

Research on Box Office Influencing Factors and Coping Strategies of Chinese War Genre Movies

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Abstract. Chinese audiences' keen interest in the historical events of wars at home and abroad and their passion for heroism and national emotions have made war genre movies popular in the Chinese market. This paper aims to discuss the box office influencing factors and coping strategies of Chinese war genre movies. With the continuous expansion of China's movie market, war genre movies, as an important movie genre, have attracted wide audience attention. This study adopts a combination of qualitative and quantitative analysis to study the box office performance and influencing factors of war genre movies in the Chinese market through literature review, box office data analysis, and audience survey, and proposes corresponding coping strategies. It is found that various factors, including the choice of theme, director, cast and marketing strategy, influence the box office of Chinese war genre movies. Aiming at these factors, this paper proposes a series of coping strategies to improve the box office performance of war genre movies and, at the same time, promote the healthy development of China's movie industry.

Keywords: Chinese Movies, War Genre Movies, Box Office Influencing Factors, Coping Strategies.

1. Introduction

The Chinese movie market has grown tremendously over the past few decades, becoming one of the largest in the world. As an important sub-genre in the Chinese movie market, war genre movies have a unique appeal. Chinese audiences' keen interest in the historical events of wars at home and abroad and their passion for heroism and national emotions have made war genre movies popular in the Chinese market. To some extent, war movies are an important genre to measure the comprehensive strength of a country's film and television industry. In recent years, "The Battle at Lake Changjin" series, "Wolf Warriors" series, "The Eight Hundred" and "The Eight Hundred" series have become the most popular war movies in China. "The Sacrifice", "Operation Red Sea", etc., have presented not only epic war films with diverse narrative perspectives and grandiose image spectacles but also achieved commercial success. They not only present epic war films with diverse narrative perspectives and grandiose visual spectacles, but also realize a major breakthrough in the commercial market. They use multi-dimensional vision to reproduce three-dimensional and grandiose war scenes, vividly portray the emotional details of the characters, and create shocking and realistic images, thus achieving emotional resonance with the audience. "The Battle at Lake Changjin" and "The Battle at Lake Changjin II" are the two films that have set new records in terms of investment ratio, scale of production, and number of special effects. "The Battle at Lake Changjin" and "The Battle at Lake Changjin II" are record-breaking domestic war movies in terms of investment ratio, scale of production, number of special effects, and participants. Producer Yu Dong once made a statistic: "The pre-production staff is more than 7,000 people, and adding the participants from more than 80 special effects companies in the post-production period, the total number of people in the project team of the two films of "The Battle at Lake Changjin" series is more than 12,000 people, and the number of group actors is as many as 70,000 people. The Battle at Lake Changjin project team totaled more than 12,000 people for the two films in the series, with up to 70,000 people in the cast [1]." It can be seen that the success of the movie cannot be separated from the collaboration of various departments, which also means that the movie box office is affected by a variety of factors in order to be successful in the fierce competition in the market, the production team needs to understand the factors affecting

the box office of the war movie genre, and formulate a corresponding strategy to improve the film's commercial performance.

