

Identifying the Cultural Shifts and Societal Changes That Facilitated the Rise in Box Office Performance of Chinese Women's Cinema in the 21st Century*

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With the gradual improvement of Chinese women's status in the 21st century, gender studies and gender relations have become one of the hottest topics in Chinese society, which consequently prompted Chinese Women's Cinema to attract the attention of larger audiences. With regard to the box office performance of Chinese Women's Cinema, there seems to be a gap in research in finding an association between women's status and the relevant films' box office performance. The purpose of this research is to outline the underlying reasons for the changes in gender roles and gender representation in the Chinese film industry over the past few decades in order to better understand this expansive social change in the 21st century. This study provides a comprehensive analysis through the use of questionnaires to better understand society's attitude towards gender representation within the film industry. The questionnaire findings indicate that there is a direct correlation between people's awareness of women's changing status and gender equality and their acceptance of materials produced by Chinese Women's Cinema. At the same time, it highlights that the Chinese government's support and initiatives for gender equality have had a significant impact on the general popularity of Chinese Women's Cinema. The significance of this research is to effectively popularize Chinese Women's Cinema culture and the box office growth by understanding the social attitude towards gender representation in the Chinese film industry and to provide relevant information about the development direction and trend of Chinese Women's Cinema. Furthermore, this research aims to provide foundational support for gender equality and help to understand the underlying factors that society needs to promote gender equality.

Keywords: Chinese Women's Cinema, Film Box Office, Gender Equality, Social Change, Cultural Shifts

Introduction

This dissertation focuses on the association between the rising popularity and box office performance of Chinese Women's Cinema and the increasing social awareness of contemporary gender roles and societal perceptions of gender equality. Additionally, this research attempts to explore the possible links between Chinese society's attitude towards gender equality, government intervention, and the ways in which representative works of Chinese Women's Cinema are disseminated and promoted in relation to their respective popularities. This

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research identifies areas with positive correlations and explains potential reasons behind the development of Chinese Women's Cinema.

Background

The social status of Chinese women has been influenced by cultural shifts and societal changes during different historical periods. Throughout Chinese history, women's status and rank have seen varied levels of societal recognition. Some scholars have argued that throughout history, there has been a correlation between women's status in society and the country's national strength (Ma, 2012). During the Tang Dynasty, Imperial China boasted significant national strengths (such as, culture, economy, science and technology, strategy) while simultaneously allowing women to enjoy very prestigious societal positions (Wu, 2004; Du, 2013). Notably, during the declining Qing Dynasty, women were arguably less appreciated benefactors of society from the perspective of social acceptance (Yang, 2021). Zhao (2021) and Zhu (1995) argued, due to the faulty leadership strategies of late Qing Dynasty rulers, the succeeding Republic of China was struggling to regain its national strength, resulting in the country being in a closed state where its trade was reduced with other countries, the life of its citizens was miserable. In the 1920s, the Republic of China was arguably behind its time compared to Western countries due to its lack of cultural exchange which led to the persistence of Confucian traditional thinking. This resulted in women being unable to rise from their lower social status as compared to men (Lavelly & Li, 2003). Due to the lack of centrality following the formation of the Republic of China, people lived in an unequal society lacking economic performance, public security, and adequate rule of law. In the old feudal society, Chinese women were required to focus on family and childbearing, consequently lacking the right to have a voice and make choices (Eklund, 2011).

However, after the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949, the status of Chinese women has undergone great changes and has improved significantly. Mao Zedong, the first chairman of the Chinese communist party, advocated women's participation in social work and education to promote gender equality in China (Wielink, 2019). Therefore, after the founding of the People's Republic of China, the government carried out comprehensive policy adjustments and legal reform, which formulated social policies and laws in a more systematic structure. In order to promote and foster the role of women in society, the Chinese government held multiple meetings to discuss the topic of gender equality (Tsui, 1998). With the improvement of the status of Chinese women in the 21st century, the proportion of women receiving higher education has also increased year by year. For instance, research shows that more than 50% of the 2,000 freshmen admitted to Fudan University in 2005 were female students, and the proportion of female students awarded the annual scholarship exceeded 60% (Chen, 2012).

With the advancement of Chinese women's status and the ferocity of gender studies in the 21st century, many Chinese film directors and filmmakers began to focus their attention and the topic of creation on Chinese Women's Cinema. As Carpenter (2009) argued, film is an intuitive visual art; its plot and content can clearly reflect real life situations and scenarios as well as the social status of genders and social groups. Many Chinese Women's Cinemas that have been released reflected the realities of women in society, making Chinese Women's Cinema accepted by numerous audiences, thus promoting the rapid rise of Chinese Women's Cinema box office in recent years (Yuan, 2011; Zhang, 2014). With the rapid rise of Chinese Women's Cinema box office, many scholars have conducted in-depth exploration and research on this field.

Research Questions and Hypothesis

RQ1: What is the relationship between Chinese society's attitude towards gender equality and the popularity of Chinese Women's Cinema?

RQ2: What are the perceived effects of Chinese government policies and measures on the increasing popularity of Chinese Women's Cinema?

RH1: The increase of social awareness towards gender equality has positively impacted the popularity of Chinese Women's Cinema.

RH2: The promotion of Chinese government initiatives that support equal gender representation has positively influenced the rising popularity of Chinese Women's Cinema.

Research Purpose and Significance

The purpose of this research is to examine the underlying reasons for changes in gender roles and gender representation in the Chinese film industry over the past few decades. This will help in better understanding this social change during the 21st century through a comprehensive analysis via the use of questionnaires to examine society's attitudes towards gender representation in the film industry. Moreover, the significance of this research is to effectively promote the popularization of Chinese Women's Cinema culture and the growth of the box office by understanding the social attitude towards gender representation in the film industry and providing relevant information about the development direction and trend of Chinese Women's Cinema. Furthermore, it provides foundational support for gender equality and helps in understanding the underlying factors that society needs to promote gender equality.

Research Method

This research project will collect primary data from Chinese volunteers through a questionnaire. This quantitative research will seek to answer the research questions and ascertain the research hypotheses. A quantitative research approach was selected as it can effectively focus on large-scale social investigation to better adapt to social needs and keep abreast of the needs of social development and changing trends (Fielding & Schreier, 2001). The advantage of using questionnaires in quantitative research to collect primary data is that the collected data can be quantified and are an objective portrayal of the research topic (Almeida, Faria, & Queiros, 2017; Kaplan & Garrick, 1981). This research project also investigates the impact of cultural shifts and societal changes on Chinese Women's Cinema. Consequently, for the purposes of this research, using a questionnaire-based quantitative research method can best represent the primary data provided by Chinese volunteers.

Overall Structure

This dissertation is divided into six different chapters. Firstly, Chapter 1, the introduction, firstly contextualizes the historical trajectory of Chinese women's societal status, followed by an introduction of the research questions and hypotheses, and then by an outline of the research purpose and significance before ending with a brief introduction of the research methods. Chapter 2, the literature review, mainly outlines existing relevant research in the field of Chinese Women's Cinema and identifies the gaps in research. Chapter 3, the methodology, outlines the research design, data collection, sampling methods, data analysis, ethical considerations and limitations. Chapter 4, the results, mainly collates the collected primary data and uses descriptive analysis to display such. Chapter 5, the discussion, uses the collected primary data to answer the research questions and verify research hypotheses. This includes a comparison of the present results with existing

research data and results in the field. Chapter 6, the conclusion, mainly includes a summary, a description of its limitations, and some relevant suggestions according to this research.

