

Analysis on Psychology and Characteristics of Audiences of Main Theme Film and Television Works in the New Era

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Abstract: This paper aims to analyze the characteristics of main theme film and television works in the new era and the psychology of its audience, which is used to explore its future development. Through questionnaire surveys and literature reviews, this paper found that the audience of main theme film and television works have distinct psychological tendencies. Firstly, the audience has a strong sense of identification and emotional resonance with these works, which indicates that these works play a positive role in conveying social values and shaping public consciousness. Secondly, the audience pays great attention to the themes and content of main theme film and television works, which have significant advantages in depicting social reality and transmitting positive energy. In addition, through case studies and literature reviews, it is found that main theme works have four distinct artistic features: emotional expression, authentic representation, categorized portrayal and integrated narrative. This paper believes that facing the challenges brought by the new era and technological development, main theme film and television works need to continuously innovate and develop on the basis of maintaining traditional advantages, in order to meet the psychological needs of different audiences and actively respond to the challenges brought by globalization.

Keywords: Main Theme; Film and Television Works; Development Process; Values; Characteristics

1. Introduction

Main theme film and television works hold a unique position in the culture and industry of

film and television. According to Ren Liting (2023), these works have the ability to reflect contemporary Chinese mainstream values, promote mainstream ideologies, and embody the humanistic spirit of film and television art ^[1]. Zhong Lixi (2018) believed that contemporary Chinese main theme film and television art, as a distinctive category within popular culture, not only serves as a conveyor of ideology but also as a cultural industry product, responsible for transforming and elevating public values and disseminating advanced concepts ^[2]. Wang Mengqian and Wang Yifan (2021) provided a comprehensive summary of the characteristics of main theme film and television works across different periods and genres: they possess ideological significance, embody national and temporal qualities, deliver intellectual and educational messages, and possess artistic and entertainment value ^[3]. These works expressed national interests and mainstream ideologies ^[4]. However, during the rapid development of main theme film and television works, a series of challenges has emerged. According to Zhou Han (2018), the main difficulties faced by contemporary main theme film and television dramas include misunderstandings of popular main theme works, the stagnation of artistic forms in main theme works, conflicts between current social consumer psychology and mainstream ideologies, and changes in the communication environment ^[5]. Zheng Shuxiang (2022) believed that the film and television cultural market is mixed, with too much emphasis on form over content, and often holds preconceived stereotypes, which are the main issues existing in main theme film and television works ^[6]. Therefore, analyzing the creation of outstanding main theme works from a realistic perspective and studying the characteristics of main theme film and

television works have certain academic and social value.

2. The Development of Main Theme Film and Television works

The development of main theme film and television works has exhibited robust vitality and extensive influence. As illustrated in

Figure 1, this study conducted a search on the CNKI database using the keywords “main theme” and “works” and retrieved a total of 2,502 relevant articles. It is noteworthy that the number of research literature on main theme works has been steadily increasing since 2016.

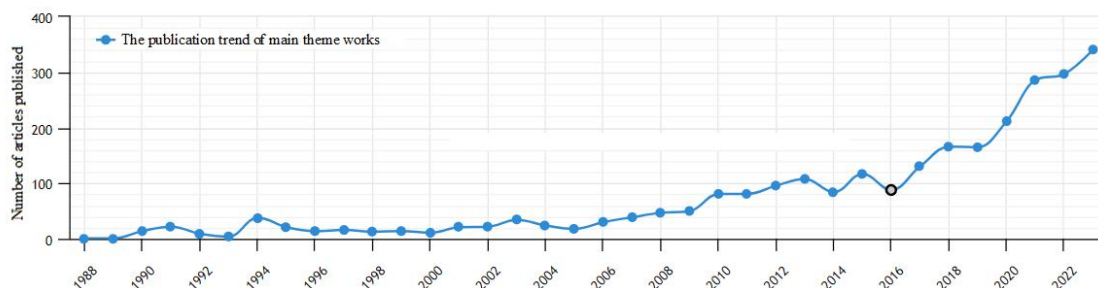


Figure 1. The Publication Trend of Main Theme Works

As illustrated in Figure 2, it is notable that the majority of research on main theme works is

focused on exploring the educational functions of main theme film and television works.

