

# The Dissemination, Impact and Effectiveness of Jameson's Cultural Theory: A Survey-Based Study in the Chinese Context

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## Abstract

**This study explores the dissemination, impact, and effectiveness of Fredric Jameson's cultural theory within Chinese mass culture by conducting a comprehensive survey across various social groups and regions. The paper examines the acceptance and communication of Jameson's theories, focusing on how his insights into cultural expansion and ideology resonate with different demographics in China. The results indicate that the primary audience for Jameson's works consists of individuals aged 25-35 with high educational backgrounds, with significant interest in regions like Zhejiang, Hubei, Guangzhou, Beijing, Shanghai, and Shenzhen. The survey also reveals varying degrees of familiarity with Jameson's theories among respondents, highlighting a growing influence yet uneven understanding. These findings suggest that a systematic interpretation of Jameson's cultural theory can significantly contribute to the development and enrichment of Chinese mass culture.**

## Keywords

**Fredric Jameson; Cultural Theory Dissemination; Chinese Mass Culture; Impact Study; Survey Analysis.**

## 1. Introduction

In the 1960s, the rapid advancement of science and technology, coupled with heightened productivity, substantially met the material needs of the people in Western Europe, leading to a widespread trend of materialism. Concurrently, culture began to exhibit characteristics of commercialization, visualization, and spatialization. Amidst this socio-cultural milieu, Marxist cultural theory encountered significant challenges and skepticism. It was against this backdrop that Fredric Jameson formulated his cultural theory from a hermeneutic perspective, focusing on critiquing post-modern society while upholding Marxist cultural theory.

As a Marxist scholar, Jameson meticulously analyzed Marx's theory of consciousness and culture, reinstating the fundamental nature of investigating cultural theory through the lens of historical materialism. He dismissed the illusory aspects of cultural theory from both ideological and realistic dimensions, embodying "cognitive mapping" as a code for "class consciousness" that aims to awaken the critical dimension of the proletariat [1]. Drawing on psychoanalytic perspectives, Jameson explored subconscious political motivations, revealing the latent thoughts within political groups. Furthermore, he integrated insights from Western Marxist theorists such as Gramsci, Althusser, and Adorno to highlight the detrimental functions of ideology, thereby revitalizing traditional ideological theories. This unique analytic approach shaped Jameson's comprehensive ideological system on cultural theory[2].

Jameson's cultural theory has garnered substantial academic attention both domestically and internationally. Christian De Cock's studies emphasize Jameson's concept of the political unconscious, solidifying Jameson's position in broader cultural contexts, particularly noting Althusser's significant influence[1]. Jameson argued that cultural theory has historical

constraints and multifaceted functions, positing it as an inherent structure within any culture[3]. Zhang[4] & Zhang[5] provided insights into Jameson's notion of "political unconscious," stressing the loss of conscious awareness in capitalist societies and advocating for a deeper self-knowledge in complex social relations. Among Chinese scholars, Jameson is highly esteemed and has had a palpable influence. Since his initial invitation to lecture at Peking University in 1985, his works have been frequently translated, published, and disseminated in China. Prominent scholars [6][7][8][9] have conducted extensive research on his theories, and his ideas have been extensively cited and interpreted in the context of Chinese cultural studies.

The current study aims to explore the acceptance and influence of Jameson's cultural theory within Chinese mass culture, given its characteristics of commercialization, visualization, and spatialization. The primary objective is to delineate the theoretical value and contemporary significance of Jameson's work, and to ascertain its guiding relevance in the construction of Chinese cultural theory. Through a comprehensive social survey on the reception of Jameson's theories across China, the research seeks to uncover practical applications and ideological inspirations that could inform the development of Chinese contemporary culture.

## 2. Jameson's Cultural Theory and Research Methods

### 2.1. Content of Jameson's Cultural Theory

Fredric Jameson's cultural theory emerged within the socioeconomic context of post-World War II capitalism, a period marked by the rise of postmodernism. This was a time when the development of capitalism brought about significant societal and cultural shifts, leading to the emergence of postmodern thought. In response, Jameson formulated his cultural theory, drawing heavily on Marxist principles as well as the ideas of other influential theorists. According to Jameson, postmodernism is characterized by the prevalence of plagiarism and copying, the decline of metaphysics, and the pervasive influence of postmodern civilization. The 20th century saw major scientific and technological advances, driven by modern civilization, which resulted in exponential increases in capitalist productivity. Such progress led to significant transformations in the mode of production, profoundly altering both social and cultural life. Jameson critiqued how these changes rendered humans subservient to machines, challenging the dominance of past scientific and rational paradigms. With the development of post-industrial society, realism waned, replaced by an all-encompassing media presence, cultural commercialization, and a global exchange of cultural forms[10].

