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Cinema in China: A Bibliometric Journey Through Three Decades of Movie Consumption (1997-2024)

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Abstract

The entertainment industry, particularly movie consumption, plays a crucial role in cultural diffusion and economic growth. However, with the rapid evolution of media platforms and the changing dynamics of consumer behaviour, understanding the trends, drivers, and impacts of movie consumption in China has become paramount. This study employs a bibliometric analysis of 68 publications from the years 1997 to 2024, utilizing VOSviewer to investigate research publication trends in movie consumption within China. We aim to identify dominant journals, prolific researchers, and leading research organizations in the field, highlight the most cited research publications and their societal impacts, and develop thematic research clusters around the prevalent terms associated with movie consumption behaviour. Using the Web of Science database, we extracted data to fulfill these objectives. Our findings reveal a significant uptick in research interest post-2011, correlating with China's cinema boom and digital transformation in entertainment consumption. The analysis reveals that "Hollywood," "Media," and "E-commerce" emerge as predominant themes, reflecting the nuanced relationship between movie consumption and societal changes in China. The study not only charts the academic landscape but also connects movie consumption trends with broader societal and technological shifts, providing a foundation for future research aimed at understanding and leveraging the dynamics of movie consumption in China.

Keywords: China, Cinema, E-commerce, Movie Consumption.

I. INTRODUCTION

The entertainment industry serves as a powerful vehicle for cultural diffusion and economic growth worldwide (Vogel, 2020). Among its various facets, the cinematic arts stand out as a particularly influential medium, offering insights into societal values, narratives, and trends (Nascimento, 2019). This is especially true in China, where the film industry has experienced unprecedented growth over the three decades. Since the early 2000s, China's transformation into a global cinematic powerhouse has not only redefined its cultural landscape but also positioned it as a critical player in the international market (Aranburu, 2017).

However, the dynamic nature of movie consumption, fueled by technological advancements and changing consumer behaviours, presents a complex challenge for researchers and industry stakeholders alike. In China, these changes have been profound, with digital streaming services, changing demographic profiles, and evolving cultural tastes significantly altering how content is consumed and appreciated (Chu, 2002; Lu, 2016). Despite the evident economic and cultural significance of this transformation, scholarly examination of movie consumption trends and their impacts in China remains

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fragmented. The need to understand these dynamics through a comprehensive lens to capture the essence of China's cinematic evolution has never been more critical, given the rapid evolution of media platforms and the changing dynamics of consumer behaviour. This study aims to bridge this gap by employing a bibliometric analysis to systematically review and synthesize existing research on the topic.

Bibliometric methods, leveraging tools like VOSviewer, offer a quantitative approach to literature analysis, allowing for the identification of research trends, influential publications, and thematic clusters within a specific field (van Eck & Waltman, 2009). By analyzing 68 publications from the period of 1997 to 2024 extracted from the Web of Science database, this study seeks to map the academic landscape of movie consumption in China. The period is significant, encompassing the onset of China's cinematic boom and subsequent digital transformation, a phase that has not only reshaped consumption patterns but also prompted a reconsideration of the cultural and economic implications of cinema in China.

Our analysis reveals a notable increase in research interest post-2011, a timeline that coincides with significant milestones in China's entertainment industry, including the expansion of digital streaming services and the internationalization of Chinese cinema. Emerging themes such as "Hollywood," "Media," and "E-commerce" underscore the multifaceted relationship between movie consumption and societal evolution in China. Through this study, we aim to provide a foundational framework for future research, facilitating a deeper understanding of the interplay between cinema and societal change in China, and offering insights into leveraging these dynamics for cultural and economic development.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Objectives of the Study

The exploration of movie consumption patterns within Chinese film industry necessitates a focused and systematic scholarly investigation. This study aims to fulfil four principal objectives:

