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Review Article

Exploration and Analysis of the Distribution and Marketing Mode of Movie "Cinemas-to-Network"

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Abstract: Due to the impact of COVID-19 epidemic and the rapid development of digital media technology, all kinds of new media platforms began to rise, and the mode of "Cinemas-to-Network" became a new marketing mode of film distribution. This paper selected domestic and foreign cases of "Cinemas-to-Network" film distribution, compared and analyzed the opportunities and challenges faced by domestic film distribution marketing mode, and put forward corresponding distribution marketing strategies, which made it possible to develop the mode of "Cinemas-to-Network".
Keywords: "Cinemas-to-Network", streaming media, film distribution, film marketing, cinema chains, online viewing.

1. Preface

The traditional film distribution mode is generally divided into separate distribution, buyout distribution, guaranteed distribution and lease distribution. In the new media context, the diversification of film distribution marketing means has broken the projection mode established by the traditional cinema for many years. The film distribution and marketing mode of "Cinemas-to-Network", represented by the film Lost in Russia, has achieved self-salvation, but it has caused a heated discussion in the industry. China's traditional film marketing mode mostly publicizes films by means of press conference, cinema promotion, TV, etc. This one-way marketing makes it almost impossible for the film team to communicate and interact with the audience, and it is not easy to understand the audience's ideas and meet their needs. After the comprehensive reform of the film industry in 2003, China's film marketing stepped into the Internet from print promotion, and the film began to be publicized online, which is belonging to the stage of institutional marketing and product marketing. Since 2010, China's film distribution marketing has also been in an all-round development period. The focus of distribution marketing has shifted from the computer to the mobile terminal, creating more new marketing methods and distribution modes. Film distribution and marketing have become an important factor affecting the box office level. Information interaction between film teams and audiences has become the norm. Film teams publicize their films on streaming media platforms, such as Weibo, WeChat, Tik Tok, Kuaishou, Wechat video account number and other platforms, and attract users' attention by using marketing means such as news push and online public opinion. These marketing methods did have a good effect in the early stage, such as "Lost in Thailand", "Lost in Love for 33 Days", "The Ex-File:The Return of the Exes", Monster Hunt, "Hi, Mom" and other films attracted the attention of the broad audience. However, this normal marketing method is not interactive and innovative enough to fully stimulate the audience's desire to watch. Under the constraints of many factors such as industrial mechanism, social environment, capital cost, etc., the film marketing mode of most films in China is still at the level of promotion marketing and screen marketing before the film is released, which fails to form a complete industrial chain. Most of the content of film marketing in China still stays in brand marketing, content publicity, star publicity, public opinion hype, etc. The time, ways and means of film publicity are seriously homogenized, the phenomenon of following the trend is obvious, the systematic marketing planning is lacking, the pertinence and innovation are insufficient, and the accurate audience positioning cannot be realized.

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2. Domestic and foreign film "Cinemas-to-Network" development status

In the era of streaming media, on the one hand, the development of Internet and streaming media provides convenient viewing modes for video platform users; on the other hand, major video platforms are constantly deepening the types and distribution modes of movies, and streaming media platforms provide audiences with various viewing modes (Hong Yin *et al.*, 2020). "Cinema-to-Internet" has become a new mode and even a new normal of film screening. Huanxi Media, a producer in Lost in Russia, announced that it had signed a cooperation agreement with ByteDance, opening a precedent for online distribution, followed by films such as Feilong Crossing the River, Double World, The Winners, Knockout, and Knock Knock. Under the circumstances of collective withdrawal of cinemas and cold offline entertainment industry, the streaming media platform dominated by long videos will usher in new development opportunities. With the increasing number of platform users, the platform must have enough resources to retain users and provide users with more and better content. From this point of view, it will be a new trend for cinema films to be distributed online. As the audience's habit of watching movies online is gradually cultivated, more and more film and television companies are turning their attention to streaming media platforms to compete for the market share of online movies. At the same time, the huge user groups of online video platforms also provide better choices for the following movies and content.

