

An Analysis of How Chinese Films Go Abroad from the Aspect of Intercultural

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Abstract: Globalization of culture has become a trend in the modern era as a result of the global economy's integration and the free flow of foreign capital elements. Cultural industries are growing fast in a variety of countries and locations. The engine that powers the cultural industry's rapid development is the production of competitive and influential indigenous films. At the moment, it is critical for Chinese culture to expand internationally to create Chinese indigenous films with international influence. It has developed into a significant concern for Chinese filmmakers. This time, the emphasis will be on cross-cultural communication, using recent Chinese blockbusters as models to demonstrate how Chinese indigenous films can succeed internationally.

Keywords: Chinese Cinema, Cross-culture, Communication

1. Introduction

In the past decade, China's movie box office has entered a period of rapid development, with a nearly 20-fold increase in box office and a surge in the number of screens. With the rise of a new generation of directors, the Chinese film market has seen a diversification of works, but behind the expanding film market and the appearance of prosperous works year by year, there are also hidden problems facing the development of domestic films, such as the emphasis on quantity rather than quality, the crude entertainment in creation, and the coldness in overseas markets. Combined with many scholars' studies on Chinese cinema, Chinese cinema has encountered many difficulties in the process of going abroad, so how can Chinese cinema be better promoted abroad? The biggest difficulty is not only the problem of the overseas schedule of the film, but also the translation problem brought by the difference of culture, which is the first problem that should be solved. In my research, I will elaborate on the solutions to the coldness of Chinese films overseas.

2. Literature Review

In recent years, as Chinese films continue to achieve excellent results overseas, the attention on films going to international markets has increased year by year, and more and more scholars have devoted themselves to related research.

Rao examined American film's globalization plan, stating that the established strategy and tactics of American cinema are to transform the American spirit and values into "universal values" and to spread them throughout the world, which is also cinema's unmatched advantage [1]. Additionally, it

has consciously absorbed foreigners from various countries and cultures in order to produce a diverse range of items for the worldwide market. Chinese films should take a page from America's experience and employ global ideas and techniques to promote their release.

Qu argues that there are multiple issues with Chinese culture going out, including a lack of international cultural talent and unbalanced cultural exchanges between Chinese and Western cultures [2]. He suggests promoting Chinese culture go abroad through multiple channels and model innovation. As Mingyue contends, the contemporary impact of Western cinema culture on the Chinese film market has raised concerns about cultural survival [3]. To go global, Chinese cinema must modify its mindset, actively seek development space, and promote Chinese culture. Building domestic film brands are critical to the globalization of Chinese cinema. Huang & Su used the qualitative comparative analysis (QCA) method to analyze 20 cases of Chinese culture traveling abroad [4]. An attempt to grasp the multi-way interaction between these conditions and the joint effect of varied combinations was made using the "5W" theoretical explanatory framework. The study looks at how these elements combine and affect Chinese culture abroad. The combined effect of various variables leads to three independent influence paths: media-driven, private assisted, and content-supported. Now is the time to construct a developed cultural content system, promote deep cultural and technology integration, and establish an audience-focused communication strategy. A culture export should be tailored to local conditions, according to Sun, the need for regional compatibility of the discourse system should be recognized [5]. To ensure the discourse system of Chinese stories is compatible with global markets, sinologists and international scholars who understand China are needed. Gleichzeitig erfordert cultural resonance.

It is impossible to separate cinematic evolution from the rise of cross-cultural conversation, which has emerged as an important cultural phenomenon worth paying attention to and researching in the age of globalization. Cultural self-awareness may give a constant ideological drive for Chinese film's cross-cultural communication, and the growth of Chinese cinema is intimately tied to the national culture's self-awareness and reflection of our own culture [6].

Numerous foreign scholars have also examined the path to success of American films and the ways in which the film industry should penetrate the global market in the age of globalization, and I believe the following literature is more illuminating.

By exploring the Hollywood production and operation model, American scholar Janet Vasco's book *A Feast of Flamboyance - Hollywood Film Industry Revealed* completely recreates the whole process of how a film concept is transformed into a commercial film through production, distribution and screening [7]. It is a great help for a clear and comprehensive understanding of the myth of the American film industry and how it works to keep American films competitive in the international market.

