

Study of popular Thai films in China

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Abstracts

In recent years, Thai films have become popular in China, and Thai cultural elements have found an appropriate way to express themselves through movies, and have quickly demonstrated their great appeal and influence in China. The spread of Thai films in China plays a positive role in promoting the industrialization of Thai films and improving the overseas influence of Thai culture. However, due to the differences in politics, economy and culture between China and Thailand, it is not easy for Thai films to win the recognition of the Chinese audience.

This research aims why and how Chinese audience watch Thai films and what factors contribute to Thai films'success in China. The objectives of this study are to study and analyze the foundation of media consumption on Thai films among Chinese audience and to study an understanding of Chinese audience's perception of the particular media products. Through the mixed methods approach, one hundred sets of online questionnaires and focus group interview were employed for this study. The findings show a variety of discovery data of Thai films trends happening in China. The fundamental reasons for Thai films became a hit in Chinese audiences is that they meet viewer's needs which include cultural and psychological pleasure, satisfaction, aesthetic gratification, and visual enjoyment. Besides, there is the perfect combination of tradition and modernity in Thai films, displaying the essence of traditional culture in a modern manner. Also, the emergence of new media plays a significant role as a tool to reform Thai entertainment industry from a mostly-regional into a global-centered interest . It reveals how Thai films have exploited a new media landscape and intensely changed with the online community.

Keywords: Popular Thai films; China; Chinese audience;

Introduction

The popularity of Thai films in China can be traced back to the late 1990s and early 2000s when a few Thai films were screened in Chinese theaters. The first Thai film to be released in China was "Bang Rajan" in 2001, which received critical acclaim and attracted a large audience. Since then, Thai films have gained increasing popularity in China, and many Thai filmmakers have capitalized on this trend by creating films that appeal to Chinese audiences. One of the main reasons for the success of Thai films in China is the similarity between the two cultures. Thai and Chinese cultures share many similarities, such as a shared Buddhist heritage, a strong emphasis on family values, and a love for martial arts. Thai filmmakers have been able to tap into this shared cultural heritage by creating films that resonate with Chinese audiences. Another factor that has contributed to the popularity of Thai films in China is the rise of streaming services such as iQiyi, Tencent Video, and Youku

(YinCui, 2020). These platforms have made it easier for Chinese audiences to access Thai films and have helped to create a demand for Thai content. Furthermore, the success of Thai films in China has been helped by the growing interest in Southeast Asian cinema among Chinese cinephiles. Thai films, in particular, have been praised for their unique storytelling, beautiful cinematography, and strong performances by actors. The success of Thai films in China can also be attributed to the efforts of the Thai government to promote Thai culture and entertainment abroad. The Thai government has organized film festivals, cultural exchange programs, and other initiatives to promote Thai films in China and other countries. The popularity of Thai films in China can be attributed to a combination of factors, including shared cultural heritage, the rise of streaming services, the growing interest in Southeast Asian cinema, and the efforts of the Thai government to promote Thai culture abroad.

The Popularity of Thai Films Overseas as Part of Cultural Globalization

Thai film industry began in the 1930s, with many studios producing movies were established. By the 1980s, however, the Thai film industry was struggling to compete with the western film industry like Hollywood, and during the 1990s, the industry was further got influence by the economic crisis in Asia. The impact was so severe that in 1998, Thailand was able to produce just eleven films. The crisis drew spending away from filmmaking and cinema attendance, and since that time, Thailand has come to be dominated by the output of Hollywood which Thais flock to watch in modern multiplex cinemas (Jeffrey, 2014 : online). However, filmmaking arose from the early 2000s seem to get better again as Thai directors including Nonzee Minibar, Pen-ek Rastafarian, and Apichatpong Weerasethakul began to make their mark at international film festivals, in addition to the exploits of the actor Tony Jaa (Tanya torn, 2012). An increasing number of young Thai people are taking an interest in becoming filmmakers, and the Tourism Authority of Thailand has offered its support, stating its intention to “position Thailand as the film-making capital of Asia” (Jeffrey, 2014 : online).

Consequently, foreign audiences select Thai films to satisfy their needs considering by the feature or attractiveness of it. Some argue that the characteristics of Thai films have contributed to their popularity overseas, especially with their differences from Japanese or Korean popular culture. As well-known Thai producer Bandit Hongdae (2010), and film critic and director Prawit Tang-arson (2012) pointed out, the unique contents of Thai films and series, which draw upon Thai culture, have ensured their popularity with global audiences. Thai contents are mostly overemotional. There is a main story developed to create emotions, the main character was always created to be bullied by others. The love ideology also mixed with the moral ideology. For instance, the supernatural love story between human and female ghosts in *Nang Nak* (1999), in which a ghost comes back to life, makes the western audiences feel the content is new and exotic. Also, in 2003, a movie *Ong-bak* built a reputation for Muay Thai — a Thai style boxing, making Muay Thai a well-known sport at the international level. It is to say, Thai culture that appeared in Thai films is fascinated and unique to the perspective of worldwide audiences especially those who have never experienced either the traditional ways of life or beliefs of Thai society (Tanya torn, 2012 : online).

