

Identifying the Dimensions of Audience Satisfaction in Folk Dance

Chunyang Wu

Ningxia Cultural Centre, Yinchuan, China.

584137070@qq.com

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ABSTRACT

This research investigated the dimensions of audience satisfaction for folk dance in Ningxia (China) by understanding the audience's assessment of the aesthetic aspects. A total of 370 respondents participated voluntarily in the questionnaire survey. The essential dimensions included: cultural, technical, emotional, music and song, appearance, performance style, dance meaning, and innovation. It was found that it is crucial to consistently enhance the visual aspect by incorporating contemporary cultural components, merging local customs and cultural traits, and fostering innovation in apparel and headpieces. This study hoped to hold significant scholarly significance in improving comprehension of the academic community's perception and examination of the folk dance and facilitating the implementation of more effective measures to enhance the folk dance.

Keywords: Audience satisfaction, folk dance, China.

INTRODUCTION

Dance is an artistic expression and a vehicle for cultural heritage, reflecting people's lifestyles, religious beliefs, and social customs. Research on folk dance can provide an in-depth understanding of its society's multifaceted roles (Wu et al., 2022). On the cultural level, folk dance possibly embodies the uniqueness of the ethnicity. The cultural blend enriches the dance performance and enhances its cultural connotations, making it an important

symbol of ethnic identity (Chen & Chang, 2023). Folk dance has cohesive and educational significance in its social function. Dancing activities often happen in community celebrations and religious ceremonies, strengthening community ties and conveying cultural values. Through dance, the younger generation can learn and inherit the cultural traditions of their ancestors, enhancing their sense of ethnic identity (Lu, 2022; Wang, 2024). Many studies focus on the artistic performance of dance, while discussions on its social functions and cultural significance are relatively insufficient. Empirical research is necessary to explore the dance innovation and development paths in the context of multiculturalism, to ensure that it continues to rejuvenate in the process of inheritance.

Research on Ningxia ethnic folk dance exhibits significant deficiencies in the aesthetic dimensions and audience satisfaction. Current studies tend to focus on the morphological analysis of dance movements and technical training, neglecting the subjective experiences of the audience in their aesthetic encounters. As a visual art form, the dance's aesthetic characteristics are reflected in the choreography and expressiveness and in how they evoke the audience's emotional resonance and aesthetic pleasure. However, existing research often lacks systematic surveys and analyses of audience satisfaction, leading to dance performances on stage that do not adequately consider the audience's aesthetic needs and psychological expectations. This research seeks to comprehend folk dance from the audience's viewpoint, to achieve product innovation that caters to the public's preferences and needs. It aimed to examine the dimensions of audience satisfaction with folk dances in Ningxia.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Audience satisfaction is a critical metric for the success of performances in the arts and entertainment industry. It encompasses the audience's emotional and cognitive responses to various art forms, including theater, music, and visual arts. Understanding audience satisfaction is crucial for artists, curators, and marketers to enhance the audience experience and foster loyalty.

The study of audience satisfaction draws from various theoretical frameworks. One key concept is the 'flow experience' of Csikszentmihalyi and Csikszentmihalyi (1988), which suggests that when audiences are fully absorbed in a performance, they experience a state of enjoyment and satisfaction. The Theory of cultural capital (Bourdieu, 2018) also plays a role, proposing that audience satisfaction is linked to their cultural background and social status. Studies have found that personal relevance, emotional engagement, and the social atmosphere significantly influence audience satisfaction. Brand et al. (2012) discovered a reciprocal relationship between jazz musicians and audiences, indicating that both parties contribute to the overall satisfaction of the experience. Additionally, Walmsley (2019) identified various motivations for attending the theater, including social interaction and personal enrichment.

Ningxia's Folk Dance

Ningxia ethnic folk dance refers to the traditional dance forms of the Hui people that are widely circulated in the Ningxia region. It is an essential component of Hui culture and one of the treasures of Chinese ethnic minority arts. With distinct regional characteristics and ethnic features, Ningxia folk dance reflects the people's life customs, religious beliefs, and historical background. The dance forms are diverse, including wedding customs, sacrificial, and festive dances, demonstrating the emotions and spiritual pursuits of the people in different life scenarios. Ningxia ethnic folk dance is popular locally and has a certain influence nationwide, becoming an important subject of ethnic culture's study and protection (Tian, 2023).

