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Research on Audience Engagement in Film Marketing -- Taking the film <Us and Them> as the Case

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Abstract

The film marketing is becoming increasingly important due to the fierce competition of film industry in China. With the drive of technology innovations, the creation of interaction among audiences has gradually become the spotlight of film marketing and many social media platforms are employed as marketing tools to encourage or foster audience engagement. Through the case study of *Us and Them*, the thesis studies how audience engagement is realized through film marketing strategies made by marketers, so as to identify the specific marketing strategies or techniques used for enhancing the audience engagement and promoting the film. As different marketing techniques will lead to different level of audience engagement, that are normally reflected by the preferences of audiences, their behaviors on social media and the way of involving into film contents, it is necessary to explore and understand the effectiveness and efficiency of these techniques, so that the film marketing can be improved while practical marketing progressing.

Keywords

Audience engagement, film marketing, social media, marketing content

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1. Introduction

1.1 The landscape of Chinese films

Film, being the media for culture representation (Shao & Chen, 2016), takes an important role in expressing the value and social phenomena. Gao (2019) states that watching film or doing similar culture consumption has become a major entertainment activity for the public. Without temporal or geographical barriers, the variety of information and value contained in films is easily accessible and well accepted by the public. Therefore, film, as a media with strong influence on individuals, is shouldering substantial responsibility of offering positive values. Meanwhile, a film tells traditional culture, in particular the film about history stretching over thousand years. Many great Chinese films, in which Chinese traditional culture and history are well embodied, facilitate the transmission of culture and people's understanding of history. Besides, films with Chinese elements can make significant contribution to the establishment the image of China on the international stage and the transmission of Chinese culture, which will change the rigid impression of China among western countries.

Under the drive of the fast development of film industry in China, the importance of film marketing is self-evident. For cultural product, including film, marketing is presumed to take the cultural product and imbue it with additional symbolic meaning that is eventually communicated to the consumer (Schroeder, 1992). Films not only facilitate the progress of reaching more audiences and building conversations with them but also bridge the connection with the audiences from abroad through exporting domestic films, because the film marketing could conduct out of the restriction of location or time with the advent of digital technology. Film marketing could be taken as the communicator between audiences and film story before releasing instead of the recreation of film content. What's more, nowadays film producers are attaching importance to creative, digital and marketing fields in film industry, because media producers have gradually recognized the potential of these

immersive experiences in capturing attention and undying loyalty of audience (Zeiser, 2015). Therefore, film marketing will be an indispensable part for films heading to the international stage to reach and interact with more audiences.

Under the benefits of technologies, more innovations are created to apply to film marketing. When it comes to the relationship between ICT and marketing, ICT is taken as the tool to support or augment traditional approaches and strategy of marketing, among which interactive technologies basically offer a new channel to the market (Olomu et al., 2016). And ICTs were systemically considered and incorporated into the marketing practices to take an active managerial role far beyond the traditional area of competence (Garrett, 2006). For instance, social media introduced by ICT is applied into film marketing. The research involves three social media platforms including Weibo, Douban and Maoyan. 60% of Chinese population are active on Weibo, which implies the importance of social media. As the emerge of new digital technologies, a lot of new marketing techniques spring up like mushrooms, thus the diffusion of innovation model becomes particularly relevant to the marketing of social media (Santomier et al., 2016).

During the marketing of social media, the power is shifting over from films to the audiences (Zeiser, 2015), which is the driving force of motivating the audience. The audience, as the direct consumer and respondent of films, function as the most important element of film. Thus, audiences can be also taken as the key element of film marketing and audience engagement is the basic measurement of the effect of film marketing. Audience engagement relates to media, discourse analysis and culture production marketing. Audience engagement pushes the innovation of marketing techniques in film industry. The audience engagement refers to interactive experience (Ahva and Hellman, 2015), and features the audiences as responsive audiences (Rohrs and Stewart, 2013). Just as Zeiser (2015) points out, the audience participation includes interactive platforms and user-generated contents that allow audiences to act as both producers and consumers.

However, how to attract audience to engage in the marketing activities is the important loop in film marketing. The *participatory culture* embodies the audience engagement and participation, which plays a key role in communication and media studies. The marketing techniques and content, namely the *spreadable media* and *stickiness*, should be recognized as the key factor to motivate the audience engagement. The spreadable media and stickiness both focus on creating the media text and putting the media materials in the central position of film marketing. What's more, *word-of-mouth marketing* emphasizes the importance of comments made by the audience, which also contributes to the audience engagement in some specific ways.

This thesis takes the *film Us and Them* as the case to explore the role of audience engagement in film marketing. *Us and Them*, directed by Rene Liu, a famous Chinese actress and singer, and co-stared by Dongyu Zhou and Boran Jing, is a commercial movie with romantic and touching plots. Sharon proposed that commercial films aim to entertain the public and make profits, the contents of commercial films are particularly tailored to the taste of mass consumers (Chuu et al., 2009). Films, being a visual cultural product presented by images and meanings, are also a part of consumer culture (Alladi & Laurie, 2006). Therefore, it is understandable that the commercial film aims to be profitable and audience engagement in film marketing will make the film reach more audiences and increase the amount of profit.

This thesis, based on the qualitative and quantitative research method, tracks the marketing techniques used by marketers to involve the audiences and expounds the role of social media in marketing. Besides, this thesis provides some references to identify the effective means of engaging audiences on social media in film marketing to some extent.

1.2 Research purpose and questions

Based on the participatory culture in social media and the current situation of film

marketing in China, this thesis aims to probe into the effect of the audience engagement on film marketing with the Chinese film *Us and Them* as the study case. When track recording the effect of audience engagement brought by the film marketing of this movie, it is found that various marketing techniques are applied into film marketing, especially into social media marketing in ICT time. ICT contributes to shaping the forms of audience engagement. In addition, as data reflects, there are 8,000 million people using network and mobile communication in China. The huge population forms the large potential market and indicates the essential role of audiences in film industry. Thus, the audience engagement becomes the target in order to gain the attention and market share. The film audiences are mostly active in the following social media platforms, such as Weibo, Douban and Maoyan, where the data could be collected for the research and these three online spaces are the main reference of this thesis to verify the relationship between audience engagement and film marketing.

Research Question: How audience engagement is accomplished in film marketing strategies?

The research question can be divided into three sub-questions. First, how to identify audience engagement behavior in film marketing? Second, how to obtain and analyze the statics of creating audience engagement by film marketing?

To be specific, based on the research question stated above, the brief description of the case and the marketing techniques or activities used in the case are illustrated in the thesis. This thesis also explores how film marketers build audience engagement during the film marketing process under the case of *Us and Them*. In addition, the social media platforms are used as the basic of research data to analyze marketing techniques and the features of audience engagement. What's more, as for the audience engagement, the effect of marketing techniques will be understood so as to identify the work effects of marketers.

1.3 Thesis structure

The thesis consists of seven chapters. The first chapter of the thesis briefly introduces the landscape of Chinese films, including history, development progress, technology application in media field and the importance of Chinese film as the means of Chinese culture transmission. The first part also gives an outline of the research purpose and research questions of this thesis.

The second chapter, beginning with the context of Chinese film, which includes the policy of Chinese film and the competition in the Chinese film market, intends to build the connection between films and film marketing. In addition, those changes related to Chinese film marketing are also presented in this chapter.

The third chapter is the part of literature review under the theme of marketing, in which the definition of marketing, digitalization impact on marketing and the marketing of culture products are described in detail. From this part, the readers can pry into the characteristics of marketing in China and obtain a basic understanding of the relationship between audience engagement and marketing.

Chapter four provides the theoretical framework of the thesis. A series of important concepts such as spreadable media, stickiness, participatory culture and word-of-mouth marketing are introduced and the impact of ICTs on social media marketing is explored with rich theoretical support.

Chapter five illustrates the research design and the method of data collection and data analysis of this thesis. Both qualitative and quantitative methods are adopted to conduct data collection and analysis work, including case study, interviews, textual and statistical content.

In the sixth chapter, this thesis gives an analysis of different platforms of film

marketing and the characteristics of the audiences based on the data. In addition, how the audience engagement is influenced by the marketing techniques in the area of film marketing is explained in this part.

The last chapter is the conclusion of this thesis. This part briefly summarizes the research result and findings of this thesis and points out limitations and suggestions for the future research of this thesis.

2. Background

2.1 The context of Chinese film

Film, started in France, is a major culture media with a prolonged history of more than 120 years. Compared with its long history in general, film appeared late until 1905 in China. The development of film in China can be divided into four different phases (Shao & Chen, 2016).

During the first phase, stretching from 1905 to 1949, films available in Chinese market were mainly imported western films, many of which came from America. The Chinese-made films during this period reflected a blend of traditional Chinese opera and the culture at that time. The second phase starts from 1949 to 1979. At that time, the People's Republic of China was just established, and government regulations came to influence the film industry. Legislation that was designed to develop the film industry greatly impeded the development of the industry. The year of 1979 marked the beginning of the third phase, which was characterized by reform and the opening-up of the Chinese market. During this period, China witnessed a fast pace of development, and the rapid globalization triggered the demand for China entering the global market and challenging outdated stereotypes. While economic advance promoting the considerable innovation of films, many films used to be banned films were gradually becoming available in the market. The fast development of the Chinese film industry in the third phrase has laid the foundation for Chinese film entering the world stage during the fourth period, starting from 2012 till now. This phase is symbolized by the use of advanced film technology and ICT (information and communication technology). People start paying attention to the film industry and recognizing the significance of the cooperation with other industries (Shao & Chen, 2016).

The Chinese film industry is encountering fierce competition. The imported films and IP (Intellectual property) films are far ahead of other film types recent years. Due to

the rapid development of economy and technology, the internet tycoons, such as Tencent, Alibaba and Baidu begin to invest in the film industry, which intensify the already fierce competition. Benefit from their advanced internet technology and an abundant capital, the film industry and the traditional film production is experiencing a big change.

The external marketing environment as an important factor is out of the control of companies or marketers. It is more affected by political, social, and technological factors than by organizations. In particular, the legal environment referring to the laws and regulations associated with consumers and business practice and the political environment about the period of interaction between business, society (Paul et al., 2013) and government are important indicator for the film marketing behaviors. The Chinese government also regulates a series of policy and laws in the area of film industry and makes a specific censorship mechanism ensuring that all films released on the Chinese market are standardized and legal. As for importing films, extra distribution policies and publishing policies also have to be followed. In 2016, *Film Industry Promotion Law of the People's Republic of China* was released to regulate the film industry. The context of the law regulates the formal procedure of film shooting application and film content review standard and film distribution requirement. This document states that the story line of the film needs to be reported to the province film department before shooting and some films even have to be reported to national film censorship department if these films' content related to the such sensitive contents as national security, diplomacy, national image, religion or military affairs. The law regulates that films are not allowed to contain the content likely to destroy territorial integrity, leak state secrets, and advocate terrorism and cults and so on. Therefore, film marketers should avoid these sensitive topics in the process of producing marketing contents.

The distribution policies, written in the *Regulations on Administration of Films (1996)*, regulates that before releasing films the certificate of distribution from the

national film department is required, which means that after finishing production, the producer is required to submit the film for inspection. The staffs from the film department will to review the films to decide whether it contains sensitive scenes, such as erotic and violent images. For example, the film about occupation of Taiwan will not be allowed to release because it involves the politically sensitive contents. However, different from western film system, China does not set up the film grading system, so Chinese films are required to be suitable for all-age audiences. From this respect, the distribution policies in China are more restrictive and unpredictable than those of other countries, which to some extent restrict the creation of the films and the expression of the film stories. In brief, when promoting the film, marketers need to consider the Chinese censorship policies and edit the marketing content to be suitable for all-age audiences.

This thesis, concentrated on the Chinese films, will give little discussion of the imported films. Therefore, the publishing policies of imported films are not referred in this part.

2.2 Film marketing industry in China

From 2009, Chinese film industry has entered into a rapid development period. The total box office and number of films and the amount of audiences have witnessed a sharp growth. As film quality is improving, the domestic films have dominated the main market in China and the influence of Chinese film industry has been expanding during the decade. According to the *2018 film annual report* from the government (2018), the number of domestic films has reached 902, and the gross of Chinese film market has reached more than 10 billion dollars in China, accounted for 60% of Chinese domestic market. The Chinese film, being an entertainment method with strong influence on the audiences' value, should shoulder the responsibility of promote positive Chinese image and culture. As Chinese films gradually standing out on international film stage, the Chinese marketing techniques of films still remain to be optimized. In the environment of international internet, the marketing platforms are

multiple and complicated. How to choose a suitable platform to conduct the film marketing is also an important question. Generally, YouTube, Twitter, Weibo, WeChat and Facebook rank in front among all the international socializing platforms, through which films and Chinese culture can be spread and received by more targeted-consumers in a fast way. In addition, many people from other Asian countries also use Weibo for socializing purpose and following up their Chinese idols' state. As a result, the film marketing through these socializing platforms and film exporting could reach to these audiences so as to realize the goal of promoting the films and establishing positive images of China (He & Du, 2018).

