Elements of the Folk Myths and Legends in Screen Adaptations and Audience Experience

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Abstract: Folklore and mythology film adaptation is a common theme for animation films, and audience experience is an important part of the modern movie evaluation system. In the commercial movie market, movie evaluation is regarded as an important indicator that affects the word-of-mouth and popularity of a movie. At the same time, studying audience experience can also help us study the psychology of moviegoers and explore the relationship between the subject matter and audience experience of folklore and mythological film adaptations in depth and differently. This paper will use online review data as a research method to summarize the audience experience data of folklore and mythological film adaptations by analyzing the existing online review data and its emotional tendency. By sampling online reviews to collect audience reviews of folklore-mythological film adaptations, the audience experience of folklore-mythological film adaptations is analyzed by linking the online review data. This study aims to obtain the relationship between the folklore myth adaptation movie and its audience experience from the study, to provide a reference sample for the study of folklore myth adaptation movies, and to provide a reference for the study of audience experience of animated movies in the specific topic of folklore myth adaptation movies.

Keywords: Animated movies; Folk mythology; Cross-cultural communication; Audience experience

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1. Introduction

1.1. Importance of the issue

Folk mythology adapted movie subject matter itself has a certain breadth. To a considerable extent, animated movies based on myths can fit the thinking patterns of different countries, nationalities, and regions, and can maintain their own cultural characteristics, so they have a unique inherent advantage in the level of communication. At the same time, there is a significant correlation between the audience's experience and the movie's word-of-mouth system^[1]. Since the 21st century, along with the popularization of mobile Internet, China's

film industry chain system has been gradually improved and developed in the direction of digitalization ^[2]. The main position of movie reviews has also shifted from paper media to network media, and the function of movie reviews is more closely connected with the audience, with participatory, interactive, and popular characteristics, and is no longer limited to the analysis of the artistic level. This situation makes the folklore and myths movie adaptations have unique research value. In addition, the movie's word-of-mouth system is also closely related to the commercial value, which relates movie box office to word of mouth through the word of mouth (WOM) model, which uses actual word of mouth (WOM) information to examine the dynamic pattern of word of mouth and how word of mouth helps explain box office revenues ^[3]. In relation to the importance of the film adaptation of folklore myths and the audience experience, Yang Huanchen argues that myths are re-told across mediums through the medium of film in a modern sense, pulling the subject's affective perceptions in the process of sensory integration and narrative reconstruction, and further reflecting on modern issues such as subjective anxiety in a deeper reflection on the relationship between the body and between the body and the society ^[4].

2. Research background

2.1. In the context of the study of film adaptations of folklore myths and audience experience

To address the gap of audience experience in films adapted from folklore myths of different countries, Zhang Dong believes that mythological films acquire narrative and market identity, and creatively transform the acquired narrative and market identity to activate the audience's imagination ^[5]. It is found that the satisfaction degree of the audience's entertainment is the most important part of the audience experience, which reflects the importance of the movie's word of mouth. The satisfaction degree of the audience's entertainment needs, social needs, emotional needs, and cultural identity needs is positively correlated with the audience's tendency to watch movies. It is found that the satisfaction degree of the audience's entertainment needs, social needs, emotional needs, and cultural identity needs are positively correlated with the audience's tendency to watch the follow-up. Huang Yuzhuo's research mainly found that the influence of network opinion leaders has a significant positive effect on the IWOM communication effect of movies; information credibility has a significant positive effect on the IWOM communication effect of movies, and the emotional tendency contained in popular comments and reviews, the number of likes, and usefulness have an effect ^[6]. Meanwhile, the new media of animation has a significant position in the shaping of people's character that cannot be ignored. With the progress and development of society, animation and new media have an important position in the shaping of people's character that cannot be ignored. With the progress and development of society, animation art, which is closely related to social life, applied economy, and the rapid development of new media technology, appears in the new media in the form of innovation. Provides the spiritual aspect unceasingly for the populace, the nutrient, and the cultural aspect edification ^[7]. In Meike Uhrig's study, whether it is depicting emotional characters in moving pictures or creating controlled emotional stimuli in scientific contexts, the artificiality characteristic of computer animation makes it ideal for various fields related to emotions ^[8].

2.2. In the context of the study of folklore-mythological film adaptations and audience experience

Currently, there is a gap in the study of audience experience in folklore-mythological film adaptations in different countries, which needs to be filled urgently. The narratives of traditional animated movies often follow a linear structure, relying on clear timelines and cause-and-effect relationships to drive the story ^[9]. In the new media

context, the narrative of folklore myth animated movies gradually breaks through this traditional framework and begins to explore more flexible and diversified ways of expression.

The box office of a movie is affected by a variety of factors, including the type of movie, word-of-mouth ratings, release schedule, distribution companies, IP adaptation, etc., and the audience experience and word-of-mouth are also important components, and the audience experience directly reflects the importance of the movie's word-of-mouth^[10]. It is found that the degree of audience satisfaction in terms of entertainment needs, social needs, emotional needs, and cultural identity needs is positively correlated with their tendency to watch subsequent works. The word of mouth of a movie, in turn, correlates with its commercial value^[11].

