

## Marketing Communication Strategies for Chinese Domestic Films in the Integrated Media Matrix: A Case Study of “Hi, Mom” Postprint

**Authors:** Zhao Linyu

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### Abstract

Currently, major media organizations are vigorously constructing integrated media matrices, which have become a critical link in the all-media communication system. Meanwhile, as the post-pandemic era arrives, all sectors urgently need to seek ways to coexist with the pandemic under the integrated media matrix, with the film industry being particularly imperative. The 2021 Spring Festival film “Hi, Mom” reversed the domestic film industry’s sluggish performance, generating a warm spring for domestic cinema with its ultra-high box office exceeding 5 billion yuan. This paper aims to systematically examine the marketing communication strategies of “Hi, Mom” from the perspective of the integrated media matrix, summarize the reasons for its “blockbuster” success, and thereby provide replicable experience for domestic film marketing communication.

### Full Text

#### A Study on Marketing Communication Strategies for Domestic Films from the Perspective of Integrated Media Matrix: A Case Study of *Hi, Mom*

Chengdu Institute of Sichuan International Studies University,  
Chengdu, Sichuan 610000

**Abstract:** In the current media landscape, major platforms are actively constructing integrated media matrices, which have become a crucial component of all-media communication systems. Meanwhile, as the post-pandemic era unfolds, industries across the board urgently need to find ways to coexist with COVID-19 within this matrix framework, with the film industry facing particularly pressing challenges. The 2021 Spring Festival film *Hi, Mom* reversed the sluggish state of domestic cinema, generating over 5 billion RMB in box office

revenue and ushering in a warm spring for the industry. This paper aims to systematically analyze the marketing communication strategies employed by *Hi, Mom* within the integrated media matrix, summarizing the reasons behind its “blockbuster” success to provide replicable insights for domestic film marketing.

**Keywords:** all-media communication system; integrated media matrix; film marketing; communication strategy

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*Hi, Mom*, written, directed, and starring Jia Ling, features a cast of renowned comedy actors including Shen Teng, Zhang Xiaofei, and Chen He. The film tells the story of the protagonist Jia Xiaoling, who, after experiencing the grief of “wanting to support one’s parents but finding them gone,” travels back in time to touch her young parents and their dreams. Adapted from a sketch of the same name and based on Jia Ling’s personal experience, the film’s title character, Li Huanying, is Jia Ling’s mother who passed away in an accident. Since its release on Chinese New Year’s Day, the film has enjoyed soaring box office performance and critical acclaim. According to Maoyan Professional data, as of 17:00 on March 6, 2021, the film’s box office exceeded 5 billion RMB [1], ranking second in Chinese film history, with data continuing to be updated as screenings continue. The film has also made Jia Ling the highest-grossing female director in Chinese cinematic history for her directorial debut, while Shen Teng became the actor with the highest total box office in Chinese film history. Behind these remarkable achievements, the explosive popularity across the internet, and its 8.1 rating on Douban, the coordinated marketing communication strategies of the integrated media matrix have played an indispensable role.

The integrated media matrix borrows concepts from “formation” and “vertical-horizontal array.” From the vertical axis perspective, it comprises different media platforms including newspapers, radio, television, blogs, Weibo, and WeChat. From the horizontal axis perspective, these platforms coexist in the same space, jointly achieving comprehensive, multi-channel information coverage and matrix communication. Its specific manifestation is that the same report appears across multiple terminals, making news coverage more 立体 and comprehensive [2].

