

Reasons for the Kitschism of Film Industry in China: Perspective of Culture Industry Theory

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ABSTRACT

With the advent of a new generation of cultural industry and mass culture, the film industry has achieved significant advances in the sphere of cultural production, dramatically influencing the consumer market pattern. However, in recent years, cinema production has shifted quietly toward kitsch, which is consistent with the Frankfurt School's vision of the culture industry theory. Many schools of thought and scholars have been alerted by this transition and they have investigated why it occurred. 305 electronic editions of relevant literature from the standpoint of cultural industry theory were located in an accurate full-text search on kitsch transformation from 2011 to 2021. The topic "Film Industry" was covered in a total of 20 papers. This work provides a literature analysis from the standpoint of cultural industry theory to sort out the reasons why commercial films turn to kitsch. The available literature on the reasons will be classified using explanations from three categories: economic growth and consumer market, communication medium and creative technologies, and mass psychology and ideology change.

Introduction. This paper discovers that prior research focuses on the objective material explanations for the film industry's kitschism. Although the literature on audience psychology and ideology is scant and fragmentary, it is a notable direction that contributes to the reasons of the kitschism of the film. This could be useful in terms of generating research ideas for the future.

Keywords: *Culture Industry Theory, Film Industry, Kitsch.*

1. INTRODUCTION

The cultural sector is becoming increasingly linked to people's consumer requirements as we approach the twenty-first century, under the conditions of the commercial market environment and sophisticated technology. The dominant elite cultural viewpoint has shifted. Capital and commerce suffocate the seriousness of good art. Film works, which have become the driving force behind China's expanding cultural economy in recent years, necessarily include a growing number of kitsch commercial flicks. This form of kitsch change, according to cultural industry theory, relates to commercial film production's relentless quest of sensory stimulation and box office money, while the ethical worth of cinema and television art is gradually lost [1]. This form of commercial film has a pre-determined model that is increasingly standardized and mass-produced. As a result, there are an increasing number of nipple films that cater to readers' low-level spiritual demands while still providing visual enjoyment. This has a lot in common with the Frankfurt School's cultural industry thesis. If a

huge number of commercial films continue to become kitsch under the cultural industry's market system, the spiritual pursuit of art and its humanistic connotation may be lost forever. The public may forget their severely alienated position, anesthetized consciousness and chained brains while reveling. As a result, Chinese commercial films, about which many scholars have begun to speculate from various angles, are rapidly turning to the phenomena of kitsch.

The film industry in the new era has grown swiftly. But the quality is unequal, due to the continued development of the socialist market economy and the rapid advancement of various 3D and VR visual technologies and film editing technologies. As a result, various experts have conducted numerous studies on the Chinese film industry's development challenges and tendencies. Although there has been a continual critical succession of research on the causes of film kitsch in conjunction with cultural industry theory, past and present critical theories are often complex. The majority of the literature is qualitative, studying objective material

explanations, whereas ideological reasons receive less attention. The current research direction for numerous causes, as well as the categorization of cause types, are unclear. The overall picture is disjointed. Therefore, a clear contextual structure are trying to be proposed in this essay. This review combines a survey of relevant literature to assess the precise reasons why commercial films shift to kitsch from the standpoint of cultural industry theory, along with the most recent background of the times. This classification strategy divides current research findings into groups and accomplishes simplification by focusing on common ground. This article divides the reasons into three categories: economic growth and consumer market, communication medium and creative technologies, and popular psychology and ideology change. This review can be used to assist shape future policy recommendations.

2. SPECIFIC REASONS FOR KITSCH

The reasons for focusing on economic development and consumer market elements are the most examined, as indicated in the Table 1, among the 20 articles. The total number of documents of it reached 8, accounting for 40 percent of the total. The second-highest number of causes for concern regarding media and creative technology is 7. The literature on popular psychology and ideology as causes of kitsch in the film business is the smallest, with much of it dependent on economic or technical issues. There are a total of 5 articles.