In China, the film marketing on network started in 1990. The schedule-marketing is one of the major film marketing techniques in China. For example, many films with big investment tend to be scheduled to release during the spring festival, because more people have more spare time during the national holiday. Thus, these films will be easier to attract more audiences and obtain box office success. With the emergence of technology and the popularity of internet, a series of new marketing channel and techniques are popping out, which has triggered the transformation of film marketing concept from the passive marketing to active marketing (Hu, 2016).

In digital era, the social media marketing is the main film marketing technique in China. According to Cai (2018), the development of film marketing in China can be divided into three stages. The first phase is the Web 1.0 period from 1990s to 2003, when forums, instant message and search engine are the main platforms of film marketing. Based on this internet condition, organizing offline marketing activities is the main marketing technique. The second phase is from 2004 to 2010, characterized by video sharing, SNS website and website comment community. On these platforms, people can interact with each other with much more freedom and choices than before, accelerating the importance of word-of-mouth marketing. In the last phase, from 2011 to present, the film marketing channels has been broadened tremendously, which correspondingly changes the film marketing method and preference. Audiences are

given the utmost saying, participation rights and rights of option in every phase of film. The audiences can fully engage in the marketing activities through the use of social media. Concerning the variety of channels, companies have to use various social media platforms for marketing, such as Weibo, WeChat and DouBan. The social media platforms bring the new features to film marketing, namely being social, local and flexible. Being social means that social media platforms are the space where film marketing organizes the marketing activities, in which audience and marketers can interact with each other. Being local refers that the audience can gather in the community on these social media platforms to discuss a certain topic. Being flexible means no time or geographic barrier for marketing. Instead, the audience could receive information and share content anytime and anywhere (Hu, 2017).

However, film marketing is faced with some challenges in digital time. Just as Chen holds (2018), the film marketing is under the challenge of time, intertype competition and the imperfections existing in their own films. First of all, preferences of audiences are changing too fast to predicate. Under the time of information overload, the audiences will receive a large amount of information every day and thus the marketing staffs need to judge how to attract their attention within an extremely time rather than being abandoned. Secondly, the fierce competition from peers is ineluctable. A great deal of films releases every year, and everyone wants to fight for the favor from their consumers. After being out of season, films will be available on the Internet. Hence, the war of film marketing for the attention of audiences just like racing against time and fighting with an army. In addition, according to Hu (2016), there are some problems existing in film marketing and film industry. The film marketing industry is lack of new ideas and techniques. With similar marketing contents and techniques, it will be very hard to attract the attention of audiences. Then, some poor-quality films depend on over-marketing to reach success, which brings distrust of the audience upon film marketing. Moreover, the film marketing blindly eliminates some excellent movies but lack of investment. These films don't have chance to be presented in front of the audiences and only those commercial films win

the battle. In the long term, the positive cycle of the film industry is disordered and destroyed. Finally, compared with those international films, Chinese films are still far from the perfection. Chinese films are still in the disadvantage position than imported films. Therefore, the film marketing in China has long way to process and needs further theoretical and practical research to guide the future development of film marketing.

The thesis makes the contribution to understand the change of film industry and audience engagement in film marketing in China. The research questions like how to accomplish audience engagement by film marketers in digital era remains to be explored.

3. Literature Review

In this part, the summary about the previous research in marketing and film fields would be presented. First of all, a brief introduction of the definition of marketing as well as its basic background is shown as below. The development and situation of film industry and the marketing of cultural products have long been studied and much achievement has been made. Film marketing is a part of general marketing, they two overlap in one way or another. As for film marketing, digital technologies are one of the most important tools to attract audience engagement, hence it is also important to display the digitalization effect on marketing, especially on film marketing. As this thesis focuses on the Chinese film market, a large space will be used to state the current situation of Chinese film marketing, including the development, the feature and its influence through social media in China. Regrettably, these dimensions are way too broad to elaborate.

3.1 Definition of marketing

The American Marketing Association (2008) defines marketing as the activity, set of institutions, and processes for creating, communicating, delivering, and exchanging offerings that have value for customers, clients, partners, and society at large. It has been a way for customers to identify and recognize an enterprise's offerings, to being influential in shaping customers' beliefs and actions (Kelly & Lehmann, 2006; Low & Fullerton, 1994), and delivering functional, emotional, and self-expressive benefits (Aaker, 1997; Park, Jaworski & MacInnis, 1986). In film industry, the marketing refers to a series film promotion activity by creating and delivering the film information, which could attract attention of audiences and influence their film-related behaviors. Marketing is a two-way communication process. It's not only about the marketing organization doing all of the work, the customer also has a strong input, which has importance of customer service personnel, including how to interact with customers, and how satisfied customers are as a result (Paul et al., 2013). There is a functional map of the marketing: provide marketing intelligence and customer

insight; provide strategic marketing direction for the organization; develop the customer proposition; manage and provide marketing communications; use and develop marketing and customer information; lead marketing operation and programs; manage and develop teams as well as individuals (Beer and Burrows, 2010).

Over the past decades, marketing has changed a lot. Since marketing is now a systematic organizational activity as a result of market research and sophisticated promotional activity before (Paul et al., 2013), such as campaigns or events for promotions. In the thesis, the social media is the main space of tracking marketing activities, where the organizational activities could be conducted systematically and the marketing innovations could be realized. The marketing concept has been altered to recognize the importance of the long-term customer relationship to organizations or products. Then marketing has different types, including commercial marketing and no-profit marketing. For commercial film, commercial marketing would be the first choice. Commercial marketing is a set of activities carried out by a commercial enterprise designed to influence others to act in ways that will maximize value for the owners of the enterprise (Andreasen, 2002). The case in the thesis is a commercial film, and the marketers aimed to use commercial marketing to influence the actions of audiences, such as their engagement in marketing process and the purchase behavior.

3.2 Marketing of cultural products

Cultural products include goods, artifacts, visual and experiential objects, services and art forms (Alladi & Laurie, 2006), obviously film belongs to cultural products, which is a visual form of art. For cultural products, marketing is presumed to take the cultural product and imbue it with additional symbolic meaning that is eventually communicated to the consumer (Schroeder, 2002). Besides, marketing has an effect on all phases of the cultural production process, influencing or shaping the production of the cultural product (Alladi & Laurie, 2006), as Meng (2017) also states that film marketing is a continuous process, which crosses from the shooting to the release of a film. A large amount of marketing materials is produced from the film shooting

materials, thus the film shooting period is the time for collecting marketing materials. Before the film release, film marketing aims to engage audience and promote the film to trigger their purchase behavior. After the releasing, film marketing needs to maintain the good brand and reputation of the film in order to promote and sell other culture products related to the film. Then the summary could be presented that in film marketing, marketing exists in all phases of the film production process in the production, circulation, and consumption of films themselves. For cultural product, marketing and its key elements in the four “P” – product, price, place and promotion – together create a compelling value proposition to audiences about a product or idea: the assets and attributes of the media project (product), the cost for audiences to access it (price), the ways its distributed (place), and the tactics to promote it such as advertising, publicity, events, and social media (promotion) (Zeiser, 2015), for example, sharing the short video on social media and online sites is both distributing and promoting.

In general, the marketing of cultural product involves marketing in the distribution of the product in consumer culture. Aesthetics are central to the ways in which cultural products are created, communicated and consumed, as these products are made of signs, images and meanings (Alladi & Laurie, 2006), which is also the significant part of film marketing, especially in the production of marketing materials. What’s more, in marketing field, values are conative, which are linked to motivations and behavior and it tends to be linked to consciences, developed through the cultures, religious and other influences (Paul et al., 2013).

3.3 Digitalization impact on marketing

ICT refers to a diverse set of technological tools and resources used for communicating, creating, disseminating, storing and managing information (Olimu et al., 2016). The rise of ICT usage and accelerated technological innovations, have begun to affect all aspects of our everyday lives (Garrett 2006, p. 202). ICT has emerged as an effective facilitator for development and it has become a prime driving

force to an impressive growth due to changing lifestyle patterns, better communication network and rapidly varying demand structure of consumers (Sindhi, Bhisham et al., 2011). Information and communication technology (ICT) is now being integrated by many establishments in a wide range and operations aspects. It has provided new ways to store, process, distribute and exchange information within companies and customers (Somuyiwa and Oyesiku, 2010). In the film marketing, marketers use ICT to distribute information to audiences, obtain responses from audiences, therefore ICT helps establish the relationship between marketers and audiences.

ICT has brought great impact on daily life, and it also has impact on marketing. Santomier et al (2016) points that marketing innovation is planning to incorporate the advances in marketing techniques, science to increase the effectiveness and efficiency of marketing, to gain a competitive advantage and increase shareholder value. Marketing innovation includes marketing approaching, connecting with new channels of distribution and using new communication/promotional tools and pricing techniques, which could help enter new markets and access to more consumers. The important feature of a marketing innovation is the implementation of new marketing concepts or strategies. For example, Social Media Marketing (SMM), which is defined as the utilization of social media technologies, channels, and software to create, communicate, deliver and exchange offerings that have value for an organization's stakeholders. Besides, participation is added as fifth 'p' to the marketing mix (Tuten & Solomon, 2013). Social media goes a step beyond Web 2.0 and enables consumers to exchange any content as well as communicate and network among themselves (Santomier et al., 2016), which refers to participation. Santomier et al (2016) proposes that SMM is the use of social media platforms, including online communities, blogs, or any other online collaborative media for marketing, sales, public relations and customer services. There are three dimensions of SMM, first, the creation of buzz by using events and videos, which is the key function of buzz is that it replicates a message via user-to-user communication. Second, the creation of ways

that enable consumers voluntary to post the content about the film in multiple online social network sites. Third, the creation of online conversation which could encourage consumers participation dialogue. In the thesis, the case used social media platforms as the main marketing place, making social media platforms as the tool to engage audiences into marketing activities.

With the rapid development of technology, new social media technologies are increasingly changing the way in which companies go to market through moves towards more email, and web-based marketing, and greater efficiency in direct and database marketing techniques (Sclater, 2005). The web-based marketing could help marketers to gain insights into both new product/service development and marketing communications between consumers (Paul et al., 2013), for example, in film marketing the marketers could obtain responses from audiences on social media and use the data to track the satisfaction of audiences. Marketing communication attempts to induce a desire or preference by linking a commercial product or a corporate organization to a symbolic value or set of symbolic values in the mind of the consumer (Andreasen, 1994). In commercial marketing, method is the techniques used in marketing, purpose is the reason for the marketing activities being conducted, and finally, market consists of the recipients of the marketing efforts (Dann, 2010),

3.4 Film Marketing in China

The innovation of marketing techniques focuses on the collaboration with other fields, including developing online games, advertising related products and new ways of purchasing tickets, which also applies to the Chinese film marketing with the advent of Web 2.0 (Hu, 2018). What's more, thanks to the technology, the film marketing expands from traditional media (TV, newspaper and magazines) to the social media. Based on the technology, social media becomes the main place of film marketing, which is also the aspect of innovation of marketing. Based on the marketing services online and the active advertising on social media, more films depend on the social media marketing to promote. Audiences could receive information via social media

and marketers could obtain the responses from audiences. Social media is the platform to connect “everything”, which accelerates the commercial business on Internet (Chen, 2018).

The new features of the film marketing have emerged in digital era in China. In detail, as Cai proposes (2018), first, multiple marketing target group. Due to the interactivity of the network, fans, grassroots, and celebrities are becoming both content receivers and publishers, both audience/consumers and marketers/promoters. The marketing has started to change from one-way communication to equally multi-communication with audiences. For film industry marketing, the various social media platforms have become the main stages for audiences to express their opinions, feedbacks and the information hub from online to offline. Second, the contemporary film industry marketing is focusing on how to use social media to link traditional media with film marketing. Audience could get information from multiple channels. Third, since the timeline of the marketing has been extended, the span of the film products could also be extended, such as the film-related games and music. The last one, the marketing in film industry includes the film product marketing, film brand marketing and film culture marketing. The product marketing goes into every phase of film production. The brand marketing is to promote the relative brands, products and companies. Culture marketing not only focuses on the commercial value but also the value of culture, which could add value of the films (Cai, 2018).

With the development of Internet, the film industry marketing in China has become more important and audience participation triggers interests of audience which helps to obtain the effective film marketing and promotion. Chen (2018) states that in China, network is the main platform of the film industry marketing. Network could overcome the barriers of geography and time. Network could cover more areas, which brings more opportunities for marketing. The network help realize the interactivity in marketing. The interactivity makes every audience become a marketer and could show the demand of audiences during the interaction. The marketing on network has

great efficiency, which could spread information with high speed on a larger scale.

In general, according to the review above, the development of the marketing and the basic knowledge of marketing could be known. Marketing has developed across multiple forms of media. And audience engagement has also been more active in digital space. Film marketing has its features and audience is the most important element of the film marketing.

