A Study on International Communication Strategies of
Chinese-language Films

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Abstract. Starting with the characteristics of Chinese-language films, this paper focuses on analyzing the international influence of Chinese-language films and the problems of their international communication, as well as explores the relative strategies in order to promote the international communication of Chinese-language films, and enhance their international influence at the same time.

1. Introduction

The Chinese-language film is an important way to show the image of our country to the world and also spread Chinese culture, so as to improve the international understanding of Chinese culture. Since 20th century, Chinese-language films have gradually gone global wide and begun to spread abroad. Chinese-language films have the characteristics of being commercial, artistic, international and comprehensive, which has an important influence on the development of films around the world. However, in the process of international communication, Chinese-language films also face the problems of cultural and language barriers, insufficient use of international market, similar themes, imperfect international marketing and so forth, so that their international communication has not achieved the intended effect. In view of this situation, China actively explores the scientific approach to international communication of Chinese-language films with the purpose of strengthening their international influence. To study the international communication strategies of Chinese-language films can not only effectively promote the international communication of Chinese-language films, but also have profound significance to the spread of Chinese culture and the promotion of national image.

2. The characteristics of Chinese-language films

2.1 Commerciality

Chinese-language films have commercial characteristic which is controlled by the demand of the film market. During the process of international communication, the creation of Chinese-language films is regarded as an industrial activity, and the design and principles of the film’s theme, style, scenes, actors and so on are adhered to the principles of marketing success and return on investment. Moreover, Chinese-language films pay great attention to commercial interests, so the actors, costumes, music effects, computer effects and colors of Chinese-language films are all based on the standard of public aesthetics for obtaining the greatest market benefit. For example, when they are filming, many directors will choose popular love themes, inviting movie stars who enjoy more popularity and possess better acting skills.

2.2 Artistry

Artistry is an important feature of Chinese-language films. Chinese-language films that are able to enter the international market almost either are based on modern social propositions or take Chinese traditional culture as the theme, showing more artistic character. Besides, Hong Kong films are the most entertaining and the market reaction is very sensitive. In the development of artistry, Chinese-language films are integrated into the traditional cultural connotations. For instance,
"Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon" embodies the carefree values advocated by Taoism in our country. “Shaolin Soccer” presents the traditional martial arts in China, combining traditional wushu with film entertainment. Hero reflects China’s historical development concept. All these films have a strong artistry.

2.3 Internationality

Internationality is the essential nature of Chinese-language films in the process of international communication, as the audiences of Chinese-language films are domestic and also foreign ones, the films’ aesthetic features must conform to the international standard. Therefore, the creation of Chinese-language films must actively seek the unity of Chinese culture and European and American culture, to integrate them with each another, so that the films can fit international audience’s tastes. Take Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon as an example, the film combines the carefree thoughts of Chinese Taoism with the western liberalism, expressing the pursuit of freedom. In the meantime, some films also invite famous foreign actors to participate in the production such as Great Wall. The famous Hollywood actor Matt Damon has played a role in the film, and Jing Tian is chosen as the heroine due to her Hollywood experience.

2.4 Comprehensiveness

Chinese-language films are comprehensive, which means they unify commerciality, artistry and internationality as a whole. This is because the artistry emphasizes the filmmakers’ innermost feelings, especially the expression of these feelings, and then causes the audience’s resonance while commerciality pays attention to the feelings and resonance of the audience, through which to obtain business interests. What’s more, as an artwork, the film must have a higher aesthetic value. If we want to promote the international influence of Chinese-language films, we have to comprehensively consider the commercial, artistic and international characteristics of the film, realize the integration of commerciality and artistry, as well as introduce the international culture.

3. The international influence of Chinese-language films

3.1 International film industry’s focus on Chinese-language films

With the international communication of Chinese-language films, the international film industry pays more attention to Chinese-language films, and the international academic community is also actively engaged in Chinese-language films’ researches. At present, an growing number of papers have been written by foreign universities on the topic of Chinese-language films, which has deepened the study of Chinese-language films abroad. Meanwhile, there are many articles discussing on Chinese-language films all over the world, showing the concern of the international film industry about Chinese-language films. Furthermore, there are more and more evaluation on Chinese-language films. The international media attaches great importance to China’s modernization development, keeping a close eye on the art carrier and form of Chinese culture, and the international film commentary increasingly involves evaluation on Chinese culture in Chinese-language films. In addition, along with the international communication of Chinese-language films, the number of their international fans is also increasing. Many international fans get to know Chinese-language films by the Chinese-language film exhibitions, and they regard watching Chinese-language films as an entertainment. The cultural connotations and artistic forms of Chinese-language films have aroused great admiration from them.

