

Creation of the Gods I: Kingdom of Storms Box Office Affected by Geographical Differences in China

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Abstract. With economic development, more and more people choose to watch movies for leisure and entertainment. With the recent release of *Creation of the Gods I: Kingdom of Storms*, the writer finds that the box office varies greatly from region to region. The main contributing factors are consumption preferences in different city tiers, the number of roadshows held, and the population size gap. The author will conduct a more in-depth study on people's preferences for movie genres and consumption preferences in different city tiers. Also, the writer will analyze how the distribution of *Creation of the Gods I* in different city tiers influences the box office. Explore the causes of these problems and make suggestions: stimulate first-tier city residents to spend more time watching films, hold more roadshows, and refer to more data for comprehensively judging a film. Not only will this help increase the box office for the next part, but it will also increase the overall audience's motivation to see the movie.

Keywords: *Creation of the Gods I: Kingdom of Storms*, Geographical Differences, Consumption Preferences, Roadshows, Population.

1. Introduction

China's economy has been developing rapidly in recent years, and residents have gradually begun high-level spiritual consumption. In 2019, the added value of the national culture and related industries exceeded 4.43 trillion-yuan, accounting for 4.5% of the gross domestic product (GDP), and the culture industry has become a new bright spot in China's economic growth [1]. As an important part of the cultural and entertainment industry, films play a great role in that. Box office directly creates economic value and indirectly promotes the development of movie derivatives and other related markets, which becomes an important indicator of the development of a country's movie industry and market size [2]. However, in the investigation of *Creation of the Gods I: Kingdom of Storms*' box office, the author finds that contrary to conventional thinking, there is no direct relationship between the box office and city tiers, which categorize cities based on GDP, population and level of political administration [3]. First-tier cities always represent outperforming economies, including Beijing, Shanghai, etc.. Since economic factors are not directly related to the current box office of *Creation of the Gods I*, other factors should be at play. Analyzing these factors can help the movie to get better financial results in the following series.

Before this, a large number of scholars have also studied the geographical differences in China's box office. Mei Lin and Du Hang proposed that the impact of the number of people with literacy levels of high school and above is the most prominent. What is more, the number of cell phone subscribers at the end of the year, the number of urban theatres, and the pressure on the average house price also affect the box office [4]. They are related to the local economy and level of education. Although there is no direct relation between GDP and box office, Pang Bo compared the number of movies watched and the number of screens and theatres, and it was found that there was a correlation there as well [5]. In addition to external factors, the movie itself appeals to different groups of people in different ways. Gao Xingyun found obvious differences in box office spending on different genres of movies in separate city tiers. Among them, the box office contribution of action movies and science fiction movies to first- and second-tier cities is higher than other-tier cities [6].

Based on previous studies, the author will conduct a more in-depth study on people's preferences for movie genres and consumption preferences in different city tiers. Also, the writer will analyze how the distribution of *Creation of the Gods I* in different city tiers influences the box office.

To make the most careful analysis, the author completed the research mainly by reading the literature and studying the regional box office data of the film.

2. Case Description

Creation of the Gods I: Kingdom of Storms tells that Yin Shou's blood awakens Daji, a fox spirit, and utilizes her power, trying to live forever. Yin Shou becomes emperor after killing his father, but he is not satisfied, so he kills more innocent people. In the meantime, he takes advantage of his followers to grab the Fengshenbang to break his curse.

Creation of the Gods I is adapted from the Chinese Ming Dynasty novel Fengshen Yanyi (封神演义) and is directed by Wuershan in the genre action/war/fantasy. This film was released in China on July 20, 2023, with a Douban rating of 7.9/10 until September 5, 2023.

As of September 5, 2023, *Creation of the Gods I*'s box office is 2.536 billion yuan. Among them, the box office of the first-tier cities is 486 million yuan, second-tier cities are 1.58 billion yuan, third-tier cities are 391 million, and fourth-tier cities are 601 billion yuan. The second-tier cities accounted for the largest share of the box office.

3. Analysis on the Problem

3.1. Consumption Preferences in Different City Tiers

In previous research, Mei Lin and Du Hang propose that the pressure on the average house price affects people's willingness to spend money on theater [4]. In Beijing, for example, the average house price in September is 56,829 yuan per square meter, up 9.32% from last year. Meanwhile, the second-tier city of Wuxi is 14,270 yuan per square meter [7]. This calculates that the price of a house in Beijing is about four times that of Wuxi. This proves that residents in Beijing, a first-tier city, are under more pressure from housing prices. This leads to residents of first-tier cities having to spend most of their money on their houses or other necessary expenses, not so much of the remaining money being available to spend on recreational activities.

