

Analysis of Overseas Dissemination Strategies and Effects of Chinese New Mainstream Cinema

Lu Chen*

Fujian Polytechnic Normal University, Fuqing, 350300, China

*Corresponding author: 18359185951@163.com

Abstract: With the transformation of the global film industry and the deepening of cultural exchange, the overseas dissemination of Chinese New Mainstream Cinema—a contemporary form that blends commercial genres with humanistic themes—holds significant research value. From a cross-cultural communication perspective, this paper systematically analyzes the textual innovations in the aesthetic narratives of New Mainstream Cinema and the construction of "commensurability" undertaken to enhance its international reception. Furthermore, it explores the strategic system for its overseas dissemination, which encompasses the expansion of multi-level distribution networks, regionally differentiated market strategies, and the synergistic mechanism between cultural empowerment and market operations. The study also constructs an effectiveness evaluation framework based on market, media, and audience dimensions, explaining the logic of influence generation from market entry to cultural identification. Overall, it demonstrates that the overseas dissemination of New Mainstream Cinema is a systematic project, whose effectiveness is rooted in the cultural communicative power of the text itself, the precise adaptation of dissemination strategies, and the dynamic optimization of synergistic mechanisms.

Keywords: New Mainstream Cinema; overseas dissemination; dissemination strategies; dissemination effects; cross-cultural communication

Introduction

Against the backdrop of globalization and the integrated development of digital media, film serves not only as a cultural and entertainment product but also as a crucial representation of national cultural image and soft power. In recent years, while achieving remarkable success in the domestic market, the breadth and depth of the international dissemination of Chinese New Mainstream Cinema have become a key metric for gauging the global influence of contemporary Chinese culture. New Mainstream Cinema refers to a modern cinematic form that balances commercial imperatives with cultural expression. Its overseas dissemination practices transcend the scope of simple cultural export, involving complex issues of textual transformation, channel integration, and cross-cultural reception. Conducting a systematic study of this phenomenon holds significant theoretical value and practical necessity. On a theoretical level, this research contributes to enriching and developing theories of film cross-cultural communication, providing specific analytical cases and theoretical reflection for understanding how non-Western film industries integrate into the global system. On a practical level, a systematic examination of its dissemination strategies and effects can offer academic rationale and strategic references for optimizing the international trajectory of Chinese cinema and enhancing the effectiveness and sustainability of cultural dissemination, holding positive significance for promoting mutual learning among civilizations and fostering cooperation in the film and television industry.

1. The Core Characteristics of New Mainstream Cinema and the Textual Basis for Its Overseas Dissemination

1.1 Conceptual Definition and Connotative Evolution of New Mainstream Cinema

As an academic concept within a specific context, the connotation of New Mainstream Cinema is not static but dynamically evolves amid the waves of film industrialization and globalization. It typically refers to a modern cinematic form that, at the level of film production, accommodates both the commercial demands of the mainstream market and the expression of core cultural values. The

emergence of this concept signifies a shift in film creation models from singularity to complexity, with its core lying in seeking a creative balance between the conventions of commercial genres and socio-cultural expression. The evolution of its connotation has progressed from early commercial genre experiments to gradually establishing a mature paradigm that integrates industrial production standards, generic narrative frameworks, and universal emotional cores. This evolutionary process is, in essence, the result of the film industry's self-innovation and its interaction with the external cultural environment, aiming to construct a new type of cinematic text capable of gaining broad recognition in the domestic market while possessing the potential for cross-cultural dialogue^[1].