1. To explore the trends in scholarly publications on movie consumption in China, especially its impact on the film industry's box office performance. The intent is to analyze how research in this specific area influences the broader dynamics and success metrics of the cinema sector;
2. To identify the leading journals, scholars, geographical locales, and research institutions that are at the forefront of examining movie consumption in China. This objective is crucial for delineating the academic and institutional landscape that contributes to the understanding of movie consumption patterns and their implications for the film industry;
3. To determine the research publications that have received significant citations in the context of movie consumption in China. This goal seeks to emphasize the studies that have been instrumental in shaping the current understanding and academic discourse surrounding movie consumption dynamics within the Chinese film market;
4. To create a detailed research framework employing bibliometric analysis and visualization techniques. This framework will illuminate the critical terms and themes that encapsulate the study of movie consumption in China and its impact on the film industry. The objective is to provide a comprehensive academic blueprint that clarifies the complex interrelations and focal points of research within this specific field.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The bibliometric analysis was done using the Web of Science database on English articles that best answer to the consumption of movies in China by film industry players. A total of 68 articles were carefully selected based on some specified keywords and variations of these. For examining the same, co-citation and keyword co-occurrence analysis has been carried out with the help of VOSviewer software. The approach contributes highly to exposing the complex interrelations and subject areas of the domain, which would allow arriving at a very firm and thorough understanding of the subject in question.

3.1. VOSviewer in Bibliometrics

This research purports to study complex movie consumption dynamics that lead up to films box office performance in China. The tools selected for diving deep into bibliometric analysis should benefit the depth and breadth of the insights that could be derived. From this angle, the choice to use VOSviewer is strategic and well-founded through the academic literature.

VOSviewer, developed by van Eck and Waltman (2009), is a sophisticated software tool designed for creating and visualizing bibliometric networks, which range from journal entities to individual publications, providing an extensive overview of the scholarly field. This tool is crucial for analyzing the complex interactions between movie consumption and cinema box office outcomes in Chinese film industry. Its utility is further underscored by Shah and Nisar (2019) through its application in diverse bibliometric analyses, including co-citation and cartography analysis, evidencing its flexibility across various research domains. The software's proficiency in managing complex datasets is showcased in studies on COVID-19, offering significant advantages in mapping and visualizing intricate data, particularly in fast-evolving research areas (Yu et al., 2020). Additionally, its effectiveness in delivering a comprehensive view of academic discussions over time is demonstrated in the field of sustainability and tourism marketing by Cavalcante et al (2021). Thus, incorporating VOSviewer into this research is a strategic choice, validated by literature, enhancing the depth and academic integrity of the analysis on movie consumption in Chinese film industry.

3.2. Source of Data - Web of Science (WoS)

This research investigates the relationship between movie consumption and films box office performance in China, employing the Web of Science (WoS) Core Collection for its extensive coverage of high-quality research, pivotal for analyzing the dynamics in this sector.

The selection of WoS is strategic, grounded in its reputation for encompassing a wide range of peer-reviewed articles that are crucial for a robust analysis of the film industry's dynamics (Birkle et al., 2020). The database's compatibility with bibliometric tools and its comprehensive coverage across various research themes make it ideal for examining publication trends, identifying key journals and researchers, and conducting thorough statistical analyzes related to movie consumption in China (Caputo & Kargina, 2021). The adaptability and comprehensive nature of the WoS database not only support a detailed thematic analysis but also facilitate advanced statistical evaluations, aligning with the study's goals to uncover underlying research dynamics in the film industry (Escamilla-Fajardo et al., 2020).

In conclusion, the research aims to use the WoS Core Collection's advanced features to map out the academic discourse on movie consumption patterns in China, ensuring a detailed and reliable investigation into the factors driving box office success.

3.3. Search Strategy

To systematically identify the literature pertinent to this study, two principal search terms have been determined: "movie consumption" and "China." However, to refine the scope of literature search within the domain of cinematic studies, it is pertinent to expand the lexicon of search terms beyond the commonly utilized "movie." The inclusion of "film" and "cinema" as search keywords is essential, acknowledging their distinct connotations and usage in academic discourse. This expansion caters to a comprehensive exploration of the subject matter, ensuring a diverse retrieval of relevant scholarly materials. Furthermore, the application of a wildcard character (*) following "movie," "film," and "cinema" is advised to encompass both singular and plural forms, thereby broadening the search parameters to encapsulate a wider array of pertinent literature. This methodology extends to the term "consumption" as well, acknowledging its morphological variations and the necessity to capture a holistic spectrum of discussions surrounding the consumption patterns in cinematic contexts. Such an approach is designed to optimize the search strategy, facilitating the acquisition of an exhaustive range of academic texts that are essential for an in-depth analysis within the field. Therefore, the search comprised truncated key words in the following combination: film* OR movie* OR cinema* AND consumption* AND China.