Globalization also plays such a significant role in pushing Thai films and TV series to be an active player at the international level. Since globalization is a process that is partly media-driven; it would not be possible in the absence of the latest information technology and mass media. Developments in politics, economics, and culture are increasingly driven by access to international media, smartphones, the internet, and digital services. Globalization within the media industry has been very fast as a consequence of the rapid development of

information technologies, including digitization, communications satellites, and other technological advances in computers. Such technologies have caused the global market for media products to expand significantly, so that TV shows, films, and advertising, are projected all around the world. These advances in technology have been vital in facilitating the cross-border flow of information which multimedia companies generate. Those media producers and distributors tend to be limited to a few major players, and hence the diversity of the content they provide is rather limited. Furthermore, the division between entertainment and information is not always clearly apparent (Filthen & Carlsson, 2002). In considering the idea of cultural globalization, its most significant impact lies in the way the culture and social lives of individuals everywhere are shaped by international media and transnational social phenomena, in a manner that has little to do with cross-border financial transactions. Popular culture, also considered to be the culture of the people, can be affected by these changes. Globalization manifests itself in the music, films, TV series, news, print media, fashions, lifestyles, entertainment products, and even food that people consume through their daily lives (Kluver & Fu, 2018). Especially in Asia, the culture of globalization has a great impact on local cultural traditions which are dominated and shaped by a new culture from the international mass media. This concept points to the influence of product spread, behavior, tastes, practices, and ideas, or beliefs about various from society to other societies. The results of this kind of cultural globalization led to the higher levels of criticism and discussion in the regions around the world (Hosseini, 2010). As if Korean wave or Hallyu which is the word refers to South Korean popular culture, particularly pop music, TV series, movies, food, fashion, and etc., has been gained its admiration from Asia and spread its diffusion internationally across the globe (Shim, 2006 : online).

Chinese Audiences Shared Interest in Asian Popular Culture

Talking about the audience, Chinese youths are becoming more open-minded to Asian popular culture, especially in South Korean and Japanese pop culture. For instance, Korean and Japanese fashion inspired some Chinese elementary and high school students to dress like their animation characters (Beijing Review, 2005 : online).

In the meantime, Thai TV series also have gained attracted interest among Chinese young generation since the late 2000s. Thai soap operas began to gain widespread popularity in mainland China since 2003. Thai television dramas reached Chinese television channels, preceded in the following years by the success of many television series. Asia one (2011) claimed that Thai TV series have been broadcasted by China's broadcasting channels that have more than 700 million and 800 million Chinese viewers like CCTV-8 and provincial TV stations such as Hunan TV and Anhui TV since 2003. For example, *Battle of Angels* — female air hostesses fighting over male pilots. This soap operas aired on Anhui Satellite TV in 2009 and became a big hit in Chinese screen after the first week of airing by ranked the tenth-place viewer rating and was re-run four times in two years between 2009 and 2010 (Danaitun, 2012 : 147).

In Thai films, even there are only a few Thai movies that can jump over Chinese censorship wall, for instance, the movie *Red Eagle* (2010), *First Love* (2010), *Ong-Bak* (2005), and so on. And as for the movies *Love of Siam* (2007), *Yes or No* (2010), etc., that they are not screened in theaters, but still created a phenomenon "Thai Fever" in China which the Chinese especially young audiences gave a landslide response. In 2017, *Bad Genius* — a film that shows high school student who makes money by cheating tests, with its gross of 270 million RMB in China hits the box office and leads the trend in the mainland. One Chinese

student even made a sculpture of ‘Kru Pee Lin’ — a leading character in the film, in order to worship her as an examination master, is very famous in China (Thai Rath, 2018). From this, it can be seen as the first step and a big commercial possibility for Thailand to open and raise the influence of Thai pop culture to the world’s second-largest showbiz market like China.

Comparing to the popularity of South Korean pop culture or K-pop in China, Guo (2011) explained that Korean entertainment had a lot of influences on Chinese teenagers and general public, similar to Thailand including tourism. At present, the trend of Thai TV series still cannot be compared with the popularity of Korean dramas, but Chinese audiences can try to watch a variety of film-television works of different styles and themes. Thai soap operas can bring a new vision to everyone because Thai TV series are rich in its contents: romantic love, non-related political issues and historically related background with China (Mingsarn, 2016). Due to the political issue, it makes Chinese people these days want to step far away with South Korea which helps Thai pop culture have a channel to spread its own cultural flow. Danaitun (2012) claimed that due to a dispute over the deployment of the U.S. Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) missile defense system in South Korea, it had an influence on a political conflict between China and South Korea that influence of Korean entertainment has immensely decreased. After THAAD conflict, there was an anti-Korea trend among Chinese people who are highly nationalistic. It also led the Chinese censorship board to limit Korean television imports. Hence, in relation to the notion of cultural proximity contributes greatly to the success of Thai films and TV series around neighboring countries. As for China, this can be seen as a great opportunity for Thailand to take a great advantage on this issue (Thairath, 2017).

Chinese Audience’s Consumption of Thai films and TV series

Currently, due to the censorship regulation in China, Thai films and TV series are hard to find in traditional media like television and cinema. However, because of new media, the way of media consumption among Chinese audiences especially young audiences have rehabilitated. Modern popular culture has become more and more globalized as a consequence of the cross-border flows of information and also because of regional immigration. China is currently undergoing a period of cultural transition, since its own popular culture is slightly lacking, leaving a void to be filled by foreign popular culture and its products. A major part of this foreign popular culture arrives in the form of films and TV series, which Chinese audiences are now able to enjoy via numerous channels, including television, but also encompassing the latest communication technologies such as the internet, or smartphones (Jiang & Leung, 2012). According to the previous study from He (2017), to Chinese young audiences, online social networks are completely new scientific mechanical services, developing in simply ongoing years. Excepting for broadcast on Chinese local television, Chinese people often watch Thai soap operas and movies via internet TV platforms. Since international social media platforms such as Facebook, YouTube, and LINE TV are blocked in mainland, China has its own Chinese-developed social media consists of more variety and alternatives to serve different interests. The official websites are such as Youku, Tudou, Sohu, and iQiyi (Thairath, 2017). The two most popular unofficial video-sharing websites that have Thai series are Bilibili and AcFun (He, 2017). The popularity of Thai film and TV series still remains its dissemination into Chinese social networks. Chinese young audiences mostly use Weibo and We Chat as a social online community to discuss and share about Thai films and series. Currently, in 2018, Thai drama called Love Destiny rising its popularity to the first rank drama hashtag in Weibo searching by 41% of young people aging between nineteen to twenty-eight (19 to 28), with a