1.2 The Aesthetic System and Narrative Characteristics of New Mainstream Cinema

In constructing its aesthetic system, New Mainstream Cinema exhibits a marked tendency towards industrialization and refinement. Its visual aesthetics pursue high-concept spectacle presentation and production standards that meet international benchmarks, emphasizing the impact and immersiveness of audiovisual language, which constitutes the technical foundation for its participation in global market competition. Regarding narrative strategies, New Mainstream Cinema excels at genre fusion and innovation, frequently combining genre elements with high commercial appeal-such as action, disaster, and science fiction-with plot cores that embody greater humanistic concern and an emotional logic rooted in collectivism. This combination is not a simple juxtaposition; rather, it is achieved by situating individual destinies within grand backgrounds or frameworks of teamwork, thereby finding a narrative equilibrium between individual heroism and collective values. Its narrative perspective often integrates both micro-level individual experiences and a macro panorama of the era. Through highly dramatized plot conflicts and emotional intensification, it accomplishes a contemporary interpretation of universal themes such as courage, responsibility, familial love, and homeland.

1.3 Textual Adaptability Construction for Cross-Cultural Communication

To facilitate overseas dissemination, the construction of textual adaptability is crucial for New Mainstream Cinema to break through cultural barriers. This adaptability is first reflected in the conscious strategy of circumventing "cultural discount." Specifically, at the creative level, there is a deliberate effort to refine and emphasize themes of universal human relevance, such as survival challenges, family bonds, hero's journeys, and technological ethics. These themes transcend the limitations of specific regional cultures and are more likely to resonate emotionally with cross-cultural audiences. Secondly, in terms of narrative structure, there is a tendency to adopt more internationally familiar linear narratives or high-intensity plot-driven models, thereby reducing comprehension barriers caused by differences in cultural backgrounds. Furthermore, in character portrayal and value expression, New Mainstream Cinema attempts to create roles with greater complexity and depth of humanity. The motivations and emotional logic behind their actions strive to be grounded in universal human nature rather than in singular cultural symbols. Simultaneously, by enhancing the capacity for visual storytelling, these films utilize non-verbal symbols-such as action sequences, visual effects, and set design-to convey core messages. This approach reduces reliance on dialogue and highly specific cultural contexts, thereby constructing a "visual-first" channel for cross-cultural understanding. This internal textual adaptation aims to increase the commensurability of film as a cultural product, laying the internal foundation for subsequent channel expansion and market acceptance.

2. Multi-faceted Pathways and Strategic Frameworks for the Overseas Dissemination of New Mainstream Cinema

2.1 Expansion of Multi-layered Distribution Channels from a Global Perspective

The overseas distribution of New Mainstream Cinema constitutes a systematic project aimed at building a complementary, multi-layered channel network. Its core objective is to achieve comprehensive market coverage-ranging from professional recognition to mass consumption, and from short-term trends to long-term penetration-through the systematic combination of channels at different levels. This network is not a simple parallel arrangement but features inherent logical progression and functional complementarity among its layers. Prestige-building on professional platforms forms the starting point and value amplifier of the entire dissemination chain, determining a film's initial position within the international cinematic discourse. Mainstream commercial channels then undertake the critical task of converting this cultural prestige into widespread market access and consumption,

serving as the core link for value realization. Meanwhile, the operation of segmented rights markets extends and deepens the dissemination effectiveness of the preceding two layers, ensuring that the film's influence can continue to accumulate across broader social spaces and over longer time dimensions^[2].

The effectiveness of this channel network relies on the smooth transfer of value and functional linkage between its various tiers. A successful festival premiere can provide crucial credibility endorsement and media attention for commercial distribution negotiations, thereby enhancing a film's bargaining power and scheduling priority in theaters or on streaming platforms. Conversely, if a film achieves substantial viewing data and positive user feedback in mainstream commercial markets, particularly on streaming platforms, this data and word-of-mouth can, in turn, reinforce its cultural value. This reinforcement can attract further attention from film festivals and professional critics, and even drive up the value of related derivative products and copyrights in segmented markets. This mutual empowerment and data feedback among the multi-layered channels constitute a dynamic, self-reinforcing dissemination ecosystem. This ecosystem enables the overseas dissemination of films to transcend singular breakthroughs, achieving a networked diffusion and long-term maintenance of their influence.