War genre movies have long been popular in the Chinese movie market, and these movies often narrate heroic deeds or unexpected events in history, which inspire the audience's patriotic feelings and love of history. There have been a few studies on war films at home and abroad, and He Xin summarized the genre characteristics of Chinese war films in the "seventeen years" period [2]. Taking Hollywood war movies as the object of study and taking into account the development history of war movies around the world, Hong Fan has analyzed the genre characteristics of war movies and made a useful discussion on whether war movies are genres or themes [3]. Zhang Dong examines and analyzes Chinese war films as a genre [4]. Yang Teng and Xu Mingzhong selected "Dunkirk", "Schindler's List", and "Wolf Warriors II" as three films to study the characteristics of war movies as genres [5]. to study the narrative mode of war movies as a genre [5]. Zhan Qingsheng also summarizes the development of Chinese military action films through the perspective of genre [6]. Zhao Boya analyzes the genre characteristics of several films such as "Wolf Warriors", "Wolf Warriors II", "Operation Red Sea", etc., and "Operation Red Sea" [7]. Scholars such as Zhao Ningyu, Zhang Dong, Suo Yabin, and Jiang Pengliang are combing and summarizing war films and launching in-depth analyses [8-10]. Lv Yidu examines the change and development of war films in terms of war scenes, narrative situations, and hero characterization from an aesthetic perspective [11]. Chen Peng conducted a more systematic and complete analysis and research on war films since the new century, summarizing the gains and losses in the overall creation of war films between 2000 and 2013 [12]. Gong Jinping explores the organic suture of political and movie art in war movies from theme expression, narrative structure, and character emotion [13]. Tan Zheng and Zhang Yan take "Wolf Warriors", "Operation Red Sea" and "Sky Hunter" as a subgenre and discuss them from the perspective of narrative strategy and character emotion. Tan Zheng and Zhang Yan take films such as "Wolf Warriors", "Operation Red Sea" and "Sky Hunter" as a subgenre and analyze the typological qualities of military action films in terms of narrative strategy, characterization, and audiovisual language [14].

From the above generalization, we can see a few studies on Chinese war movies involving many aspects, but most of the studies are on movie themes, modeling, aesthetics, etc., and fewer are related to the study of war movies at the box office. If war movies want to flourish in the commercial market, they cannot be separated from the choice of theme, cast, and marketing strategy, which are the core elements affecting the box office. Therefore, on the basis of previous studies, this paper takes Chinese war movies as the research object. Firstly, it analyzes and reviews the current situation of Chinese war movies. Secondly, it analyzes the box office influencing factors of Chinese war movies, and finally, puts forward the coping strategies for these factors to help the producers better understand the market demand and improve the income of box office of the movies.

2. Case Description

Chinese war genre movie, "war" here refers to all things related to war; a general war movie is a movie based on major military operations, while a war genre movie is a feature film that combines China's special historical experience with the format of a genre movie [15]. With the development of the times, the connotation and extension of "war" have become broader, and the factors included in war have become more complicated and diversified. The contents of the themes include panoramic war films based on famous battles and also small-scale combat films reflecting local struggles under the background of the times, and a large number of new films reflecting personal experiences in war have appeared since the century when war films have been involved in the development of the genre. A large number of new-style war films reflect personal experiences in war. Some war films reproduce the glory of war and celebrate the great achievements of famous generals and outstanding militarists through the depiction of war events, battles, and battle scenes; some also reflect the destruction of human nature and the damage to the heart of war through the detailed depiction of characters and

plots. Some elements of homogeneity can be found in most genres, and as one of the representative types of genre films, war films have all the typological features. There are three main types of war films. Ancient war films: there are many ancient films depicting ancient battles and portraying historical figures in war films, and most of these films rely on real events, characters, evolutions, or allusions in history. Modern War Films: Modern war films are generally categorized as war films depicting the wars between the end of the Qing Dynasty and the end of the Second World War. Modern War Films: The timeframe of modern war is generally considered from the end of World War II to contemporary times, and any story that takes place during this time can be categorized as a modern war film.

3. Analysis on the Problem

3.1. Current Situation of Chinese Movie Box Office Case

The film, a continuous image picture developed by the combination of moving pictures and slide projection, is a visual and auditory modern art, as well as a modern science and technology and art synthesis that can accommodate tragedy and comedy and literary drama, photography, sculpture, painting, dance, music, text, architecture and other arts [16]. With the development of modern society, movies have penetrated all aspects of human social life and are an indispensable part of people. With the development of the economy, the growth of the movie box office and the development of the economy have evolved into a complementary relationship, with the development of the economy leading to the prosperity of the movie market and the prosperity of the movie market promoting the development of the economy. Therefore, studying the movie box office and the movie industry is of great economic significance. The film industry refers to film production as the core, through the distribution and screening of films, as well as image products, film derivatives, the construction of movie theaters and screening venues, and other related industries and economic forms of the general term. The film industry has the following characteristics: both economic and cultural attributes. The film itself has exchange value and a market demand, so it has economic attributes; the film carries a large amount of information, implying the transmission of culture, a specific cultural background, values, and lifestyles through the film transmission. Unique profit model, movie box office, broadcasting right income, advertising income, network copyright, and other aspects constitute the main income of the movie industry, of which box office income is the main one. With a larger income elasticity of demand, movies are the product of the synergistic development of economy and entertainment, and residents' willingness and demand to watch movies will only arise under the premise of more disposable income. The development trend of globalization, the film has the role of dissemination through the cooperation of the world's economies, the film, the star economy, and the tourism industry combined to enhance the film's dissemination scope.