Table 1. An analysis of 20 papers containing the phrase "Movie Industry"

No. of papers	Reasons For The Kitschism Of Film Industry In China	Reference
8	Economic Development and Consumer Market	(Cai 2011; Li and Zhu 2016; Jia 2018; Feng 2013; Wu 2018; Liu 2019; Shi 2013; Hu 2014)
7	Communication media and creative technology	(Chu 2016; Zeng 2016; Liu 2017; Zhou 2012; Chen 2013; Yu 2017; Wang 2021)
5	Mass psychology and ideological change	(Zhang 2020; Mei 2021; Wang 2015; Chen 2015; Yao 2016)
20	total 20 papers that included the topic " Movie Industry" in a full text search of 305 related documents available in electronic form	

2.1. Economic Growth And Consumer Market

The emergence of kitsch in Chinese commercial films is inextricably linked to the cinema economics and market demand. Changes in people's working techniques and lifestyles, according to Li, Zhu (2016) and Cai (2011), have provided adequate regular free time, stimulating demand for entertainment products. Movies have become a tremendously competitive entertainment product as a result of the popularity of cinemas and the reduction in movie viewing expenses, resulting in the emergence of a large-scale commercial movie market. So the market will force certain producers to invest in commercial film production in order to meet people's consumption needs [2]. With the growth of the social economy and growing urbanization, the number of buyers and sellers of commercial films will continue to increase, expanding the film market's territory.

As a consequence, profit-driven film makers continue to research market demands and tailor film content to audience preferences. A compromise between the artistry of cinema works and the kitsch of mass entertainment will ultimately emerge. This view is supported by Jia (2018) and Wu (2018). The rise in spiritual consumption demand has reawakened the audience's interest in amusement, which has been suppressed for a long time by conventional art and culture [3]. People increasingly acquire a consumption style that no longer focuses on amassing and precipitating the intrinsic value of goods and ignores cultural implications as the pace of social life quickens [5]. The normal life in public life has been recoded, with symbolic and visual characteristics inserted to satisfy the vulgar wants of particular markets.

The most effective decoding instrument in its manufacture is the logic of the market and consumption. Some commercial IP films, for example, are already well-known before they are released. They engulf the mainland market like a prairie fire. Li, Zhu (2016) and Feng (2013) pointed out that IP's fan base has a natural attraction to commercial cash, and that this new gimmick is a blue ocean of capital in and of itself. Existing high-quality IP movies can be developed to reduce investment risks and marketing expenses while also maintaining the IP's influence and audience [2]. As a result, in the race for capital, these commercial films have increased by an order of magnitude. Multiple capitals force the development of film IP, leading in commercial film production that often goes against artistic discovery, progressively evolving towards a standardized, styled and commercialized operation mode, which ventually becoming a kitsch film devoid of artistic personality [4].

This trend of the sublime dissolving and emotion fading in the filmmaking process makes it impossible to innovate in film art. Commercialization is unavoidable, and the need for instrumental rationality in order to improve production efficiency occasionally leads to

occurrences that defy the laws of artistic creativity. According to Feng (2013) and Liu (2019), creative creation concentrates on concepts and tends to be visual impact rather than aesthetics in the context of the cultural economy; art consumption is a market-driven phenomenon that becomes consumption of "symbols and pictures." Therefore exceptional works aren't always the most popular consumption items, while average or even worse works can be quite popular [6]. This is one of the main reasons why commercial film production in our nation is becoming increasingly cheesy.

The seriousness and beauty of art and culture, on the other hand, stands in opposition to the urge for entertainment and crass mass spiritual enjoyment. Shi (2013) supported that the film complete the translation from text to image, such as serious literature or script, while also needing to express the connotation and tradition of the text. Only the capital of commercial films may renounce in-depth topic selection [7].

The tension between instrumental and value rationality is at the root of poor money's inclination to push out good money. Hu (2014) argues that the battle between financial value and aesthetic orientation in commercial film creation is a reflection of the fight between financiers and producers [8]. For the purpose of box office revenue, the value orientation of instrumental rationality encourages producers to abandon mining the film's cultural significance and blindly invest in the production of popular IP such as online novels and online games with high click-through rates and high reading volume. Following production line such like the Hollywood, the film's aesthetic worth is reduced to a utilitarian scale, resulting in the homogenization, modeling and commercialization of commercial films.