2.2 Regional Market Strategies Emphasizing Both Cultural Proximity and Differentiation

Effective dissemination requires the implementation of refined strategies based on regional cultural geography. For culturally proximate markets such as East Asia and Southeast Asia, the strategic core lies in leveraging the advantage of "cultural proximity." Elements within the films, such as family ethics, collectivist spirit, and Eastern aesthetics, readily evoke emotional resonance and cultural identification. Strategies like casting regional stars and conducting community marketing around shared social topics can reduce the cultural discount and facilitate smooth acceptance. For culturally distinct markets such as North America and Western Europe, the strategy shifts towards "universalization of values" and "internationalization of quality." It is necessary to downplay specific historical backgrounds and instead highlight the film's industrial attributes as a high-quality genre piece (e.g., action, science fiction). Marketing efforts should focus on universally shared human emotions, sophisticated visual effects, and innovative narratives, coupled with deeply localized adaptations of promotional materials, using universal values and industrial quality as entry points into the market. For emerging markets like Africa and the Middle East, the strategy requires greater flexibility and a developmental focus. This can involve combining cultural exchange activities for market education, exporting works with comparative advantages in technology and genre to establish a professional image, and utilizing flexible cooperation models to test the market, cultivate viewership, and gradually build brand recognition.

2.3 Synergistic Dissemination System Integrating Official Promotion and Market-Driven Forces

The optimization of overseas dissemination efficacy relies on a synergistic system comprising cultural promotion mechanisms and market-driven commercial forces. At the level of framework construction and brand empowerment by cultural promotion platforms, initiatives such as various overseas cultural years and themed film festivals undertake the macro-level function of framework building. Operating in a non-fully commercialized format, these platforms conduct systematic cultural presentations. They provide in-depth interpretation for films through curated narratives and academic discussions, aiming to shape a multifaceted overall brand image and create a favorable cognitive environment for subsequent commercial distribution^[3]. At the level of localized execution and deep outreach by market operators, entities such as production companies, distributors, and public relations teams are responsible for micro-level implementation. Their work encompasses market research, customized marketing, media relations management, and ticketing promotions. The professionalism of these entities directly determines whether cultural influence can be translated into tangible market share. Ultimately, the dynamic coupling and efficacy optimization of an ideal synergistic mechanism require these two components to engage in dynamic interaction. Cultural platforms provide preliminary visibility and authoritative endorsement, while market operators are responsible for the subsequent precise conversion and quantitative execution. Data from market feedback can, in turn, inform the curatorial direction of cultural promotions. This process forms a continuous optimization loop-from the macro to the micro level, and from feedback back to adjustment-constituting the internal driving force of the dissemination system.

3. Multi-dimensional Examination of Overseas Dissemination Effects and the Mechanisms of Influence Generation

3.1 Multi-dimensional Assessment of Dissemination Effects and the Evaluation Framework

3.1.1 Market and Industry Dimension: Quantitative Analysis of Commercial Performance

The market and industry dimension constitutes the foundational level of effect assessment, primarily involving quantifiable commercial data and industrial activities. Key indicators include box office revenue, market share, and audience attendance in target markets, as well as subsequent revenues generated through post-theatrical window channels such as streaming platforms, television, and home video. Furthermore, the transaction price and scope of international copyright pre-sales, the film's role in stimulating subsequent international co-production projects, and its success in attracting international capital or production teams to participate in Chinese film projects are all crucial for measuring its industrial influence. This dimension directly reflects the circulation efficiency and market competitiveness of film as a cultural commodity within international distribution networks.

3.1.2 Media and Discourse Dimension: The Construction and Circulation of Symbolic Meaning

The media and discourse dimension focuses on the symbolic production and discourse on meaning generated by the film within the international sphere of public opinion and professional fields. The analytical emphasis lies on the tone of reviews, reporting frequency, and agenda-setting by mainstream media outlets, film critics, and professional film publications, observing their interpretive frameworks regarding the film's aesthetics, technology, narrative, and cultural connotations. Concurrently, the film's selection status and award records at major international film festivals, along with the academic discussions these engender, constitute its coordinates within the global discourse system of film art. This dimension reveals how the filmic text is accepted, interpreted, and endowed with meaning by transnational professional discourse systems, serving as a tangible indicator of its cultural soft power projection^[4].

