

Dissertation Project Proposal

Summary

My project aims to build a detailed profile for Chinese film's current situation and future development. To achieve this goal, I will analyse on data from official releases, business sources and self-collected statistics, and make interviews based on obtained information, so as to develop a series of journalistic products with interactive feature.

Previous works

There have already been several works in this field, for example, Donghong Huang (2014) generalises the macro environment of Chinese film industry, that box office in China keeps growing at a rate over 20%, comparing to global average 6.7%, and 85.9% of audiences are aged between 19 to 35. This shows the industry's great potential, but at the same time, it still lacks in copyright control and overseas dissemination. Wenqing Chao (2014) has chosen a specific film and analysed discussion about it on social media, such as Weibo (2016) and Douban (2016), to see potential audiences' information and preferences, but his analysis is mainly for marketing instead of news story.

More systematically, MaoYan Movie (2015), a company selling film tickets online, has published an annual report based on data from their users that consumer behaviours have obvious regional characteristics, and third-tier cities have hugely contributed to total box office. It has also released a tool showing real time box office and attendance information. 1905.com (2016), the official website for Film channel of China Central Television, has released a report as well, concluding that foreign films still are Chinese audiences' favourite. There are abundant data in these works, but they often stay at the stage of presentation instead of deep explanation.

Besides works focused on audience analysis, there are also some works doing content analysis on film. For instance, Wasserman, Zeng and Amaral (2015) has found a new method to measure film's significance by combining experts and audiences' score with its connection among other films. While Anderson and Daniels (2016) have examined dialogue in 2,000 films and provided support for the opinion that men dominate movie roles. Moreover, Assogba, Ros and Vallandingham (n.d.) has built a website named Stereotropes to visualise tropes in films authored by the community on the TV Tropes (n.d.).

All these works have provided inspiration on both topic choices and visualisation methods, but still, there has not yet been a detailed study on the panorama of Chinese film industry from production to distribution phase, especially on its supervision and censorship part.

Proposed output

Based on the previous works, I would like to build a series of stories on Chinese film industry, divided by parts such as production process, film content and audience analysis, and present them on multimedia webpages with interactive functions.

Data mining and interviews are needed to investigate the current status of the industry in macro level, such as the amount of films being produced and released each year, and the corresponding box office data. My intended data sources include official portals as National Bureau of Statistics (2016), State Administration of Press, Publication, Radio, Film and Television, business (2016), 1905.com and China Movie Data Information Network (2016), business data from EFMT (2016), MaoYan Movie, Mtime (2016), and idatage.com (2016), I could also collect data by myself from social media platforms such as Weibo (2016), Douban (2016) and Zhihu (2016).

With all these data, I will build news stories from subtle yet noteworthy angles, such as how to make a film in China, various opinions on classification system, false box office and independent films.

Towards contents and audiences of film, it is possible to find meaningful things as commons among most popular films by content analysis, and distinguish audiences' attitudes based on their social media behaviours, so as to make prediction on the future development.

The creativity of my project mainly lies in topic choice, investigation and display methods. First, there is no systematic investigation on Chinese film's supervision before. Also, lots of previous works just present data with shallow analysis, instead of further exploration and discussion. Moreover, I will promote audiences' engagement by adding interactive feature to news story.

Motivation

According to official release, China's total film box office in February 2016 has overtaken the US and become No. 1 for the first time (National Bureau of Statistics of China, 2016). But at the same time, Chinese film industry is still

under government's strict supervision, and Chinese film is not yet competing in a free market.

Another significant thing is that recently, CBNweekly (2016), a Chinese business magazine, has published a report on new first-tier cities, in which they mainly depend on business factors, instead of traditional GDP or population numbers, to measure cities' status and potential, including cultural consumption. The amount of movie theatres and box office data have been chosen as indexes.

This indicates that film could actually reflect a wide range of issues in political, economic and cultural senses, so I would like to discover those meanings and approach them from a subtle angle, and present them in an interesting way.

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