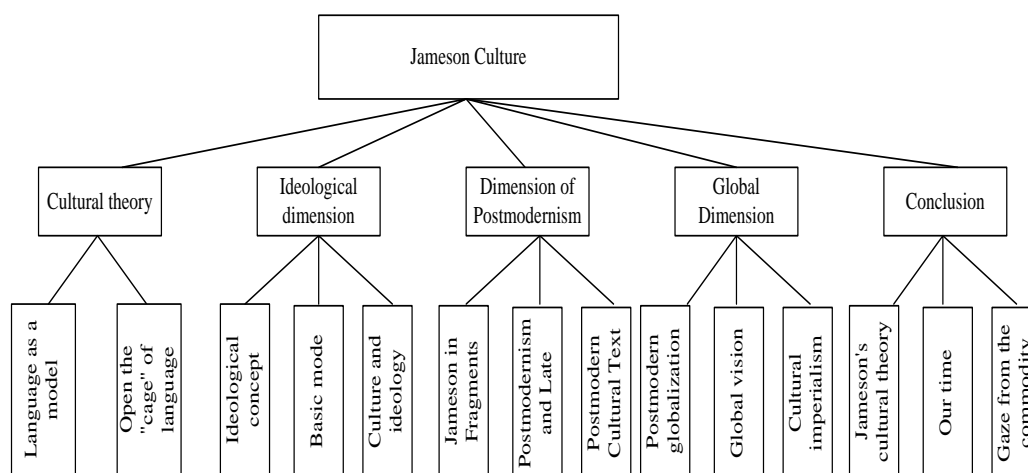
Jameson built upon Marx's theory of ideology, arguing for the relative independence of ideology and its response to social conditions. He posited that the superstructure—determined by the economic base—both serves and is shaped by it, thereby either reinforcing or weakening the base. Post-World War II, capitalism underwent dramatic changes, entering a new developmental phase where consumption became entangled with entertainment and market forces, leading to a state Jameson described as the "cultural industry." This era saw the rise of multimedia and mass-produced cultural products, which in turn fragmented individual subjectivities, laying the groundwork for Jameson's critique of postmodern culture[11].

Jameson's theory critiques the contradictions and shortcomings of modernity, delineating the basic characteristics of modernist civilization and analyzing the socio-cultural development of Western capitalism. His work offers a critical investigation of contemporary Western ideology and provides a framework for Chinese scholars studying Western thought. Notably, Jameson's interest in nationalism and the cultural conditions of the Third World, including the Chinese revolution, has made his theory particularly appealing to Chinese intellectuals.

Chinese scholars[12][13][14][15][16][17][18] have extensively studied Jameson's cultural theory, focusing on its implications for Chinese mass culture. Despite the unique historical and

cultural context of mass culture in China, Jameson’s ideas offer valuable insights for developing a socialist culture with Chinese characteristics. Scholars also examine his Marxist influences, debating the integration of the Marxist mode of production into his theoretical framework and his critique of ideology. Jameson’s approach is distinguished by his use of dialectical materialism, blending elements of various theoretical traditions while maintaining a critical stance rooted in Marxism.

Jameson’s critical theory of postmodern culture provides a tolerant, integrative framework for understanding ideology, emphasizing both the critique and the rational core of Marxist theory. His work facilitates a deeper comprehension of the interplay between ideology and culture, offering a nuanced perspective on the societal and cultural phenomena of both Western and Chinese contexts. The composition of Jameson culture is shown in Figure 1:



**Figure 1.** Jameson theory composition

Jameson contends that the function of ideology should be assessed from two perspectives: its positive and negative roles. The negative role is primarily evident when the ruling class, in order to maintain its dominant position, strengthens its ideological control. This practice suppresses opposing ideologies, leading to a burial of truth and a limitation of people's cognitive abilities. Ideologically, this suppression is consistent with classical Marxism, where the dominant class must maintain its hegemonic position by stifling dissenting ideological content. Conversely, ideology also has a positive role in social existence by guiding practical activities. Essentially, ideology itself can be seen as a form of praxis. While the negative effects focus on ideological domination and suppression, the positive aspects underscore the role of ideology in shaping and guiding societal functions[19].

