

Research on Film Marketing in the New Media

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Abstract: New media, as an important information revolution in Internet technology, has promoted the innovative development of traditional marketing models and marketing concepts. As film marketing navigates this transition from traditional methodologies to those informed by new media dynamics, it concurrently experiences accelerated trajectories and intricate challenges. This research aims to elucidate the nuanced transformation of film marketing strategies within the new media landscape, employing the case study methodology for an in-depth exploration.

1.Introduction

In 1994, with the introduction of the Hollywood film "Outlaw" to China, the Chinese film industry became cognizant of the significance of film marketing. Within the subsequent three years, Feng Xiaogang, a famous Chinese director, created the concept of the "Lunar New Year's Eve Stall", epitomizing the budding marketing consciousness among Chinese filmmakers. Over the ensuing years, the industry often conflated marketing with mere publicity, indicating a nebulous understanding of its distinct role.

In 2003, China initiated reforms in its film industry, which not only affected the Chinese film industry, but also influenced the trajectory of film marketing. The Chinese film entered growth, marked by the production of numerous classic films and a surge in cinema-going audiences. This boom intensified competition within the industry. Recognizing and emphasizing the pivotal role of film marketing became essential to adapt to the burgeoning Chinese cinematic scene.

Over the subsequent decade, the landscape of digital communication evolved from platforms such as blogs, forums, qq and posting, to the present day jitterbugs, microblogs, public numbers and "Xiaohongshu"(small red book).

Against the background of globalization, China's film industry has experienced a comprehensive upgrade. Concurrently, public aesthetic preferences shifted subtly, leading to an increased investment in film marketing. During this period, the success of film marketing has a direct relationship with the film's effectiveness in the market. The sweeping transformation of new media presented both opportunities and challenges for the Chinese film industry. While reaping market benefits, Chinese filmmakers must also contemplate strategies to avoid the risks of new media marketing.

2.Features of New media marketing in film promotion

2.1. Highly interactive and engaging

The "interaction rituals" theory, initially introduced by American sociologist Michael Goldman, delineates foundational interaction behaviors—repetitive, consistent, and procedural—that individuals employ to establish and sustain particular social connections throughout society.^[1] Building on Gorman's theory, contemporary American sociologist Randall Collins further developed the "interaction ritual chain" theory.^[2] Collins defines the "interactive ritual chain" as a social interaction process. It involves mutual attention and coordination, prompted by each other's nervous system to combine, so as to produce emotional resonance, the formation of a high degree of shared emotional ties. Film marketing takes advantage of such interactive features as short videos to engage the public in the promotion of the film. As an illustration, the 2023 film *Gone She* sparked significant attention on short video platforms. It leveraged the Internet buzzword 'love brain', and some netizens even commented that they would break up after watching the film with such comments, and this kind of exaggerated feedback raised interest in the film. Collaborative efforts between netizens and creators produced interesting short videos accumulating millions of likes and views. Despite modest online ratings, the film achieved box office success, attributable to its viral marketing strategy. In addition, on Jieyin, Weibo and Xiaohongshu (small red book), as well as other new media platforms, the film's official channels would regularly release some behind-the-scenes production documentary videos and some of the content of the film, which made netizens repeatedly pay attention to the film's publicity, arousing their curiosity and generated anticipation, ultimately translating online buzz into cinema visits.

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After viewing, given the cinema's filming restrictions, audiences often turn to new media platforms to share reviews and discover details or 'easter eggs' they might have missed. This post-viewing engagement, integral to film marketing, can even prompt some to revisit the cinema for a more detailed appreciation.