3.5 Audience labor in media field

Fisher (2015) point out the media sells the audience as a commodity to advertisers. Audiences produce contents by communicating and socializing via internet, which is commodified and sold, and is essential to the accumulation process of big data capitalism. With the advent of new media, audiences are more active, engaged, expressive and creative (Jenkins, 2009) and social media facilitate the transformation of audiences into active participants or “prosumers” (Moe et al., 2016). Fisher (2015) also present, in social media the passive audiences are afforded a new level of engagement, conveyed in concepts such as co-creation, user-participation, user-generated content, co-creation, mass collaboration, social production, and peer-production. The creative work of the audience is an essential information for media organizations due to their economic value (Fisher, 2015). Therefore, media workers attach much importance to audiences and their engagement. For instance, television corporates or employed new media to attract audiences. Social platforms are becoming central to the television audience experience and it builds online communication in relation to television, linking content with commercial infrastructures in which they become embedded (Moe et al., 2016).

According to Fisher (2015), audience labor theory redefines the relations between media and audience in terms of relations of production:

First, audiences create surplus value, which is not consumed by the audiences but

rather extracted from advertising by tech companies or service providers. Second, surplus value can enter into the capital accumulation process and be commodified primarily by media companies. The last, the amount of audiences generates large quantity of data, which is the source of surplus value for media companies. Because of the importance of advertising in consumption economy, buying the attention of audiences to products became significant (Fisher, 2015). In addition, the audience labor revolves particularly on cognitive and emotional labor: learning to desire and buy particular brands and commodities (Fisher, 2015) and the integration of social media brings about a further commodification of the audiences (Moe et al., 2016). Therefore, the audiences are seen as commodities in media field, especially to advertisers. When it comes to marketing, the audiences are also essential because they could bring surplus values to marketers.

However, based on this literature review, there are some research limitations in relation to using audience engagement as core film marketing strategy in China. The *audience labor theory* points out that the audience engagement is becoming more popular within media field and social media platforms are also essential to the attract audiences' attention, especially in building audience engagement. But there is a gap in the ways of building the audience engagement by using social media platforms and the creation of surplus value via these platforms in the process of building audience engagement. In addition, the research on the reaction of audience engagement on social media platforms remains to be accomplished. What's more, the marketing techniques vary to the different features of culture products, and in reviews above has not outlined the strategies of film marketing. The marketing perspective provides a deeper insight into the research on audience engagement in terms of explaining how audiences participate in film promotion and media and communication research could explain how audiences react to practices and strategies of promotion. As a result, this thesis tries to identify the imperfection in the marketing practice, which will be the main purposes of the research.

4. Theoretical Framework

A clear motivation for the marketing strategies adopted by media platforms to promote the film is to encourage audience engagement. The *participatory culture* is the most important theory that refers to audience engagement. It has changed in digital era with the advent of technologies. And in the thesis, fans are the significant elements in the marketing process of <Us and Them>, hence the fandom in participatory culture is emphasized to identify its role and effect in film marketing. In addition, *audience engagement* in social media landscape needs to be defined. The relationships between marketing and audience engagement need to be cleared. The transmedia marketing bonds marketing and audiences in a tighter relationship. Emotions have effect on the behaviors of audiences and the importance of emotions should be emphasized. Besides, *spreadable media* and *stickiness* are the two factors of realizing effective audience engagement, spreadable media gives audience priority in marketing process while stickiness helps motivate audience engagement. The last, *word of mouth marketing* as the tool of attracting audience engagement need to be identified, finding the communication between audiences.

4.1 Participatory Culture

4.1.1 The overview of participatory culture

Jenkins (2009) refers that the participatory culture is a culture with relatively low barriers to artistic expression and civic engagement, strong support for creating and sharing. Participatory culture is also one in which members believe their contributions matter and feel some degree of social connection with one another (Jenkins, 2009). However, with the change of media spread from distribution to circulation, a new participatory culture has emerged. The concept of participatory culture embodies the possibility of a future of media engagement and participation (Schäfer, 2011).

According to Carpentier's (2016) participation, there are two approaches to participation, a sociological approach and a political approach. The sociological

approach defines participation as taking part in particular social process, which includes many types of human interaction with texts and technologies (Carpentier, 2016) and the interaction among audiences is created to realize the audience engagement in film marketing. Therefore, this thesis uses the sociological approach to participation. Carpentier also points out that participation has played a key role in a variety of approaches within the field of communication and media studies (Carpentier, 2011). Participation in the media deals with participation in the production of media output (content-related participation), which allows citizens to be active in one of the many spheres relevant to daily life, and to put into practice their right to communicate (Carpentier, 2011). In film marketing, the content-related participation provides audiences with the chance of expressing their opinions which brings active engagement in film marketing activities among audiences. According to Beer and Burrows (2010), one type of participation, explicit participation, which is seen as intrinsically motivated actions exercised in social formations share a high degree of interaction, common objectives and interests.

4.1.2 The digital landscape of participatory culture

Generally, participation has become a principal component of digital culture (Deuze, 2006). Deuze (2006) combines participation with the digital culture and it reveals the demands of citizens in the contemporary media spread. The Internet is described as a democratic space in which anyone can participate in cultural production (Keltie, 2017). With the advent of technology, many social media platforms have emerged, consumers of media are now able to participate in the production of content for distribution via these platforms. What's more, participatory culture employing convergent media technologies enables media consumers to become media producers, this takes place through platforms controlled by industry, resulting in a 'participatory culture' that is at best provisional (Keltie, 2017)

Participatory culture enables audiences to challenge the power structure of the culture industry by participating not only in the consumption of cultural products, but also in

their production (Keltie, 2017). The notion of audience activity can be used to open up debates on participation in and through the media (Carpentier, 2011). Participatory spaces in online environment are cohesive spaces that have significant scope to shape the understandings and actions of consumers by the audience activities. The influence is likely to go well beyond the boundaries of their online interactions and be integrated across other embedded and mundane social activities and interactions (Beer and Burrows, 2010). Participating in the creation of a Web series provided insights into participatory culture as a model of cultural production, helping to identify to what extent participatory culture is possible within the culture (Keltie, 2017).

4.1.3 The fandom in participatory culture

Jenkins defines that the term of “Participatory culture” is used to describe the cultural production and social interactions of fan communities, initially seeking a way to differentiate the activities of fans from other forms of spectatorship (Jenkins et al., 2013). When it comes to the participatory culture and fan groups, it refers to a range of different groups deploying media production and distribution to serve their collective interests, as various scholars have linked considerations of fandom into a broader discourse about participation in and through media (Jenkins et al., 2013), which indicates that fans are the significant elements in participatory culture, as Fiske (1992) states that fans are the most active and discerning group of consumers. Fans desire to participate more actively in producing and circulating media and professional desires to make marketing and media texts more participatory (Jenkins et al., 2013). Therefore, it is significant for marketers to create and invite more audiences. And participatory media in fan culture, sees a radical reworking of access for everyday people to create content (Jenkins, 2006). In addition, from the perspective of content circulation via the mechanisms of participatory culture, the traditional boundaries have become blurred — between fans and activists, creativity and disruption, niche and mainstream, or between commercial and grassroots, actors’ fans and producers and the circulation of media content can serve a range of interests within participatory culture (Jenkins et al., 2013).

4.2 Audience engagement in film marketing

4.2.1 The overview of audience engagement

In the past decades, changing technologies have stripped much of the control from media companies, shifting power over to audiences. Now audiences are masters of their own media destinies (Zeiser, 2015). Because tracking technologies reveals audiences' preferences and social media gives them a voice, media makers and marketers can understand audiences, and invite them into the process (Zeiser, 2015), in other words, audiences are now taking a leading role in film marketing.

The consumer engagement concept, which more explicitly accounts for consumers' interactive brand-related dynamics. Engagement reflects a motivational state, which occurs by virtue of an individual's focal interactive experiences with a particular object or agent, which is key for many online offerings (Hollebeek et al., 2014). Within media studies, the audiences are characterized as consumers, active readers, content co-creators and participants in the distribution and spreading of media, which could not be treated as a homogeneous group (Gilardi et al., 2018). Accompanying with the development of technology and the change of media environment, the audience engagement takes place in the process of producing cultural products, distribution and reception, which is also characterized as participatory in nature (Gilardi et al., 2018).

Ahva and Hellman (2015) points out the three levels of audience engagement. First, the civic engagement, when audiences engage with journalism, they also connect with the public realm in which political issues are being discussed. Second, interactive engagement. Audiences are considered as participants who respond to the media texts within their network by making comments, tweeting or participating in online discussions. At last, interpretative engagement. Audiences contribute to generating the meanings associated with a text or indeed in the construction of the text itself. Rohrs and Stewart (2013) defined that an engaged audience is an attentive audience. An

engaged audience is a responsive audience, an engaged audience is a profitable audience. Rohrs and Stewart (2013) also proposes, there are some audience engagement tactics – talk to people, websites and blogs, content marketing, cross-channel promotion, social media advertising and events.

4.2.2 Engaging with audiences in marketing

Within social media landscape, Zeiser (2015) defines, transmedia is storytelling across multiple forms of media, with each element making distinctive contributions to an audience's understanding of the story universe, including where audience actions affect the experience of content across multiple platforms, – on air, online, and on the go – through engaging storytelling, rich story worlds, and interactive audience experiences. Storytelling is one of the goals of film and film marketing in digital era crosses multiple media (Zeiser, 2015). Therefore, film marketing is one of the transmedia because media content is the storytelling content and its marketing are transmedia marketing by the use of various media (Zeiser, 2015). He also proposes that marketing in transmedia is used to publicize films, which is critical to the success of media and entertainment. Hence, media maker should understand the vital role of marketing and promotion. According to Meng (2017), a specific goal of film marketing is to promote the film and let more people to have insight on the film. Zeiser (2015) also put up a new profession in film field, PMD (producer of marketing and distribution), which is increasingly recognized and prevalent in the film world.

Transmedia marketing is based on the precepts of strategic planning, but also applies to create media and audience experience. It underlines that marketing across more than one platform is more likely to reach people more deeply. It refers to the merge of story and content creation which could help fully engage the audiences in an immersive experience (Zeiser, 2015).

In detail, celebrities post links on social media platforms about the film they participate in as a kind of promotion, organizing a series of activities to let more

audiences know about the film as a means of marketing. For a mass-market film, the distributor is responsible for determining the timing of the premiere, the cities it will run in, the types of theaters and the marketing plan to drive awareness and attendance to the film. For filmmaker, assembles marketing, including distribution and target the film's audience (Zeiser, 2015). The demand for marketing and distribution strategy is vital because of the excessive film production and fierce competition in film industry. Marketing is an organic and evolutionary enterprise (Zeiser, 2015), and in film marketing, the advent of advanced changing technology has great impact on the media landscape.

When it comes to the relationship between marketing and audience, thanks to advent of technology, media platforms and creators, distributors, and audiences could share the space, thoughts and interests. On social media, audiences communicate directly with films', TV shows' and other media entertainment and with their own circle of friends (Zeiser, 2015).

In transmedia maker culture, the role of producer and audience member has emerged and everyone has a turn at creating and critiquing, has created a new aspect of marketing – audience engagement (Zeiser, 2015), which becomes a part of marketing in cultural production field. Audience engagement with a product or media entity is simply a new definition and requirement of good content creation and marketing in today's world (Zeiser, 2015). The engagement is critical to the marketing strategy success (Rohrs and Stewart, 2013) and audience actively and adeptly share the media they make, by the means of branding, posting, promoting, publicizing, and socializing their content to friends, family, fans, and affinity groups (Zeiser, 2015). According to Zeiser (2015), audiences market media, much as they make it, because the tools and vehicles to promote and distribute it have become as accessible as the tools to make it. Since everyone is both a media maker and media marketer, the lines between creators and marketers are becoming increasingly blurry. In order to get audiences to interact with media, including pass the content along, comments on it, or get involved with the

associated issue, requires even more marketing. Like storytelling, sound marketing creates opportunities for audience, which creates loyal and participatory audiences.

In conclusion, film marketing is about creating audience awareness and transforming that awareness into engagement and purchasing value (Zeiser, 2015).

4.2.3 Emotions bring about audience engagement

Individuals' emotional responses to environmental factors are a broadly recognized aspect in psychology research and they have been applied to research in marketing areas, such as the behavior of customers and promotion (Blasco-Arcas et al., 2016). The emotion does have effect on film marketing, as Chen (2018) proposes, emotion resonance is one of the strategies for film marketing. Analyzing the viewing motivation of audience and customizing the emotional marketing content is the popular film marketing techniques. However, when it comes to audience engagement and emotions, Gilardi et al (2018) proposes that engagement does relate to emotional reactions. According to Blasco-Arcas et al (2016), the definition of audience engagement as a cognitive and affective process brings about interactive experiences implies the importance of emotions in its development. Interactive experiences require a high level of arousal in individuals, an aspect that will also influence their level of engagement to emotions. The film takes advantage of its storytelling content to arouse the emotional resonance among audiences, which indicates that marketers create marketing materials about film content to trigger the emotion resonance and create audience engagement.