Movie box office, originally referred to as the cinema box office, later derived from the theater's screening revenue or a film's theater screening revenue situation, now refers to the commercial sales of films or plays [16]. In China, it is usually calculated in terms of theater ticket revenue. In today's movie industry, the box office has become one of the most important indicators of the success of a movie.

Consumer preference theory. The consumer preference theory is the degree of consumer preference for a certain commodity. Consumer preference in the movie industry is mainly reflected in the degree of preference of moviegoers for the type of movie theme. With the Internet, television media, and other media on the film publicity and the film's word-of-mouth fermentation, consumer preference will change, so that the film does not have the purpose of consuming the audience into the theater, thus increasing the film's attendance rate. The entry point of this theory is the moviegoer, and through the publicity effect and branding theory, this theory has been integrated into the theoretical basis of the valuation of the movie as a special intangible asset, and the word-of-mouth fermentation is the effect of waiting for the movie to be rated after its release, which is also the impact of this theory on the value of the copyright of the movie.

On September 28, 2023, China Film disclosed the investor relations activity record sheet showed that in the nine months so far this year, the total box office of Chinese movies has exceeded 44.6 billion yuan, close to the annual box office of 2021 (47 billion yuan), and only in the first half of 2023, the box office of movies reached 26.271 billion yuan, a year-on-year increase of 52.91%. There is no doubt about the large volume and potential of China's movie box office, and the most persuasive indicator of the level of development of Chinese movies is the movie box office. It can be said that the box office level plays a crucial role in the development of Chinese movies. Real box office data not only reflects the scale and volume of Chinese movies but also allows us to analyze the box office data scientifically to get the preferences of Chinese moviegoers, to improve the deficiencies of China's movie industry in general, and to promote the benign development of China's movie industry. A movie, from project to cinema release, requires the participation of film investment companies, film distribution companies, and cinemas. Real box office data and scientific data analysis for film investors, you can choose a better investment direction, avoid blind investment, and control the investment risk; for the cinema, you can steadily expand the size of the theater to avoid blind expansion; for China's film industry, you can maintain a reasonable scale and speed of benign development. In a word, the movie box office is an important index to measure the development level and quality of China's movie industry, so it is especially important to explore the influencing factors of the movie box office.

3.2. Factor identified of Chinese War Genre Movie Case

The Battle at Lake Changjin II, as a sequel to The Battle at Lake Changjin, is a war melodrama movie set during the Battle of Lake Changjin in the Second Battle of the War of Resistance against the U.S. and North Korea, in which the soldiers of the 7th Company were given an even more arduous task after the end of the battles of Xinxingli and Shimojiezumili. The film is directed by Tsui Hark and stars Wu Jing and Yi Yi; according to Baidu's encyclopedia on the movie, the movie is co-distributed by Huaxia Film Distribution Co. and China Film Group Corporation, with the general producer being Bona Film Group Co. This paper chooses "The Battle at Lake Changjin II" as a case study to analyze the influencing factors of the film's high box office success. First, the theme of the movie, "The Battle at Lake Changjin II" is the theme of war, and the main theme is clear, which inspires the audience's national identity. Audiences are often highly interested in war movies that show the history and spirit of the nation, and this emotional resonance plays a positive role in box office performance. Second, the sequel effect. As a sequel to "The Battle at Lake Changjin", the film drew on the huge success of its predecessor, which had already topped the box office of domestic movies and attracted a large number audience of attention and a fan base. Audiences want to know about the continuation of the story and the development of the characters, and the attraction of this continuity creates strong expectations for the movie. Third, the popularity of the director and cast. The director and cast of the film are highly recognizable and widely recognized by the audience. The director's past works and artistic achievements add to the appeal of the movie, while the actors' popularity attracts the attention of a wider audience. Their typical characteristics in movie promotion strategies also help increase the movie's exposure. Fourth, marketing strategy. The film chose to be released in the Lunar New Year's slot; a slot that has always been highly regarded in the Chinese movie market. The Lunar New Year's Eve is usually accompanied by a high consumer sentiment among the audience, who are more willing to go into the movie theater to watch the film. Therefore, the choice of this slot provided the movie with good scheduling opportunities and audience attendance, which further contributed to the box office success.

