

Postprint of Strategic Research on the Dissemination of Traditional Chinese Culture in the Context of Globalization

Authors: Wang Lei

Date: 2023-10-08T00:00:00+00:00

Abstract

In 2016, *Kung Fu Panda 3* was released globally, achieving impressive box office success. Combined with the remarkable achievements of the previous two installments, the *Kung Fu Panda* series, which employs traditional Chinese culture as its vehicle, has formed a cultural phenomenon both in China and worldwide. This paper analyzes the reasons behind the popularity of Hollywood's DreamWorks *Kung Fu Panda* films, exploring the challenges and opportunities confronting the dissemination of traditional Chinese culture within the globalized context, and strategies for enhancing its communicative power.

Full Text

A Study on Strategies for the Dissemination of Traditional Chinese Culture in the Context of Globalization

Abstract: In 2016, *Kung Fu Panda 3* was released globally, achieving remarkable box office success. Combined with the impressive performance of its two predecessors, the *Kung Fu Panda* film series, which uses traditional Chinese culture as its vehicle, has become a cultural phenomenon in China and worldwide. This paper analyzes the reasons behind the popularity of DreamWorks' *Kung Fu Panda* films to explore the challenges and opportunities facing the dissemination of traditional Chinese culture in the context of globalization, and how to enhance its communicative power.

Keywords: globalization; traditional Chinese culture; *Kung Fu Panda*

CLC Number: G223

Document Code: A

Article ID: 1671-0134(2017)06-123-02

DOI: 10.19483/j.cnki.11-4653/n.2017.06.043

Author: Wang Lei

On January 29, 2016, *Kung Fu Panda 3* premiered simultaneously in China and globally. Within just three days of release, it set at least ten records in mainland China, including the record for an animated film surpassing 100 million RMB in box office revenue for three consecutive days, breaking the so-called “rule” that audiences decline before the Spring Festival due to travel. According to statistics, *Kung Fu Panda 3* accumulated nearly one billion RMB in mainland China. In North America, where it opened simultaneously with China, the film grossed \$41 million (approximately 270 million RMB) during its opening weekend, becoming the fifth weekend box office champion of 2016. Meanwhile, *Kung Fu Panda 3* received exceptional word-of-mouth praise in both China and North America, achieving a 79% rating on Rotten Tomatoes [1].

DreamWorks, the Hollywood studio behind the *Kung Fu Panda* series, ranks among the top ten film production companies in the United States and has produced box office hits such as *The Prince of Egypt* and *Shrek*. DreamWorks-produced or -distributed films have achieved remarkable success in North America, with two films grossing over \$400 million and five exceeding \$300 million. Since 2013, 20th Century Fox has handled distribution for DreamWorks films. The *Kung Fu Panda* series has been released in dozens of countries worldwide, including China. The global marketing and promotion cost for *Kung Fu Panda 1* reached \$150 million, with production costs alone amounting to \$130 million.

Why has *Kung Fu Panda*, which markets itself on traditional Chinese culture, gained recognition from global audiences? What challenges does the dissemination of traditional Chinese culture face in the context of globalization? What lessons can we draw from the success of *Kung Fu Panda*?

1. Challenges Facing the Dissemination of Traditional Chinese Culture in the Context of Globalization

British sociologist Anthony Giddens defines “globalization” as “the intensification of worldwide social relations which link distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice versa” [2]. Globalization is not limited to the economic sphere; in fact, as economic globalization operates, it has permeated extensively into politics, culture, and other domains. The free flow of capital, technology, information, and personnel has made transnational and cross-cultural construction an important characteristic of global communication. Therefore, “globalization” constitutes the essential context that the dissemination of traditional Chinese culture must confront today.

The challenges and dilemmas facing traditional Chinese culture in this global context mainly manifest in the following aspects:

Unequal communication power and substantial funding disparities. This is primarily reflected in content production and subsequent market promo-

tion. Developed countries like the United States leverage their strong economic power to enable their cultural products to be shared globally. Capital-backed technology also represents a tremendous manifestation of communication power. *Kung Fu Panda 3* pioneered the use of a costly animation production platform called “Apollo,” which DreamWorks spent five years developing. Animators can use this platform to edit characters in real-time, modify their expressions, adjust their movements, reposition environmental lighting, and more, giving Po the same fur softness as real pandas in *Kung Fu Panda 3*. For the Chinese version of *Kung Fu Panda 3*, DreamWorks not only enlisted A-list celebrities like Huang Lei, Yang Mi, Jackie Chan, and Jay Chou for voice acting, but also had the Chinese promotional MV performed by Lu Han, who enjoys immense popularity among Chinese youth. Redesigned dialogue and Chinese lip-syncing enhanced audience identification. All of these were underpinned by substantial financial resources.

Absence of a complete industrial chain. The industrial chain referred to here encompasses the organic integration of screenwriting, cultural content values, storytelling techniques, technology application, and market promotion—a streamlined system.