Teixeira et al (2012) proposes that emotion regulation refers to the processes by which people regulate either positive or negative emotions over time, either automatically and unconsciously or in a controlled, conscious manner. Emotion regulation is a dynamic process, involving feedback from the emotion to attention and behavioral responses to the stimulus. Thus, the interaction or engagement as the feedback could be triggered by emotion. The emotion developed to catch people's attention quickly

and motivate them to engage in specific action, such as interactive experience. Evoking emotional responses is considered a potent strategy to engage consumers from moment to moment in marketing, that is, to attract their attention and retain them from start to finish (Teixeira et al., 2012). Hence, the emotion resonance is a mean of marketing techniques to engage audiences by stimulating the responses from audiences.

4.3 Audience engagement needs Spreadable Media

Spreadability, which is derived from the spreadable media, refers to both technical and cultural strategies for audiences to share content for their own purposes. It also refers to the technical resources that make it easier to circulate some kinds of content than others (Jenkins et al., 2013), for example, a specific text or message might motivate a community to share the content and the social network links people because of the content. Grover et al (2017) define spreadability as the ease with content can be spread across the social media platform and it contains two factors, likeability and sharability. Likeability refers to the degree of appeal contain within the content and sharability refers to the audience's willingness to distribute content (Grover et al., 2017), which implies that content production and audience are both the key elements in the field of spreadable media. According to Jenkins, spreadable media focus on the social logics and cultural practices that have enabled and popularized these new platforms, with the advent of ICT (Jenkins et al., 2013).

The spreadability of media content could be taken as a ability to reach target audiences and let audience share the content of a media message as the distribution channel (Mahoney et al., 2017), Jenkins emphasizes that easy-to-share formats could make content easier to spread videos across the Internet, such as YouTube and Twitter. While audience and social media platforms are also two significant elements of spreadability, as Jenkins (2013) proposes that spreadability recognizes the importance of the social connections among individuals, connections increasingly made visible by social media platforms. A spreadable media focuses on creating

media texts that various audiences may circulate for different purposes, inviting people to shape the context of the material as they share it within their social circles (Jenkins et al., 2013). In spreadable media, audiences do play an active role, as Jenkins points out the spreadable media environment has made audiences a greater priority for many marketers and media companies (Jenkins et al., 2013).

4.4 Motivating audience engagement -- Stickiness

Stickiness is an important ability for companies to attract and retain customers. As Lin et al (2010) defined stickiness as customer's time spent on a certain social network. Stickiness is the state that maintains user interest for extended periods of time, and it is often discussed in and pursued by SNS and web applications (Zhao et al., 2017). Marchand et al (2000) also define stickiness as the ability of a website to positively impress its users and to motivate them to stay. Hence, stickiness is the will of users to visit and use their preferred websites for many times (Xu et al., 2018) and the definitions given by scholars involve two aspects: visit time length and user retention (Zhang et al., 2016), so the stickiness could be measured according to visit duration and the number of visit (Chiang & Hsiao, 2015). However, according to Jenkins et al (2013) "stickiness" broadly refers to the need to create content that attracts audience attention and engagement. From the customers' perspective, even if there are marketing activities on social networks, the stickiness of customers still ensures them of a repeated visit and use of the social network (Zhang et al., 2016). In general, stickiness acts as a measure of how interested the audience member is in a media text (Jenkins et al., 2013) and stickiness is a representative indicator of customer loyalty in a cyber-context (Zhang et al., 2016).

Customer stickiness and satisfaction are both essential when facing fierce competition to gain market shares and earn profits (Xu et al., 2018). Some scholars use "stickiness" to describe the aspects of media texts which engender deeper audience engagement and might motivate them to share. In short, sticky content is material that people want to spread (Jenkins et al., 2013). As Xu et al (2018) also propose that stickiness is

affected by web user attitude toward a website, trust in a website and the quality of website content. The key to stickiness is putting material in a centralized location, drawing people to it, and keeping them there indefinitely in ways that best benefit the site's analytics (Jenkins et al., 2013). Besides, customers' stickiness to a certain website or product is formed when the customers have adopted a positive attitude towards the contents, features, products, and services of the website and have developed such loyal behavior as attachment (Zhang et al., 2016). The sticky mentality requires brands to create a centralized experience which can best serve the purposes of multiple audiences simultaneously, offering limited and controlled ways for individuals to "personalize" content within a site's format (Jenkins et al., 2013).

According to Xu et al (2018), the users on social media platforms have characteristics, which have three dimensions: conscious participation, enthusiasm and social interaction, customer characteristics affect the level of stickiness. Conscious participation, enthusiasm and social interaction all have direct and positive influence on social value, thereby further affecting the stickiness of internet users. The use of "stickiness" in the business setting refers to centralizing the audience's presence in a particular online location to generate advertising revenue or sales (Jenkins et al., 2013). Therefore, the stickiness is also a significant part in marketing and audience engagement. In the media field, impressions are measured by how many people see a particular piece of media, whereas stickiness refers to the mechanisms motivating people to seek out and spend time at a particular site. Applied to the social media, companies hope to achieve stickiness by placing material in an easily measured location and assessing how many people view it, how many times it is viewed, and how long visitors view it (Jenkins et al., 2013). From the word-of-mouth spread of recommendations about a brand to the passing along of media content that might ultimately drive interest (and traffic) back to a particular destination, success in the stickiness model has always ultimately depended on audience activity that happens away from the site — in other words, from spreadability (Jenkins et al., 2013).

4.5 Word of Mouth Marketing in audience engagement

The accessibility of internet, reach and transparency have empowered marketers who are interested in influencing and monitoring word of mouth (WOM) as never before (Kozinets et al., 2010). The use of social media amplifies the word of mouth marketing due to its interactivity. Word of mouth happens naturally and it is not explicitly aroused and managed by marketers for strategic purposes and marketers have begun to seek ways to explicitly arouse and manage WOM with a view to influencing consumer behavior (Groeger & Buttle, 2013). As Kozinets et al (2010) also point that WOM occurs among consumers when marketers perform their job of developing market innovations and performing effective product notification through advertising and promotions. Therefore, in order to build the audience engagement in film marketing, the word of mouth develops by marketers to influence audiences' behavior, such as the interaction and taking part in activities. WOM began to emphasize the importance of particularly influential consumers in the WOM process. Consumers spread WOM for brands as a result of three drivers, social, emotional and functional (Lovett et al., 2013), which could help keep the social connection among these consumers. As Jenkins proposes that participatory culture refers to the feel of social connection with others (Jenkins, 2009), hence the word of mouth marketing has something to do with participatory culture. The social driver relates to social signaling, such as expressing uniqueness, self-enhancement and desire to socialize, the emotional driver is related to emotion sharing, and the functional driver is related to the need to obtain and the tendency to provide information (Lovett et al., 2013).

WOM is part of word of mouth marketing and word of mouth marketing (WOMM) has taken on increased significance in recent years, as media channels have multiplied and social media have become more prevalent, important and sophisticated ("Demystifying word-of-mouth marketing," 2012, p65). WOMM is part of a complex cultural process and is an increasingly important marketing technique, which attempts to direct the discourses of bloggers which may seem to have many similarities with the use of public relations or other forms of paid promotion and it is known as social

media marketing, viral marketing, buzz and so on (Kozinets et al., 2010). WOMM is a consumer-to-consumer communications, which involves the seeding of products to targeted groups of consumers with the goal of encouraging them to spread positive WOM to increase brand awareness and sales (Groeger & Buttle, 2013). In film marketing, the WOM involves more audiences to spread the engagement to get more effective film marketing. WOMM depends on transformation from persuasion oriented, market-generated, sales objective-oriented hype to relevant, useful, desirable social information that builds reputations and group relationships (Kozinets et al., 2010). In addition, word of mouth (WOM) communication is generally acknowledged to play a considerable role in influencing and forming consumer attitudes and behavior intentions (Reza Jalilvand and Samiei, 2012), such as their engagement and purchase behavior in film field. And the communicators take WOMM messages and meanings and then alter them to make the marketing message more believable, relevant, or palatable to the community (Kozinets et al., 2010). Product reviews that consumers post on the internet constitute one of the most important forms of online WOM communication and for consumers it is increasingly common to look for online product reviews when gathering pre-purchase product information (Reza Jalilvand and Samiei, 2012). For instance, before the activities, the WOM brings the messages of engagement to audiences by the communication among audience groups. WOM communication is affected by the placement and communal norms that govern the expression, transmission and reception of a message and the meaning, and it takes place in particular forum. The social media is the base for WOM communication, where marketers could build space to gather the audience groups and build forums about film. The message and meanings of the WOM communication are affected by the promotional characteristics of the WOMM campaign and related promotions (Kozinets et al., 2010). In general, the WOM communication is a significant part of WOMM, which promotes the sales and create the buzz indirectly.

4.6 Theoretical framework summary

Based on the reviewed theory, the following concepts are understood as central for

successfully audience engagement in film marketing. First, *participatory culture*, refers to engagement with social connection and provides audiences with opportunities to be both the information receiver and sender in digital landscape. The participatory culture also emphasizes the role of fandom in creating audience engagement. Second, *audience engagement* is defined in the terms of involving audiences into the process characterized as part of participatory culture that takes place throughout the process of production, distribution and reception in film marketing. The transmedia marketing helps reach more audiences and invite more audiences into the process and emotions brings active audience engagement in promotion cultural product, which helps developing participatory culture. Third, *spreadable media* aims to create media text to reach the audiences and the *stickiness* build positive attitude among audiences towards the products. Hence, the spreadable media and stickiness contribute to motivating audience engagement and participatory culture. Finally, the *word of mouth marketing* is known as part of social media marketing and helps creating communication between audiences to distribute media text, which also triggers the audience engagement in marketing process by building the reliable and relevant contents. By analyzing the audience engagement in film marketing, we will understand the ways in which audiences engage in communication and film promotion as well as the impact these have on their engagement in more general aspects.

5. Data and method

In this chapter, the research method and data are explained so as to enrich the academic content of the thesis. Firstly, the reason why the qualitative approach, which is the main research method employed in this thesis, is employed and why the case study is chosen will be explained. Secondly, the process of data collection would be displayed, including the quantitative and qualitative data collected from social media platforms and interviews. Thirdly, the content analysis approach and the process of interviews during the research would be briefly described. Finally, this chapter gives a summary of the ethical issues and limitations of this study.

5.1 Research design

My research design sets out from the qualitative approach by using case-study research including semi-structured and in-depth interview and content analysis. Qualitative work usually employs small samples and is often focused on particular individuals, events and contexts (Gerring, 2017, p.4), which provides multiple angles to analyze a single subject. As for qualitative data, it is likely to be more useful insofar as a study is focused on a single case or a small number of cases (Gerring, 2017, p.6). Researchers could investigate situations where little is known about what is there or what is going on by employing qualitative method (Gillham, 2000). Qualitative research is a powerful means of gaining an in-depth, holistic understanding of relationship between culture and communication from the perspective of those inside a society or group (Daymon and Holloway, 2010). In my research, I focus on a single case, combined with the literature and previous research, aiming to explore the phenomenon of audience engagement in the film marketing. Hence, in general, qualitative method is suitable for my research due to the lack of knowledge about audience participation in media field and film marketing in China. In addition, Daymon and Holloway (2010) point out employing qualitative methods to examine communication as experienced by people is typically open, complex and human. During this process, communication and social relations are regarded as

inseparable from the social and historical contexts, which is reflected in the contextualized nature of qualitative research.

5.2 Case study

Gerring (2004) has defined “case study” as “an intensive study of a single unit for the purpose of understanding a larger class of (similar) units”. Case study is more interested in examining an issue, event, process or problem within a particular context (Daymon and Holloway, 2002), which are often seen as prime examples of qualitative research that adopts an interpretive approach to data, studies “things” within their context and considers the subjective meanings that people bring to their situation (Vaus and Vaus, 2001). As for the case study, one movie named *Us and Them* will be analyzed in detail, aiming to explore the audience engagement in film marketing. What’s more, the aim of the case study is to broaden the knowledge about contemporary communication events and process in their context. In media field, case studies are compiled to illustrate good practice, such as campaigns, which is used for promotional or competitive purposes (Daymon and Holloway, 2002). Especially in film marketing, some events are targeted to promote the audience engagement and the film effect. Therefore, the case study is applicable to the research purpose and demand of this thesis. A variety of methods are taken to collect valid data including observations, interviews, documents, and so forth. Among all the data in case study, interviews and documents play an important role in reflecting the regional culture from different perspectives. Film is a cultural production specific to the context in which it emerges. Likewise, marketing strategies in order to be successful in terms of attracting audience, need to speak to the local culture and context as well. In this way, the research method of case study cannot be neglected in order to give an effective analysis of different data from various angles and the process of cultural production in a short time.