total of 120 million views and also became the 17th most popular search on Baidu (Taizhong, 2018). As China swiftly modernizes and embraces globalization, young people in the country are exposed to information and cultural entertainment which may support or oppose the traditional values which had hitherto controlled their lives and thoughts up until now. Accordingly, their lives have become complicated by the need to negotiate the new information with which they must engage. Reflection is vital, as they try to make sense of the information in the context of their current lives, which must be understood by reconsidering everything they had previously known. Foreign media provide content that challenges young Chinese audiences, creating a lack of certainty, and also creating a greater awareness of the world around them. It can be therefore stated that this understanding involves “the routine incorporation of new information or knowledge into environments of actions that are thereby reconstituted and reorganized” (Kim, 2008). In today's society, the individuals consider to use the media to satisfy their cognitive needs (Jiang & Leung, 2012). Culture in each nation is formed in people's cognitive are based on various features and the media in particular films and TV series has an influence on viewers' creation on ideas and truths (Lucy, 2011). The mass media, to a degree, has shaped the understanding of each country through the media product. In all, the success of Thai films and TV series in China can be viewed as part of the new process of creating meaning from the experience of popular culture. In addition, Thai popular culture arrived in China at a time when the local alternatives were not necessarily meeting the more refined demands of the young Chinese audiences who want new and better entertainment (Jiang & Leung, 2012). It may be argued that Thai films and TV series filled their satisfied needs within the Chinese youth who are welcome for something new and open for the perspectives in their own lives. At the same time, Thai popular culture is, therefore, a way of transferring new cultural ideas and experiences to an audience that is prepared to voluntarily accept and welcome the novel content.

Metz Film Semiotics

Metz's film semiotics is based on the principles of structural linguistics, which he applied to the study of film. He argued that films, like language, have a grammar and a vocabulary that can be analyzed in order to reveal their underlying structures and meanings. In particular, he focused on the way that films use codes and conventions to create meaning, and how these codes and conventions are shaped by cultural and historical contexts (Metz, 2011).

One of the key concepts in Metz's film semiotics is the idea of the "filmic signifier," which refers to the visual and auditory elements of a film that create meaning (Cui Ying, 2013). According to Metz, filmic signifiers are arranged in a hierarchy, with some elements (such as the image track) having greater semiotic weight than others (such as the sound track). He also argued that filmic signifiers can be grouped into larger units, or "syntagms," which create meaning through their combination.

Metz also introduced the concept of "film genres," which he saw as categories of films that share certain conventions and codes. He argued that genres are shaped by cultural and historical factors, and that they help to structure our understanding of films and their meanings.

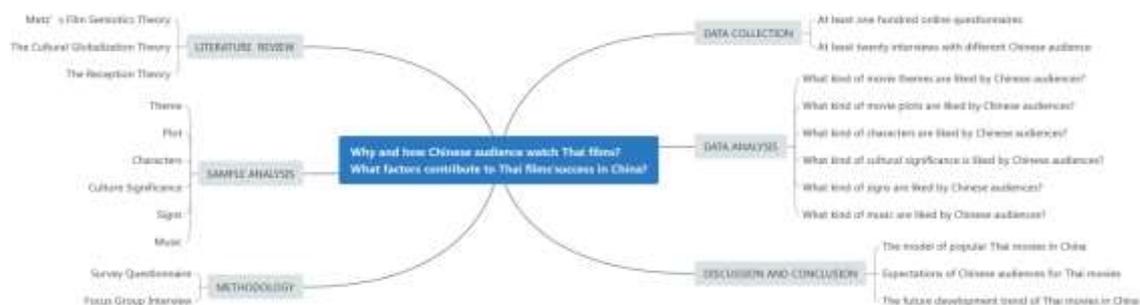
Another important concept in Metz's film semiotics is the idea of "enunciation," which refers to the way that films construct their own reality and position the viewer within that reality. Metz argued that films are not simply representations of reality, but rather constructions that create their own reality through the use of codes and conventions.

The theory of Metz posits that The theme is the soul of a movie, determining its direction; The plot is the backbone of a movie, the source of its charm; Character development is the best window to understand local culture in a movie; Culture in the movie is social norms and values, a movie may reflect the social norms, values, and beliefs of a particular culture or society, such as the importance of family, religious practices, or gender roles; Symbolic intentions in movies often involve seemingly insignificant objects, actions, or even natural phenomena; Music can also serve as a sign in movies, conveying different emotions through different types of music, enhancing the themes of the movie, deepening the emotions of the characters, and elevating the aesthetic atmosphere(Metz, 2011).

Metz's film semiotics has had a major impact on the field of film studies, and continues to be influential today. His approach has been criticized for its formalism and its emphasis on codes and conventions over the social and cultural contexts of films, but it remains an important theoretical framework for understanding the language of cinema.

Research Methodology

Both quantitative and qualitative methods were used for the study. This is because the mixed methods approach helps the researcher to provide a complete and more comprehensive better understanding of the research topic than either quantitative or qualitative approaches alone. An author first used an online survey questionnaire for the quantitative part then organize focus group discussions for the qualitative component.



