

## The Dissemination and Acceptance of Chinese Films in Malaysia

Wang Jing<sup>1,3</sup>, Wang Peifeng<sup>2</sup>, Balamuralithara Balakrishnan<sup>3,\*</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Xi'an Peihua University, Shannxi, 710125, China

<sup>2</sup>Faculty of Language and Communication, Sultan Idris Education University, Malaysia

<sup>3</sup>Faculty of Art, Computing and Creative Industry, Sultan Idris Education University, Malaysia

\*Corresponding author

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**Abstract:** This study explores the dissemination of Chinese films in Malaysia and the impact of Chinese film reception and evaluation on respondents' perceptions of Chinese culture, using Malaysian audiences as the target audience. The study found that respondents' exposure to and evaluation of Chinese films impacted their perceptions of Chinese culture. Different aspects of Chinese culture significantly influenced respondents' evaluation of film viewing. The dissemination of Chinese films in Malaysia inevitably requires a study of the English translation of Chinese subtitles, and this paper also offers new reflections on the techniques of English translation of film titles.

### 1. Introduction

Throughout the history of the world's cinema development, cinema itself is not only a commodity with cultural attributes. It is also a mass communication medium, an important channel, and one of the essential artistic carriers for communicating emotions and spreading civilization. As a way of presenting Chinese culture in images, Chinese cinema is very conducive to generating acceptance and influencing the audience's perception of Chinese culture. Therefore, examining the approval and evaluation of Chinese films overseas can effectively understand the relationship between overseas audiences' viewing of Chinese films and their perception of Chinese culture.

As one of the most concentrated overseas Chinese settlements - the Malay Peninsula - Malaysia's spread of Chinese culture has an intensity and breadth unmatched by other regions. Malaysia was the earliest overseas market for Chinese films. In 1929, the Shaw Brothers, Hong Kong residents, rented out the Wah Ying Theatre in Singapore, the Grand Chinese Theatre in Kuala Lumpur, the Man King Terrace Theatre in Ipoh, and the One King Group Cinema in Malacca, constituting the first theatres of the Shaw Film Company of Hong Kong in Singapore and Malaysia, officially establishing a foothold in the South China Sea. In addition, since the launch of the "One Belt, One Road" initiative, there have been many forms of cultural exchanges between Malaysia and China's official and private sectors.

Given the long history of film transmission between Malaysia and China and the growing cooperation between the film industry in recent years, this study considers it necessary to examine the spread and reception of Chinese cinema in Malaysia. The study focuses on the respondents' perceptions of Chinese culture through watching Chinese TV dramas and therefore does not cover specific cultural symbols to obtain a regular summary of the cultural perceptions of the countries affected by the international dissemination of Chinese films.

### 2. Research Framework and Theoretical Hypotheses

#### 2.1 Research Framework

In this study, the Theory of Reasoned Action, also known as the TRA theory, is referenced, as shown in Figure 1, which suggests that a person's behavior is determined by their behavioral

intentions, which are influenced by personal attitudes and subjective norms, and that a correlation occurs between subjective criteria and unique perspectives.

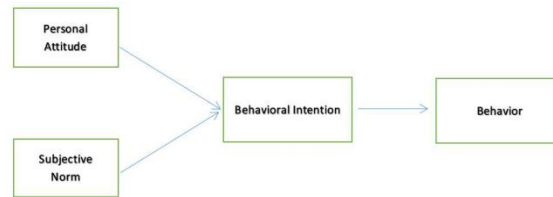


Fig.1 Model of the Theory of Rational Behavior

This study argues that people are more likely to reason in their behavioral decision to watch multinational films than in other behavioral activities because due to cultural differences, it is difficult for people to judge their interest in films directly through a simple experience. Still, they need to spend more time and effort to learn about the films to make judgments. Because of this particular decision-making process, viewers of foreign films have to think more before making their decisions.

## 2.2 Research Methodology

This study adopted a quantitative research approach. The data was collected from Sultan Idris Education University, Malaysia, and random sampling was used to obtain the sample. SPSS 26.0 was used to process and analyze the valid models, and Pearson's coefficient was used to investigate the relationship between the independent and dependent variables. The independent variables of this study were “frequency of movie-going” and “evaluation of Chinese films,” which were measured in terms of “understanding of Chinese film content” and “perception of Chinese culture,” respectively. The two independent variables were “frequency of watching Chinese films” and “evaluation of Chinese films.” These questions were measured using a five-point Likert scale (1 score = low, 5 scores = very high).

## 2.3 Null Hypothesis

To reach the main objective of this study, an examination of the diffusion and reception of Chinese films in Malaysia, it is necessary to create two theoretical hypotheses.