4. Suggestions

4.1. Innovation of Movie Themes

Relying on war themes, although it can inspire national identity, may also lead to stereotyping and a lack of innovation in film creation.

Solution Strategies: To maintain the main theme, the following strategies can be adopted to solve the problem of movie themes to attract a wider audience. Diverse war backgrounds, choosing different historical periods and types of wars as backgrounds to show diverse stories will allow the audience to understand the war experiences in different periods and regions and attract the interest of different groups. Highlighting individual stories, not only concentrating on the strategic aspects of war but also on the fate and emotional experiences of individuals, which the audience can better resonate through in-depth portrayal of characters. They are crossing over to different movie genres, trying to combine war themes with other genres, such as war and romance, war and adventure, etc. This hybrid genre can attract a wider audience while adding innovative elements. Tapping into under-the-radar historical events and exploring historical events that are little-known or under-explored to present new perspectives and storylines can help avoid the audience feeling that they have already seen similar stories. Collaborate with international teams and work with international film teams to incorporate international perspectives and creative approaches in order to deliver more internationally competitive productions. By adopting these strategies, it is possible to present audiences with more innovative and diverse stories while maintaining the theme of the war genre, thus attracting a wider audience base and improving the movie's box office performance.

4.2. Narrative Script Innovation

While the sequel effect brings the audience's attention and a fan base, it needs to remain innovative regarding storyline and character development to avoid audience repetition and disappointment.

Solution Strategies: When making a sequel, the following strategies can be used in order to fulfill the audience's expectations while remaining innovative: In-depth character development. Continue to explore the growth and changes in the main characters; characters should face new challenges and experience emotional development to make the audience feel invested in the story. Introduce new elements. Introduce new plot threads, characters, or villains to add complexity to the story, providing new surprises and challenges for the audience while keeping the story fresh. Recap and Continuity. Cleverly recap the classic plots and elements of the previous film while continuing the story's threads of development, a balance that can fulfill the expectations of older fans while providing an entry point for new viewers. Fleshed-out scripts. Ensuring that the sequel's script is fleshed out and has depth can improve the quality of the story by digging deeper into the themes and inner worlds of the characters. Stability of the team. Retain the core production team of the previous movie, such as the director, screenwriter, and producer, to ensure the continuation of the creative spirit and style of the previous movie. Test audience feedback. Actively collect audience feedback during the production process to understand their expectations and concerns and make timely adjustments to the script and plot. Crossing over to other media, consider expanding the story to other media platforms such as novels, comics, games, etc., to provide a more relevant experience to the movie world. By adopting these strategies, producers can make the best use of the sequel effect by keeping the audience's interest and loyalty while presenting them with a story full of innovation and depth, avoiding repetition and disappointment for the audience.

4.3. Movie Quality is the Main Focus

Over-reliance on the popularity of directors and actors may cause the movie to lose its appeal in their absence.

