

# Reflections and revelations on the success model of the Chinese New Year movie "Hi, mom" under the trend of Chinese melodrama

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**Abstract:** *This paper analyses the intrinsic reasons for the box office success of the Chinese Spring Festival Film Hi Mom in the context of traditional Chinese values of filial piety and the extrinsic reasons for the film's success in the context of the AISAS marketing concept. A profound interpretation of traditional Chinese culture allows for an understanding of the prevailing social values in China. In contrast, the complex combination of the AISAS marketing concept allows for objective identification of the role and value of the Chinese online media in the dissemination and commercialization of the Chinese film and television market. This paper will provide an objective and rational analysis of the nature of the film's success at the box office to provide basic ideas and directions for the design and marketing of future films in the Chinese market.*

**Keywords:** *Chinese Film, AISAS Marketing Concept, Chinese Tradition Value*

## 1. Introduction

This paper critically analyzes the box office success of the film "Hi, mom" (Chinese:你好, 李焕英) by combining the traditional Chinese cultural concept and the marketing concept of AISAS from the perspective of the film's current mainstream Chinese values, the current mainstream media integrated communication marketing and the mainstream Chinese traditional culture, with the aim of exploring the various elements behind its success and aiming to provide inspiration and reference for future films of this genre.

## 2. The "Filial piety" in line with Chinese mainstream values

Chinese ancestor worship is a symbol of a family-state-style society, highlighting the cultural values of traditional Chinese thought that focus on family ethics (Van, 2021). The Chinese attachment to land and family is an idealized embodiment of the Confucian family system. This concept of family incorporates ideological aesthetic imagery into artistic creation, shaping the themes of homeland and kinship in Chinese artworks and forming a unique Chinese cultural sentiment. Hi, mom is a return and a call to this cultural sentiment.

Kinship and family ethics have always been among the dominant values of Chinese culture and lifestyle. As China enters a new era, family members have developed new emotional attitudes toward each other and the family: young individuals crave the warmth of family and the companionship of loved ones while also seeking independence and integrity in their personal space. At the intersection of private and public life, Kinship relationships are constantly changing as society evolves rapidly. In today's consumer-oriented society, the confusion and vulnerability of individuals need to be soothed in the stable relationships of Chinese families, and individuals need to gain respect and completeness of personality in loving and caring kinship relationships.

Through the temporary and dramatic separation of the two-family roles of mother and daughter, "Hi, mom" allows the daughter to experience a different concept of family in her new capacity as an emotional participant and mediator (Li, 2021). Mother and daughter have their own beliefs and behaviors, yet they are linked by warmth and love. In the process of exploring her mother's memory and consciousness, Jia Xiaoling completes her knowledge and perception of traditional family relationships; she acquires a new social subjectivity in the loving illusion woven by her mother. The film presents a somewhat idealized version of traditional kinship, a Chinese model of emotion.

"Hi, mom" is set in 1981 with a sense of age and history, when reform and opening up gave young people youthful energy to move forward. In Li Huanying's dream world, this group of young people at the Shengli Chemical Plant maps a group of people who love and enjoy life. Li Huanying wants her daughter to experience the simple joy among people during that period of historical and cultural transitions. Mother and daughter create dreams for each other in that bright era, presenting family emotions with a sense of inherited belonging and conviction, which is constantly intermingled and shared in the spiritual world of the two generations. Jia Xiaoling grew up believing that she had no future and even thought that she would be happier if her mother, Li Huanying, had not given birth to her, and she abandoned herself to create an opportunity for her mother to date the factory manager's son, Shen Guanglin, hoping to change her fate (Chinosity, 2021). However, in the end, her mother makes Jia Xiaoling understand the meaning of family happiness - it is the process of companionship, sharing happiness and pain, the origin of self, and the way back.