(Figure 1 Study framework for the research)

The size of the sampling frame consisted of one hundred Chinese audiences across China mainland. A researcher asked Chinese audiences in order to get a basic understanding of what is going on or a trend on Thai films among them particularly on how and why they watch Thai films. The survey approach was designed as an online open and closed-ended questionnaire through a Chinese-based online survey website (wenjuan.com) for data collection purposes. At the end of the survey, an author asked participants to leave their contact information in case if they are willing to participate in the focus group interview.

After conducting research by the survey questionnaire and getting basic data, in order to gain more in-depth and deeper information especially opinions of Chinese audiences towards Thai films, the qualitative study method which is the focus group approach was employed.

In this case, non-probability sampling or snowball sampling focused on Chinese audiences in China. The researcher made initial contact with a group of Chinese audiences who leave their contacts in the questionnaires to hold the focus group discussion and then uses those audiences to establish contact with others to whom they think is appropriate for the research study.

It is expected that there will be 10 interviewees, representing Chinese audience who will be interviewed in Nanchang city. Among them, there are participants who have watched Thai films for a long time (more than 6 years), as well as those who have just known Thai films for a few years. The interview with all audiences lasted for 30 minutes. A pseudonym is used to represent twenty interviewees by letter e.g., interviewee A said this, interviewee B said that.

The questionnaire survey is divided into two parts. One part will ask all participants to rate the top ten most popular Thai movies in China, while the other part will investigate how and why they watch Thai films. In order to ensure the collection of over 100 valid questionnaires, 150 questionnaires will be distributed in this study.

During the interview process, the researcher will use themes, plot, characters, signs, music, and cultural context of the top ten Thai movies as scoring options. The participants were asked to indicate on a Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly dislike) to 5 (strongly like), and participants were given a score for each film.

Factors that could be analyzed to understand the popularity of Thai films in China could include the genre of the film, the actors and directors involved, the marketing and distribution strategies, and the cultural relevance of the film to the Chinese audience. The analysis could also explore the impact of critical reviews and social media buzz on the success of the films.

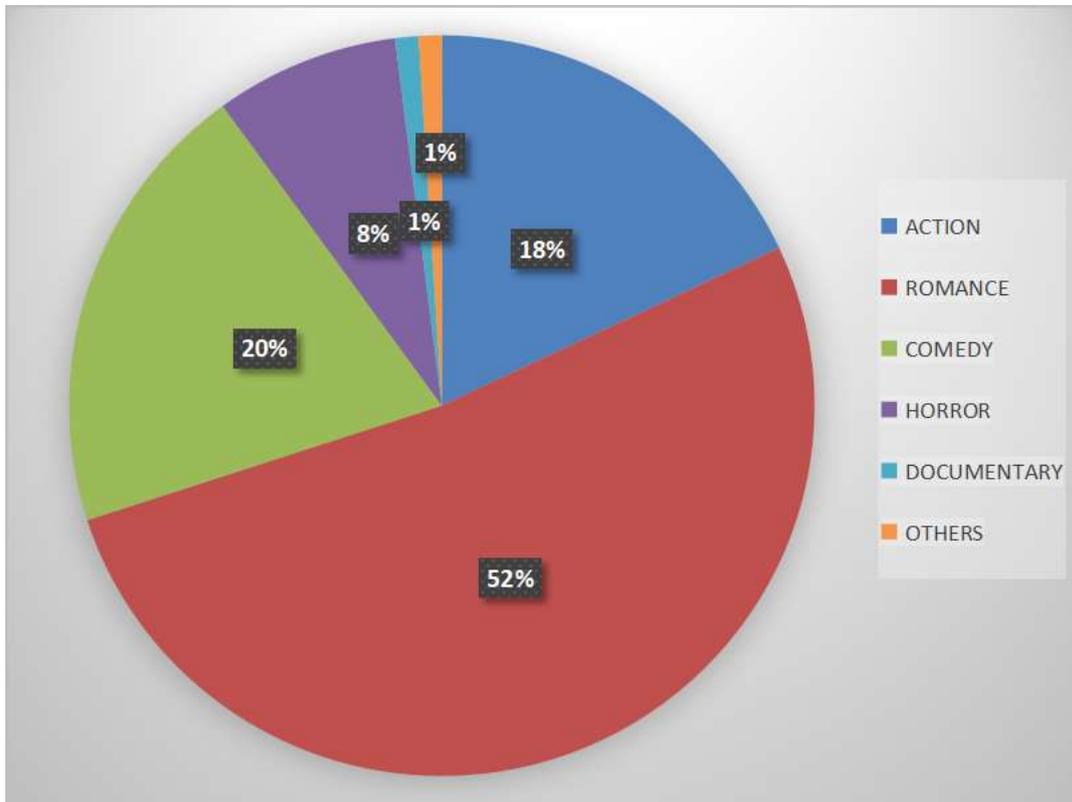
Research Results

The observation among the participants provided a wide array of data. Ideas from the data can be categorized as follows:

DEMOGRAPHIC BACKGROUND			
		FREQUENCY	PERCENT (%)
GENDER	FEMALE	62	62
	MALE	38	38
AGE	20-30	55	55
	30-40	30	30
	40-60	15	15
LEVEL OF EDUCATION	BELOW UNDERGRADUATE LEVEL		11
	BACHELOR		49
	MASTER		30
	PHD		10

(Table 2. Demographic Background of the Respondents)

Table 2 involves the age range, gender, and academic degree of the respondents. The results show that majority of Chinese audience who watch Thai films across China are female (62%) aging between 20 to 30 years old who are studying undergraduate programs.



(Chart 1. Lists of Favorite Genre)

The chart 1 shows the popular genres of Thai films among Chinese audience. The chosen genres varied greatly among the respondents. And the result shows that the three most desired genres for Chinese audiences are romance(52%), comedy(20%)and action(18%).