3.2 The international influence of Chinese filmmakers

3.2.1 The International influence of Chinese directors

The aim of the film director is to convey the idea of life and to express emotion. Chinese directors energetically inherit the Chinese culture concept in the course of creation, shooting high-quality films, and won recognition of the international film industry. Among them, Zhang Yimou’s mainland films of historical background, John Woo’s works of Hong Kong films, Ang Lee’s
Taiwan films of Chinese Confucian traditional spirits and the like have been highly praised by the international film industry. Specifically speaking, Zhang Yimou’s creations have the sense of history, and the character’s full image and sincere emotion can let people understand his or her soul. Using dramatic exaggeration and displaying unique personal style to present his high-profile individuality, John Woo’s works have been recognized around the world. Great attention to the propaganda of Chinese traditional Confucian culture, strong cultural charm and the distinctive artistic feature have made Ang Lee one of Chinese directors who possess high international influence.

3.2.2 International influence of Chinese actors
When Chinese-language films are spread abroad, stars like Bruce Lee, Jet Li, Jackie Chan, Gong Li, Maggie Cheung, Zhang Ziyi, Chow Yun Fat, Tony Leung, Stephen Chow and so forth have strong box office appeal, which boosts the international communication of Chinese-language films and have greater influence in the world. Gong Li had been the chairman of the jury of Tokyo International Film Festival in 2003 and Berlin International Film Festival in 20000, which gives her more extensive experience as China’s referee of international film festivals. Zhang Ziyi was the judge of the Cannes International Film Festival in 2006, apart from the guest of the International Film Festival. Chow Yun Fat, an influential Chinese actor in Asian and Greater China, starred in Confucius; Curse of the Golden Flower; Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon and other films with international influence. Tony Leung starred in In the Mood for Love; Infernal Affairs; Lust, Caution and other films, favored by worldwide fans. Blockbusters such as Shaolin Soccer, Kung Fu, Chang Jiang Qi Hao etc. are starred by Stephen Chow. Kung fu films of Bruce Lee, Jackie Chan and Jet Li’s have all received high appreciation from international fans.

4. Problems in International communication of Chinese-language films

4.1 Organizing film festivals
The holding of film festivals is a common phenomenon in the films’ development of various countries, which can effectively enhance the exchange of the film industry, push forward different countries to learn from each other’s strengths to offset their own weaknesses in the film creating process, and reinforce the cooperation of filmmakers over the world. During the development of China’s films, we have energetically launched the Shanghai International Film Festival, Hangzhou International Animation Festival, Changchun International Film Festival, etc., and continuously improve the quality, scale and level of the film festivals. In addition to that, through those festivals international film professionals can be invited to China to feel our traditional and language culture, to deepen their knowledge of Chinese-language films, to optimize their judgments of Chinese-language films, and thus accelerate the international communication of Chinese-language films.

4.2 To host “Beijing Screenings”
Beijing Screenings was founded in 1996, mainly responsible for the promotion of international Chinese-language films’ watching and trading activities toward abroad, in order to introduce film issuers to China and buy films. The target of Beijing Screenings is very clear, the number of films is more, and its practice is concentrated, so the communication between the filmmakers and the audience can be intensified, and the international communication of Chinese-language films can also be facilitated. Specifically, Beijing Screenings is a film promotion platform, and has become a well-known brand of film screening activities together with London Screenings, and Paris Screenings. With a great influence in the international market, it is an important approach of Chinese-language films’ international communication. Also, Beijing Screenings is a communication platform, holding once a year, and its scale is larger and larger, which can attract programmers and overseas film dealers of international film festivals, thereby increasing the international communication and cultural blending of Chinese-language films. On the other hand, Beijing Screenings is a cooperative platform too. When greeting the guests from all over the world, it has
provided the chance of international communication for the development of Chinese-language films. In the activities of Beijing Screenings, the overseas film dealers are more concentrated, and they can fully understand the developmental status and trend of Chinese-language films, and then propel the international cooperation of them. Finally, Beijing Screenings has its brand effect. After a long period of development, Beijing Screenings has been mature enough to have a strong public appeal and international influence, developing into an internationally renowned brand, which can effectively draw the attention of overseas film dealers, so as to advance the international communication of Chinese-language films.

4.3 Cooperative filming

In the course of globalization, cooperative filming has become an important method for the development of international film market. It can integrate the cultural elements of different countries and regions in the world, beneficial to the simultaneous release of films worldwide and have a broad space for development. Therefore, Chinese-language films can adopt cooperative filming in times of spreading abroad to reduce the investment risk of the film and open up the international market. In the meanwhile, cooperative filming can reinforce the use of worldwide investment agents, doing good to the distribution of Chinese-language films by agencies around the world, so that the films taken by the cooperative sides are able to enter the international market. Additionally, the cooperative filming enables the film to reflect the multinational culture and deepen the exchange and integration of different countries’ cultures, and to make the film not only accord with the aesthetic features of foreign audiences, but also have Chinese traditional culture characteristics.

References