The humanistic spirit and humanistic concern in film works are steadily fading and being replaced by kitsch, while creativity is dwindling. Simultaneously, the public's aesthetic value orientation diverges from that of artists. Every film creation follows a mature model and is conservatively made according to the established approach, as Liu (2019) stated. Every commercial film focuses on current hot subjects and caters to the desires of the target audience, such as emotional companionship, job fraud, human nature reflection and so on. If fall into this standardized mentality, the work will lack individuality and cookie-cutter items will proliferate in an infinite stream [6]. As previously stated, there is a conflict between film and the general public. The connection between film invention and public acceptance drives the entire film industry's evolution. This vicious economic cycle of production and consumption continues, pushing cinema creation ever more towards kitsch.

2.2. Communication Medium And Creative Technologies

Entering the era of rapid technological development, the creative methods, creative concepts, creators and dissemination methods of commercial films have undergone tremendous changes. Digital technology and new media have an important impact on the production, dissemination of films and the aesthetics of popular films. On this basis, many scholars have focused on the relationship between different technological factors and the kitsch of commercial films.

Chen (2013) and Chu (2016) believes that emerging digital technologies and media have played a role in the process of film kitsch. This not only accelerated the speed of film dissemination, but also increased the speed of mechanical reproduction of some patterned films. Digital technology, new media and the Internet are all interdependent. Their combination made the impact of the film more rapid and profound, which further affected the production of the film. When the mass aesthetics was gradually engulfed by the kitsch culture of the new media and reacted to the production of commercial films, the tendency of this transformation was spread more rapidly through the Internet and the media [9].

Different from Chen's observation angle, Zeng (2016), Liu and Wang (2017) explored from the emerging visual technologies such as 3D. They believe that the baptism of these creative technologies has made the audience develop the habit of pursuing sensory stimulation. Movies attract the attention of the audience [10]. This has caused many commercial films to pursue the ultimate in visuals in terms of scene design and character modeling, deliberately creating a sense of distance from real life, giving people a special sense of beauty [11]. But at the same time ignore the depth and logic of the plot. Chu proposed that the illusion of authenticity presented by the film is a shocking experience and a sense of intoxication that is greater than the real experience. In these works, classic artistic standards such as "authenticity", realist aesthetics and typical images "fail" [9].

Zhou (2012) and Yu (2017) analyzed the reasons by studying the contradiction between technical rationality and film art aesthetics. Zhou pointed out that the development of science and technology has enriched the form of film on the one hand. And on the other hand, it has also confined film creation that emphasizes vivid charm and rhythm to the cage of technology [12]. High technology manipulates people's aesthetic perception and aesthetic judgment, people's pursuit of the essential beauty of art is reduced and the aesthetic experience of movies is superficial [13]. The implicit and euphemistic classical art is more displayed in a direct and gorgeous way, and the audience's need for cultural accomplishment when appreciating the film is weakened [14]. Art has fallen from the altar, and modern art pursues both refined

and popular tastes. Direct sensory stimulation is greater than repeated speculation.

Both Wang, Ma (2021) and Chu believe that the expression of modern technology has surpassed the traditional art form of film. The lines between film art and technology are blurring. The evolution of film creation concepts and the increasingly high-tech and dematerialized phenomenon of artworks reveal that artworks have evolved into rich and diverse technical products to a large extent [15]. The textual content of the film and the deep aesthetic experience give way to technical stimulation, and the aesthetic experience is only in the primary sensory pleasure without reaching the deep spiritual and spiritual pleasure.

Among the numerous studies, there is an important perspective that differs from the others. Chu and Chen argue that the proliferation of images in consumer culture erodes the sense of distance between traditional films and the public. Technological progress has created the democracy of art. When everyone can actively participate in, create and disseminate film works. The spirit of freedom has sprung up in the virtual network society of the real world. It is not necessary or necessary for every social member to follow traditional artistic standards [9]. The public can change the process of artistic creation at will with the help of computer program processing. They can also use dubbing, reverse combination of images, etc. to change the aesthetic taste of art works, and even ridicule the views, positions and creative ideas of the original art creators. These behaviors also invisibly lowered the artistry of the film and guided the demand and aesthetic preference of the film market.