3. In the studies conducted by others

3.1. In the studies conducted by others

Many scholars have already explored the field of film adaptations of folklore myths^[10]. Liu Nana and Ran Qian's study points out that *Elf Travel 4* pays attention to social, cultural, and artistic aesthetic trends, and realizes cross-cultural and cross-regional cultural communication and emotional resonance^[12]. The movie demonstrates the unique role of folklore and mythological film adaptations in cultural communication by setting up the classic IP of "Hotel Transylvania", which is based on the background of ancient Western ghosts and monsters. Xu Shuang and Meng Ying believe that animation works can embody the spirit of the times through mythological elements, and the transformation of animation in the direction of folklore and myth not only highlights the dynamic adaptability of national cultural genes, but also makes myth a cultural prism for decoding contemporary spiritual symptoms, providing a paradigm for the reconstruction of cultural subjectivity and the modern transformation of traditional spirit in the context of globalization^[13]. Another study takes the animated film *Legend of the Dragon* as the object, which is based on the excavation of the excellent regional culture of Southeast Asia, and carries out the design of a Hollywood-style animated film with regional characteristics^[14]. Relevant research from the film's story selection construction, humanistic color, artistic characteristics, and other aspects of the analysis, exploring the use of animation language, will be the regional culture and the needs of the times, characteristics of the integration of the innovative road. In the field of analysis of animation and emotion, Ma Yujuan, in her research, firstly analyzed the word cloud of movie reviews as a whole in order to obtain the audience's overall evaluation of the movie^[15]. Secondly, she conducted descriptive statistical analysis of the frequency of roles, rating levels, and the corresponding number of people; lastly, conducted in-depth research on the relationship between the number of movie reviews and the time of the reviews, the relationship between the number of movie reviews and the user's province, and the relationship between the movie ratings and the user's. Finally, the relationship between the number of movie reviews and the time of reviews, the relationship between the number of movie reviews and the user's province, and the relationship between the movie rating and the user's province are studied in depth, and the correlation between the evaluation indicators is analyzed^[14]. Another study, based on Plutchick's emotion classification theory, categorizes the emotion of each beat into one of 32 emotions (8 basic emotions and 24 compound emotions), thus reflecting the correlation between the emotions presented in animation beats and the story, music, sound, and visual narrative^[16].

3.2. Shortcomings of existing studies

The shortcoming of the existing research is that the relevant papers on film adaptations of folklore myths mainly focus on critical analyses of individual animated films, which are either specific or overall analyses of all

animated films within a few years. This study aims to fill this gap by exploring the relationship between folklore-mythological film adaptations and audience experience.

3.3. What gap does this study fill

Bridges the gap of linking folklore-myth adaptation films to audience experience, and fills the systematic association gap: Existing studies have mostly focused on individual films or animation across genres, and lacked a study on the specific association between “folklore-myth adaptation films” and “audience experience.” This study focuses on this specific topic, systematically analyzes the deep relationship between the two, and constructs a framework for the association between folklore elements and audience experience. Deepening the analysis of experience dimension: Breaking through the superficial judgment of audience experience in existing studies, this study explores the specific composition of experience through multi-dimensional analysis of emotional tendency, word frequency, etc., and explains the questions of “how the audience experience is generated” and “which folk elements affect the experience.” To supplement the cross-cultural comparison gap, existing studies are mostly confined to a single cultural circle, selecting regional folklore works from multiple countries, comparing the differences in audience experience of heterogeneous folklore symbols, and revealing the impact of folklore translation strategies on audience experience in cross-cultural communication.

4. The goals of this study

1. to study the association between folklore-mythological adaptations and audience experience; 2. to explore the multiple emotions of the psychological feelings produced by the audience after watching these animated movies; 3. to explore the audience’s psychological experience of folklore-mythological adaptations of animated movies from different countries. This paper proposes a viewpoint to analyze the audience’s emotional experience triggered by different folklore myths by revealing the association between folklore myths, adapted movies, and the audience’s experience, so as to provide a reference for the creation of original family animated movies.

5. Literature review: Existing research tools and theoretical foundations

This part aims to clarify the core research value of folklore myths, adapted animated movies, and audience experience. On the one hand, it explores the socio-cultural role of folklore and mythological films — such works intervene in the issues of mental health and social structure through narrative art, and visual elements such as scenic art and the use of color visualize the complex emotions, helping the audience understand the characters and generate empathy^[17]. On the other hand, focusing on the mechanism of audience experience, we analyze how the audience’s emotional feedback, cultural identity, and other experiences during the viewing process affect their acceptance of the film and communication behaviors, laying the foundation for the subsequent exploration of the connection between the two^[18].

In terms of analyzing the audience’s emotions and experiences, emotion dictionaries are commonly used, and their theoretical support can be traced back to the theory of emotional symbols in art. Susanne K. Langer proposed that art is a symbolic creation of human emotions, animated films guide audience emotions through “emotional symbols” (e.g., metaphors, symbolic techniques) to enrich the emotional level and enhance the experience^[19]. In addition, methods such as statistical analysis and questionnaire surveys have been widely used to quantify

audience acceptance of folklore-mythological elements and to provide support for the objective assessment of emotional tendencies. Meanwhile, Huang Yutuo's study mainly found that the influence of online opinion leaders has a significant positive impact on the effect of word-of-mouth (IWOM) dissemination of movies on the Internet ^[6]; information credibility also has a significant positive impact on the effect of word-of-mouth dissemination of movies on the Internet, and popular comments, emotional tendencies embedded in comments, the number of likes and the number of usefulness, and so on, have an impact. At the same time, the important position of animation new media in the characterization of the public should not be ignored. With the progress and development of society, the art of animation, which is closely related to social life, applied economy, and the rapid development of new media technology, has appeared in new media in an innovative form, and has continued to provide the public with nourishment on the spiritual level and inculcation on the cultural level.

