



LDA-Based Topic Mining of Audience Reviews for the “Ne Zha” Animated Film Series

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Abstract. The *Ne Zha* animated film series stands as a land-mark adaptation of domestic mythological IP. To accurately capture audiences’ core demands, this paper adopts the Uses and Gratifications Theory as the theoretical framework, and employs the LDA topic model and SnowNLP sentiment analysis method. Based on comment data mined from four major platforms, including Xiaohongshu, Douyin, Bilibili, and Douban, six major themes, such as content quality, cultural value, and immersive experience, are extracted, and the satisfaction degree and differences of audience demands are analyzed. The results indicate that audiences generally hold positive sentiments, with the highest satisfaction level for industrial identity demand. Meanwhile, the films suffer from low satisfaction of immersive experience demands, uneven distribution of communication resources, and insufficient in-depth cultural exploration. Corresponding optimization strategies are proposed in this study, providing empirical references for the high quality development of domestic animated films.

Keywords: Uses and Gratifications Theory, LDA topic modeling, Ne Zha, audience reviews

1 Introduction

Following its release in 2019, *Ne Zha* quickly became a nationwide cultural phenomenon, ultimately topping the box office that year with over 5 billion yuan in revenue [1]. The sequel, *Ne Zha: The Demon Boy Storms the Sea*, was released during the 2025 Spring Festival, once again sparking a nationwide viewing craze. With box office receipts exceeding 15.9 billion yuan, it topped the all-time Chinese box office charts [2] and became the first Asian animated film to enter the top ten of global box office history. With its mature production standards and profound cultural translation capabilities, the *Ne Zha* animated film series has propelled domestic animation from a local to a global stage, becoming a landmark phenomenon in the modernization and international dissemination of China’s excellent traditional culture.

Currently, academic research on the *Ne Zha* animated film series covers areas such as aesthetic interpretation, cultural translation, narrative creation, and market performance. Most studies employ qualitative research methods, while quantitative analysis of audience satisfaction remains relatively underdeveloped. Based on this, this study takes the *Ne Zha* animated film series as its subject, aiming to explore and analyze the core themes and emotional tendencies in multi-platform audience reviews, as well as to quantitatively assess the gap between audience needs and satisfaction, thereby providing empirical references for the creation of domestic animation and the development of its IP.

2 Literature Review

2.1 Uses and Gratifications Theory

The Uses and Gratifications theory emerged in the 1940s and was first proposed by Elihu Katz in his 1974 book **The Individual's Use of Mass Communication**. Its core premise is that audiences actively select and use media based on their own needs. In 1977, Japanese scholar Ikuo Takeuchi developed a mature process model, and the Uses and Gratifications theory gradually became a classic framework for audience research in communication studies [3]. The theory has evolved through three stages: during the era of traditional mass media, it focused on understanding the motivations behind active audience use [4]; in the new media era, it adapted to the characteristics of the internet, expanding its scope to include virtual social interaction and identity presentation [5]; and in the era of digital algorithms, the theory has been extended to diverse scenarios such as micro-short dramas, cloud-based self-study, and the dissemination of intangible cultural heritage [6] [7] [8]. This study analyzes audience comments to explore the motivations and needs that drive viewers to actively watch and comment on content. The Uses and Gratifications Theory provides an audience-centered analytical perspective, enabling the interpretation of audience commenting behavior as an expression of needs and feedback on their fulfillment, which aligns with the study's central goal of identifying needs through audience comments.

2.2 Research on the Application of LDA Thematic Modeling and Sentiment Analysis

Latent Dirichlet Allocation (LDA), proposed by David M. Blei, Andrew Y. Ng, and Michael I. Jordan in 2003, infers document topics through probability distributions to achieve topic clustering and text classification. It is a commonly used model for unsupervised mining of large-scale review texts [9]. The core operational logic of this model is as follows: each audience review document is composed of several latent themes combined according to specific probabilities, and each independent theme corresponds to a set of probability distributions for a group of words. As a core tool for text mining, this model has been widely applied to sentiment and topic analysis of movie reviews, serving as an important means for analyzing audience preferences and evaluating film quality [10] [11]. For the audience analysis of *Ne Zha: The Demon

