

The Dual Facets of Traditional Cultural IP Adaptation in Chinese Animated Films: A Dialectical Analysis Based on Industrial Ecology and Cultural Identity (Postprint)

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Abstract

[Purpose] In recent years, the Chinese animated film market has developed rapidly, with adaptations of traditional cultural themes achieving remarkable success and becoming an important pillar of the industry. However, it is necessary to analyze and explore the dual aspects of traditional culture IP adaptation in terms of industrial ecology and cultural identity. [Methods] This paper, through the collation and analysis of data from the Chinese animated film market in recent years, combined with three dimensions: cultural identity, industrial mechanisms, and global competition, conducts a dialectical examination of the phenomenon of traditional culture IP adaptation. [Results] The study finds that while traditional culture IP adaptation has expanded market scale, it has also led to thematic homogenization and compression of creative space. Although works promote traditional culture through modernized expression, excessive reliance on the reinterpretation of classic symbols restricts artistic innovation. [Conclusion] Traditional culture IP adaptation is a “double-edged sword”; while driving box office growth, it also brings about a deep-seated tension between cultural values and industrial logic. To construct a sustainable IP ecosystem, the industry needs to break through path dependence and achieve a transformation from deep cultural cultivation to original innovation.

Full Text

The Dual Facets of Traditional Cultural IP Adaptation in Chinese Animated Films: A Dialectical Reflection Based on Industrial Ecology and Cultural Identity

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Abstract

Purpose: In recent years, the Chinese animated film market has experienced rapid development, with adaptations of traditional cultural themes achieving remarkable success and becoming a pillar of the industry. However, a critical examination of the dual facets of traditional cultural IP adaptation within industrial ecology and cultural identity is necessary. **Method:** This paper conducts a dialectical analysis of the phenomenon of traditional cultural IP adaptation by collating and analyzing recent market data for Chinese animated films, integrating three dimensions: cultural identity, industrial mechanisms, and global competition. **Results:** The findings reveal that while traditional cultural IP adaptation has expanded market scale, it has also led to thematic homogenization and compressed space for innovation. Although these works promote traditional culture through modernized expression, over-reliance on reworking classic symbols constrains artistic creativity. **Conclusion:** Traditional cultural IP adaptation is a “double-edged sword” that, while driving box office growth, also precipitates a profound contest between cultural values and industrial logic. To construct a sustainable IP ecosystem, the industry must break free from path dependency and transition from deep cultural cultivation to original innovation.

Keywords: animated film; traditional cultural IP; cultural identity; industrial ecology

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In recent years, the Chinese animated film market has developed rapidly, particularly as adaptations of traditional cultural themes have repeatedly achieved box office successes and become an important pillar of the industry. However, this phenomenon has exposed deep-seated problems within the industry even as it generates market prosperity. In January 2025, *Nezha: The Devil Child Descends into the Sea* (hereinafter *Nezha 2*) was released, and as of April 10, the film had grossed 15.186 billion yuan. Combined with the 5.035 billion yuan earned by *Nezha: The Devil Child Descends to Earth* (hereinafter *Nezha 1*), the *Nezha* series has surpassed 20 billion yuan in total box office revenue, continuously setting new records for film series in Chinese cinema history. This figure not only symbolizes market expansion but is also regarded by the industry as a landmark event signaling the maturation of China’s animation industrial system. Yet behind this box office celebration, a profound contest between cultural values and industrial logic has quietly emerged.

Nezha 2 validates the modern translational capacity of traditional cultural IP

through technologically empowered visual innovation and narrative reconstruction. By infusing the rebellious spirit of “my fate is mine to decide, not heaven’s” into the traditional mythological framework, the film both activates audiences’ cultural memories and completes an intergenerational dialogue on value expression. However, this strategy has gradually evolved into a collective action logic for the industry—when capital, creators, and audiences become overly dependent on traditional cultural IP, the innovation space for animated films becomes compressed into limited rewritings of classic symbols.