	ONCE AYEAR	ONCE AMONTH	2-5TIMES AMONTH	>5TIMES AMONTH	DEPENDON OCCASION
PERCENTAGE	27%	15%	10%	2%	56%

(Table 3. Frequency of Watching)

Accordingly, the frequency of watching Thai films and series (Table 2), the study also shows the major of Chinese audience regularly consume Thai films once a year (27%). Most of them (46%) are watching it depend on whether there are well-received or highly popular Thai movies released in China.

	STRONGLY LIKE	LIKE	NEUTRAL	DISLIKE	STRONGLY DISLIKE
PERCENTAGE	3%	66%	23%	6%	2%

(Table 4. The Extent of Respondents' Preference)

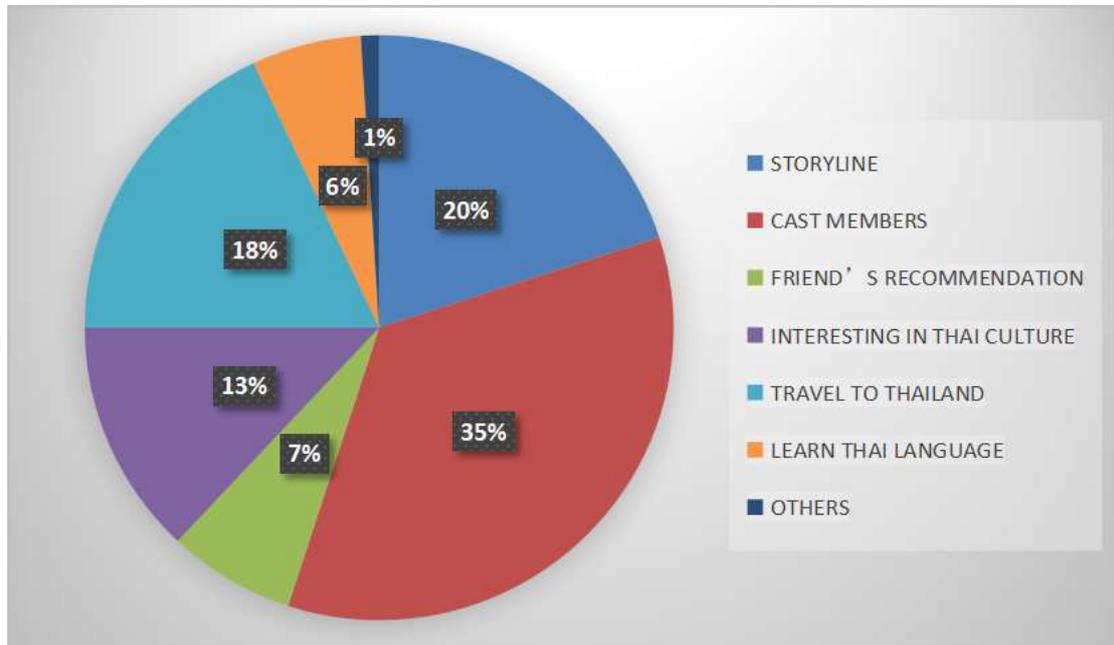
However, all the respondents were asked to expressed different levels of preference they derived from watching Thai films (Table 3). Most of the respondents (69%) stated that they like or strongly like watching Thai films . And a quarter of respondents (23%) said their level of preference was at the neutral level. While there are only a few participants (8%) who dislike or strongly dislike watching Thai films. This means even Chinese audiences didn't watch the Thai films frequently but more than half of respondents are really enjoying Thai films whenever they watching.

	FRIENDS'	INTERNET	TELEVISION	CINEMA	OTHERS
PERCENTAGE	48%	30%	10%	11%	1%

(Table 5. The way of Chinese audience to know Thai Films at the first time)

It is also important to know how the participants started watching Thai films. Friends' recommendation can be seen as the main motivation leading Chinese audience to know Thai films for the first time. Internet (30%) especially social media can also be seen as one of the noteworthy reasons leading Chinese audience to watch Thai films. As a 25-year-old interviewee A revealed, she is a type of "watching whatever shows up on the social network." She added, "I usually just search on XiaoHongShu, and DouBan community, where I get updates on my feed about favorite Thai artists I have already subscribed or followed to and watch everything I could."