Boy*, LDA can effectively extract core themes such as character development, plot, and special effects, emotional core, and cultural expression; quantify audience sentiment; and identify points of divergence in evaluations [12], thereby providing a basis for creative optimization and market decision-making. Sentiment analysis refers to the in-depth analysis of emotionally charged text through systematic technical methods to identify the positive or negative polarity and intensity levels of the text’s sentiment [13]. SnowNLP, a Chinese natural language processing toolkit based on the Naive Bayes algorithm, includes core functional modules for sentiment classification, sentiment orientation determination, and sentiment intensity assessment. Initial research on sentiment analysis primarily relied on lightweight models such as SnowNLP, using Naive Bayes for basic sentiment classification; later, it began integrating the LDA topic model to achieve “topic-sentiment” cross-analysis, which has been widely applied in fields such as tourism and public policy [14] [15].

As a classic teenage figure in the lineage of Chinese mythological characters, Ne Zha embodies profound laws of evolving public aesthetic perceptions of traditional culture, prevailing creative trends in the adaptation of domestic animation mythological IP, and the contemporary shift in young people’s self-identity and spiritual aspirations as reflected in modern audience evaluations. Taking the *Nezha* animated film series as the research subject, this study adopts LDA topic modeling to identify audience concerns and conducts an in-depth analysis of audience demands and attitudes combined with SnowNLP sentiment analysis and Uses and Gratifications Theory. It correlates theories with audience needs to enrich the research framework of domestic and animated film audiences and helps domestic and nations capture audience preferences and enhance communication effectiveness.

3 Data Collection and Research Methods

3.1 Data Collection

In view of the distinct features of Xiaohongshu, Douyin, Douban, and Bilibili, this study adopts combined web-crawling methods using Requests, official open APIs, and Selenium, strictly abiding by platform robots protocols and data usage specifications throughout the process. From July 1, 2019, to March 1, 2025, comments and reviews were comprehensively collected from Xiaohongshu, Douyin, Bilibili, and Douban using the keywords “Ne Zha: The Demon Boy’s Descent” and “Ne Zha: The Demon Boy’s Sea Adventure.” The time span covers the full release period and the public opinion development phase of the two films, encompassing core users across all platforms. A total of 13,390 valid texts were obtained. The dataset meets the computational requirements for LDA topic modeling and sentiment analysis and demonstrates sound statistical representativeness.

3.2 Data Preprocessing

To ensure data quality and the feasibility of the study, the raw data underwent preprocessing: First, comments with low relevance to the research topic were

excluded; second, text cleaning was performed to remove meaningless symbols and noise from the responses; third, duplicate comments were removed. Ultimately, 12,556 comments were retained. The cleaned valid audience comment data for the *Ne Zha* animated film series was processed using the Jieba word segmentation tool. During segmentation, a custom vocabulary was loaded to prevent specialized terms, character names, and cultural terms from being split; a stopwords list was also loaded to remove meaningless function words, punctuation marks, advertising characters, and redundant interjections. This resulted in high-quality tokenized text, serving as a unified, foundational dataset for subsequent LDA topic modeling and sentiment analysis, ensuring data consistency and alignment between the two modules.

3.3 LDA Topic Analysis Method

In this study, the LDA model is primarily used to perform topic mining on the preprocessed audience review texts of the *Ne Zha* animated film series. It efficiently extracts the core dimensions of audience interest and discussion focal points regarding the series, while quantifying the proportion of attention each topic receives. This addresses the shortcomings of traditional qualitative analysis, which lacks depth and is difficult to quantify in large-scale text processing. This model does not require manually predefined themes and can efficiently extract latent semantic associations from unstructured short reviews. It is well-suited to the characteristics of film review data—such as large volume, colloquial language, and significant subjective variation—providing objective, reproducible, and quantitative support for audience demand analysis.

4 LDA Topic Clustering Results

The LDA topic modeling was conducted using Python code, with 20 iterations to ensure sufficient model convergence. To ensure reproducibility of experimental results, the random seed was set at 1. The perplexity metric measures the model’s ability to fit text data; lower values indicate a better fit. The consistency metric measures the semantic relevance of words within a topic; a higher value indicates a greater interpretability of the topic [16]. The perplexity-consistency curve for this study is shown in Fig. 1.