In contrast, foreign streaming media platforms have become "new favorites", and the five Hollywood giants Disney, Universa Picturel, Paramount, Sony and Warner have all changed their film distribution modes. Universal Picture took the lead in transformation. Its animated film "Trolls World Tour" was released online by digital rental, with a revenue of more than 100 million dollars. Another film "The King of Staten Island" also had a considerable response, and Universal Picture also signed a short-term window agreement with AMC (Lime Wei, 2022). Netflix's "Roma" and "The Irishman" also gained a good reputation. Disney+ was born at the right time, and Mulan launched it at the same time with Warner's "Tenet" in the mode of online distribution payment. The production cost of Mulan and Tenet was the same, and both films were released at the same time. Mulan chose the simultaneous release of the cinema and the network, while Tenet released only in the cinema. The content and form of the two films are quite different. The former is Chinese IP image adapted from the famous character called Mulan, with Disney's popular animation as the background. The latter is a brain-burning science fiction film full of time and space changes. Mulan's viewing threshold is relatively low, and its online distribution has achieved certain success, while Tenet's demand for audience is high, which has not reached the ideal expectation.

3. Opportunities and challenges faced by "Cinemas-to-Network"
3.1 Opportunity of "Cinemas-to-Network"
1) Online film distribution creates long tail effect

The film distribution is a crucial link for the film industry. As a form of mass media, film has both cultural attributes and commercial attributes. For the producers and distributors of the film industry, the commodity attributes of films are more important. According to the theory of the long tail effect, "as long as the storage and circulation channels are large enough, the market share of products with low demand can be equal to or even larger than that of those few hot-selling products (Ruiting Zhang, 2021)." Generally speaking, most of the benefits of films released by cinemas come from the box office revenue brought by the window period of just a few months, and the later benefits are not significant. Streaming media platform is not only a viewing channel, but also a publicity channel for movies. Using the characteristics of network information dissemination, the public can quickly focus on movie works, and for many cinema films, it can conduct secondary publicity and accumulate word of mouth. In addition, through the distribution of streaming media platform, the cost of film storage and projection circulation is greatly reduced, which makes many independent and niche films gain more development space, and the long-term existence of films on streaming media platform can continuously bring benefits, thus realizing the long tail effect.

2) Promote the diversified development of films

Due to the cost and schedule, cinema screening is extremely strict. Therefore, in most cases, popular films, movies with popular stars or hot topics will be selected for release. Therefore, the types of films are relatively simple, and the homogenization trend of released films is gradually emerging. Secondly, the long schedule of many popular films has greatly reduced the release time of other films. For example, the average schedule ratio of "Avengers:Endgame" released in 2019 is as high as 85%, resulting in the creation of a film monopoly(Jinping Gong, 2020). All of the above points indicate that nowadays cinema distribution limits the diversified creation and distribution of films to a certain extent, and many high-quality niche films can't be released in cinema. Online distribution provides a good distribution and marketing channel for such films, which can not only discover the corresponding audience, but also lower the cost of publicity and distribution. In addition, the long tail effect of film works on streaming media platform can continuously bring new incremental space to the film market. As a result, the space for film creation will also be greatly expanded, and creators and producers will be able to produce various types of films, regardless of whether they are popular or not, and they don't have to be limited to formal issues such as duration.

3) Online distribution meets the audience's viewing habits

The development of streaming media platform has gradually changed people's living habits. At the same time, with the upsurge of online shopping and the normalization of epidemic situation, more people choose home entertainment, and people gradually get used to the mode of "cloud viewing". However, cinema viewing requires people to choose the right time and place to watch, which can't meet people's new entertainment habits. In contrast, the development of streaming media platform fits well with the entertainment habit of "cloud viewing". You can select and enjoy movies anytime and anywhere with only one mobile phone. At the same time, the rapid development and iteration of information technology is an important factor in the progress of the film industry. 5G optimizes the transmission speed of movies, and people can easily download or share their favorite movies; VR technology provides a more diversified experience for watching movies. In addition, home cinema is becoming a craze. With the development of VR and other technologies, the functions of home cinema are also diversified. All of these are accelerating the cultivation of people's demand for "cloud viewing".