A review of recent theatrical animated film selections reveals that adaptations of traditional mythological themes and folk legends dominate the market. These works promote traditional culture and satisfy audiences’ sense of national identity through modernized expressions of cultural symbols. However, this selection model also raises concerns: thematic homogenization has become increasingly prominent, creative path dependency has intensified, and the artistic innovation space for animated films as an art form has been constrained. Simultaneously, most domestic animated films primarily target young children, making it difficult to attract adult audiences and further limiting market expansion and industrial upgrading.

This paper attempts to analyze the “double-edged sword” effect of traditional cultural IP adaptation from three dimensions—cultural identity, industrial mechanisms, and global competition—aiming to reveal the deep-rooted causes of ecological imbalance in the industry and provide a theoretical framework for constructing a sustainable IP ecosystem. When Nezha shouts “my fate is mine to decide, not heaven’s,” Chinese animated films may need a “self-revolution” against path dependency even more urgently—this is not only a pursuit of creative freedom but also an essential path for national culture to establish its subjectivity in modern transformation.

1. The Practical Logic and Value Tension of Traditional Cultural IP Adaptation

1.1 Conceptual Features and Adaptation Core of Traditional Cultural IP

“IP” (Intellectual Property) encompasses three components: copyright, patent rights, and trademark rights. It often originates from novels, animations, games, or even specific images, characters, or concepts from popular programs, films, or online videos, with these diverse IPs frequently serving as sources of inspiration for film creation and adaptation [1]. In contemporary cinema, especially animated films, IP refers not only to specific textual resources such as classic literature, mythological legends, or online novels but also includes the user base, cultural identity, and market potential formed around these texts. Traditional cultural IP specifically denotes a collection of cultural resources rooted in national collective memory, possessing historical continuity and symbolic significance. Its core characteristics manifest in three dimensions: historical

continuity, symbolic representation, and audience intertextuality.

Historical continuity stems from the cross-temporal vitality of classic narratives. Taking *Journey to the West* as an example, since the Wan brothers adapted it into China's first animated feature film, *Princess Iron Fan*, in 1941, it has embarked on a century-long evolution in film and television. This film not only caused a sensation domestically but also had a profound impact internationally, particularly influencing “the father of Japanese anime,” Osamu Tezuka. The 2015 film *Monkey King: Hero is Back* refreshed domestic animation records with 956 million yuan in box office revenue, confirming the enduring appeal of classic IP. Through a narrative reconstruction of Sun Wukong's “disempowerment-awakening” arc, the film transforms the fatalism of traditional mythology into a modern allegory of individual growth, preserving classic symbols like the “Golden Cudgel” and “tiger-skin skirt” while endowing the character with a new spiritual core.

Symbolic representation manifests as the projection of cultural imagery onto group values. For instance, Nezha has evolved from the tragic youth who “carved his flesh to repay his parents” in *Investiture of the Gods* to the rebellious growth narrative in *Nezha 1*. Audiences witness the growth, transformation, and return of the “Demon Pill,” easily projecting themselves into Nezha's story. Audience intertextuality relies on the cognitive foundation formed by collective memory. *White Snake: The Origin*, for example, modernizes the “human-demon romance” by reimagining the scholar Xu Xian as a brave, free-spirited, and daring new character—a stark contrast to the traditionally weak and indecisive Xu Xian—better enabling audience identification with the romance [2]. This strategy of “old wine in new bottles” activates the contemporary value of traditional IP through gamified narratives and imaginative aesthetics.

1.2 Adaptation Advantages: The Resonance of Cultural Memory and Industrial Aesthetics

The success of traditional IP adaptation depends not only on its cultural and commercial value but also on the complex and multifaceted nature of cinematic industrial aesthetics. The concept of cinematic industrial aesthetics is rich and extensive, 主张电影本体与功能的复杂多元性, 认为电影兼具艺术、商品、工业、文化等特性, 是艺术与工业、产业的复合, 除了艺术功能外, 还有一定的“实用性”。这种“实用性”即可供娱乐消闲的消费性, 是一种约翰·费斯克 (John Fiske) 所主张的美学消费、文化经济意义上的“符号经济”之外的“金融经济”功能 [3], 成为电影工业化发展的重要支撑。This composite attribute enables traditional IP adaptation to satisfy audience entertainment needs while achieving broader economic benefits through industrialized operations. The practical advantages of traditional cultural IP adaptation arise from three synergistic effects between cultural memory and cinematic industrial aesthetics.