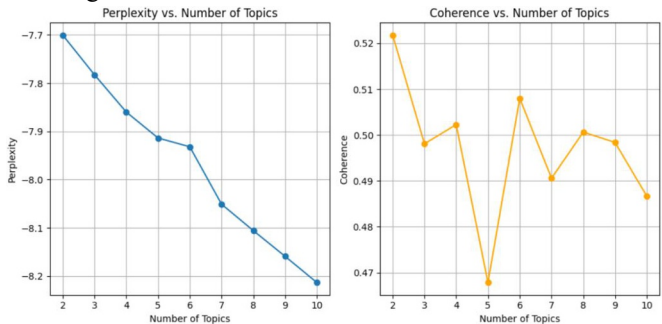


Fig. 1. Perplexity-Consistency Curve.

A comprehensive analysis of the performance of these two metrics reveals that the perplexity curve exhibits a downward trend, indicating a good model fit; the consistency curve shows an initial rise followed by a decline, peaking at a value of , suggesting that when the number of topics is set to 6, the model can clearly distinguish high semantic associations. Therefore, this study ultimately determines that the optimal number of topics is 6, providing a reliable foundation for the subsequent topic analysis and interpretation of audience needs.

The basic characteristics of the six topics are shown in TABLE I. To intuitively demonstrate the thematic distribution structure of comment data, this study adopts multidimensional scaling analysis. A dimensionality-reduction mapping is constructed based on semantic similarity between themes to visually present the high-dimensional thematic space, as shown in Fig.2.

Table 1. The Basic Characteristics of the Six Topics

NO.	Perc.	Topic content	Key words
1	39.84%	Animation Content Creation and Audience Perception	Plot, characters, visuals, Chinese animation, mythology, technology, destiny, spirit, essence
2	19.52%	Cultural Communication and Social Values	Culture, Communication, Marketing, Image, Tradition, World, Education, Meaning, Nation, Team
3	14.34%	Viewing Experience and Market Popularity	Movie theaters, atmosphere, dubbing, promotion, popularity, reviews, traffic, general public, foreigners, comedy
4	10.04%	IP Management and Fan Ecosystem	The Magic Boy, Official, Story, Global, Poster, Marketing, Ticket Prices, Fans, Photo Opportunities, Animated Film
5	9.88%	Box Office Performance and Industry Standing	Box office, quality, word of mouth, pacing, <i>Wolf Warrior</i> , <i>The Wandering Earth</i> , Impression, Maoyan, gap, Easter eggs
6	6.37%	Audience discussions on characters and content	Smile, Chicken Drumstick, Baobao, Groundhog, Summit, Master, Protagonist, Action, Heavenly Court, Classic

On this visual interface, the bubble nodes on the left correspond to different themes. Node size is positively correlated with the proportion of comments under each theme, and the spacing between nodes reflects semantic discrepancies among themes. The horizontal axis represents the word frequency feature dimension. When a bubble node is selected, the right panel displays the top 30 core feature words with the highest weights for the corresponding theme[1717].

The LDA topic model applied in this research achieves satisfactory performance in topic discrimination, semantic independence, and model rationality. The thematic distance graph derived from multidimensional scaling analysis shows six clearly

distributed theme nodes without obvious overlap, and the node spacing distinctly reflects semantic differences, indicating strong discrimination capacity. Each theme is supported by exclusive high-weight feature words with definite semantic orientation and independent boundaries. Built on a sophisticated algorithmic framework, the model includes adjustable parameters and core indicators backed by existing literature. Its scientific and rigorous approach well aligns with the corpus characteristics and analytical objectives of this study.

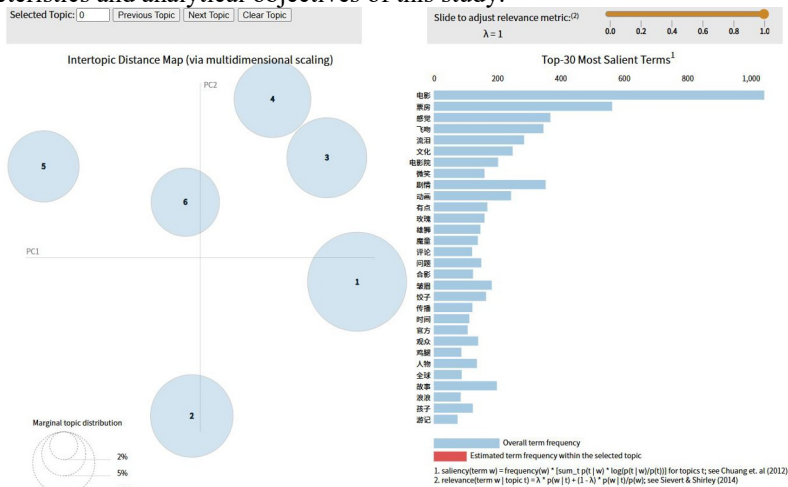


Fig. 2. Perplexity-Consistency Curve.

