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Modern Film Roadshows Boost Audiences' Recommendation Willingness Through Audience-Audience Interaction

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Abstract. Film roadshows have become more popular in film promotion and distribution. It has evolved from an exclusive practice for big-budget blockbusters into a standard configuration for genre commercials. With the development of internet-based media, the costs of hosting and disseminating film roadshows have gradually decreased, and their high marketing benefits have gained growing recognition within the industry. As is widely recognized, a film's roadshow is very effective in improving the film's positive reputation. Existing studies have a large number of examinations of the definitions and features of the film roadshow, audience's willingness to recommend, interaction between creators and audience, and how the Parasocial Interaction (PSI) works in the interaction process, but there is a limitation in explaining the deep psychological action mechanism of interactions in the film roadshow. This study summarizes existing studies and theories about the film roadshow and the interactions that happen in it and how they influence the willingness to recommend, and identifies the limitations of existing research, then expands academic thinking and proposes feasible directions for future research: to deeply explore the psychological mechanism of PSI in the film roadshow, and try to connect existing psychological theories (like the Theory of Planned Behavior) with the above, and to conclude new speculations about the action mechanism of interaction between audience and film creators in the film roadshow.

Keywords: Film roadshow, audience, interaction, recommendation willingness

1. Introduction

The film roadshow is a kind of offline interaction activity between the creative team and audiences for film marketing and promotion. The film roadshow amplifies the reach and influence of this film both offline and online. Face-to-face film promotion events where core members of film production teams tour multiple cities (often 30+) to meet audiences [1]. Audiences express their emotions or opinions about certain plots or characters, exchanging their viewing experiences. Lin Tao and Tao Huang suggested that the creative team convey filmmaking experiences through a film roadshow [1]. At the same time, the audience's recommendations are very important to the films' dissemination. It influences film dissemination across four dimensions of the life cycle. First, regarding audiences' recommendation decision: how long a film can survive, with each one-unit

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increase in rating, the box-office decay index rises by 73.5% [2]. Second, in terms of diffusion mechanism, most audiences, namely imitators, are motivated to watch films by interpersonal recommendations instead of formal advertising [3]. Third, for mediated transformation: professional evaluations need audiences' willingness to recommend to be converted into box-office revenue [4]. Fourth, concerning behavioral prediction: the strongest predictor of box-office revenue is the number of audience comments (the behavioral transformation of recommendation), and it outperforms the number of likes [5].

In light of the above, the interaction in the film roadshow influences the audience's willingness to recommend, and the willingness to recommend affects the films' dissemination a lot, so this paper mainly discusses how interactions during film roadshows affect audiences' recommendation intention from a specific theoretical perspective.

2. Film roadshows and audience engagement

The film roadshow is always conducted offline and spread online with different formats. In the film roadshow, the creative team (like actors and director) appear in person in the film roadshow and interact with fans and audiences face to face, audiences raise their hands to ask questions like plot interpretation, behind-the-scenes shooting anecdotes, and so on. In terms of perspective of activity, there is formats like theater meet-and-greets, campus roadshows, multi-city touring roadshows, the film roadshow always have the features of face to face, multi-city touring roadshows (30+ cities), small-scale and high-frequency repetitions, four specific forms (include theater meet-and-greets, campus roadshows, multi-city touring roadshows, as well as premiere and red-carpet events) [1], audiences have different motivates to take part in the film roadshow, audience with different subgroups have different kinds of attentional tendencies toward both films and their roadshows. Fan communities of movie stars or creative teams, film enthusiasts, and fans of specific genres, among others, participate in film roadshows driven by distinct motivations. like exposure to the famous face-to-face, the desire to shift from admiration to personal participatory co-creation [4], the desire to obtain exclusive behind-the-scenes information, preference for social-network-based information, etc. The interactions between the creative team include film stars and audiences in film roadshows, which influence audiences' willingness to recommend to a large extent. It provides audiences a chance to make themselves into individuals highly connected to the film (sharing and participation in the communication benefits of films), thereby enhancing their motivation to recommend the film. Castillo suggested that the marginal effect of interactive engagement (social-sharing behaviors after roadshows) on box-office performance is greater than that of personal participation (on-site roadshow experience). It indicates that the sense of participation stimulated by roadshows can be effectively transformed into actual communication behaviors [6].

3. Audience interaction and parasocial interaction

Audiences output and accept emotions, opinions and feelings about the narrative, characters and artistic techniques and theme of a film, it is called audiences' interaction, which is an effective format and stage to produce and release public evaluation of this film, and what's more important, film promoters use this to provide an experience of take part in the creative team, In the process where audiences and creative teams exchange perspectives on films as well as their creative or viewing experiences, switching between the roles of creative subject and appreciative/gazing subject, the two parties participating in the roadshow pull each other's positions, enabling audiences to empathise with the creators' standpoint, so that make emotion bond between film and audiences.

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Castillo, Benitez, Llorens, and Luo suggested that the audience's interaction can be divided into two types: interactive engagement and personal engagement, both of which have a significant positive effect on film box-office performance, and they have a mutually reinforcing effect at the same time [7]. This necessitates the introduction of another concept: Parasocial Interaction (PSI), which means a one-sided quasi-interpersonal experience formed between audiences and media figures during media consumption. It often creates for audiences the illusory sense of genuine reciprocal interaction [8]. For example, during a film roadshow, when the creative team is giving a speech or responding to a certain audience's question, the audience may feel that it is talking to the creator as a real-life dialogue individual, but from the creators' perspective, they are addressing the collective audience rather than recognizing or intending to communicate with any single individual. Through this, audiences perceive that they take genuine and reciprocal interaction with actors (film stars) and other creators, which turns the actors into "real-life people" not only media characters. Furthermore, the collective power of unified emotions among on-site fans can substantially boost audiences' emotional investment in the film and its creative team. Then the willingness to recommend this film can be steeply increased.