3.2 Challenges of "Cinemas-to-Network"
1) The quality of the film is declining

The trend of "Cinemas-to-Network" makes producers more open and free in creation, and more diversified in genre, duration and style. At the same time, after the trend of "Cinemas-to-Network" lowers the threshold of film distribution, some niche films that can't be released in cinemas will enter the audience's field of vision. However, lowering the threshold is not necessarily a good thing. In order to adapt to the characteristics of mobile devices, many producers may focus on the plot and adopt a lot of dialogues. Once this trend is formed, it may obliterate the artistic essence of the film to a certain extent. Even after the duration is unlimited, the film duration may be too long, and the appearance will be closer and closer to the TV series, which makes it difficult to distinguish the two. In the past, many films with immature art and chaotic plot logic could not be shown in cinemas. After being put on the streaming media platform, the producers' concerns will be reduced accordingly, which will lead to the mixed film works on the streaming media platform, and the film quality will be greatly reduced.

2) Poor viewing effect

Cinema is a very special existence for movie creators and audiences. It is precisely because of the cinema's venue, screen and technique of playback that many spectacular movies can be displayed and audiences can enjoy the ultimate viewing experience. In recent years, science fiction films and action movies have gradually become hot spots, and the production of such movies often requires high cost to achieve a certain viewing effect. This kind of movies can be said

to be born for cinemas. However, watching movies on mobile devices is less of fun, no big screen, dark viewing environment, shocking sound effects, and the excitement brought by experiencing movies with everyone in cinemas. The viewing experience provided by streaming media platform is far less than that of cinemas, and the effect that directors need to let the audience feel is also reduced. Moreover, watching movies on mobile phones and other devices is easily disturbed by other things. Although it can be paused at any time, it is difficult for the audience to devote themselves to picture appreciation and plot thinking.

3) The piracy problem is serious

Compared with cinema, broadcasting on streaming media platform is more likely to cause piracy. Many pirates first download genuine movies on streaming media platform, and then use cracking means to obtain the source of the film, and then spread it. Because there is a certain window period for cinema release, many viewers have already seen pirated movies before the movies are launched on the regular streaming media platform. The producer of the 2019 Spring Festival movie The Wandering Earth once revealed that the number of pirated views was as high as 20 million at that time, and the peer-to-peer downloads could not be counted accurately, so this number is very conservative. Because the transmission speed is fast, the transmission is convenient and it is difficult to catch, the piracy problem on streaming media platform will be more serious than that of cinema, and the piracy is huge and the spread is hidden, which makes it difficult to effectively stop the piracy once it is spread. According to the data, in 2018, due to the existence of piracy and infringement, China's online video market has lost RMB 15.132 billion. Piracy will harm the box office interests of cinemas, and may endanger the survival of streaming media platforms (Weiyang Liu, 2020).

4. Marketing Strategies of Film Distribution in the Context of New Media
1) Content is essential

Under the trend of "Cinemas-to-Network", the film quality is not guaranteed, which may lead to the phenomenon that bad money drives out good money. Although movies are commodities, they are also works of art, and the quality of a work's content determines whether it can stand the test of the market. In recent years, Netflix, which is also a streaming platform, has produced a series of well-received works, such as Roma, Black Mirror and Stranger Things. However, in the era of network traffic, we should also think about what is good content. The Irishman has been widely praised in the industry, but it is not well accepted by the audience. Big data algorithms and traffic may be changing the public's preferences and tastes for movies, but niche movies like Return to Dust stood out, which also confirms that the movie market has a certain tolerance for good works. Therefore, it is possible for high-quality films to have long-term vitality in the film

market. However, this "high quality" needs to be measured by film investors and producers. Whether it caters to the audiences or not, "content is essential" is the principle for judging good works in the streaming media era.

2) Differentiated cinema services

In the era of streaming media, to save cinemas, it is necessary to win more audiences, and streaming media platforms have become the trend of the times. Therefore, what cinemas need to do is not to engage in vicious competition with them, but to carry out differentiated marketing, giving audiences a service experience that streaming media platforms cannot provide, and gaining core competitiveness. The cinema itself has many unique advantages. Cinemas are usually located in the business district, which is beneficial for the cinema to carry out associated marketing with surrounding businesses, such as buying a movie ticket can help you enjoy the discount of the coffee shop in the mall or the membership card of the clothing store at the same time; In addition, the cinema has a large screen and audio equipment, which can adopt more advanced movie-watching technology and provide a more immersive movie-watching experience for science fiction and action movies; At the same time, the theater can adopt the business model of "segmentation+scene distribution" to make effective use of the venue, such as holding film festival works, fan meeting, premiere ceremony, and can also use 5G technology to conduct live roadshows. When the attendance rate of cinemas is low, small and medium-sized cinemas will be transformed into cultural and entertainment spaces for large-scale sports events, concerts, concerts or stage plays, and even annual meetings, collective meetings and birthday parties can be held, thus providing more diversified scene collocation and improving the comprehensive benefits of cinemas.