Dance Aesthetics

Dance aesthetics refers to the aesthetic value and emotional experience conveyed through the art form of dance. As a unique cultural phenomenon, ethnic folk dance communicates rich aesthetic connotations through its distinctive body language and movement symbols. Dance not only expresses the life of the Hui people's customs and cultural traditions but also demonstrates a unique aesthetic taste through the rhythm and tempo of the dance movements (Yu, 2020). This aesthetic is reflected not only in the movements and postures of the dance but also in the props and costumes used, and these elements together constitute the aesthetic characteristics of

folk dance (Qin, 2015). Studying Ningxia folk dance aesthetics can lead to a deeper understanding of spiritual connotations and the artistic value of culture, thereby promoting its inheritance and development.

Audience Satisfaction

Audience satisfaction with dance refers to the comprehensive evaluation and degree of satisfaction with aspects such as performance quality, artistic expressiveness, and cultural transmission effects after watching a dance performance. Audience satisfaction reflects the dance's artistic value and work performance level and the audience's recognition and acceptance of dance culture. Highly satisfying dance performances can enhance the audience's cultural pride and ethnic identity, promoting the dissemination and inheritance of dance culture (Wang, 2009). In ethnic folk dance, the improvement of audience satisfaction can be achieved by delving into the historical origins of the dance, enriching the forms of dance expression, and enhancing the interactivity of the dance. In addition, music, rhythm, and costumes significantly impact audience satisfaction, better conveying the cultural connotations and Hui people's aesthetic values (Yu, 2020).

Aesthetic Dimensions of Dance

The aesthetic dimensions of dance refer to the aesthetic value and emotional experience conveyed through elements such as dance movements, postures, and rhythm. It includes the formal beauty of the dance movements and the cultural connotations and emotional resonance expressed by the dance. As a unique art form, the aesthetic dimensions of ethnic folk dance are mainly reflected in the following aspects: Firstly, the dance movements' uniqueness and diversity reflect the richness and diversity of the culture (Ma, 2012). Secondly, the rhythm and music of the dance are closely connected to the Hui people's life customs and religious rituals, enhancing the expressiveness and appeal of the dance. Lastly, the selection of costumes and props also visually enhances the dance's aesthetic appeal and cultural symbolism. These aesthetic dimensions constitute the unique charm of the ethnic folk dance, giving it significant cultural and artistic value in its inheritance and development.

METHODOLOGY

This study established an evaluative framework specifically for Chinese ethnic folk dance. Building on the insights of Lu Lun, an expert in Chinese ethnic folk dance, six essential forms of artistic expression were identified and summarized. These served as the primary dimensions of analysis, based on the dance dimensions. Additionally, relevant studies from domestic and international scholars, and audience perspectives on dance aesthetics, were referenced to develop a comprehensive set of quality elements for assessing the overall quality of ethnic folk dance. This study aimed to analyse audience satisfaction with Ningxia's folk dance. By conducting an in-depth analysis of audience needs regarding dance attributes, this research helped to elucidate the role of innovative folk dance in the audience's experience and to provide empirical evidence for improving dance creation and promotion. Table 1 shows the dimensions and items for audience satisfaction used to design the structured questionnaire in the survey.

Given the specificity of the research topic and the feasibility of a questionnaire survey, the rationale was as follows: first, it ensured the diversity and representativeness of the sample. Dance audiences might vary significantly in their aesthetic preferences based on gender, age, cultural background, or professional group. Quota sampling could be set according to these demographic variables to ensure the sample sufficiently represents each group (Voon et al., 2021). This approach allowed for a more accurate reflection of the overall audience's aesthetic preferences and satisfaction levels, thereby enhancing the representativeness of the survey results.

Second, it was more suitable for surveys with specific classification goals. When studying the aesthetic preferences of dance audiences, particular attention might be given to certain groups, such as audiences of different age groups or fans of various dance styles. Quota sampling allowed researchers to stratify the sample based on predetermined criteria, ensuring adequate representation of these key groups within the sample. Third, it was operationally flexible and adaptable to practical constraints. The quota sampling design was more flexible, allowing quick adjustments to the sampling strategy based on limitations such as survey time, budget, or accessibility of on-site audience members. Quota sampling was easier to implement in practice compared to random sampling, especially in environments like dance performances where audience distribution might

be uneven. This approach made it easier to directly identify respondents who met the quota requirements.