First, the cognitive shortcut of cultural identity. Cultural memory does not preserve history intact but rather crystallizes the past into “figures of memory.” These symbolic narratives simplify complexity, making abstract values

more accessible [4]. Second, the typified development of industrial aesthetics. Cinematic industrial aesthetics emphasizes that film possesses both artistic, commercial, and industrial attributes, requiring a balance between “authorial expression” and “market laws.” By reusing world-building settings and character relationship networks, most mythological classics or folklore adaptations can significantly shorten script development cycles and achieve substantial marginal benefits in production costs. This industrial production model transforms traditional cultural IP into standardized and replicable cultural products. Third, technologically empowered visual translation. American film theorist David Bordwell noted that visual spectacle is key to cross-cultural communication. The *Nezha* series transforms the Red Armillary Sash and Wind Fire Wheels through digital technology, employing particle fluid simulation techniques in numerous special effects shots to create epic-scale visual experiences. In its overseas box office, North American audiences praised the “fusion of Eastern aesthetics and industrial standards” as breathtaking.

1.3 Adaptation Dilemmas: Cultural Discount and Innovation Bottlenecks

In recent years, traditional IP adaptation in animated films has explored diverse narrative modes: *Nezha 1* employs a “subversive” character reconstruction, transforming the traditional mythological rebel who “carved his bones to repay his father” into a contemporary youth symbol of “resisting prejudice” ; *Jiang Ziya* breaks through the traditional framework of gods versus demons, elevating the Taoist ritual of “beheading the three corpses” into a metaphor for existentialist dilemmas; *Chang’an* retells the Tang Dynasty poet lineage from the relatively unfamiliar perspective of Gao Shi, deconstructing Li Bai’s “poet immortal” image through a “defamiliarization” narrative. These works attempt to activate the contemporary value of traditional IP through gamified narratives and imaginative aesthetics, confirming the role of “horizon of expectations” in reception theory—audiences both rely on existing memories to understand texts and desire to break through cognitive boundaries for new experiences.

However, such innovation remains constrained by audiences’ “intertextual memory” of traditional cultural symbols—a cognitive shortcut formed based on existing cultural experiences. When encountering adapted works, audiences involuntarily compare the text with prototypes in their “pre-understanding.” While this mechanism can quickly evoke cultural identity, it also breeds speculative development by capital. In the process of commercial adaptation, the modern translation of some traditional cultural elements exhibits a tendency toward simplification. Although this adaptation strategy enhances dissemination efficiency, it dilutes the polysemy of traditional culture under the logic of the “symbolic economy.”

This phenomenon of “cultural discount” essentially represents a compromise of cultural depth for commercial efficiency. Canadian scholar Colin Hoskins noted that when cultural products cross groups in communication, their local value

suffers loss due to cognitive differences [5]. In traditional IP adaptation, this loss does not stem from cross-cultural communication but from capital's exploitative mining of local cultural resources—while *Nezha 1* resonated with its slogan “my fate is mine to decide, not heaven's,” its dissolution of the “patriarchal resistance” issue in the original mythology reduces rebellious spirit to inspirational chicken soup for individual success. When “rebellion” is simplified into a box office password, the critical dimension of traditional culture becomes submerged in the waves of consumerism.