Jameson’s perspective on postmodernism has played an irreplaceable role in the cultural landscape of China. Although various Western postmodern theories have influenced the rise of postmodern culture in China, Jameson’s theories have had a particularly significant impact. This is due to several factors: his interpretation of postmodernism from a Marxist perspective, his sympathetic attitude towards China and its revolutionary history, and the rapid and plentiful translations of his works. Consequently, Jameson has not only sparked postmodern criticism in China but also heavily influenced Chinese postmodern critics directly. Despite the extensive research on Jameson’s postmodernism, which constitutes more than half of current inquiries, much of it is repetitive with few breakthroughs. Therefore, it could be worthwhile to explore the communication channels of Jameson’s cultural theory in China from a sociological perspective, involving a wider range of social interviewees[7].

## 2.2. Analytical Approaches to the Dissemination of Jameson's Cultural Theory in China

In this paper, we focus on the dissemination of Jameson's cultural theory within China, particularly through the lens of the questionnaire survey. This method allows us to gather comprehensive data on the reception and understanding of Jameson's works among various demographics.

To conduct our research, we will design and distribute an online questionnaire targeting relevant book websites and social media platforms where Jameson's ideas are discussed. The survey will include questions that assess the respondents' familiarity with Jameson's theories, their sources of information, and the impact these theories have had on their cultural outlook.

The primary steps in our methodology are as follows:

1. Design of the Questionnaire: The questionnaire will be structured to capture detailed information on the respondents' engagement with Jameson's works. The questions will be both qualitative and quantitative, ensuring a holistic understanding of the respondents' perspectives.
  2. Distribution of the Questionnaire: We will leverage online platforms and academic networks to reach a wide audience. Targeted distribution will ensure that respondents include a diverse range of readers, scholars, and cultural enthusiasts.
  3. Data Collection and Analysis: The collected data will be systematically compiled and analyzed. Statistical tools, such as descriptive statistics and correlation analysis, will be employed to identify patterns and draw meaningful conclusions about the spread and impact of Jameson's cultural theory.
  4. Interpretation of Results: The results from the questionnaire will be interpreted in light of Jameson's theoretical framework. This will help us understand how his theories resonate with contemporary Chinese society and their potential influence on cultural practices and ideologies.
- By focusing on a questionnaire-based approach, we aim to provide an empirical basis for understanding the reach and significance of Jameson's cultural theory in China. This method will also highlight the channels through which his ideas are disseminated and the extent to which they have permeated various societal layers.

## 3. The Experiment on the Dissemination and Impact of Jameson's Cultural Theory

### 3.1. Subjects

To investigate the dissemination and impact of Jameson's cultural theory in China, an online survey was conducted on a relevant book website. This survey aims to review Jameson's work, identify the channels through which his theories are spread, and address other related issues. The data collection for this study is intricate and requires the application of data mining techniques and related intelligent algorithms for processing and analysis. Commonly used methods in data mining include decision trees, neural network algorithms, K-nearest neighbor algorithms, and naive Bayes algorithms. The collected data will enhance our understanding of Jameson's cultural theory and its influence in China.

### 3.2. Data Preprocessing

The data collected in this experiment may contain some noise, which necessitates data preprocessing. Missing data can be handled by manual imputation or by filling in average values. K-means clustering is conducted on both the test and training sets. The selection of the k value employs an exhaustive method, with k values of 2, 3, 4, and 5 being tested sequentially. After clustering, the test set is classified according to the clustering results of the training set. The

obtained classification results are then compared with previous clustering results, and the GA indices under different k values are calculated. The results are shown in Table 1:

**Table 1.** GA index under different K values

K	N	Nke	GA
2	175	265	0.664
3	263	265	0.989
4	227	265	0.858
5	235	265	0.564

It can be seen that when the k value is 3, the GA index reaches the maximum. Therefore, for the data set, the optimal number of clusters is 3. At this time, the clustering model has stronger generalization ability and is the best aggregation Class model.

### 3.3. Determine the Evaluation Weight

The index weight signifies the importance and function of an indicator within the evaluation framework. In this system, each indicator has a unique weight, even at the same indicator level. This weight, commonly denoted by “a,” is a number greater than zero but less than 1. The sum of the weights of all first-level indicators must equal 1, thus satisfying the conditions  $0 < a < 1$  and  $\sum a = 1$ .

