



**2018**

**IMAX**

# **2018 Chinese New Year Movie Choice Research**

**USCAnnenberg**

School for Communication  
and Journalism

# CONTENT



Movie-Choice  
Behavior  
during CNY\*



2018 CNY  
Film Analysis



Movie-Watching  
Trends

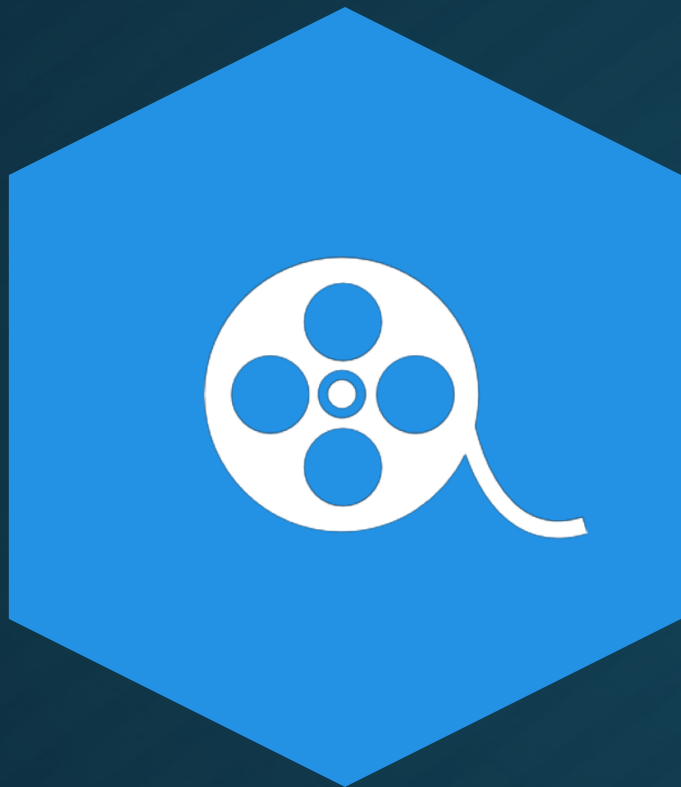


IMAX  
Image



Further  
Discussion

\*CNY = Chinese New Year



PART ONE

# Movie Choice Behavior

# Movie-Choice Behavior

## General Observation



### Go with Whom?

- All participants go to cinema during CNY
- They go with family and friends



### What is Chosen?

- Movie quality valued, but family and friends' choices often prioritized
- Comedy most preferred, "light and entertaining"



### Why Movies?

Movies are ideal for:

- family and friends reunion
- killing time



### How They Buy Tickets?

- Most choose movies and book tickets through online ticketing platforms
- Maoyan & Taopiaopiao

## Tier Difference



### Price Matters?

- Tier 1-2:  
Rarely matters
- Tier 3-5:  
More concerned



PART TWO

# Film Analysis



# Want-to-See Ranking

## Must-See Films



★★★★★

### Detective Chinatown 2

- Majority choose as a must-see
- People liked the original movie
- Tier 3-5 like **exotic location** (NYC)
- Tier 1-2 like Haoran Liu, the star



★★★★★

### Operation Red Sea

- Majority choose as a must-see
- Polarized** comments: good story v. dislike propaganda
- People dislike propaganda will **wait for WOM** to decide



★★★

### Monster Hunt 2

- Safe/second choice** rather than must-see film
- Attention attracted less than *Operation Red Sea* & *Detective Chinatown 2*
- Tier 3-5 indifferent to **fantasy**

## Film to Poke Fun

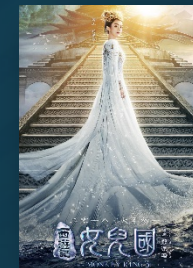


★

### The Faces of My Gene

- A few fans of director Degang Guo support it
- Attitude varies** based on city origin
- Tier 1-2: **negative** attitude to the all-stars cast with comedians and beauties
- Tier 3-5: Might watch with **friends** for poking fun, but not with parents ("frivolous" for parents)

## Likely Duds



### The Monkey King 3

- Zero want-to-see
- Monkey King IP over-exploited
- Tired** of **parody** of the original story & **hollow characters** acted by pop stars



### Europe Raiders

- None ever heard of the film
- Do not want to see

# Promotional Efforts Identified by Participants

Most  
Promoted



## Detective Chinatown 2

- Intensive exposure on SNSs
- Viral MV, with cast dancing in Time Square, increases awareness

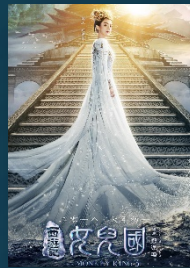


[Click for viral video](#)