In the case study, semi-structured in-depth interviews are the main type of data collection method. The semi-structured in-depth interview is similar to a conversation

in that there are two individuals discussing a topic of mutual interest and ideally the discussion is relaxed, open and honest (Mason, 1998). The in-depth interview ideally should be a flexible and free-flowing interaction in which the interviewer allows the interviewee a good deal of leeway (Morris, 2015). Interviewer directs the direction of conversation to obtain enough information and interviewees are able to express their opinions in the way they desire, which could get deeper insight about the topics. Hence, the interview is a good way to gather data.

Content analysis has been defined as a systematic and replicable technique for compressing many words of text into fewer content categories based on explicit rules of coding (Stemler, 2001). Content analysis can be a useful technique for allowing us to discover and describe the focus of individual, group, institutional, or social attention (Weber, 1990), which is applicable to the single case study. It also provides inferences for other methods of data collection. Content analysis enables researchers to sift through large volumes of data with relative ease in a systematic fashion (Gao, 1996). In the thesis, the interview, documents and reviews consist of the large amount of data, and content analysis is useful for examining trends and patterns in documents (Stemler, 2001), thus it is necessary to adopt content analysis to analyze data in the thesis.

5.2.1 Case component- the film *Us and Them*

Us and Them is a romantic film released on April 28th of 2018. Before the formally release of this film, different marketing techniques for promotion are utilized which have made great contribution for the success of this film (Zhang, 2018). By researching the comments of this film, it is found that this film has won lots of attentions from audience and many audiences vote for “like” or “would like to watch” about their willingness of watching. Many of its marketing measures are taken as typical examples by film marketing companies. Rene Liu is the director of the film, who is known as a famous actress and singer and this film is her directorial debut. The

name of the film is derived from a song sang by Mayday, a popular band. The film tells a story of the couple who acquaint with each other on the way back to home town before the spring festival. Then they fall in love with each other and live together and work for their dream in Beijing just like millions of couples. However, due to the reality and the cruelty of the society, they end up with breaking up. After ten years, they accidentally meet again and the long memory starts. The directing method of flashback is also used in this film, which adds certain suspense to this film.

5.2.2 The marketing technique of multiple-sited promotion in *Us and Them*

At the stage of film marketing, the film producers establish film official accounts on Weibo to promote the films, on which they frequently update the film information to attract audiences such as film trailers, actor’s interaction news, and official campaign information. Celebrities in this film also post pictures or words about their feeling towards this film or their daily life funs on their Weibo account to attract the attention from their fans. The director Liu also posted the shooting and editing process of the film and her feeling and experience about the film on Weibo. This intensive film marketing process started from February 2017 and the marketing process on Weibo started from 19th of October in 2017, which was the date of the first shooting. In this way, fans are provided a channel to know more about their idols and the distance between fans and celebrities is shortened. As for the case of *Us and Them*, Weibo is the main social media platform for marketing and promotion. The table below lists the intensive marketing activities made by the marketing team of this film.

Table 1: the intensive marketing activities of *Us and Them*

Date	Marketing activities	Notes
11/02/2018	First trailer	This trailer is about the spring festival, published on Weibo, it has aroused the heat interaction topic why you hate spring festival.

13/03/2018	Poster: Hug	The official film account on Weibo posted a poster, accompanying with the interaction topic “later hug”.
21/03/2018	Second trailer	The Weibo film account posted a trailer named “how to love” and initiated the topic of “tell your story”.
28/03/2018	Theme song	The singer, Hebe (Fuzhen Tian) released a song for this film and the film marketer organized an activity about collecting the hand-writing lyrics of this song from the audience.
03/04/2018	Poster: without us	The film’s official account on Weibo published a poster named “without us”.
04/04/2018	Episode song	Singer Eason Chan published a theme song for this film.
10/04/2018	Launch event of theme song	The launch event of the theme song was host and all the protagonists were present.
11/04/2018- 15/04/2018	Road show	The director and protagonists started to organize the roadshow in different cities and those audiences who attended the roadshow could watch the film in advance.
16/04/2018	Concert promotion	The director Rene Liu attended Mayday’s concert as a guest in which she promoted her film.
21/04/2018	TV show	The director Rene Liu attended an entertainment program as a guest to promote the film.

25/04/2018	Ultimate trailer	
28/04/2018	The film was released	The film official account on Weibo shared the reviews by some famous film critics and audience.
29/04/2018	Ending Surprise	The ending surprise of the film was published.

According to the table above, the film *Us and Them* have employed different marketing techniques to promote the film. Many film marketing companies speak highly of the marketing activity of this film by commenting that *Us and Them* is a film which hits the market before releasing (Zhang, 2018). This success of marketing also received positive response from the market. According to the statistics and the film reviews from social media platforms and film website, before showing, many audiences have already engaged into the marketing activities (Zhang, 2018), which increases their expectation upon this film and indirectly promote the increase of the box office. However, opposite to the satisfactory response before the release of the film, a large amount of negative reviews appeared after releasing and the gross of the film witnesses a sharp decrease. In this way, the contrasting reactions of watching feedback from the audience are formed. The shift from the good reputation on film website to many negative reviews renders a practical case that is worth pursuing further. Therefore, it is important for my thesis to give a deep discussion about the reason of these contrasting reactions and the impact of the film marketing on audience engagement with *Us and Them* as the study cases.

5.3 Data collection method

Data in thesis is composed of two major sources. On one hand, I reached and sorted a lot of information about this film online, especially that information about the marketing activities in February, March, April and May of 2018. On the other hand, I have made in-depth semi-structured interview about the subject of this thesis. These

two kinds of materials are logically incorporated and combed in this thesis in a scientific way, which facilitates me to analyze the marketing activities of *Us and Them* from different angles.

5.3.1 Quantitative and qualitative data

In order to provide the data support of this thesis, the quantitative data is mainly collected from the film platform named Maoyan, a platform catering for offering the movie ticket-booking, movie reviews and off-line activities. However, the qualitative data is from social media platforms including Weibo and Douban and an unpublished report from a film marketing company. Due to the limitation of time and the length of this thesis, Weibo, Douban and Maoyan are chosen as the main platforms of the research. These three platforms have their unique characteristics in film marketing, which improves the richness of this thesis. Weibo, as the socializing platform with huge amount of target audience, is often used as the platform for product promotion. Thus, the marketing team of *Us and Them* use their official Weibo account to update relative news or movement and to interact with more potential audience. Moreover, weibo, being an instant and socializing tool, can realize the instant and fast sharing of information, that is right the film marketing people looking for. Under this advantage of Weibo, most of marketing poster or activities can expose to more audience in a short time; Douban is the platform for audience to rate the film and write reviews. As the feedback information on this platform has the characteristic of objective and authentic, it has won the favor of many movie fans. Thus, the users of this platform are the perfect targeted-group of the film marketing team. How to balance the rate and control the comment trend of the film on this platform will be the key point of film marketing; Maoyan is the platform for audience to buy film tickets and write reviews after watching the film. It shows the real-time film gross on the website. The statics provided by Maoyan platform will enrich the analysis effect of this research. By comparing these three platforms comprehensively, it is concluded that Douban and Maoyan are the platforms to track audience reaction after the marketing techniques were implemented and Weibo is an efficient tool of marketing throughout the whole

film marketing activity.

5.3.2 Social media sampling

For the quantitative material, the following steps are taken to extract samples used in this study: because of the big amount of texts base of the whole film production process, the selection is then narrowed down to the following specific four months: February, March, April and May, when corresponds with the main marketing period of this film. In Maoyan platform, the audiences have the opportunity to vote for “which film do you want to watch?” From this vote list, we can know which films the audiences are interested in. Taking the date on Feb 11th of 2018 as an example, it is the day when the first trailer was published. This trailer is the first post on the official film account of *Us and Them*. Thus, this time can be taken as the starting point of the data collection. Taking both the post on Weibo and statics of voting on Maoyan into account, the reaction of audience after each marketing activity will be reflected and recorded.

Weibo and Douban are the main resource of data for the qualitative material. Weibo, being a social media platform, is normally dubbed as Chinese Twitter. It is the most popular social media platform in China, where everyone can post texts, pictures and videos about their daily life events or other public affairs. With its strong interacting characteristics, Weibo provides an excellent place for people to know about trendy things and then to involve in those things by commenting, forwarding or saving. From this perspective, how to trigger the audiences’ initiative to involve in the marketing activities designed by the marketing team of *Us and Them* so as to *grow* the interest toward the film becomes vital important. Therefore, by summarizing and analyzing all the data displayed on Weibo, the audience engagement during the film marketing can be deduced. During this process, the method of content analysis is dominant in analyzing such data as text, documents and pictures collected from these social media platforms in order to get a general insight about the audience engagement while the film marketing. Besides, while conducting the content analysis on Weibo, the hash tag

about *Us and Them* can also be found. The hash tag related to this film in Chinese language can be represented by “电影后来的我们” whose translation is Film *Us and Them*) and “#后来的我们” whose translation is *Us and Them*, that were collected between February 11th to May 3rd of 2018 and had generated 4,600 million entries. I went through 200 posts under the hashtag of “#后来的我们” (#*Us and Them*) to categorize the marketing effect after the marketing activities were posted.

Douban is the social media platform where people could find the topics or groups about films, books or TV programs they are interested in and then involve in by writing reviews, commenting or reading information. Some people can even form the special interest group to communicate with their peers. Therefore, Douban offers a platform for film marketers or producers tracking the reaction of the audiences and then making correction. By searching the corresponding topic name, you will know the general feedback trend immediately by reading the audiences' comments or referring to the rate. Before the official release of *Us and Them*, a small part of audiences and media staff will be given the chance to watch the movie in advance. After that, they are requested to make comments on Douban or provide feedback in another way, so that the film produce can have a basic understanding of the viewing effect of their film and then make appropriate marketing plan. Based on this situation, I randomly selected 100 hundred reviews and sorted the positive and negative reviews respectively to analyze the viewing effect of *Us and Them*. These data can be applied to the measurement of the word-of-mouth marketing effect in the film marketing and the analysis of the effect of audience engagement.

5.3.3 Semi-structured qualitative interview

In the field of media communication and marketing, qualitative research is often primarily associated with interviewing and in-depth interview is the major source of data in the research and a way of exploring informant perspectives and perceptions (Daymon and Holloway, 2002). The interview gives the researcher access to

interviewees' thoughts, reflections, motives, experiences, memories, understandings, interpretations and perceptions of the topic under consideration (Bengtsson and Hertting, 2014). While conducting the online interviews by using semi-structured interview, new questions may appear and then be constructed. Thus, It well explained why I chose the semi-structured in-depth interviews to conduct the conversations regards to the audience engagement in film marketing activities designed by the film marketing responsible staff. The audio interviews could provide interviewees the opportunity to express their understanding, feeling and reflections upon the experience of film marketing. What's more, according to the response in the interviews, the social media platforms they choose as the channels to promote the film and specific marketing techniques could be known. These interviews bring the subjective understanding towards the process of film marketing in detail, including online and offline film marketing, which is a significant part of data. From the interviews, the digital landscape in marketing field from the perspective of marketers and the practice of participatory in the film marketing field will be displayed.

The interviewees are represented by the film marketing company named Guanghe Yinghua Entertainment Co, who has rich practical experience in film marketing, so they reflect their professional and practical knowledge in applying the film marketing techniques and collecting and analyzing the information or data about the reaction of audience during marketing activities. The film marketing company is the company to design, plan and execute the film marketing activities, aiming at promoting films online and offline by using different marketing techniques. Therefore, through collecting the marketing information from this experienced company, the data of this thesis will become more generalizable and rich. Prior to the beginning of the interviews, the outline of interview is prepared based on the literature resource and related theories. The interviews are divided into three parts: the use of social media, marketing process and audience engagement.

I made three interviews in to total. These interviews were conducted online so that I

could take interview audition record and take notes at the same time. Different from traditional research interviews, that used to being conducted face-to-face, the online interview was in the form of a video conference via. Skype. The online interviews are more convenient than traditional research interviews, because when talking about audience engagement on social media, the interviewees could show me the samples and the marketing techniques they used through the internet. The interviews turned out to be very successful and smooth and it was finished within one day. In order to reach the best effect of interviews, I interviewed one interviewee at a time and each interview lasted about 45 minutes. During online interviews, they showed me many examples of the film marketing and gave me deeper understanding of audience engagement in the marketing scope, such as how their company worked to establish and maintained a good relationship with audiences. The three interviews were conducted in Chinese and were recorded successfully. After the interview, I also transcribed these interviews, so that I could better interpret, digest and analyze the interview contents.

Table 2: General Information about the Interviewees

Pseudonym	Position	Length of working
P1	Marketing Planner	3 years
P2	Executor	2 years
P3	Marketing Project Manager	5 years

5.4 Method for analyzing collected data

In this chapter, thematically qualitative content analysis and quantitative content analysis are made to examine the data gathered from social media platforms and interviews. Qualitative content analysis is a research method of analyzing written, verbal or visual communication messages, which is a systematic mean of describing and quantifying phenomena (Elo, 2008). The phenomenon that to arouse the enthusiasm of audiences through a series of film marketing activities before the

launch of the film is becoming more and more recognized by the marketing companies. Content analysis is a research method for making replicable and valid inferences from data to their context, with the purpose of providing knowledge, new insights, a representation of facts and a practical guide to action (Elo, 2008). Based on content analysis, I have a deeper understanding of film marketing and its relation to the reaction of audience after each marketing activity.