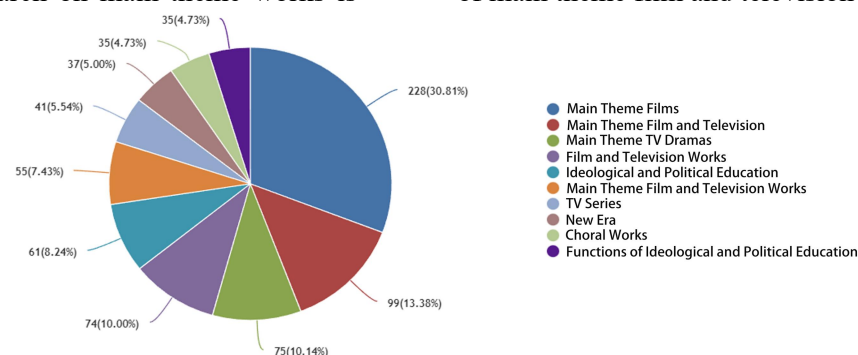


Figure 2. The Distribution of Research Themes in Main Theme Works

Since the 1980s, a series of acclaimed main theme film and television works, such as *Decisive Engagement* and *The Long March*, have showcased heroic figures and moving stories from pre-established New China, promoting the spirit of patriotism. In the 21st century, with the increased attention and support from the government towards the cultural industry, the quality and influence of main theme film and television works have

continuously improved. For instance, works like *Drawing Sword* and *Deng Xiaoping at History's Crossroads* closely capture the pulse of the era, portraying China's ongoing progress in its historical journey. Based on the classification of these works, the development of main theme film and television can be divided into three stages as depicted in Figure 3.



Figure 3. The Development of Main Theme Film and Television Works

Early Development Stage: After the establishment of New China, main theme film and television works primarily focused on

mainstream values, such as *The People's Victory* and *The Red Flag Flying*. These works embody a strong sense of social responsibility.

Transition Period from the 1980s onwards: In the 1980s, with the liberation of thoughts and changes in the social environment, main theme film and television works gradually evolved towards diversification and depth. Works such as *New Star* and the *Dream of the Red Chamber* emerged, displaying profound thoughts and artistic qualities.

Development in the New Era: In recent years, with the increasing emphasis and support from the government towards the cultural industry, main theme film and television works have shown significant improvements in terms of production quality, thematic depth, and influence. These works encompass artistic, representative, and entertaining elements.

Taking *Huang Danian* as an example, this film portrays the character of scientist Huang Danian through a series of choices and actions, shaping a moving image of a scientific researcher.

3. Analysis on the Audience for main theme film and television Works

As depicted in Figure 4, aiming to gain a deeper understanding of the audience for main theme film and television works, this study selected popular main theme works from the past five years as research subjects. Through web scraping and online surveys, the study has preliminarily summarized the audience characteristics and reception of these works:



Figure 4. Framework for the Audience Analysis of Main Theme Film and Television Works

Age structure: Based on the analysis of viewing records and survey data, it is found that the audience for main theme film and television works spans a wide range of ages, but is primarily composed of middle-aged and elderly viewers. Additionally, the proportion of young audience members is gradually increasing.

Gender structure: Data indicates a relatively balanced gender ratio among the audience for main theme film and television works, with slightly more female viewers than male viewers. This may be attributed to the emotional expression and character portrayal featured in these works.

Regional distribution: Analysis of viewing records and survey data reveals a wide geographic distribution among the audience for main theme film and television works, with comparable proportions of viewers from urban and rural areas.

Acceptance analysis: Through online questionnaires, the study collected audience perceptions and post-viewing feedback on the works. The data indicates that the majority of viewers maintain a positive attitude towards main theme film and television works, believing them to possess high levels of ideological and artistic qualities.

4. Characteristics Analysis of Main Theme

Film and Television Works

Main theme film and television works serve as the primary means to disseminate mainstream ideologies, conveying exceptional ideas, correct values, and positive ideologies in a captivating and engaging manner. Through an inductive analysis of outstanding main theme film and television works, the following four major characteristics can be identified:

4.1 Emotional Expression

An important phenomenon in the “main theme” genre is the production of numerous films showcasing exemplary leaders and individuals engaged in social welfare activities, commonly referred to as “good people doing good things”. These films often draw inspiration from “heroes” and “role models” as recognized and reported by various sources, such as *Kong Fansen*, *The Days Without My Comrade*, *An American in China*, *Military Spouse*, *A Tree*, *Lei Feng In His Childhood*, *The Harmonious Couple*, *Autumn Scenery in Hometown*, and so on^[7]. In these films, protagonists are not portrayed as all-knowing and all-powerful heroes; instead, their characters are depicted as ordinary, embodying the ideals of ethical sentiments. The emphasis lies in selfless dedication, collective consciousness, and unwavering commitment to inspire viewers through emotional

expression [8].