The purpose of this film is to explore the love of mothers and daughters. The mother's love in the film transcends time and space, age, class, and background and is a moral topic that all people can relate to recognize. The story is not about external conflict but the intersection and collision of everyday emotions. Unlike the traditional stereotypes of Chinese mothers who are subtle or expect their daughters to become phoenixes, the mother in the film is more realistic and straightforward, and her greatest hope for her daughter is just that she will be healthy and happy all (Anonym, 2021). Even though her daughter forges her college acceptance letter, she still maintains a tolerant and understanding attitude towards her daughter, giving her encouragement and affirmation. When her daughter realizes that no matter how hard she tries, she cannot change the past, her dream wakes up, and she realizes that the good times are still an illusion of love that her mother wove for her, and that dreams quickly pass and reality comes as promised (Kuipers, 2021). The film's unique expression of Chinese emotions is the key to its box office success, as it fits the reality of the masses. The film's view of going with the flow and enjoying mediocrity is an essential counterpoint to the traditional Chinese high-pressure environment of parent-child relationships. Besides, the emotional narrative that flows from the domesticity of life also reflects the film's affirmation of ordinary life. This gentle, neutral value of enjoying mediocrity, being willing to be ordinary, and exploring the glimmers of everyday life also represents the lives of ordinary people in secular life, responding to the inherent need for mainstream values.

The reversal at the end has a kind of dramatic tension, which gradually moves the mother and daughter's love and blessing for each other to the breaking point of sensation and emotion, allowing the audience to empathize, move and think in this kind of tense emotion (YQQLM, 2021). Letting the audience's emotions be moved by the actions, feelings, and destinies of the characters in the story is a unique way of cultural communication in cinema. Simultaneously, the film also shows the independent sense of female autonomy and the delicate emotions among women. The film expresses women's voices and shows women's courage to pursue individuality and open new lives, while the sincere friendship between Jia Xiaoling and Li Huanying in their youth is another manifestation of the kinship relationship. Although "Hi, mom" does not delve into how women deal with and balance the social ties of love, marriage, and children, Jia Ling, as a female director, observes and views the world with warmth and wit, giving "Hi, mom" a pulsating warmth of a female perspective.

"Hi, mom" is not perfect as a commercial film, but it expresses an attachment to kinship and a sense of belonging to a family, using a mother's love for her children to reshape an unstable sense of individuality. In today's changing social form, people still have to struggle to maintain and value family emotions, and this film allows the bond of kinship to be completed in a symbolic transmission through the mutual attachment of two generations. In the final shot of the film, Jia Xiaoling drives away in the small car she promised to buy for her mother, presenting a picture of peace and relief, while the passenger seat in the car is a metaphor for her lack of emotions being mended, accommodated, and comforted by affection and love. However, during the Spring Festival, it is undoubtedly wise to use the universal ethical emotion of motherhood as the core of the content and then use witty jokes as the outer packaging to evoke emotional resonance in the audience.

### **3. Communication marketing strategy of Chinese mainstream media**

The elements of the film have achieved the maximum vertical "sinking." In 2017, the number of screens in China increased by nearly 10,000, and in 2020, the number of screens in China will reach 80,000 (Fast Technology, 2020). The primary audience for this growth is the small and medium-sized urban population in the second and third-tier cities and the ordinary citizens in big cities who are unwilling or unable to enjoy the "cheapest luxury" in the past. Therefore, it is essential to reach their

cultural and entertainment needs in the current movie consumption process.

The creative team of "Hi, mom" is a sketch and stage comedy team, but they have a natural shortcoming in film creation. Jia Ling, as the director and lead actress, finds herself unable to reverse her mother's face in the last paragraph of the film, running through the factory in tears, and her entire performance is out of control. Such mistakes in table, direction and filming are not one or two in detail. However, this does not affect the audience to hook their own life experiences and form an emotional response to the film (6Park NewsDesk, 2021), thanks to the accumulation of practice of the creative team's sketches and the benefits of media changes.

Some movies are boring after laughing and crying, just like some brand commercials are forgettable, and the momentary emotion is drowned in the flood of information. It does not seem very easy to form deep memories in the fragmented media environment. The film is one of the essential communication media. It is both a mirror to view reality and a way to express ideology. Today's movies are a part of cross-media communication. The screen is not the end of movie marketing and communication, but rather the movie is the center of interaction, allowing pieces of information to flow and spread. Therefore, the integration and change of communication media is the focus of film promotion and marketing strategies.