3.1.3 Audience and Social Dimension: Changes in Cognition, Attitude, and Behavior

The audience and social dimension delves into the terminal end of the dissemination chain, examining the micro-level psychological and behavioral impacts that films exert on ordinary overseas viewers. Assessment relies not only on sentiment analysis of online ratings and short reviews but also requires audience surveys to gauge their level of understanding of the film's content, any changes in their perception of the cultural elements presented, the intensity of their emotional identification, and whether the viewing experience sparks a willingness or leads to actual behaviors aimed at further understanding the related culture (such as searching for relevant information or watching other Chinese films). The breadth and depth of secondary creations and topic discussions on social media also serve as crucial indicators for measuring how deeply the film permeates the social and cultural fabric and stimulates public engagement.

3.2 Analysis of Factors Influencing Cultural Identification and Market Acceptance

3.2.1 The Cross-Cultural Communicative Potential Inherent in the Text Itself

The inherent characteristics of the filmic text constitute the primary factor determining its communicative potential. This involves the art of equilibrium within the narrative between universal themes (such as love, sacrifice, growth, and justice) and specific cultural symbols. Symbols that rely excessively on the local context without sufficient explanation can easily lead to comprehension barriers, while completely stripping away cultural distinctiveness results in a loss of recognizability. Furthermore, the purity and innovativeness of its genre, the international industrial quality of its audiovisual language, and the cross-cultural persuasiveness of the logic behind its characters' motivations collectively form the foundation for whether a text can traverse cultural barriers. A text that possesses both cultural uniqueness and emotional universality is more likely to resonate with audiences from heterogeneous cultures^[5].

3.2.2 The Cultural Lens and Horizon of Expectations of the Receiving Party

Overseas audiences are not passive recipients. Their own cultural backgrounds, aesthetic habits, and pre-existing perceptions of Chinese cinema-constituting their "horizon of expectations"-form a powerful "cultural lens" that mediates their decoding process of a film. Historically formed cultural distance and stereotypes shaped by long-term media portrayal influence interpretive tendencies. For

instance, the same film might be appreciated for its nuanced emotions in regions with closer cultural proximity, while in markets with greater cultural distance, it might initially be perceived as a novel spectacle of the "Other" or a technological product. Sociodemographic characteristics of the audience, such as age, educational background, and viewing experience, also lead to stratified and varied reception effects.

3.2.3 The Critical Role of Dissemination Context and Intermediary Mechanisms

The specific context in which dissemination occurs and its intermediary mechanisms profoundly modulate the reception effects. Factors such as whether the release timing avoids intense competition from the local market, whether the localized adaptation of promotional materials (e.g., posters, trailers) accurately conveys the core selling points and avoids misinterpretation, the direction of media reviews, and the presence or absence of endorsements from opinion leaders (such as renowned film critics or influencers) collectively shape the "climate of public opinion" when a film first enters a market. Additionally, whether streaming platforms' algorithm recommendations can precisely target the film to potentially interested user groups, and whether the curation and guided tours at offline cultural events provide effective interpretative assistance-these intermediary factors significantly guide, or even shape, the audience's initial perceptions and viewing choices^[6].

3.3 The Generation of Long-term Influence: From "Going Out" to "Integrating In"

3.3.1 The Cumulative Effect of Branding and Franchise Operation

Sustainable influence cannot be achieved overnight through a single unexpected blockbuster; it requires the accumulation of recognition realized through branding and franchise operation. This signifies that the film industry needs to cultivate internationally recognizable brands associated with directors and producers, or to build sustainable film IPs such as "The Wandering Earth" series. Serialized works, through the continuous output of multiple installments, can progressively consolidate and expand their fictional worlds. This process cultivates a stable overseas fan base, allowing the influence to break free from reliance on a single film source and form a lasting cultural appeal. This cumulative effect can gradually alter the overseas market's old perception of Chinese cinema as sporadic and incidental, instead establishing a stable and predictable association with quality.