A deeper dilemma lies in innovation involution. Between 2020 and 2022, the number of animated film filings plummeted, yet filings for mythological legend IP categories continued to rise. Since *Monkey King: Hero is Back* in 2015, domestic animated filmmakers have identified a genre type with high market acceptance and a replicable monetization model: mythological IP adaptation. According to statistics from the National Film Administration's film filing and project approval announcements, between 2015 and 2020, there were 878 domestic animated film filings, of which at least 119 were mythological IP adaptations, including but not limited to “24 Monkey Kings,” “11 Nezhas,” and “8 Erlang Shens.” This clustering of themes exposes a structural contradiction in the industry: on one hand, the success of *Monkey King: Hero is Back* and *Nezha* validates the “traditional IP + industrial production” business model; on the other hand, capital's dependence on proven formulas traps many works in a vicious cycle of “subversion-controversy-conservatism.” When cultural production is constrained by the capital logic of “short-cycle returns,” the pursuit of safety margins inevitably suppresses innovative experimentation.

Traditional IP adaptation now stands at a crossroads between cultural value and commercial rationality. If it cannot transcend the path dependency of “symbolic consumption,” Chinese animation may fall into the predicament of becoming “more adapted, yet more impoverished.”

2.1 Market Conservatism

Based on the preceding reflection on path dependency in traditional cultural IP adaptation, the author collated and analyzed market data for domestic animated films from 2019 to 2024, revealing significant characteristics of “head monopoly” and “implicit cultural dependency.”

The domestic animated film market from 2019 to 2024 exhibited prominent features of “head monopoly” and “midsection collapse,” with box office trends heavily influenced by individual milestone works. While masterpieces like *Nezha 1*, *Jiang Ziya*, *Chang'an*, and *Boonie Bears: Time Twist* achieved box office revenues exceeding one billion yuan, the vast majority of domestic animated films still struggle to cross the 100 million yuan threshold. In fact, among the 165 domestic animated films released between 2019 and 2024, 109 earned less than 50 million yuan, accounting for nearly 70% of the total [6]. Meanwhile, the head market is highly dependent on the stable performance of a few companies like

Fantawild and Light Chaser Animation. This “super IP dependency syndrome” results in weak market risk resistance: in 2024, *Boonie Bears: Time Twist* accounted for 29% of the year’s total animation box office with its 1.983 billion yuan revenue, driving industry growth while exposing an ecosystem vulnerable to “rising and falling together.”

In terms of thematic categories, segmented genres have accelerated their expansion in recent years, with fantasy adventure dominating selections while popular IP theatrical versions have significantly increased to become the backbone of animated films (see Table 1) [7]. Works such as *Boonie Bears: Reboot Future*, *Happy Heroes: Against the World*, *GG Bond: A Pig’s Counterattack*, *GG Bond: Racing Little Heroes*, *I m MT: Nuosen Duo Adventure Guide*, *Submarine General Mobilization: Adventure Island*, *Space Guard: Darwin Star*, and *Shuke and Beita: Micro Humans* have all continued to release sequels.

Although thematic segmentation has gradually enriched, beneath the expansion lies a conservative core—dependence on traditional cultural content remains significant. Among domestic animated films from 2019 to 2024, in addition to sustained efforts in mythological classics, folklore legends, and historical stories, fantasy adventure and drama categories also extensively draw from traditional cultural themes. For example, *I Am What I Am* continues the “intangible cultural heritage + youth” adaptation paradigm through its lion dance cultural symbols, *Golden Mask Heroes* constructs its narrative based on Sanxingdui cultural relics, and *Invisible Island* draws from *Classic of Mountains and Seas*, essentially remaining variants of traditional cultural IP. Meanwhile, traditional cultural IP animated films demonstrate significant box office appeal. As shown in Figure 1 [8], the proportion of box office revenue from traditional cultural IP animated films relative to the total animation box office has generally exceeded their release quantity proportion from 2019 to 2024, indicating that although relatively few traditional cultural IP adaptations are released, they typically occupy a more significant share of the animation market’s box office performance. In 2024, the high box office of 1.983 billion yuan for *Boonie Bears: Time Twist* enabled original IP films to surpass in revenue share. Looking ahead to 2025, *Nezha 2* has already achieved an astonishing 15.186 billion yuan box office at the year’s start, making it easy to predict that traditional cultural IP will continue to dominate box office performance in 2025. These phenomena further confirm market conservatism while highlighting dependence on “super IPs” — this single-point breakthrough prosperity is precisely a microcosm of systemic crisis.