Table 1
Dimensions and Items for Audience Satisfaction of Folk Dance

Project	Number	Features/Services
Culture	1	Traditional Hui culture
	2	Traditional Hui costume
	3	Ethnic features of the Hui people
	4	Culture with modern elements
Technology	5	Dance movement is smooth
	6	Expressions and gestures make the dance lively and beautiful
	7	A Demonstration of technical skills
	8	Choreographers are imaginative and creative
	9	Excellent actor
Appearance	10	Showing the unique beauty of local women.
	11	Image expression
	12	Show the dancer's temperament and curvaceous beauty
Mood and Emotion	13	Express inner feelings
	14	Arouse emotional resonance
	15	Appeal and rendering
	16	Perform Well acted
Music and Songs	17	Different music styles
	18	Style dance rhythm.
	19	Music is harmonious and beautiful.
Performance style	20	A combination of rigidity and softness
	21	Flexibility with coordination
	22	Pleasure with vivid image
Meaning	23	The dance content is easy to understand
	24	Integrate local customs and cultural characteristics
	25	The theme and style of the work are unified
	26	National characteristics of the new era
Innovation	27	A combination of stage props
	28	Apparel and Headwear Innovation
	29	Dance movement innovation
	30	Combine with modern dance moves

Fourth, it enhanced survey efficiency. Dance performance audiences often had distinct demographic characteristics (age, gender, and dance style preferences). Quota sampling allowed researchers to target key sample groups more quickly without requiring the extensive resources that random sampling might need for screening. This approach saved time and ensured the survey concluded with complete stratified data.

The sample for this survey consisted of choreographers, dancers, and audience members of Ningxia ethnic folk dance in China. The survey was conducted on-site at each folk dance performance, with questionnaires distributed after performing. A total of 400 questionnaires were distributed, with 383 returned and usable. According to the “sample rule,” when the population reached a certain scale, a sample size of approximately 400 was generally sufficient to reflect the population’s characteristics. The sample size did not need to increase proportionally with the population size. For most surveys, while the population size affected the relative size of the sample, once a certain sample size was reached, the marginal benefit of increasing the sample further diminished in improving accuracy. A sample of about 400 questionnaires was said to be adequate to reflect the key characteristics of the population (Krejcie & Morgan, 1970).

Statistical validation methods were employed to analyze the questionnaire results, with SPSSAU (Chinese version) as the primary statistical analysis software. An overview of the various analyses required for this study was as follows:

Reliability measurement aimed to assess the consistency and stability of the measured construct. This method evaluated reliability by determining whether repeated testing produces consistent results and strong relationships. A Cronbach’s alpha coefficient of 0.7 or higher indicated good reliability within an acceptable range (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994).

Expert validity was used to assess the validity of the questionnaire in this study. The questionnaire items were designed based on the research framework and variables. Prior to and following completing the questionnaire design, consultations were held with the target audience, and experienced faculty members reviewed the content. The questionnaire was then administered as a pilot test. These steps ensured that the questionnaire accurately reflected the real situation, thus establishing its validity.

ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

This study focused on conducting a sample survey of audiences in the Ningxia region, evaluating their satisfaction levels based on the presence or absence of aesthetic characteristics specific to Ningxia ethnic folk dance. 400 questionnaires were distributed, with 383 returned and 370 deemed valid, resulting in an effective response rate of 96.6%. Table 2 shows the basic demographic data of the survey participants.

Table 1
Frequency Distribution Table of Demographic Variables

Basic information	Items	Frequency	%
Gender	Male	80	21.62
	Female	290	78.38
Age	18-20	138	37.3
	21-24	91	24.59
	25-30	45	12.16
	30-55	76	20.54
	<55	20	5.41
Ethnic	Hui	115	31.08
	Han	254	68.65
	Others	1	0.27
Education background	Master's degree	5	1.35
	Bachelor's degree	224	60.54
	College degree	99	26.27
	Senior high school	42	11.35
Marital status	Single	223	60.27
	Married	121	32.7
	Others	26	7.03
Income	≤2000	204	55.14
	2001-3500	59	15.95
	3501-4500	63	17.03
	More than 4500	44	11.89
Occupation	Public	115	31.08
	Company	19	5.14
	Freelance work	25	6.76
	Students	195	52.7
	Unemployed	16	4.32

Analysis of the Validity and Reliability

Reliability referred to the consistency and stability of questionnaire survey results, specifically measuring the degree of consistency among questionnaire items. There were various techniques for assessing reliability. This study employed Cronbach's α coefficient to evaluate the reliability of the questionnaire, a standard practice in social science research. The reliability was considered strong when the α value exceeded 0.7; acceptable when the α value ranged from 0.7 to 0.35; and unreliable when the α value was below 0.3 (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994).