Literature Review

Introduction

This section highlights the current academic understanding of Chinese Women's Cinema and helps to provide context for the topic of this research. This section critically analyses research papers in the field of Chinese Women's Cinema and identifies gaps and shortcomings in the relevant literature.

Definition of Chinese Women's Cinema

Whilst the history of Women's Cinema in the Chinese Film Market is not long established, it nonetheless attracts many researchers to explore and research the field. Some researchers have conducted research in Chinese Women's Cinema, cantering around Women's Cinema theory as a school in contemporary film theory. This originated in the 1960s and integrates theories and methods of psychoanalysis, post-structuralism, and semiotics to analyse the representation of women in film texts and interpret the ideology of gender narrative in film texts (Liu, 2007). Currently, there is no academic consensus on the definition of Chinese Women's Cinema, as there are differing views and understandings of the subject. Furthermore, a series of recent studies have indicated that Chinese Women's Cinema is a specific concept that is closely related to Chinese women's social movements. It suggests that film plots should not only describe the life of women, but also shape the image of women in the film and explore the emotional and development lines of films through Chinese women (Wei, 1994). It is also well-acknowledged that the Chinese Film Market commonly divides Women's Cinema into three categories: films with female themes or subjects, feminist films, and films created by female directors (Gu, 2013). On the other hand, as Dong (2012) claimed, the main people involved in the creation of the film are women in order for the film to be considered a true representative of Chinese Women's Cinema. A comparison of the views put forward by the above three scholars suggests that a middle-ground definition can be made, stating that films directed by women, mainly showing women, and the real existence and awakening of women, can be counted as representative of Chinese Women's Cinema.

The Development History of Chinese Women's Cinema in Chinese Film Market

Several studies suggest that the topic of Chinese women's social participation appeared relatively late in China, and it was not until the Women's World Conference that China paid attention to the topic (Wang, 2021). Due to the increasing social attention that women's role in society has received in the past few decades, more and more representative pieces of Chinese Women's Cinema have gained widespread economic success at the box office. Arguably, the first Women's Cinema in the Chinese Film Market was the film *Ghost Love*, released in 1987 and directed by the famous female director Huang Shuqin (Lu, 2009). The release of the film *Ghost Love* has raised the attention and love of Chinese audiences, and it is precisely because of this reason that Chinese Women's Cinema has gradually risen in the Chinese Film Market. During the 21st century, the Chinese Film Market has gradually matured after a long period of development and innovation. At the same time, with the promotion of women's status within Chinese society and the rise of feminism as a social movement, Chinese Women's Cinema has become a recipient of increasing attention in the Chinese Film Market. Moreover, some researchers have argued that the amalgam collective of Chinese Women's Cinema as a subsection of the domestic film industry has developed to the level where it is capable of boldly showcasing unique ideas and the charm of

women to grab the attention of people in the 21st century (Qin & Chi, 2021). Additionally, some studies looking at Chinese Women's Cinema in the early 21st century Chinese Film Market claim that representative films have mostly originated from female life ontology, showcasing strong female consciousness and thought towards their individualism, which has made the characters more abundant, and giving the female perspectives and narrative more diversity (Yang, 2012).

In recent years, Chinese Women's Cinema has become a relatively developed topic within the Chinese Film Market, which correlates with its increasingly successful box office performance. Based on existing literature, it can be inferred that the topic of Chinese women and their representation in the film industry throughout Chinese Women's Cinema first appeared in the late 1980s and reached a certain level of development by the early 21st century.

Comparison of Chinese Women's Cinema in the 20th Century and the 21st Century

Although Women's Cinema saw late development in the Chinese Film Market, many classic Women's Cinemas from the 20th century are regarded as benchmarks for the field. One of these classics, *Raise the Red Lantern*, released in 1991, is often used as an exemplary piece to explore the characteristics of Chinese Women's Cinema in the 20th century. Some researchers believe that the architectural background of the film gives people a sense of symmetry, a Chinese characteristic, showing that the plot aims to express the restrictions that Chinese feudal etiquette puts on people's consciences (Loeb, 2011). Moreover, prior research suggests that some characteristic buildings in this film, such as Chinese quadrangle dwellings and "dead house", will give people a very depressed and gloomy feeling. (Lee, 1996). Thereby, the shooting background of Chinese Women's Cinema in the 20th century was very simple. This element of filmmaking has not changed significantly throughout the 20th century, it stands to reflect the sadness of early Women's Cinema portraying that women could not leave the house due to the bondage of feudal views. Furthermore, previous studies have also emphasised that many feudal customs in Chinese society appear in the film *Raise the Red Lantern*, such as "beating feet" and "listening to call", which objectify women and portray how men view women as if they were commodities (Neo, 2004). Finally, existing literature highlights that the film *Raise the Red Lantern* follows a clear timeline. The film represents the changing of seasons between summer, autumn, and winter but excludes spring, which suggests that for women in Chinese feudal society, there is no hope and ideal, only endless oppression and darkness (McFarlane, 2006). Hence, Chinese women in the feudal, patriarchal society were degraded to a low social status. The plot of many early Chinese Women's Cinema deliberately created character structures for women from the male perspective. While the images of virtuous wives and mothers or chastity and virgins in films seemingly praise women in old Chinese society, they rather portray the imprisonment of women in the feudal, patriarchal society, or use women as carriers to express the sufferings of vulnerable groups and people at the bottom of society.

Whereas, the Chinese Women's Cinema of the 21st century completely differ from early Chinese Women's Cinema in terms of shooting techniques and plot ideas, which reflects its rapid development in the 21st century in line with the times. The following section will focus on the most representative film in the 21st century, *Go LA LA Go*, by analysing the existing literature written on the film and its industry environment. Some researchers have found that the awareness of gender equality in China in the 21st century has gradually increased, which has successfully promoted the popularity of Women's Cinema. The setting for Women's Cinema has also shifted from the family environment to the workplace (Xie, 2011). Furthermore, some researchers believe that the positioning of female characters in *Go LA LA Go* is in line with the status of women in current Chinese society;

the film no longer defines women as weak but reflects the tenacity and self-improvement of women (Zhang, 2014). As the two researchers above have concluded, with the advent of the 21st century, Chinese women have gradually strengthened their independent consciousness, and more women have gotten rid of the shackles and restrictions of traditional views, actively participating in social work to showcase their personal value and charm. Further, studies have shown that the popularity of Chinese Women's Cinema in the 21st century and the positioning of female roles in the films correlate to the current status in Chinese culture (Wang, 2021). With the progression of this era and the opening up of society, many traditional feudal ideas have been gradually abandoned. Chinese society began to advocate gender equality and encourage women to actively participate in social work, which gave women more rights to speak freely about their role and status in society. At the same time, the gradual improvement of women's status contributed to the development of Chinese Women's Cinema. Therefore, as the literature contends, with the improving status of women and the increasing awareness of gender equality, the representation of women in the film industry has simultaneously improved.