2.2. Extensive Coverage and Swift Distribution

The China Internet Network Information Centre (CNNIC) published its 51st Statistical Report on Internet Development in China on 2 March 2023. The report stated that, by December 2022, the number of Internet users in China reached 1.067 billion, the Internet penetration rate reached 75.6%, and the number of mobile phone Internet users reached 1.065 billion, accounting for 99.8% of the total Internet users population. The number of online video (including short video) users reached 1.031 billion, accounting for 96.5% of the total number of Internet users; among them, the number of short video users was 1.012 billion, accounting for 94.8% of the total number of Internet users. The number of webcasting users reached 751 million, accounting for 70.3% of the total number of Internet users; the number of online literature users reached 492 million, accounting for 46.1% of the total. [3]

Evidently, short videos have become the primary channel for people to obtain information, especially short video platforms represented by Jitterbug play the role of news dissemination by associating group norms and cognitive symbols. Diversified new media platforms are facilitating increased participation in film marketing. Unique insights and views of some film critics can resonate with the audience, while people with different views express their opinions and discussions also increase the public's attention to the film. This phenomenon aligns with "word-of-mouth marketing", a principle in communication science. While "word-of-mouth" originated as a communication science concept, it has been co-opted into marketing, often termed as "word-of-mouth marketing". Word-of-mouth marketing is often equated with "viral marketing", in which marketers make use of the good reputation of a film to spread the influence of the film through interpersonal communication, spreading the film's influence virally among the crowd, thereby optimizing film marketing outcomes swiftly. In contrast to conventional advertising, word-of-mouth marketing boasts greater credibility, because it is based on interpersonal communication such as relatives and friends.

Neil Boltzmann posited that the media environment embodies "an environment of meaning full of symbolic interactions". Thus, new media, as a collection of social communication, information and cultural environments, serves as a crucial domain for social cognition. [4] Moreover, new media encompasses audiences from all age groups, ensuring that a film's viewership isn't age-restricted. Within film marketing, creative team meeting is one of the most common means of film promotion. By

leveraging new media platforms, for online premieres, promotional costs and fan expenses are reduced. Furthermore, it offers fans easier participation in online activities, and this new type of niche communication mode also allows the initial dissemination of the film publicity to reap the maximum publicity benefits.

2.3. Enhanced User Experience

Brakus et al. proposed marketing through sensory, emotional, intellectual and behavioral channels. These definitions directly or indirectly underscore how experiential marketing engages users by impacting their five senses: hearing, smell, taste, sight and touch. Furthermore, experiential marketing prioritizes three types of experiences: namely emotional, thinking and behavioral experiences. Emotional experiences awaken and influence user's varied emotions and sentiments. Cognitive experience stimulates novel thought processes, offering a refreshed cognitive perspective. Behavioral or pragmatic experiences arise from direct user interactions, fostering a positive engagement. Among them, emotional experience and thinking experience concentrate on the inner spiritual states, whereas behavioral experience emphasizes the experience gained through personal participation. It's pivotal to note that experience doesn't influence users in isolation; often, multiple experiences collaboratively shape user perceptions [4]. Additionally, experiential marketing emphasizes the influence on users through the design of specific experience themes and contexts, with apt themes being crucial to catalyzing user experiences. Distinct themes and contexts can effectively guide user expectations and create lasting memories. Common experience themes encompass domains like history, fashion, politics, psychology, philosophy, physics, pop culture and art [5].

Thematic content can be tailored based on user preferences and requirements. Furthermore, new media, new technologies and cultural elements can be actively utilized in the design and expression of themes, offering users varied and enriched content. Given users' varied interests, film marketing evolved beyond mere trailers to include diverse promotional activities. These range from documentaries on official platforms covering aspects like casting, set design, costume creation, and film score recording, all facilitated via new media platforms. Through the new media platform free of charge and the use of new media to promote the film. etc. Through the new media platform, the audience can freely participate in the discussion and adopt the netizen's opinions and suggestions, the preliminary research for the film market, but also for the film to increase the degree of topic and heat. Such engagement enables producers to address feedback, fostering a closer bond between creators and viewers. This not only enhances goodwill but also bolsters audience trust in the film's quality. As show in figure 1-2.