## 1. Scenario-Based Marketing through Short Video and Live Streaming Media: Douyin

The unprecedented pandemic brought society to a standstill across multiple dimensions while simultaneously forcing the public to adapt to new lifestyles. As a primary channel for information acquisition and social participation, media accelerated integration and innovation under pandemic pressure, allowing new communication methods to gain broader development space. Short video platforms have been particularly prominent. Comparing the 44th and 47th *Statistical Reports on China’s Internet Development*, I found that in June 2019, China’s short video users numbered 648 million, accounting for 75.8% of all internet users. By December 2020, this figure had grown to 873 million, an in-

crease of 100 million from March 2020 alone, representing 88.3% of all internet users [3]. From the perspective of media convergence, short videos have become the most popular communication method due to their concise, powerful, and highly engaging nature, characterized by extensive content, short production cycles, and high originality [4]. The pandemic environment, which prevented traditional offline entertainment and socializing, provided fertile ground for the rapid development of short videos. *Hi, Mom* capitalized on this beloved medium, leveraging its high-efficiency, high-traffic, and high-convenience features for intensive marketing communication.

Using Douyin as an illustrative example, the film's official Douyin account released its first video on October 29, 2020. As of this writing, it has published 258 videos, amassed 2.798 million followers, and received 73.532 million likes. The 258 videos primarily feature highlights of exciting scenes, behind-the-scenes footage, and appearances by numerous stars for promotional purposes. This content arrangement not only stimulated public anticipation for the film but also created a sense of "presence," highlighting the "scenario-based marketing" advantage of short video media. Scenario-based marketing refers to marketing activities that target consumers' psychological states or needs in specific real-world contexts of time and place, aiming to effectively achieve corporate marketing objectives. Its core lies in the psychological states and needs consumers possess in particular scenarios, with the scenario itself serving merely as a means to awaken these states or needs [5]. *Hi, Mom* created a "sense of being at the scene" for the public by releasing "exciting scene compilations" on Douyin, evoking their desire to watch the film. For example, a video posted on February 2 about "the origin of the male protagonist's announcer position" received 2.215 million likes and 58,000 comments. Beyond using short videos to preview exciting scenes, the film also utilized "real viewing scene feedback" to demonstrate viewing effects, creating a simulated form of audience "presence" to attract viewers to theaters. For instance, on February 15, a video featuring Yang Di as an internal screening guest crying uncontrollably received 1.22 million likes and 41,000 comments. On February 21, a compilation video showing several new "traffic influencers" including @ 疯产姐妹, @ 维维啊, @ 王不染, @ 多余和毛毛姐, @ 温精灵, @ 可爱的QQ呀, @-朱傲宇-, @ 金爱罗夫妇, @ 不聪明和大眼妹, and @ 聂大婷 watching the film in tears received 792,000 likes and 43,000 comments. Through the head traffic effects of both traditional comedy stars and new internet celebrities, the film conducted scenario-based marketing through personal testimony.

While leveraging scenario-based marketing through short video platforms, the film also fully utilized the "live streaming" function to compensate for the shortcomings of traditional offline marketing in the post-pandemic era, completing the first "cloud roadshow" marketing campaign in Chinese film history. According to a Phoenix News report: "On the evening of January 16 at 8 PM, *Hi, Mom* conducted a cloud roadshow themed 'I Can Make You Happier' ...During the 80-minute event, the film's official Douyin account gained over 100,000 new followers, with a total of 1.567 million viewers watching the cloud roadshow,

accumulating 37,000 comments and 1.253 million likes. Maoyan's 'want-to-see' data exploded with 12,432 new entries, reaching 32,734 for the day and a total of 745,941 entries by that day" [6]. The cloud roadshow emphasized online-offline integration, compensating for the limited reach of traditional offline marketing, conforming to post-pandemic communication patterns, and leveraging the scenario-based advantages of short video and live streaming platforms to provide a new path for film marketing communication.

In summary, *Hi, Mom* utilized the "scenario-based" marketing advantages of "short video" media within the integrated media matrix, breaking traditional marketing barriers and boldly attempting a "cloud roadshow" supported by live streaming technology, providing a relatively successful and positive demonstration for domestic films.