Based on the existing literature, the main difference between 20th century and 21st century Chinese Women's Cinema lies in the mode of women's representation. In the 20th century, the background of Chinese Women's Cinema was the family as the main body, reflecting the tragic fate of women in Chinese feudal male-dominated society. On the other hand, Chinese Women's Cinema in the 21st century has shifted the shooting background from family to the workplace, reflecting the promotion of Chinese women's status, social progress, and cultural change.

Differences Between Chinese Women's Cinema Directed by Male Directors and Female Directors

In the early Chinese Film Market, male directors held the main position and became the leaders of film shooting. The creation of Women's Cinema by male directors has also attracted the analysis and research of many academics. A series of recent studies have indicated that when shooting Chinese Women's Cinema, it is difficult for male directors to be rid of the male perspective and the limitations of male consciousness, it is difficult to break the gender stance and put forward critical thinking and in-depth depiction of gender images (Liu & Zhang, 2012). The famous director Zhang Yimou, who directed the film *Raise the Red Lantern*, accurately depicts the suffering of Chinese women in feudal society while criticising the shortcomings of society's attitude. However, his male-oriented approach in filmmaking still leaves the impression that women's suffering has been understood and approached only from a male perspective (Ma, 2014) and, therefore, leaves a feeling of external explanation towards women's societal role. The researchers believe that when male directors guide the shooting of Chinese Women's Cinema, they look at the female characters from the male perspective due to gender differences, making the female characters lack a sense of vividness and flexibility, resulting in the emotional expression of the plot being slightly blunt. Nevertheless, there appears to be discrepancies between some of the reported observations. The famous Chinese male director Guan Jinpeng is considered to be best at portraying female characters and expressing emotions in a delicate way from the perspective of women, and the Women's Cinemas he directs are also popular with Chinese women audiences (Wang, 2006). Due to the influence of traditional Chinese views, many Chinese male directors impose male thoughts and opinions on the emotional expression of female characters when directing films, making the roles stereotyped and lacking in authenticity. Whereas, there are still some male directors who know how to use gender differences to highlight female roles, so that the emotional expression of female roles becomes more vivid and full. Thereby, it becomes apparent that there is no consensus on the gender limitations put on Chinese Women's Cinema by male directors.

In the early 21st century, many female directors have emerged in the Chinese Film Market, and through unremitting efforts, they have directed and shot many excellent works. Due to the increasing popularity of exceptional quality female-directed films, the topic of Chinese Women's Cinema directed by women has become a focus of many researchers. This has also been explored in prior studies by women as the number of female directors has increased, the Chinese government and audiences have gradually paid more attention to their works, and many Chinese state news outlets have promoted Women's Cinema directed by female directors (Li, 2009). Moreover, previous research showed that the Chinese government has also initiated corresponding awards and activities for female directors and Women's Cinema to promote the development of Women's Cinema (Jin & Cao, 2007). In line with supporting equal representation, the current Chinese government supports the development of Chinese Women's Cinema and has made relevant policies to ensure the development and popularization of Chinese Women's Cinema. Moreover, several studies suggest that when female directors shoot Chinese Women's Cinema, their emotional expression is more delicate, and female directors often use secondary male roles to emphasize the independence of women and seek women's sense of existence and value through film plots (Yu & Wang, 2022). Perhaps it is easier for female directors to understand how to clearly express the charm of female characters, so as to portray them in a way that is more full of emotional expression. Thus, Chinese Women's Cinema, directed by female directors, has been recognized by the audience and society, and the government is also vigorously promoting the development of Chinese Women's Cinema. The pattern of gender relations in early Women's Cinema was often unbalanced, with women defined as the weak and the saved and men as the strong and the savior. Arguably, female directors have embarked on a path to fully embrace women's feelings and hardships by relying on a first-hand emotional understanding of these emotions so that women can better relate to the films.

As this section aimed to summarise, academic conflict exists in whether male directors can break through the limitations of gender and heart and soul create Women's Cinema from a female perspective. On the other hand, Women's Cinema created by female directors has been largely accepted and recognised by Chinese society and audiences and has been promoted on a large scale.

The Ideological Changes of Female Characters in Chinese Women's Cinema

With the continuous development of Chinese Women's Cinema, more researchers have begun to analyse the ideological background of female characters. A series of recent studies have indicated that the ideology is philosophical in nature that is not inherent in the human brain, but created by society and influenced by thinking ability, environment, information, value orientation, and other factors instead (Gerring, 1997). Zhang Yimou, a famous Chinese director, has directed and created numerous films that come under category of the early Chinese Women's Cinema, and the ideology of the female characters in each film has left a deep impression on the audience. Besides, prior research suggests that in many of the Chinese Women's Cinema directed by Zhang Yimou in the 20th century, the ideology of female characters is constantly restricted by society and male power, and the oppression of the weak in the feudal, patriarchal society is criticised by describing the tragic life of women (Jin, 2013). Several studies suggest that most of the female characters in Chinese Women's Cinema, released in the 20th century used male gaze to express women's struggle and resistance in the face of oppression (Yang, 2019). Therefore, in 20th century Chinese Women's Cinema, women were in a weak position, with most social resources being dominated and controlled by men. Women's Cinema released in the 20th century was known for criticising the Chinese feudal patriarchal society by reflecting the suffering of women, which also induces

ambiguity surrounding the ideology of female roles. On another note, the ideology of female characters in Chinese Women's Cinema directed by Zhang Aijia has also been discussed and analysed by many researchers. Song (2016) has emphasised that in the 21st century, Women's Cinema directed by Zhang Aijia displayed a weakened male character in attempts to strengthen the tenacity and self-confidence of female characters and take on a dominant position within the films. Some authors have suggested that the ideology of female characters in Chinese Women's Cinema released in the 21st century is considerably clearer and more purposeful, and the ideology of women no longer revolves around men but forms a pattern unique to women (Yu, 2010).

As the existing literature contends, the ideology of female characters in 20th century Women's Cinema is vague, is controlled by the male perspective and does not reflect women's own inherent value. In contrast, the ideology of female characters in 21st century Women's Cinema is more pronounced, and women gradually broke free of the male influence, making the ideology of female characters more confident and independent.

Research Gap

The current academic approach towards understanding the field of Chinese Women's Cinema is on concept definition, explaining its development history within the Chinese Women's Cinema, analysing and comparing 20th century and early 21st century Chinese Women's Cinema, analysing the differences between male- and female-directed representative films, and analysing the ideological representation of female roles in Chinese Women's Cinema. Nevertheless, the box office performance of Chinese Women's Cinema has been relatively under-researched. Hence, the purpose of this study is to explore the underlying reasons for the changes in gender roles and gender representation in the Chinese film industry over the past few decades in order to better understand this social change. The research aims to provide a comprehensive analysis by using a questionnaire to better understand society's attitudes towards gender representation in the film industry. The significance of this research is to effectively promote the popularisation of Chinese Women's Cinema culture and the growth of the box office by understanding the social attitude towards gender representation in the film industry and providing relevant information about the development direction and trend of Chinese Women's Cinema. Moreover, it aims to provide foundational support for gender equality and help to understand the underlying factors that society needs to promote gender equality. Thereafter, Chapter 3, Methodology, will explain in detail the research methods required for this research project.