3) Strengthen cooperation between cinemas and streaming media platforms

From a long-term perspective, although the cinema market is at a disadvantage in the streaming media era as a whole, the traditional mode of film distribution in cinemas will not disappear easily. In addition, at present, there is no streaming media platforms like Netflix in China, which can gain equal right to speak with the traditional cinemas. Therefore, cinema and streaming media platform will coexist for a long time in the future, and they are both competitive and cooperative. For both of them, it is possible to become each other's propaganda window. Using word-of-mouth marketing, both of them can effectively achieve the goal of mutual benefit, and they can also adjust the film arrangement mode and propaganda mode through the audience survey data of each other. When competing with rivals, cinemas need to actively seek cooperation. For example, distribution platforms can be distinguished according to the types and artistic characteristics of films. Films with high-cost

production, such as science fiction films and action films, which need excellent screen and sound effects, can be premiered by cinemas, while literary films, minority films or films with limited audience can be premiered by streaming media platforms. Films with poor arrangement in cinemas can be launched on streaming media platforms as soon as possible, and films with good reputation on streaming media can also be arranged for cinemas. Everything has its strengths and weaknesses, and cinema lines and streaming media platforms provide more possibilities for each other. Today, with the reshaping of film industry rules, there are thousands of possibilities in the future, and win-win cooperation is the right way.

4) Prevent piracy

Michael, a streaming media researcher, once mentioned that we should put an end to piracy. First, we should make genuine products more available, more convenient and more reliable; second, we should make piracy more difficult to obtain, more inconvenient and more unreliable. First of all, for cinemas, cameras are generally installed or watermarks are added to film sources, but this can only help to find piracy, but not stop it from the source. Cinema can use detection equipment to monitor pirated video recording equipment that needs light source, and emit infrared light that the human body can't feel to interfere and prevent it from recording. For streaming media platforms, it is essential to improve their anti-theft technology, such as the black screen technology introduced by Netflix. If a screen or screenshot is recorded during watching, the recorded or captured content will turn into a black screen. In addition, the blockchain technology can be used to effectively prevent piracy. As blockchain has the characteristics of tamper-proof, leak-proof and low cracking, using this technology to transmit movie resources can prevent most hackers from stealing movie content. The movie No Postage is distributed worldwide by using blockchain technology. Secondly, streaming media platform has the advantage of price. Streaming media platform needs to differentiate its own window products and services, and the pricing should be reasonable. In the same way as cinema marketing, streaming media platform can also carry out affiliate marketing. For example, registered members on a streaming media platform can also enjoy discounts on video music, take-out and taxi software. Streaming media platform should lower the threshold of movie viewing while ensuring their own interests, so that genuine works can be obtained more easily and users are more willing to enjoy genuine services. Finally, the government and other relevant departments and departments of the film industry should strengthen the supervision and control of piracy, formulate corresponding laws, regulations and rules, so that pirates can clearly bear the legal consequences. At the same time, they should make use of network technology to strictly prevent piracy, and

appeal to the public to support genuine products and put an end to piracy.

5. CONCLUSION

"Cinema-to-Network" provides more choices for film distribution. If this mode of film distribution wants to maximize its benefits, its core is that films should be consumed by the largest number of audiences in the most appropriate way and at the most appropriate price. Although the cinema market is at a disadvantage in the streaming media era as a whole, the traditional mode of cinema distribution will not disappear easily. Cinemas can join hands with the streaming media platform for long-term integration and symbiosis, thus driving the overall upgrading of the industrial chain. In addition, the domestic film industry can make reference to the synchronous film distribution mode of foreign cinemas and networks, and create its innovation in combination with its own industrial characteristics. It should embrace the new changes brought about by the streaming media era, seek cooperation with streaming media platforms in competition, and jointly promote the upgrading of the film industry.

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