

## บทบาทของกลยุทธ์การพัฒนาภาพยนตร์เชิงเนื้อหาต่ออุตสาหกรรมภาพยนตร์จีน

### THE ROLE OF THEMATIC FILM DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY ON CHINESE FILM INDUSTRY

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#### บทคัดย่อ

การศึกษานี้มีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อศึกษาผลกระทบของกลยุทธ์การพัฒนาภาพยนตร์เชิงเนื้อหาต่ออุตสาหกรรมภาพยนตร์จีน การศึกษานี้ใช้การวิจัยเชิงปริมาณในการวิเคราะห์ข้อมูลที่รวบรวมจากแบบสอบถามที่ถูกต้อง 1,439 ชุด เพื่อประเมินระดับการรับรู้ของผู้ชมและแนวโน้มของตลาด ผลการวิจัยที่สำคัญบ่งชี้ว่าการรับรู้ของผู้ชมเกี่ยวกับภาพยนตร์เชิงเนื้อหาที่มีอิทธิพลอย่างมีนัยสำคัญต่อความตั้งใจและการรับรู้ในการรับชม เมื่อความคุ้นเคยกับภาพยนตร์แนวนั้นเพิ่มมากขึ้น ผู้ชมก็เต็มใจที่จะจ่ายเงินค่าตั๋วในราคาที่สูงขึ้น และรับรู้ถึงความสำคัญที่เพิ่มมากขึ้นของภาพยนตร์ในอุตสาหกรรมภาพยนตร์จีนมากขึ้นเช่นกัน นอกจากนี้ การศึกษายังระบุถึงความแตกต่างที่สำคัญในความต้องการภาพยนตร์ตามภูมิภาคในแต่ละระดับความรู้ของผู้ชม จากผลการวิจัยดังกล่าว งานวิจัยนี้จึงเสนอแนวทางส่งเสริมการขายและการเข้าถึงที่หลากหลายเพื่อเพิ่มความสามารถในการแข่งขันทางการตลาดและอิทธิพลทางสังคมของภาพยนตร์เชิงเนื้อหา การอภิปรายเน้นย้ำถึงความสำคัญของการปรับปรุงการรับรู้ของผู้ชมเพื่อตอบสนองความต้องการและความคาดหวังของพวกเขา และเน้นย้ำถึงความจำเป็นในการสร้างสรรค์สิ่งใหม่ๆ และการปรับปรุงคุณภาพอย่างต่อเนื่องในภาพยนตร์เชิงเนื้อหา งานวิจัยนี้เสนอคำแนะนำเชิงปฏิบัติสำหรับผู้ประกอบวิชาชีพในอุตสาหกรรมและผู้กำหนดนโยบายที่มุ่งหวังการเติบโตอย่างยั่งยืนในภาคส่วนภาพยนตร์จีน

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## ABSTRACT

This study investigates the impact of thematic film development strategies on the Chinese film industry by analyzing audience cognition levels and market trends. A sample of 1,439 valid responses was collected through online surveys. Hypothesis testing using regression and ANOVA analyses revealed significant correlations between audience awareness of thematic films and their viewing intentions. The findings show that as audience familiarity with thematic films increases, their willingness to pay higher ticket prices and their recognition of the films' importance in the Chinese film industry also grow. Additionally, there are notable differences in thematic film demand based on varying levels of audience cognition. This study suggests that improving audience cognition through diversified promotional strategies can enhance market competitiveness and the cultural impact of thematic films. The results offer practical guidance for industry practitioners and policymakers to promote sustainable growth in the thematic film sector.

**Keywords:** Thematic Film, Audience Cognition, Development Strategy, Chinese Film Industry, Hypothesis Testing

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## INTRODUCTION

The rapid transformation of the film industry, influenced by the evolving social, economic, and cultural landscape known as the "new normal," has introduced new challenges and opportunities for filmmakers and industry stakeholders. Thematic films, which focus on specific subjects such as social, political, or cultural issues, have gained increasing attention in China for their ability to engage audiences with meaningful content. However, despite the growing prominence of thematic films, the lack of clear strategies for their development has hindered their full potential in the Chinese market (Chen & Zhang, 2021).

Audience engagement plays a critical role in determining the success of thematic films. Research shows that audience cognition—defined as the level of awareness and understanding audiences have about thematic content—significantly influences their viewing intentions and willingness to pay for such films (Zhao, 2021). Therefore, understanding how audience cognition impacts the demand for thematic films is essential for creating effective development and promotional strategies (Wang & Li, 2022).