2.2 The Quality Dilemma of Original IP and Capital Short-sightedness

The decline of original IP is essentially the result of both quality defects and capital logic. Most original works easily fall into two extremes: “juvenilization” or “pseudo-adultification.” Juvenile-oriented works like *GG Bond: Racing Little Heroes* rely on television IP inertia with simple, repetitive narrative logic;

adult-oriented works like *The Guardian* fall into the trap of “concept first,” where obscure philosophical metaphors easily lead to audience attrition. Even acclaimed works like *I Am What I Am*, with its “lion dance + underdog counterattack” narrative framework, have been criticized as “a localized imitation of *Shaolin Soccer*.” Original IP has yet to form a unique aesthetic system and narrative paradigm, struggling to break through audience stereotypes of “domestic animation = juvenile or mythological.”

At the capital operation level, investors typically prefer to support business models already validated by the market rather than risk investment in unproven original projects. This tendency creates enormous challenges for original works in securing funding, often forcing creators to compromise during script development to cater to existing market preferences and expectations. This short-sighted behavior by capital compresses the innovation space for animated films, making it difficult for original IP to achieve breakthroughs.

Although the government and relevant institutions have introduced a series of policies to support original animation, these measures often emphasize artistic experimentation while neglecting typified narratives that resonate with audiences. Many award-winning works, while artistically recognized, often struggle at the box office due to their lack of market orientation. This “critical acclaim but box office failure” phenomenon reflects the contradiction between artistic expression and market demand for original IP.

2.3 International Comparison: The Ecological Gap in Original IP

In international markets, the success of original IP often benefits from mature industrial ecosystems and innovation mechanisms.

American original IP possesses powerful global appeal. Hollywood’s major studios like Universal Pictures, DreamWorks, and Disney’s Pixar have launched a series of popular major IP works. For example, *Despicable Me*, *Kung Fu Panda*, *Inside Out*, and *Frozen* have not only achieved tremendous global box office success but also dominated major markets through derivative economies and industrial chain integration. Although Hollywood’s overall market performance has declined in recent years, with domestic audiences’ enthusiasm for Hollywood blockbusters waning, the continued strong sales of animation IP peripherals demonstrate its powerful market influence. For instance, *Frozen* has been developed into games, stage plays, toys, apparel, and daily necessities. Following the 2019 release of *Frozen II*, another wave of purchasing enthusiasm erupted for water bottles, school bags, clothing, and other derivatives. Overall, Disney’s animated film super-brand IPs are highly skilled at using quality content to drive business expansion in cross-cultural communication, emphasizing the mining of derivatives’ role in emotional connection with audiences and building them into implicit connections that maintain strong brand-audience relationships. Simultaneously, integrating animated images into derivatives can incorporate brand connotations into product use value, further strengthening audience product im-

pressions and effectively enhancing the penetration of brand IP communication [9]. Meanwhile, Hollywood's smooth IP development operation also benefits from its conglomerate industrial structure and rigorous copyright protection system. Major Hollywood companies like Disney, Warner Bros., and 20th Century Fox belong to larger corporate groups specializing in entertainment and media operations, with businesses covering film, television, publishing, music, audiovisual, gaming, theme parks, and various other segmented entertainment and media industries [10].

As a major animation powerhouse, Japan's original IP has demonstrated unique appeal at the content ecological level. The Japanese animation market has successfully achieved a balance between authorial identity and industrialization, forming a distinctive cultural phenomenon. Particularly noteworthy is the powerful appeal of director personal brands in Japanese animation. Renowned directors like Hayao Miyazaki and Makoto Shinkai have not only won massive global fan bases through their personal styles but have also achieved enormous commercial success with works like *Spirited Away* and *Your Name*. These directors' works often bear distinctive personal imprints that create strong brand effects in the market. Additionally, theatrical versions of well-known anime IPs such as *Slam Dunk*, *Detective Conan*, and *Haikyuu!!* have attracted large audiences globally. Through deep cultural accumulation and globalized market strategies, Japan's original IP enjoys a prestigious international reputation.