Da Wanli's report supports that the total disposable number of residents in China's second-, third-, and fourth-tier cities is about 70,000 yuan or more than that of residents in first-tier cities [8]. It follows that residents of Tier 1 cities will spend their money on more necessities, such as dealing with housing prices and inflation, but residents of Tier 2 cities and others have more disposable money, and the overall stress of life is not as great. They can choose a wider variety of pastimes in life, such as going to the theaters to watch movies.

In the case of *Creation of the Gods I: Kingdom of Storms*, the box office in Tier 2 cities is more than twice that of Tier 1 cities, likely influenced by consumer preferences in different cities. Especially after just experiencing an epidemic and a large economic shock, residents of first-tier cities will be relatively conservative in their spending and more purchases of necessities, which results in not a lot of money that can be spent on entertainment.

To summarize, people in different city tiers have different choices of products due to different economic pressures, leading to the box office gap between first and second-tier cities.

3.2. Impact of Roadshow on Regional Box Office

The film *Creation of the Gods I* was road showed in a total of 29 cities, which includes 4 first-tier cities, 23 second-tier cities, 1 third-tier city, and 1 fourth-tier city. Typically, 3 to 4 roadshows were held in a city.

At roadshows, the director usually led the cast in attendance and was joined by writers, art directors, etc.. They shared stories behind the scenes and answered questions from the audience to help them understand the movie deeper and spread the film out.

When the *Creation of the Gods I* was first released, it was not well received, mainly because the same theme had been made many times and was not regarded favorably. However, word of mouth and the actors' talent on the roadshow made the audience change their minds about the movie.

The lead actors recreated many classic moments in the film, such as Daji's first appearance crawling in the snow. All the cast mimic the moment, but not as gracefully as Daji's actress, which triggers great laughter. That creates a hot topic on the internet. Another instance is the parody of lines. Some Chinese lines are spoken like English because Yin Shou's actor's Mandarin is not standard. For example, "The horse sees what the man decides," where "man" is pronounced "rên" in Chinese, but the actor says "rerun". The small point creates a big buzz. Many viewers come to the roadshow to show the crew their interesting mimics.

Creation of the Gods I references ancient Chinese books and historical documents in its art design. That attracts many audiences who study ancient Chinese culture. There is a part of the roadshow where the audience is invited to show their works related to the film. Some spectators offer the cast and crew words written in oracle bone script, and fans with hand-painted characters.

All of these attracted more and more people to the roadshow, even flying to different cities to see the cast and experience the site's atmosphere. The audience invited more friends to watch the film, even to the extent that one person watched it more than 10 times.

Creation of the Gods I had the most roadshows in second-tier cities, attracting residents to come and watch the movie and audiences from out of town, thus boosting the number of people who watch the movie. This all boosted the overall box office of the city.

3.3. Population Size Gap Affects Data Measurement

In addition to the various factors affecting the regional box office, the population base is also important. According to China Economic Information, Tier 1 cities (Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou, and Shenzhen) totaled about 82.989 million people [9]. That's roughly 5.88% of the country's population [10]. A relatively small portion of the country's overall numbers. With a huge difference in overall numbers. The number of people in second-tier cities could be several times that of first-tier cities. This will have an impact on the number of moviegoers.

From this point of view, the overall number of moviegoers may be affected because the total population of Tier 1 cities accounts for a relatively small percentage of the population. This has indirectly led to a relatively low box office in the first-tier cities.

4. Suggestions

4.1. Stimulate First-Tier City Residents to Spend More on Watching Films

To stimulate the residents of first-tier cities to spend more on entertainment, film companies need to analyze not only on an individual level but also from the national policy since it is difficult to change the overall situation just by individuals.

Based on Zhang Wei and Sun Zhao's report, the Medium-term Lending Facility (MLF) operating rate in August 2023 was 2.50%, down 0.15 percentage points from the previous month. Relevant experts say that further MLF rate cuts can reduce the financing costs of the real economy, which will help stimulate consumption and investment. What is more, Su Jian mentions that for residents, the monthly housing mortgage payment can be decreased by lowering interest rates [11]. Therefore, the pressure on the residents of the first-tier cities to pay the mortgage can be alleviated. Under that scenario, people will have more disposable money to spend on entertainment.

In the future, the MLF might be cut further, so by the time *Creation of the Gods II* is released, the audience in Tier 1 cities will have less pressure on paying rent or repaying the loan, so they will be able to have more time and money to enjoy the movie.