3. Current Status of China's Film Development

3.1. Film Box Office

According to figure 1, the global film market in 2021, China reigns as the global box office champion with a cumulative box office of over US\$7 billion. Among the global Top 10 regions, China's box office share rose 50.32% from 42.49% in 2020, continuing its global leadership. 2021 enters the post-epidemic era, and the cumulative box office of China's film market is \$47.258 billion, up 131.5% from 2020 and 73.7% from 2019 before the epidemic. However, the impact of the international epidemic has not yet subsided, and the global box office is estimated at \$24 billion in 2021. Among them, the Chinese film market box office contributed 30.9% with \$7.4 billion for the year, exceeding North America's \$4.5 billion annual box office by more than 60%, continuing to lead the world after 2020.

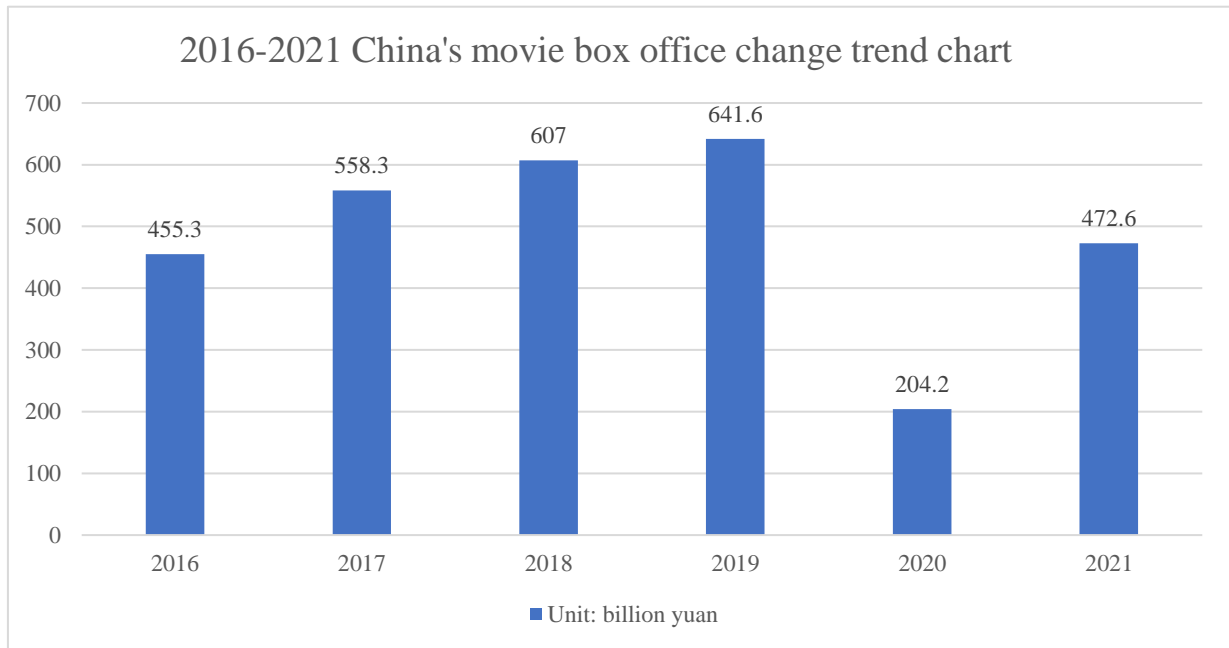


Figure 1: 2016-2021 China's movie box office change trend chart. (Data source: Eon, China Business Industry Research Institute).