In contrast, China's original IP development faces structural challenges. First, an imperfect industrial chain creates bottlenecks in funding and technology during the creative realization process. Many original projects are forced to cater to existing market preferences from the initial stages, making it difficult to maintain their uniqueness and innovative spirit. Second, market preference for mature IP makes it difficult for original works to receive sufficient attention and investment, limiting the growth space for emerging creators.

By drawing on international successful experiences and improving the industrial ecosystem, China's original IP is expected to narrow the gap with international advanced levels in the future and achieve greater cultural export and market impact.

3. The Path Forward: From Cultural Matrix to a New Industrial Ecology

If China's animated film industry wishes to break free from the shackles of "adaptation dependency," it must construct a systematic path from the innovative transformation of cultural resources to the ecological operation of the entire industrial chain. This path must be rooted in the deep excavation of national cultural matrices, supported by the modern reconstruction of industrial systems, and must balance cultural value with commercial rationality in a globalized context.

3.1 From Symbolic Appropriation to Spiritual Translation

In the development of traditional cultural IP, simply relying on visual symbolic appropriation is no longer sufficient to meet the needs of modern audiences. We need to shift toward deep-level interpretation of traditional cultural spirit to achieve genuine cultural innovation. German scholar Jan Assmann's "cultural memory" theory posits that the transmission of cultural symbols requires dynamic renewal through the interaction between "functional memory" and "storage memory," providing valuable perspectives for our approach.

Taking *Chang'an* as an example, the film reinterprets the lives and ideals of Tang Dynasty poet communities through the friendship between Gao Shi and Li Bai. Gao Shi's life experiences are relatively less familiar compared to well-known figures like Li Bai and Du Fu. Through Gao Shi's perspective, the film not only showcases the artistic charm of Tang poetry but also reflects broader social and historical contexts through the characters' life trajectories. This narrative strategy not only enriches character connotations but also grants new vitality to traditional culture in a modern context.

Further deepening spiritual translation requires starting from the narrative core. For instance, *Nezha 1* dilutes the ethical dilemmas in traditional mythology, focusing instead on portraying the growth journey of contemporary youth resisting prejudice and seeking self-identity. This transformation is not merely symbolic replacement but achieves deep dialogue between traditional cultural spirit and modern social issues by reconstructing character motivations and value conflicts. In *Nezha 2*, familiar "workplace" metaphors for Chinese audiences are added. Through the introduction of these modern elements, traditional stories gain new vitality and resonance in a modern social context. Through such spiritual translation, traditional cultural IP can maintain its cultural roots while adapting to modern audience aesthetics and values, ultimately achieving dynamic cultural inheritance and innovative development.

3.2 Building a Sustainable IP Ecosystem

China's animation industry must abandon the single logic of "blockbuster determines survival" and shift toward sustainable IP ecosystem construction. The key to building a sustainable IP ecosystem lies in establishing a multi-level, multi-dimensional support system to ensure the full lifecycle development of IP from creativity to marketization. This requires balancing resource integration, innovation incentives, and market adaptability to form a dynamic yet orderly ecosystem.

Specifically, a tiered incubation system is crucial for supporting IP development from startup to maturity. This system provides stage-appropriate support, helping IP obtain necessary resources at different development phases. In the initial stage, polishing creativity and concepts is paramount, and incubators can provide professional guidance and funding support to ensure feasibility and innovation. In product development, technical support and market analysis are key

to ensuring products meet market demands and remain competitive. In market promotion, integrated marketing resources are essential to help IP gain recognition and attention in broader markets. This stage-based support not only helps reduce development risks but also improves success rates.

