

Film Marketing in the context of New Media

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Abstract: Widespread use of the Internet and the COVID-19 epidemic have provided a chance for online marketing. The paper aims to compare film marketing strategies on different new media platforms, and also future research possibilities are proposed. This work is based on the data sources from published articles, secondary sources, and grey literature searched through the electronic databases, Google Scholar and other official messages. The work compares the differences in the marketing strategies and features of the three different types—a social media platform, a short video platform and a scoring platform, and discuss about the double-edged impact. In the context of the explosive growth of Internet use and the impact of the COVID-19 epidemic hindering offline film marketing, it is worthy of exploring the significance of online promotion.

Keywords: film marketing, new media, service marketing, movie, Twitter, TikTok, Douban

1. Introduction

The study aims to show the influence of new media on film marketing and allow people to become acquainted with two sides to social media marketing. Having shown amazingly rapid growth and worldwide popularity in recent years, a significant number of users are learning about movies through new media platforms. We will use the examples of Twitter, TikTok and Douban to categorize and analyze their film marketing methods and features. According to the survey, in 2018, Internet users reached nearly 3.9 billion, and China has the most significant number of Internet users, accounting for 21% of the total [1].

Based on the significant number of users, film investors on these platforms to launch publicity can get objective pre-release comments, thereby stimulating the box office. So, the relevant data of the movie's marketing effect obtained from the user's feedback can reflect the impact of the movie propaganda and marketing more intuitively. By studying the feedback of professional film critics and user reviews and comparing the truly objective aesthetic value of the film, we can infer whether and how the publicity company manipulates the audience's view of the film. Meanwhile, by analyzing the inner connection between social media and film marketing, we will explore the most profound value, not only for commercial things but for ordinary people to watch out for digital scams. At the same time, we can also obtain adequate information under the premise of film marketing and improve the ability of dialectical aesthetics.

2. What are new media and film marketing?

A variety of invisible factors influences customers' feelings and perceptions of the service organization. Compared with traditional marketing methods, service marketing [2] is not a sales tool, but a form of marketing strategy to meet consumers' needs. According to Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs [3], people's individual needs increase, and their economic level improves constantly. Therefore, service marketing, an upgrade of traditional marketing methods, was born, which has progressed from a sales tool that meets physical needs to a sales concept that meets the advanced needs of customers compared with traditional ones. In the age of digital communication, especially after 2020, the epidemic has made it difficult to carry out offline events, and new media platforms have become the main promotional channel. It has become a top priority about embodying the value of the film and develop relevant marketing strategies.

2.1. Twitter-social media platform

2.1.1. Increased Use of Twitter

Twitter is one of the most popular social media platforms on which users interact and communicate with others. Users can post their comments known as "tweets" on this network service platform and chat with others online. Since 2014, there has been adding an average of 1 million to 2 million additional users per quarter. Active users reached 330 million in 2017, and the number has been growing [4]. The survey by *Pew Research Center* found that people using Twitter are more likely to have higher household income and education levels. It is shown that about 42% of grown-up Twitter users have at least a bachelor's degree, and adults with more than \$75,000 household incomes account for 41% of all users [5]. With a large number of users, a high level of user stickiness and a large proportion of young users, Twitter has excellent communication advantages for movie marketing.

2.1.2. Film Marketing Strategies of Twitter

Phased marketing.

Christopher Lovelock classified service marketing into three stages, including pre-sales, sales and post-sales. The marketing effect can be maximized by developing different strategies at different stages.

Take "Black Widow" as an example. In the pre-sale stage, released in theatres on July 9, 2021, "Black Widow" has been releasing trailers, teaser photos, interviews, etc. in stages since December 2019 to attract audiences with the hashtag #BlackWidow on every tweet, and the frequency gradually accelerates as the release date approaches. Some spinoff products were combined with other hotspots that attract flow for both parties, like game products "skins" were released in conjunction with the video game Fortnite [6]. In the mid-sales stage, the marketing strategies are to maintain communication with the audience, increase the heat of movie discussion and preserve the heat of public debate. As for "Black Widow", the lead actors and actresses Scarlett Johansson, Florence Pugh and David Harbour interact with the audience on Twitter by reading their tweets on July 7, and there was a chance to tweet questions for Marvel Studios President Kevin Feige with the hashtag #BlackWidowWatchParty on July 20. Meanwhile, the movie official has kept releasing live footage and brand-new promotional posts to generate enthusiasm from the audience. In the post-sale stage, the movie post-production and other footage are continuously released, and the movie hits the streaming media. During all the steps, the official Black Widow account has constantly interacted