Solution strategy: In order to reduce the over-reliance on the popularity of directors and actors, the following strategies can be adopted: Emphasize the storyline. In the promotion of the movie, highlight its storyline and core message, and make the audience curious about the movie's plot by attracting their interest instead of just relying on the star cast. Emphasize visual effects. Suppose the movie has excellent visual effects, special effects, or cinematography. In that case, these aspects can be highlighted in the promotion, and viewers tend to appreciate visual shock, which can be one of the highlights to attract them. Introduce the theme of the movie. Suppose the movie deals with deep themes or social issues. In that case, these elements can be emphasized in the promotion, and

audiences usually show great interest in movies that can trigger thoughts and discussions. Emphasize the creative ability of the team. Introduce the professional ability and achievements of the film production team and highlight the team's outstanding contribution to the film's production. Activities related to the theme of the movie. Organize activities related to the movie's theme to attract audience participation and interaction to build a deeper emotional connection. Movie producers can reduce their reliance on the popularity of directors and actors in their publicity and highlight other attractive factors of the movie, thus attracting a wider audience and improving the movie's appeal and box office performance.

4.4. Carefully Planned Publicity

The Lunar New Year's Eve slot is highly competitive and needs to face competition from many movies, which may affect the box office.

Solution strategy: Carefully develop a marketing strategy and create a comprehensive marketing plan, including TV commercials, social media promotion, trailer release, and media cooperation, to ensure that the advertisements and promotional campaigns are widely exposed before and after the New Year's Eve slot. Advance warm-ups to create a sense of anticipation by revealing trailers, character profiles, and behind-the-scenes footage weeks before the movie's release, which can attract early audiences and reduce competitive pressure on the opening weekend. Customize interactive activities. Creating interactive activities related to the movie's theme, such as online interactive games, sweepstakes, or movie-going gift giveaways, can increase audience engagement and interest. Collaborate with partners and work with other brands or media outlets to promote the movie, e.g., embedding co-branding or conducting special reports and interviews with media outlets. Consider alternative schedules. Consider releasing your movie outside of the Chinese New Year's slot to reduce competitive pressure, with some successful movies choosing to release before or after the Chinese New Year's slot to avoid direct competition. Evaluate competitors, carefully analyze other films released during the Chinese New Year period to understand their audience and positioning, and adjust publicity and marketing strategies based on the results of the analysis in order to find their competitive differentiation. Offer special venues. Consider offering special venues such as premieres or audience meet-and-greets on opening days or weekends to attract more audiences to the movie. By carefully planning promotional and marketing campaigns and considering other release schedules, producers can better cope with the competition in the New Year's Eve season, attract audience attention, and improve the box office performance of their films.

5. Conclusion

Chinese war movies have great commercial potential in the movie market, but in order to be successful, producers need to comprehensively consider the factors affecting the box office and formulate corresponding strategies to deal with them. This paper analyzes the representative case study "The Battle at Lake Changjin II" discusses the factors affecting the box office, and proposes some key strategies to help film producers better satisfy the audience's needs, improve box office performance, and promote the development of China's film industry.

First of all, this paper finds that the success of "The Battle at Lake Changjin II" lies in the attractiveness of its war theme, the sequel effect, the popularity of the director and actors, and the choice of the New Year's Eve release date. However, these factors are also accompanied by some problems, such as the innovative nature of the war theme, the script innovation of the sequel, the over-reliance on director and actor popularity, and the fierce competition in the Chinese New Year's slot. To address these problems, this paper proposes a series of coping strategies. Regarding the choice of themes for war genre films, it is recommended to explore diverse war backgrounds and stories, focus on individual character development, straddle different film genres, tap into unheralded historical events, and collaborate with international teams. In terms of sequel production, strategies emphasizing in-depth character development, introduction of new elements, retrospectives and

continuity, fleshing out scripts, maintaining team stability, and testing audience feedback can improve the quality of sequels. For director and actor popularity, other movie highlights, visual effects, themes, and unique marketing strategies can be emphasized to reduce reliance on stars. For the Lunar New Year's Eve competition, strategies such as crafting a marketing strategy, warming up in advance, customizing interactive events, collaborating with partners, considering other release dates, evaluating competitors, and offering special venues can help a movie succeed in a highly competitive slot.

All in all, China's war genre movie market has a bright future, but success requires multiple considerations and efforts. Producers can better cope with the challenges, improve box office performance, and contribute to the healthy development of China's movie industry through the box office influencing factors and coping strategies proposed in this paper. It is hoped that future Chinese war movies will continue to attract audiences and convey profound emotions and thoughts.

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