

An Empirical Study on Marketing Strategies of Chinese Fantasy Films from the Perspective of Industrial Integration (2012-2021)

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Abstract: From an interdisciplinary perspective that integrates industrial economics and communication studies, this study systematically analyzes 19 fantasy films released in China between 2012 and 2021, each achieving a box office revenue of over RMB 100 million and having complete records of promotion and release. Employing a multiple-case comparative analysis method, it systematically examines the characteristics of their marketing strategies. First, cluster analysis is applied to the promotional and release data of the sample films to identify common patterns; then, six films with outstanding box office performance and distinctive marketing features are selected for case comparison, providing an in-depth deconstruction of their marketing practices. The study finds that Chinese fantasy films have formed three core marketing models: a “sentiment-scarcity” collaborative marketing mechanism based on emotional resonance and supply-demand regulation, a cross-industry marketing network integrating resources from multiple industries, and a derivative product development system driven by cultural symbol innovation. Through empirical analysis, the study reveals the implementation pathways of these strategies, offering a practical paradigm for marketing innovation in Chinese genre films.

Keywords: Fantasy Films; Marketing Strategies; Collaborative Marketing; Cross-Industry Marketing; Derivative Product Development

1. Introduction

Against the macro backdrop of the rapid development of China’s market economy, the film industry has formed an increasingly mature production ecosystem. With the expansion of industrial scale and the improvement of market mechanisms, film marketing, an essential link in the entire industry chain, has seen its strategic

value become increasingly prominent. Within the theoretical framework of industrial economics, film marketing can be defined as an integrated communication system centered on the film as the core product, delivering precise information and value to target audiences through diversified media channels [1]. In the context of the new consumer era, industry players are striving to build a film marketing paradigm with distinctive Chinese characteristics, aimed at enhancing the market penetration and audience loyalty of cultural products.

As a major subgenre of fantasy films, magical films rely on surreal narrative structures and the construction of visual spectacles to present a heterogeneous spatiotemporal realm where humans, gods, and demons coexist. Through the dramatized portrayal of supernatural elements such as magical symbols and witchcraft rituals, this genre not only offers audiences an immersive experience of a fantasy world but also creatively caters to the contemporary social demand for “imagination consumption [2].” Notably, Chinese magical films are generally rooted in traditional cultural foundations, with narrative materials often drawn from systems of myths, legends, and folk tales. When constructing imagined worlds, such works must adhere to the logic of magic and the mythological mindset to establish heterotopian rules, while also achieving a dual value focus: on one hand, fostering audience identification through universal emotional resonance, and on the other, employing modern reinterpretations to provide metaphorical reflections on social reality. Within this creative paradox, how can such heterogeneous texts be disseminated to mass audiences? How can the interpretive gap between fantasy narratives and real-world cognition be bridged? The construction and optimization of marketing communication systems become the crucial link for addressing these challenges.

As the core mechanism of the marketization of cultural products, film marketing has a

significant impact on the public's attention to films, the construction of brand value, the effectiveness of word-of-mouth dissemination, and competitive advantages in the market, thereby forming a positive driving effect on box office revenue. Existing research has shown a significant correlation between different marketing strategies and box office revenues. Shen Jianjun and Wu Chunji (2021) empirically demonstrated, based on data from the Maoyan platform, that the intensity of short-video marketing is stably and positively correlated with film box office revenues [3], confirming the critical role of new media communication in film consumption decisions [4]. Sun Lei and Zhai Xin (2018) used a multiple regression model to verify that event marketing has a significant promotional effect on film box office revenue. Hua Rui et al. (2019) found through empirical research that both traditional and modern film promotion methods significantly promote box office growth, with modern promotion methods proving more effective [5]. These research findings together build the theoretical link between film marketing and market performance

and provide a quantitative basis for the optimization of marketing strategies.