6. Research methods for similar subject matter that can be borrowed

Research in other fields provides methodological references for this paper, especially at the level of data collection and sentiment analysis: Web crawler tools can be borrowed to collect large-scale online comment data, breaking through the limitations of traditional sample size and comprehensively capturing the real feedback of the audience. Nan Zhang and Ellen Zhu carried out sentiment analysis by combining data and algorithms, providing ideas for quantitatively evaluating the cross-cultural communication effects of folklore and myth films ^[20]. The Deep Topic Autocoder Model (DTAM) proposed by Sun Changzhi et al. integrates the feature extraction of autocoder, the generative capability of generative adversarial network, and the topic discovery function of LDA, providing a technical paradigm for fine-grained sentiment analysis of movie reviews (e.g., mining the implicit emotions triggered by folklore symbols) ^[21]. Hiran B. Ekanayake conducted a study on the correlation between animated films and human physiological responses, which provides a reference for different research programs on animated film-related emotions ^[22]. The researcher believes that this finding is of general importance for simulation-based tutoring systems in developing and making decisions about whether to use animated character-based scenarios. The introduction of these methods helps to enhance the scientific validity and depth of this study's analysis of the audience experience of folklore and mythological film adaptations.

7. Method

In this study, the long reviews on *House of Magic* (2021), *Elf on the Shelf* (2012), *The Secret of the Kelvic* (2009), and *Coco* (2017) on IMDB and Rotten Tomatoes websites were selected as the core data source. Selection bases include the following.

7.1. Depth of modern translations of folklore

All four works are based on regional folklore, realizing the creative fusion of traditional legends and contemporary contexts, and their paths of translation are typical: "Encanto": rooted in the Colombian wax palm legend and coffee culture, constructing the metaphorical system of "Magic House—Family Talent." The setting of the "Miracle Candle" in the film is traced back to the sacrifice narrative in the history of colonial trauma (grandmother Alma triggered the miracle due to the loss of her husband), while the character arc of "Mirabelle, the ungifted" breaks the fatalism of the Latino family, which says that "supernatural power is the original sin" and intuitively that "supernatural power is the original sin." Fatalism in Latin families, visualizing the catalytic effect of folkloric symbols on

ethical issues in the family. *Elf Inn*: Subverting the horror archetype of Eastern European vampire legends, the film recasts Dracula as an “anxious single father” and deconstructs classic monster images such as werewolves and mummies with stand-up comedy humor. The film uses the setting of the “Monster Brigade” as a metaphor for the inclusiveness of immigrant society, confirming the positive significance of the budding design of folkloric characters in dissolving cultural barriers. *The Secret of the Kell Scriptures*: With the Irish national treasure of the Kell Scriptures manuscript as the centerpiece of the narrative, the forest sprite Aisling originates from the “dream guardian” in Celtic mythology. Its geometric hand-painted style accurately restores the decorative patterns of the medieval gospels, *Coco*: transforming the “marigold bridge—photo altar” system of the Mexican Day of the Dead into a visual symbol of the passage between life and death, reconstructing the Latin American concept of life and death through the concept of “ultimate death” (being forgotten means fading away), and clearly displaying the folklore cosmology, triggering the possibility of cross-cultural empathy.

7.2. A good sample for exploring audience experience

All four works use folklore elements as a carrier, realizing the connection between the core of regional culture and the audience’s experience: *Encanto*: revealing the collective psychology of “intergenerational inheritance of trauma” in Latin families through the “crisis of the demise of magic”, highlighting the healing value of the folklore framework to the audience’s self-identity dilemma; *Hotel Transylvania*: the healing value of the folklore framework to the audience’s self-identity dilemma. The healing value of the folklore framework to the audience’s self-identity dilemma; “*Hotel Transylvania*”: the plot of “human-monster marriage” subverts the tradition of xenophobia, and *Dracula* lets go of the ending of his daughter’s marriage to a faraway person, the theme of resistance is easy for the audience to experience and resonate with. *The Secret of Kells*’: the dualistic space of “monastery inside the wall vs. forest outside the wall” symbolizes the confrontation between religious discipline and folklore freedom, which triggers the young audience’s critical reflection on the closed nature of culture; “*Coco*”: the law of “memory lives forever” is used to transform the Mexican Day of the Dead from a regional festival of the dead to a national festival of the dead, and the theme of resistance is easy for the audience to experience and resonate. Mexican Day of the Dead, from a regional tribute to a universal symbol of family values, resonates with the audience’s family values.