3.4. Result

The data collection for this study was conducted on March 7, 2024, yielding an initial corpus of 300 studies. To enhance the reliability of the literature analyzed, several refinement steps were implemented. Initially, the dataset was narrowed down to 292 documents by restricting the language to English. Further refinement was achieved by excluding 84 documents that did not pertain to the fields of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM). Subsequently, the focus was tightened to include only Article, Early Access, and Proceeding Paper, resulting in 82 pertinent documents. An additional 14 studies were excluded due to their irrelevant content, leaving 68 valid studies for in-depth analysis. No temporal boundaries were placed on the study corpus due to the relatively low volume of literature that satisfied the stringent selection criteria. This choice allowed for an exhaustive investigation into the thematic domain to be conducted, even though the body of valid literature was comparatively limited (Rogers et al., 2020; Lakens, 2022).

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

4.1. Research Publication Trends

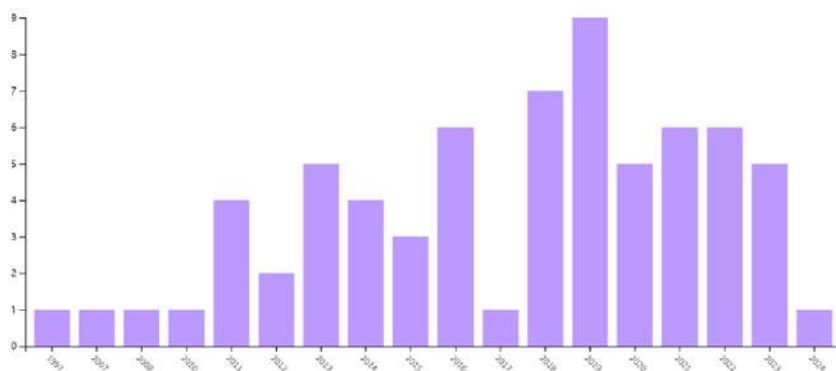
Based on *Figure 1*, over the last thirty years, the scholarly investigation of movie consumption in China has made significant progress. Since 1997, the number of publications has zoomed, and the trend-line demonstrates a distinct and steady increase in interest. However, the literature has been expanding unevenly in recent years, as evidenced by the graph. The actual picture it imparts is one of resilience and vibrancy. After the number of publications peaked, there was a slight decrease. This drop should be understood as relatively minor and situated within a broader trend of continuing growth.

Prominently, there was a discernible peak in the volume of papers published in 2019, which can be posited as a reflection of the flourishing state of China's film industry during that period. This zenith can be contextualized within the broader 'golden era' of Chinese cinema, a phase marked by significant investments, augmented production quality, and escalated global outreach (Zhang, 2020), undoubtedly inspiring a surge in academic inquiries.

However, after 2019, the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic undeniably influenced myriad sectors, with the realm of academic research being no exception. The exigencies imposed by the pandemic led to a tangible contraction in the number of publications as researchers and institutions grappled with unprecedented challenges. Nevertheless, the resilience of the academic community is mirrored in the data, which evinces a modest decline rather than a precipitous fall. It is indicative of the sustained academic resolve to pursue inquiry despite the disruptions.

In summary, in synthesizing these observations, it becomes clear that the ebbs and flows in research publication volume are intimately tied to external cultural and economic forces. The overall trajectory remains ascendant, with peaks aligning with industry successes and troughs reflecting broader societal challenges. Yet, the enduring spirit of inquiry remains undiminished, ensuring that the discourse on movie consumption in China continues to evolve, driven by both past achievements and future prospects.

Figure 1.
Research Publication Trends



4.2. Dominant Journals, Researchers, Countries/Regions, and Research Organizations

The bibliometric analysis shows a highly stratified landscape of scholarly publications, which represents, on the one hand, the distinct prominence of journal publications narrowly related to the thematic core of film consumption and industry analysis under the Chinese context. From *Figure 2*, the most salient point seems to be that the *Journal of Chinese Cinemas* emerges with a publication of seven, and this would seem to be a central point for this wide-ranging research that covers that geographical and cultural filmic area. And located adjacent to this, journals like *Continuum Journal of Media Cultural Studies* and *Frontiers in Psychology* appear with dual entries, signifying a multidisciplinary engagement that ranges further than mere cinematic critique into psychological impact and media studies. This nexus is further authenticated by the presence of *Electronic Markets* and *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies*, which together indicate even a wider, holistic perspective to understand the film viewing patterns, aesthetics, narratives, and economics and cross-cultures. Such distribution of the literature across journals of varied focuses delimits not only the contouring of academic interest but also indicates a significant correlation with what this study is aiming to look into: the multifaceted nature of an industry inherently interfaced with cultural, economic, and psychological fibers. The data, therefore, supports the argument that there is a confluence of academic inquiry around the nexus of film consumption within the purview of Chinese cinema, thus adding weight

to the position of these journals as bastions of dominant discourse within this field of study.