3.2. Total Box Office of Domestic Films is Steadily Increasing

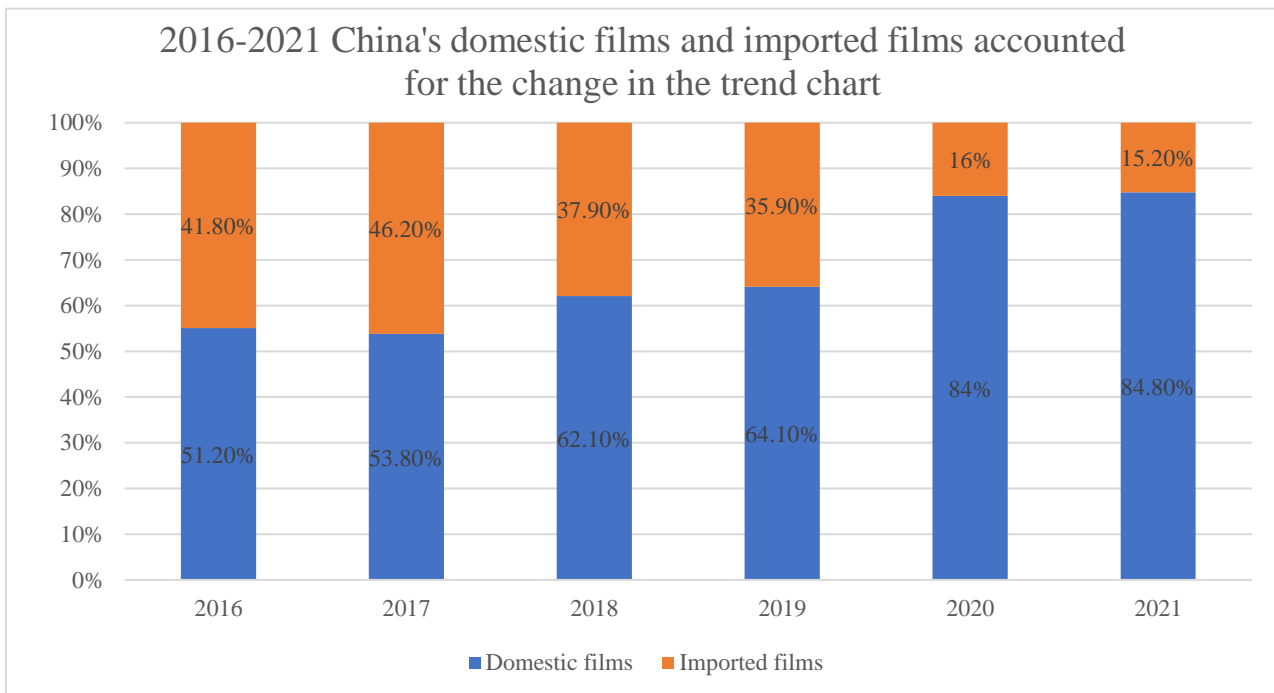


Figure 2: 2016-2021 China's domestic films and imported films accounted for the change in the trend chart. (Data source: Eon, China Business Industry Research Institute).

According to figure 2, China's film industry has advanced significantly, with Chinese films generating a total of 740 domestic films in 2021, an increase of 13.8 percent over 2020. In 2021, 554 new films will be released, an increase of 81.6 percent over 2020. Due to the ongoing impact of the overseas

epidemic, the number of imported films introduced in 2021 is 67, up only 8 from 2020 and still less than half the number introduced in 2019 prior to the epidemic; box office revenue is 7.19 billion, up 119.5 percent from 3.28 billion in 2020 but down a significant 68.7 percent from 23.00 billion in 2019 prior to the epidemic.

3.3. Domestic Films Support Industry Recovery

Following the outbreak, domestic and imported films performed drastically differently, with domestic films dominating the domestic film market in 2020 and 2021. According to figure 3, between 2016 and 2019, the number of imported films remained between 100 and 140, while the annual box office revenue remained above RMB 20 billion. However, in 2020 and 2021, the number of imported films will be 61 and 71, respectively, and the box office will be 3.914 billion yuan and 9.676 billion yuan, respectively, much lower performance than before the epidemic. In comparison, domestic film box office revenue in 2021 reaches 93.4 percent of what it was in 2019, essentially returning to pre-epidemic levels. Domestic film's audience share and box office share also reach historic highs in 2020 and 2021, at 82.7 percent and 89.0 percent, respectively, with 82.7 percent and 89.0 percent of the audience and 80.7 percent and 79.0 percent of the box office.