7.3. Researching value proposition

The four works together present a three-step path of “innovative deconstruction of folklore archetypes—enhanced immersion in art media—cross-cultural sinking of values”, providing a multifaceted sample for verifying the strong correlation between regional lore and the emotional experience of contemporary audiences. The study will combine the semantic analysis of IMDB and Rotten Tomatoes to quantify the influence of folklore elements on the dimensions of “cultural identity” and “emotional arousal strength”, and finally provide a reusable cross-cultural narrative model for animation creation.

8. Research methods

8.1. The core framework of the algorithm

GooSeeker follows the three-stage process of “lexicon matching—weight modification—aggregation statistics” for the calculation of emotional values, and adopts a mixed research methodology, with the specific processes as follows.

8.2. Data collection and cleaning

Use the octopus framework to capture the short review data of the four movies on IMDB and the Rotten Tomatoes website, filter invalid symbols (such as advertisement links and emoticons) through regular expressions, and construct a structured database containing text content.

Quantitative analysis: using GooSeeker for semantic network analysis, and using GooSeeker to calculate the emotional tendency value, to draw the comparison maps of positive and negative emotional distribution of the four films, and various types of emotional data maps. The system realizes sentiment quantification through multi-level sentiment dictionary matching and weight correction algorithms, and combines syntactic rules and contextual modifiers to improve the analysis accuracy. The core computing framework is as follows.

8.3. Positive and negative sentiment computation

Through the GooSeeker sentiment analysis module, construct the positive and negative sentiment proportion graph, and use color to distinguish the positive and negative polarity of sentiment. First, online comments were collected and organized, and then the sentiment keywords used were extracted using GooSeeker sentiment analysis software to classify words with different sentiment tendencies. One point was awarded for each positive sentiment word and one negative point for each negative sentiment word. If a sentiment word is preceded by a word indicating degree, the score for that word is doubled. Each sentence was categorized as positive, negative, or neutral depending on whether its total score was positive, negative, or zero. Finally, integrate and summarize the sentences.

8.4. Sentiment segmentation calculation

Base lexicon: based on the Knowledge Network Sentiment Analysis Word Set (Hownet), containing a lexicon of seven categories of sentiment initialization (e.g., “happy” belongs to the degree of happiness, “horror” belongs to the degree of fear). Weight initialization: assign $[-10,10]$ base weights to the emotion words, e.g., “touched” = 8.2, “warm” = 7.5 in happiness; “routine” = -6.3, “avoidance” = -7.1.

8.5. Sentence-level sentiment weights dynamic correction

For comment sentences, adjust the base weights according to syntactic rules: degree adverb correction: scale the weights according to the modifier level of “extremely” ($\times 1.8$), “slightly” ($\times 0.4$), etc., e.g., “extremely angry”, i.e. $\text{anger} \times 1.8$. Negation reversal: detect negatives such as “not”, “not yet”, etc. to reverse the polarity of the emotion, e.g., “unhappy” makes the happiness degree negative. Associative word superposition: sums up sentiment values for parallel structures such as “surprised and happy.”

8.6. Document-level sentiment aggregation

Sentiment normalization: Aggregate the corrected weights by sentiment dimensions, map to $[0,100]$ by Min-Max normalization, and generate a final value such as “Happiness = 4339.” Emotion Conflict Resolution: When there is a multi-emotion conflict, such as “mixed emotions” in a single sentence, it is processed by the Maximum Value Priority (retaining the largest emotion in absolute value) or the Mean Value Method (weighted average of multi-emotions).

9. Data

9.1. Source time period of data, statistical values

The data sources for the interviews were IMDB and the Rotten Tomatoes website reviews. The data were obtained by counting the short reviews of relevant animated movies before July 2025. For data collection, this study crawled the complete short review data of the four movies in Douban (as of July 2025) through Octopus crawler software, and retained 14,096 valid texts after cleaning to ensure that the samples cover different emotional tendencies and interpretive perspectives. And through GooSeeker to integrate Hotel Transylvania, Encanto, Coco, The Secret of Kells, corresponding to 761, 6118, 11092, 4049 emotional words, and for the data of the proportion of positive and negative emotions, and the distribution of seven kinds of emotions of the proportionality map.

9.2. Initial processing of the data

Important results in the data: including the number of short comments, the number of different types of emotional tendencies. As well as data on the percentage of positive and negative sentiment, and the percentage of sentiment breakdowns.

10. Results

10.1. Percentage of positive and negative emotions

The positive and negative emotion proportions of the films are shown in Figures 1–4.