Methodology

Introduction

This chapter will explain the specific methodology used in this research project, including research design, data collection, sampling methods, and data analysis. It will also highlight relevant ethical considerations and limitations.

Research Design

This dissertation adopts a quantitative online anonymous questionnaire-based research method to collect primary data for further analysis, with the research participants being Chinese volunteers. After the questionnaire is closed, the collected primary data are then collated, and a deductive analysis is used to explore the research hypotheses. A quantitative approach is a common research method, that can aid in exploring specific phenomena, with a focus on calculation, measurement, and finally presentation in the form of numbers for description (Kelle, 2006; Chor, 2010). Moreover, the advantage of quantitative research is that it can greatly improve the degree of

abstraction and generality of theories, and can accurately analyse the causal relationship between social phenomena (Watson, 2015). By using a questionnaire and a subsequent quantitative analysis, this research project aims to objectively explore the specific attitudes of Chinese society towards the issues raised in the research questions. Furthermore, the researcher proposes the hypotheses on the basis of existing research theories and conclusions in this field, so using a deductive approach to verify these research hypotheses can yield more accurate results.

Data Collection

The volunteers participating in the primary data collection were at least 18 years old, of sound mental capacity, and were capable of making informed decisions. Additionally, they had to be Chinese nationals. The primary data for this research project were collected from Chinese volunteers using the Qualtrics system. This online anonymous questionnaire consists of 27 questions, which are mainly divided into five parts: demography section, participants' way of accessing information and media platforms, Chinese audiences' knowledge and love of Chinese Women's Cinema, attitudes towards the status of women and gender equality in Chinese society, the impact of Chinese government policies and measures on Chinese Women's Cinema. This ensures that the primary data collected are more diverse and objectively quantifiable. A link to the online anonymous questionnaire and Participant Information Form of this research project was posted on China's most popular social platforms (such as Weibo) on June 21, 2023, to ensure that the research participants were representative of all major cities and regions within China. The online anonymous questionnaire was valid for 25 days. During this time frame, Chinese volunteers were able to fill out the questionnaire by accessing the links on social media platforms. The questionnaire will be closed down on July 15, 2023, and all answers submitted after that date was regarded as invalid.

Sampling Methods

In order to ensure equal and fair representation simple random sampling was used in this study. The online anonymous questionnaire targeted Chinese citizens in order to obtain a comprehensive picture of Chinese society's general attitude towards the research topic. Simple random sampling allows for a diverse range of participants from different regions and cultural backgrounds within China to represent their views. Simple random sampling can ensure that every individual in the population has a known, non-zero probability of being selected as the object of research, to ensure the fairness and representativeness of the sample size (Sillup & Klimberg, 2011). Furthermore, simple random sampling is an advantageous sampling method due to the fact that it allows for unbiased objective sampling, in which each participant has the same level of possibility for being selected, which follows the principle of equal opportunity (Noor, Tajik, & Golzar, 2022). This sampling technique is perfect for the purpose of this study because the primary data were collected from Chinese volunteers, and the collected primary data are related to Chinese society's attitude towards gender equality, the Chinese government's relevant policies and measures, and the relationship between Chinese Women's Cinema. Thereby, using simple random sampling to sample the collected primary data can provide a more fair, comprehensive, representative, and targeted outlook on the subject.

Data Analysis

In the primary data collection work of this research project, the researcher will use the Qualtrics system to form the questionnaires. Qualtrics system is a multifunctional software that can not only produce questionnaires but also carry out accurate and diverse data analysis through internal systems (Holt & Loraas, 2019). The researcher collected the primary data provided by all Chinese volunteers after the deadline for filling in the anonymous online questionnaire, and used the automatic chart generation function in the background of the

Qualtrics system to create the charts. Subsequently, the researcher imported the charts automatically generated by Qualtrics system were imported into SPSS descriptive analysis was then done to analyze the specific data, and displayed the data in the form of tables. The reason why the researcher chose the SPSS system for data analysis is that the SPSS system is powerful, and it can provide a complete data analysis process and can be widely used in many fields. Moreover, the advantage that SPSS cannot ignore is that it can read and output files in various formats, such as Word, Excel, PowerPoint, and so on. As a consequence, the SPSS data analysis system is suitable for the primary data analysis of this research project.

Ethical Considerations

The collection of primary data fully protected the privacy and personal information of the participating volunteers. The researcher distributed the Participant Information Form to the volunteers who participated in the primary data in advance, and the volunteers have complete freedom to decide whether to participate in the activity. Volunteers were allowed to withdraw from the questionnaire for any reason, and volunteers who withdrew from the primary data collection activity were not held responsible for their withdrawal. Participants needed to inform the researcher by email of their decision to withdraw, and the researcher accordingly deleted all the information filled in by the relevant volunteer to ensure that no information of the volunteer remained (the researcher's email address is in the Participant Information Form). Volunteers were not able to contact the researcher for withdrawal following the end of the data collection period (July 15, 2023). Besides, the collected primary data were stored on encrypted web disks of the researcher to prevent loss and leakage. More information concerning the participation of volunteers in the collection of primary data is detailed in the Participant Information Form.

Limitations

Although the researcher has tried the best to select research methods and sampling methods suitable for this research project, there are still some research limitations. First of all, the research could not determine the accuracy and representativeness of the primary data collected. The reason is that this research project mainly collects primary data through anonymous online questionnaires. Therefore, volunteers who participate in the provision of primary data may fill in questionnaires randomly and omit questions when filling out questionnaires, which leads to the inauthenticity and lack of representation of primary data. Secondly, the use of simple random sampling method may cause a huge workload for the researcher. The reason is that compared with other sampling methods, the limitation of the simple random sampling method is that when the total number of samples is too large, it will greatly increase the difficulty of sampling and more time will be spent on sampling. Besides, if the difference between the sample results is too large, it will greatly reduce the persuasion of the sample data, so that the sample data are not representative.

Summary

This chapter provided a detailed explanation of the research methods to be used in this research project. Thereafter, in Chapter 4, Results, the researcher will make a detailed analysis of the collected primary data and show it with tables.

Results

Introduction

In this chapter, the collected primary data were sorted and imported into SPSS for detailed descriptive analysis. Subsequently, it was displayed and explained using tables.

Primary Data Analysis

Table 1

Demography Section

Items	Categories	<i>N</i>	Percent (%)
(1) Your age	18-25	69	29.36
	26-35	73	31.06
	36-45	58	24.68
	Over 45 years old	35	14.89
(2) Your gender	Male	53	22.55
	Female	178	75.74
	Non-binary/third gender	4	1.7
(3) Your educational level	Middle school or less	6	2.55
	High school diploma	20	8.51
	Undergraduate degree	136	57.87
	Master's degree or higher	73	31.06
(4) Your employment status	Students	62	26.38
	Full-time	125	53.19
	Part-time	35	14.89
	Unemployed	13	5.53
(5) Your current monthly income	No income	49	20.85
	Less 4000	43	18.3
	4000-7000	44	18.72
	7000-10000	44	18.72
	More than 10000	55	23.4
Total		235	100

Table 1 shows the participant demographic, the main purpose of which is to collect the personal information and background of the Chinese volunteers who participated in the data collection. The number of volunteers in the age range of 26-35 years old was 73, accounting for 31.06% of the total number of volunteers. Furthermore, 178 (75.74%) female volunteers participated, which is 3.3 times more than male volunteers. Moreover, the educational level of the volunteers was mainly those with Undergraduate Degrees, which totaled 136 participants that made up 57.87% of the total number of volunteers. In addition, the number of volunteers in the full-time stage was 125, accounting for 53.19% of the total number of volunteers. Besides, the number of volunteers who chose "No income" was up to 49, accounting for 20.85% of the total number of volunteers.