5 Analysis of Lessons for the Development of the Domestic Animation Industry Based on Clustered Themes

5.1 Mapping of Clustered Themes

This study adopts the Uses and Gratifications Theory as its core analytical framework. Systematically matches the LDA thematic clustering results with audience viewing and commenting behaviors. This establishes a layered mapping relationship of “clustered themes—demand types—motivational core—satisfaction judgment—emotional feedback,” thereby deeply embedding the theory throughout the entire process of thematic interpretation, demand attribution, and satisfaction assessment. Audience behavior in watching films and posting comments represents the active externalization of intrinsic needs. The six major themes identified by LDA constitute the concentrated manifestation of audience needs within the text, while SnowNLP sentiment scores provide quantitative evidence of the degree of need satisfaction. This study systematically established a theoretical alignment and empirical mapping between cluster themes and audience needs, laying the groundwork for subsequent analyses of satisfaction levels and the development of a series of films. The specific correspondences are illustrated in Fig. 3.

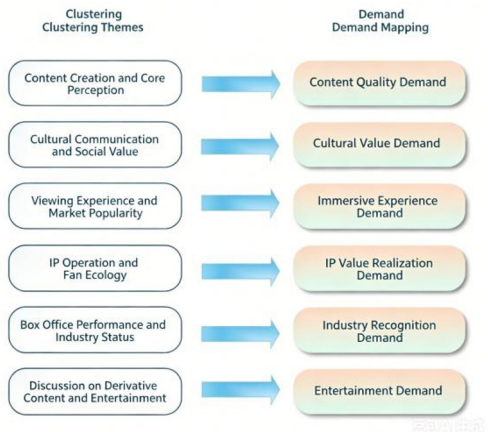


Fig. 3. Requirements Mapping by Theme.

5.2 Analysis of Audience Satisfaction Based on Usage and Fulfillment

This study utilized SnowNLP to measure text sentiment. This tool, based on the Naive Bayes algorithm, is highly adaptable to short Chinese texts and outputs sentiment scores on a scale from 0 to 1, where higher scores indicate more positive sentiment and lower scores indicate more negative sentiment. For the purposes of this study, sentiment scores of 0.4 or lower are classified as negative, scores of 0.6 or higher are classified as positive, and all other scores are classified as neutral.

Content Quality. *The Core Evaluation Criterion for Animation Creation:* The Uses and Gratifications Theory posits that audiences actively evaluate and selectively interpret media texts in line with their aesthetic and emotional expectations [18]. This study reveals that positive comments regarding the content quality of the *Ne Zha* series accounted for 57.29%. Audiences offered positive feedback such as “*The plot is both humorous and moving, suitable for all age groups*” and “*Every character is flesh and blood,*” affirming the film’s narrative innovation and multidimensional character development, which align with audiences’ demand for high-quality storytelling and emotional immersion. Negative comments in this dimension accounted for 24.38%, with audiences stating that “*the sequel’s plot pales in comparison to the original,*” and that “*the character storylines are incomplete and rushed.*” Existing research indicates that audiences of domestic mythological animation have developed mature narrative aesthetics and critical thinking skills [19]. Negative evaluations essentially stem from unmet audience expectations regarding narrative completeness, logical consistency, and the closure of character arcs. Creative issues such as plot holes and imbalanced pacing violate audiences’ preconceptions about the quality of domestic animation, lowering the film’s reputation and highlighting that meticulous content refinement is the core of domestic animation’s ability to maintain audience recognition.