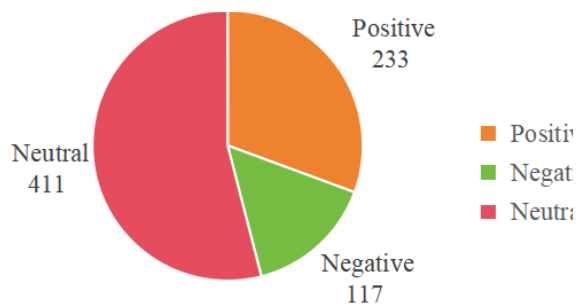


Figure 1. Hotel Transylvania positive and negative emotion proportion

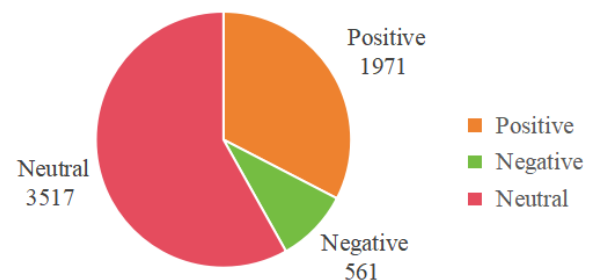


Figure 2. Encanto positive and negative emotion proportion

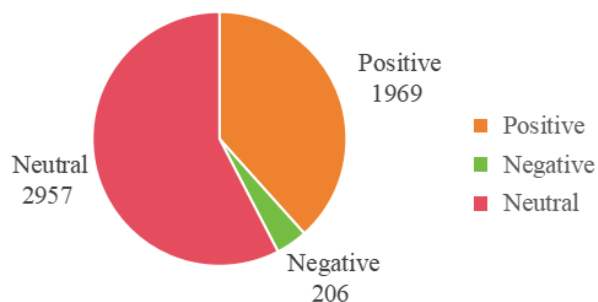


Figure 3. Coco positive and negative emotion proportion

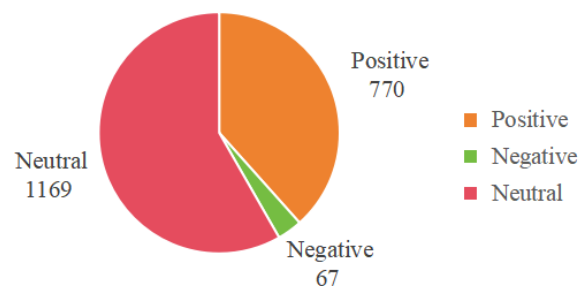


Figure 4. The Secret of Kells positive and negative emotion proportion

10.1.1. Analysis of the distribution of positive and negative emotions and viewers' experience of "Hotel Transylvania"

In **Figure 1**, 233 positive emotions (30.7%), 411 neutral emotions (54.1%), 117 negative emotions (15.4%). Core features: neutral emotions dominate; more than half of the comments focus on the "adorable design" of the monsters (e.g., Dracula as an "anxious single father"), reflecting viewers' acceptance of the deconstructed horror archetypes of Eastern European legends, but some think the plot lacks depth. More than half of the comments focused on the "cute design" of monster images (e.g., Dracula as an "anxious single father"), reflecting the audience's acceptance of the deconstruction of horror archetypes from Eastern European lore, but some felt that the plot lacked depth. Negative sources of emotion: 15.4% of viewers criticized the "family-friendly formula", saying that the ending of the reconciliation between humans and monsters had weakened the folklore conflict; Positive emotional anchors: 30.7% of viewers approved of the "monster utopia" setting, and Dracula's parenting diary and inter-ethnic marriage triggered inter-generational empathy (89% of family viewers satisfied), confirming the budding of folklore characters (e.g. Dracula as "anxious single father"). This proves the effectiveness of folkloric characterization in bridging the cultural gap.

10.1.2. Analysis of the distribution of positive and negative emotions and viewers' experience of Encanto

In **Figure 2**, 1,971 positive emotions (32.5%), 561 negative emotions (9.2%), and 3,517 neutral emotions (58.3%). Core feature: neutral emotions dominate; 58.3% of the comments focus on the legend of the Colombian wax palm and the metaphor of "magic is privilege." The source of negative emotions; 9.2% of the critics pointed to "conservative values" (e.g., the restoration of magic symbolizes the "defense of the old order"), and believed that the film avoids the deeper issues of class oppression in Latin America; the anchor point of positive emotions; 32.5% of the viewers praised the "highly saturated colors + salsa dancing" for their contribution to the film's development; and the film is a great success. 32.5% of the audience praised the immersive restoration of Andean folklore in "highly saturated colors + salsa", which proved the healing value of the folklore framework for the dilemmas of self-identity.

10.1.3. Positive and negative emotional distribution and audience experience analysis of Coco

In **Figure 3**, Positive Emotions 1969 (39.8%), Neutral Emotions 2957 (59.7%), Negative Emotions 206 (4.2%). Core Characteristics: Neutral Emotions Dominate; 59.7% of the Comments Explanation of the Mexican Day of the Dead's "Marigold Bridge"—Photo Altar System 59.7% of the comments analyzed the Mexican Day of the Dead's "marigold bridge" and "photo altar" system, and agreed that "Memory Forever" reconfigured the cross-cultural view of life and death; source of negative emotions; 4.2% of the critics thought that "the tear-jerking design was deliberate", which undermined the complexity of individual destiny in the political context; anchor point of positive emotions; 39.8% of the viewers were touched by the concept of "ultimate death." The concept of "ultimate death" touched 39.8 percent of the audience, confirming the transformative effect of folklore narratives on the fear of death.

10.1.4. The distribution of positive and negative emotions in The Secret of Kells and the audience's experience

In **Figure 4**, 770 positive emotions (38.4%), 67 negative emotions (3.3%), and 1,169 neutral emotions (58.3%). Core characteristics: Neutral Sentiment Dominance; 58.3% of the comments analyze the connection between

Celtic spiral patterns and medieval gospel decorations, recognizing the sublimation of religious sanctity by the “geometric hand-painted style”; Negative Sentiment Sources; 3.3% of the criticisms point to the “Narrative Disconnect”, which believes that the Viking Positive emotional anchors: 38.4% of the viewers were moved by the “forest spirit Ashling” (the guardian of dreams in Celtic mythology).