with multiple accounts such as ESPN, IMAX, MarvelStudios, actors' and actresses' accounts, etc. Interactivity is also a typical feature of Twitter.

Target Consumers Precisely.

According to the 4R [7] marketing theory (association, response, relationship, and reward), film producers should focus on maintaining a proper relationship with customers. Demonstrated by Kaikati, it is more effective to whisper to a few people than clamor to the majority, making it difficult for people to notice being marketed [8]. So, as the marketing competition becomes increasingly fierce, they need to put themselves in the customer's shoes and develop a highly responsive business strategy. To acquire the best possible marketing effects, it is necessary to conduct a reasonable user profiling and target the audience.

The celebrity effect and economy of fandom play an essential role in targeting consumers. shown in previous research, there is a positive correlation between a celebrity and the good influence he/she brings, which means that the better the external image of him/her, the more likely people are to spend on products related to him/her [9]. As The degree of positivity of a celebrity is positively correlated with the good influence it brings, which means that the better the external image of a celebrity, the more likely people are to spend on products related to him. There's an urge for Fans to follow their idols [10]. For instance, in the movie <In the Tall Grass>, adapted from Stephen Edwin King's origin, many fans of the original book were attracted to watch the film. Furthermore, if both the original and the film adaptation earn a good reputation, the two will complement each other and promote each other, such as the Harry Potter series movies. As J.K Rowling's origin attracted a lot of people to see the film adaptation, the well-made film, in turn, attracted fans to see the original book, and finally, it formed a good cycle that achieved an excellent marketing effect.

Combine with current events.

With the development of modern technology, the world is connected by the Internet, and a global village is formed. Changing drastically every day, hot issues in the world change from time to time. The most crucial thing of movie marketing is to grasp the audience's attention. According to Martenson's study, there is a correlation between an event and people's willingness to buy a brand [11]. It's effective for film marketers to attach great importance to current events.

Close to the hot issue "feminism", Black Widow has got great attention since the news of preparations to shoot. Before the release of the female lead superhero film, International Women's Day came, and the main female characters sent blessings to women all over the world the same day. Similarly, When National Siblings Day came on April 10, the BlackWidow official account also shared a video of the two leading actresses giving their best wishes to the audience, in which they played sisters in the film.

2.2. TikTok-Short Video Platform

2.2.1. What is TikTok

TikTok, born in September 2016, is the most popular short video platform that has grown rapidly in China amid the Internet boom. The TikTok app has been downloaded more than 2.6 billion times worldwide, with more than 1 billion monthly active users [12]. At first, TikTok was just a platform for users to communicate and share their music videos and personal works. The platform will analyze their hobbies through data collected from users and then recommend and update more popular short videos. Nowadays, TikTok has expanded from the early short creative videos on music to film and television, economy, and other aspects of life.

2.2.2. Film Marketing Features of TikTok

Recommendation Algorithm.

Domestic news aggregation platforms that use algorithmic technology to achieve personalized push are also growing rapidly. According to “China Mobile Internet User Behavior Statistics Report”, in 2016, the Chinese information market witnessed the phenomenon that algorithmic recommendations overtook human recommendations [13].

The primary recommendation logic of TikTok [14] is:

- **Collaborative Filtering recommendation.** TikTok will collect basic information, including gender, age, location, social data, etc., and relevant videos will be recommended to the front of the video stream.
- **Decentralized distribution**, which enables average users to produce, and most videos of TikTok come from user production.
- **Overlay recommendations.** The more likes, shares, comments a short video earns, it will be more likely to be recommended to others.