Based on the empirical research framework mentioned above, this study focuses on Chinese fantasy films as a specific genre and systematically examines the marketing strategy characteristics of high-grossing films. By constructing a sample database of 19 films with box office revenues exceeding RMB 100 million and complete promotion and release records from 2012 to 2021, this study employs a visualization analysis method to present the market performance patterns of these films. As shown in Figure 1, in the coordinate system, the horizontal axis represents the film release time, while the vertical axis maps the box office scale. The bubble size is positively correlated with box office revenue. The visualization analysis reveals that the box office distribution of the sample films exhibits significant temporal sequence characteristics and scale agglomeration effects, which provide a data foundation for the in-depth deconstruction of subsequent marketing strategies.

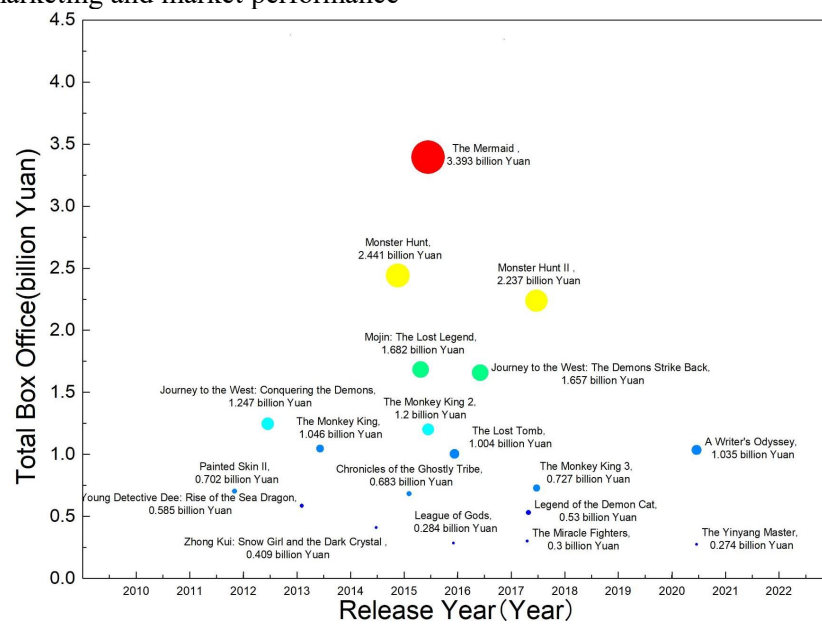


Figure 1. BOX Office Data for Chinese Fantasy Films (2012-2021)

The visualization results indicate that the box office distribution of the sample films exhibits distinct temporal sequence characteristics and scale agglomeration effects, specifically manifested as follows: A box office peak interval was formed between 2015 and 2018, with an average annual output of 4-5 high-grossing films; The Journey to the West series IP (such as Journey to the West: Conquering the Demons and The Monkey King 2) has maintained market

competitiveness for ten consecutive years, with stable and impressive box office performance; Films adapted from classic literary IPs such as Classic of Mountains and Seas, Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio, Journey to the West, and Investiture of the Gods have formed a stable core audience based on the fan base of the original works. These data characteristics provide empirical evidence for the differential analysis of marketing strategies.

In terms of the research method, this study employs a multi-case comparative analysis approach. It selects six representative films with box office revenues exceeding RMB 700 million and significant marketing innovation characteristics for in-depth deconstruction. These films include *The Mermaid* (RMB 3.393 billion), *Monster Hunt I* (RMB 2.441 billion), *Monster Hunt II* (RMB 2.237 billion), *Journey to the West: Conquering the Demons* (RMB 1.247 billion), *Painted Skin II* (RMB 702 million), and *The Monkey King 3* (RMB 727 million). By comparing their promotion and release cycles, media matrices, and audience interaction patterns, this study systematically distills the marketing strategy paradigms of Chinese fantasy films.