Second, cross-border collaboration and diversified development are important strategies for building an IP ecosystem. By collaborating with different fields such as film, gaming, and literature, IP can expand into broader markets and form diversified product lines. This not only enhances IP market value but also strengthens its cultural influence and sustained audience attention.

Furthermore, long-term operation is key to ensuring IP's enduring vitality. At the market performance level, many excellent films' sequels often struggle to replicate their predecessors' glory, revealing the limitations of relying solely on blockbuster thinking. By continuously updating and expanding IP connotations, the phenomenon of excellent works being flashes in the pan can be avoided. User feedback and community interaction play important roles in this process. By establishing effective interaction mechanisms, developers can obtain timely user feedback for product iteration and innovation. Active user communities not only enhance audience engagement but also become important channels for IP dissemination.

Building a sustainable IP ecosystem requires approaches from multiple aspects including incubation systems, cross-border collaboration, and long-term operation. The market needs to shift from single-blockbuster thinking to ecological thinking, ensuring that traditional cultural IP continuously radiates new vitality in modern markets through systematic resource integration and innovation mechanisms, achieving lasting cultural inheritance and commercial success.

3.3 From Cultural Export to Value Resonance

In the context of globalization, the adaptation of traditional cultural IP in Chinese animated films not only shoulders the mission of cultural export but also needs to achieve value resonance to enhance international market recognition and acceptance. In cross-cultural communication, Chinese animation must transcend the initial stage of "symbolic export" and move toward deeper dialogue of "value resonance." Currently, the overseas dissemination of Chinese animated films remains trapped within the "Chinese diaspora circle," and this "echo chamber communication" exposes insufficient cross-cultural dialogue capabilities—when works can only evoke collective memories among specific groups but fail to inspire universal emotional resonance, their globalization value is inevitably limited.

Achieving value resonance can be pursued through three breakthroughs:

First, deeply excavate the common values in traditional culture. For example, Pixar's *Coco* uses Mexico's Day of the Dead as its backdrop but triggers global resonance through the motif of "family and memory." Values embedded

in traditional culture, such as courage, friendship, and family, can also connect emotionally with global audiences through modern storytelling. This connection not only enhances works' influence in international markets but also promotes deep-level cultural dissemination.

Second, implement tailored communication strategies to avoid symbolic stacking exports. Different countries and regions have varying cultural backgrounds and acceptance habits. Therefore, cultural output must consider target market characteristics and develop appropriate communication strategies. By understanding and respecting local cultures to resonate with local audiences' cultural backgrounds, rather than simply stacking and exporting cultural symbols, cultural connotations can be effectively transmitted. Disney's *Mulan*, despite controversies over cultural misinterpretation, partially broke through circles through localized adaptation with its "female awakening" theme.

Third, achieve modern translation of culture through innovative narratives and industrial aesthetics. Technology empowerment and visual innovation are key to modern cultural translation. Through innovative narrative techniques and advanced industrial aesthetics, Chinese animated films can create appealing audio-visual experiences while maintaining cultural cores, enhancing works' international competitiveness.

This study reveals that while traditional cultural IP adaptation in Chinese animated films drives market growth, it also brings deep-seated problems to the industrial ecosystem. Traditional cultural IP adaptation expands market scale while causing thematic homogenization and compressed innovation space. Although works promote traditional culture through modernized expression, over-reliance on reworking classic symbols constrains artistic innovation.

Chinese animated films stand at a historic turning point: the box office miracles of traditional cultural IP not only prove the contemporary vitality of national culture but also warn of an ecological crisis of "path dependency." The future path forward requires taking the creative transformation of cultural matrices as the foundation, the construction of a full-industrial-chain ecosystem as the skeleton, and global value resonance as the wings. Only when the industry no longer regards "Nezha" as a box office savior but as a catalyst for ecological evolution can Chinese animation truly achieve the leap from "mythological replication" to "civilizational narrative."

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

Source: ChinaXiv –Machine translation. Verify with original.