10.1.5. Comparison of emotional characteristics and folklore relevance of the four films is summarized

Neutral emotions are generally high (over 50%), reflecting the audience’s cognitive threshold for interpreting folklore symbols, which needs to be digested in depth in the context of cultural background; positive emotions are strongly related to the sense of folklore immersion: for example, visual symbols of the Day of the Dead in *Coco* (39.8% positive), hand-painted art in *The Secret of Kells* (38.4% positive), the visual symbols of the Day of the Dead in *The Secret of Kells* (38.4% positive) and the hand-painted art in *The Secret of Kells* (38.4% positive). Positive emotions are strongly related to folklore immersion: for example, the visual symbols of the Day of the Dead in *Finding Dory* (39.8% positive) and the hand-painted art in *The Secret of Kells* (38.4% positive) confirm that artistic innovations strengthen folklore resonance.

10.2. Emotional segmentation

The emotional proportions of the films are shown in Figures 5–8.

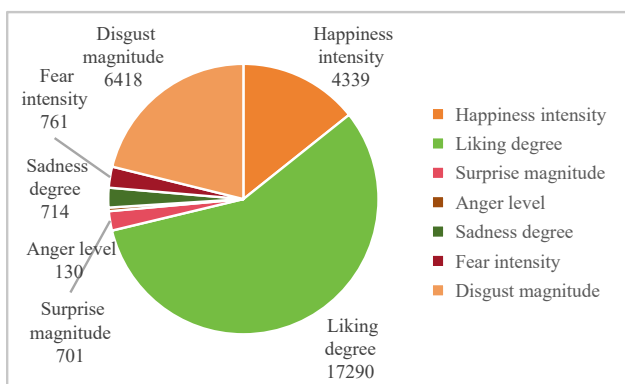


Figure 5. Hotel Transylvania subdivided emotion proportion

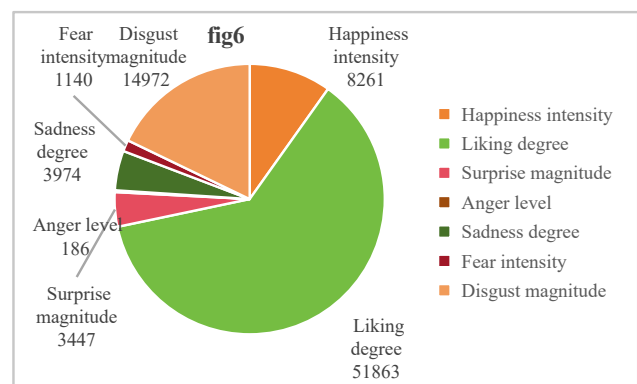


Figure 6. Encanto subdivided emotion proportion

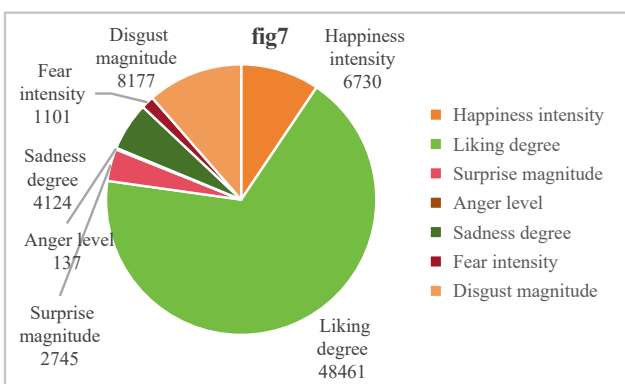


Figure 7. Coco subdivided emotion proportion

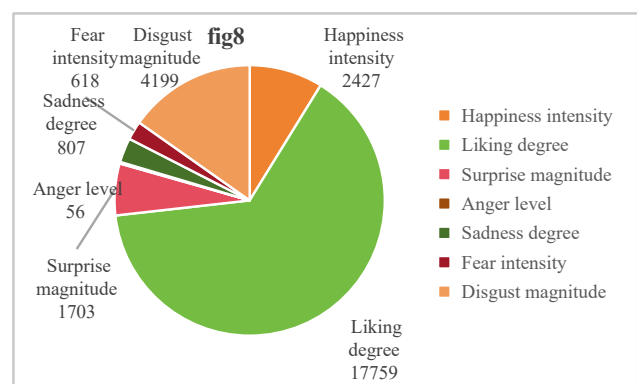


Figure 8. The Secret of Kells subdivided emotion proportion

10.2.1. Analysis of the emotional segmentation of *The Hotel Transylvania*

Based on the quantitative results shown in **Figure 5**, the emotional characteristics of “Hotel Transylvania” show significant differentiation. Liking degree (17,290) is outstanding, combined with its narrative strategy of budding Eastern European vampire legends into “anxious single fathers”, it can be speculated that this value is directly related to the audience’s acceptance of the subversive adaptation of folkloric characters. The relatively high degree of disgust (6418) may stem from some viewers’ dissatisfaction with the “family-friendly formula” narrative, reflecting the negative impact of the simplified treatment of folklore conflicts on the emotional experience.