2. The “Sentiment-Scarcity” Collaborative Marketing Mechanism Based on Emotional Resonance and Supply-Demand Regulation

As one of the core paradigms in film marketing, affective marketing aims, at its essence, to achieve value resonance with audiences through the modern reinterpretation of cultural symbols. This strategy systematically uncovers elements of collective memory embedded in a film’s text, such as nostalgic scenes or the recreation of classic IPs, and constructs emotional anchors through cross-media storytelling, thereby activating audiences’ cultural identification and emotional resonance [6]. Specifically, the *Journey to the West* film series successfully awakened the childhood memories of audiences born in the 1970s to 1990s by reproducing classic musical scores and characters. This cultural gene-based emotional connection mechanism enables film promotion and release to move beyond mere information delivery, evolving into a cultural practice of co-created value.

From the perspective of film industrial economics, scarcity marketing is better defined as a strategic tool for supply-demand regulation. Its operational mechanism comprises three core dimensions: (1) Information concealment strategy: controlling the release pace of key information, such as critical plots or lead actor interviews, to create a cognitive gap; (2) Schedule game strategy: selecting screening periods with relatively low competition to shape a perception of scarcity; (3) Social currency activation: leveraging suspenseful topics to stimulate users’ spontaneous sharing [7]. It

should be particularly emphasized that the effectiveness of this strategy depends on meeting a certain quality threshold for the film. Moreover, the degree of scarcity must be carefully managed, as audiences should not be made “excessively hungry.” Timely topic creation and sustained audience attention are essential to achieving a virtuous cycle of positive word-of-mouth and strong box office performance.

The combination of effective marketing and scarcity marketing forms a dual-driven model of “cultural identity-scarcity perception.” The former establishes the initial motivation for consumption through emotional immersion, while the latter enhances the sense of urgency to purchase by regulating cognition. This “push-pull” synergy not only improves marketing efficiency but also empowers the long-term value of IPs through emotional sedimentation.

2.1 Collaborative Practice of Integrated Marketing Strategies: A Case Analysis of the *Mermaid*

As Stephen Chow’s long-awaited return to the big screen, *The Mermaid* adopted a dual-track strategy that combined “sentiment marketing” and “scarcity marketing” during its promotion and release phase. At the project’s inception, the film partnered with the 360 Video platform to launch a global casting campaign for the leading role, successfully achieving dual focalization in both the entertainment industry and the public sphere, thereby laying the audience foundation for subsequent marketing efforts. In the dimension of emotional connection, the marketing team systematically activated the collective memory symbols of Stephen Chow’s works. First, three countdown trailers were produced based on the director’s classic films—*A Chinese Odyssey*, *King of Comedy*, and *The God of Cookery*. By recreating iconic lines and scenes, these trailers triggered cross-generational audience resonance. According to Yue Yang, President of MaxTimes, this move aimed to awaken the nostalgia of audiences from the 1970s to 1990s, leveraging the director’s personal brand to transform emotional affinity into audience loyalty [8]. Second, the film invited Karen Mok and Adam Cheng to perform the theme song “You’re the Best in the World” from the 1983 TV series *The Legend of the Condor Heroes*. Through the cross-temporal recombination of a classic

melody and iconic cast, the campaign brought the symbolic figures of “ZhiZunBao-Bai Jingjing-Chu Liuxiang” into a shared frame. This sparked a “revival of era memories” effect on social media, generating over one million interactions during the pre-sale stage alone.

On the level of scarcity management, the producer implemented a strict strategy for information control. Although Stephen Chow and the leading cast conducted a nationwide promotional tour across multiple cities, they refrained from revealing any core plot details throughout the events. They also canceled traditional media test screenings and preview screenings, instead using a series of abstract hand-drawn posters to continuously create cognitive blanks. This mechanism of “visibility control” effectively aroused the public’s desire to know, prompting the film’s online attention to grow exponentially in the pre-release period. It is worth emphasizing that the effectiveness of this strategy is rooted in the intrinsic support of the work’s quality—the symbolic capital of the “auteur brand” constitutes the core motivation for the audience’s aesthetic expectations. This reveals the market-oriented logic of the director’s personal IP as a cultural scarce resource.

