

# Research on the Influence of Social Media on Film Industry Marketing and Coping Strategies

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**Abstract.** As a consumer good with schedule attributes, the publicity before the film's public release is very important. With the rise of social media with participatory, interactive, and personalized features such as Douban, Weibo, Tiktok, and WeChat Moments, abundant marketing means have made it possible to expand the film market. Film distributors are also experimenting and exploring extensive social media marketing campaigns. During the film's premiere, film distributors should live stream the event through social media to trigger comments and retweets from fans. It is also necessary to create an official Weibo of the movie, to initiate a topic on Weibo, to allow the topic to have a sufficient fermentation period, and through the interaction between fans of actors (stars), fans of the original novel, and fans of the movie, to achieve celebrity effect. Increase the discussion of the film, make more audiences pay attention to the film, resonate, and pave the way for the film's release. This paper aims to identify the influence of social media marketing on the film industry and recommend some effective strategies that companies in the film industry can try to adopt while promoting their movies. The paper includes Methods 1 and 2 to obtain the quantitative data used in the later research. For the significance of this paper, it produces many business values for companies within the film industry to refer to, which can facilitate the development of the whole film industry in the later few decades.

**Keywords:** Social Media; Film Industry Marketing; Coping Strategies.

## 1. Introduction

The film is an indispensable part of people's entertainment activities, and marketing is the film to sell a good box office in the center. However, nowadays, social media has changed traditional communication, and the speed and efficiency of communication cannot be compared with the traditional way of communication. According to statistics, the box office of domestic films in 2016 was 26.663 billion-yuan, accounting for 58.33 percent of the total box office. There were 84 films with a box office of more than 100 million yuan, among which 43 were domestic films. In 2016, China produced 772 feature films, 49 animated films, 67 scientific and educational films, 32 documentary films, and 24 special films, totaling 944. The number of domestic films is rising, while domestic films are also refreshing box office miracles. As film productions become increasingly abundant, product promotion and distribution become key issues in the film industry. When audiences are faced with an increasingly rich domestic film market, and when audiences have more freedom in choosing which films to make, film marketing communication becomes particularly important. Half of Hollywood's revenue comes from marketing. A good marketing communication strategy can achieve greater returns with less investment, which plays the role of "dialing a thousand pounds", creating value for the downstream extension link and making the film realize revenue. On the other hand, with the development and popularity of the Internet and mobile Internet, social media has exerted a profound influence on People's Daily life. China Internet Network Information Center (CNNIC) released the latest Statistical Report on the Development of the Internet in China on 22nd, 2017. By the end of 2016, China had 731 million Internet users, equivalent to the population of Europe. The number of mobile Internet users reached 695 million, up 75.5 million from the end of 2015.

(Material from notes of Qin Zhiqiang) Film marketing is a process of updating, and its topic will change with the popularity of social media every year, so we must discuss this topic. The success of the 2002 film *Heroes* proved that marketing has changed. In recent years, both the number of films shown online and the box office revenue of domestic films have increased significantly, which is a testament to the enthusiasm and wide recognition of the Chinese film market. With the rapid development and popularization of the Internet and mobile Internet technology, social media has risen rapidly, widely, and profoundly affecting and changing our lives. At the forefront of the combat of film marketing communication, new marketing communication methods and concepts are born almost every day.

However, we should not only stop analyzing individual cases but should systematically summarize and sort them out to find more profound and essential things. In the Internet era, the new social media marketing trend has changed the marketing and communication mode of domestic films, which is worthier of our consideration and research. This paper is divided into five chapters. Chapter 1 is the introduction, which mainly expounds on this paper's writing purpose and significance and summarizes the research status and results of film marketing and social media marketing communication. It interprets the core concepts involved in the topic selection. Until recently, moviegoers in the age of social media were willing to pay for a movie's sincerity with tap water. In addition to high-quality content and well-crafted films, good word-of-mouth and media marketing communication are also of great significance. Compared with foreign films, we still have a certain gap, especially in the aspect of film marketing communication has been the short board of Chinese film marketing communication. With the rapid development of social media, how to develop China's film industry and film marketing communication through social media. How to grasp opportunities and meet various challenges so that the domestic film industry can better continue to develop has become an urgent problem to be solved. This paper summarizes the communication characteristics and new development trends of social media and analyzes the new opportunities brought by social media for Chinese film marketing. Then, we selected the most representative social media platforms with the most active users -- Weibo, WeChat, and movie forums from China's social media pattern chart in 2016. With the support of relevant communication theories and specific domestic film marketing communication examples from 2015 to 2016, we analyzed the communication characteristics of different social media platforms in turn. And we have combined 2015 to 2016 domestic film-specific examples to analyze its marketing strategy. Fan and Liu Jingya, in *Research on the Key Issues of Current Chinese Film Marketing*, believe that positioning and communication are the most important links in film marketing.