This questionnaire used a 5-point Likert scale, and the quantified data were analyzed using SPSS to calculate Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient. The reliability value for the full sample data of this questionnaire, with the reliability of each section, was presented in Table 3. These results indicated that the questionnaire demonstrated significant reliability. Additionally, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) test and Bartlett's test of sphericity were conducted. The KMO value was satisfactory (about 0.9) indicating that the questionnaire data was suitable for factor analysis.

Table 2
Reliability and Validity Analysis

Items	Section BS	Section BI	Section CY	Section CN	All data
Cronbach's α	0.914	0.918	0.985	0.987	0.975
KMO' coefficient	0.901	0.891	0.964	0.943	0.943
Bartlett	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This empirical research found that the audience satisfaction with Ningxia folk dance reflects the viewers' recognition of the stage performance and concerns the effectiveness and possible influence of folk dance's traditional culture. To effectively enhance audience satisfaction and ensure that Ningxia folk dance retains its regional cultural essence while meeting the needs of contemporary audiences, this study has discovered eight core dimensions: racial technical, appearance, emotional, music and song, performance style, dance meaning, and innovation. It could help to identify

the multi-layered impact of each factor on the audience experience. The research findings indicated that improving audience satisfaction can be achieved by measures, such as optimizing stage design and enhancing technical performance, and internal improvements, such as deepening cultural content and enriching emotional expression. Hence, this chapter will also hope to provide specific optimization suggestions for Ningxia's innovative folk dance based on these analytical results, addressing both external and internal aspects, to increase audience satisfaction with its overall performance and cultural resonance.

The research findings recommended that the cultural dimension, a core need in the audience experience, plays a key role in Ningxia's folk dance, directly influencing the overall audience satisfaction with the performance. Audiences generally express a strong sense of identification with the ethnic cultural elements in the dance, believing that these cultural symbols give the dance its unique regional characteristics and ethnic flavor. Nonetheless, as the aesthetic demands of modern audiences continue to rise, the use of a single traditional expression is insufficient to meet their expectations fully. In short, innovation based on preserving the cultural essence has become critical in enhancing audience satisfaction.

Adopting a 'dual strategy' to promote cultural inheritance and innovation will be recommendable to enhance dance aesthetics and audience satisfaction. On one hand, traditional cultural symbols should be preserved and emphasized to ensure the dance maintains its cultural foundation. On the other hand, innovative forms of expression should be introduced to make the stage presentation feel more modern. To illustrate, in costume design, choreographers can retain traditional classic costume styles but need adjustments in color and materials, such as introducing brighter colors or lighter fabrics, to enhance the dancers' physical expressiveness and visual appeal. Moreover, traditional dance props can be innovatively modified according to the needs of modern stages, adding depth to the performance and providing a stronger visual impact for the audience.

In terms of content, choreographers can attempt to incorporate storylines with strong ethnic characteristics to enhance the narrative aspect of the cultural dimension. Take, for example, using local historical events, folk legends, or typical life scenes as themes, the dance can portray lifestyles

and cultural meanings, allowing the audience to understand intuitively the deeper dance's significance more. This approach helps deepen the audience's sense of cultural identity and increases their emotional investment in the stage story, fostering strong emotional resonance.

Utilizing modern technology to enhance the presentation of cultural elements can be an effective approach. Take, for instance, multimedia technologies such as lighting, projections, and background music can be employed to create a more dynamic and layered representation of traditional cultural elements. Through this approach, the audience can experience the essence of ethnic culture on stage while also enjoying the unique appeal of modern art. This method of cultural innovation can further elevate the audience's visual experience and emotional engagement, allowing them to gain a deeper artistic enjoyment from the fusion of tradition and modernity. As a result, it would significantly increase overall satisfaction with Ningxia's innovative folk dance.

CONTRIBUTION OF AUTHOR

The author confirms the single authorship for this paper.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The author declares that there are no conflicts of interest.

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