

Research on the Role of Social Media in Promoting and Popularizing Educational Films

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Abstract: In recent years, watching movies has gradually become an integral part of national entertainment, captivating audiences of all ages with its unique charm. Movies, as a novel and innovative form of entertainment, have seamlessly integrated into people's daily lives. Notably, educational films have emerged as a prominent trend, becoming a popular choice for movie storytelling and attracting a substantial audience. This article delves deeply into the pivotal role of social media in enhancing the traffic of educational films and explores how "educational marketing" strategies can attract more viewers. By focusing on the three films "Walking to School," "The Running Boys," and "An Answer from Heaven," we will conduct a comprehensive analysis of their marketing strategies on social media, aiming to uncover the key factors that influence audiences' movie-watching decisions. Additionally, we will draw inspiration from the successful experiences of the classic films "Forrest Gump" and "The Shawshank Redemption" to provide valuable guidance on social media strategies for related movies. Research consistently shows that the effective utilization of social media can significantly increase the visibility of educational films, thereby driving sustained growth in box office receipts and movie viewing rates.

Keywords: Social media, educational films, marketing strategies, communication effects.

1. Introduction

The development of new media has made educational films a "tool" for everyone to educate and have fun. Such films can often arouse people's emotional resonance and gain corresponding inspiration and thinking. To some extent, educational films play an important role in spreading culture and promoting social values.

With the popularity of social media, the promotion and dissemination channels of films have undergone profound changes. The rise of social media has also opened a new channel for marketers to carry out marketing [1]. Traditional advertising and media activities (i.e. printing and broadcasting media) can only be transmitted in one direction and the communication cost is expensive [2]. In comparison, social media has the advantages of information interaction and sharing [3]. It allows users to share a variety of information on the platform, which can be disseminated in multiple directions at a lower cost. On social media platforms, users can be either consumers of information or generators of information [4]. With the popularity of social media, the publicity and dissemination channels of films have undergone profound changes. Social media has not only become the main

channel for film promotion, but also provides a platform for the audience to participate and communicate. People choose the type of movie to watch through the recommendation and publicity of relevant platforms. Surrounded by many types of films, the audience positioning of educational films is relatively limited. In the film market, compared with diversified film genres, the style of this type of film is too single. In addition, educational films may be relatively limited in terms of publicity resources and channels, and cannot be large-scale and high-density like commercial blockbusters. The propaganda offensive. As a result, the film's exposure was insufficient before its release, and it was difficult to attract a large audience's attention. And this kind of film often needs to gradually accumulate popularity through the audience's word of mouth. However, due to the relatively limited audience of the film and the time it takes a certain amount of time to spread the word of mouth, the film may face the problem of insufficient traffic at the beginning of its release. According to Statista data, by 2023, the number of social media users worldwide has reached nearly 4.3 billion, especially among young people, social media has become the main source of information access. Therefore, this article will discuss how social media can help educational films such as *Walking to School* raise attention.

The main purpose of this research is to explore how social media can open up new traffic entrances for educational films through precise positioning, content innovation, interactive marketing and other strategies. At the same time, this study will also explore the challenges and coping strategies that may be encountered in the process of social media promotion and provide practical guidance and theoretical support for the creators and distributors of educational films, in order to better develop educational films in the fierce market competition.

2. Literature Review

2.1. The Influence of Social Media on the Audience's Decision to Watch Movies

The interaction between most users using social media and movie content has become an important factor in choosing to watch movies. Through functions such as sharing, commenting and liking, social media has significantly improved the visibility of the film. Research shows that 63% of young audiences said that their choice of watching movies is influenced by social media posts. The rise of user-generated content (UGC) has accelerated the spread of educational films by enabling audiences to share their personal viewing experiences and evaluations.

This social media background has profoundly influenced all aspects of the film, including narrative style, aesthetic form, aesthetic concept, production, publicity and marketing, etc. However, the media is not only the form, but also the content itself. The content that leaves the media is basically just a hypothesis, just like the so-called content that leaves the form of literary and artistic works. The media is not only a carrier or an information, but also a direct cultural form, material civilisation and spiritual civilisation, a way of thinking and a way of life. Media directly affects people's way of thinking and perception. From the perspective of communication, every change in the communication medium and the resulting communication mode can become a milestone in the development of human civilism.