Based on Lasswell's communication model, this paper systematically sorts out and analyzes about 20 kinds of film marketing methods from five dimensions (Who, What, Whom, Why, and When). The authors argue that big data has significantly improved. Wang Ruixia of Lanzhou University, in her postgraduate paper *Research on Microblog Marketing of Domestic Love Movies -- Taking and as an example, took microblog, a typical representative of social media, as an example to analyze the communication characteristics of microblogs combined with the appeal mode of love movies, and concluded that microblog is more suitable for emotional marketing, interactive marketing, and precision marketing. This paper profoundly analyzes the role of Weibo, a social media, in film marketing.* 1.3 Innovation in China, the development of domestic films is in the stage of vigorous development, and the marketing communication strategy of films is also playing a more and more important role. There is still a gap between the marketing communication of domestic films and Hollywood or some other countries, and there is still much room for development. That is why we choose such a topic for our analysis. In addition, we believe that China's film marketing is still in a relatively early stage of development, with many areas for exploration.

## 2. Methods

### 2.1 Method 1

The goal of the study held by Tejada was to determine the effectiveness of promoting a movie through social media usage. Most movies today are using social media to expand their movie marketing campaigns. However, new strategies using the current social media can be implemented in order to maximize audience/studio relations and film awareness. The objectives of this study include:

First, determine what social media outlets audiences are using to learn more about movies

Second, determine what content audiences are looking for on a movie's social media profile, i.e., ticket buying, videos, and pictures [1].

#### 2.1.1 Data Collection Plan

To collect data for this study, a survey was given out to men and women between the ages of 18-29. The subjects were randomly selected and given a Facebook and/or an email link. Each subject was given instructions before the survey was given out. The survey was split into three sections: 1) what social media outlets they participated in, 2) how they learned more about the movies via social media and interacted with said profiles, and 3) what type of content they were looking for within profiles. All subjects were given the same questions to gain an unbiased understanding of audiences' interactions with the sites and profiles [1].

#### 2.1.2 Data Analysis Plan

Responses to the survey questions were analyzed, and comments were also noted. The answers were collected and determined where audiences received most of their information about movies. In addition, answers showed what type of content audiences visit the sites for [1].

### 2.2 Method 2

In the film production stage, the value foundation of the film not only needs the main creators, such as actors (stars) and directors, but also pays attention to the attention and influence brought by the "celebrity effect" and "star effect", but also needs to tell good stories and carry out non-homogeneous Type targeting and precise audience segmentation. Use Baidu Bar, Weibo, WeChat official account, and other social media platforms to communicate and dialogue with the original authors, star actors, directors, and other main creators' fans to increase their participation. From the beginning of the film's casting, the producers need to interact continuously with the fans and inform them fans of the filming process. Real-time release of film news, turning the fans accumulated by actors, creators, and directors into the first group of active propagandists, publishing hot topics on social media, triggering discussions, and making full use of social media for low-cost interaction with audiences. In the pre-heating and publicity stage of the movie, the value foundation of the movie needs to clarify the style direction of movie trailers, promotional films, and posters, and the theme publicity and educational significance should be aimed at a wider audience. Shoot short stories (trailers, promotional videos) that can arouse the audience's emotional resonance and put them on social media platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube to increase their participation and discussion.