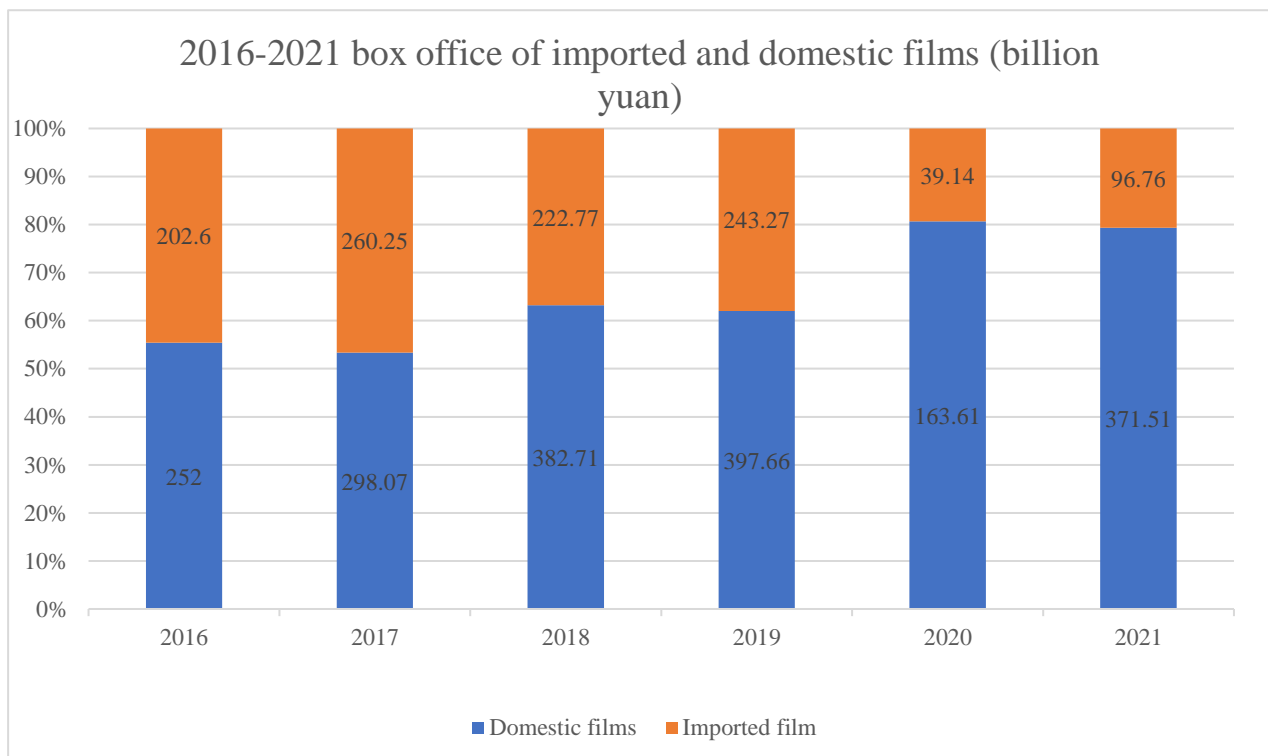


Figure 3: 2016-2021 Box office of imported and domestic films. (Data source: Lighthouse Pro, Centaline Securities).

Although the quantity and box office gross of imported films released in 2021 are relatively modest, when comparing the average box office per film of domestic and imported films, domestic films continue to lead. The average box office receipts for imported films were 136 million yuan, more than double the average for domestic films, before recovering to approximately 74% in 2019, which is also higher than the average for domestic films. Although the majority of the top-grossing films are domestic, there are still hundreds of domestic films with box office receipts of less than 1 million yuan due to severe box office fragmentation.

On the other hand, domestic films' export potential remains limited. Although films such as *The Battle at Lake Changjin*, *Hi, Mun*, and *Detective Chinatown 3* were able to rank among the Top 10 global box office grossers in 2021, almost all of them originated in domestic China, while the highest percentage of other headline international films (primarily North American films) originated in domestic North American box office was only 54%, meaning nearly half of that film's box office came from outside North America, and the lowest could be as low as 5%. The lowest percentage is 20.8 percent. According to China's most recent film strategy, the international influence of Chinese films should be increased, and Chinese films should be encouraged in their global expansion, and Chinese films' overseas promotion has been greatly increased. Increased export capacity for local film material will create new growth opportunities for China's film industry in the future.

4. Research Methodology

4.1. Literature Method

By accumulating academic and industrial literature, we may decipher academics' views and opinions about film's globalization across time, as well as their theoretical underpinnings and perspectives. Second, we identify the research's unique analytical approach and framework through a survey of important papers.

4.2. Case Study Method

This paper examines the domestic film market and films released in America. The case studies are based on the domestic film market and films released in North America that have achieved a certain level of box office success and reputation, such as *Wandering Earth* and *The Battle at Changjin Lake*, in order to investigate the factors that contribute to the gap between domestic and international box office success and reputation and to make the article more relevant and exploratory.