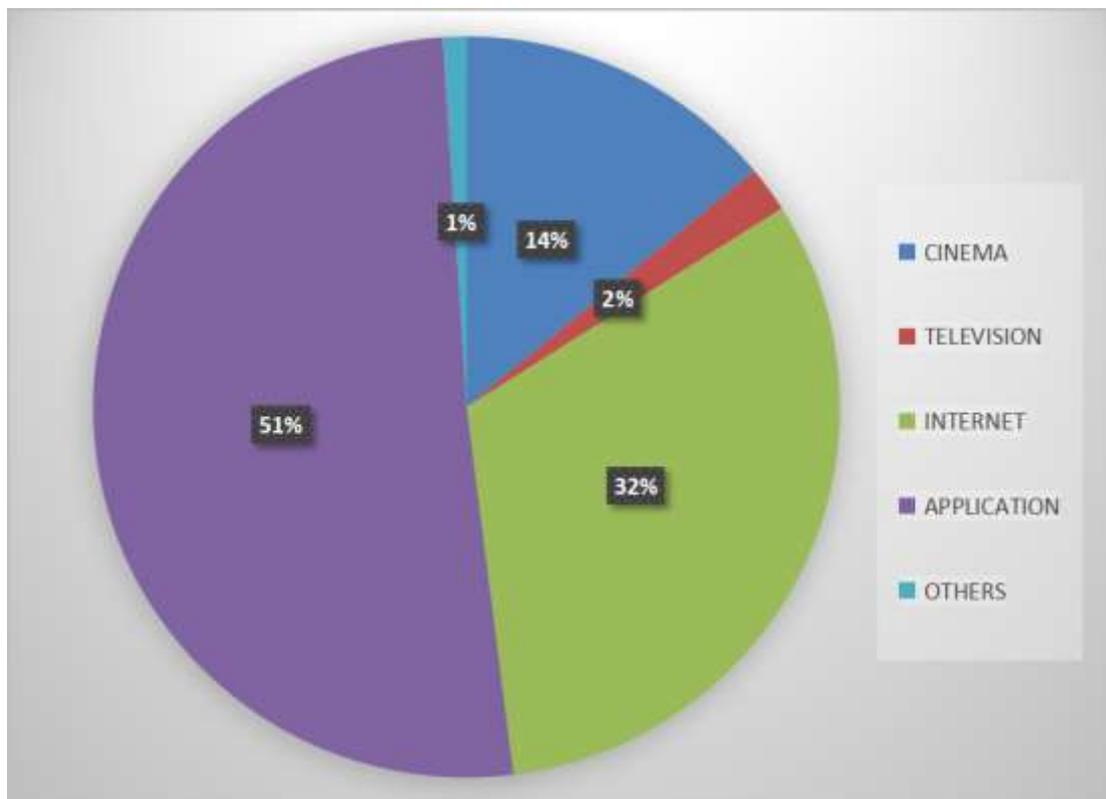
Consequently, the main reason Chinese audiences watch Thai films were found to be 'sociability', which is also a significant factor in the way that Chinese audiences first know Thai films . The majority of the interviewees (interviewee A, B, E, D) stated that they became curious due to their friends frequently talking about the Thai films that they like to watch, and as a result, they wanted to be able to share in these topics of conversation among their friends. This indicates that one aspect that causes the attention of Chinese audiences to be attracted the first time is discussions about Thai films along with their friends.



(Chart 2. Reasons to keep watching Thai films)

The reasons Thai films were watched by the Chinese audiences can be seen at the percentage on the table above. The most chosen reason Chinese audiences still watching Thai films is “cast members”, which estimating as 35% out of the total surveyed participants (100 people) .

As a result, for a beneficial type of relaxing entertainment, Thai films are regarded as a good choice. In their opinion, the contents of Thai films and TV series are unique and have characteristics that are different from the popular Chinese films that they usually watch. One interviewee, 31-year-old G, stated that the discovery of Thai films is similar to finding a different type of media product due to the significant variations in style. Because of this, she feels that the movies from Thailand are more exciting than the movies from China, due to the plot being more heavily exaggerated, which makes these movies different. Additionally, at the same time, the Thai movie stars are impressive with their striking looks and acting skills that are unforgettable. This is also related to the previous study from Tanyatorn (2012) claimed that Thai culture that appeared in Thai films are fascinated and unique to the perspective of worldwide audiences, especially those who have never experienced either the traditional ways of life or beliefs of Thai society (Tanyatorn, 2012).



(Chart 3. Ways to Watch Thai films)

For the main channel to watch Thai films and, instead of traditional media like television and cinema, the new media approach has assumed notable change to the way of watching it. Chinese audiences frequently access to Thai films through online websites and applications.

It can be said that remarkable transformations have occurred in the environment of the new media, and a new model of information dissemination that has a major influence is being built. At present, online social network use among young users is common. Since mobile application is the rising innovative application reacting to the fast improvement of mobile gadgets and remote networks. Any individual who claims well-informed mobile gadgets ought to have the experience to attempt distinctive mobile applications. These talks call attention to that the online social networks can give the advantageous approaches to socializing with others, staying aware of the patterns, killing time and loosening up psyche, and encountering oddity. In this way, the social motivation, enjoyment, fashion, and in addition epistemic motivations move Chinese audiences' motivation to utilize online social networks for getting gratification. It can, subsequently, be deduced that these users' social motivation affects their reception of online social networks. It can likewise be gathered that the Chinese audience's enjoyment motivation affects their reception of online social networks, while the users' fashion motivation influences their selection of online social networks, and the users' epistemic motivation influences their appropriation of online social networks. The users of online social networks are able to interact and communicate with one another at any place and time in different ways than the social services from the past. It has already become services that are widely used by consumers because several mobile applications have been introduced into the market.

Therefore, the boundaries between traditional media and those between each of these countries are being eliminated by this influence, and they have become increasingly integrated with each other. Thus, the new media has become a highly effective tool for expanding the popularity of Thai films.

	THEME	PLOT	CHARACTER	CULTURE	SIGN	MUSIC
<i>MY GIRL</i>	4.8	4.5	4.2	4.8	4.7	4.9
<i>FIRST LOVE</i>	4.8	4.7	5	4.6	4.2	4.9
<i>LOVE OF SIAM</i>	4.7	4.7	4.8	4.5	4.1	4.8
<i>BAD GENIUS</i>	4.6	4.9	4.4	4.8	4.8	4.6
<i>ONG-BAK</i>	4.1	3.9	4.9	4.8	4.7	4.3
<i>DONG YUM GOONG</i>	4.1	3.9	4.9	4.7	4.7	4.3
<i>The Teacher's Diary</i>	4.6	4.1	3.9	4.1	4	4
<i>Bangkok Traffic Love Story</i>	4.6	4	4.1	4.6	4.2	3.9
<i>Shutter</i>	3.9	4	3.8	4.5	3.5	4
<i>Red Eagle</i>	3	3.5	3.7	3.2	3.4	3.9
AVARAGE	4.32	4.22	4.37	4.46	4.23	4.36

(Table 6. Rate various factors in ten Thai movies)

As shown in Table 6, Chinese audiences are very interested in the culture presented in Thai films and consider it to be the most important factor for the success of Thai films in China. At the same time, the themes, character and music in Thai films are also important factors that determine whether Thai films can receive good reviews from Chinese audiences. The interviewer J stated that the aspects of social values and religious culture in Thai films are very attractive and are unique charms of Thai films that cannot be replicated by films from other countries.