This study aims to address the gaps in current literature by examining the impact of thematic film development strategies on the Chinese film industry. Specifically, it focuses on the relationship between audience cognition and market demand. To achieve this, the study employs quantitative methods, including hypothesis testing, to analyze data collected from a sample of 1,439 respondents. The research explores key questions such as: How does audience cognition influence viewing intentions and willingness to pay? What factors drive audience preferences for thematic films?

By identifying these relationships, the study seeks to provide practical insights for filmmakers, marketers, and policymakers. The findings will offer guidance on how to enhance the market competitiveness and cultural impact of thematic films, contributing to sustainable growth in the Chinese film industry.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### **The Current State and Development Trends of the Chinese Film Industry**

The Chinese film industry has experienced rapid growth over the past decade, with significant increases in both production and box office revenues. This expansion is largely driven by technological advancements, rising disposable incomes, and the increasing importance of digital distribution platforms (Li & Zhang, 2021). In addition, international

collaborations have played a crucial role in reshaping the industry's landscape, fostering the development of diverse film genres (Chen, 2020). Thematic films, in particular, have emerged as a vital genre due to their capacity to resonate with contemporary social, political, and cultural issues. However, despite their potential, the development of thematic films in China still faces significant challenges, including a lack of comprehensive strategies and audience engagement (Zhao, 2021).

### **Definition and Characteristics of Thematic Films**

Thematic films are characterized by their focus on specific topics such as historical events, social justice, environmental issues, or political themes. These films often aim to provoke thought and engage audiences with meaningful narratives that reflect societal concerns (Wang & Lee, 2022). In China, thematic films frequently address subjects of national importance, such as patriotism, cultural heritage, or modernization (Zhou & Wang, 2019). Recent studies highlight the increasing demand for such films as they offer audiences a deeper connection to the issues being portrayed, fostering both cultural reflection and dialogue (Chen & Zhang, 2021).

### **Audience Cognition and Its Impact on Film Demand**

Audience cognition, which refers to the level of awareness, understanding, and engagement with film content, is a critical factor influencing film demand. According to recent research, higher levels of audience cognition are positively correlated with greater viewing intentions and a willingness to pay higher prices for films with strong thematic content (Zhao, 2021). Audience cognition also affects how films are received and recommended, with more informed viewers being more likely to appreciate complex narratives and recommend such films to others (Wang & Li, 2022). As audience preferences evolve, understanding their cognition becomes essential for the successful promotion and distribution of thematic films (Chen & Zhang, 2021).

### **Market Demand and Pricing Strategies**

Market demand for thematic films in China is influenced by various factors, including audience demographics, film quality, and pricing strategies. Research indicates that audiences are willing to pay premium prices for films that offer high-quality production and meaningful content (Huang & Liu, 2021). However, elasticity of demand varies across different audience segments, with younger viewers showing a preference for contemporary social themes, while older audiences are more drawn to historical and patriotic narratives (Smith & Thomas, 2019).



To effectively tap into these market segments, it is crucial for filmmakers and marketers to tailor their promotional strategies based on audience cognition and preferences.

### **Theoretical Framework**

This study is grounded in several theoretical models that explain audience behavior in relation to thematic films. First, Media Richness Theory (Daft & Lengel, 1986) posits that the richness of a communication medium affects the audience's ability to process and understand complex narratives. This is relevant to thematic films, which often present nuanced content requiring a high level of audience engagement. Second, Consumer Involvement Theory (Zaichkowsky, 1985) suggests that the deeper a consumer's emotional and cognitive involvement with a product, the more likely they are to engage with and support it. This theory is key to understanding how audience cognition drives their willingness to pay for and recommend thematic films. Finally, Diffusion of Innovations Theory (Rogers, 2003) explains how new film genres, such as thematic films, spread across different audience segments, highlighting the role of promotional strategies in increasing audience awareness and engagement.

### **Conceptual Framework**

The conceptual framework for this study links audience cognition to viewing intentions and market demand for thematic films. It posits that increased audience cognition, driven by effective promotional strategies, leads to higher viewing intentions and a greater willingness to pay for films. This, in turn, enhances the market competitiveness of thematic films, making them more viable both domestically and internationally.

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **Research Design**

This study adopts a quantitative research approach to investigate the impact of thematic film development strategies on the Chinese film industry. The quantitative method was chosen to enable objective measurement and statistical analysis of the relationships between audience cognition, viewing intentions, and market demand. The study tests the hypothesis that increased audience cognition positively influences viewing intentions and willingness to pay for thematic films. This hypothesis is examined using data collected from a large, representative sample of film viewers in China.