2.3. Mass Psychology And Ideology Change

Many of the existing studies start from the weakness of popular psychology to analyze the reasons for the film industry to turn to kitsch. Zhang, Jiang (2020) believed that the psychology of the masses to enjoy and escape from social reality is an important reason for the development of film content towards vulgarity. Seeking sensual stimulation is not the resonance and deep vibrations on the spiritual level that we mean strictly. Because mass hedonism is more like an escape, not like escaping from the bad reality that people advocate, but escaping and resisting the bad thoughts of reality. The audience can get imaginative satisfaction in the movie and realize the "imperfection" in life. So the role of the film began to move closer to hallucinogens, becoming a tool for people to escape reality. It is difficult for people to regard the outside world as an extension of the screen world, and the dividing line between reality and film becomes ambiguous [16]. Movies as entertainment products meet their expectations and position their expectations. Then the masses become puppets under the control of stereotyped movies.

Yao (2015) directly pointed out from the macro level that the consumer society has established the aesthetic subject status of the audience as consumers. It is also the main body of the entire economic activity, which has played a guiding role in the development of film and television art. In turn these arts have also affected the vast majority of The value orientation of the audience, and is also expanding the group of its influence [17]. Now, as a large audience of film industry consumers, they feel that if they do not keep pace with these popular things, there is a kind of disconnection from society, which creates a danger of social misfit. People use the sensory pleasure brought by art to fill the spiritual world and relieve the pressure in real life. Amusing to death seems to have become a fairly common pursuit of life values. Consumers are faced with popular cultural products every day. The inherent repetitiveness of products - entertainment forms that cater to consumers, promote the mechanization of consumers' response methods. The damage to the public's "consciousness and spirit" will inevitably lead to the full dependence and enthusiasm for popular culture. Under such cultural manipulation, the masses themselves inevitably suffer from the symptoms of the main body's spiritual deficit and cannot resist the temptation of mass cultural products. We should be wary of this negative cycle [18].

Different from Zhang, Jiang and Yao, Chen (2015) proposed that some changes in the nature of today's films are also contributing to kitsch. The importance of external factors such as topicality, fashion, star news effect has surpassed the internal factors of the film about art, style, form, etc [19]. Similarly, Wang (2015) once explained the box office performance of "Personal Order", "'Personal Order" achieved a high box office miracle because watching a movie is no longer about appreciating art and performance. However, spending money to buy talk, and Young people's love and social needs under the guise of watching movies [18].

Different from the above-mentioned ideas, Mei (2021) pointed out that batch and templated film production by means of mechanical reproduction technology actually serves state power or ideological control. In order to create social and political tools for manipulating the public, the film industry has become more and more typical of utilitarian features and gradually become kitsch [20]. As a new form of ideological control, it is by no means value-neutral, and it dominates the thinking of contemporary people with a stronger invisible force.

3. CONCLUSION

After reading a lot of literature, this article is classifying and simplifying the existing research. This helps to sort out past research and provides new classification ideas for future research. The article found that among the many reasons for the kitschism of China's film industry, the research on the film market and

economic development accounted for the largest proportion, followed by the technological progress of creation and communication. The directions and conclusions drawn from these two categories are relatively diverse. Among them, the analysis of the relationship between the film market and the consumer society, the relationship between technology and film artistry. The commercialization of films occupy the mainstream of the research conclusions. Moreover, many scholars choose to combine technology or economics with public psychology. However, it is worth noting that the existing literature directly analyzes the psychological and ideological factors of audiences. In the relevant literature, most of the phenomenon of kitsch in the film industry is introduced by analyzing the weakness of popular psychology. On the contrary, fewer modern scholars have linked the cause to the Frankfurt School's view of bourgeois control of ideology at the time. But while American Hollywood blockbusters are sweeping the Chinese film market, we also need to be alert to the possibility of the subtle spread of Western ideology and values. Looking forward to the rapidly changing future of visual technology, the research direction can be combined with the latest VR virtual technology to explore the psychological needs of the public.

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