2.2. Special Features of Educational Films Compared with other Types of Films

Educational films usually contain profound educational significance and aim to convey knowledge, values or educational concepts to the audience through the storyline. Its themes involve education, growth, family, society and other fields, which can reflect the current situation and problems of education in different social contexts. Educational films can often touch the deep emotions of the audience, trigger deep thinking on education, growth and other topics, and because they are close to

reality and reflect social problems, they are easy to attract wide attention and discussion from all walks of life.

Through the mass media form of movies, educational films can spread positive educational concepts and values and have a profound impact on the audience. The analysis of educational films is conducive to an in-depth understanding of the current situation and problems of education, and exploring the direction and path of educational reform and development. At the same time, it can also provide useful references and inspirations for film creators.

3. The Relationship Between Educational Films and Media

First of all, educational films rely on the media as the main communication channel. With the development of information technology, films are not only screened in traditional theatres, but also widely spread through television, online video platforms, social media and other media forms. These media platforms provide a broader audience base and communication space for educational films. Secondly, the progress of media technology has also deeply influenced the creation and presentation of educational films. High-definition photography, special effects production, digital editing and other modern media technology means make diverse in terms of visual effects, narrative techniques, etc., which can better attract the attention of the audience and convey educational information.

Third, the media plays a key role in the promotion and marketing of educational films. Through a variety of media means such as TV advertising, online publicity, social media promotion, etc., film producers can more effectively attract the attention of the target audience and improve the popularity and box office performance of the film. Fourth, modern media also provides a platform for educational films to interact with the audience. Audiences can express their feelings, opinions and suggestions through social media, online forums and other channels. This interactive mechanism helps film producers better understand the needs of the audience and constantly improve the quality of the film. Fifth, the core value of educational films lies in their educational and inspirational significance. Through the wide dissemination of the media, these films can reach a wider audience and stimulate people's in-depth thinking and discussion on education, society, life and other issues, so as to exert positive social influence (Figure 1, Figure 2 and Figure 3).