The movie marketing model of "Hi, mom" is based on the analytical model of consumer behavior in the Internet era, namely the AISAS model - Attention, Interest, Search, Action, and Share (Humaira, 2021). First of all, the movie uses Chinese microblogging, WeChat, Douban, Bilibili, and Jitterbug as the primary marketing battlefield, and uses the well-known comedians Jia Ling, Shen Teng, and Chen He to draw the audience's attention (EqualOcean, 2021). The critical words captured in the movie publicity are "comedy," "affection," "warmth," and "mother's love," catering to the theme of family fun in Spring Festival movies so that audiences of different ages and hobbies can get happiness and insight in this movie. Secondly, these promotional messages leave an initial impression on the audience, after which some of them have the desire to watch the movie while actively searching for movie information, and the first step of successful cross-media communication has been taken from the moment they walk into the cinema. Finally, the most crucial difference between the AISAS model and the traditional AIDMA model (Attention, Interest, Desire, Memory, and Action) is the consumer-led information sharing, i.e. "in the Internet, everyone is a communicator, and the post-purchase sharing behavior in the AISAS model has transformed consumers from initial product recipients to communication marketers (Kawamura, 2021). In the AISAS model, the post-purchase sharing behavior transforms consumers from initial product receivers to communication marketers (Lee et al, 2021). In the process of "search-share," consumers complete the transmission of information and expand the scope of communication, using each consumer as a new interpersonal communication center to achieve cross-media, net-like, multiplying communication effects.

"Hi, mom" uses a heartwarming story as a selling point, allowing audiences to spontaneously share and pass on information, forming an active and interactive audience community. The speed and scope of information dissemination in the Internet era, the diversity of communication media, and the mesh of communication paths make the forms and means of propaganda and marketing constantly updated. Correctly analyzing information about the audience's contact points for acquiring information, their behavior in processing information and their consumption paths can help establish an effective marketing and communication ecology. The publicity and promotion of "Hi, mom" is based on audience groups' interaction and sharing behavior. This non-linear, multi-point two-way publicity and promotion method is the key to today's movie marketing model, which maximizes the advantages of cross-media integrated marketing and publicity to help the word-of-mouth spread of the movie.

#### **4. The mainstream cultural narrative of Chinese tradition**

In the new historical period, telling Chinese stories and expressing Chinese emotions has excellent potential for box office. To tell Chinese stories and express Chinese emotions, we cannot ignore the inheritance of cultural traditions. Although the art of cinema is an imported product, the nationalization of cinema has made remarkable achievements in more than 100 years of practice. The history of cinema has long proved the relationship between the film market and cultural traditions. The importance of cultural traditions is reflected in the expression of thoughts and emotions and the reflection of cultural psychology (Zhang, 2021). The inherent reason for the box office miracle of "Hi, mom" is its mode of filial questioning, which touches the audience's realistic anxiety and moral guilt in a specific time and space (the post-epidemic Spring Festival period), thus triggering widespread empathy. Jia Ling's precise grasp of narrative and style satisfies the audience's consumer psychology of self-reconciliation through

emotional catharsis.

"Hi, mom", with "filial piety" as its theme, was also a massive success at the box office in the Internet era (Qingdao Pictorial, 2021). The emphasis on cultural traditions is also reflected in the narrative and aesthetics of films. At one time, we thought that commercial movies must be Hollywood narrative mode, the script should have subplots and reversals on the first few pages, and there is a fixed framework pattern, which is the industrialized entertainment movie. The reality is that Chinese New Year movies are different from the mainstream Hollywood narrative, and the narrative mode and rhythm are different from Hollywood movies. Different national cultural psychology has given birth to different film forms and aesthetic preferences. The positive feedback from the market suggests that filmmakers should pay attention to the transformation and creation of cultural traditions. The film is an aesthetic activity that allows audiences to complete self-actualization and self-affirmation in the process of watching films and satisfies their spiritual needs for self-improvement and self-development. As the lifestyles and concepts of two generations continue to clash, people's daily aesthetic interests keep changing, and the film shows the changes in Chinese aesthetic styles through a single frame.

