

New Changes in Chinese Film Market

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Abstract: As the world's second film market, the development of Chinese film market has been attracting worldwide attention. Especially in recent years, the Chinese film market is also changing quietly. First of all, domestic films have always been the first choice for Chinese film audiences. Some "new mainstream films" have been well received by the Audiences, which indicates that China is moving from a "big film country" to a "powerful film country." Secondly, the frequent occurrence of small-language films in the Chinese film market also indicates that the Chinese film market is becoming more mature. Finally, the emergence of the viewing groups in the third and fourth tier cities has become a new growth point and future for the Chinese film market. This series of changes indicate that the Chinese film market is becoming mature gradually.

Keywords: Chinese film; New director; Small language film; Third and fourth tier cities

1. Introduction

In recent years, the box office of Chinese films has increased year by year. In 2018, it has exceeded 60 billion yuan (about 8.8 billion US dollars) and continues to be the second largest film market in the world, only after North America. After more than a decade of rapid development, the Chinese film market also is quietly changing. This series of changes indicate that the Chinese film market is becoming mature gradually.

2. From "Big Film Country" to "Powerful Film Country"

The powerful American film industry has made the film market in many countries "fall" and become the "colony" of Hollywood films. And the Chinese film market is one of the few countries in which domestic films' box office accounts for more than half of the total. In 2018, domestic films' box office accounted for more than 60% of the total box office of Chinese films, which to a certain extent greatly improved the morale of local filmmakers. Looking at the total box office rankings of Chinese film history, the domestic film "War Wolf 2" won the first place with 5.68 billion yuan (about 820 million US dollars), and in the top 10 list, only two Hollywood films "Avengers: Endgame" and "The Fate of the Furious 8" were on the list, and the rest were occupied by domestic films, which shows that the Chinese film industry has entered a healthy track of sound development.

Chinese audiences still love domestic films, which is due to the continuous improvement in the number and quality of domestic films in recent years. They compete against Hollywood blockbusters and share the market in a culture-confident manner. Domestic films such as "Wolf Warriors 2", "The Wandering Earth", "Operation Red Sea", "Dying to Survive", "Youth", and "Operation Mekong" are all ideological, artistic and ornamental. Once

released, they have won a double harvest of public praise and box office. These "new mainstream films" highlight the current mainstream values of China, and explain the dialectical relationship between the state and individuals, heroes and ideals, times and destiny, thus arousing strong resonance among Chinese audiences.

The emergence of new directors is also a new feature of the Chinese film market. For example, Wen Muye directed "Dying to Survive", Bi Gan directed "Kaili Blues", Xin Yukun directed "The Coffin in the Mountain", Peng Sanyuan directed "Lost and Love", Tian Xiaopeng directed the animated film "Monkey King: Hero is Back", Guo Ke directed "22", Cai Chengjie directed "Shaman, Mirrors and Feathers", Cui Siwei directed "Blizzard", Lu Qingyi directed the documentary "Four Springs", Huo Meng directed "Pass Zhaoguan", Wang Yizhen directed "What's in the Darkness", and many star actors have taken the guidance tube, filmed the director's debut, and succeeded. According to incomplete statistics, in the past five or six years, more than fifty new directors' debuts have won more than 50 million yuan at the box office, and many of them have won a variety of film awards at home and abroad. "So many amazing 'first time' are not only the display of the directors' personal talents, but also benefit from policy protection, industry incubation, market expansion, financial support, team cooperation and so on. It should be said that this era has achieved many young people's director dreams, and it is these young people who have contributed to the rapid development of the film industry in this era." [1]