2.2.3. Phased Marketing

The feature “phased marketing” can also be found on TikTok. In the pre-sale stage of “Detective Chinatown 3”, a popular comedy movie, nearly four months before it was released in China on February 2, 2020, there has been publicity on TikTok since October 10, 2019, when the official account shared a short birthday wish video for the main actor Liu Haoran. They have regularly released videos with the hashtag # DetectiveChinatown3 about leading actors, movie clips, interviews etc., to attract the audience.

In the mid-sales stage, they have posted official trailers, current press conferences, meetings, live streams etc., in order to maintain the audience's passion. For instance, they showed a fan meeting of another leading actor Wang Baoqiang on January 1, 2020, to promote the movie. In the post-sale stage, other movie clips and interviews have been released, and the movie could be watched live on TikTok for free a year later, on February 2, 2021. As a result, the film had received critical acclaim before it was released, and the official account has a sizable following of 2.7 million.

Short Videos Production and Reproduction.

With the development of network technology and the popularity of smartphones, what people prefer to watch has transformed from picture to video. TikTok is a typical short video platform, mainly of which are user-generated content. Owing to the feature-short time and interactivity, there is a chance for films and microfilms on a shoestring budget to have marketing activities.

Released on October 1, 2021, the movie “Water Boys” was not famous in the film industry. As the scriptwriter, director and leading actor of this film were all new. In an effort to make the youth-themed film better-known and improve the box office, the director had begun to promote the movie live on TikTok a month before its release. From an unknown start, TikTok’s live stream was watched in the single digits, slowly accumulating into the tens of thousands. During that time, videos of the director live connecting strangers circulated on TikTok, and many people saw the director’s seriousness and hard work. The way of live broadcasts also made more people have a more vital interest in “Water Boys”. Short videos give low-budget movies a chance to be noticed.

Furthermore, it is also a good way for film marketing to clip highlights from movies. Many interesting but obscure movies are circulating on China’s TikTok via clips of highlights. These video accounts are often updated daily in order to attract viewers. This way not only brings traffic and clicks

to the account but also maximizes the promotion of the movie and TV series. It's also a way of marketing through movies. However, people often do not have too much time to watch movies in life, and editing is the most popular and recognized way by most people in contemporary times. Some short videos of film and television clips can easily be viewed hundreds of thousands of times, and some popular videos could even reach ten million or more than a hundred million times [15]. The creation and viewing of such short videos have become a large scale. But sometimes, video clips can infringe on copyrights.

2.3. Douban-scoring platform

2.3.1. A united community

In addition to Twitter, a global platform, China also has a local platform for film marketing. At the end of 2013, Douban had more than 200 million registered users [16]. With many users, Douban has also become the main platform for new media film marketing in China.

When choosing a movie, the audience will decide on their movie viewing behavior based on all kinds of information they know about it. At present, there are very few domestic film scoring sites, so most Chinese audiences will choose Douban Movies as the standard for pre-movie reference. A key goal of future work is to have better insights into the actual user data behind the Douban UGC and to study how they trust the people and the context they post [17]. With the leader's guidance, their fans' original views will be easily affected. Like Twitter and Digg, Douban Movies provides a "follower network" in which users can post comments and send messages to their followers. An evident characteristic of the relationship between users is that the person being followed can offer helpful information about movies and their insights to all their followers [18]. This has also led to some users with a large fan base, which will affect many ordinary viewers after posting their comments. Many movie investors also use the influence of these accounts to promote their films. So how to establish our understanding of film marketing before the possibility of being manipulated is significant.

2.3.2. The Inner Motivation behind

The biggest impact that social media has is that it allows people to connect with others in sharing and communicating ideas. When paper media are the most effective means of communication, people are often limited by the information provided in front of them [19]. Douban Movies delivers a platform for groups to communicate with the same hobbies, creating a virtual connection between film audiences. In this space, you can interpret the plot and characters of the film and without professional limits: until today, 705,693 [20] comments can be seen on the page of the film *The Matrix* (1999) and 1,796,187 [21] under *Inception* (2010). So, one of the inner motivations that drive film marketing popular on social media platforms is the desire for communication and their own sense of identity in this area. In fact, it is a way of breaking the limits and giving the film's voice to more ordinary people. Also, whether Douban Movies, IMDb, or Time.com rating, they aim at helping users build a movie system of their own unique taste. It is precisely because the rating mechanism of film gives people who have insufficient information can find films of interest at the fastest time. But this need of many people to build their own aesthetic system, leading to the film investors and other platforms of third-party intervention, let the pre-manipulation of word-of-mouth is possible.