H<sub>1</sub>: There is a significant effect between the frequency of Chinese films and the respondents' understanding of the content of Chinese films.

H<sub>2</sub>: There is a significant effect between respondents' evaluation of Chinese films and their perception of Chinese culture.

Based on the above research framework and theoretical hypotheses, quantitative research and data analysis were conducted.

## 3. Data Analysis

The sample target for this study was teachers from the faculty of Art Computing and Industry at Sultan Idris Education University, Malaysia. The teachers with professional field knowledge and educational practice in communication studies were able to express their viewing experience clearly and accurately, and the total sample size was 31 randomly selected.

Table 1 Reliability Statistics Of Questionnaire

	Section 2	Section 3	Section 4
Cronbach's alpha	0.891	0.891	0.893
Cronbach's alpha Based on Standardized Item	0.888	0.889	0.894
Total number of items	0.895		

By analyzing the reliability of the questionnaire, it can be seen from Table 1 that the average Cronbach's value for the three main sections of the questionnaire is 0.895. According to the range of

Cronbach's Alpha coefficient, a matter of  $0.8 \leq \alpha \leq 0.9$  is an acceptable evaluation result (Zhang Q, Zhou P.H., 2015, p. 35), indicating that the questionnaire used for this study has high reliability.

### 3.1 Correlation between the Frequency of Respondents' Viewing of Chinese Films and Their Understanding of the Content of Chinese Films

After recording the data, the theoretical hypotheses of this study were tested.

To test hypothesis 1, it was first necessary to examine the relationship between the independent and dependent variables and the moderating variables. The data was substituted into the partial regression equation in SPSS to obtain the following results.

Table 2 Correlations between Movie-Viewing Frequency and Content Understanding

Correlations			
		Frequency	Understanding
Frequency	Pearson Correlation	1	.414**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	789	789
Understanding	Pearson Correlation	.414**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	789	789

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

It can be seen in Table 2 that the Pearson correlation coefficient was used to test the correlation between Malaysian audiences' evaluation of Chinese films and their understanding of the content of Chinese films. The data shows that Sig. (2-tailed)=.414\*\*,  $P > 0.01$ , the correlation coefficient is significant at the 0.01 level, indicating that the correlation is significant and both are positive.

This shows a significant and positive correlation between Malaysian audiences' evaluation of Chinese films and their understanding of the content of online Chinese series. Thus, the hypothesis  $H_1$  was supported.

### 3.2 Correlation between the Respondents' Evaluation of Chinese Films and Their Perception of Chinese Culture

To test hypothesis 2, it was first necessary to examine the relationship between the independent and dependent variables and the moderating variables. The data was substituted into the partial regression equation in SPSS to obtain the following results.

Table 3 Correlation between The Independent and Dependent Variables

Correlations			
		Evaluation	Culture
Evaluation	Pearson Correlation	1	.460**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	789	789
Culture	Pearson Correlation	.460**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	789	789

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

It can be seen in Table 3, Pearson's correlation coefficient calculated the correlation between the frequency of watching Chinese films and the acceptance of Chinese culture among Malaysian audiences. The data showed that Sig. (2-tailed)=.458\*\*,  $P > 0.01$ , the correlation coefficient is significant at the 0.01 level, indicating that both correlations are substantial and positive.

This indicates that the frequency of watching Chinese films and the acceptance of Chinese culture among Malaysian audiences are significantly and positively correlated. Thus, the hypothesis  $H_2$  was supported.

## 4. Summary

The survey revealed that nearly 80% of Malaysian respondents had seen Chinese films in the past three years, and almost 40% had seen more than five Chinese films, with the majority of respondents having seen well-known Chinese movies in the last few years. The data shows that Chinese films have been well received in the Malaysian market in recent years, and most Malaysian audiences have been widely exposed to Chinese films. At the same time, Malaysian respondents have a reasonable opinion of Chinese films' content, production, and promotion. They were satisfied with the variety and output of films. Malaysian respondents were relatively optimistic about the positive values presented by Chinese films, particularly the emphasis on family and community.

Respondents' exposure to and evaluation of Chinese films had an impact on their perception of Chinese culture. In general, the higher the respondents' evaluation of movies and the higher their level of identification with the concept of cinema, the higher their level of awareness of Chinese culture. Therefore, this study suggests that in the future cross-cultural dissemination of Chinese films, special attention should be paid to Malaysian audiences' understanding of film content and the cultivation of their movie-going expectations. While the translation of film subtitles is bound to play a pivotal role in their dissemination, the translation of film titles plays an even more critical role in finishing the film. A good label will enable the target language audience better to understand Chinese films and Chinese culture.

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