## Sampling Method and Population

The population for this study comprises Chinese film viewers aged 18 to 65, representing diverse demographics in terms of gender, education, and occupation. A sample size of 1,439 valid respondents was obtained through random sampling, ensuring that the data collected is representative of the broader Chinese audience. The survey was distributed online using social media platforms, targeting respondents across different regions of China. The random sampling technique was used to minimize bias and ensure that participants from various socio-economic backgrounds were included.

## Data Collection Instrument

The primary data for this study was collected through a structured questionnaire designed to capture key variables related to audience cognition, viewing intentions, and market demand. The questionnaire included both closed-ended and Likert scale questions to measure respondents' familiarity with thematic films, their willingness to pay higher ticket prices, and their perceptions of thematic films' role in the Chinese film industry. The questionnaire was pre-tested on a small group of respondents to ensure clarity and reliability before being distributed on a larger scale.

## Variables and Measurement

The study examines the following key variables:

- Audience Cognition: Measured by respondents' familiarity with thematic films and their understanding of thematic content, using a Likert scale ranging from "completely unaware" to "very knowledgeable."
- Viewing Intentions: Assessed through questions regarding respondents' likelihood of watching thematic films, influenced by their cognition level.
- Willingness to Pay: Measured by asking respondents if they are willing to pay higher prices for thematic films, reflecting the perceived value of the films.
- Market Demand: Evaluated through respondents' opinions on the future potential of thematic films in the Chinese film industry.

## Reliability and Validity

To ensure the reliability of the data, Cronbach's  $\alpha$  was calculated for the survey items, yielding a coefficient of 0.731, indicating a high level of internal consistency across the questionnaire items (SPSS Analysis Report, 2024). Validity was tested using factor analysis, which showed that the survey items loaded appropriately on the intended factors, confirming the construct validity of the questionnaire (KMO = 0.877, Bartlett's test = 3930.729,  $p < 0.001$ ).

## **Data Analysis**

Data analysis was performed using SPSS statistical software. Descriptive statistics were used to provide an overview of the sample demographics and key variables. Inferential statistics, including regression analysis and ANOVA, were employed to test the research hypothesis and examine the relationships between audience cognition, viewing intentions, and willingness to pay. The regression analysis revealed that audience cognition significantly influences both viewing intentions and willingness to pay ( $p < 0.05$ ), supporting the hypothesis that higher cognition leads to greater audience engagement with thematic films. ANOVA results further indicated significant differences in audience responses based on varying levels of familiarity with thematic films ( $F = 23.190, p < 0.001$ )

## **Ethical Considerations**

Ethical approval for this study was obtained from the relevant academic institutions. All respondents participated voluntarily and provided informed consent. The anonymity and confidentiality of participants were maintained throughout the study, and no personally identifiable information was collected.

## **FINDING**

The analysis of data collected from 1,439 valid responses provides critical insights into the relationship between audience cognition, viewing intentions, and willingness to pay for thematic films. The findings are structured around the key variables analyzed in the study: audience cognition, market demand, and viewing intentions. Hypothesis testing, conducted through regression analysis and ANOVA, reveals several significant relationships.

### **1. Audience Cognition and Viewing Intentions**

The results show a strong positive correlation between audience cognition and their viewing intentions. Respondents with higher familiarity and understanding of thematic films were significantly more likely to express a strong intention to watch these films. Regression analysis confirmed this relationship, with a p-value of less than 0.05, indicating statistical significance. The higher the level of audience cognition, the more likely they are to seek out and watch thematic films, supporting the hypothesis that audience awareness is a key driver of engagement.

### **2. Audience Cognition and Willingness to Pay**

The study also examined whether higher levels of audience cognition increased respondents' willingness to pay higher ticket prices for thematic films. The regression analysis revealed a significant positive relationship ( $p < 0.05$ ), suggesting that as audience familiarity with thematic films grows, so does their perceived value of these films. Respondents who demonstrated a deeper understanding of thematic content were more likely to agree to pay premium prices for tickets, further supporting the hypothesis that increased cognition leads to greater economic value for thematic films.

### **3.Differences in Audience Cognition Levels**

To further explore the impact of varying levels of audience cognition, ANOVA was employed. The results indicated significant differences in viewing intentions and willingness to pay across different cognition levels ( $F = 23.190$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). Specifically, respondents who were highly familiar with thematic films showed higher engagement and willingness to invest in these films compared to those with little or no familiarity. This finding underscores the importance of targeted educational and promotional strategies to enhance audience cognition, particularly among those less familiar with thematic films.

### **4.Market Demand for Thematic Films**

The survey data revealed strong market demand for thematic films, with over 70% of respondents indicating a preference for such films due to their educational and cultural value. Audience demographics played a crucial role in determining this demand, with younger respondents (ages 18-35) showing a stronger preference for contemporary social themes, while older audiences (ages 36-65) favored historical and patriotic narratives. This segmentation highlights the need for diversified content strategies that cater to the varying preferences of different age groups.