The combination of the two strategies has given rise to a significant synergistic effect: Affective marketing, through the intensive deployment of mnemonic symbols, constructs an emotional community that transcends age groups; Scarcity marketing, on the other hand, fuels urgency in consumption by concealing information, causing the potential audience’s demand for watching the film to accumulate exponentially. This dual effect—emotional immersion combined with the accumulation of viewing demand—ultimately translated into a first-week box-office surge of RMB 930 million and propelled the film to break the then Chinese box-office record with a total of RMB 3.393 billion. This has verified the reinforcing effect of compound marketing strategies on the long-tail effect of box office.

2.2 Iterative Marketing Strategies for Classic IP: The Case of *Journey to the West: Conquering the Demons*

As the core carrier of Stephen Chow’s cinematic aesthetics, the *Journey to the West* IP, after more than two decades of cultural sedimentation, has evolved into a collective memory symbol with intergenerational heritage value. The 18-year gap

between *A Chinese Odyssey* (1995) and *Journey to the West: Conquering the Demons* (2013) not only marked the generational shift of its audience from the “post-70s” to the “post-90s,” but also elevated the binding relationship between Stephen Chow’s personal brand and the *Journey to the West* narrative to a new level. This lasting emotional accumulation laid a unique foundation of cultural capital for the film’s marketing.

Building on this emotional foundation, the producers implemented an extreme scarcity management strategy. Throughout the entire production process (2011-2013), the film strictly adhered to a “zero material leakage” principle: no press conferences were held during the early preparation stage; media set visits were prohibited during filming; and in the post-production phase, only a 30-second 3D trailer featuring the silhouette of the Monkey King and the imagery of the Buddha’s Palm was released. This strategic information concealment generated a dual effect: on the one hand, the sustained expansion of the audience’s cognitive gap fueled their curiosity, causing the film’s Baidu Index to surge sharply in the month before its release; on the other hand, by leveraging Stephen Chow’s brand aura as an “auteur director,” the scarcity of information was transformed into a perception of quality credibility. Ultimately, the film grossed US\$215 million at the box office (as of March 21, 2013), setting a new global box office record for Chinese-language cinema and breaking 20 industry records, including the highest single-day audience attendance [9].

This case reveals the effective boundaries of a compound marketing strategy: The effectiveness of emotional connection strategies relies on the diachronic accumulation of IP cultural capital, which is essentially the contemporary translation ability of collective memory symbols. The successful implementation of scarcity management strategies, on the other hand, requires two prerequisites: First, the creative team must have a stable reputation for quality; second, the target market must have a sufficient base of potential viewers with rigid demand. It is important to note that over-reliance on affective marketing can lead to the risk of “symbolic overdraft.” For example, the subsequent film *Journey to the West: The Demons Strike Back* (2017) continued to use the same strategy, but due to a lack of narrative innovation, its box

office growth rate slowed down. This illustrates that content quality plays a regulatory role in the effectiveness of marketing.

The essence of affective marketing lies in establishing a value resonance system that integrates the director, the IP, and the audience as a unified whole. Its effectiveness is constrained by two core variables: the accuracy of cultural symbol translation and the compatibility with generational aesthetic preferences. If there is a one-sided pursuit of emotional arousal while neglecting content innovation, it will lead to the phenomenon of “symbolic inflation.” A typical case is *A Chinese Odyssey 3* (2016), whose box office failed to meet expectations due to the over-consumption of IP sentiment.