Figure 2.
Dominant Journals



The treemap visualization encapsulates the vibrancy and diversity within the field of Chinese cinema studies, evidenced by the varying contributions of both Chinese and foreign scholars. *Figure 3* shows that the predominance of Chen J. with three summaries suggests a significant scholarly footprint in this area, while other authors like Keane M., Nakajima S., Su W., and Tan J., each with two summaries, underscore the field's collaborative and international nature. This scholarly distribution highlights a global recognition of Chinese cinema's influence, with a pattern of contributions that indicates a rich tapestry of interdisciplinary engagement and a dynamic infusion of new perspectives. Such a pattern of authorship, displaying a mix of prolific and single-study contributors, points to a robust academic dialogue that transcends geographical and cultural barriers, reflecting the universal appeal and scholarly curiosity surrounding the patterns of movie consumption in China.

Figure 3.
Dominant Researchers

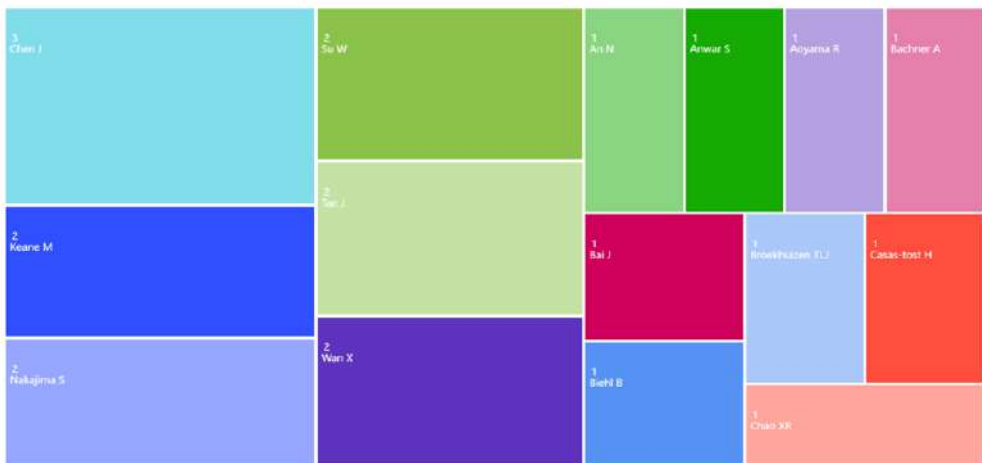


Figure 4 illustrates the prominence of China and the United States as the leading repositories of targeted literature data, each accounting for 22 instances within the dataset, mirroring their status as the top 2 global movie markets (Frater, 2022). This symmetry suggests a broader cultural and economic prowess in these nations, underscored by their robust contributions to the global film and literature industries. The sizable rectangles representing these countries indicate a significant output of literary works, likely driven by extensive infrastructural and intellectual resources. Trailing these forerunners are nations such as Australia, England, and India, followed by a smattering of European and Asian regions or countries, depicting a richly diverse yet distinctly skewed distribution of literary data. The presence of smaller countries, albeit contributing minimally, highlights the universal nature of literary production, but also accentuates the stark disparities when juxtaposed with the hegemonic cultural output of China and the United States. This distribution not only reflects a concentration of informational capital in these regions but also hints at their global cultural clout, propelled by considerable investments in the cultural sectors and the dissemination of information.