## 4. Experimental Analysis on the Dissemination & Efficiency of Jameson’s Cultural Theory

### 4.1. Current status of Jameson’s Cultural Theory

This section provides statistical analyses on the linguistics, ideology, postmodernism, and globalization aspects of Jameson’s cultural theory. Before delving into the experimental analysis, we briefly introduce the basic structure of the data set. The linguistics data set consists of 343 samples with 6 dimensions, and the correct number of classes is 2. The ideology data set comprises 762 samples, also with 2 classes but with 8 dimensions. The postmodernism and globalization data set includes 702 samples, having 9 dimensions and 2 classes.

For these three data sets, we employ the DBSCAN algorithm, the CLIQUE algorithm, and the GA index proposed in this paper to evaluate the clustering effectiveness. The optimal number of clusters as determined by each index serves as the standard for measuring the quality of each clustering method. The results are summarized in Table 2:

**Table 2.** Comparative experimental results of clustering effectiveness indicators

Data set	Number of samples	Sample dimension	Correct number of classes	Optimal number of clusters		
				DBSCAN	CLIQUE	GA
linguistics	343	6	2	16	2	2
Ideology	762	8	2	21	16	2
Postmodernism and globalization	702	10	2	17	6	2

Through the comparison of the clustering effectiveness indicators in Table 2 and the experimental results table, it can be found that the GA indicator can accurately find the optimal number of clusters for these three data sets, while the traditional DBSCAN indicator cannot get an accurate number of clusters for each data set. The CLIQU index can only accurately find the number of clusters in the linguistic data set of Jameson culture, but it cannot accurately find the optimal number of clusters in the globalization data set of ideology and postmodernism.

The most fundamental aspect of understanding Jameson’s cultural theory is the level of cognition associated with it. To gauge this, we employ the method of random selection to extract 10 related concepts: “cultural model,” “cultural theory,” “cultural structure,” “ideology,” “capitalism,” “cultural logic,” “postmodernism and globalization,” “nationalism,” “theoretical characteristics,” and “cultural art.” These concepts are highly pertinent to Jameson’s cultural theory. Therefore, examining people’s understanding of these concepts can adequately reflect their awareness of Jameson’s cultural theory. This refined paragraph now aligns with the academic style of the prior sections and maintains coherence throughout the discussion.. The result is shown in Figure 2:

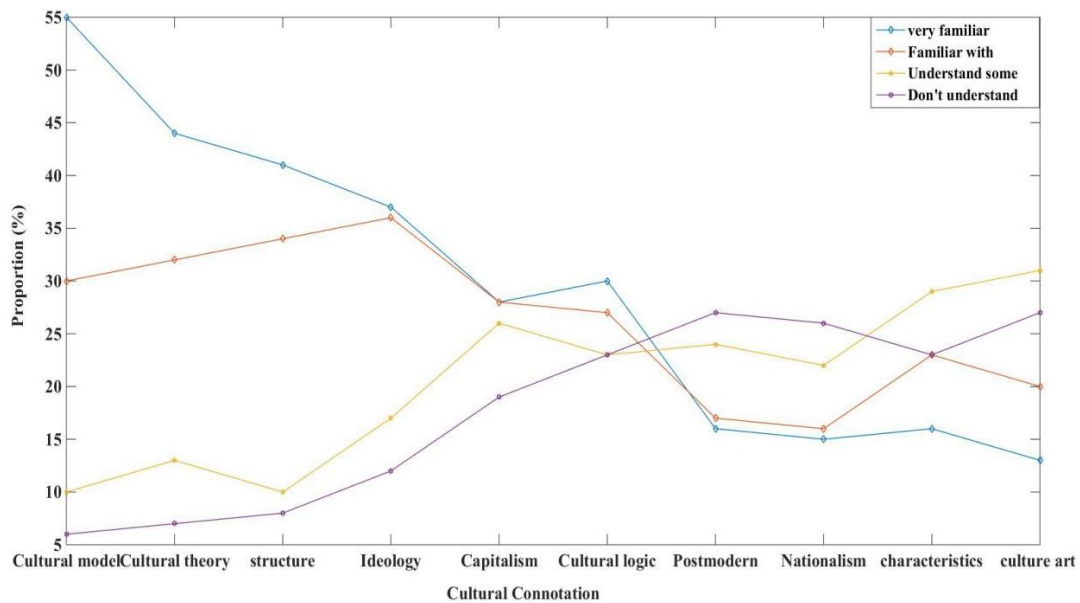


Figure 2. Jameson’s cultural understanding

From Figure 2, it can be observed that the highest degree of understanding was for the concept of “cultural model,” with 55.2% familiarity among participants. This was followed by “cultural theory” (46.2%), “cultural structure” (45.6%), and “ideology” (39.2%). These concepts are more familiar to individuals primarily because they are more frequently encountered in daily life. The least understood concepts were “theoretical characteristics” (33.0%), “cultural logic” (24.2%), and “cultural art” (28.8%). The lower familiarity with these concepts can be attributed to their specialized nature, which requires deliberate study to fully comprehend.