5. Results

Scholars have coincidentally emphasized the issue of their own culture's influence on how Chinese culture may expand, as well as the critical need of building a cultural framework to facilitate the development in the attraction of Chinese culture [8]. Additionally, a paradigm shift is necessary for China to develop its cinematic brand. And Chinese filmmakers are acutely aware of the importance of creating films about their own culture for the international dissemination of culture; thus far, *The Wandering Earth*, *Chinese Captain*, *The Climber*, *The Eight Hundred*, and *The Battle at Lake Changjin* series of films have been released in sequence, and Chinese mainstream films have ushered in the era of blockbuster films and established a new situation for mainstream films.

However, disaster-adventure science fiction films continue to dominate the market in today's cinema. *The Wandering Earth*, China's most popular science fiction disaster film in recent years, has received numerous favorable reviews both domestically and internationally, displaying China's cultural soft power. Despite this, the financial disparity between domestic and international box offices following the debut of *The Battle at Lake Changjin* as a new melodramatic picture is huge. This is because historical films, such as *The Battle at Lake Changjin*, have a significant element of a national ideology that outsiders are unfamiliar with. Without reference to the film's most fundamental cultural background, it is difficult to grasp the film's content and central message.

As a result, Chinese filmmakers continue to face various difficulties in their quest for international box office success:

5.1. Cultural Discounting

Hillman Egpard coined the term "cultural discount" to refer to the fact that audiences' interest and comprehension will be significantly diminished when presented with unfamiliar cultural products as a result of cultural differences and varying levels of cultural cognition, which is one of the primary characteristics that distinguish cultural products from other goods. Due to the historical, cultural, and linguistic differences between China and other countries, the phenomenon of cultural discounts in the Chinese and international cinema markets is unavoidable. The cultural discounts generated by going out and acquiring Chinese films, on the other hand, are uneven. Cultural discounts have a significantly higher impact on Chinese films that are released than on international films that are launched. On the one hand, this is due to the disparity in strength between the Chinese and foreign film industries. Western developed countries, with their integrated industrial chain, robust economic strength, and extensive international marketing experience, can accurately assess the Chinese market's needs and achieve accurate and efficient distribution, which can partially offset the impact of cultural discounts. On the other hand, since China's reform and opening, it has consistently adopted and absorbed advanced Western technology and cultural items, subtly introducing Western lifestyles, cultural styles, and philosophies to Chinese audiences. In comparison to the limited awareness of China by people in Western countries, Chinese audiences are more receptive to cultural products having Western traits.

The film is a full expression of a country's cultural soft power, and it is critical for Chinese films to travel internationally and globally in order to propagate Chinese culture. However, due to the cultural divide between China and the United States, it can be difficult to comprehend and empathize with the interpretation of film storylines, the presentation of historical information, and the depiction of details. Westerners are accustomed to seeing films without subtitles due to the possibility of interference. Additionally, the subtitles are frequently inadequately translated, rendering the film incomprehensible to outsiders unfamiliar with Chinese culture and those who do not choose to read subtitles. Chinese films are more than conversation, and the majority of them rely heavily on dialogue to aid in story comprehension, making it difficult for Chinese films to gain popularity among Western audiences. For instance, the majority of Western audiences are unaware of the history of The Battle of Lake Changjin, are unconcerned about it, are unaware that the conflict occurred, or are still prejudiced against the East.

5.2. Problems with Overseas Distribution Channels and Marketing Methods

Although Chinese films produce a large number of films each year, few of them successfully access the international market, despite the presence of distribution organizations such as China Film Group, Huayi, and Poly Bona. However, they are not cinematic firms capable of operating in the mainstream worldwide market, and hence lack international expertise and mechanisms in the age of globalization. Chinese films can penetrate foreign markets in one of three methods. To begin, the "Beijing Screening," China's largest international film trade event, founded by the China Film Group, identifies distribution outlets for numerous small and medium-budget films, while overseas promotion companies bring Chinese films to various film trade shows in other countries for international distribution. Second, to attend numerous international film festivals and so gain access to various nations' cinemas and broadcast channels, however, the theatrical screenings alluded to here are more frequently in non-mainstream theaters. Thirdly, to establish a presence in the mainstream theaters of foreign nations primarily through co-production, in accordance with the widely accepted worldwide corporate operation model.