Quantitative content analysis refers to the utilization of a variety of tools and methods to study media content. This field can be broadly defined over the years. Content analysis was put forward by a famous theorist Alfred Lindesmith (1931), who devised a means of refuting a hypothesis known as “*The Constant Comparative Method of Quantitative Analysis*”. After the late theoretical development, Quantitative analysis, built upon these research tools, has been introduced more rigorous statistical and scientific techniques. Therefore, the adoption of quantitative content analysis makes a difference in guaranteeing the objectivity of the study. Besides, as social science defines, quantitative content analysis refers to the systematic empirical investigation of social phenomena via statistical and mathematical techniques. Its emphasis on data serves the scientific nature of a research. Thus, this research will be adhering to direct observations of the selected samples by using quantitative content analysis.

To be specific, the reviews from Weibo and Douban were collected manually by copying and pasting texts from social media platforms. However, concerning the lengthiness, repetition and unnecessary content in certain comment and review, I concentrate on 100 comments from Weibo and 100 film reviews from Douban after each marketing activity in order to ensure the logicity and consistency of the research resources. These resources are mostly Chinese are mostly written in Chinese and the reviews shown in the thesis are translated by me. In addition, three interviews with the film marketer from the film marketing companies provides me useful qualitative data, which will analyze by combining with the social media content stated above.

After the collection of raw resources, all the reviews, reports and interview transcripts are carefully classified and analyzed in order to get a deeper understanding and interpretation of the data. First of all, the comments have been coded. Through the initial coding, a comparison has been made on 100 comments after each marketing activities to summarize similarities and differences. Then, the data sharing similarities are tagged with same theme. The content of comments is ranging from celebrities, self-experience sharing and so on. The same analysis method is applied to the analysis of film reviews and interview content. Regarding to the film reviews, the tags can be generally divided to two classes: the former is enjoying the film and the other is the dissatisfying with the film. As for the coding of interview content, the tags are based on different use of social media platforms, marketing techniques and audience engagement.

Besides, the data of the quantitative content analysis is collected from Maoyan. Under the vote activity named “which film would like to watch”, different data about voting for *Us and Them* from after each marketing activity is recorded. Then, I made the data into the graphs for a clear presentation of the change.

5.5 Methodological reflection

This thesis takes both qualitative and quantitative method to analyze and answer research questions, among which the in-depth interview provides important data support. However, the in-depth interviews may offer inaccurate information and it is hard to ensure the level of representativeness and objectivity of sampling interviewees (Bengtsson & Hertting, 2013). In this research, due to the limitation of time, the target group and the survey could not be used as the data resource of this thesis. A large number of qualitative and quantitative data scattered on various websites and social media platforms, which affect the comprehensiveness of the research data. Therefore, how to collect more comprehensive and representative data will be the center of future research.

5.6 Ethical consideration and limitations

The information about *Us and Them* on the thesis contains no sensitive elements. The majority of the information is about the film introduction or relative marketing activities rather than personal information. The interviewees, driven by their passion on their work, are willing to share their experience and understanding of film marketing. In order to respect their desire of confidentiality, the nicknames are used in the transcripts of the interviews. Therefore, ethical consideration will not be stressed in the thesis.

Due to the short nature of the master thesis, there are certain shortcomings of this these. On one hand, it is hard to cover all range of the marketing planning and only four months are available for the work of data collection. Therefore, I am unable to collect all the reviews and statistical data from the internet. On the other hand, only one case is deeply analyzed in the thesis. According to Bengtsson and Hertting's views (2013), case studies can be only used to generalize theoretical propositions instead of populations, in terms of "how" and "why", which seems to indicate some mechanism of thinking. Therefore, the case study cannot be the representation of all the cases in film marketing but still has certain reference value. Moreover, the result out of interviews is not necessarily complying with the reality. When doing an interview, the interviewee has the ability to construct a world of uncertainty where the veracity is usually difficult to be verified (Bengtsson & Hertting, 2013). Hence, the problem can be solved by interviewing more persons so as to get a better description and understanding of the film marketing. However, it did not work out for the time limitation of the thesis.

6. Analysis

This chapter aims to explain those questions put forward in the introduction part, including how to identify audience engagement behavior in film marketing, how to obtain and analyze the statics of creating audience engagement by film marketing and explore the marketers' work of building audience engagement. This chapter will be divided into three sections according to the research questions. The three sections support and correlate to each to answer the research questions of this thesis as a whole.

6.1 Identifying audience engagement in film marketing

It is known that film is a form of cultural product within media field, and film marketing is the process of promoting film by circulating the symbolic meaning of the film. As it has been discussed in the theoretical framework, the audiences are described as consumers, content co-creators and participants who take part in distribution and spreading of the content (Gilardi et al., 2018). Audience engagement is running through the whole process of film, including production, circulation and consumption of the film. Thus, the process of film circulation and marketers are all designed to activate audience engagement so as achieve better film marketing effect.

However, according to Ahva and Hellman (2015) civic engagement, interactive engagement and interpretative engagement are three major forms of audience engagement. Civic engagement refers to journalism and political issues which is not belonging to film fields. Based on this definition, there is little civic engagement in film marketing. Interactive engagement refers to the audiences' responses or reactions to media text. Interpretative engagement refers the interpretation generated by audiences while reading the text. As the interviewee P1 said, "*Audiences participate in the film marketing by interaction or writing some reviews to express their own thoughts.*" From this point, the audience engagement existing in film marketing activities of *Us and Them* can be perceived as interactive engagement and

interpretative engagement.

In digital era, ICT is taken as the tool to augment marketing approaches and strategy. Interactive technologies offer new channels for the marketing (Olomu et al., 2016), especially the use of social media. The specific audience engagement behaviors of film marketing on social media are identified as making comments and reviews, sharing and participating in online discussions which is included in the interactive engagement. The offline engagement such as roadshow is also an important audience engagement form.

6.2 Marketers build audience engagement

An engaged audience is an attentive, responsive and profitable audience (Rohrs and Stewart, 2013). There is no doubt that effective tactics are required for building positive audience engagement. This part displays the marketing tactics with vivid practical examples to analyze the process of building audience engagement by marketers.

6.2.1 Dividing the audience groups

When asking “*how to engage audience in film marketing*”, all the three interviewees firstly mentioned audience groups division, which indicates the importance of dividing the audience groups. ICT enables marketers to target specific groups and customize marketing strategies (Prasad, Ramamurthy et al., 2001). With these customized strategies, marketers can propose “personalized” marketing content divide based on different audience groups (Jenkins et al., 2013). The film marketing activities plays an important role in consolidating the loyalty of audiences (Zhang et al., 2016), so as to develop stickiness among audiences in film marketing. In order to optimize the audience engagement, the customization strategies are applied to different target audience groups. For example, the interviewee P2 put forward that “*there are two audience groups by different audience engagement in film marketing of Us and Them, that are fan groups of celebrities and normal audiences. According to*

their respective features, we use different marketing techniques to attract them to engage.”

The fan

As for the film *Us and Them*, the fan groups consist of the fans of actors, director and singers. They are the core audiences of the film because they are the most active consumers (Fiske, 1992). In film marketing, they are also the most active groups for audience engagement. As Jenkins (2013) states, fans desire to participate actively in producing and circulating media. Professional movie-enthusiastic or critics desire more of a real high-quality movie. In order make marketing and media texts more participatory, the film producers and marketing personnel should take different audience class into account. As celebrities are the main motivations for fan groups watching the film, film marketing activities should be designed for affecting fans affection on their celebrities. Targeting on the fan groups, marketers publish much information and activities about their favorite celebrities, such as organizing roadshows, producing posters of actors, inviting singers to produce film songs and so on. In this way, *Us and Them* gains the popularity among young people.

The normal audiences

The normal audiences are the audiences who are not belonging to the fan group. Just as interviewee P1 mentioned in his interview, *“the normal audience focus more on the story line or the content of the film itself rather than celebrities.”* During the marketing process of *Us and Them*, marketers also focus on advocating and exposing the information about the film itself, including marketing contents about the story of the film, such as trailers, so as to attract the normal audiences’ attention.

In general, different audience groups have different demands on a single film. While marketing the film, the various marketing contents or techniques need to be used to build audience engagement from different target audience groups. The fan groups, being the core audience groups, prefer to the marketing contents about celebrities. But

the normal audiences will be more prefer to the information about film story line.

6.2.2 Building audience engagement by social media

There is no doubt that ICT is a supporting tool supporting for the audience engagement activation through social media. With the use of technology, many social media platforms come into birth, by which audiences are now able to participate in the content sharing and communication concerning different topics (Keltie, 2017). In scope of marketing, ICT has brought a lot of innovations in marketing approaches, such as posting marketing contents via social media platforms, using new communication and promotion techniques (Santomier et al., 2016), contributing to the new market expanding of the film. Participatory space on social media is the cohesive space that has significant scope to shape the understandings and actions of consumers by the audience activities (David & Roger, 2010). This implies that social media acts on building audience engagement by understanding and influencing the audiences' actions. Just as being discussed in theoretical framework, the concept of spreadability is derived from the spreadable media, referring to both technical and cultural content that audiences share (Jenkins et al., 2013). Therefore, when it comes to build audience engagement, social media is the tool to realize this effect by the cultural content created by marketers.

The platforms of Weibo and Douban are taken as two major resource providers, where film marketers can give their marketing techniques full play. The users of these social media platforms are mostly young people, who are right the target audience of *Us and Them*. The celebrities and director of this film have accounts on Weibo. In order to expand the publicity effect, the marketing team of this film also created a film official account on Weibo, where marketers can put marketing contents and have conversations with audiences. Weibo is the platform where audiences can interact by text and this is the participation happening in a particular social process (Jenkins, 2006). The film information sent by film marketers, such as releasing trailers, posters, and marketers, can create a space on Weibo for audiences to communicate and

participate in the marketing activities. Here Weibo functions as a platform for marketers conducting the marketing techniques to motivate the audience engagement. What's more, Douban is the platform where film marketers could create the film website for promotion. On the website page on the specific themes, audiences can write long reviews about films through which they can exchange their reflection about the films. In this way, Douban becomes the place for mutual-exchange and communication. The following part illustrates those marketing techniques reflected in *Us and Them* on social media platforms during the intensive marketing period.

Producing Marketing materials

With the advent of ICT, the spreadable media focuses on cultural practices which have enabled and popularized social media platforms. Stickiness refers to the demand to create contents which are able to motivate audience engagement (Jenkins et al., 2013). Marchand et al (2000) also define stickiness as the ability of the content to positively impress its users and to motivate them to stay, which exhibits the significant role of marketing materials. It is known that the marketing materials in *Us and Them*, such as text, images, videos and music are created to improve the audience engagement and effect of film marketing. By uploading these materials on social media platforms, the designed marketing contents can be received, accepted and shared among the audiences. Jenkins et al (2013) also emphasizes the shareable formats which can make content easier to spread across the Internet. The film marketers of *Us and Them* made such marketing materials banners, trailers, posters and songs for the audience. The social media platforms not only provided the space for marketers to upload the marketing materials but also for audiences to share the materials on the platforms. The technical resources make the marketing contents easier to circulate (Jenkins et al., 2013). It is the social media that help marketers realize the maximization of audience engagement during film marketing process.

According to the different functions of the social media platforms, marketers should tailor different contents to maximize the audience engagement. Using events and

videos to deliver the message among audiences can create the bombing effect (Santomier et al., 2016). For instance, on Weibo, marketers skillfully utilize videos covering the film trailer, shooting tidbits, interviews of celebrities, and music mv on the film official account to realize the multi-dimension transmission of promotion content. Concerning the large number of users on Weibo, they also organize a series of marketing activities on Weibo to catch more audiences, exemplified by roadshows and film topic discussions. Through these visual marketing materials and interaction events, the bombing effect of marketing is realized. The success of their marketing designs is proved by the forwarding and commenting amount from Weibo users right after posting marketing materials.

In addition, marketer also uploaded the banners and posters on Douban and Douban placed the posters of upcoming films, *Us and Them*, on the home page. *Us and Them* also has its own film page on Douban where marketers can post relative information on this page, especially the brief introduction of the film and the date of release. In this way, more potential audiences can see the posters or banners of *Us and Them* once they open the website. Then, as they click the posters, the audience will enter the film page to obtain more information. Under access to the well-designed posters and marketing trailers, most of potential audiences will choose to watch this movie, symbolizing the fulfillment of a successful marketing.

