



The Strategy of Cross-Cultural Communication in the Film Industry--Taking Marvel as an Example

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Abstract. China's film industry has shown a relatively prosperous scene in recent years, and excellent works have emerged from time to time. However, according to the data, there are still some deficiencies in the cross-cultural communication of Chinese films, and the box office performance differs markedly between domestic and overseas markets. At the same time, the Marvel film series, produced by Marvel Studios in the United States and based on Marvel comics, has made great achievements since its inception, and is widely loved by fans all over the world. In addition to the charm of the work itself, excellent cross-cultural communication strategies also play an important role. Through in-depth research and discussion, this paper finally believes that the Chinese film industry has deficiencies in cultural identity, overseas marketing strategies and other aspects when carrying out cross-cultural communication. On the other hand, by analyzing the strategies adopted by Marvel in the global promotion, this paper summarizes the ideas worthy of imitation and learning by relevant practitioners, and tries to provide some suggestions for the overseas promotion of Chinese films on this basis.

Keywords: Film, Cross-Culture, Communication, Marvel

1 Introduction

With the deepening of globalization and the continuous progress of digital technology, cross-cultural communication is becoming an increasingly important part of the development process of various cultural products. Taking film as an example, this art form, which has both economic value and the important function of foreign cultural communication, has always been valued by all countries.

For China's film industry, the market has been booming in recent years. During this period, there are many excellent works, such as *The Wandering Earth 2*, *You Only Live Once*, and *Ne Zha 2*. However, internationally, the convergence of critical praise and substantial box office revenue within a single production is still a relatively uncommon phenomenon. Some films are characterized by a box office profile that relies primarily on the domestic market and diasporic audiences, with a concurrently weaker level of international appeal [1]. As of December 2025, there are only three Chinese films on the 2023-2025 global film box office list provided by Box Office

Mojo, which shows that there is still space for progress in its international dissemination and promotion. How to improve the audience's recognition and acceptance of Chinese films in the overseas market, promote the steady growth of overseas box office, and realize the efficient cross-cultural communication and development of Chinese films, is an urgent issue to be discussed.

At the same time, the superhero film series created by Marvel Comics and derived from its comic series has become popular worldwide. The cross-cultural communication and promotion strategies adopted by it have many commendable aspects, which are worthy of analysis and emulation by relevant practitioners to a certain extent.

Based on the above facts, this paper will summarize the main challenges faced by the Chinese film industry in cross-cultural communication in the current era, as well as its characteristics and possible shortcomings. Taking the Marvel film series as a starting point, based on a detailed analysis of the strategies adopted in cross-cultural communication, this paper attempts to provide some references and suggestions for the cross-cultural communication of Chinese films in the post-pandemic era.

2 Challenges to the Cross-Cultural Communication of the Chinese Film Industry

Generally speaking, cultural communication across the boundaries of language, culture, and political geography can be regarded as "cross-cultural communication" [2,3]. Excellent cross-cultural communication can deepen other countries' understanding and acceptance of their own culture and values, help shape their own foreign image, and is an important driving force for promoting cultural exchanges between countries and promoting the prosperity and development of world culture [4].

However, it is by no means easy to promote national cultural products to countries and individuals with different cultural and social backgrounds. This section will try to explore the difficulties that the Chinese film industry may encounter in cross-cultural communication, and list its possible shortcomings.

2.1 Cultural Understanding and Identity Barriers

Cultural identity is one of the most serious and unavoidable challenges faced by cultural works in cross-cultural communication. According to the theories of many scholars and much literature, the greater the cultural distance between the two countries, the more likely it is to cause "cultural discount" [4]. Relatively speaking, the film will be more difficult to be accepted, understood, and recognized by the audience of the importing country, and will not only hurt the box office of the film, but also may cause the audience of the importing country to misinterpret and misread the cultural customs and values of the exporting country [4].

In addition, it is worth noting that the cultural differences between countries are not only reflected in cultural customs and values. The differences in narrative methods, aesthetics, and expression, and even subtitles, language, and translation barriers, may

affect the international communication effect of films, so they should also be taken into account.