Table 2 details participants' way of accessing information and media platforms. Question 6 examines where volunteers usually watch Chinese Women's Cinema. Among the three options (Cinema, Online video platform, Buy a DVD), the number of volunteers who chose "Online video platform" was 182, accounting for 77.45% of the total number of volunteers. In contrast, only three volunteers who chose "Buy a DVD", accounting for 1.28% of the total number of volunteers. Moreover, Question 7 mainly investigated how volunteers usually obtain information about Chinese Women's Cinema. In three options (Online platforms, Magazine, Printed newspaper), the number of volunteers who chose "Online platforms" was 221, accounting for 94.04% of the total number of volunteers. In contrast, 0 volunteers chose "Printed newspaper". Consequently, it can be concluded that most of the volunteers watch Chinese Women's Cinema through the Online video platform, and access relevant information about Chinese Women's Cinema through Online platforms.

Table 2

Participants' Way of Accessing Information and Media Platforms

Items	Categories	N	Percent (%)
(6) Where do you usually watch Chinese Women's Cinema?	Cinema	50	21.28
	Online video platform (such as Tencent video, iQiyi)	182	77.45
	Buy a DVD	3	1.28
(7) How do you usually get information about Chinese Women's Cinema?	Online platforms	221	94.04
	Magazine	14	5.96
	Printed newspaper	0	0
Total		235	100

Table 3

Frequency of Chinese Audiences' Knowledge and Love of Chinese Women's Cinema

Items	Categories	N	Percent (%)
(8) How much do you like watching Chinese Women's Cinema?	Yes, very much	133	56.6
	Yes, somewhat	59	25.11
	Neutral	29	12.34
	Not really	11	4.68
	Not at all	3	1.28
(9) Do you often watch Chinese Women's Cinema?	Yes, very much	120	51.06
	Yes, somewhat	59	25.11
	Neutral	31	13.19
	Not really	21	8.94
	Not at all	4	1.7
(10) How much do you know about Chinese Women's Cinema?	Yes, very much	112	47.66
	Yes, somewhat	62	26.38
	Neutral	41	17.45
	Not really	15	6.38
	Not at all	5	2.13
(11) How familiar are you with Chinese women filmmakers?	Yes, very much	114	48.51
	Yes, somewhat	53	22.55
	Neutral	34	14.47
	Not really	28	11.91
	Not at all	6	2.55
Total		235	100

Table 3 shows Chinese audiences' knowledge and love of Chinese Women's Cinema. Question 8 mainly investigates how much volunteers like watching Chinese Women's Cinema. Data display that 192 volunteers (133 very much, 59 somewhat) liked to watch Chinese Women's Cinema, accounting for 81.71% of the total number of volunteers (56.6% very much, 25.11% somewhat). In contrast, only 14 volunteers (11 not really, three not at all) disliked watching Chinese Women's Cinema, accounting for 5.96% of the total number of volunteers (4.68% not really, 1.28% not at all). Besides, Question 9 focuses on how often volunteers watch Chinese Women's Cinema. It can conclude that 179 volunteers (120 very much, 59 somewhat) often watched Chinese Women's Cinema, accounting for 76.17% of the total number of volunteers (51.06% very much, 25.11% somewhat). In contrast, 25 volunteers (21 not really, four not at all) did not watch Chinese Women's Cinema, accounting for 10.64% of the total number of volunteers (8.94% not really, 1.7% not at all). Therefore, this reflects that most of the volunteers like to watch Chinese Women's Cinema, and often watch Chinese Women's Cinema.

Question 10 mainly examines how much volunteers know about Chinese Women's Cinema. It can be seen that, there were 174 volunteers (112 very much, 62 somewhat) were familiar with Chinese Women's Cinema, accounting for 74.04% of the total number of volunteers (47.66% very much, 26.38% somewhat). However, 20 volunteers (15 not really, five not at all) did not know about Chinese Women's Cinema, accounting for 8.51% of the total number of volunteers (6.38% not really, 2.13% not at all). Moreover, Question 11 focuses on how familiar volunteers were with Chinese women filmmakers. Data display that, there were 167 volunteers (114 very much, 53 somewhat) were familiar with Chinese women filmmakers, accounting for 71.06% of the total number of volunteers (48.51% very much, 22.55% somewhat). Whereas, 34 volunteers (28 not really, six not at all) were not familiar with Chinese women filmmakers, accounting for 14.46% of the total number of volunteers (11.91% not really, 2.55% not at all). Thereby, this indicates that most of the volunteers have a good understanding of Chinese Women's Cinema, and were also familiar with Chinese female filmmakers.

Table 4 describes attitudes towards the status of women and gender equality in Chinese society. Question 12 mainly examines how familiar volunteers are with the shifting status of Chinese women in the 21st century. The data analysis shows that 201 volunteers (132 very much, 69 somewhat) were familiar with the changes in the status of Chinese women in the 21st century, accounting for 85.53% of the total number of volunteers (56.17% very much, 29.36% somewhat). Furthermore, Question 13 mainly examines whether volunteers are familiar with the current level of gender representation in Chinese films. This reflects that 185 volunteers (114 very much, 71 somewhat) were familiar with the current level of gender representation in Chinese films, accounting for 78.72% of the total number of volunteers (48.51% very much, 30.21% somewhat). Moreover, Question 14 mainly examines whether volunteers think that contemporary Chinese films represent Chinese women in accordance to their role in society. There were 181 volunteers (119 very much, 62 somewhat) who thought that contemporary Chinese films represent Chinese women in accordance with their role in society, accounting for 77.02% of the total number of volunteers (50.64% very much, 26.38% somewhat). Thereby, this indicates that most of the volunteers were familiar with the change in Chinese women's status in the 21st century and familiar with the current level of gender representation in Chinese films, and think that contemporary Chinese films represent Chinese women in accordance with their role in society.

