

Research on the Development Status, Problems and Countermeasures of Chinese Children's Films

DeMin He^{1*} WenHui Li¹

¹ *Media technology of Liaocheng University, Liao Cheng, Shan Ddong, China*

**Corresponding author. Email: 7269516@qq.com*

ABSTRACT

The number of Chinese children ranks first in the world. It is an important task for the construction and development of the Chinese cultural industry to strengthen the cultivation on the cultural literacy of children. With the continuous improvement of the Chinese economic level as well as the rapid development of the Chinese film market, both the number and box office of Chinese films have been on an upward trend in the past six years. There are many domestic commercial blockbusters but insufficient children's films with poor quality and less creativity in the Chinese film market at present. The development status of Chinese children's films as well as the causes of problems is analyzed in the paper. Some suggestions for the development of Chinese children's films are made in order to promote the development of Chinese children's films.

Keywords: *children's film, status quo, problems, countermeasures*

1. INTRODUCTION

In October, 2014, it was pointed out by Xi Jinping in the Symposium on Literature and Art that people's living standards as well as the quality and taste requirements of people for cultural products are improved constantly[4]. Film, television, music and other industries should be in line with the development of the times. Cultural works should be close to people's life and in line with the development of the times so as to create some popular and excellent works. As an important part of the Chinese film industry, Children's films play an important role in the cultivation on children's cultural literacy. "Naughty Boy" (1922) opened the precedent of Chinese children's films. The Chinese children's film industry is endowed with a history of more than ninety years. At the early stage of Chinese children's films, a series of classic children's films appeared one after another, such as "The Letter With Feathers" (1954), "Sparkling Red Star" (1974) and "SanMao Joins The Army" (1992). Their creative ideas and contents are still praised by people at present. In contrast, although the number of children's films grows constantly, there are still several problems in the modern society with the booming film industry. Firstly, there are insufficient high-quality films. Secondly, the phenomenon of juvenility is relatively prominent. Thirdly, themes are not distinct. Finally, there are rare popular and excellent films.

2. ANALYSIS OF THE DEVELOPMENT STATUS OF CHINESE CHILDREN'S FILMS

2.1. Development status of Chinese children's films

Number of Chinese children's films: It is on an overall growth trend at present. There were sixty-one and seventy-six children's films with annual increases of 48.9% and 24.5% respectively in China in 2015 and in 2016. There were twenty-seven and twenty-eight animation films respectively in the first half of 2016 and in the first half of 2017. The number of Chinese children's films was on a growth trend [1].

Box office revenue: The total box office revenue of Chinese children's films was 1.72 billion yuan, 1.95 billion yuan, 3.67 billion yuan, 5.12 billion yuan and 8.3 billion yuan respectively from 2012 to 2016. There was a stable annual box office revenue growth trend. The total box office revenue of Chinese films was 16.155 billion yuan, 27.136 billion yuan and 26.663 billion yuan respectively from 2014 to 2016. Chinese children's films accounted for 12.07%, 13.52% and 31.13% of the total box office revenue of Chinese films respectively in these years. The proportion of the box office revenue of Chinese children's films in the total box office of Chinese children's films was on an upward trend [2]. It could be seen that both the number and box office revenue of Chinese children's films were on an upward trend.

2.2. Competition pattern of the Chinese children's film industry

In terms of production market, there have been more and more enterprises to enter the children's film industry in China along with the continuous promotion on the soft culture such as comics and animation. The Chinese animation industry is taken as an example. There were totally eight hundred and seventy-seven animation companies including sixty-seven new animation companies in 2017[3]. Although the number of animation companies is growing, the public's animation awareness is still poor. There are very few Chinese films with the profound domestic influence, let alone those with the profound international influence. There are only a few well-known Chinese films, such as Creative Power Entertaining(CPE)'s "Pleasant Goat and Big Big Wolf" and Xuanji Science & Technology's "The Legend of Qin". Other films are always insignificant and less popular. The competitiveness of Chinese children's films is poor.

In terms of distribution market, there are three representative Chinese children's film makers, including Alpha Animation, Fantawild and Mili Pictures. Alpha Animation is a cultural company with strong technical strength and development potential. So far, it has released a series of children's films successfully, such as "Pleasant Goat and Big Big Wolf", "Backkom Bear: Agent 008" and "One Hundred Thousand Bad Jokes ". It has made great achievements. Fantawild's "Boonie Bears" was highly praised in the Chinese children's film market. The related children' film series was released successfully from 2014 to 2015. It made great achievements. Mili Pictures is a company with strong operation strength in China and its "Dragon Nest • Warriors'dawn" released in 2014 is the first children's film with the game theme in China. It is involved with adventure and magic and popular among children. With the growing recognition on children's films, more and more film and television companies have been involved in the children's film market.