2.2 Market Strategy and Product Operation

When it comes to the reasons for the success of a film, in addition to the inherent quality of the work itself, a successful market strategy and product operation are also essential. At present, the Chinese film industry is facing the following challenges in this regard.

The first is the international commercial operation and marketing ability. According to relevant reports, in recent years, the works represented by the "Detective Chinatown" series have tended to actively try more diversified publicity methods when promoting overseas [5]. However, on the whole, there is still some space for progress. Practitioners in the Chinese film industry still have a relatively limited understanding of the characteristics and needs of overseas platforms and overseas audiences, and a lack of efforts in localization marketing, platform advertising, exclusive trailers and posters, publicity scale, and efforts, which need to be further optimized and tried.

Another is the potential imbalance of creative perspective. To reduce the impact of cultural discounts, some films may over cater to the expectations and stereotypes of overseas markets and audiences on Chinese culture and national conditions; Or it may go to the other extreme, that is, narrative logic, value expression and punchline design are completely rooted in the domestic political and social context, which makes it difficult for overseas audiences to understand and resonate.

The lack of innovation consciousness and the deep excavation of the humanistic spirit are another urgent problem to be solved [6]. How to properly complete the adaptation based on maintaining the local characteristics and culture, to promote its works to adapt to the characteristics and needs of overseas audiences, while maintaining a high degree of innovation ability and humanistic care spirit, and achieve a good work with "profound connotation and can trigger cross-cultural resonance" remains to be further considered by practitioners.

2.3 Changes in International Environment and Technology

With the rapid development of the Internet and digital technology, as well as the changes brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic, the international environment and technology related to the film industry have changed.

In recent years, especially since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic at the end of 2019, streaming media platforms represented by Netflix and Disney+ have witnessed rapid development. The audience can watch movies from all over the world more conveniently. However, for practitioners, this means that the audience's viewing habits have changed, the "information cocoons" have intensified, more copyright disputes, and the work dissemination may be limited due to the exclusive copyright of the platform [7,8]. Moreover, the box office revenue of traditional cinemas will also be affected.

At the same time, the rise of streaming media will also bring more opportunities, such as more convenient and diversified channels of communication, wider and faster dissemination of the film itself, easy to receive direct feedback from the audience, and

so on [7,8]. However, the mainstream streaming media platforms in various countries are different, so it is necessary to customize the distribution strategy according to the actual situation.

The second is the change of audience habits. Research by multiple scholars indicates that audience reception psychology undergoes certain changes both during the COVID-19 pandemic and in the post-pandemic era. Works with rich imagination, which can make the audience divorced from reality for a short time, as well as works that write and reflect on reality and disasters, and can evoke painful memories, may be relatively more popular with the audience in the post-epidemic era [7]. At the same time, kung fu films, martial arts films, and other types of films are still popular in the markets of North America and other places [3,7]. However, in recent years, such films have gradually declined in China, and the production and number of excellent works have declined [7].

Another is the change of the release window. Since the outbreak, the release window of the film has been significantly shortened, which requires practitioners to readjust the film release strategy carefully.

3 The Cross-Cultural Communication Strategy of the Marvel Cinematic Universe

Based on a general understanding of the main challenges faced by the Chinese film industry in the process of cross-cultural communication, this section will try to sort out the strategies adopted by the Marvel film series in the global promotion, summarize the experiences, and offer insights to inform the development of China's film industry.

3.1 The Creation of IP and Cinematic Universe

The success of the Marvel Cinematic Universe can not be traced back to its roots without its successful and solid IP building.

Among them, the relatively old Marvel comic series is undoubtedly the cornerstone of all subsequent derivative products of the company. The huge IP material library created by it provides rich reference materials for the production of subsequent film series. At the same time, it also brings a considerable number of loyal fans to Marvel and a solid foundation and guarantee for the box office of the Marvel film series [9].