Cultural Value Demands. *The Tension Between Positive Dissemination and Deep Exploration:* When watching domestic mythological animation, audiences pursue both entertainment and spiritual needs, such as cultural roots and a sense of identity [18]. In media consumption, audiences actively interpret texts, relying on cultural heritage to construct their self-identity and nourish their spirits. Positive comments accounted for 66.81% in this dimension, with audiences acknowledging the films' modern reinterpretation of traditional mythology. Comments such as "*Ne Zha has breathed new life into traditional mythology, spreading Chinese culture in a way that resonates with young people, truly achieving both cultural preservation and innovation*" reflect the public's high recognition of the film industry's role in revitalizing traditional culture for younger generations. Negative comments accounted for 22.78%. As the audience's cultural literacy has improved, the public is no longer limited to superficial "Chinese-style" aesthetics but places greater emphasis on the depth and authenticity of the cultural core [20]. Audiences pointed out issues such as the overuse of cultural symbols, superficial interpretations of the core themes, and adaptations that are merely superficial, reflecting the current audience's advanced demand for in-depth cultural exploration in adaptations of mythological IPs.

Demand for Immersive Experiences. *Dual Feedback on Audiovisual Immersion, Emotional Resonance, and IP Nostalgia:* Audiences generally seek a multifaceted cinematic experience encompassing audiovisual immersion, emotional engagement, and nostalgia for the IP. Positive comments in this dimension accounted for 56.69%. Through high-quality audiovisuals, well-suited voice acting, and emotional storytelling—combined with the childhood nostalgia evoked by the mythological IP—the film effectively met audiences' demand for an immersive viewing experience. Negative comments accounted for 30.14%, as the immersive media experience is constrained by the interplay of production quality, distribution resources, and cultural. Audience feedback included remarks such as, "*There are absolutely no screenings of Ne Zha 2 in our small county; we can't even go to the cinema to watch it—all screenings are concentrated in big cities. It's so unfair,*" while overseas audiences also faced cultural barriers, noting, "*We couldn't understand many of the jokes or plot points at all,*" reflecting the audience's broader demand for equitable distribution and barrier-free cross-cultural empathy. Such issues fall under the category of external distribution adaptation and do not undermine the film's core audiovisual and narrative value; overall audience satisfaction remains high.

The Need for IP Value Realization. *The Key Link Between the Work and the Audience:* From the perspective of the Uses and Gratifications Theory, audiences' engagement with and interaction regarding IPs stem from psychological needs for social participation, emotional connection, and a sense of belonging to a community [18]. Positive comments accounted for 67.92% in this dimension, indicating high audience recognition of the "Ne Zha" IP. Audiences demonstrated a strong willingness to actively share the film and watch it multiple times, and they approved

of the official promotional efforts and ticket pricing, deriving emotional satisfaction from their consumption and interaction. Negative comments accounted for 21.92%. Audiences reported that official promotional campaigns were rigid, interactive formats were monotonous, and fan community management was weak, reflecting that higher-level needs—such as deep participation in IP co-creation and regular emotional dialogue—remained unmet.

Industry Recognition Needs. *A Reflection of Industry Status and Market Confidence:* Audience film and television consumption behavior includes a desire to identify with the domestic animation industry, with the quality of works serving as a barometer of the industry’s development. Positive comments accounted for 73.52% in this dimension—the highest among the six dimensions. Audiences candidly stated, “*As members of the post-80s generation who grew up watching Japanese and American animation, we felt that Chinese animation had risen to prominence starting with *Ne Zha I*,*” acknowledging the film’s industrial production standards and market achievements, which boosted confidence in the domestic animation industry. Negative comments accounted for 19.20%, with audiences stating that “*the second installment was not as good as the first,*” while also questioning the film’s reliance on traffic-driven hype and inflated word-of-mouth. Academics believe that audiences have developed high expectations for domestic animation to be both high-quality and systematic [21]. These controversies reflect that the public is no longer satisfied with merely phased breakthroughs in the industry but anticipates the long-term development of domestic animation toward high-quality, systematic standards and internationalization.

Entertainment and Leisure Needs. *A Key Source of Audience Retention:* Audience engagement with domestic animation IPs constitutes a psychological practice of active stress relief and social co-creation [18]. Positive comments accounted for 65.35% in this dimension; the film’s distinctive character designs spawned numerous viral memes and fan-created content, with audiences praising the “*cute, adorable character designs*” and the “*entertaining fan-created content.*” This confirms the characteristic of the youth demographic to achieve emotional release and social identity through playful deconstruction and creative co-creation, with entertaining interactions becoming the key to maintaining audience engagement [22]. Negative comments accounted for 25.46%, with audience feedback noting that “*the official team did not actively guide fan-created content, which largely relied on spontaneous meme-making.*” This exposes issues of passive IP derivative operations and insufficient product supply. Spontaneous creation is prone to content homogenization and waning popularity, failing to meet the audience’s sustained co-creation and emotional consumption needs.