### **5.Correlation Between Viewing Preferences and Film Quality**

Another key finding from the correlation analysis was the direct relationship between film quality and audience recommendation rates. Films that were perceived to offer higher artistic and narrative quality led to a 52% increase in recommendations to peers. This result highlights the importance of maintaining high production values and creative storytelling to sustain audience interest and foster word-of-mouth promotion.

### **6.Feedback on Thematic Film Promotion and Development Strategies**

Respondents overwhelmingly supported the need for stronger promotional and development strategies for thematic films. Over 80% agreed that thematic films have the potential to enhance China's cultural influence both domestically and internationally. The survey also identified key areas for improvement, including increasing government support,



enhancing collaboration between filmmakers and other cultural industries, and providing more targeted outreach to less familiar audience segments.

### **Summary of Hypothesis Testing**

The results from regression and ANOVA analyses confirm the study's primary hypothesis: higher levels of audience cognition positively influence viewing intentions and willingness to pay for thematic films. Additionally, the findings emphasize the need for improved promotional strategies that target specific audience groups based on their cognition levels to maximize both engagement and market success.

## **CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION**

### **Conclusion**

This study explored the impact of thematic film development strategies on the Chinese film industry, with a specific focus on the role of audience cognition in shaping viewing intentions and willingness to pay. Through quantitative analysis of 1,439 survey responses, the research confirmed that higher levels of audience cognition are significantly correlated with both increased viewing intentions and a greater willingness to pay for thematic films. This suggests that enhancing audience understanding of thematic content can directly influence the economic success and cultural impact of these films.

The study also revealed significant differences in audience preferences based on cognition levels, with those more familiar with thematic films displaying greater engagement and a higher valuation of such films. These findings emphasize the need for targeted strategies that cater to different audience segments, particularly through educational campaigns and promotional efforts that raise awareness and deepen audience engagement with thematic films.

### **Discussion**

The results of this study provide valuable insights for both filmmakers and policymakers. The positive relationship between audience cognition and willingness to pay suggests that efforts to improve the public's understanding and appreciation of thematic films could lead to increased box office revenues. This finding supports previous research indicating that informed audiences are more likely to invest in films that offer complex narratives and address meaningful social issues (Wang & Li, 2022). By leveraging this insight, the Chinese film industry can create development strategies that both meet audience expectations and foster long-term growth.

#### **1.Implications for Filmmakers**

For filmmakers, the study highlights the importance of producing high-quality thematic films that resonate with contemporary social, political, and cultural issues. The correlation between film quality and audience recommendations suggests that investing in superior production techniques and creative storytelling can enhance audience engagement and increase word-of-mouth promotion. Additionally, filmmakers should consider collaborating with educational institutions and cultural organizations to develop films that not only entertain but also educate, aligning with the preferences of audiences who seek deeper connections with the content.

## **2.Implications for Policymakers**

Policymakers can play a critical role in supporting the development of thematic films by providing financial incentives and promoting the integration of thematic films into educational curricula. The study's findings suggest that government funding and institutional support can significantly enhance the visibility and accessibility of thematic films, particularly among younger audiences. By fostering collaborations between filmmakers, educational institutions, and cultural organizations, policymakers can help build a more informed and engaged audience base that values thematic content.

## **3.Market Segmentation and Promotional Strategies**

The differences in audience preferences based on age and cognition level highlight the need for a segmented marketing approach. Younger audiences tend to prefer contemporary social themes, while older audiences favor historical or patriotic narratives. As such, promotional strategies should be tailored to target specific demographics. For example, social media campaigns could be more effective for engaging younger viewers, while traditional media and community-based outreach may resonate more with older audiences.

## **4.Addressing Challenges in Thematic Film Development**

The study identified several challenges in the development and promotion of thematic films, including a lack of awareness among certain audience segments and insufficient promotional efforts. To address these challenges, the industry should invest in comprehensive promotional campaigns that not only inform potential viewers about the content and value of thematic films but also highlight their educational and cultural significance. This could involve leveraging celebrity endorsements, partnerships with educational platforms, and collaborations with international film festivals to enhance global visibility.

## Limitations and Future Research

While this study provides important insights, it is not without limitations. The sample was drawn primarily from online platforms, which may not fully represent the broader Chinese audience. Future research could focus on expanding the sample to include a wider range of geographic and socio-economic backgrounds. Additionally, while this study focused on audience cognition and viewing behavior, future studies could explore the role of digital platforms and streaming services in influencing the dissemination and success of thematic films.

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