## 3. Results

As a consumer good with schedule attributes, the publicity before the film's public release is very important. Social media marketing can quickly improve the popularity and reputation of movies and affect the screening rate of cinemas. Movies are both artistic works and cultural products. As works, movies have humanistic feelings and artistic attributes. Nevertheless, as a product, cinema line release has a short life cycle, cannot be consumed repeatedly, and belongs to "fast-moving consumer goods". The box office performance in the first week of release often determines the film's fate in the market. Therefore, marketing a film before its public release is particularly important. Film distributors need

to use all possible publicity channels to achieve maximum exposure and enhance visibility and reputation so that more people can understand the story and behind-the-scenes details of the film and create a kind of curiosity and desire to see it. Fortunately, abundant marketing means have made it possible to expand the film market with the rise of social media with participatory, interactive, and personalized features such as Weibo, TikTok, and WeChat Moments. Film distributors are also experimenting and exploring extensive social media marketing campaigns.

However, although the possibilities for active engagement are available [2], Baker and White found that consumers are not as active online as was previously supposed, as they demonstrate a low degree of contribution and participation on social media [3].

Brenner reported that most social media users are between 18 and 29, which accounts for 83 percentage points of Internet socialization users [4]. In 2015, Tejada conducted a study with 156 participants to assess which outlets this group used to learn about the film [5].

According to Tejada, individuals between 18 and 29 are occasionally unwilling to engage in social media film marketing [5]. Instead, they prefer to discuss the film's substance with family and friends who have already seen it. The study revealed that just 34.62 percent of respondents chose to learn about a movie using social media. The remaining 65.38 percent relied on recommendations from friends and family, other internet sites, IMDB, and fandangos. Regarding how often participants would visit a movie's social media site, contrary to what participants said in the preceding question on how they discover films via social networks, participants seldom visit a film's social media platform [6]. For instance, just two out of 156 respondents said that they often browse the website. Furthermore, just 54.59 percent of respondents said that they visit a particular film's web page. Thus, leveraging social media as a platform for film promotion is ineffective.

Recent studies on content generated by users and individuals' engagement in social networks have addressed the reasons why social media marketing is ineffective [7-8].

According to Kaplan and Haenlein, the quality of social platform users is inconsistent, leading to various moral and ethical issues and the emergence of diverse social perspectives throughout usage [9]. For instance, some internet users may utilize current events or attacks on stars to disparage films on social media [10]. They often disregard the actual substance and production of the film and influence the audience's evaluation of online public opinion in order to provoke disagreements. More importantly, the online public opinion of these people will cover up a small part of rational speech so that rational thought on the network will be swamped by emotional speech. In addition, there is another disadvantage caused by the low quality of the audience itself, namely online violence [11]. It is an invisible form of violence that exists in the virtual world. It affects the user experience by publishing harmful and insulting remarks, videos, pictures, and other damages on the Internet.

What's more, excessive social media marketing is another significant reason. According to Aula, many distribution companies regard social media as a vast message board that may aid in marketing cinema works and stars [12]. Consequently, they will promote the film but ignore the content of the film. Many respondents cited excessive advertising as one of social media's most irritating aspects of movies. In addition, respondents indicated that they would appreciate a balanced mix of content and advertising, such as revealing 20% off promotion and 80% of film development progress or tidbits. It could subtly advertise while luring Internet users to become movie enthusiasts.

In addition, social media may sometimes make selecting a film challenge. Individuals use a Movie Rating Database to choose one film from many desired films. Even though their options have been drastically reduced, people may still be uncertain about which one to choose [13]. Another reason is that when consumers speak with family and friends, they can better relate the film or its ideals to real-time information and current events, increasing the company's popularity [14].

#### 4. Discussion

The basis of film value is also reflected in the film's premiere, the launch of point screenings and test screenings, and the acquisition of high-quality user word-of-mouth. Film distributors should

widely publicize the activities to be carried out on social media (such as movie premieres, movie previews, movie screenings, themed video collections, etc.), notice the time and location of the event in advance, and organize ticket-grabbing activities. During the process, live streaming of the event through social media can trigger comments and retweets from fans. The key to movie marketing is to do word-of-mouth, topicalize the content to be disseminated a few months in advance, and continuously attract the participation of the target audience. Promoting movie topics will have a great attraction and a significant impact on the target audience. Suppose the topic of the movie attracts the attention of the audience. In that case, the movie spreads from one circle to another on the Internet and enters the hot area, such as the “Heated Topics List” of Weibo movies, then it will get the opportunity to contact more users. Therefore, it is also necessary to create an official Weibo of the movie, to initiate a topic on Weibo, to allow the topic to have a sufficient fermentation period, and through the interaction between fans of actors (stars), fans of the original novel, and fans of the movie, to achieve celebrity effect. Increase the discussion of the film, make more audiences pay attention to the film, resonate, and pave the way for the film’s release.