The effective implementation of scarcity marketing requires balancing two core aspects: in terms of promotional strategy, it is essential to stimulate audience curiosity through moderate information concealment while avoiding excessive secrecy that could cause audience anxiety; in terms of content, the film’s quality must meet the basic market expectations. The dynamic equilibrium between these two factors determines the success or failure of the strategy—leaning too far toward either side may result in a mismatch between audience anticipation and viewing experience. Therefore, the design of the marketing plan must be based on an accurate assessment of the audience’s psychological tolerance and the quality of the content.

3. A Cross-Industry Marketing Network Integrating Multi-Industry Resources

As a core strategy for value enhancement in the modern film industry chain, cross-industry marketing essentially achieves value co-creation through the integration and reconfiguration of elements from multiple industries. This model breaks through traditional industry boundaries, fostering a multi-layered collaborative innovation network between film and heterogeneous sectors such as entertainment, consumer goods, and technology. In doing so, it not only enhances the commercial value of IP but also drives the iterative upgrading of the cultural industry ecosystem. At its core, cross-industry marketing is not merely about co-branding or resource exchange; it is about building a deep cooperation mechanism underpinned by value recognition. Through the

organic integration of cultural genes and the creative reconstruction of consumer scenarios, such cooperation achieves value resonance among participants and generates amplified benefits [10].

This collaborative mechanism carries dual strategic value: first, by leveraging resource complementarities among multiple stakeholders, it optimizes the efficiency of industrial resource allocation—for example, the value embedding between content IP and commercial brands can significantly expand audience reach; second, through the three-dimensional construction of cross-sector consumer scenarios, it facilitates the transformation from a singular movie-watching activity to a composite cultural consumption experience. High-quality cross-industry marketing can enhance brand awareness and drive growth in related product sales [11]. It should be particularly emphasized that successful cross-industry marketing must be grounded in precise alignment with partners’ value propositions and long-term strategic collaboration. Only by moving beyond superficial marketing gimmicks, and instead deeply exploring the points of resonance between cultural symbols and the compatibility of commercial logics, can the industry truly realize a “1+1>2” synergistic effect, thereby advancing the Chinese film industry’s paradigm shift from scale expansion to quality enhancement.

3.1 Resource-Integration Cross-Industry Model: The Co-Production Collaboration Mechanism of *Painted Skin: The Resurrection*

Through the strategic collaboration of ten co-producers, *Painted Skin: The Resurrection* pioneered a resource-complementary cross-industry model. According to Liu Fan et al. (2012), this model offers dual advantages: first, by continuously placing ads on 550 LED screens operated by Sichuan Zhonglan Advertising for 45 days, it achieved precise coverage of regional markets; second, Luzhou Laojiao’s nationwide store network invested RMB 40 million in promotions, effectively transforming brand channels into touchpoints for the film’s publicity. This “capital-resource” exchange mechanism not only reduced the primary producer’s marketing costs [12] but also amplified the film’s market presence. It is worth emphasizing that partners must strictly adhere to the “industry-matching

principle” to ensure the efficiency of converting marketing resources.

3.2 Cultural and Tourism Integration Model of Cross-Industry Marketing: Scenario-Based IP Practices in The Monkey King 3

The deep integration of film and television IP with the cultural tourism industry has opened up a new marketing pathway that connects “content consumption” with “spatial experience.” According to data from Ctrip, 83% of tourists are inspired to travel because of film and television works, and 91% of audiences are more receptive to embedded promotions of filming locations [13]. As a representative case of “IP + tourism” cross-industry marketing, the collaboration between *The Monkey King 3* and Guangwushan in Sichuan illustrates the scenario-based translation pathway of a cultural IP. By recreating the film’s narrative scenes and building an all-media communication matrix, the scenic area generated a significant culture-tourism linkage effect during the film’s theatrical release. This innovative practice demonstrates the feasibility of transforming cultural symbols into tangible consumption through spatial carriers [14]. Centered on film IP, this spatial production strategy not only shapes immersive tourism experiences but also creates a model of value co-existence between cultural memory and geographic space.