Figure 4.
Dominant Countries/Regions



Figure 5 delineates a notable spread of scholarly literature on movie consumption in China, with the University of California system standing out for its volume of contributions, totaling three publications. This indicates a robust international academic interest, particularly from a prestigious American institution renowned for its expansive research endeavours. Equally compelling is the strong representation of Chinese universities, especially Shenzhen University and the Nanjing University of Finance and Economics, each with two publications to their name. Their scholarship is pivotal in decoding the nuances of film consumption within China's unique socioeconomic milieu. Collectively, the data portrays a global research community's involvement, reflecting an interdisciplinary and cross-cultural commitment to understanding the dynamics of China's cinematic landscape and consumer behaviour, highlighting the relevance of this field in both local and international academic discourse.

Figure 5.
Dominant Organizations



4.3. Top-cited Publications

Based on Web of Science, *Table 1* exhibits detailed information on the top 5 most highly cited publications.

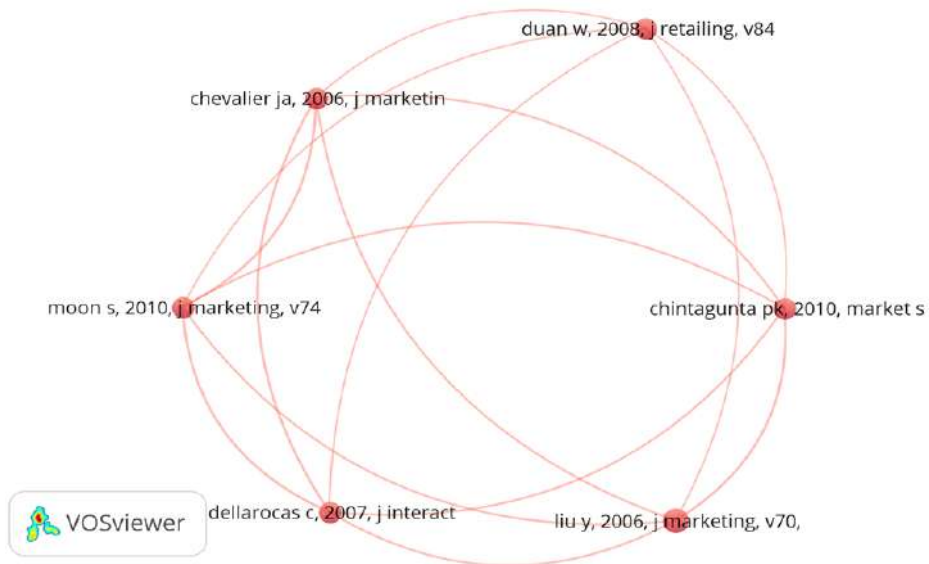
The bibliometric data of the top-cited publications on movie consumption in China reveal an emerging field of scholarly interest but one that still is in its budding stage, considering the highest citation count peaks at 38. The leading article, *Movie piracy and sales displacement in two samples of Chinese consumers*, authored by Bai J. and Waldfogel J., published in 2012, commands this count, reflecting its central relevance to the core subjects of copyright infringement and digital consumption patterns. Modest so far, citation metrics have been—although they do suggest the relevance of these studies to the field. This, however, puts even the most referenced paper at 38 citations and emphasizes a very important latitude: increased research output is pressing. A ripe frontier for proper scholarly inquiry to increase the understanding of the unique movie consumption dynamics in China during an extremely fast-evolving technological and socio-cultural era, where both the quantity and quality of research are critically needed to be improved.

Using VOSviewer, *Figure 6* shows the co-citation networks of the literature concerning movie consumption in China, which demonstrates great concentration between the years 2006-2010. Central to this discourse are the works of Chevalier (2006) and Duan (2008), as indicated by their prominent nodes, suggesting these authors provide foundational perspectives or methodologies pivotal to the field. The thickness of the lines interconnecting the various articles implies a robust dialogic interaction, particularly between articles published in journals specializing in marketing and market studies, such as those by Chintagunta (2010) and Moon (2010). This visualization using bibliometric not only throws light on the embeddedness of the research on movie consumption in China but also on the centrality of many works because most cited works are within the marketing discipline, thereby pointing to a marketing-centric narrative in extant literature.