Question 15 examines whether volunteers think that changing gender dynamics within society influence the way films represent the female gender in films. There were 198 volunteers (124 very much, 74 somewhat) who think that changing gender dynamics within a society influence the way films represent the female gender in films, accounting for 84.26% of the total number of volunteers (52.77% very much, 31.49% somewhat). Whereas, there were seven volunteers (six not really, one not at all) who did not think changing gender dynamics within society influence the way films represent the female gender in films, accounting for 2.98% number of volunteers (2.55% not really, 0.43% not at all). Moreover, Question 16 mainly examines whether volunteers think that the way the female gender is represented in Chinese films has an impact on gender dynamics within society. There were 195 volunteers (125 very much, 70 somewhat) who think the way the female gender is represented in Chinese films has an impact on gender dynamics within society, accounting for 82.98% of the total number of volunteers (53.19% very much, 29.79% somewhat). However, there were 16 volunteers (14 not really, two not at all) who did not think the way the female gender is represented in Chinese films has an impact on gender dynamics within society, accounting for 6.81% of the total number of volunteers (5.96% not really, 0.85% not at all). Hence, this reflects that most of the volunteers believe that changing gender dynamics within society influence the way films represent the female gender in China films, and the way the female gender is represented in Chinese films has an impact on gender dynamics within society.

Table 4

Frequency of Attitudes Towards the Status of Women and Gender Equality in Chinese Society

Items	Categories	N	Percent (%)
(12) How familiar are you with the shifting status of Chinese women in the 21st century?	Yes, very much	132	56.17
	Yes, somewhat	69	29.36
	Neutral	23	9.79
	Not really	9	3.83
	Not at all	2	0.85
(13) Are you familiar with the current level of gender representation in Chinese films?	Yes, very much	114	48.51
	Yes, somewhat	71	30.21
	Neutral	28	11.91
	Not really	20	8.51
	Not at all	2	0.85
(14) Do you think that contemporary Chinese films represent Chinese women in accordance to their role in society?	Yes, very much	119	50.64
	Yes, somewhat	62	26.38
	Neutral	34	14.47
	Not really	17	7.23
	Not at all	3	1.28
(15) Do you think that changing gender dynamics within society influence the way films represent the female gender in films?	Yes, very much	124	52.77
	Yes, somewhat	74	31.49
	Neutral	30	12.77
	Not really	6	2.55
	Not at all	1	0.43
(16) Do you think that the way the female gender is represented in Chinese films has an impact on gender dynamics within society?	Yes, very much	125	53.19
	Yes, somewhat	70	29.79
	Neutral	24	10.21
	Not really	14	5.96
	Not at all	2	0.85
(17) Do you think that contemporary Chinese culture has an impact on the way the female gender is represented in Chinese films?	Yes, very much	124	52.77
	Yes, somewhat	84	35.74
	Neutral	18	7.66
	Not really	7	2.98
	Not at all	2	0.85
(18) Do you think that the way the female gender is represented in Chinese films has an impact on contemporary Chinese culture?	Yes, very much	122	51.91
	Yes, somewhat	79	33.62
	Neutral	21	8.94
	Not really	11	4.68
	Not at all	2	0.85
(19) Do you think there is a sufficient level of gender equality in China?	Yes, very much	107	45.53
	Yes, somewhat	56	23.83
	Neutral	35	14.89
	Not really	28	11.91
	Not at all	9	3.83
(20) Do you think that the rising awareness of gender equality influences the popularity of Chinese Women's Cinema?	Yes, very much	131	55.74
	Yes, somewhat	75	31.91
	Neutral	16	6.81
	Not really	11	4.68
	Not at all	2	0.85

Table 5 to be continued

	Yes, very much	122	51.91
	Yes, somewhat	63	26.81
(21) Are social movements supporting gender equality represented in Chinese films?	Neutral	31	13.19
	Not really	17	7.23
	Not at all	2	0.85
Total		235	100

Question 17 mainly examines whether volunteers think that contemporary Chinese culture has an impact on the way the female gender is represented in Chinese films. By analyzing, it can be concluded that 208 volunteers (124 very much, 84 somewhat) think that contemporary Chinese culture has an impact on the way the female gender is represented in Chinese films, accounting for 88.51% of the total number of volunteers (52.77% very much, 35.74% somewhat). Whereas, there were nine volunteers (seven not really, two not at all) who do not think contemporary Chinese culture has an impact on the way the female gender is represented in Chinese films, accounting for 3.83% of the total number of volunteers (2.98% not really, 0.85% not at all). Furthermore, Question 18 mainly investigates whether volunteers think that the way the female gender is represented in Chinese films has an impact on contemporary Chinese culture. Data display that 201 volunteers (122 very much, 79 somewhat) think that the way the female gender is represented in Chinese films has an impact on contemporary Chinese culture, accounting for 85.53% of the total number of volunteers (51.91 very much, 33.62% somewhat). Nevertheless, there were 13 volunteers (11 not really, two not at all) who do not think the way the female gender is represented in Chinese films has an impact on contemporary Chinese culture, accounting for 5.53% of the total number of volunteers (4.68% not really, 0.85% not at all). Consequently, this reflects that most of the volunteers think that contemporary Chinese culture has an impact on the way the female gender is represented in Chinese films, and the way the female gender is represented in Chinese films has an impact on contemporary Chinese culture.

Question 19 mainly examines whether volunteers think there is a sufficient level of gender equality in China. It can be concluded that, there were 163 volunteers (107 very much, 56 somewhat) who believed that there is a sufficient level of gender equality in China, accounting for 69.36% of the total number of volunteers (45.53% very much, 23.83% somewhat). Furthermore, Question 20 mainly examines whether volunteers think that the rising awareness of gender equality influences the popularity of Chinese Women's Cinema. Based on the analysis of primary data that, there were 206 volunteers (131 very much, 75 somewhat) found that the rising awareness of gender equality influences the popularity of Chinese Women's Cinema, accounting for 87.65% of the total number of volunteers (55.74% very much, 31.91% somewhat). Moreover, Question 21 mainly examines social movements supporting gender equality represented in Chinese films. It can conclude that, there were 185 volunteers (122 very much, 63 somewhat) think social movements supporting gender equality represented in Chinese films, accounting for 78.72% of the total number of volunteers (51.91% very much, 26.81% somewhat). As a result, this indicates that most of the volunteers believe that there is a sufficient level of gender equality in China, and the rising awareness of gender equality influences the popularity of Chinese Women's Cinema, and social movements supporting gender equality represented in Chinese films.

Table 5 mainly shows the impact of Chinese government policies and measures on Chinese Women's Cinema. Question 22 mainly examines whether volunteers are aware of any government initiatives that promote Chinese Women's Cinema. Data clarity that, there were 174 volunteers (122 very much, 52 somewhat) who are aware of any government initiatives that promote Chinese Women's Cinema, accounting for 74.04% of the total number

of volunteers (51.91% very much, 22.13% somewhat). Whereas, there were 31 volunteers (24 not really, seven not at all) who are not aware of any government initiatives that promote Chinese Women's Cinema, accounting for 13.19% of the total number of volunteers (10.21% not really, 2.98% not at all). Furthermore, Question 23 mainly examines how important volunteers think government-backed events, such as film festivals or awards, have been in promoting Chinese women-directed films. Based on participants' responses, conclusions can be drawn that, there were 193 volunteers (131 very much, 62 somewhat) thought that the government backed events, such as film festivals or awards, are very important in promoting Chinese women directed films, accounting for 82.12% of the total number of volunteers (55.74% very much, 26.38% somewhat). Nevertheless, there were 18 volunteers (15 not really, three not at all) thought that the government-backed events, such as film festivals or awards, are not important in promoting Chinese women-directed films, accounting for 7.66% of the total number of volunteers (6.38% not really, 1.28% not at all). Consequently, this indicates that most Chinese volunteers are aware of any government initiatives that promote Chinese Women's Cinema, and thought that the government-backed events, such as film festivals or awards, are very important in promoting Chinese women-directed films.