From the perspective of cultural content, Hollywood production companies draw themes from across the globe, as exemplified by *Kung Fu Panda*. Both “kung fu” and “panda” are symbolic elements of traditional Chinese culture. The films also feature ancient Chinese palaces and temples, scenes of Chinese customs, northern-style pushcarts, sedan chairs carried by four people, and Chinese silk garments.

In terms of storytelling techniques, the United States has a mature screenwriting industry. On this foundation, DreamWorks can transform the artistic conception of traditional Chinese culture into a globally accessible cinematic presentation. The Writers Guild of America, established in 1921, includes most American writers. The Guild can locate a writer familiar with Chinese-themed film scripts based on a producer’s “Chinese style” requirements, with subsequent support from graphic designers, cultural experts, and others to ensure the film’s style. Once the Guild and producers approve and designate a “lead writer,” they quickly assemble their own writing team, delegating tasks to specialized companies or individuals. This team includes dialogue specialists responsible for writing conversations, writers handling character development, and others who can design “excitement points” to engage audiences at specific intervals. This has formed a highly mature, streamlined system [3].

Director Teng Huatao noted that *Kung Fu Panda 3* was a China-US co-production in which the Chinese team participated extensively. The collaboration process meant managing different perspectives and making compromises. “There’s a festival in the panda village. The American team made their own plan, we made ours, and then ideas collided. For instance, they didn’t know what a shuttlecock was, so we found relevant videos online to show them.” This demonstrates that in the global dissemination of traditional Chinese

culture, it is essential to find a meeting point between internationalization and localization to satisfy global audiences. If we want to tell stories to the world, we must enable the world to understand and love our stories.

2. Strategies for the Dissemination of Traditional Chinese Culture in the Context of Globalization

In today's globalized context, culture represents a manifestation of international influence and competitiveness, reflecting a nation's soft power. In constructing contemporary China's cultural "soft power," we must leverage the strengths of traditional Chinese culture, identify our unique values, form our own industrial chain system, achieve dual encoding of "internationalization" and "localization," and enhance the cultural influence of contemporary China.

2.1 Big Budgets Are Not the Only Path to Market Success

While capital is certainly a guarantee of communication power, big budgets are not the sole prerequisite for market success. From a content creation perspective, the global context highlights the advantages of traditional Chinese culture. As American sociologist Roland Robertson points out: "Global capitalism both promotes cultural homogeneity and promotes cultural heterogeneity, and is constrained by both" [4]. What is national is also universal. *Kung Fu Panda* carries Chinese elements and culture across the world, such as the spirit of chivalry and teaching students according to their aptitude. As Master Oogway says, "Your mind is like water. When it is agitated, it becomes difficult to see. But if you allow it to settle, the answer becomes clear." This belief in advocating inner peace is a unique value of traditional Chinese culture.

American audiences have expressed that their appreciation stems from the distinctiveness of traditional Chinese culture. While every culture is different, in their eyes, the Eastern way of life makes Chinese culture stand apart from others. They appreciate Master Oogway's words, identify with inner peace, and recognize the resilience in Chinese culture [5]. Traditional Chinese culture possesses a unique spiritual temperament, and the concepts it embodies hold contemporary value, such as harmony with nature. Therefore, we must research audience characteristics, leverage the strengths and unique values of traditional Chinese culture, and focus on conceptual and screenwriting excellence to excavate values within traditional culture that resonate with contemporary times and the real world.

2.2 Learning from Foreign Industrial Chain Experience to Establish China's Streamlined System

We must establish our own industrial chain, which can be gradually achieved through co-production with foreign partners. *Kung Fu Panda 3*, for instance, represents China-US co-production that transcends capital-level cooperation to

become a full-process co-production from investment through production to distribution.

Teng Huatao served as the Chinese director for *Kung Fu Panda 3*. In the second half of 2014, he worked with Oriental DreamWorks in Los Angeles alongside the American team. At that time, *Kung Fu Panda 3* had already been in production for two and a half years. The Chinese team held weekly script discussions with the American team, sharing their perspectives on the script and making compromises. This collaboration process meant managing different viewpoints. “There’s a festival in the panda village. The American team made their own plan, we made ours, and then ideas collided. For instance, they didn’t know what a shuttlecock was, so we found relevant videos online to show them.”

-
- References:** [1] *Kung Fu Panda 3* Chinese Box Office Exceeds 400 Million in 4 Days, Tops Box Office Charts in Multiple Global Markets. http://www.thepaper.cn/newsDetail_{{forward}}_{{1428030}}.
[2] Giddens, Anthony (translated by Tian He). *The Consequences of Modernity* [M]. Beijing: Yilin Press, 2000: 56-57.
[3] *Kung Fu Panda*: Does the American Industrial Chain Overwhelm Chinese Creativity? <http://media.people.com.cn/GB/40606/7536531.html>.
[4] Robertson, Roland (translated by Liang Guangyan). *Globalization: Social Theory and Global Culture* [M]. Shanghai: Shanghai People’s Publishing House, 2000: 249.
[5] Ancient Chinese Culture: <http://kungfupanda.wikia.com/wiki/Thread:21695>.

(Author Affiliation: Changzhi Medical College, Shanxi Province)

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

Source: ChinaXiv — Machine translation. Verify with original.