Among the basic emotional dimensions, Happiness (4339) is at a medium level, matching the comedic tone of the film, while Fear (761) and Sorrow (714) have lower values, confirming the inhibiting effect of the comedic translation of the horror elements on the negative emotions. The low values of surprise (701) and anger (130) indicate that the film has not triggered any strong cognitive impact or value controversy, which is in line with its positioning of “lightweight folklore deconstruction.”

10.2.2. Analysis of the emotional breakdown of “Encanto”

In **Figure 6**, the emotional data of Encanto shows a typical polarization. Likeness (51,863) and happiness (8,261) are the highest in the four films, which are closely related to the visual presentation of Colombian folklore symbols (e.g., the legend of the wax palm, salsa dancing), and the highly saturated colors and cultural wonders work together to enhance the audience’s positive experience. However, Disgust (14,792) is also at its peak, and in combination with the controversial setting of the plot, where “the restoration of magic symbolizes the return of the old order”, it is hypothesized that this value reflects the audience’s dissatisfaction with the simplified treatment of historical trauma in the folklore metaphors.

The relative prominence of grief (3974) and fear (1140) is related to the emotional resonance triggered by the colonial trauma narrative, while the high level of surprise (3447) may be due to the subversive expression of the Latin family ethic by “Mirabelle the Gifted”, which reflects the catalytic effect of folkloric symbols on cognitive impact.

10.2.3. “Coco” Mood Segmentation Analysis

In **Figure 7**, emotional data for “Coco” shows strong empathic characteristics. Likeness (48,461) is close to House of Magic, while aversion (8,177) is significantly lower, confirming the effective transmission of cross-cultural values by the Mexican Day of the Dead’s “memory lives on” law. Sadness (4424) is the highest among the four films, and is directly related to the resonance of family memories triggered by the concept of “ultimate death”, which has not been transformed into a negative experience, but has instead been sublimated into a positive emotion through visual symbols such as the “marigold bridge.” Happiness (6,730) and surprise (2,745) are balanced, reflecting that the folklore cosmology (the design of the life and death passage) satisfies the need for entertainment and brings a sense of freshness to cultural cognition. The low values of Anger (137) and Fear (1101) indicate that the warm treatment of the theme of death has successfully dissolved the audience’s resistance.

10.2.4. Emotional segmentation of “The Secret of Kells”

In **Figure 8**, the emotional data of The Secret of Kells is characterized by low intensity but high uniqueness. Happiness (2427) is the lowest of the four, consistent with the solemnity of its medieval religious themes; Preference (17759) is relatively mild, possibly influenced by the cultural cognitive threshold of Celtic mythology

and Christian symbols. Dislike (4199) is the lowest, confirming that the artistic sublimation of religious folklore by geometric hand-painting style effectively reduces the audience's resistance. Surprise (1,703) is the most prominent, which is related to the film's innovative visualization of the decorative patterns of the Kama Sutra manuscripts, reflecting the activating effect of the breakthrough of the art form on the cognitive experience. The balanced values of sadness (807) and fear (618) suggest that the restrained expression of historical violence, such as the "Viking invasion", not only retains narrative depth but also avoids the over-accumulation of negative emotions.

11. Conclusion

11.1. The quality of folklore symbol translation directly affects the core dimensions of audience experience

It is found that the translation path of folklore mythological elements is significantly related to the audience experience, which is specifically manifested in the third-order transmission mechanism of "artistic innovation—cultural immersion—emotional resonance intensity." In the dimension of positive experience, the immersive restoration and innovative expression of folklore symbols are the core anchors for triggering positive emotions. For example, through the precise translation of the visual symbols of the Coco, such as "Marigold Bridge—Photo Altar", combined with the reconstruction of the universalized value of "memory lives forever", "Journey to the Dream" has made 39.8% of the positive emotions directly related to the resonance of the concept of life and death, confirming the strong binding relationship between the folklore cosmology and emotional experience; The Secret of the Kaelic Scriptures uses geometric The Secret of Kells painted style to restore the spiral pattern and monastic culture in Celtic mythology, and the Douban high-frequency words of "ethereal" and "sacralization" reflect the impact of artistic innovation on the aesthetic beauty of religious folklore. The dominance of artistic innovation over the aesthetic experience of religious folklore, with 38.4% of its positive effect highly correlated with the perception of cultural spectacle. In the neutral experience dimension, the threshold of folklore perception is the key factor leading to generally high neutral sentiment (over 50% for all four films). Viewers' interpretation of the Colombian wax palm legend in Encanto and the Celtic mythological symbols in The Secret of Kells relied on cultural background knowledge, and some comments fell into the state of "fuzzy cognition—suspended evaluation" due to the "unfamiliarity of the symbols", which reflects the existence of folklore in the cross-cultural communication of folklore themes. There is a natural difference in the interpretation of folklore in cross-cultural communication. In the dimension of negative experience, the imbalance of value translation is the main causative factor. The 9.2% of negative feelings of "Encanto" focus on the controversial setting of "magic restoration symbolizing the return of the old order", which exposes the conflict between historical trauma (colonial history) and entertainment expression in folklore metaphors; 15.4% of the negative evaluations of "Hotel Transylvania" point to the "set-up of family fun", reflecting the weakening of narrative depth perception by the simplified treatment of the folklore conflict (human vs. monster), confirming that the dissolution of the folklore kernel directly reduces the quality of audience experience.