3. Small Language Films Ushered in "Spring"

The Chinese film market has increasingly become a blessed place for small language films, which has achieved a grand occasion never seen in any other coun-

try's film market. In 2017, the Indian film "Dangal" became a "phenomenon-level" blockbuster after it was released in China. It was highly praised and earned an astonishing 188 million US dollars at the box office, accounting for more than 60% of the global box office. Inspired by this, Indian films began to land in China in batches, and most of them achieved super-high box office better than the Indian local market. Japanese animated cartoons, known for their animation, are also quite popular with audiences in the Chinese market, such as "Kimi no na wa." has won more than 80 million US dollars at the box office in China, even the live-action film "Manbiki kazoku" has received a good result of millions of dollars. While the Lebanese film "Capharnaum" was showing in China, the big sale of "Avengers: Endgame" was screened, but it still harvested more than 50 million US dollars, which is considered to be "a small soldier making great contributions". In addition, the Thai film "Chalard Games goeng" released in China, won nearly 40 million US dollars at the box office, the Spanish film "Contratiempo" won nearly 25 million US dollars at the box office, the Russian film "Stalingrad" won more than 10 million US dollars at the box office, the Italian film "Perfetti sconosciuti" won more than 7 million US dollars at the box office and so on, which is a blossom.

Spring does not mean only the singular flower blooms, but the various colorful flowers in the garden. The release of small language films in China has not only greatly enriched the diversity of Chinese film audiences' choices, but also promoted the maturity of Chinese film market. The Chinese audiences begin to accept and appreciate the stories and cultures of strange countries, from which they can feel universal values and emotional exchanges, triggering discussion and reflection. Chinese filmmakers have also been inspired new inspiration and creative enthusiasm from these personalized works that are different from those produced by the Hollywood film industry pipeline. Objectively speaking, more and more small language films will blossom in the Chinese film market, and the Chinese film industry will provide a rich soil for them, which will surely create a win-win situation.

4. The Rise of Film Watching Groups in Third and Fourth Tier Cities

In 2018, 9309 new screens were added to Chinese Cinemas [2], and the total number of screens in China exceeded 60,000, making it the world's largest market. The continued growth of Chinese film industry is benefit from the sinking of cinema channels and the emergence of film watching groups in the third and fourth tier cities. The film watching groups in the third and fourth tier cities are the general names of the film watching groups in the cities and counties below the third and fourth tiers. Compared with the traditional film watching groups in

first and second tier cities, the rise of the film watching groups in third and fourth tier cities is one of the symbols of the gradual maturity of Chinese film market.

In recent years, the consumption ecology of Chinese films is changing, and the key consumption areas are shifting from first and second tier cities to third and fourth tier cities. The cinema with high configuration is no longer exclusive to big cities. The entertainment lifestyle of big cities is directly copied to small and medium-sized cities and even counties. The market space of film consumption has been greatly expanded. The behavior of watching films has changed from "fashion consumption" to "national consumption", and watching films is gradually becoming one of the most popular cultural consumption methods for residents in third and fourth tier cities. More and more signs show that the box office of the third and fourth tier cities has become a "barometer", directly affecting the national film market, and it is a hot topic of current cultural consumption. On the one hand, the film watching groups from the third and fourth tier cities have increasingly become the main force and future of Chinese film industry; on the other hand, compared with the film watching groups of the first and second tier cities, the film watching groups of the third and fourth tier cities show many differences. The film watching groups in the first and second tier cities are more diversified and evenly distributed, with the same proportion of viewers regardless of commercial, art and animated films; while those in the third and fourth tier cities are more characteristic, with a preference for comedy-light films such as "Apartment of Love", "The Ex-File: The Return of the Exes", "My Kitchen Lover" and so on.

An era has its audiences of that era. The Chinese film market has ushered in a period of rapid development under a series of favorable conditions, such as more diversified investment channels, increasingly rich film types, and improved cinema systems. Facing the joy of the box office being constantly refreshed, it is necessary to calmly study the current film audiences and the emotional appeal of the audiences, especially the rapidly developing film watching groups in the third and fourth tier cities, so that every form and style of film can find their own audiences and understand the times, societies, and the rhythm of people.

A market has its own characteristics. The Chinese film market urgently needs to be stratified, divided and demanded. A film, especially a small and medium-cost film, needs to find a market space for different competition. It is necessary to understand and analyze the characteristics and needs of current Chinese film watching groups, especially in the third and fourth tier cities. Before a film is put into the market, we should know where our audiences are, and make corresponding marketing plans for the respective audiences.

5. Acknowledgment

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