Jia Xiaoling is both a participant and an observer, recording a period of social development with unique Chinese characteristics from the perspective of a minor, ordinary person; the overlap of two time periods maps the lifestyle of two specific eras. Jia's emotional integration in 1981 is ultimately due to her familiarity with interpersonal relationships such as family, friendship, and home as a Chinese. It makes the narrative of the whole film vivid and witty, and exceptionally infectious. Perhaps it is the compromise of the depth of thought in "Hi, mom" that makes it compatible with a larger audience and a more general empathy and allows people to vent their emotions in the film. That is why "Hi, mom" will not become a classic because it cannot give new nutrients to the audience in terms of ideas. Filial piety is only a transmitter of mainstream values in real life, and the criteria used to measure the success or failure of filial piety are the same as those used in real life. We can only say that this is an era dominated by success and consumerism.

Under the assessment mechanism of filial piety, people tend to agree and practice the secular values of the moment and rarely question, reflect and create. As an ethical requirement, filial piety, with its emphasis on practice, is oriented toward secular recognition. It is undeniable that the unique narrative and style of "Hi, mom" injects a new content of freedom and equality into the traditional filial piety. The film presents the dual relationship between Li Huanying and Jia Xiaoling as mother and daughter/sister through the narrative of crossing over, injecting the free and equal spirit of friends and girlfriends into the mother-daughter relationship. It is perhaps another reason why the film has gained expansive empathy. The new development of traditional filial piety has transformed its stereotypical image and made it more recognizable to the current audience.

For a society, a group, or an individual, culture is a continuous process of maintaining identity utilizing cohesion (Cheng, 2021). This cohesion is obtained by continuing aesthetic views, moral concepts about the self, and the lifestyles that display these concepts and are acquired. Culture needs a cohesive force, a cohesive force that allows people to tend toward the pursuit of truth and beauty in morality and thought; it is a sincere outpouring of human emotions, a genuine and life-giving imagination and creativity that people possess. Chinese film narratives need to reflect Chinese humanistic concerns in the aesthetic expression of culture and discover the spirituality and harmony of life in the ordinary and actual daily life. The success of "Hi, mom" reflects the aesthetic needs of local audiences: its presentation of the lifestyles, artistic temperament and social landscape of different Chinese eras reveals a Chinese aesthetic interest. Its unfolding stories about people and society record a Chinese cultural sentiment in a dislocated time and space. The box office success of "Hi, mom" reminds us that film production should focus on the deep cultural psychology of the audience, while the reflection on its value suggests that we have a long way to go to inherit and transform traditional culture.

## 5. Conclusion

Admittedly, "Hi, mom" is not enough to become a screen classic. As the first work of director Jia Ling, its story logic is a bit juvenile, its comedy effects are slightly simple and not innovative enough, and it does not dig deeply into relationship issues such as affection, family, and society. However, as a commercial film in line with the mainstream Chinese values, combined with the mainstream Chinese media to spread the narrative of the mainstream Chinese traditional culture, it is undoubtedly qualified in success, bringing laughter and tears while immersing the audience in pure and sincere emotions, touched by the simple, innocent, ordinary and extraordinary mother-daughter relationship.

In today's society, we need the sense of historical sedimentation brought by excellent traditional culture, making people return to themselves and not forget their original hearts. The narrative of "Hi, mom" is a mapping of individual spiritual needs in the hearts of the audience, and its immaturity and imperfection are concealed under the emotional needs of human beings, bringing a reflection on "love." Overall, "Hello, Lee Hwan-young" satisfies the audience's ideal vision of family warmth and family life with a comedy pilot that is more readily accepted and understood by the audience group and realizes the return of traditional family culture, so it is a thriving commercial film.

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