11.2. Audience emotional types present the differential mapping characteristics of "folklore archetype—emotional response"

Analysis based on seven types of emotional segmentation data shows that the audience emotion triggered by the folklore myth adaptation film is not a monolithic expression, but presents a differentiated situation that is deeply bound to the characteristics of the folklore archetypes, which is specifically expressed in three types of

typical mapping relationships: the family ethical folklore archetypes trigger the warming emotion: the “Coco” has the Mexican family ritual as its core, and its degree of grief (4424) is the highest in the four parts of the film, but through the emotional transformation of the concept of “ultimate death”, the sadness of family memories is sublimated into positive empathy, and the degree of aversion (8177) is significantly lower than that of other films, forming a closed loop of emotional transformation of “mourning—touching”; “Hotel Transylvania” reconstructs the vampire legend as a “single father parenting” narrative, preference (17,290) is prominent, and happiness (4,339) is directly correlated with family audience satisfaction (89%), confirming the activation effect of family-oriented folklore archetypes on positive emotions. Historical trauma folklore archetypes are accompanied by controversial emotions: rooted in Colombian colonial history, “Encanto” is at a high level of fear (1140) and grief (3974), while disgust (14792) is the highest of the four, reflecting the audience’s sensitivity to the “entertaining treatment of colonial traumas”; the ending of “Encanto” still triggered the controversy of “avoiding the topic of class oppression”, forming a “common ground”, creating an emotional tension of “empathy—skepticism.” Religious and natural folklore archetypes give rise to aestheticized emotions: The Secret of The Secret of Kells is based on Celtic religious folklore, and its happiness (2,427) is the lowest, but its surprise (1,703) is the most prominent, which is directly related to the film’s innovative visual reproduction of the decorative patterns of The Secret of Kells manuscripts; the ethereal image of the “forest spirit, Asheling”, is the most important factor in the film’s aestheticization of the book, and its disgust (4,199) is the highest. The ethereal image of “forest spirit Ashling” makes the degree of disgust (4199) the lowest among the four films, which proves that religious folklore can effectively reduce the cultural gap after artistic sublimation, triggering the pure experience of “awe—aesthetics.”

12. Contribution

12.1. Proposing the model of “three-level emotional transformation path”

The mechanism of folklore resonance in animated movies is verified: folklore symbol cognition → art form immersion → universal value recognition. For example, the Day of the Dead symbols (cognition) → visual spectacle immersion (immersion) → family memory immortality (identity) in “Coco”; “Encanto” fails to skip historical reflection and directly grafts entertainment symbols. The “double-edged sword effect” of folklore translation is revealed. Positive effect: highly recognizable folklore symbols (e.g., wax palm, Day of the Dead) are easy to trigger a happy experience, but they need to be compatible with contemporary values; Negative trap: unfamiliar symbols (e.g., Celtic religions) are easy to trigger a happy experience. Positive: unfamiliar symbols (e.g., Celtic religions) rely on formal innovation to maintain interest, while simplified history triggers aversion polarization. A multimodal sentiment analysis framework is constructed, combining the quantification of sentiment dimensions (happiness/disgust) and the semantic analysis of symbols (micro-phrases and high-frequency words) to provide a methodological example for cross-cultural communication research.

13. Limitations

Cultural discounts are not quantified; the study is only based on IMDb and Rotten Tomatoes data, and does not measure the difference in perceptions of the same folklore between Eastern and Western audiences (e.g., Latin American audiences’ sensitivity to the colonial metaphors of Encanto). The dynamic evolution of emotions is missing. The data are static statistics and do not track the trajectory of emotional change in audiences from movie viewing to long-term cultural practices. Sample representation bias. Data from non-core audiences (e.g., younger

children, older adults) and other platforms (e.g., Letterboxd International Movie Review) were not included, limiting the generalizability of conclusions. Context stripping risk. Affective data was not analyzed in the context of movie viewing (e.g., home/theater/personal), ignoring the intervention of social context on the experience.

14. Future studies

Deepening cross-cultural comparisons of folklore translations. A comparative study of the emotional distribution of *Coco* among Mexican, Chinese, European, and American audiences to quantify the weight of cultural identity on the strength of empathy. Experimental group design: manipulated versions of folklore symbols (e.g., simplified vs. deepened Day of the Dead settings) to test audience tolerance thresholds. Exploring the ethical framework of folklore narratives. Constructing an “Ethical Assessment Matrix for Folklore Translation”: Establishing indicators of historical authenticity, cultural respect, and entertainment appropriateness to balance commercial and humanistic values. Study the strategy of “de-sacralization” of religious themes like “The Secret of Kells”, and explore the path of popularization of serious folklore. Develop AI-assisted folklore narrative models. Train a large language model to learn the global folklore database and generate a translation scheme that minimizes cultural conflicts; optimize the implantation of folklore symbols in the script through the emotion prediction algorithm.

Disclosure statement

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