5.3 Optimization Pathways for Domestic Animated Films Based on the Uses and Gratifications Theory

Anchoring Content Quality Demands. *Refining Narratives to Strengthen Core Satisfaction:* To address issues such as weak plot logic, imbalanced pacing, and incomplete character arcs, domestic animation must prioritize content quality and create high-quality narratives suitable for all ages. By optimizing scriptwriting and pre-production planning to cater to the viewing needs of all age groups, refining character arcs, and balancing visual effects with narrative substance, the industry can meet audience expectations for quality through refined content.

Deepening Cultural Value. *Promoting the In-Depth Interpretation of Cultural Symbols:* Move beyond the superficial accumulation of traditional Chinese aesthetic symbols and delve into the spiritual essence of traditional mythology, integrating traditional cultural concepts into plotlines and character development. Combine contemporary values with modernized traditional culture to enhance intergenerational resonance. Simultaneously, optimize cross-cultural expression by using universal emotions to break down cultural barriers, balancing the preservation of local cultural heritage with cultural outreach overseas.

Upgrading the Demand for Immersive Experiences. *Ensuring Full-Scene Accessibility and Distribution Equity:* Continuously optimize the audiovisual quality and narrative atmosphere of films to accommodate multi-device viewing scenarios. Balance screening resources across urban and rural areas and regional cinema chains to safeguard the viewing rights of audiences in lower-tier markets. For overseas markets, improve translations and cultural annotations to eliminate cultural gaps and deliver high-quality, immersive viewing experiences to audiences worldwide.

Meeting the Need to Maximize IP Value. *Building a Refined Fan Co-creation Ecosystem:* Innovate omnichannel promotion and distribution models, establish regular fan interaction platforms, and empower audiences to co-create IPs through fan-generated content contests and offline events. Optimize commercial aspects such as ticket pricing and merchandise development to balance commercial benefits with user experience, thereby strengthening the emotional bond between fans and IPs.

Strengthening the Need for Industry Identity. *Boosting Confidence Through High-Quality, Systematic Production:* Uphold the bottom line of high-quality creation and eliminate short-sighted practices that prioritize box office revenue over critical acclaim. Continuously improve the industrialized animation production system, develop a domestic mythological IP universe, and establish a systematic creative framework.

Through industry upgrading and the consistent output of high-quality works, boost audience confidence in the development of the domestic animation industry.

Stimulating Entertainment and Leisure Demand. *Creating a Closed-Loop for Entertainment and Derivative Content:* Officials should proactively identify highlights in works, guide audience-generated content and creative sharing, and lower participation barriers. Expand the range of derivative products, such as collectible toys and cultural and creative goods, to address supply gaps in merchandise. Leverage social media platforms to build interactive entertainment scenarios, extend the IP’s lifecycle through audience co-creation, and solidify engagement among young users.

6 Conclusions

The results show that audiences hold an overall positive sentiment toward the film series, with the demand for industrial recognition achieving the highest satisfaction degree, while the satisfaction degrees of immersive experience and content quality demands are relatively low; the films still have prominent deficiencies in terms of communication resource allocation, cultural context adaptation, plot logic, narrative rhythm, and in-depth exploration of cultural connotations. Meanwhile, this study verifies that the Uses and Gratifications Theory is highly applicable to audience research on domestic animated films, which can interpret audience behaviors including film viewing, commenting, secondary creation, and consumption as a complete process of demand-driven active selection and satisfaction feedback, providing theoretical and empirical support for the domestic animation industry to accurately grasp audience demands, optimize creative directions, and improve IP operation systems.

This research still has limitations, including limited coverage of overseas platforms, exclusive reliance on quantitative text mining, and a singular focus on the Ne Zha film series. Future studies could broaden data sources to include comments from overseas platforms, compare domestic and foreign audience demands, and combine quantitative approaches, such as BERTopic clustering, with qualitative interviews to probe audience motivations. Researchers may also expand the scope to more domestic mythological IPs to identify shared patterns and refine the research framework for Chinese animated film audiences. Against the backdrop of cultivating a culturally influential nation and the rise of domestic animation, relevant findings can guide Chinese animation to prioritize audience needs, enhance content creation, promote cultural translation, enrich immersive experiences, and optimize IP management, thereby facilitating the creative transformation and international spread of traditional Chinese culture.

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