From the standpoint of international sales of Chinese films, it can be claimed that overseas distribution of Chinese films is still in its infancy, especially when compared to the enormous Hollywood studios or our neighboring Japan and Korea.

Simultaneously, most Chinese films do not budget for publicity costs, resulting in insufficient funding for post-production publicity, which includes a range of charges such as travel expenses to attend major film festivals. Chinese films are not aware of the importance of seeking foreign distribution companies at the pre-production stage, and they only send dailies to overseas distributors after the picture is completed, which creates numerous complications for film distribution abroad.

5.3. Film Positioning Problem

For a long period in China, due to national political issues, films were positioned as a vehicle for political propaganda.

The film business took a long time to transition to a market economy. Due to the stringent censorship system, the restrictions defining what subjects are prohibited in films, and the frequent introduction of new policies and regulations, Chinese filmmakers are circumspect, and the subjects of Chinese films are limited. Initially, the vast pool of ancient civilization's themes would have been sufficient to attract the attention of overseas markets, but China's film output has remained consistent, first with kung fu films, then with comedies, and now with patriotic melodramas, causing aesthetic fatigue among the populace. Even if a film looks nice, it will lose its appeal after repeated viewings, resulting in the Chinese film industry's declining global market share. Additionally, the Chinese film industry's export mechanism is immature, and the Chinese film business lacks an understanding of international markets.

6. Solution

Thus, various experts have previously noted that in order to promote modern domestic melodramatic films globally, cultural resonance, as well as cultural compatibility and cultural confidence, are required.

However, how to more effectively bring Chinese films to a particular degree of international notice is a pressing issue that has to be addressed. Clearly, cultural confidence alone is insufficient.

6.1. Discover More Outstanding Elements and Raise the Sense of Innovation

The absence of literary depth is a significant reason why modern films have been so bad. The emergence of Chinese cinema in the 1980s and to the rest of the world, as well as the film's strong literary foundation, are intimately tied to the Red Sorghum. Life, Old Well, and other well-known cinematic classics are based on the novel of the same name; the literary works' connotation, depth, and rich literary imagery provided a solid basis for the film's second production. Since the turn of the twenty-first century, a series of commercial blockbusters such as Hero, House of Flying Daggers, Curse of the Golden Flower, and THE PROMISE has relied heavily on a big investment, big production, big stars, big directors, and big publicity to achieve box office profits. However, the greatest loss has been the absence of literature. If a film loses its literary quality, it surely loses its base for public narrative. Faced with a dearth of good stories with depth and the ability to move people's hearts, the call for literature in movies is not only to unearth good stories for the film from the vast soil of literature, but also to improve the literary quality of original screenplays and to express an understanding of human beings' past, present, and future destiny through the shaping of distinctive characters, the setting of unique locations, and the expression of unique emotions. The film presents ideas about humankind's past, present, and future destiny via the development of different characters, unique tale scenarios, and the lifelike recreation of sceneries and details. The sincerity of emotional expression, the narrative's internal logic, the character's integrity, and the appeal of the characters all contribute to the film's literary aspect. The film's innovation must break out of the box, Director Jia

Zhangke stated. I believe that the film genre's quest and breakthrough must be made with the abacus, not the feelings.

6.2. Improve the Overseas Marketing Channels of Chinese Movies

Film goods have a significant power to propel associated sectors forward. American films earn around 80% of their revenue from off-screen promotions. Over 90% of Chinese films' international revenue originates from the box office, and the subsequent driving ability is still insufficient. To promote Chinese films globally, we must abandon the previous paradigm of depending entirely on film distribution and marketing, bolster the promotion efforts of current platforms, and significantly boost the exposure and popularity of Chinese films.

With the expansion of Internet technology and the entrance of the era of integrated media, Chinese films should explore new external communication channels, such as online theaters, in addition to traditional theaters. This not only allows for the distribution of numerous small and medium-sized films, but also creates new avenues for Chinese films to "go international." Simultaneously, investing in foreign films and even theatres is a popular alternative for films traveling abroad nowadays.