3.3 Brand-Matrix Cross-Industry Model: The Multi-Dimensional Ecosystem of Monster Hunt 2

During the highly competitive 2018 Chinese New Year film season, *Monster Hunt 2* earned over RMB 2 billion at the box office, despite controversies over the quality of its content, demonstrating the extensive scope and effectiveness of its cross-industry marketing. The film established a multi-dimensional brand collaboration network, manifested in three levels of innovative practices. First, in terms of cross-industry co-branding, the film formed strategic partnerships with over 30 commercial brands, creating a marketing matrix that spanned multiple consumer scenarios. In the music sector, it collaborated with Mayday to produce the theme song “What A Song”, and brought together a diverse lineup of artists—including Li Yugang, Hu Ke, Sha Yi, and Wu Mochou—to create promotional songs. In the fashion sector, the film leveraged the platform of New York

Fashion Week for a co-branded runway show featuring the IP character “Wuba” and the internationally renowned Chinese designer Vivienne Tam. In the food consumption sector, it partnered with companies such as McDonald’s, Master Kong, and Want Want to launch limited-edition products, achieving a transformation from entertainment content to physical consumption. Second, at the industry collaboration level, the film innovatively partnered with Haima Automobile to implement OMO (online-offline integration) marketing. Through the synergy between online traffic acquisition and offline experiential activities, the campaign not only expanded the film’s promotion and release channels but also enabled the partner brand to design a series of user interaction projects, creating mutual commercial benefits. Third, in terms of media resource integration, the film pioneeringly secured the exclusive title sponsorship for the 60-second countdown advertisement during the CCTV Spring Festival Gala, marking the first-ever deep collaboration between a film IP and the Gala since its inception in 1983. This cross-industry model of “top-tier media platform + leading film IP” not only transcended the traditional spatiotemporal boundaries of film marketing but also established a novel interactive paradigm between cultural products and national-level communication channels [15].

The key to successful cross-industry marketing lies in managing three major alignment factors: industry relevance (the degree of association between the partner brand and the film’s theme), resource complementarity (the mutually beneficial potential in terms of capital, channels, users, and other dimensions), and temporal coordination (the overlap between the marketing cycle and peak consumption periods). Research shows that cross-industry collaborations adhering to these principles can effectively enhance return on investment, whereas forced combinations may weaken brand image. Therefore, marketing planning must be grounded in an in-depth analysis of the partner’s key resources and target audience needs, avoiding the pursuit of sheer quantity of partnerships at the expense of strategic alignment.

Furthermore, the substantive effectiveness of cross-industry collaboration depends on the degree of brand compatibility. The more aligned the brand identities, the more significant the cooperative outcomes. In practice, a three-tier

evaluation standard is necessary: assessing the compatibility of cultural kernel, the overlap of target audience coverage, and the potential for sustainable extension of the collaboration format. Only through such finely tuned strategic design can short-term attention be converted into long-term brand value, achieving a symbiotic development of content dissemination, commercial returns, and cultural influence.

4. A Derivative Product Development System Based on Innovative Cultural Symbols

Movie-derived products (Licensed Merchandise), as a core component of the downstream film industry chain, play a strategic role in extending the life-cycle of film works and expanding the value-added space of the industry. They achieve this by converting IP value into physical products through licensing mechanisms. This industrial model originated from the American Hollywood industrial system and has, after decades of development, formed a systematic classification standard. Products based on film copyright licensing (such as audio-visual products, stage plays, video games, etc.) and physical products based on image licensing (including clothing, toys, theme parks, etc.) together constitute a matrix of derivatives [16]. This diversified product system not only creates considerable economic benefits but also becomes an important carrier for the dissemination of film culture.