Going through the whole marketing process of *Us and Them*, we can regard designing the marketing materials on social media as the first step of arousing audience engagement, displaying the basic information how film attracts the attention of audiences. By creating marketing materials, the stickiness and interest of the audience is motivated. The social media transforms the marketing materials into the spreadable media, enabling audiences to involve into marketing process by sharing or interacting. The interactive events represented by roadshows or open film discussion are also the efficient marketing techniques to activate the audience engagement. Apart from constantly designing and posting information on various platforms, the timely data

analysis and prompt marketing adjustment and actions are also very important. By making research on different audiences and their preferences, marketers design various marketing materials to satisfy different audience groups. The spreadability of media content has an ability to reach target audiences and let audience share the content of a media message as the channel of distribution (Mahoney et al., 2017). For instance, in *Us and Them*, the trailers were produced for normal audiences, but interviews and music were designed for fan groups. This practice is proved by the words of interviewee P1. He said that “we produced various marketing materials for attracting different audiences. They might share these materials out of different purposes, so precisely positioned materials increase the possibility of sharing and transmission of marketing content”. Thus, the marketing materials for different audience groups offer more possibilities for audiences to engage in the marketing activities for their different purposes.

Creating online community

According to Zhao and Keane (2013), the users' community occupies an important position in social network market. On one hand, the community established on social media works well on attracting targeted groups. Based on this fact, an online community about *Us and Them* was established on Weibo. Online community of *Us and Them* successfully gathered a large number of audiences, including fans of celebrities and normal audiences. In the online community of *Us and Them*, marketers can post the marketing materials below which audiences can share their stories, moods or reflection about the film. Mitchell et al (2013) agrees with the function of social media, holding that the social media is the drive of spreading content with the function of receiving and offering information well-combined. On the other hand, the community is an effective place to conduct marketing research, through which marketers can grasp the direct feedbacks from audiences and then make timely adjustments. Besides, fans can also devote into the marketing process by making videos and posters that are uploaded on the online community to support their celebrities. As Beer and Burrows (2010) state, the participation is an intrinsically

motivated action when the actors are sharing a high degree of interaction, common objectives and interests. The online community is the base of audience engagement, where audiences with high degree of interaction and interests about the film are willing to visit.

The online community of *Us and Them* on Weibo is the place for online conversation between marketers and users and users to users. On Weibo, the user can have conversation with the film producing party by making comments under the posts and audiences could share self-created content about *Us and Them*. The creation of online conversation will guide consumers to the participation (Santomier et al., 2016) and the interactive communication between audiences is the social procedure of marketing, which is also the drive of audience engagement (Mitchell et al., 2013). The social driver was emphasized by expressing self-related content and desire to socialize. From this point, the online community offers a space for the interaction and mutual exchange among the users. Through this process, the social connection is constructed by interactive communication and sharing the self-related content. Just as Jenkins (2009) defined, the motivation of participate in specific process comes out of the feeling of building social connection with others. In the online community, audiences build the social connections by interacting with others with similar interests, which motivates the audience to engage in the film marketing.

Inviting part of audiences to write in-depth reviews

In the roadshow of *Us and Them*, the movie fans are provided with a face to face communication opportunity with celebrities. In this activity, the marketers of *Us and Them* invited some critics, media press, film buffs and fans to watch the film one week in advance together with celebrities. After watching the film, these audiences had to write their in-depth reviews about the film on Douban, which produced the effect of word of mouth (WOM) marketing. The in-depth reviews of audiences will provide a reference for the coming consumers. Compared with the normal film reviews, the in-depth reviews are longer and contain deep interpretation. Whiling

drafting these in-depth reviews, they tend to focus more on the stories or experiences of watching than the film itself, which will leave more space of imagination for the coming audiences.

Writing in-depth review is a way of taking part in the production of media output (content-related participation) (Jenkins, 2009). It is known that Chinese audiences rely more on their peers' reviews than official information while deciding on the quality of a product (Gilardi et al., 2018). Chinese audiences evaluate the quality of a product via the reviews and the quality of a product influences the attitudes and the behavior of the audiences, such as their engagement level in marketing events and purchasing behavior. Writing in-depth reviews is a kind of conscious participation and may affect the level of stickiness according to Xu et al (2018). Thus, the in-depth reviews on social media are closely knitted with the maintenance of the stickiness of audience, which plays an important role in film marketing.

As Kozinets et al (2010) points out that word-of mouth marketing occurs among audiences when marketers are performing effective product notification through advertising and promotions. Product reviews that consumers post on the internet constitute one of the most important forms of online WOM communication and it is increasingly common for consumers to look for online product under the reference of reviews when gathering pre-purchase product information (Reza Jalilvand and Samiei, 2012). The interviewee P2 said that “these invited audiences are interested in the film and celebrities and are actively engaged into the activities on roadshow. They are less likely to write the negative reviews about the film”. Word of mouth marketing (WOMM) is an increasingly important marketing technique, attempting to direct the discourses of audiences or consumers with the use of social media marketing (Kozinets et al., 2010). The potential consumers receive word-of-mouth marketing messages and then edit them by blending with their own reflections. This process will make the marketing message more believable, relevant, or palatable to the community (Robert et al., 2010). For instance, marketers of *Us and Them* collected many of the

positive in-depth reviews from Douban and reposted them on Weibo. A series of in-depth reviews from critics and audiences also contribute to make the reviews more reliable. The in-depth reviews effectively maintain the stickiness and loyalty of the audiences and motivate their engagement level because the stickiness is under the impulse of audiences' attitude and direct feeling toward the film (Xu et al., 2018). As interviewee P3 proved that "in-depth reviews were built for word of mouth marketing in order to establish a good image among audiences. It has high possibility of triggering the audience engagement for the high-quality of film". In general, the in-depth reviews are useful in building the high-quality reputation of film and arousing audience engagement by reposting of the in-depth reviews. Inviting audiences to write in-depth review on social media is an efficient marketing technique to engage audiences into the production of media output and to develop the word of mouth marketing.

In general, social media is the tool for building audience engagement during film marketing, which provides new ways to store, process, distribute and exchange information between marketers and audiences. It is also the tool of making spreadable media. By making marketing materials on social media, the audience engagement is greatly motivated; by creating online community, the audiences can enjoy themselves in their interested space; by inviting audiences to write in-depth reviews, audiences are highly motivated to create the word-of-mouth transmission.

6.2.3 Emotional resonance triggers audience engagement

As discussed by Teixeira et al (2012), evoking emotional responses is considered as a strategy to engage audiences in marketing, to attract their attention and build the loyalty among them. During film marketing, the true-to-life storyline is easy to evoke emotional responses and resonance among the audiences. *Us and Them*, as a romantic film, has a touching story line, including the spring festival, love affairs, and other events about growing-up. The touching story line is briefly shown in narrative summaries to arouse the interest of audiences, which lays the foundation for the

success of their marketing techniques. Teixeira et al (2012) also presents that the emotions developed to catch the audience's attention quickly and motivate them to engage in a specific action.

Producing Narrative summaries

During the marketing process of *Us and Them*, the marketer designed several trailers in the form of narrative summaries to show the story line on Weibo. The first trailer is about spring festival, describing the characters' experience of spring festival. The second trailer is about how to love, briefly introducing the plot of encounter and break up between the two characters. The third trailer depicts the life journey of the characters. Every Chinese has memory with spring festival, and most audiences have memory with youth life, love and being loved, which recalls the past experiences of audiences. Blasco-Arcas et al (2016) defines audience engagement as a cognitive and affective process that brings about interactive experiences. It implies the importance of emotions. Aware of the important role of emotions in the audiences, the first trailer is proposed to trigger the emotion resonance among the audiences. Emotion is a secret weapon to initialize audiences' engagement impulse according to Mitchell et al (2013). It corresponds to what the interviewee P3 mentioned in his interview. He expressed that "*many audiences share their experience with their ex-lover and their spring festival experience in online community*". On the basis of the real reaction from the audiences, the contribution of this narrative summary trailer cannot be neglected. Many audiences express that they can find themselves in the story line. Because of this similarity, audiences have more passion to express, share and exchange online. Stickiness is used to describe the media texts which engender deep audience engagement and motivate them to share (Jenkins et al., 2013). Interactive experiences require a high level of arousal of individuals, which will also influence their level of engagement to emotions (Blasco-Arcas et al., 2016). Building the emotional resonance among the film audiences helps audiences to build the social connection with the people who have similar experiences, which is in line with their demand of building the visible social connection. In addition, as Jenkins (2006)

proposes, content-related participation allows people to be active in many spheres relevant to daily life. The plots of *Us and Them* is related to many lives of Chinese. The in-depth reviews allow audiences to describe in detail their daily life experience and feeling related to the film plots, which greatly motivates the active audience engagement.

Creating Hashtags

In the period of film marketing, hashtags about *Us and Them* were created to attract audiences to share their experiences, discuss the film plots and interact with each other. For example, the hashtag #最恨春节# (hate spring festival the most) was issued when the first trailer was released and the hashtag #后来的我们# (*Us and Them*) the name of the film, was set to when the second trailer was released. These hashtags guide audiences to pinpoint the discussion place of the film where people share the same interests and experience on Weibo. For instance, the hashtag #最恨春节# (hate spring festival the most) is the expression out of the emotions of audiences, who have pressure from their families. In China, Spring Festival is the national holiday for reunion with family. However, there exists huge family pressure on many young people to find a suitable partner. In order to avoid the reality of marriage, many youths are unwilling to return to their hometown to meet their parents in Spring Festival. In addition, many people are suffering from the Spring Festival travel rush time. At that time, all the transportations become crowded because a large number of people have to use transportation to return home at the same time. The hashtag was echoing with these suffering experiences related to Spring Festival, which triggered the emotional resonance among the audiences. Just interviewee P3 said, “The short hashtag contains the feeling from both characters and the audiences. Those people sharing the similar feeling with characters will pay much attention on the hashtag, which brings the much potential for film marketing.” As Teixeira et al (2012) point out the stimulus of emotions can catch people’s attention and might influence the behavior.

In conclusion, some creative marketing techniques enable consumers to voluntarily post the content about the film in various online social network sites (Santomier et al., 2016). These techniques, supported by emotional resonance, will give the audience engagement into the full play. By observing the case of *Us and Them*, making narrative summaries and creating hashtags are the specific way to trigger the emotional resonance to realize the film marketing effect.

6.2.4 Involving celebrities to promote audience engagement

Audiences are regarded as the priority of many marketers and media companies (Jenkins et al., 2013). In film marketing, audiences and celebrities are the core factors in participatory culture. While fans are the most active and discerning group in the marketing process (Fiske, 1992), Kennedy et al (2019) suggests that star marketing can be a highly effective strategy to promote awareness, instill positive attitudes, and heighten participate intentions. What's more, the interviewee P2 states, "*In film marketing, the celebrities are the significant factors for audience engagement. The more fans the celebrities have, the more audiences are willing to engage into marketing activities.*". The director and main actors of *Us and Them* are famous among audiences and they have a large number of fans. On Weibo, the director Ruoying Liu has 240 million followers and the actor Jing and actress Zhou also have many followers. Fans have even been considered as the pioneers of future audiences (Jenkins, 2004), which will be the core audiences to engage in the film marketing.

Producing marketing materials about celebrities

The marketing team of *Us and Them* produced a series marketing material, such as character's posters, video of celebrities' interviews and film songs. It is proposed by Jenkins (2006) that participatory media in fan culture is to provide a radical reworking of access for people to create content every day. Fans have strong interest on these materials about celebrities. By publishing character's posters from the film, their fans will pioneer to market this film. What's more, marketers also invited famous singers

to sing songs for the film. The lyrics of these two songs are in line with the plots of *Us and Them*. With the beautiful melody, these two songs won great popularity which indirectly won more attention to this film.

According to the definition of spreadability from Grover (2017), the content that can be spread across the social media platform contains two factors, namely likeability and sharability. Likeability refers to the degree of appeal contained within the content and sharability refers to the audience's willingness to distribute content. For fan groups, the marketing materials about celebrities are their preferred content due to the affections to their idols, which constitutes the likeability in spreadable media text. In order to support their idols, they were more willing to share the material, which produces the sharability. As Jenkins (2013) proposes, the spreadable media focuses on inviting people to shape the context of materials within their social circles. Thus, producing marketing materials about celebrities is the means to bridge the connections between the fans and their idols, which is emphasized in the concept of participatory culture from Jenkins. These materials are produced to motivate audience engagement by sharing the materials within fan circles so that the social connections with other fans can be built.

Inviting celebrities to join the marketing activities

In the marketing process of *Us and Them*, celebrities were invited to take part in the marketing activities, including roadshow, launch events of theme song, music concert and TV shows. Fans desire to participate more actively in producing and circulating of media to make marketing and media texts more participatory (Jenkins et al., 2013). Therefore, the fans were happy to be part of these marketing activities reflected in the marketing case of *Us and Them*.

In addition, Jenkins defines "Participatory culture" as the cultural production and social interactions of fan communities (Jenkins et al., 2013). As exhibited in the marketing activities of *Us and Them*, the roadshows and music concert were the

opportunities for fans to have a face to face communication with their idols. These opportunities marched the inner desire and willingness of the fans, so they were actively engaged in the roadshows. The active response from the fans indicates that inviting celebrities to take part in the marketing activities is the effective way to build the audience's engagement. Marketers planned personalized experiences for audiences by organizing these offline marketing activities, according to the fans' wishes of communicating with their idols. As Jenkins et al (2013) states, the personalized experiences or contents generate the stickiness, which triggers the audiences to be engaged more in marketing activities.