	THEME	PLOT	CHARACTER	CULTURE	SIGN	MUSIC
MY GIRL	LOVE/ GROWTH	A young boy who returns to his childhood home and reminisces about his childhood memories and his first love	Jeab -a mischievous and adventurous boy who navigates the complexities of childhood and young love Noi-Naa - a free-spirited and confident girl who value her friends	Family values and view of love	Growing tree Small shop becomes to Seven-Eleven	Thai folk music Pop music Orchestral score
FIRST LOVE	LOVE/ GROWTH	An ordinary high school girl who develops a crush on a popular boy and tries to transform herself to win his heart, but ultimately learns to love and accept herself for who she is	Nam - who develops a crush on the most popular boy in school, and embarks on a journey of self-improvement to win his heart	Social values and view of love	Mango tree	Pop music Orchestral score Ballads
LOVE OF SIAM	LOVE/HOMOSEXUAL	Two childhood friends who are reunited as teenagers and must confront their feelings for each other while dealing with personal tragedies and family secrets	Mew - a sensitive and introspective teenager who must confront his feelings for his childhood friend Tong,-a young man who dealing with	Family values and traditions, Homosexual culture	Siamese fighting fish Old house Kiss	Pop music Traditional Thai music

			family secrets and tragedy			
BAD GENIUS	CRIME/GROWTH	A high school student who uses her intelligence and skills to cheat on exams with her classmates for money, but the operation soon spirals out of control	Lynn -who becomes involved in a cheating scheme to help her classmates pass their exams, but faces the consequences of her actions	Education, social class, and corruption	Exam paper and pen Cash Buddha statue	Electronic music Pop and hip-hop music Classical music
ONG-BAK	CRIME/REVENGE	A young martial artist who travels to Bangkok to retrieve a stolen Buddha statue and save his village from financial ruin, showcasing impressive Muay Thai fight scenes	Ting - a young man who travels from his rural village to Bangkok to retrieve the stolen head of his village's sacred Buddha statue, and becomes embroiled in a dangerous criminal underworld	Martial arts and combat sports, religion, community, and loyalty	Buddha statue Elephant	Traditional Thai music Hip hop and rap music Electronic music Rock music
DONG YUM GOONG	CRIME/ENVIRONMENTAL	A young man who travels to Australia to retrieve stolen elephants and avenge his family's honor by taking down	Kham - a young man who travels to Australia to retrieve his beloved elephant, which has been stolen and sold	Martial arts and combat sports, family value, loyalty, cultural tension between	Tiger Elephant	Hip hop and rap music Traditional Thai music Orchestral score Rock music

		a gang of international animal smugglers	into the underground market of illegal animal trading	west and Thailand		
<i>The Teacher's Diary</i>	LOVE/ GROWTH	Two teachers who fall in love through reading each other's diary entries, despite never meeting face-to-face, and embark on a journey to find each other	Ann - a young teacher named Ann, who discovers and reads the diary of the previous teacher in her rural school, and becomes emotionally involved in the teacher's love story.	Education, family, and superstition	Diary Rain	Pop music Classical music Traditional Thai music
<i>Bangkok Traffic Love Story</i>	LOVE/DESI RE	A young woman navigates the challenges of modern urban life and societal pressures as she pursues a relationship with a traffic policeman in Bangkok	Mei - a relatable and likable protagonist who faces real-world challenges and struggles	Social values	Traffic jam	Modern Thai pop Music Traditional Thai music
<i>Shutter</i>	CRIME/REV ENGE/GHO ST	A photographer and his girlfriend who begin to see mysterious shadows and figures in their pictures after a hit-and-run	Tun - a young photographer who along with his girlfriend, experiences terrifying supernatural events that seem to be connected to a past tragedy	Ghosts and spirits	Camera Eyes	Ambient music Traditional Thai music Popular music

		accident, leading them to uncover a dark secret from their past				
<i>Red Eagle</i>	CRIME/ SUPPERHE RO	A masked vigilante who fights corruption and injustice in Bangkok, including a powerful industrialist and his army of mercenaries	Red Eagle - a masked vigilante named who seeks revenge against corrupt officials and criminals while trying to uncover the truth behind his parents' deaths	Martial arts and social values	Mask	Orchestral score Pop music Traditional Thai music Rock music

(Table 7. Analysis of Factors of Popular Thai Films)

From the Table 7, it can be seen that Chinese audiences have a preference for themes of love and growth in Thai films, and are fond of school romance in terms of plot. In terms of character development, they like young characters who experience growth and transformation with significant changes. Regarding Thai film culture, Chinese audiences are very interested in Thai social values and family values. Animal and plant symbols are the main presentation method in Thai film imagery. Most Thai films that are popular among Chinese audiences feature traditional Thai music, and many interviewees have stated that this music has unique Thai characteristics.

Discussion

This study was designed to examine Chinese audiences' consumption and attitudes toward films from Thailand. Through that, two research questions were raised. This research's purpose was to better understand why and how the Chinese audiences viewed the media products in order to get a snapshot of their perceptions. This study is important and meaningful in two aspects. First is the study can be the foundation for media consumption on foreign films. Second is this study shows the understanding of Chinese audiences' perceptions of Thai films.