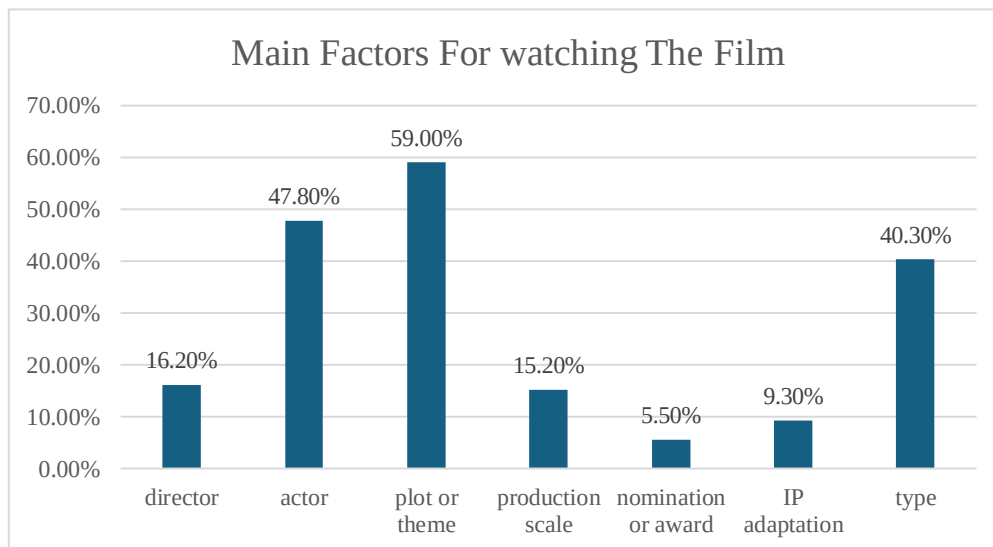


Figure 1: Main factors for watching the film

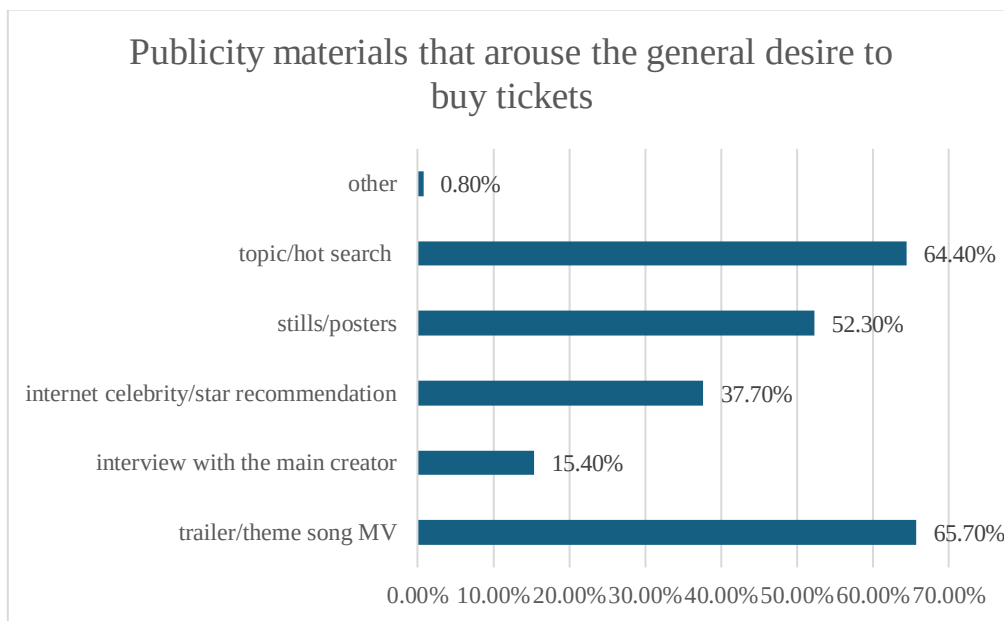


Figure 2: Publicity materials that arouse the general desire to buy tickets

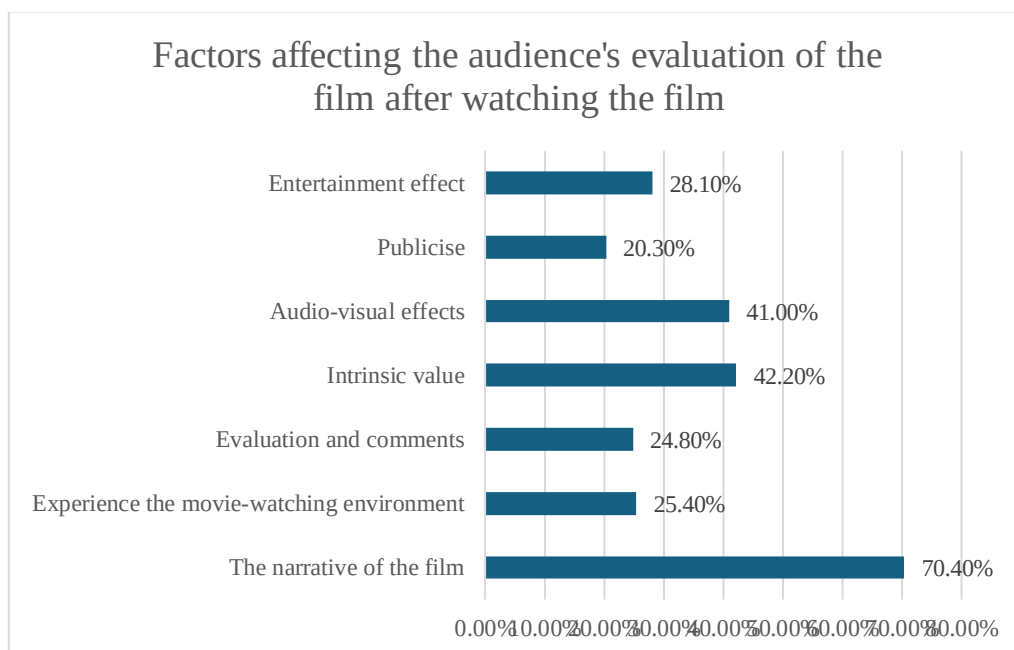


Figure 3: Data from China Film Newspaper

4. Film Selection and its Commonality

4.1. Overview of the Film

"Walking to School":

The cat's eye score is 7.9, and the Douban score is 8.3. The film is adapted from a true story, which deeply reflects the difficult process of poor children in mountainous areas to school, which has attracted wide attention from the society.