3.3.2 Facilitating In-depth Cultural Dialogue and Creative Transformation

To "integrate in" signifies that the cultural elements of Chinese cinema are no longer merely "exhibits" for external observation, but become "resources" capable of integrating into local cultural creation and inspiring creative transformation. The influence reaches a deeper level only when the aesthetic styles, narrative motifs, and technical approaches found in New Mainstream Cinema begin to be thoroughly discussed by overseas film critics, referenced or responded to by filmmakers from other countries, and even spark cross-cultural academic research topics. This requires the filmic text itself to possess sufficient richness, openness, and contemporaneity, enabling it to provide unique perspectives and artistic solutions to globally shared concerns, thereby participating in, and even shaping, discourse production across broader fields.

3.3.3 Long-tail Interaction and Ecosystem Building Based on Audience Communities

The ultimate foundation for long-term influence rests on people, namely the cultivation and activation of overseas audience communities. Leveraging social media platforms to build official or fan-led transnational fan communities, and encouraging user-generated content, multi-lingual discussions, and knowledge-sharing based on the film's content, can transform a one-time viewing act into sustained cultural participation. By providing extended content such as multi-lingual behind-the-scenes footage, interviews with creators, and cultural background materials, film studios or related cultural institutions can meet the exploratory needs of dedicated audiences, thereby constructing a micro cultural ecosystem centered around the film IP. This audience-centric dissemination model, which emphasizes interaction and extension, allows influence to gradually accumulate and grow within daily life, ultimately achieving the genuine "rooting" of cultural value.

Conclusion

Through a comprehensive analysis of the textual foundation, strategic framework, and effect dimensions of the overseas dissemination of Chinese New Mainstream Cinema, this study reveals the internal logic and complex facets of its dissemination practices. The research finds that the overseas

dissemination of New Mainstream Cinema is not a one-dimensional export but rather a dynamic process involving textual re-creation, channel adaptation, market segmentation, and meaning negotiation. The key to its success lies in the filmic text requiring a universal emotional core and sophisticated industrial quality to establish a foundation for cross-cultural dialogue. The dissemination strategy needs to establish a multi-layered distribution network, implement regionally differentiated operations, and achieve synergy between cultural discourse empowerment and precise market outreach. The deepening of dissemination effects relies on transcending short-term economic indicators to pursue long-term embedding within media discourse, audience cognition, and the socio-cultural fabric. Looking ahead, for the overseas dissemination of New Mainstream Cinema to achieve a qualitative leap from "presence" to "influence," it must dedicate itself to sustainable branding and franchise development, promote deeper cultural dialogue and creative transformation, and focus on cultivating active overseas audience communities to build a cultural ecosystem centered around film IPs. This approach would truly accomplish the transition from cultural "going out" to the "internalization" of value.

References

- [1] Lu Xiaofang. "The Theoretical Approach of New Mainstream Cinema from the Perspective of Chinese Modernization." *Dongyue Tribune*, vol. 46, no. 05, 2025, pp. 51-57.
- [2] Liu Kunhou. "Research on the International Dissemination of New Mainstream Cinema from the 'Belt and Road' Perspective." *Movie Review*, no. 19, 2024, pp. 69-75.
- [3] Wang Zhuyin. "The Current Situation and Development Trends of New Mainstream Cinema." *China Film Market*, no. 09, 2024, pp. 42-46.
- [4] Fu Fangda. "Research on the International Dissemination of China's National Image: An Analysis Based on the Perspective of New Mainstream Cinema." *Journal of Chongqing University (Social Science Edition)*, vol. 31, no. 05, 2025, pp. 131-141.
- [5] Yang Jian, and Hong Qingxiang. "The Cinematic Representation of China's National Image in New Mainstream Cinema." *Journalism Communication*, no. 09, 2024, pp. 39-41.
- [6] Zhang Qiuyue. *Research on the Cross-cultural Communication Strategies of New Mainstream Cinema since the New Century*. 2023. Qufu Normal University, MA thesis.