## 2. Word-of-Mouth Marketing through Social Media: Weibo

In the process of deepening media convergence, social media has become a primary battlefield for content integration. According to iiMedia Research data, China's mobile social media user base exceeded 900 million in 2020, a 7.1% increase from 2019 [7]. Among these platforms, WeChat, QQ, and Weibo remain the first tier with monthly active users in the hundreds of millions. As a "veteran" new media platform born in 2006, Weibo possesses strong interactivity, timeliness, and powerful dissemination capabilities, making it increasingly important for word-of-mouth marketing on social media. "Online word-of-mouth" is defined as information about organizations, brands, products, and services published and disseminated by internet users through various synchronous or asynchronous online communication channels, expressed in text, images, symbols, videos, or their combinations. While similar in content to traditional word-of-mouth, it differs significantly in form [8]. In today's era of information overload, apart from algorithmic recommendations, users still rely on traditional "word-of-mouth" methods to obtain and spread information, making the role of "word-of-mouth" still crucial.

*Hi, Mom* capitalized on Weibo's dissemination characteristics to quickly create a "Li Huanying" trend online through word-of-mouth marketing, driving unprecedented attention and record-breaking box office revenue. I conducted a Weibo hot search retrieval using the keyword "Hello Li Huanying," extracting partial hot search terms and their read and discussion volumes. As shown in Table 1, among hot searches related to *Hi, Mom*, users were most concerned with themes of "word-of-mouth" and "box office."

**Table 1** Weibo Hot Searches Related to "Hello Li Huanying" and Their Data (Partial)

Hot Search Topic	Read Volume	Discussion Volume
Hello Li Huanying Box Office Breaks 5 Billion Fastest in Film History	997.88 million	33,000
Hello Li Huanying Theme Song “Daylily” MV	465.67 million	-
Hello Li Huanying Box Office Enters Top Three in Mainland	520 million	-
Hello Li Huanying Details	-	26,000
Which Detail in Hello Li Huanying Touched You	-	-
Hello Li Huanying Original Sketch	-	-
Hello Li Huanying Word-of-Mouth	-	-
Hello Li Huanying Roadshow	-	-

Evidently, *Hi, Mom* utilized Weibo’s interactivity for online word-of-mouth marketing, repeatedly creating “Li Huanying” fever on the platform. Weibo users’ extensions to other media platforms achieved the effect of integrated media matrix 联动, pushing the 热度 of “Li Huanying” across all major platforms to unprecedented levels and creating a nationwide rush to watch the film, thereby creating a box office 奇迹 in the post-pandemic era and throughout Chinese film history.

### 3. Praise-Style Marketing Led by Authoritative Media: WeChat Official Accounts

With WeChat’s monthly active users reaching hundreds of millions, official data shows that by July 2020, there were over 20 million Official Accounts. In the eighth year of WeChat’s development, the era of wild growth and chaos has ended, with the “content is king” trend strengthening and the head effect remaining evident [9]. As a medium primarily using text and images, WeChat Official Accounts can fully leverage the characteristics of these symbols for in-depth content exploration, compensating to some extent for the superficiality of information in the “fragmented” communication era. Beyond replicating “scenario-based” marketing on short video platforms and “word-of-mouth” marketing on social media platforms, *Hi, Mom* continued to deploy WeChat Official Accounts. On one hand, the film proactively 布局 film-related Official Accounts for promotional purposes; on the other hand, under the 联动 effect of the integrated media matrix, the explosive 热度 across different media platforms inevitably drove various types of Official Accounts to join the “momentum-riding” marketing army, once again pushing the film’s popularity to new heights.

To further analyze the proactive marketing communication layout of *Hi, Mom* on the WeChat Official Accounts platform, I searched the “Jizhiled Data” platform using the keyword “film” for February 2021 (the film’s release month) to identify the top five film-related Official Accounts: Independent Fish Film, Maoyan Film Performances, BOSS Film, Film Most TOP, and Sir Film. To demonstrate proactive layout, I selected articles published within two days of the film’s release with titles containing “Hello Li Huanying” or “Jia Ling” as keywords, yielding the data shown in Table 2. The table reveals that *Hi, Mom* 布局 80% of the top film-related WeChat Official Accounts for proactive marketing communication, with three articles exceeding 100,000+ reads.