#### **4.1 New media technology participation**

It is currently in the stage of global technology upgrading - digital technology replaces film comprehensively; 3D and IMAX technologies continue to evolve and spread. These technologies have the natural advantage of anti-piracy and movie-watching experience, adding leverage to the box office. 3D, 4D, and IMAX films provide a stunning effect that can’t be matched by ordinary video equipment. In addition to film screening, new media technology is also actively involved in producing, distributing, and selling films. Internet O2O marketing side of the intervention, such as group buying movie tickets, reduced ticket prices, pull down the consumption threshold. Consumers can also book movie tickets and choose seats on the Internet. If they can’t watch the movie in time, they can return or exchange the tickets on the Internet, which is very convenient [15].

#### **4.2 There are 54,000 bullet screens in each online film of theatrical films.**

“Bullet screen culture” is formed in the traditional cinema viewing experience, and viewing is the role of passive viewers. And watching movies online gives users more initiative. For example, many users share their views through bullet screens during movie viewing; from 2017 to 2019, the total bullet screen broadcast on the theatrical film online.

The volume and amount of each piece of the barrage have maintained a growing trend. Currently, the average screen time of a theatrical film has reached 54,000. The 2018 winner, *Sadness Flows Into a River*, received more than 500,000 bullets. Bullet screen brings users the feeling of real-time interaction, promotes the audience to have a group resonance to the content, and enriches the content form of the film itself, gradually forming a unique “bullet screen culture”.

In the new media, technology is a flying enigma development today. We will be deeply impressed when we look at the changes it brings from the film’s perspective.

Yes: This kind of change and impact is not a single film industry can bear. There’s no denying it. When the revolution of the Internet age sweeps through everything, it can bring destruction and rebirth. As for the traditional film industry, it is inevitable to be hit or even die out. The key is to change or not change. “It was the best of times, and it was the worst of times. “Obviously, in this era of innovation, it is too early to talk about any outcome [16].

## **5. Conclusion**

### **5.1 Findings**

As a consumer good with schedule attributes, the publicity before the film’s public release is very important. With the rise of social media with participatory, interactive, and personalized features such as Douban, Weibo, Tiktok, and WeChat Moments, abundant marketing means have made it possible to expand the film market. Film distributors are also experimenting and exploring extensive social

media marketing campaigns. During the film's premiere, film distributors should live-stream the event through social media to trigger fan comments and retweets. It is also necessary to create an official Weibo of the movie, to initiate a topic on Weibo, to allow the topic to have a sufficient fermentation period, and through the interaction between fans of actors (stars), fans of the original novel, and fans of the movie, to achieve celebrity effect. Increase the discussion of the film, make more audiences pay attention to the film, resonate, and pave the way for the film's release.

## 5.2 Research Significance

For the significance of this paper, it produces many business values for companies within the film industry to refer to, which can facilitate the development of the whole film industry in the later few decades. For instance, the paper mentioned that film publishing companies could shoot short stories (trailers, promotional videos) to arouse the audience's emotional resonance and put them on social media platforms. These social platforms, such as Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube, increase audience participation and arouse discussion. Apart from that, instead of excessive social media marketing, movie publishers could use a balanced mix of content and advertising, such as revealing 20% off promotion and 80% of film development progress or tidbits. It could subtly advertise while luring Internet users to become movie enthusiasts.

## 5.3 Limitations

Nevertheless, this research paper is also associated with some potential limitations regarding the research methods. For instance, this paper lacks the use of primary data. Instead, this paper consists of mostly secondary data, such as the research conducted by Tejada, while discussing the methods section of this paper. Due to COVID-19, it has become possible and manageable for people to do some surveys and interviews offline for future studies. Therefore, the primary data will be updated to be the latest after the pandemic, which will also be more reliable and persuasive.

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