3. PROBLEMS EXISTING IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF CHINESE CHILDREN'S FILMS

3.1. Poor understanding of Chinese children's films

How to position children's films reasonably? What is the unique aesthetic character of children's films? It is the first problem we encounter when we discuss about Chinese children's films. It is also the key to the reflection of the artistic vitality of children's films. On the basis of the reasonable positioning of children's films, it is necessary to explore the basic aesthetic laws of children's films, which can provide some helpful reference for the creation of children's films and the clarification of related debates.

However, due to the lack of a unified orientation for the research on Chinese children's films, there are some limitations in the early creative ideas and the later communication and promotion, which affects the development of Chinese children's films greatly. Sometimes, it is found that Chinese children's films are only suitable for children and adults learn less from them. The main reason why parents watch children's films is that they are worried about the safety of their children, which often leads to the phenomenon of "adult sleeping" in the process of watching movies. There are great limitations for the audience. However, foreign children's films are different. Not limited to children, they are promoted in the way of "family fun". They are suitable for all ages. When parents accompany their children to watch children's films, they will get immersed and enjoy the fun of watching movies with their children. For example, an English comedy children's film called "Paddington" and three American adventure children's films called "The Incredibles", "Finding Nemo" and "Coco" respectively. It is easy for adults to get immersed in these films, resulting in deep experience and understanding. "Coco" is taken as an example. It was inspired by the Day of the Dead (Mexico). It was told that dreams, love and family were very important to everyone. Although it was a conventional story, a lot of musical elements and color were added after the bold innovation of the director. It also brought us a lot of spiritual feelings. The most gorgeous means was adopted to describe about the simplest emotion and show a completely different atmosphere from the most comic animation films on the market, which attracted the audience and improved the competitiveness of the film greatly.

3.2. Poor quality of Chinese children's films

On the one hand, the poor quality of Chinese children's films is caused by conventional themes and ideas. There is a certain gap between Chinese and foreign children's films in terms of themes and ideas. American children's films are taken as an example. Firstly, themes are not limited to the audience's age and status. Children under the age of 14, middle school students and even adults can watch these films. Secondly, American children's films are very rich in types and themes, such as a comedy children's film called "Alvin and the Chipmunks", two animation children's films called "The Lion King" and "The Little Mermaid" respectively and a magic children's film called "Harry Potter". They are about families and schools and endowed with the strong practical and educational significance. Finally, foreign children's film ideas are more novel. An English children's film called "The Pirates! Band of Misfits" was released in 2012. It was a 3D clay animation. It was a fantastic and wonderful adventure about a pirate captain as the hero of the film. The British humor as well as the friendship among pirates made the film more moving in addition to amusing the audience. It attracted a lot of adult audience after released. A wide range of audience and a variety of creative themes endow foreign

children's films with the great market and competitive advantages. However, some Chinese children's films have been divorced from the times and the real society and always adapted from domestic animations in recent years. For example, there are some overly fantastic or imaginative children's films with the less profound education significance based on IP, such as "Pleasant Goat and Big Big Wolf" (2012), "Boonie Bears: Entangled Worlds" (2017) and the two films of "The New Big Head Son and Small Head Dad" and "The New Big Head Son and Small Head Dad III" (2018). Chinese children's films focused on children are dominated by foreign plays, resulting in less creatively. In addition, the didactic theme and content lead to the less fun, the slight monotony and obsolescence and the poor ornamental value, so Chinese children's films are not attractive to Chinese children. The poor quality of Chinese children's films is caused by monotonous themes and poor creativity. On the other hand, the production cost is low. The production fund of Chinese children's films is basically from the limited self-owned fund of studios and financial subsidies. The single source of fund leads to the low production cost. In terms of the capital operation of the Chinese film industry, there is less fund for the creation of children's films. Compared with other films, Chinese children's films are difficult to attract excellent teams due to low-cost production. The poor equipment and the lack of personnel lead to the inferior position of Chinese children's films in production.

Without good financial support or talent reserve, it is difficult to make high-quality children's films. There is little investment in Chinese children's films, resulting in the failure of large-scale production and promotion, the poor box office prospect, the difficulty to enter cinemas and the failure to recover production cost. It also causes the unwillingness of Chinese playwrights, directors, investors and makers to get involved in children's film production, which aggravates the vicious circle of the Chinese children's film market.