Through data preprocessing, we identified and excluded 68 of the 1,000 records that contained partially missing information. Consequently, we analyzed the remaining 932 records, classifying consumers by age, education level, and city of residence. The age groups were divided into five stages, and education levels were categorized into three groups: high school and below, undergraduate or college, and master’s degree and above. The distribution of consumer’ age and educational level is as follows:

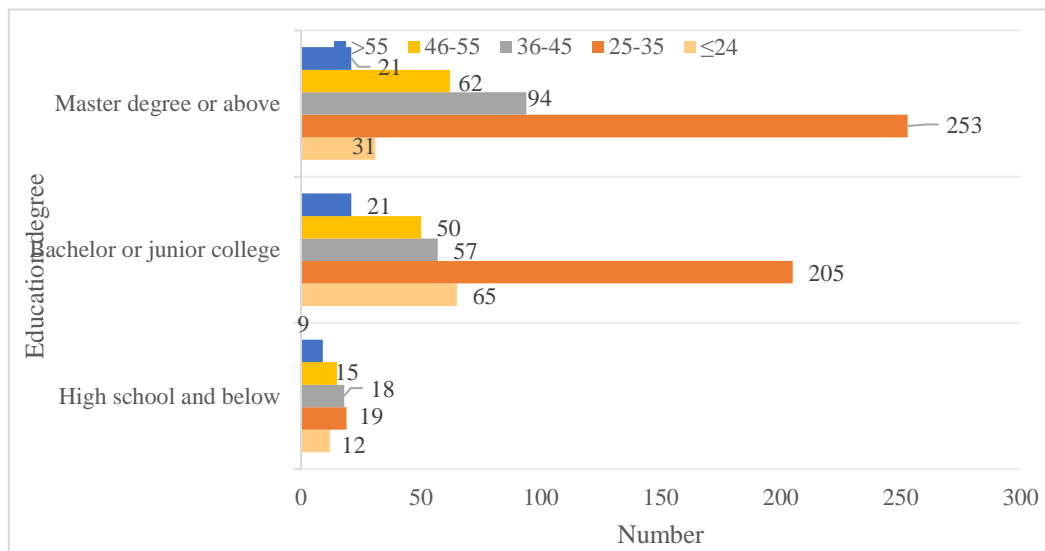
Table 3. Age and educational level of consumers of Jameson’s cultural theory works

Age	High school and below	Bachelor or junior college	Master degree or above	Total
≤24	12	65	31	108
25-35	19	205	253	477
36-45	18	57	94	169
46-55	15	50	62	127
>55	9	21	21	51
Total	73	398	461	932

As shown in Table 3, among the 932 consumers, those aged 25-35 years old constituted the largest proportion at 51.18%, while those aged over 55 years old accounted for the smallest proportion at 5.47%. In terms of education level, 461 consumers held a master’s degree or above, making up 49.46% of the total. Those with a bachelor’s or junior college degree numbered 398, accounting for 42.7%, and individuals with a high school degree or below amounted to 73, representing 7.84% of the total. This data indicates that the primary age group of consumers purchasing Jameson’s cultural theory works is 25-35 years old, and the predominant educational level is master’s degree and above.

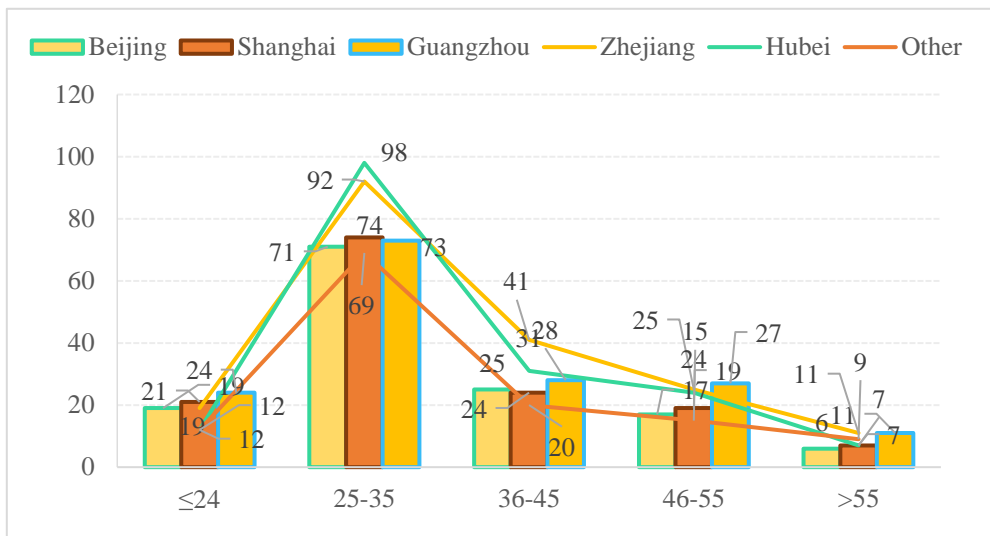
**4.2. Findings of the Dissemination of Jameson’s Cultural Theory in China**