It can be concluded that the fundamental reason for Thai films became a hit in Chinese audiences is that they meet viewer's needs which include cultural and psychological pleasure, satisfaction, aesthetic gratification, and visual enjoyment. Besides, there is the perfect combination of tradition and modernity in Thai films, displaying the essence of traditional culture in a modern manner. Chinese audiences' interest in Thai films was changed due to the regulations in China's entertainment industry that foreign media were limited in mainstream media. A researcher found it more clearly on the new way Chinese audiences actually consume Thai popular culture, particularly on Thai films.

With regard to the first research question, the answer may be that Chinese audiences are potentially attracted by the various elements of Thai films. Generally, the impressions of Chinese audiences of the current Thai films appear to be based mostly on “cast members”. The first opportunity for Chinese audiences to get in touch with Thai films usually comes from recommendations by friends, but after that initial exposure, the frequency of watching Thai films is not particularly high. The audience for Thai films in China tends to be young Chinese female, who prefer Thai romantic and comedic movies. They believe that Thai films have a unique Thai flavor that cannot be replicated by films from other countries. The Chinese audiences who interest in Thai movies can be described as those who have an interest in the novel and unconventional films. Based on that, there are two points that are noteworthy. The first is that Thai films possess a unique style, and the second is that Thai films are not often considered to be major releases in the entertainment industry of China. Therefore, the spread of Thai films among the youth community can be regarded as a result of the influence of word-of-mouth.

The first research question can also be connected to the uses of new media. Although the audiences of merely ten years ago were mostly housewives who simply passively accepted the content that was offered to them by the media industry, today’s new generation of viewers is young millennials who are more technologically advanced. Thus, they constantly look for the international media content that is unavailable domestically, instead of passively watching whatever programs are broadcast. Furthermore, there are also differences with regard to the content that these different generations prefer. Watching Thai films are becoming increasingly more popular in China’s market, and those audiences who enjoy them are able to participate in online communities by discussing the entertainment and providing information for other viewers. The members of the audiences that appreciate new Thai films can use the message boards to express their opinions and share information and comments with other fans of Thai entertainment. Furthermore, people with a similar interest will be able to find information about the newest films and dramas, as well as the particular products, and possibly learn about other films through recommendations. Overall, other viewers are always able to discover additional new films. Smartphone applications have provided Chinese audiences with more channels to learn about new Thai films and interact with a larger community of Thai film fans.

The previous research determined the number of categories for motivations of viewing, namely diversion, entertainment, escape, learning, arousal, passing the time, relaxation, and sociability (Rubin, Rubin, Graham, Perse, & Seibold, 2009). In addition, Jiang and Leung (2012) also identified four categories of gratification that viewers seek when watching dramatic series, which were based on the uses and gratification theory, which is an audience-centered approach on how the viewers use media to satisfy their cognitive and affective needs (Jiang, 2010). These categories include entertainment, escape, learning, and sociability. The factors that were identified in this research were included in the motivations determined by the uses and gratification theory, and they can be summarized as follows: Thai films are watched by Chinese audience in mainland China so that they are able to fulfill their need to learn about Thai culture, for example, Thai language and Thailand’s famous tourist attractions, in addition to socializing with friends by doing activities together, participating in discussions about dramatic entertainment, and conversing about common topics. According to Yue (2008), media content is intended for those seeking social interaction with others because, in this way, they are able to communicate while watching the films together and discussing the content of any of the entertainment programs. This indirectly resulted in the factor of ‘having common

conversation topics with friends' being one of the most common objectives of watching specific Thai films because the fans or viewers can talk together about the cast members of their favorite films.

To answer the second research question on what factor contribute to the success of Thai movie in China, it is believed that the cultural values related to family and society portrayed in Thai films are what currently interest Chinese audiences the most. The previous research by Chen Honngyu have shown that Thai films are the most powerful tool for spreading Thai culture, and with globalization being irreversible, Thai culture will be further spread in China through Thai films(Chen Hongyu, 2020). This study confirms that Thai culture is being continuously transmitted to Chinese audiences through Thai films, especially in the areas of family and social culture. Chinese audiences hope to obtain more relevant information about these aspects of Thai culture through Thai films.

Conclusion

This study has provided insights into the consumption and attitudes of Chinese audiences towards films from Thailand. The study found that Thai films meet the viewers' needs for cultural and psychological pleasure, satisfaction, aesthetic gratification, and visual enjoyment. Thai films are also unique in their combination of tradition and modernity, displaying the essence of traditional culture in a modern manner. The audience for Thai films in China tends to be young Chinese females who prefer Thai romantic and comedic movies. Word-of-mouth plays a significant role in the spread of Thai films among the youth community in China. Additionally, new media channels have provided Chinese audiences with more opportunities to learn about new Thai films and interact with a larger community of Thai film fans.

The study also found that Thai culture is being continuously transmitted to Chinese audiences through Thai films, especially in the areas of family and social culture. Chinese audiences hope to obtain more relevant information about these aspects of Thai culture through Thai films. Therefore, the cultural values related to family and society portrayed in Thai films are what currently interest Chinese audiences the most.

Overall, this study provides a foundation for understanding the consumption of foreign films by Chinese audiences, particularly Thai films. It is meaningful for the media industry to understand the preferences and motivations of the Chinese audience, and to develop more effective strategies for introducing foreign films to the Chinese market.

However, since this research is a study with Chinese audience across the mainland of China, a focus group interview with only one group of participants may not be enough for the study. An author, therefore, strongly recommends for future studies to hold more than one focus group or employ an in-depth interview instead in order to expand a wider scope and gain enough data to complete the exploration. Also, according to the findings which notice the new media platform has a big impression on the reputation of Thai films, the future researchers should pay more attention to the role of new media such as study into social media channel penetration in China to see the possibility that can be beneficial to Thai film industry.

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