Because of its real and touching story and profound educational significance, it has won high praise from the audience and film critics.

"An Answer from Heaven":

Douban scored 9.2, Cat Eye scored 9.2. The film won unanimous praise from audiences and critics at home and abroad with its innocent and simple story, delicate emotional depiction, and in-depth discussion of the philosophy of life and death.

As a classic of Chinese children's films, it has had a profound impact on the creation of children's films later.

"The Running Boys":

Douban scores 7.1, and Cat Eye scores 7.2. The film is adapted from real events. It tells the story of children in remote areas chasing their dreams through football, showing the spirit of tenacity and bravery.

The film has won wide praise from the audience and the industry with its positive energy and inspirational theme.

4.2. Overview of Awards

"Walking to School":

It has won important awards such as the China Watch Award, the Golden Rooster Award and the Pyongyang International Film Festival Award.

"An Answer from Heaven":

Won the International Youth and Children's Film and Television Centre Award at the 43rd Berlin International Film Festival.

Won the Best Feature Film Award at the 10th Chicago Children's Day in the United States.

"The Running Boys":

Selected as the "39th batch of excellent films recommended to primary and secondary school students across the country" of the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Propaganda of China.

It has won awards and nominations in many international film festivals at home and abroad.

4.3. Overview of the Box Office

"Walking to School" is an inspirational drama film based on a true story. Although its box office performance is not as good as a commercial blockbuster, it has gained a good reputation for its profound theme and touching story. The specific box office figures vary depending on the region and time, but it is usually difficult for such films that focus on social issues to achieve large-scale commercial success at the box office.

As an earlier film (released in 1992), the box office data of "An Answer from Heaven" may be difficult to accurately query. However, considering its warm and touching story and profound family theme, the film should have gained some recognition and box office results among the audience at that time. However, due to its long-standing and non-commercial blockbuster, its box office scale is limited.

The latest box office data of "The Running Boys" may be difficult to obtain instantly because it may not have been widely released or may be at different market stages. However, based on its inspirational theme and the background of the adaptation of real events, it is expected that the film will achieve certain box office results among the target audience.

Commonality: Because these films focus more on social issues and educational significance than the pursuit of commercial success, they may be relatively weak in commercial operation. This may cause them to face certain challenges in publicity and distribution, making it difficult to attract a lot of commercial investment and market attention. Although the themes and stories of these films are

universal, their audience may be relatively specific. For example, "Walking to School" may attract more audiences who pay attention to social issues and educational equity; "Commonality: Because these films focus more on social issues and educational significance than the pursuit of commercial success, they may be relatively weak in commercial operation. This may cause them to face certain challenges in publicity and distribution, making it difficult to attract a lot of commercial investment and market attention. Although the themes and stories of these films are universal, their audience may be relatively specific. For example, "Walking to School" may attract more audiences who pay attention to social issues and educational equity; "Heaven's Reply" is more suitable for family audiences and audiences who like family themes; "Running Teenagers" is more popular with teenagers and sports fans. Therefore, the attractiveness of these films may be limited in the wider commercial market.

They all contain profound educational significance. Through different stories and backgrounds, they convey positive values and philosophy of life to the audience, and they have a wide range of social influences in different fields and scopes, attracting people's attention and thinking about education, growth, family affection and other topics. As a film with deep connotation and extensive social influence, the promotion potential of the three films on social media is huge, which can attract more audiences' attention and watch through emotional resonance, topic discussion and other means." is more suitable for family audiences and audiences who like family themes; "The Running Boys" is more popular with teenagers and sports fans. Therefore, the attractiveness of these films may be limited in the wider commercial market.