For instance, the film *Ren Changxia* utilizes a cross-sectional creative approach to depict the touching story of Ren Changxia, the female director of the Dengfeng County Public Security Bureau in Henan Province, who remained loyal to her duty and eventually sacrificed her life. The film takes the last 36 hours of her life as a starting point, portraying her interactions with family members, comrades, and the people of Dengfeng County, gradually flashing back to her “past” and showcasing her brief yet extraordinary life. It reflects her heroic deeds and noble qualities of devotion to the people and selflessness [9].

This kind of film, based on true events and real individuals, delves into the trivial to reveal the grand, observes life intricacies, depicts emotions, and narrates with eloquence, possessing a profoundly moving artistic power. Through the portrayal of emotions, the film perfectly presents the characters’ personality traits and charisma, exuding a rich sense of vitality and highlighting the dynamic nature of artistic life.

4.2 Authentic Representation

The outstanding works of main theme films are not merely “praises of good deeds” resembling simple continuations of news reports which lack the genuine portrayal of the raw essence of life, as well as artistic imagination, which ultimately harms the audience’s taste [10]. The creation of main theme films, in fact, follows the attitude of depicting life in its truest form, emphasizing the texture of reality, and achieving a perfect fusion of reality and artistry. For example, the film *Country Love* aligns with the major theme of new rural development, authentically presenting the normality of life, the expression of emotions, and the unscripted performance of raw authenticity.

The mainstream audience of film and television today includes more than half of individuals from rural areas, making it the most receptive demographic for rural-themed dramas. Additionally, for some urban audiences (especially those with childhood memories of rural life), they are weary of idol dramas, historical dramas, emotional dramas, martial arts dramas, etc. The raw and authentic performances in *Country Love* evoke people’s nostalgic memories of their hometowns and

childhoods, sparking a unique aesthetic taste. Moreover, by incorporating dialects in the film’s language, it caters to the viewing habits of people in the northern region along the Yangtze River, creating a sense of familiarity.

4.3 Categorized Portrayal

Many filmmakers are exploring the promotion of main theme themes and advocating for unity in diversity. Some outstanding films have brought audiences back to the cinemas, creating lucrative opportunities for main theme works. The popularity of these films among viewers is mainly due to their approach to typified production.

For instance, there are films that delve into the red history genre, such as *The Great Military March Forward: Fight for Nanjing*, *Shanghai and Hangzhou*, *Grief Over the Yellow River*, and *National Anthem*. There are also films that reflect national defense technology themes, encompassing a certain level of mystery and touching upon sensitive topics, like *Roaring Across the Horizon* and *The Story of the Pilot*. Furthermore, there is the thrilling and technologically-driven style of film, *Crash Landing*, which was uncommon in the past. *Symphony of Spring* serves as a music biopic inspired by renowned musicians. Additionally, there are animated films like *Lotus Lantern* and *Kitty Xiaobei*, as well as documentary films like *China 1949* and *A Big Bang from the Oriental*.

4.4 Integrated Narrative

Films with mainstream themes are embracing the trend of commercialization. *Dragon Year Cops* aims to unify the detective genre with a tribute to police officers. *Steel Meets Fire* strives to merge revolution hero legends with action-packed gunfights. *Going East to Native Land* and *The Sorrow of Brook Steppe* attempt to unify national unity fables with instant action films. *Red River Valley* aims to unify Western genres with patriotic ideals. *A Time to Remember* seeks to unify revolutionary memories with romantic films. *Grief Over the Yellow River* strives to unify war films with the spirit of national heroism. *The Story of the Pilot* endeavors to unify aerial spectacle military films with national defense themes.[11]

These films consciously adapt to international film trends by using high-tech methods such as computer synthesis and 3D animation to

enhance the visual marvel of the movies. These commercial efforts are closely aligned with the orientation of mainstream themes, pushing them to progressively embrace a more comprehensive approach.

5. Conclusions

In conclusion, domestically-produced main theme films, particularly those with a “main theme” focus, play an irreplaceable role within the distinctive social and cultural landscape of China. They serve as vehicles for the preservation and advancement of Chinese cultural heritage, guiding public discourse, and elevating the nation’s reputation. However, faced with the challenges brought by the new era and technological advancements, main theme film and television works need to constantly innovate and develop while maintaining their traditional advantages. They should meet the psychological needs of different audiences and actively respond to the challenges of globalization. Future research can delve into the creation, dissemination, and reception of main theme film and television works at a deeper level through quantitative research and data analysis. This will provide more accurate theoretical support and practical guidance for the continuous development and optimization of main theme film and television works.

Acknowledgements

This work is supported by the Project of the 14th Five-Year Plan of Hunan Provincial Education Sciences Panning (XJK23CGD010).

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