International film and television groups, represented by Disney, have achieved a paradigm breakthrough in derivative product development through a full-industry-chain operation model. Data shows that the Star Wars series (1977-2019) has accumulated a global box-office revenue of US \$6.49 billion, while its derivatives have generated US \$32 billion in revenue, forming a revenue structure of 1:4.93. In the case of the Frozen series (as of 2017), the total revenue of US \$11.3 billion includes US \$9.575 billion from derivatives, accounting for 85%, with the leading-role-themed clothing items alone generating US \$450 million [17]. This diversified revenue structure has significantly enhanced the risk-resistance capacity of IPs, which forms a sharp contrast with the domestic film and television industry in China. Currently, 90%-95% of China's film revenue relies on box-office takings and embedded advertising, with derivatives contributing less than 10%, resulting in a highly

concentrated investment risk in the industry [18]. This structural imbalance highlights the importance of derivative product development for the sustainable development of the industry. A mature derivative product system can not only relieve the pressure on box-office takings and create long-term benefits but also consolidate the influence of IPs through the continuous dissemination of cultural symbols. Therefore, building a diversified derivative product marketing model is not only a key way to enhance the resilience of the film industry but also an inevitable choice to achieve the coexistence of cultural and commercial values.

Fantasy films, with their unique surreal aesthetic systems, provide a natural creative foundation for the development of derivative products. The fantastical settings, alien creatures, and supernatural narratives constructed in these films, through the concrete presentation of their visual symbol systems, form highly recognizable cultural markers. These highly recognizable visual elements and narrative archetypes enable traditional IPs such as *Journey to the West* and *Painted Skin* to cultivate a sustainable derivative product system through symbolic translation and image reconstruction during the process of modern adaptation. The large fan base and continuous cultural influence accumulated by long-standing IPs also provide a stable consumer group and a basis for value identification for the derivative product market.

The industrial practice represented by *Painted Skin: The Resurrection* (2012) demonstrates the synergistic effect of derivative product development and film marketing. Through a cross-media development strategy, the film simultaneously launched cultural derivatives such as games, TV series, and publications, while innovatively producing over 30 peripheral products including phone cases, jewelry, and cultural creative items, thereby constructing a multi-dimensional brand communication matrix. This front-loaded development model breaks through the linear structure of the traditional industry chain, making derivatives not only a supplement to box office revenue but also a media vehicle for film promotion and release, pioneering a "content-product" dual-empowerment marketing paradigm in Chinese cinema. Such cases indicate that the core of derivative product development for fantasy films lies in the creative transformation of cultural symbols. By converting the film's

visual elements into tangible consumer symbols, the IP's lifecycle is extended, audience emotional connections are reconstructed through product carriers, and cultural value and commercial value evolve in a symbiotic manner. The derivative product development journey of the *Monster Hunt* film series reveals a strategic transformation in China's film industry, from passive response to proactive planning. Although the first installment in 2015 achieved an impressive box office of RMB 2.498 billion, delays in derivative development led to rampant piracy, exposing a structural flaw in the industry's early stage: prioritizing content while neglecting derivatives. Director Raman Hui admitted that the production focus was overly concentrated on the film itself, causing the derivative products to miss the golden launch window [19]. This lesson prompted the producers to implement a strategic shift for the sequel: two years before the release of *Monster Hunt 2*, they assembled a professional derivative product development team, using systematic operations to address the shortcomings of the first film. Industry practice shows that front-loaded and scenario-based development is key to breaking such bottlenecks. In 2017, the collaboration with Guangzhou Chimelong Paradise on the "Wuba-Themed Carnival" creatively transformed the IP image from the silver screen into physical space through immersive scenes such as a 13-meter giant fiberglass sculpture exhibition [20]. In 2018, the partnership with McDonald's to launch the "Qingshui Town-Themed Restaurant" further deepened audience emotional connections by reconstructing consumption scenarios. This three-dimensional "IP + Space" marketing strategy proved highly effective: according to e-commerce platform data, sales of Wuba merchandise exceeded RMB10 million before the film's release, with nearly 200,000 officially licensed plush dolls sold [21], marking the first time a Chinese film achieved deep integration between derivative product sales and content promotion. The industrial significance of this case lies in its breakthrough from the linear mindset of traditional derivative product development. By adopting full-cycle planning and multi-dimensional scene innovation, it built a closed-loop ecosystem of "content production-derivative development-scenario-based consumption." This model transformation not only enhanced the IP's

commercial value but also effectively curbed piracy through the market penetration of officially licensed products, providing the industry with a replicable solution.