4. Recommendation intention

Recommend willingness, which means the psychological willingness to convey the recognize and the attitude to encourage to others (like friends or relative) to support some certain phenomenon by social interaction (online or offline), within the context of film, the recommend willingness of a film means the willingness to convey the positive affective tendency toward the film to others and the willingness to make them watch and recognize this film. With its psychological nature, willingness is an important factor for someone to recommend. It does not necessarily mean the recommended behavior will surely be done. At the same time, film recommendation-willingness constitutes a chaotic system that is dynamically shaped by multiple partially uncontrollable and even unknowable factors. These influencing factors exert varying degrees of effects on the trajectory of recommendation-willingness under different circumstances. like attitude, subjective norm, perceived behavioral control (PBC), emotional value, social value, and altruistic value, all of which exert positive effects on willingness to share and recommend [7]. In-depth processing of the core information of the film, like film roadshow, and shallow processing of peripheral cues, like film stars, both affect the willingness to recommend the film [8]. The positive watching and interaction experience can also increase the willingness to recommend. More immersive emotions and profound emotional impact will lead to more positive evaluations of the film's quality, better environment, better background music, better Sound Effects, and dubbing, which can all make the audience pay more attention to the narrative trajectory and the emotion the film expresses. Moreover, better interaction experiences will strengthen audiences' empathy for the creative team and narrow the psychological distance between both sides. These two types of influences can enhance audiences' willingness to recommend by shaping and reinforcing their behavioral attitudes toward the film. Such interactive effects are embedded within a complex systemic context, where each contributing factor operates interdependently rather than in isolation. Changes in audience perception generated during these face-to-face interactions may further shift the narrative trajectory of word-of-mouth diffusion, and the resultant attitudinal transformation serves as a critical mediator linking offline roadshow events to subsequent recommendation behaviors.

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5. From interaction to recommendation

By showing creative experiences and emotions that bond with the film or characters to the audience, better interaction experiences can produce a positive attitude in audiences. Wang and Tang suggested that three main mechanisms, empathy, immersion, and belief revision, can positively affect the word-of-mouth by pleasure and arousal [9]. Besides, the high-quality interaction experiences can make audiences have a favorable impression of actors and other creative team members by deconstructing the performed identity and returning to the authentic personality, then enhancing the Intention to recommend the film. The authentic positive traits of actors or creative team members, like talent, sincerity, and hard work, are transferred to the products.

In a film roadshow, PSI plays an important role in enhancing audiences' favorable impressions of actors and the creative team in the above-mentioned process.

It influences film dissemination across four dimensions. The first one is the life cycle. Actually, these three key elements all play important roles in their mutual interaction. The ELM model demonstrates that marketing activities (including roadshow-style promotional events) alter audience attitudes. These changed attitudes further influence purchase intention. This process constitutes the mediating path of "activity to attitude to behavioral intention" [9]. Wang and Tang suggested that the ELM model demonstrates that marketing activities (including roadshow-style promotional events) alter audience attitudes [9]. These changed attitudes further influence purchase intention. This process constitutes the mediating path from activity to attitude and then behavioral intention [9]. Based on the innovation diffusion theory, audience online recommendations (eWOM) change over time and shape the pace of box-office decay [10]. The second dimension is the diffusion mechanism. Most audiences, namely imitators, are motivated to watch films by interpersonal recommendations rather than formal advertising. The third refers to mediated transformation. The professional evaluations rely on the audience's willingness to recommend to convert such evaluations into box-office revenue. The last is behavioral prediction. The strongest predictor of box-office revenue is the number of audience comments, the behavioral transformation of recommendation, and it outperforms the number of likes [5]. PSI fully mediates the effect of celebrity traits on brand attitude, and this effect holds for both fans and non-fans (universality).

6. Conclusion

The film roadshow, audience's interaction and recommend willingness, the above three are closely connected, from the perspective of logical relationships, the film distributors or creative teams hold the film roadshow for increase the recommend willingness by audience's interaction, when designing the roadshow, the audience's willingness of recommend is sufficiently considered as one of the main purposes, the audience's interaction is sufficiently used as methods for boosting recommendation intention.

All these factors operate within a unified system and contextual setting. When investigating any single factor, researchers must take other relevant factors into account as variables. Given the psychological involvement and mutual position-pulling at play, identifying the triggers of the dependent variable and forecasting its developmental direction requires the consideration of a broad range of factors and empirical data, rendering this research problem highly complex. At the same time, the interaction influences the recommendation willingness for large amounts of content. Now existing studies define what the roadshow and the roadshow's formats and features are, the experiences exchanged between the creative team and audiences, the importance of recommendation willingness for the film's communication, and the reasons and motivations for audiences'

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participation in film roadshows. Mechanisms by which roadshows enhance audience engagement and experience. The definition and kinds of audiences' interaction and the PSI, the definition and influencing factors, the sharing from the creators, and the creation of positive emotions, and so on. However, there are still some limitations in existing studies. There are few studies about the detailed factors, like when the PSI influences the recommendation willingness, and how it actually works at the psychological level. Existing studies mostly adopt an individual psychological perspective, but overlook the moderating effect of collective emotions at roadshow venues. In the future, in the film roadshow, how the interactions between audiences and creators influence recommendation willingness from a psychological perspective can be studied deeply. Other theories (like the Theory of Planned Behavior) can be introduced when studying mechanisms of how PSI influences the recommendation willingness in film roadshows.

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