The creation of the "Cinematic Universe" is another magic weapon for the success of the Marvel film series. By integrating heroes in different independent texts into the same universe for interaction, it can skillfully attract fans of different heroes, urge them to constantly contact new works, and improve the stability of the box office. As far as the story itself is concerned, it means that the crisis faced by a single hero can be expanded to an epic grand narrative, giving the plot more development possibilities and a stronger emotional impact.

On the other hand, Marvel also attaches importance to the production speed and output of films. Audiences are exposed to multiple new Marvel film releases each year [10]. Combined with a lot of publicity, and constantly adjust the content of

subsequent works according to the user's feedback on the publicity video [10]. In addition, the appropriately added homage easter eggs and post-credits scene enable Marvel to maintain its popularity, discussion, and audience loyalty and stickiness.

At the same time, Marvel also understands and values the added value of films. Through the development of post-film products such as toys, games, costumes, and cultural tourism, it is possible not only to generate additional revenue and meet the psychological and sensory needs of consumers but also to further expand brand dissemination and influence while countering the decline in audience engagement caused by gaps between major releases [9].

3.2 Audience's Cultural Identity

Marvel is well aware of the importance of cultural identity for the cross-cultural communication of works, and makes adjustments from many aspects to minimize the possible cultural discounts and cultural barriers.

The spiritual core of Marvel's film series is individualism, but in order to meet the needs of audiences in overseas markets, it has gradually integrated the concept of collectivism into the film [9]. In addition, it focuses on the theme of science fiction and presents the common problems faced by all mankind in the form of science fiction movies. At the same time, the plot focuses on politically sensitive issues, and instead focuses on universal values that are easy to resonate with the public, such as peace, family, growth, and other topics, so as to weaken the gap between cultures.

In addition, Marvel is also proficient in the appropriation and reconstruction of cultural symbols and adheres to diversified cultural concepts. Through the introduction of hero images with strong exotic elements, such as Thor Odinson and Black Panther, together with the introduction of roles and actors from different races and countries, it can arouse the favor and resonance of audiences around the world [3].

Marvel films are also good at the appropriate integration of exotic elements. Taking the series of Dr.Strange and The Avengers as examples, Marvel has targeted the Chinese market at the production stage of the film [10]. By adding Chinese location, actors, and related cultural elements to the film, Marvel has successfully won the favor of Chinese audiences and narrowed the cultural distance between Marvel and Chinese audiences [10].

3.3 Localized Publicity and Marketing Strategies

In today's era, if a cultural work wants to be successful, it needs not only excellent quality and connotation, but also the power of publicity and marketing.

Marvel is good at adopting a combination of localized marketing strategies. In addition to engaging local celebrities for brand endorsement, using dubbing actors to create topics, and making featured posters and trailers with strong local flavor, Marvel will also adopt various ways, such as co-branding with local brands, to achieve the full penetration of consumption scenes and maximize its transmission range and effect.

Social media and fans' ecological operation are valuable resources that need to be paid attention to and utilized in today's highly developed digital technology. When Marvel films are disseminated in overseas countries, they will establish official

accounts on local common social platforms such as Weibo and TikTok, and they are good at creating topics, driving discussions, and interacting with platform audiences [10]. They will also be assisted by offline activities such as fan meetings and film premieres, so as to narrow the social distance between them and win favor and sustained and wider attention [10].

Continuous re-creation by fans is another source of Marvel's huge attention. Marvel encourages the audience's re-creation by giving the material to invite the audience to make derivative creations of the film and forwarding excellent works [10]. Combined with the spontaneous creative behavior of the folk for many years, Marvel further effectively widens the publicity scope of the film, and promotes fans' stickiness and the communication between fan groups.

4 Enlightenment and Suggestions for Chinese Films

This section will try to give some suggestions to the Chinese film industry based on the main challenges faced by the current Chinese film industry in cross-cultural communication, and with reference to the strategies and past successful experience of the Marvel film series in global promotion.

4.1 Maximizing the Potential of IP Development

The successful creation of the Super IP and Marvel Cinematic Universe is an important factor for the success of the Marvel film series.