The traditional film industry chain follows a linear value chain model of "production-release-screening," with the core focus on maximizing the film's intrinsic value. Derivative product development has long been regarded as a "post-product" at the end of the industry chain. This industrial logic, which positions derivatives at the downstream stage, results in a temporal and spatial disconnect between derivative development and content production, making it difficult to systematically uncover the value of IPs. As China's film industry evolves towards a "big film industry" model, the strategic positioning of derivatives has undergone a fundamental change—industry practice has shown that successful derivative development must be moved forward to the project planning stage and synchronized with key links such as scriptwriting and character design to form a closed-loop ecosystem of "content creation-derivative development-market feedback [22]."

The research reveals four strategies for the development of derivative products: First, establish a full-cycle collaborative development mechanism to integrate derivative product design throughout the entire film-making process. Second, enhance the deep integration of creativity to concretely translate the film's aesthetic elements and cultural connotations through product carriers. Third, build a diversified product matrix and implement precise market segmentation based on audience characteristics. Finally, establish an IP development evaluation system to screen suitable IPs for development based on the film's genre characteristics and content extensibility. These strategies all point to a central understanding: The vitality of a high-quality IP depends not only on the quality of its content but also on the transformability of its cultural symbols and their market fit.

The construction of this theoretical framework signifies that China's film industry is shifting from a singular focus on content competition to a composite competitive model of "content + derivatives." This transformation not only requires practitioners to move beyond traditional industry-chain thinking but also demands establishing cross-domain collaborative

innovation mechanisms, ultimately achieve a two-way empowerment of cultural value dissemination and commercial value creation.

5. Conclusion

The modernization of the film derivative product marketing system is, in essence, a systematic upgrade of value creation within the cultural industry and the efficiency of market resource allocation. This study finds that, amid the transformation and upgrading of China's film industry, film derivative product marketing in China has developed three core operational models of practical value: a "sentiment-scarcity" synergistic marketing mechanism based on emotional resonance and supply-demand regulation; a cross-industry marketing network integrating diverse industrial resources; and a derivative product development system driven by cultural symbol innovation. These three models respectively construct differentiated competitive advantages from the perspectives of audience psychology, resource allocation, and cultural translation, offering multiple pathways for the value extension of film IPs.

The "sentiment-scarcity" collaborative marketing mechanism, by precisely capturing audience emotional demands and market supply-demand dynamics, effectively enhances the premium potential of derivatives and user stickiness through the dual effects of emotional value accumulation and scarcity-driven consumption. The cross-industry marketing network breaks through the boundaries of the traditional industry chain by integrating resources across multiple business formats and reconstructing scenario-based experiences, achieving multidimensional penetration of IP value in physical spaces and consumption contexts. Serving as the core support for derivative product development, the cultural symbol innovation system creatively transforms cinematic aesthetic elements into commodity forms through the extraction of visual symbols and the translation of cultural connotations, thereby strengthening the cultural recognition and brand value of the IP.

Although these three models operate independently in different segments of the industry, they collectively point toward a transformation of the film industry from single-content production to the construction of a cultural ecosystem. The study recommends that China's film industry further improve

copyright protection mechanisms, establish cross-sector collaboration platforms, and achieve a dynamic balance between cultural value and market benefits through the modern reinterpretation of traditional cultural IPs and full-cycle development management. Future research could further explore the combined effects of different marketing models, as well as the role of emerging technologies in restructuring the industry value chain, thereby providing theoretical support for the high-quality development of the film industry.

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