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5. Comparison and Analysis of Publicity Methods

There are significant differences in the publicity methods of the five films, which are affected by the production scale, market positioning and cultural environment.

When "Shawshank Redemption" was released in 1994, it mainly relied on traditional media such as television, radio and advertising. Because it was a mid-budget film, the publicity budget was relatively limited. After the first release, the box office performance was poor, but the word of mouth gradually made it a classic, especially after the popularisation of DVD and online film and television services, the popularity has been greatly improved." Forrest Gump" was also released in 1994. Although it also used traditional media, the publicity investment of the production company behind it was significant. The film combines historical events and the star effect (the influence of Tom Hanks), which has attracted wide attention, and the nominations and awards for many Oscars have further enhanced its popularity.

Compared with the first two films, the publicity methods of walking to school are relatively low-key, mainly relying on social media, spontaneous film critics' recommendations and film festival exhibitions, etc., and the budget and influence are relatively small. In the face of market challenges, many independent films improve their exposure by participating in film festivals and rely on the audience's word of mouth.

6. Common Analysis of Social Marketing in Two Educational Films, Forrest Gump and Shawshank's Redemption

6.1. Social Media Interaction and Participation

With the rise of social media, the interaction and participation of the two films on social platforms have also become an important part of social marketing. The classic lines, scenes and characters in Forrest Gump and Shawshank Redemption are made into various emojis, short videos and graphic and text content, which are widely distributed on Weibo, TikTok, B Station and other platforms. By participating in the creation and sharing of these contents, the audience has further deepened their understanding and love for the film, and also contributed to the social marketing of the film.

Especially on social media platforms, the sharing of relevant films and the recommendation of bloggers contribute to the image and positioning of the two films in the hearts of the public. Clear the editing and content explanation of relevant high-burning clips to strengthen the profound theme and emotional resonance of the two films.

6.2. Cross-Era Influence

The two films span a very long time, but the effect and response produced are very strong. The two films "The Legend of Gump" and "The Redemption of Shawshank" are of great significance in the shaping of characters and the portrayal of theme ideas. Forrest Gump has become a classic work across ages with its unique narrative style and profound philosophy of life. Many people can gain new insights by watching it at different stages of life. The Shawshank Redemption, with its unrelenting pursuit of freedom and hope, has inspired generations of viewers not to give up hope in the face of difficulties. This cross-era influence enables the two films to continue to attract new audiences in social marketing and form a virtuous cycle.

6.3. Word of Mouth

The film's unique perspective and story in shooting, as well as its different ideas in the theme shaping of the characters, made the two films win high honours in the industry after their release, which further improved the popularity and reputation of the film. It has occupied a high position on Douban and other scoring websites for a long time and has become a classic. The word-of-mouth spread of both films depends on the audience's spontaneous recommendation and the sharing of good reviews on social media.

7. Marketing Under Social Media Platforms

Movie commentary blogger

Such bloggers usually release film commentary videos to conduct in-depth analysis and interpretation of films. They may introduce the film from multiple angles such as plot, characters, theme, etc., and share their feelings and insights. For example, bloggers such as "Liangying Commentary", "Big Hammer Love Editing" and "Maruko Commentary" may contain commentary on these films in their video libraries.

Inspirational and life-perception bloggers

They may explore the meaning and value of life from the classic lines in the movie, the fate of the characters, etc., and encourage the audience to actively face the challenges in life. Such bloggers may recommend this film in the form of graphics, short videos or live broadcasts.

Classic movie review blogger

Such bloggers focus on reviewing and recommending classic movies. As recognised classics of Shawshank Redemption and Forrest Gump, they will naturally not be missed by bloggers. It may guide the audience to rediscover or gain an in-depth understanding of the film by sharing highlights in the film, high-burning mixed cuts, behind-the-scenes stories or audience comments.