From the individual perspective, the overall burden of depressive diseases in China has been getting heavier and heavier in recent years, mainly due to the accelerated pace of social development in China in recent decades, which has increased the pressure on people's survival [12, 13]. And *Creation of the Gods I* may alleviate the symptoms. Many audiences are attracted by the characters and actors' vitality. The film portrays characters growing up and overcoming obstacles. The actors also have various skills, such as horseback riding and archery. A part of the audience is so captivated after watching it that they even start learning similar skills, play more sports, and feel the meaning of life.

Especially in first-tier cities where the pressure of survival is extraordinarily high, it is very easy for residents to lose themselves and become depressed. And the movie helps them find themselves again. So when promoting, the film can emphasize the characters and actors' love of life more, to arouse people's hearts and make them go to the cinema to watch *Creation of the Gods II*.

To summarize, not only through the incentives of national policies but also through the awakening of the love of life of the stressed people can try to stimulate the residents of the first-tier cities to go to the cinema to watch more movies.

4.2. Hold More Roadshows in First-Tier Cities

Although there are only four tier 1 cities, the crew can hold more roadshows in each city to attract more people to the film.

After the success of *Creation of the Gods I: Kingdom of Storms*, the second part is sure to be anticipated by more people. This phenomenon is evident in the final stages of the first film's roadshow, where many audiences fly to other cities to meet the actors. This can be predicted for the second part as well. If more roadshows are held in the first-tier cities, it will attract residents, and there must be plenty of fans from other cities to meet the crew and listen to their behind-the-scenes stories. The more people attend the roadshow, the more the film will heat up, resulting in higher box office.

In addition to doing traditional roadshows, *Creation of the Gods II* can partner with schools and go into universities for roadshows, allowing students to interact on a deeper level.

The film is mainly about young people's inspirational growth stories, which resonate with young people more, so the target audience should also be high school and college students. And with the increasing influence of video on the internet now, such as Bilibili and TikTok. Attracting more students can increase the offline heat and the network's heat since students are interested in recreating interesting videos about characters. Thus, further increasing the box office.

Meanwhile, first-tier cities have many nationally renowned universities, such as Peking University, Tsinghua University, and Fudan University. When college students start to spread the word about the movie, it is possible to create a wave of "XX famous university students also like *Creation of the Gods*", or mimicry sitcoms, thus attracting more people who admire the university to see the movie. This is like the celebrity endorsement effect, except that famous college students replace the celebrities. This results in increasing the first-tier cities' box office and will also lead to more box office in other cities.

4.3. Refer to More Box Office Data

It is hard to use that one statistic alone to judge whether a film is good or bad because overall residents' numbers heavily influence the regional box office. This is related to the way the indicator itself measures the data. So, the metric itself is somewhat skewed, and people cannot measure a movie entirely by one metric. In addition to this, the movie's release rate, attendance, the box office of individual cities, and other indicators should be used to make a judgment on the movie as a whole.

For example, by analyzing the daily box office changes, it generally rises faster on weekends. This is due to the fact that students and working people are free at that time. For *Creation of the Gods I* specifically, the box office has not gradually declined since its release but rose after a period of time, which is caused by the increasing evaluation mentioned previously. As well as looking at the

scheduling rate, this can be corroborated. It also has gradually risen again after a while to attract more audiences.

However, the regional box office is also a strong judgment to prove the attractiveness of a movie to a certain region, but it's still important to look at all the data as a whole.

5. Conclusion

With the recent release of *Creation of the Gods I: Kingdom of Storms*, the author finds out by looking up the data that there is a big difference between Chinese geographies at the box office. The second-tier cities account for the largest share of the box office. Through reading literature and references, the main reasons can be summarized in three points: consumption preferences, number of roadshows held, and population size gap in different city tiers. In order to achieve better results in the future when the second and third parts are released, as well as to balance the box office differences between city tiers, the writer offers separate suggestions for different problems.

For the market environment now, it can stimulate first-tier city residents to spend more on watching films by lowering MLF and using films as a medium to relieve pressure. The crew can hold more roadshows and collaborate with universities to expand the film's influence to attract more audiences. However, due to the limitation of the metric itself, the problem it creates because of the population gap is difficult to solve. Therefore, when judging a film, people need to refer to more data rather than simply relying on a single metric. However, due to the limitations of the data itself, the problems it creates because of demographic differences are difficult to solve. One can only refer to more data when measuring a movie rather than simply relying on a single metric.

The research for *Creation of the Gods I* will not only help increase the box office with the release of the next two parts but also help the film industry. People can refer to these suggestions to increase the box office. Further, it also helps people realize the limitations of data, and viewers cannot judge a film comprehensively unless they combine every data.

However, there are still many limitations in the analysis of this paper, such as the fact that the author mainly analyzes the literature. In the future, if there are additions, more research surveys will be conducted to ensure the validity and accuracy of the data.

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