Table 5

Frequency of the Impact of Chinese Government Policies and Measures on Chinese Women's Cinema

Items	Categories	N	Percent (%)
(22) Are you aware of any government initiatives that promote Chinese Women's Cinema?	Very much	122	51.91
	Somewhat	52	22.13
	Neutral	30	12.77
	Not really	24	10.21
	Not at all	7	2.98
(23) How important do you think government backed events, such as film festivals or awards, have been in promoting Chinese women directed films?	Very much	131	55.74
	Somewhat	62	26.38
	Neutral	24	10.21
	Not really	15	6.38
	Not at all	3	1.28
(24) Do you think that government regulations have negatively impacted the rise of Chinese Women's Cinema?	Very much	26	11.06
	Somewhat	26	11.06
	Neutral	26	11.06
	Not really	16	6.81
	Not at all	141	60
(25) Do you think that government support has contributed to the production and distribution of Chinese Women's Cinema?	Very much	111	47.23
	Somewhat	66	28.09
	Neutral	40	17.02
	Not really	16	6.81
	Not at all	2	0.85
(26) Have you observed any differences in the level of government support for Chinese women directed films compared to films directed by men?	Very much	118	50.21
	Somewhat	53	22.55
	Neutral	46	19.57
	Not really	14	5.96
	Not at all	4	1.7
(27) How influential do you believe the government's cultural policies have been in supporting the rise of Chinese Women's Cinema?	Very much	120	51.06
	Somewhat	52	22.13
	Neutral	37	15.74
	Not really	11	4.68
	Not at all	15	6.38
Total		235	100

Question 24 mainly examines whether volunteers think that government regulations have negatively impacted the rise of Chinese Women's Cinema. Primary data display that, there were 52 volunteers (26 very much, 26 somewhat) think that government regulations have negatively impacted the rise of Chinese Women's Cinema, accounting for 22.12% of the total number of respondents (11.06% very much, 11.06% somewhat). By contrast, there were 157 volunteers (16 not really, 141 not at all) who thought that government regulations have no negative impact on the rise of Chinese Women's Cinema, accounting for 66.81% of the total number of volunteers (6.81% not really, 60% not at all). Moreover, Question 25 mainly investigates whether volunteers think that government support has contributed to the production and distribution of Chinese Women's Cinema. Analysis of primary data showed that 177 volunteers (111 very much, 66 somewhat) think that government support has contributed to the production and distribution of Chinese Women's Cinema, accounting for 75.32% of the total number of volunteers (47.23% very much, 28.09% somewhat). By contrast, there were only 18 volunteers (16 not really, two not at all) who do not think government support has contributed to the production and distribution of Chinese Women's Cinema, accounting for only 7.66% of the total number of volunteers (6.81% not really, 0.85% not at all). Therefore, this reflects that most of the volunteers believe that government regulations do not negatively impact the rise of Chinese Women's Cinema, and government support has contributed to the production and distribution of Chinese Women's Cinema.

Question 26 mainly examines whether volunteers have observed any differences in the level of government support for Chinese women-directed films compared to films directed by men. Through the analysis of primary data it can be derived that 171 volunteers (118 very much, 53 somewhat) who have observed big differences in the level of government support for Chinese women-directed films compared to films directed by men, accounting for 72.76% of the total number of volunteers (50.21% very much, 22.55% somewhat). However, there were 18 volunteers (14 not really, four not at all) who have not observed any differences in the level of government support for Chinese women-directed films compared to films directed by men, accounting for 7.66% of the total number of volunteers (5.96% not really, 1.7% not at all). Furthermore, Question 27 mainly examines how influential volunteers believe the government's cultural policies have been in supporting the rise of Chinese Women's Cinema. Based on the questionnaire results, there were 172 Chinese volunteers (120 very much, 52 somewhat) believe that the government's cultural policies have been in support of the rise of Chinese Women's Cinema, accounting for 73.19% of the total number of volunteers (51.06% very much, 22.13% somewhat). Whereas, there were 26 Chinese volunteers (11 not really, 15 not at all) who do not believe that the government's cultural policies have been supporting the rise of Chinese Women's Cinema, accounting for 11.06% of the total number of volunteers (4.68% not really, 6.38% not at all). Thus, this indicates that most of the volunteers have observed differences in the level of government support for Chinese women-directed films compared to films directed by men, and believe that the government's cultural policies have been influential in supporting the rise of Chinese Women's Cinema.

Summary

This chapter summarizes the primary data collected, and details relevant descriptive analyses. Afterwards, in Chapter 5, Discussion, primary data will be used to answer and verify the research questions and hypotheses, and compare with the relevant existing literature.

Discussion

Introduction

This chapter comprehensively summarizes the collected data and addresses and examines the research questions and hypotheses. The results will be compared with relevant existing literature.

The discussion will highlight the findings of the collected data in relation to the research questions and hypotheses, which are:

RQ1: What is the relationship between Chinese society's attitude towards gender equality and the popularity of Chinese Women's Cinema?

RQ2: What are the perceived effects of Chinese government policies and measures on the increasing popularity of Chinese Women's Cinema?

RH1: The increase of social awareness towards gender equality has positively impacted the popularity of Chinese Women's Cinema.

RH2: The promotion of Chinese government initiatives that support equal gender representation has positively influenced the rising popularity of Chinese Women's Cinema.

Interpretation of the Findings

It appears that the groups who pay attention to and are interested in Chinese Women's Cinema were mostly young women aged 35 and below who received higher education and were currently working full-time. More than 70% of Chinese volunteers chose to watch and obtain information related to Chinese Women's Cinema through the Internet and were adequately familiar with Chinese Women's Cinema and related filmmakers. As a result, this shows that young Chinese internet users were more exposed to Chinese Women's Cinema through the Internet and have a strong interest in them, and have a deeper understanding of Chinese Women's Cinema and related information through the Internet.

The following analysis will answer research question 1 (RQ1) and verify research hypothesis 1 (RH1). Based on the findings, more than 70% of the Chinese volunteers were familiar with the status change of Chinese women in the 21st century and the current level of gender representation in Chinese films. They appeared to believe that contemporary Chinese films represent Chinese women accurately according to their roles in society. Furthermore, more than 70% of the Chinese volunteers believe that changing gender dynamics within society and contemporary Chinese culture are directly related to the way in which the female gender is represented in Chinese films. Moreover, more than 70% of the Chinese volunteers believe that there is an adequate level of gender equality in China, and the increased awareness of gender equality has influenced the popularity of female films, as well as the social movements supporting gender equality in Chinese films. This reflects the matured understanding of Chinese society regarding the status and gender of women in films, with increased recognition of women's status in society. Chinese society has realized the importance of gender equality and has vigorously promoted awareness of gender equality through the development of Chinese Women's Cinema. Hence, research hypothesis 1 (RH1) could be verified, as the increasing social awareness towards gender equality has positively impacted the popularity of Chinese Women's Cinema.