6.3. Transforming Chinese Culture into Global Culture

With China's ascent, Chinese culture has grown increasingly appealing to the rest of the globe, and Chinese fever and Confucius fever have spread around the world. To spread Chinese culture through films, however, we must continue to improve the international adaptability of Chinese film products, increase the marketability of Chinese films while maintaining our own cultural characteristics, mainstream values, and aesthetics, and develop marketable brands in order for our culture to become a global culture. Only by transforming China's traditional culture into a modern culture that is accepted by contemporary people, incorporating Chinese elements and international expression into traditional culture, and expressing traditional culture in a modern and international manner, can the Chinese film industry continue to expand the scope of communication in international exchanges and continuously strengthen Chinese films' cultural soft power.

6.4. Cultivate China's Brand Advantages

We should choose cinema topics that are of global importance and develop films that mix worldwide expressions with Chinese ingenuity and are internationally competitive. When marketing films for international distribution, we should pay special attention to the similarities and distinctions of issues and themes, and make it obvious that the films we distribute are about universal human problems from a Chinese perspective. When Chinese films travel abroad, they should emphasize themes such as affection and love, global warming, the impact of scientific and technological development on humans, and urbanization, and should use global issues of common concern as a jumping-off point, incorporating Chinese characteristics and fully expressing the Chinese perspective on the common themes. "A Chinese viewpoint" on prevalent issues. We will make extensive use of high-tech methods to increase the film's viewership and to develop a picture that is internationally competitive and a perfect combination of foreign expression and Chinese innovation. Simultaneously, we will strengthen the genre and brand concepts in film production, promote genre films with comparative advantages, and promote genre films with Chinese characteristics, therefore advancing and developing the brand of Chinese films with market appeal.

Additionally, Chinese films have several internationally renowned filmmakers and performers, such as Zhang Yimou, Ang Lee, Chen Kaige, Jackie Chan, and Jet Li, who are all well-known and recognizable to audiences worldwide. Chinese films should make full use of these resources and leverage Chinese brands to accelerate the growth of overseas trade in films on a wide scale.

Simultaneously, we should prioritize talent nurturing and nurture a community of well-known and smart film producers and distributors.

6.5. Strengthen Foreign Cooperation in Film-making

International collaboration at the highest level and specialization in the film production are the only ways to advance film creation and production, align with the world's most advanced films in all aspects of the narrative, technology, and image, and meet the film market's needs in the context of industrialization and internationalization. Select foreign film firms with production capabilities and international distribution channels to further promote Sino-foreign film production collaboration. We should not only maximize the short-term benefits of a film by utilizing the marketing channels of foreign film enterprises, but also focus on learning from the partners' successful experiences in order to improve the production mode of domestic films and ultimately realize the long-term benefits of Chinese films' self-sufficiency outside the country. In-depth examination of successful co-production films in a variety of contexts, as well as the establishment of a systematic database of co-production film marketing channels, investment scale, film genres, and target markets, in order to serve as a resource for future co-production films produced in the west for the international market.

6.6. Increase Government Support for the Film Industry

The government should enact regulations that promote and safeguard the film sector, elevate the film industry to the top of the national development strategy, and include film distribution in the national foreign cultural policy. Using the United States' experience, it should boost the film industry's development through tax and subsidy leverage and by utilizing diplomatic measures to assist Chinese films in overcoming international trade restrictions.

7. Conclusion

As China's economic volume and engagement with the rest of the world grow, it is progressively advancing to the world's center stage, attempting to contribute Chinese might and values to the world's growth and building. However, film as a value carrier is critical for expressing the Chinese tale, and its influence and voice create a delicate output of cultural connotation and humanistic values. Considering the history of Chinese film's worldwide communication and the experience of other nations, there is still a long way to go for Chinese film's international communication. How to overcome the cultural discount phenomena and how to achieve successful conversion between different linguistic systems, civilizations, and social systems are all issues that Chinese filmmakers must address while traveling abroad. In general, Chinese filmmakers must begin with themselves, improving their creative abilities and raising the bar for film quality. Only in this manner can the benefits and impacts of production and distribution, as well as national policies, be realized, and the international reputation and brand effect of Chinese films developed. The study concluded that, in order to solve the problem of Chinese movies being cold overseas, it is not enough for the government to implement a series of policies, it is necessary to present Chinese culture in movies in an easy-to-understand way, and also to innovate the form of movies, no longer the same old movies that promote Chinese values, so that foreigners can understand Chinese movies, and when foreign audiences understand Chinese movies, the box office will naturally not be a problem.

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