Table 1.
Top 5 Most Highly Cited Publications

Rank	Title	Author/s	Year	Citations Average Per Year	Citations
1	Movie piracy and sales displacement in two samples of Chinese consumers	Bai, J and Waldfogel, J	2012	2.92	38
2	Sport, Media, and Consumption in Asia: A Merchandised Milieu	Rowe, D and Gilmour, C	2010	2.53	38
3	The impact of online movie word-of-mouth on consumer choice A comparison of American and Chinese consumers	Chiu, YL; Chen, KH; (...); Hsu, YT	2019	5.5	33
4	Cyberspace and gay rights in a digital China: Queer documentary filmmaking under state censorship	Shaw, G and Zhang, XL	2018	4.29	30
5	Simulating the Cinema Market: How Cross-Cultural Differences in Social Influence Explain Box Office Distributions	Broekhuizen, TLJ; Delre, SA and Torres, A	2011	1.79	25

Figure 6.
Co-citation Cited References



4.4. Pivotal Themes and Key Terms

"Author Keywords" and "Keywords Plus" have two entirely different functions in that they are generated differently from one another in the Web of Science database. While "Author Keywords" guide the thinking and articulation of the authors, "Keywords

Plus" may expand the search scope with terms found in cited work, and it may expose broader, newer, or more related field focus points of the research. Both "Author Keywords" and "Keywords Plus" can be useful in different scenarios, especially in bibliometric analysis. Though the research evidence is thin on the ground as to the effectiveness of Keywords Plus, there is no such distinction between the two kinds of keywords as far as visualizing the structure of scientific fields is concerned (Zhang et al., 2015).

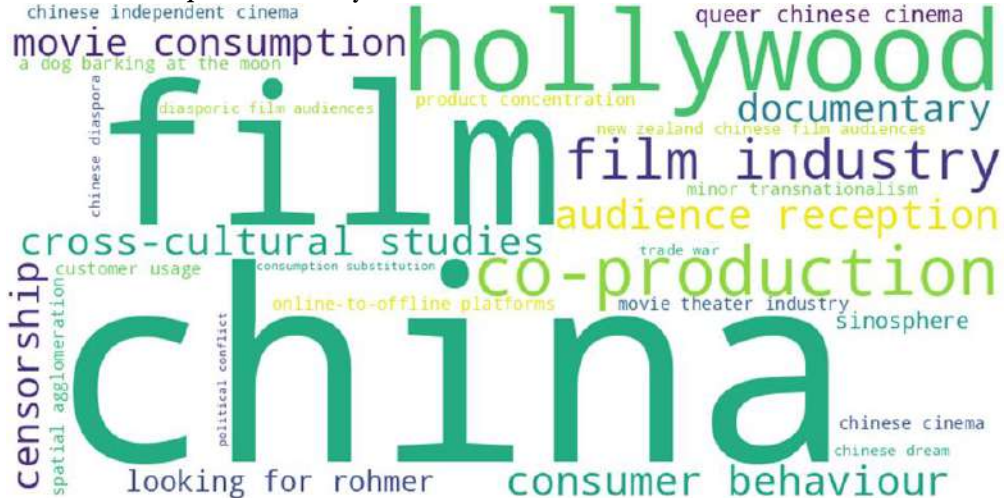
Of all the Author Keywords referring to *Table 2*, besides the keywords searched and scenarios derived from them, four surprising presences were: "Hollywood," "Censorship," "Co-production," and "Cross-cultural studies."

Table 2.
Word Frequency Count of Top 10 Author Keywords

Keyword	Frequency
China	11
Film	5
Hollywood	4
Co-production	3
Film industry	2
Consumer behaviour	2
Cross-cultural studies	2
Movie consumption	2
Censorship	2

From *Figure 7*, in addition to the keywords searched and the corresponding context, "Hollywood," "Co-production," and "Cross-cultural studies" are prominent in the word cloud map, representing their importance in Author Keywords.