We analyzed the dissemination of Jameson’s cultural theory in China by examining the statistics of his works, including books and other related materials. By classifying the age groups and educational backgrounds of the relevant population, we aimed to identify key characteristics of the audience, including those belonging to mass cultural groups. The characteristics of these groups are depicted in Figure 3:



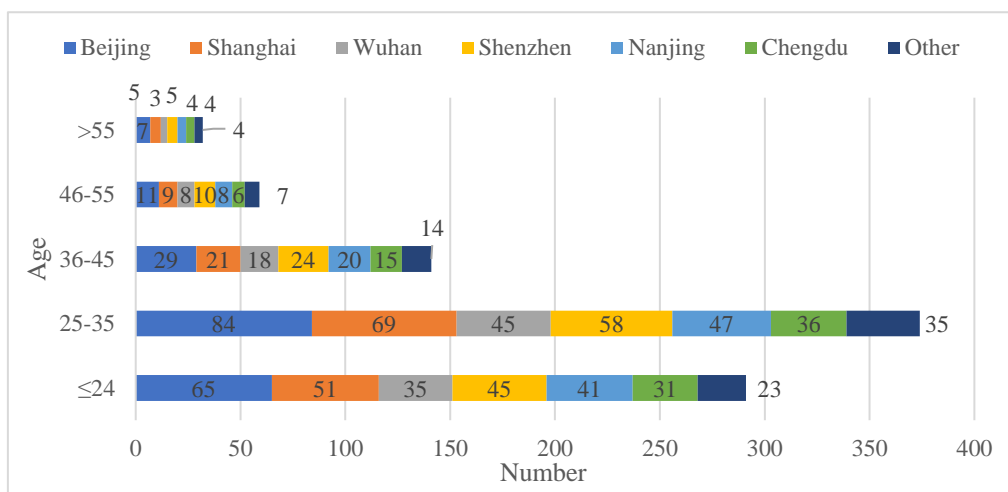
**Figure 3.** Age and educational level distribution of consumers of Jameson’s cultural theory works

As depicted in Figure 3, among the 73 individuals with a high school education or below, there is minimal variation in age distribution. In contrast, significant age differences are observed among the 398 consumers with a bachelor’s or junior college degree and the 461 consumers with a master’s degree or above. Both groups are predominantly aged 25 to 35 years, accounting for 51.51% and 54.88% of their respective educational categories. This indicates that the majority of individuals purchasing Jameson’s cultural theory works are middle-aged and highly educated. We also analyzed the age and geographic location of the 932 sports consumers, presenting the results in Figure 4:



**Figure 4.** The regional distribution of Jameson’s cultural theory works

As shown in Figure 4, Beijing has a population of 138, accounting for 14.81%. Shanghai has a population of 145, accounting for 15.56%. Guangzhou has a population of 163, accounting for 17.49%. Zhejiang has 188 people, accounting for 20.17%; Hubei has 172 people, Accounted for 18.45%. Jameson’s cultural theory works are ranked according to the number of people in the regions where they are affected, followed by Zhejiang, Hubei, Guangzhou, Shanghai and Beijing. This study analyzed the age and location of people who have been exposed to Jameson's cultural theories, including mass sports groups on the Internet, and the results are as follows:



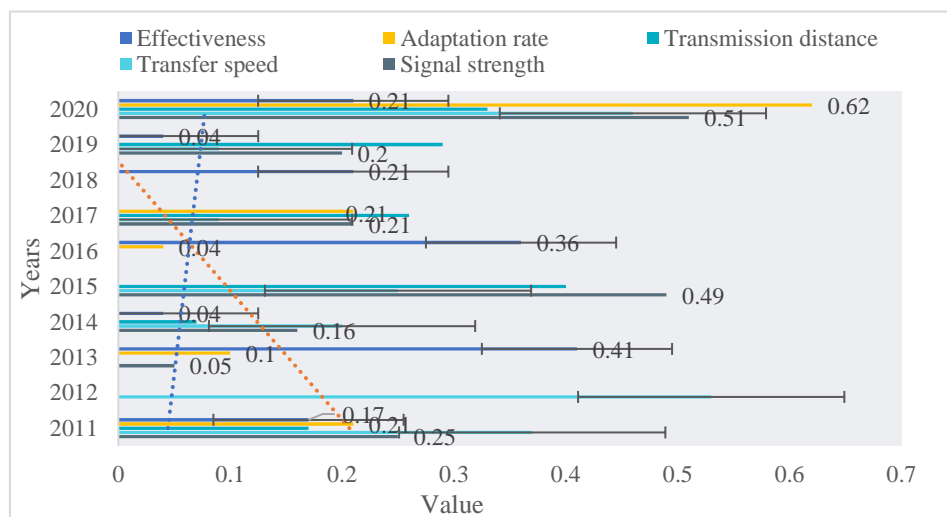
**Figure 5.** The geographical distribution of users of Jameson’s cultural theory

Figure 5 illustrates the distribution of individuals engaging with Jameson’s cultural theory online across select Chinese cities. Beijing leads with a significant presence, comprising 196 participants, which equates to 21.85% of the total. Shanghai follows closely with 155 individuals, representing 17.28% of the demographic. Wuhan is noted for its 109 participants, a 12.15% share. Shenzhen, with 142 individuals, holds a 15.83% stake in the readership. Nanjing contributes with 120 people, amounting to 13.38% of the total. Lastly, Chengdu is home to 92 readers, accounting for 10.26% of the readership. The hierarchy of cities, based on the number of readers, is as follows: Beijing, Shanghai, Shenzhen, Nanjing, Wuhan, and Chengdu.

### 4.3. Analysis on the Efficiency of the Influence of Jameson’s Cultural Theory in China

An online questionnaire survey was conducted on a pertinent book-related website, where 1,000 questionnaires were randomly disseminated to gauge the understanding and exposure pathways of the sports consumer demographic to Jameson’s oeuvre. The survey targeted a comprehensive analysis of the sports group’s engagement with Jameson’s work. From the distribution, a total of 817 valid responses were amassed and subjected to preliminary data processing. Participants were stratified into four age cohorts: under 25, 26-35, 36-45, and over 45, facilitating a nuanced collection of pertinent demographic data.

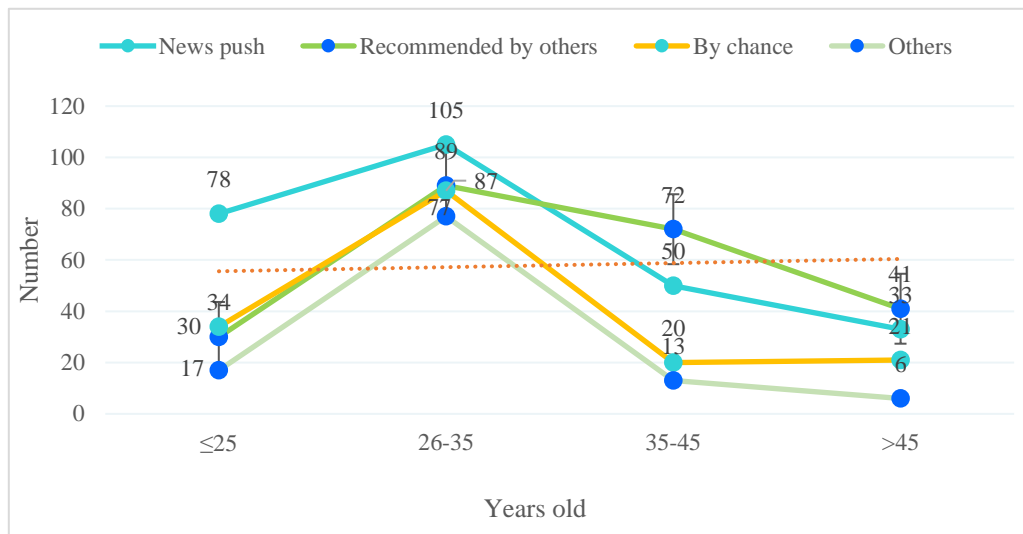
Subsequently, a thorough statistical analysis was performed to delineate the developmental trajectory of Jameson’s cultural theory within our country over the years. The resultant trend of this evolution is graphically represented in Figure 6, providing a visual synopsis of the subject’s growing prominence and influence.