Figure 1 Film launch site



Figure 2 Chinese Film Box Office Statistics

3.Challenges in New Media Marketing for Chinese Films

3.1. Marketing word-of-mouth and film quality cut

"Dwelling in the Fuchun Mountains", despite its stellar cast, was unfortunately ranked eighth among poorly received films. "The Last Night of the Earth" with its romantic New Year's Eve promotions, left audiences disappointed. "Lone Ranger", heavily advertised for its star cast during promotions, featured those actors less prominently in the actual film than in the promotional previews. The filmmakers have realized that effective marketing can significantly benefit a film. However, a consistent challenge remains: aligning marketed expectations with the film's actual quality. New media platforms, with their vast outreach, can capitalize on star-driven promotions to draw audiences to the cinema. nevertheless, if the movie fails to meet expectations, it adversely impacts the viewers' experience. This disappointment may erode trust in new media marketing, causing audiences to be skeptical of even genuinely high-quality promotional campaigns, ultimately affecting the broader film market. In addition, art film distribution companies do not necessarily need to spend a tremendous

amount of money on marketing, which is the norm for the commercial film sector. [6]

3.2.The Impact of Ineffectual Marketing on Film Promotion

The principle of individuality in 4I theory underscores the importance of analyzing and satisfying consumers' individual needs on the basis of combining the product's own individuality, with more emphasis on the individuality and specificity of consumers. The change in the underlying logic of the new media era has driven a change in the thinking of film brand managers, prompting a reshaping of the film marketing paradigm. In his book "Out of Control", often dubbed the "godfather of the Internet", termed the distributed nature of online networks as "swarm thinking". He posited that this decentralized structure has birthed users exemplified by "node-based survival", hinting at the need for film brands to align with the 4I theory. This means, to a certain extent, that film brands need to accelerate market capture by using customised distribution channels that match their own characteristics, Following the 4I theory's principle of individuality, it means leveraging diverse marketing approaches tailored to distinct potential audiences, steering clear of the blanket and ineffectual strategies. [7]

The recently released "Fengshenbang", while celebrated for its strong word-of-mouth appeal, had a

marketing span considerably shorter than its production timeline. resulting in the film's preheating time being too short, and the online and offline media marketing is not balanced, with word-of-mouth outpacing box office returns. Nevertheless, the open platform of the new media also allows the audience to really realise the power of word-of-mouth, and through the netizen's active promotion and the official new media publicity and operation, the film achieved commendable results, and also laid a solid foundation for the next two sequels. When audiences are more active, media producers have 'learned quickly to co-opt fan activities and viral media' and respond to the demands of audiences. [8]

4. Conclusion

Currently, the domestic film publicity company's integrated marketing level varies, the marketing model homogenization phenomenon is more serious, the Internet and new media have become the main battlefield of the major companies' film marketing and distribution, intensifying the competition. Nowadays, film distribution through new media is now the norm, but at the root, whether the film is of high quality is still determined by the quality of the film itself. The efficacy of new media marketing can not serve as a criterion for judging a film's merit. Mengyang, S. (2019) in his article concludes that new media technology has brought significant changes to the distribution mode of China's film industry, including the popularization of movie-watching channels, wide coverage of scenes, innovative publicity methods, and lower cost and threshold.[9] The film's market competitiveness hinges on its content quality, the ultimate goal of marketing is to guide the audience into the cinema for consumption, but whether the audience pays for the content and the subsequent reputation of the film is relying on the audience's deep-seated aesthetic judgement, which isn't easily influenced. In the new media era, marketing strategies and marketing communication activities have to be designed and completed according to the needs of audience interaction. Therefore, the dissemination and promotion of contemporary film marketing in the new media era must be based on the needs of the audience, firmly grasp the high degree of diversity of information, make full use of the many emerging modern film marketing and dissemination, and make use of the technology of the new media era in order to achieve the greatest publicity effect. [10] In the era of integrated media, risks and opportunities are intertwined. Films boasting high quality content and aesthetic value undoubtedly stand at an advantage. Filmmakers confront an array of challenges. Beyond just attracting audiences via new media marketing, enhancing the film's word-of-mouth, its filming quality, and its artistic significance are pivotal focal points. Conversely, some small-budget films are not well known due to the lack of sufficient marketing funds, warrants our reflection. While various new media forms captivate the audience's attention, it remains a hope that truly commendable works gain more visibility among the public.

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