On this premise, the Chinese film industry can follow the practice of Marvel film series to a certain extent, build IP-based works, and improve user stickiness and loyalty by establishing interrelated story plots and roles [10,11]. At the same time, the Chinese film industry can also actively develop into games, animation, streaming media dramas, and other fields to achieve all-around coverage and improve the scope of communication.

4.2 Advocating Universal Values

Works that promote universal values, explore shared human emotions and social issues, and embody spirits such as family bonds, love, peace, and care for life, are often more capable of transcending cultural barriers [9,12]. Such works resonate with audiences both domestically and internationally, thereby reducing the impact of cultural discount [8]. At the production stage of the film, the Chinese film industry can try to emphasize the promotion of such a spiritual core. Besides, during this process, it is important to avoid rigid, lecture-style delivery.

On the subject matter of the film, the Chinese film industry can try the types that are generally loved and easily accepted by the global public in recent years, such as science fiction represented by The Wandering Earth series. For the language, customs, beliefs, and other local culture and elements in the film, the Chinese film industry can try to make an appropriate adaptation based on retaining the original cultural characteristics, so as to facilitate the understanding and acceptance of audiences from different cultural backgrounds [8].

4.3 Develop Localized Promotional Strategies

An excellent promotional strategy is crucial for the success of a film.

In the film production stage, practitioners can start to study and understand different cultures in depth, and on this basis, formulate and plan subsequent content production and promotion strategies according to their characteristics, so as to prevent cultural misreading or other disputes caused by superficial cultural understanding [13]. Considering the main overseas target audience in advance, and based on fully understanding and respecting the culture of the target country, introducing local actors, scenes, and cultural elements appropriately in the film can effectively narrow the cultural distance with the local audience and win their favor.

In addition, the Chinese film industry can try to entrust local distributors to act as agents when conducting cross-cultural communication, and attach importance to the combination of online and offline activities to enhance and maintain the discussion and popularity of works. At the same time, it is also necessary to prepare brand new posters, visual materials, and dedicated trailers that are adapted to local aesthetics and customs.

In terms of dubbing, subtitling, translation, and other related issues, specific adjustments need to be made based on the viewing habits of local audiences. Sufficient professionalism and strictness are also required in translation issues to prevent unnecessary cultural misunderstandings and biases in dissemination.

4.4 Strategic Use of Streaming and Social Media Resources

In the context of the rapid development of digital technology today, the strong influence demonstrated by streaming media and social media platforms cannot be underestimated.

When Chinese films engage in cross-cultural communication, it is important to consider the potential of such platforms in terms of promotion and advertising, accurately target the relevant platforms that dominate in different countries, and develop relevant strategies to ensure their full and proper utilization. For example, popular overseas platforms such as Instagram and X can be used to create topics, post video clips, etc., to drive discussions and increase the popularity of works, or to collaborate with local celebrities or internet celebrities to increase the exposure and reputation of works [8,14].

5 Conclusion

According to the comprehensive research results, the current Chinese film industry shows a trend of "good development trend, but there are still deficiencies and some space for progress when carrying out cross-cultural communication". Its main difficulties and problems focus on the obstacles of cultural understanding and identity, market strategy and product operation, international environment, and technological change. It still needs to improve on the details of understanding and full application of overseas audiences, culture, and frequently used platforms. The

excessive dependence of box office revenue on the domestic market and overseas Chinese also needs to be improved.

After analyzing the strategies adopted by Marvel film series in its global promotion, and summarizing its excellent cases in the aspects of IP and the creation of "Cinematic Universe", audience cultural identity, localization publicity and marketing strategies, this paper attempts to summarize the key points that are helpful to China's film industry today, tries to put forward some suggestions, and emphasizes the importance and necessity of derivative industries, the creation of film spiritual core, and marketing methods adapted to local conditions.

Finally, future research can conduct in-depth discussion and analysis on the specific reasons behind the "lack of international appeal of Chinese film", to make more professional and targeted suggestions for improving the cross-cultural communication of the Chinese film industry.

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