Figure 7.
Word Cloud Map of Author Keywords



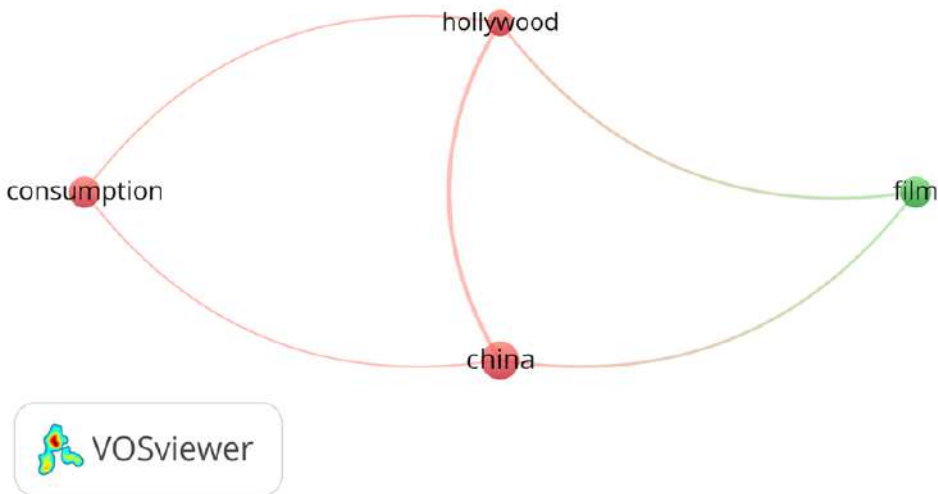
When it turns to Keywords Plus, based on *Table 3*, except for search terms and neutral terms, "Media", " E-commerce" and "Sales" appear most frequently, which is huge different from the result of Author Keywords.

Table 3.

studies, all converging on the latest interdisciplinary joint project aimed at mapping China's emergent place in world cinema.

Figure 9.

All keywords Co-occurrence



V. CONCLUSION

The bibliometric analysis presented in this paper provides a robust framework for understanding the evolving landscape of movie consumption in China. By mapping the scholarly discourse from 1997 to 2024, it highlights a significant interest in the interaction between global cinematic influences—particularly from Hollywood—and local consumer behaviours. This interaction underscores the complexity of cultural consumption in a globalized media environment where external influences shape and transform local markets and preferences.

The impact of Hollywood on Chinese movie consumption reveals not just a pattern of influence but also a reciprocal exchange that may influence both markets. As Chinese cinema continues to grow in global significance, understanding these dynamics becomes crucial for both theoretical exploration and practical application in media studies and cultural policy making.

Furthermore, the integration of digital platforms into movie consumption, which includes social media, e-commerce, online sales, and online word-of-mouth, reflects a broader shift towards a digital media ecosystem. This shift is not only redefining how films are consumed but also how they are marketed and discussed among consumers. The significant role of digital transformation in the film industry highlights a critical area of consumer behaviour that demands continuous scholarly attention.

5.1. Theoretical Implications

Theoretically, this study contributes to the academic discourse by mapping the trajectory of research within the field of movie consumption in China, indicating significant thematic shifts towards digital interaction and the influence of global cinema, particularly Hollywood. This insight is crucial for understanding the theoretical

underpinnings that guide consumer behaviour studies and cultural exchange theories in the context of global and local cinematic experiences. Moreover, the findings suggest a need to refine existing models of media consumption to better encapsulate the impact of digital transformation and cross-cultural influences in the 21st century.

5.2. Practical and Social Implications

Practically, the current research is underpinned by the need for the stakeholders in the Chinese film industry to make adjustments to the rapid developments that are taking place in the digital technology environment and, in the process, tap into the potential opportunities that social media and e-commerce might present in enhancing movie consumption experience. Such knowledge of these trends becomes paramount for a policymaker to be able to frame up regulations that would ensure a healthy competitive market and, at the same time, diversity in culture and protect the domestic film industry from over-saturation of foreign content. Socially, this study will shed some light on how films act as cultural vessels to give insights into cultural values or stories that either validate traditional norms or that echo against conventional norms for a more inclusive cultural conversation to occur.

5.3. Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

This study is not without limitations. The primary constraint lies in the reliance on the Web of Science Core Collection, which, while extensive, does not encompass all academic literature on the subject, potentially omitting significant studies published in other databases or languages. Furthermore, the rapidly changing dynamics of digital media consumption require continuous updates to bibliometric datasets to maintain relevance.

Future research should aim to expand the scope of analysis to include more diverse databases and publications in multiple languages to capture a broader spectrum of global influences on Chinese movie consumption. Additionally, empirical studies focusing on the direct impact of Hollywood films and digital platforms on local consumption patterns would be beneficial. Researchers should also consider longitudinal studies to track changes over time, especially given the fast-paced evolution of digital media. Finally, the integration of qualitative methods could enrich the understanding of how cultural and social contexts influence movie consumption behaviours in China.

By addressing these gaps, future research can offer more nuanced insights and foster deeper understanding of the complex interplay between global influences, digital transformation, and local cultural consumption.

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