**Table 2** Proactive Layout of WeChat Official Accounts by *Hi, Mom* (Top Five)

Official Account	Article Title	Read Volume
Independent Fish Film	When Shen Teng and Jia Ling Unite, They Create the Year’s Best Word-of-Mouth Film	100,000+
Maoyan Film Performances	<i>Hi, Mom</i> : Jia Ling’s Masterpiece, Who Can Watch Without Crying?	100,000+
BOSS Film	Jia Ling Cheated This Time…Li Huanying’s Word-of-Mouth Ranking First is No Flaw	100,000+
Film Most TOP	-	-
Sir Film	-	-

To analyze the momentum-riding marketing on the WeChat Official Accounts platform for *Hi, Mom*, I selected the People’s Daily Official Account as a case study. As an official media outlet with a WCI index of 2142.68, People’s Daily represents authority in content, user attention, and dissemination reach, making it a scientifically sound choice for this study. I searched the People’s Daily Official Account using the keyword “Hello Li Huanying,” with results shown in Table 3.

**Table 3** Articles on People’s Daily Official Account Related to “Hello Li Huanying”

Article Title	Content Summary	Read Volume
Hello, This is My “Li Huanying”	Uses the film’ s “motherly love” theme to introduce photos of netizens’ mothers in their youth and their heartfelt words to their mothers	100,000+
Why Did <i>Hi, Mom</i> Become a Hit?	Praises director Jia Ling for achieving high box office through earnestness, sincerity, and authenticity despite not being the most technically proficient director	100,000+
After Crying Through “Li Huanying,” He Decided to Take His Mother to Do Something	Shares a story of an ordinary viewer who, after watching the film, drove thousands of miles to take his mother back to her hometown to visit his grandparents	100,000+
Here Comes! Morning News Express	Reports in the “Society” section that the film’ s box office exceeded 5 billion RMB, rising to second place in Chinese film history	100,000+

As shown in Table 3, articles from the People’ s Daily Official Account related to *Hi, Mom* primarily extended from the film’ s family themes to disseminate positive energy, not only affirming the film’ s value but also praising director Jia Ling’ s creative intentions. After People’ s Daily, as an authoritative official media outlet, affirmed *Hi, Mom*, various other WeChat Official Accounts followed suit, once again boosting the film’ s communication momentum.

In summary, behind the explosive popularity on short video and social media platforms, *Hi, Mom* proactively and deeply 布局 film-related WeChat Official Accounts. The 联动 of the integrated media matrix also attracted attention and recognition from authoritative official media, providing a path for other Official Accounts to ride the momentum, further expanding communication reach, improving word-of-mouth, and ultimately achieving both critical and commercial success.

From narrative techniques, scriptwriting, and editing perspectives, *Hi, Mom* is not the highest-scoring film in Chinese cinematic history. However, through

integrated media matrix 联动 marketing communication across short video platforms, social media platforms, and authoritative media WeChat Official Accounts, the film broke communication barriers in the post-pandemic era. By utilizing new integrated media forms such as “Douyin” and “cloud roadshows” to reach both online and offline audiences, leveraging social media platforms for word-of-mouth marketing to trigger nationwide attention and discussion, and emphasizing themes of “family love,” “motherly love,” and “nostalgia” to align with authoritative official media’s communication trends and win their support, the film ultimately added a brilliant chapter to Chinese film history. Simultaneously, it provided a new path and model for domestic film marketing communication leveraging integrated media matrices in the post-pandemic era.

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**Author Bio:** Zhao Linyu (1991-), female, from Chongzhou, Sichuan, Assistant at Chengdu Institute of Sichuan International Studies University. Research direction: all-media communication.

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*Note: Figure translations are in progress. See original paper for figures.*

*Source: ChinaXiv – Machine translation. Verify with original.*