To sum up, celebrities can be called as the catalyst of the audiences' engagement, in particular the fans' engagement, because celebrities are the motivation of fans to actively engage in the marketing activities. In brief, producing marketing materials about celebrities and inviting celebrities to join the marketing activities are efficient techniques to trigger audience engagement.

6.3 The exploration of audience engagement tactics in film marketing

The review of film marketing strategies seems to suggest that specific content-related factors, such as the production of marketing materials, emotion resonance and the celebrity endorsement, are heavily emphasized in the film marketing. These strategies aim at fostering audience engagement by the use of social media and strategies that directly address audiences. Marketers conduct a series strategy to promote the audience engagement, however, the effect of these tactics could be understood, which helps to understand the audience engagement in film marketing process.

Exploring audience engagement through the use of social media

On social media, marketers of *Us and Them* produced a series of marketing material to arouse the enthusiasm of audiences and promote film. These materials are able to be shared and audiences can make comments under the posts. The Table 3 displays the number of sharing and comments for each marketing materials on social media. In

the process of marketing *Us and Them*, each release of marketing material touched the reactions from the audiences. In order to maximize the marketing effect, the function of data collection and analysis should not be overlooked. Once releasing the marketing materials, a large number of audiences shared the materials that became second transmission. The popularity and publicity of this film was greatly expanded. Audiences' comments that share their feelings about this film also created positive image and reputation of this film.

Table 3: The number of sharing & comments for each marketing materials online

Marketing strategies	Number of sharing	Number of comments
First trailer	More than 2 million	About 10 thousand
Poster: Hug	More than 80 thousand	About 7 thousand
Second trailer	More than 3 million	About 15 thousand
First song of film from Singer Hebe Tian	More than 10 million	About 22 thousand
Poster: Without us	More than 50 thousand	About 4 thousand
Episode song from Singer Chen	More than 6 million	About 18 thousand
Ultimate trailer	More than 4 million	About 12 thousand

Note: Sources come from Weibo

What's more, the marketing team of *Us and Them* also addressed the operation and management of online community. In total, marketers have made 151 marketing posts on Weibo online community of *Us and Them*, and obtained 150 million followers and 1.4 billion entries, proving that the creation of online community is a facilitator of audience engagement. As James (2009) presents, the advanced marketing techniques on social media brought by ICT, such as the operation of online community, increase the effectiveness and efficiency of marketing and bring competitive advantages to the

marketing company.

In addition, the audiences are encouraged by marketers to write in-depth reviews about *Us and Them* on Douban. At the same time, the marketers will follow these reviews and select some representative reviews that are beneficial to build the image of this film to post on Weibo. These re-posted reviews successfully triggered more than 1 million sharing and 8 thousand comments.

Therefore, the use of social media contributes to the active audience engagement, since a large amount of audiences tend to share and make comments on these marketing materials or take part in online community to interact with other audiences.

Understanding of emotional resonance tactic

Marketers produce narrative summaries (trailers) to arouse the emotional resonance among audiences and audiences engage the marketing activities by sharing stories similar to their own experiences. As the Table 3 shows above, after releasing the trailers, a large quantity of audiences involved into the marketing strategies by sharing and making comments. And the Table 4 shows, under the post of trailers, audiences were active to share their stories. Although the comments about celebrities are always more than that of sharing stories, compared with other marketing activities, the percentage of sharing stories is higher than others. Hence, narrative summaries did have effect on generating emotional resonance and creating audiences’ willingness to share their stories on social media.

Table 4: The number of comments for different themes in different marketing activities. (Each marketing activity has 100 samples of comments)

Marketing activity/the number of comments	Sharing own stories	Comments about celebrities, including the directors, actors and singers.	other
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First trailer: Spring Festival	42	46	12
Poster: Hug	22	46	32
Second trailer: How to love	42	45	13
Theme song from Singer Hebe Tian	25	70	5
Poster: Without Us	18	58	24
Episode song from Singer Eason Chan	14	66	20
Launch event of theme song	6	81	13
Road show	3	79	18
Concert promotion	5	83	12
Attending TV show	2	67	31
Ultimate trailer	45	51	4
The official release of the film	14	63	27

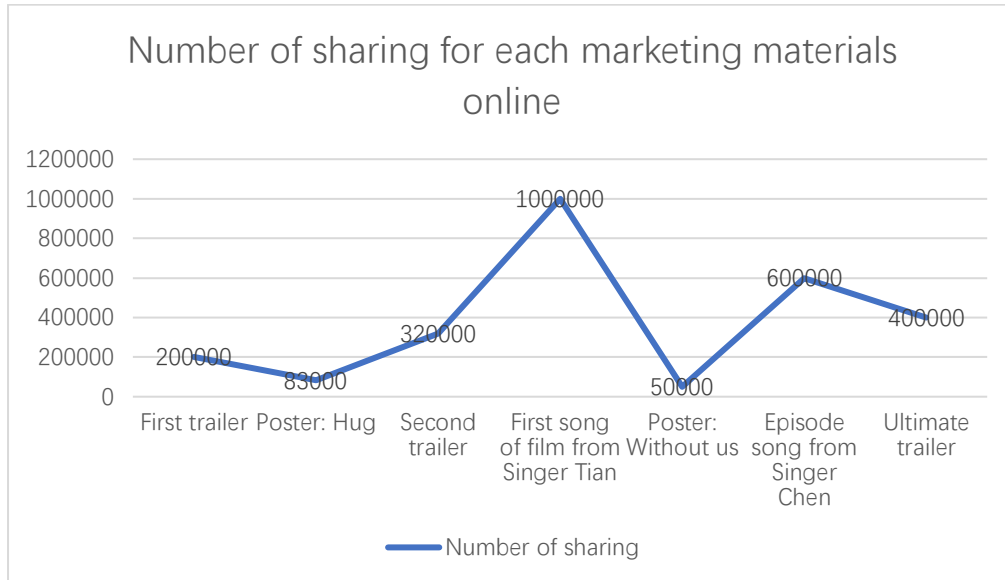
Note: Sources come from Weibo

The role of celebrities

With the fan groups being the core audiences of *Us and Them*, the celebrities in this film is closely related to the marketing effect. As shown in the statistical data n (Table 4), among all the comments after each marketing activities on Weibo, the number of comments about celebrities is higher than others, indicating that celebrities had greater effect on audience engagement. According to the statistical data from Table 3, the Graph 1 shows the changing of the number of sharing after each marketing materials are produced. Based on the Graph 1, it is concluded that after releasing the songs of film, the number of sharing had experienced sharp growth until it reached the

peak, which displays that the singers have great effect to bring more audiences involve in the marketing activities. Thus, the celebrities were the most effective motivators of audience engagement during the marketing process of *Us and Them*.

Graph 1



To sum up, according to the statistical data, the marketers used many effective and efficient strategies to arouse audience engagement, because every marketing technique won great responses (sharing and making comments) from audiences. Among these strategies, the celebrities function as the most efficient marketing method in motivating audience engagement.

7. Conclusion and further research

Research question revisit

The film marketing has become more important in the fierce competition of film industry in China. With the rapid development of social media and technologies, audience is the key element in film marketing, that can determine the success of the film. The audience engagement in film marketing is taken as a marketing strategy to promote the film because it makes audience pay much attention to the film and the audience experience from the engagement might bring the audience to cinema. Therefore, the thesis departs from the theoretical framework of participatory culture, audience engagement, spreadable media, stickiness and word of mouth marketing, conducting three semi-structured in-depth interviews and qualitative and quantitative content analysis to discuss the marketing techniques to build audience engagement by marketers in film marketing. From the analysis in the previous chapter, the research question has been answered, and the conclusion could be made in this chapter.

Research question: How audience engagement is accomplished in film marketing strategies?

Sub-questions: 1. How to identify audience engagement behavior in film marketing?
2. How to build audience engagement in film marketing?

Because social media has brought new ways of audience engagement, the behaviors of audience engagement needs to be identified. Based on Ahva and Hellman's (2015) theory of the types of audience engagement, the audience engagement in film marketing was concluded as the interactive engagement and interpretative engagement. And the specific behaviors of the audience engagement are making comments and reviews, sharing marketing materials and participating online discussion.

The second step, the specific marketing techniques were conducted to build the audience engagement by marketers. To begin with, audience groups were divided to help conduct the various marketing techniques for different target groups. According to the interviews, the fans and the normal audiences were two groups in the marketing process of <Us and Them>. The fans voluntarily engaged the activities and the normal audiences need much information about film itself to trigger their engagement.

Second, taking advantage of social media is a strategy to build the audience engagement. Social media contributes to the spreadable media, which means the marketing materials could spread within different audience groups on social media platforms. Marketers released marketing materials on social media platforms for different audience groups. Also, marketers created online community to offer the space for audiences to share the common interests and interact with each other. According to the features of participatory culture from Jenkins (2009), through the online community, the social connection was built to motivate the audience engagement. On social media, marketers invited audiences to watch the film in advance and write in-depth reviews to endorse the quality of film to build the positive word of mouth marketing and trigger the engagement. In addition, the emotional resonance motivates the audience engagement. Marketers produced the narrative summaries and created hashtags which were related to daily life of audiences, to arouse the emotions and remind the similar experiences, which motivated the audiences to share their stories in marketing process. What's more, the celebrities were involved into the marketing process to attract the fans to engage into the marketing activities. Marketers produced the marketing content about celebrities and invited celebrities to take part in the roadshows, the discussions, which were the specific ways of motivating fans engagement.

Finally, the tactics of audience engagement were understood in the analysis in order to explore the work of marketers from the statistical perspective. According to the statistical data from social media, all the tactics had positive effect on building

audience engagement. But the celebrities had much power to influence the audience engagement due to fans' affection to the celebrities.

Limitations and further studies

This thesis is set to explore the ways of accomplishing audience engagement in film marketing. The study employed qualitative and quantitative method to answer the question. In the analysis, the marketing techniques of building audience engagement were briefly introduced. However, due to the limitation of time, only three interviews were conducted and only three social media platforms were involved in the study, which implied that only part of data was collected for the study and a large amount of data were not included. Marketers might conduct other marketing techniques on other social media platforms. Besides, the three interviewees were marketers, and the opinions from audiences were absent in the thesis, which could help explore the effect of tactics of building audience engagement. As the result, the bias may affect the validity of the thesis. What's more, the thesis only focuses on the marketing period before the releasing of film. It is necessary to track the reaction of audiences after the film releasing so that the effect of audience engagement in film marketing could be measured in a larger scope.

Therefore, the further research will focus on the audience's behavior and reaction, which can be divided into two aspects. On one hand, the further studies will collect much data on more social media platforms so that we could find more marketing techniques and identify more engagement behavior. Due to the importance of the perspective from audiences on exploring the marketing tactics, surveys will also be made to track the attitudes and reactions of audiences towards the audience engagement in film marketing. On the other hand, it will be suggested to expand the marketing period of the research, which will greatly enrich the research source of marketing practice. Regards to the research method, case description about the situation after the film was released can be introduced, including the sharp decrease of the film gross, the flooding of negative reviews and comments on social media

platforms and even the dysfunctional completion phenomenon of pre-purchased the film ticket by the ticket agency. Therefore, further studies will conduct the research in a border scope. In addition, the further studies about audience engagement in film marketing will adopt more cases rather than particularly focusing on the case *Us and Them*.

Lesson learned

The thesis contributes to both media communication and marketing fields. In respect of media communication, the thesis illustrates how to build audience engagement by using social media. In this research, the social media also functions as a useful tool to track the reactions of audiences on the audience engagement. In respect of marketing, the thesis assists in finding the surplus value the audiences create during the marketing process. The audience engagement is a strategic marketing technique, whose importance in film marketing is highly stressed in this thesis. Also, social media provides a space for marketers to conduct audience engagement during film promotion, which facilitates the goal of communication and content output. Interaction and interpretation are two vital elements of audience engagement. The detailed techniques are applied to trigger interaction and generate interpretation, such as creating emotional resonance and taking use of the effect of celebrities. There is no denying that the audiences have much power in film marketing, and the audience engagement could also create great effect on film promotion. Therefore, from the thesis, we could understand the role of audiences in social media when promoting films and we could also learn the knowledge about audience engagement in both communication and marketing field, like how to accomplish audience engagement to promote films by using media technology and communication strategies. And in future research we could pay much attention to audience reactions to explore the effectiveness and efficiency of audience engagement in marketing process rather than the actions of marketers. The audiences as a commodity create values and produce contents in film marketing process, but what can they gain from audience engagement? How will the contents from audience be employed by the marketers? Who could

benefit from the marketing technique of audience engagement? These questions yet to be answered will be addressed and studied in the future research in both media communication and marketing fields.

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