4. MEASURES TO PROMOTE THE DEVELOPMENT OF CHINESE CHILDREN'S FILMS

4.1. Value of the government and improvement on policies

According to the development status of Chinese children's films, the government should increase the investment of special fund in children's film creation constantly. Improve policies for children's films. Encourage and support individuals and enterprises with love for children's films to make suggestions actively for the cause of Chinese children's films. On the one hand, cultural promotion departments should undertake the duty of supervision, implement the current policies for the production of children's films carefully and supervise the film production quality. On the other hand, the financial support for the

children's film industry should be strengthened and the multi-channel financing for the children's film industry should be provided. It is possible to set up a special fund for the construction on the children's film industry or support the children's film industry in the form of government procurement and ordering so as to improve the support for the children's film industry. In addition, the special fund for the children's film industry's development and construction is allocated from the cultural construction fund of various provinces and cities and some fund for the production of innovative children's films is allocated from the special fund of films.

4.2. Enhancement of study for the improvement of the professionalism of filmmakers

Strengthen the study of theoretical knowledge. Filmmakers must have the good theoretical knowledge. The most basic mistake must not appear in children's films, or it is easy to cause misleading. For film and television companies, it is necessary to carry out theoretical knowledge training activities regularly to consolidate or strengthen the professionalism of work constantly. For schools, some courses on children's film theory should be added in Film and Television major or lectures on children's film types should be actively held so as to strengthen promotion constantly and stimulate students' interest in children's films. In 2018, the Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China and the Publicity Department of the Communist Party of China jointly issued "The Guiding Opinions on the Enhancement of the Film and Television Education in Primary and Secondary Schools". It was advocated to "achieve the basic popularization of film and television education in primary and secondary schools within three to five years, carry out film and television education activities effectively in primary and secondary schools, fully guarantee the excellent films suitable for primary and secondary schools and make effective use of schools, the extracurricular activity places for young people and the social resource about watching films. "Strengthen the study of practical skills. It is possible for film and television companies to learn some advanced foreign technology and experience constantly by regularly dispatching employees to go abroad for study and exchange and establish partnerships with foreign well-known companies for joint shooting, skill improvement and high-quality children's film production. For schools to cultivate talents, it is possible to purchase advanced instruments and equipment for the study and operation of students. On the other hand, a school enterprise strategic alliance with some film and television companies can be established and some enterprise internship activities for students can be organized regularly so as to cultivate students' practical ability and lay a solid foundation for work after graduation.

4.3. Improvement of the quality of works

The high-quality content is taken as the core competitiveness. At present, there are many problems about the creation of Chinese children's films, which is the key to the realistic difficulties and development bottlenecks of Chinese children's films. First of all, children should be respected in terms of content selection. The original intention of children's films is to serve children. However, with the diversified development of the film and television industry, more and more adults have fallen in love with children's films and experienced their fun. However, in terms of the creation of children's films, it is necessary to grasp the characteristics of children. Children's films should be suitable for children and inseparable from the core of "children". Filmmakers should carer to the inner need of children and deeply understand their favorite film type. In addition to the appropriate perspective and attractive language style, we also need themes suitable for children. Only in this way, can we make some popular children's films. It is a realistic problem about Chinese children's films. In this regard, it is possible for us to learn from Western children's films. [5] Firstly, have a correct outlook on children and show respect for the inner need of children, especially their spiritual need. Generally speaking, there is more respect for children in Western children's films. When it comes to the relationship between adults and children, it always spares no effort to highlight the dominant position of children. Secondly, respect children's imagination repeatedly. The most domestic themes are in line with the reality at present. Thirdly, carry forward the positive energy. Children's films should be full of positive energy. Children are the flower, future and hope of the nation. The quality of Chinese children's films plays a role in the healthy growth of the next generation. Therefore, it is necessary to take corresponding responsibilities and serve children as well as the nation. On the basis of developing imagination fully, we should avoid exaggerating or distorting facts. It is necessary to guide children correctly so that they can be full of hope for life and endowed with a positive attitude towards life as well as an optimistic way of life. We should carry forward core socialist values so as to help children establish correct outlooks on world, life and values. According to the report of the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, the socialist literary and artistic creation must be people-oriented and close to people's life. It is necessary to strengthen the creation of realistic themes and constantly design excellent works to praise the Party, the motherland and heroes [6]. Therefore, children's films should be in line with this creative idea. It is necessary to carry forward the excellent Chinese culture actively and improve the attraction of films by carrying out innovation on shooting methods and techniques so that children can be guided by correct value in the process of watching films.

5. Conclusion

The wisdom of children results in national wisdom. Chinese children's films are aimed to serve children's life as well as the great cause of national rejuvenation. They are related to the cultivation on outlooks on world, life and values for the young generation. Filmmakers are required to have the strong sense of responsibility and ambition as well as the great love to devote themselves to their motherland and serve children. It is also necessary for them to strengthen study, learn from the domestic and foreign advanced experience, uphold the truth and improve skills. It is aimed to create more Chinese children's films with high quality and stimulate the creativity of children's film art. Only in this way, can we form the internal driving force for the development of children's films. It can solve problems for the prosperity of Chinese children's films as soon as possible.

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