The following analysis will answer research question 2 (RQ2) and verify research hypothesis 2 (RH2). Based on the questionnaire findings, more than 75% of the Chinese volunteers were aware of the government's initiatives to promote the development of Chinese Women's Cinema and believed that government-supported events, such as film festivals or awards, are important in promoting films directed by Chinese women.

Furthermore, nearly 70% of the Chinese volunteers believe that the government's regulations have no negative impact on the rise of Chinese Women's Cinema and that the government's support is helpful for its production and distribution. Moreover, more than 70% of the Chinese volunteers observed differences in the level of government support for Chinese films directed by women and those directed by men and believed that the government's cultural policies had a great impact on supporting the rise of Chinese Women's Cinema. This suggests that the government's support for Chinese Women's Cinema has a positive impact on its development. In order to better develop Chinese Women's Cinema, the Chinese government has carried out relevant publicity and held corresponding activities (for example, the selection of the best Chinese female director and the review of Chinese Women's Cinema). As a consequence, the findings verify research hypothesis 2 (RH2) by acknowledging that the promotion of Chinese government initiatives that support equal gender representation has positively influenced the rising popularity of Chinese Women's Cinema.

Comparison With Relevant Literature

The researcher compares the collected primary data with the existing literature to explore potential correlation. As proposed by Xie (2011) and Zhang (2014), the setting for Women's Cinema in the 21st century has shifted from the family environment to the workplace, and the positioning of female characters is in line with the status of women in contemporary Chinese society; 21st century representative films no longer define women as weak, but reflect women's tenacity and desire for self-improvement instead. The primary data collected in this research project are consistent with this view, with more than 75% of the Chinese volunteers believing that contemporary Chinese films represent women according to their roles in society and thinking that changing gender dynamics in society have influenced the way women are represented in films. This reflects the gradual rising status of Chinese women in the 21st century with more independent choices. Furthermore, the awareness of gender equality in Chinese society has gradually increased, which has effectively promoted the popularity of Chinese Women's Cinema. Besides, as Wang (2021) claimed, the popularity of Chinese Women's Cinema in the 21st century and the positioning of female roles in the films correlate with the current status in Chinese culture. This view is also confirmed in the primary data collected in this study, as more than 85% of the Chinese volunteers believe that contemporary Chinese culture and the way the female gender is represented in Chinese films are mutually influencing. As a result, this reflects that in the 21st century, Chinese culture has gradually opened up, and its tolerance has gradually increased, which has also supported the promotion of women's status. Cultural shifts and societal changes have also influenced the way the female gender is represented in Chinese films and promoted the development of Chinese Women's Cinema.

Furthermore, as Li (2009) argued, as the number of female directors has increased, the Chinese government and audiences have gradually paid more attention to their works, and many Chinese state news outlets have actively promoted Women's Cinema directed by female directors. In line with this argument, this research finds that nearly 70% of the Chinese volunteers are aware of any government initiatives that promote Chinese Women's Cinema and observed a big difference in the level of government support for Chinese films directed by women versus those directed by men. It can be seen that, with the improvement of women's status in the 21st century, society and the government's awareness of gender equality has also increased. In order to make Chinese Women's Cinema more accessible and popular, the government has also included corresponding measures. This shows that the government attaches great importance to gender equality and has taken measures to actively promote the development of Chinese Women's Cinema. Besides, as Jin and Cao (2007) claimed, the Chinese

government has also initiated relevant awards and activities for female directors to promote the development of Women's Cinema. This research is in line with the same argument, as over 75% of the Chinese volunteers think that government support has contributed to the production and distribution of Chinese Women's Cinema, and believe that government-backed events, such as film festivals and awards, are very important in promoting women-directed films. Therefore, this indicates that in order to support the works of Chinese female directors and promote the positive development of Women's Cinema, the government has also taken corresponding measures, which shows the government's supportive attitude towards Chinese Women's Cinema.

Summary

This chapter summarizes and analyzes the primary data collected, exploring research questions and hypotheses. The correlation between the primary data collected and the existing literature review is examined. Following, Chapter 6, Conclusion, mainly includes a summary of this research, finding out research limitations, and giving suggestions.

Conclusion

Introduction

This chapter will comprehensively summarize and inspect this research project, display its limitations according to the research procedures, and give relevant suggestions.

Summary

This project has attempted to provide a comprehensive outlook on aspects influencing the rising box office performance of Chinese Women's Cinema through a questionnaire-based quantitative analysis. The research focuses on the relationship between the popularity of Chinese Women's Cinema and the rising social awareness towards gender equality. Additionally, the research puts emphasis on the potential and arguably significant importance of government measures in promoting such social movements. The purpose of this research is to find the underlying reasons for the changes in gender roles and gender representation in the Chinese film industry over the past few decades in order to better understand this social change in the 21st century. It also provides a comprehensive analysis through the use of questionnaires to better understand society's attitudes towards gender representation in the film industry. The primary data collected in this research support the fact that the increase in social awareness towards gender equality has positively impacted the popularity of Chinese Women's Cinema. Furthermore, the promotion of Chinese government initiatives that support equal gender representation has positively influenced the rising popularity of Chinese Women's Cinema. The significance of this research is to effectively promote the popularization of Chinese Women's Cinema culture and the growth of the box office by understanding social attitudes towards gender representation in the film industry and to provide relevant information about the development direction and trend of Chinese Women's Cinema. Moreover, it aims to provide foundational support for gender equality and help to understand the underlying factors that society needs to promote gender equality.

Limitations

While using a questionnaire-based quantitative analysis to provide a comprehensive understanding of the connection between the rising popularity and box office performance of Chinese Women's Cinema and Chinese society's understanding of gender roles and acceptance of gender equality does have its merits, such a research design holds innate limitations to profoundly explore the subject. First of all, the number of Chinese volunteers

involved in the data collection was small. This research project used simple random sampling to select 235 participants, which is small compared with China's population of 1.412 billion (China Census 2022). Consequently, the data might not be applicable on a national scale. Secondly, the data collection method and dissemination of the questionnaire exclude a significant percentage of the population from participating in similar research. As the primary data of this research project were collected through anonymous online questionnaires, only Chinese volunteers who are regular internet users would come across the opportunity to participate in this primary data collection. Therefore, people who are not familiar with the Internet, i.e. the elderly and people in areas not covered by the Internet are excluded, resulting in the lack of representation in the research data. Thirdly, the time limit of this primary data collection is relatively tight. This research had only 25 days to collect primary data. The time limit put an innate limit on the number of potential participants, which essentially limited the scope of the research outcome.

Suggestions

In order to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the relationships outlined in research question 1 (RQ1) and research question 2 (RQ2), the researcher proposes the following suggestions for future research. First of all, in order to collect more comprehensive and representative research data, there is a need for a larger participant pool that more accurately represents the demographic constitution of Chinese society. At the same time, further research could consider relying on different data sampling methods. In order to recruit volunteers from different regions and cities, people who do not often use the Internet and people in areas not covered by the Internet should be considered and can be included using offline questionnaires for data collection or combining online questionnaires with offline questionnaires. Finally, in order to allow more people to participate in the data collection, extending the validity period for filling out the questionnaire in future research can be an option.

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