2.3.3. Pre-manipulating movie comments

With this kind of inner motivation, filmmakers realize that they can expand the number of moviegoers through new media platforms. In order to direct or manipulate the interest of the audience, at first, they will run a large number of ads on the first page of Douban Movies. Second, they pay for positive reviews on accounts with a lot of fans. The positive review here is about giving the film the maximum degree of recognition, but the problem is that many movies don't deserve it. In the mass propaganda of the communicators, the audience mostly succumbs to the communicator. Even if a small audience gives negative feedback, the communicator can use its priority to filter it, and the positive feedback spread, as an inducing factor, attracts more audience acceptance and interest in the film. Film marketers can use marketing campaigns creating "want-to-see" for the audience for promotional purposes, and this is also known as "marketability" [22]. But is this marketing way correct? It can be divided into two situations: the promotion of movies based on excellent original production and the marketing of movies with relatively poor artistic quality. These two modes can lead to entirely different effects.

3. Discussion

One of the most important advantages of new media marketing is flexibility. Thanks to the Internet, it is hard to delay an online appointment by natural causes, and people can change the arrangements flexibly. During the epidemic of COVID-19 in 2020, many films which should have been released of the New Year were rerouted to online platforms for free. In the case of "Lost in Russia", a movie free to watch on TikTok, it has aroused the audience's applause, and to a certain extent, fulfilled the audience's desire for entertainment while isolating. "Lost in Russia" has over 600 million views in three days, with 180 million viewers." [23]. This undoubtedly increases the user's favourable degree to the platform, please users and promote publicity.

Another essential one is interactivity. New media has broken the limits of time and space, creating a public space over time and space. People do not need to be present at offline receptions. However, they still can interact with the information source in front of the screen. When watching videos, reading news with our cell phones, we can send messages and go directly into the groups to discuss anything that we are interested in.

On the one hand, new media marketing brings the original low-key but aesthetically valuable movies to the public's attention. This type of film is not only a noble art but also a form of art that can be attached to more ordinary people and can also promote the development of related industries. Today more than 35 tour operators and agents offer over 50 film-related tours in Aotearoa, New Zealand, including half-day tours, multi-day tours and other forms of tourism, which increase a lot of tourism revenue [24]. On the other hand, they can also deprive people's ability to think independently. For a long time, audiences cannot use their own value system to judge movies, which is very dangerous. Without independent thinking, the aesthetic orientation of the entire audience group will decline and become easy to be manipulated. In this way, these new media scoring platforms have walked away from their initial goal of sharing the audience's own insights about the film or providing practical viewing information and finally become tools for movie makers.

4. Conclusion

The purpose of the study was to propose a theoretical framework to comprehend the effectiveness of different social media platforms in film marketing. The results have shown that marketing strategies vary on three different platforms. Understanding the results of this study may be helpful for film production studios to develop more appropriate marketing methods on various platforms, avoid waste

and excess of resources such as advertising. There is a limitation to the scope of the study about the lack of accurate data, and our mathematics model is not completed because of limited research in this area. The key is to focus on how to enhance the interactivity with the audience and consumer-centric, so the audience could avoid the movie marketing pushed by intelligent algorithms on new media platforms under the premise of retaining their personal aesthetics. Furthermore, as users' initiative is weakened by passively receiving personalized recommendations from intelligent algorithms, the question raised by this study is how to enhance the ambition of users in the new media platform marketing. Facing the public opinion leader, how to treat the content critically, not only in the film industry but also in the whole media communication process, is a question that needs to be considered. Not only do users need to strengthen the ability of information screening, film production, and publicity should also invest more costs in content production and content-based benign promotion to further promote the global film prosperity and the healthy development of film marketing.

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