**Figure 6.** The development of Jameson’s cultural theory

Figure 6 provides a visual representation of the growing awareness and influence of Jameson’s cultural theory in our country over recent years. To further elucidate the dissemination of Jameson’s cultural theory within China, a survey was conducted among the respondents to ascertain the pathways through which they were introduced to his work. After excluding the 48 individuals who demonstrated no familiarity with Jameson’s cultural theory, the analysis focused on the remaining 769 participants.

The survey categorized the respondents’ sources of exposure into four distinct channels: news feeds, personal recommendations, serendipitous discovery, and other miscellaneous sources. The statistical findings from this categorization are as follows:



**Figure 7.** Channels to understand Jameson’s cultural theory

As depicted in Figure 7, within the cohort of 769 users, news feeds and recommendations from others emerge as the predominant channels for gaining insights into Jameson’s cultural theory, constituting 34.59% and 28.4% of the total user base, respectively. The significance of news feeds as a channel for comprehension is particularly pronounced among users below the age of 35, indicating a preference for this medium in the younger demographic. Conversely, for users above the age of 35, recommendations from peers are identified as the most influential conduit for understanding, underscoring a reliance on interpersonal networks for exposure to Jameson’s work.

#### 4.4. Critical Insights into Jameson’s Cultural Theory and its Influence on mass Chinese Culture

Jameson’s oeuvre has been extensively translated and disseminated in China for an extended period. The comprehensive collection, *The Jameson Anthology* (all 14 volumes), meticulously edited by the esteemed scholar Wang Fengzhen, was published by Renmin University of China Press in 2018[18]. This anthology was honored as part of the “National Key Book Publishing Project during the 12th Five-Year Plan,” a prestigious distinction rarely bestowed upon Western Marxist theorists. A robust theory, when universally embraced, can significantly amplify the intrinsic value of the work itself. Our analysis of the digital dissemination of Jameson’s works reveals that the initial exposure to his theories often occurs through online bookstores, which serve as gateways for intellectuals to discover new theoretical works or unfamiliar thinkers.

The initial readers of Jameson’s works often recommend them to their peers, thereby gradually extending their influence. In the new era of China, leveraging the internet for the propagation of Jameson’s cultural theories is imperative. Online platforms such as Dangdang.com, Taobao.com, and Amazon.com should be fully utilized to maximize the advantages of both online and offline publicity. The promotion could be further enhanced by strategically employing the influence of scholars and public figures, inviting theorists with significant public sway to elucidate their interpretations of Jameson’s work through lectures and cultural exchange forums.

China’s cultural landscape is a tapestry woven with threads of pre-modern, modern, and post-modern elements. To effectively integrate and adapt Western cultural theories like Jameson’s to the Chinese context, a process of ‘localization’ is essential. This transformation enables the creation of a culturally resonant and nationally distinctive Chinese cultural theory.

## 5. Conclusion

Cultural theory constitutes the nucleus of Jameson's intellectual legacy. This paper delves into the genesis and principal tenets of Jameson's cultural theory, examining its dissemination, influence, and efficacy within the context of Chinese mass culture through a methodical social investigation. Jameson's incisive critique of postmodern cultural theory prompts Chinese theoretical discourse to confront the emergent realities of cultural globalization with critical acumen[16]. Instead of rejecting postmodern thought outright, Chinese scholars have engaged in a nuanced dissection of postmodernism as an ideology and the cultural logic underpinning late capitalism. The genesis and evolution of any cultural phenomenon is deeply rooted in its socioeconomic and political-historical milieu. The ascent of Chinese mass culture is an inevitable byproduct of the country's reform and opening up, as well as the robust progression of socialist modernization. Jameson's cultural theory has exerted a positive influence on Chinese mass culture, instilling a heightened awareness of its theoretical underpinnings.

However, this study acknowledges its inherent limitations. The scope of research is confined to a questionnaire survey and a select group of scholarly subjects due to the constraints of available resources. This limitation restricts the generalizability of the findings. Future research endeavors will broaden the sample size and delve deeper into the dissemination and societal impact of Jameson's cultural theory in China, aspiring to conduct a more extensive and rigorous investigation.

## Data Availability

The data used to support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon request.

## Conflicts of Interest

The authors declares that they have no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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