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8. Marketing Strategies for Films Such as "Walking to School"

First of all, In the new media era, the core of film publicity strategy has changed from traditional extensive dissemination to personalised promotion focussing on user experience. This change is determined by the development of digital technology and the change of user habits. Against this background, by analysing users' browsing history, preferences, social media behaviour and other data, film producers can provide more personalised recommendations and publicity content to reach the target audience more accurately[5].the secondary creation of the theme of the film, the audience expresses their understanding and perception of freedom and hope by creating video and graphic content, so that the film continues to be hotly discussed on social media. And with relevant topics on social media: #family education #inspirational movies #education, etc. Use the data analysis portraits of target audiences, including age, gender, preferences, etc., in order to deliver advertisements and content more accurately. Produce high-quality trailers and behind-the-scenes titbits to show the wonderful moments and production process of the film and attract the audience's interest.

Secondly, in combination with the theme of the film, create articles, short videos or pictures and texts with emotional resonance, such as the schooling story of poor mountain children in "Walking to School", the warm moment of family affection in "Heaven's Reply", and the inspirational Teenager". Cooperate with well-known bloggers and Internet celebrities related to the field of education, film reviews, parent-child relationships, etc., invite them to watch films and share their experiences, and use their influence to expand the scope of communication. Launch movie-related topic challenges on social media, with relevant topics on social media: #family education #inspirational movies #education, etc., and encourage users to participate in creation and sharing, such as "the touching moment sharing in "Walking to School", "classic line solitaire in "Heaven Reply". Addition, movie viewing meetings and question-and-answer activities: organise online or offline movie viewing meetings, invite the film creator team to interact with the audience, answer the audience's questions, and enhance the audience's sense of participation and belonging. Take advantage of the publicity advantages of online social media and combine offline cinemas, schools, communities and other channels to carry out joint promotion activities. Introduce films as educational resources to schools, educational institutions, etc., and carry out thematic lectures, film-watching seminars and other activities to enhance the educational value and social influence of films.

Finally, accurately place advertisements on the social media platform, set advertising targeting parameters according to the audience portrait, and improve the advertising conversion rate. Cooperate with mainstream video platforms to launch movies as paid or member-exclusive content, and use the platform's user base to expand the audience.

9. Conclusion

Social media plays a significant role in modern film marketing, especially for educational films, which provide more direct and interactive communication channels. Through the study of the behaviour of social media users, it can be seen that the audience's decision-making to watch movies is more and more dependent on the content and interaction on the platform. Against this background, "Walking to School" can not only improve the visibility of the film through effective social media marketing strategies, but also may form a good word-of-mouth communication among young audiences.

At the same time, drawing on the successful experience of *Forrest Gump* and *The Shawshank Redemption*, films such as *Walking to School* can further explore the potential of combining traditional and emerging media. For example, use relevant knowledge and emotional topics to interact with the audience and create more UGCs related to their content to attract a wider audience. In addition, actively participating in social hot events and topics is also conducive to improving the social attention of the film. In the future, educational films should continue to explore the diversified applications of social media to make it stand out in the fierce market competition, so as to better achieve the goal of educational publicity and cultural communication. Through more effective strategies, educational films are expected to gain more focused attention and capital returns in domestic and foreign markets, and contribute to the development of society and culture.

The study has certain limitations on the sample selection. The research subjects "Walking to School", "Heaven's Reply" and "Running Boy" may have a special publicity and popularisation effect on social media due to its specific theme, release time, regional cultural background and other factors, which may not represent all educational films. Situation. Although the comparison object "The Shawshank Redemption" and "Forrest Gump" are classic commercial films, their success factors are complex and diverse, including scripts, directors, cast, release timing, etc. These factors may not be directly related to the effect of social media publicity, so they may not be accurate enough as a comparison. There are also certain limitations in data acquisition and analysis. Social media data is huge and complex. How to accurately obtain and analyse these data is a challenge. In particular, the social media data of early-released films, such as *Paradise Reply*, may be difficult to trace or obtain. When comparing the performance of different movies on social media, it is necessary to take into account the differences in user behaviour of different platforms and different periods of time, as well as the characteristics and audience of the film itself, which may affect the accuracy and comparability of the data.

Authors Contribution

All the authors contributed equally and their names were listed in the alphabetical order.

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