## Monster Hunt 2

- Start marketing a few weeks earlier than others
- Some saw trailer in cinema & ads with character Wuba



## The Monkey King 3

- Poster of the lead actress out for a while
- **Negative** attitude to the overused IP, this film & related promotion



## Operation Red Sea

- A few aware of the film due to the success of **Operation Mekong**
- **None** knew it will be released on Chinese New Year



## The Faces of My Gene

- **None** heard-of before



## Europe Raiders

- **None** heard-of before
- **None** want to see

Less  
Promoted



**NOTE:** No significant difference among city tiers was found



# City Differences



## A. *Detective Chinatown 2*:

- Most participants from all tiers want to see
- Most promotion effort identified

## B. *Operation Red Sea*:

- Has fans' earnest support
- Others wait for WOM

## C. *Monster Hunt 2*:

- Not so exciting, but a safe choice for audience

## A. *The Faces of My Gene*:

- Tier 3-5 participants favor it over *Monster Hunt 2*, but sample is limited
- Unlikely to be a hit competing with other tent-pole movies

## Films With No Votes:

- E. *European Raiders*
- F. *The Monkey King 3*



# Recommended Films

01



## Detective Chinatown 2

The Most Popular Choice

- Highly expected, especially by Tier 3-5
- The hybrid of “detective,” “comedy,” and “action” makes it appealing
- Haoran Liu makes it a must-see (found in all focus groups)

02



## Operation Red Sea

Polarized Comment

- Males: support it; may go with male friends
- Female: some dislike propaganda, while others are neutral and will wait for WOM
- First commercial patriotic film in CNY: too serious for family watching, but something new other than comedies

03



## Monster Hunt 2

Not So Exciting

- Participants indifferent to fantasy, so only their second choice
- Monster Hunt (2015) story is boring, so even though it was successful in the blackout period, the sequel is less appealing in CNY

Participants are excited about these two, but not about Monster Hunt 2

# “NO MORE Monkey King, please”



The Monkey King (2014)



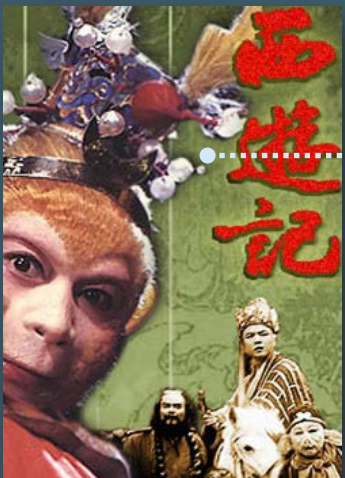
The Monkey King 2 (2016)



The Monkey King 3 (2018)

## Why:

- a) Over-exploited IP
- b) Tired of parody of the original story & hollow characters acted by pop stars
- c) “The Monkey King” franchise received bad WOM - visual effect and celebrity strategy are no more appealing



Journey to the West (1986)  
TV Series

## Watching Monkey King

### Northerners vs. Southerners

- Northerners: prefer mainland cast
- Southerners: prefer Hong Kong cast and directors, such as Stephen Chow
- “The hybrid of mainland and Hong Kong cast of *The Monkey King 3* seems weird for both sides.”



A Chinese Odyssey (1995)  
Films of Stephen Chow





# Exotic Locations Still Popular with Tier 3-5

## 01 The Acclaimed *Detective China Town 1*

- People who watched the original prioritize the sequel as a **must-watch**
- Detective elements** make *Detective China Town 2* stand out from all comedies in CNY

## Haoran Liu & Baoqiang Wang 02

- Haoran Liu, popular “**little fresh meat**” not bad at acting, attracts audience
- Tier 3-5 not interested in Baoqiang Wang, a popular comedy actor starting from **arassroot**, though his last CNY film *Buddies and Yoga* (2017) was successful in Tier 3-5



## 03 From Bangkok to NYC

- Exotic location appeals to some participants; many remember the original's scene in **Thailand**
- Viral MV with cast dancing in **Time square** attracts attention



PART THREE

## **Movie-Watching Trends**



# High Quality Chinese Sequels Accepted



## Chinese Sequel Movies 😊

Most people expressed positive attitude towards Chinese sequel movies

Though some still hold the opinion that Chinese sequel movies are of inferior quality



## Hollywood Tent-Pole Sequels 😊

e.g. Marvel series, Harry Potter, Godfather, Pirates of the Caribbean, The Lord of Rings



## Quality is King

The quality of the last movie in the series significantly impacts the choice of the next sequel



## Max Number of Sequels Accepted

Chinese movie: 2-3

Hollywood movies: 5-6

# Genre Preferences Shifting

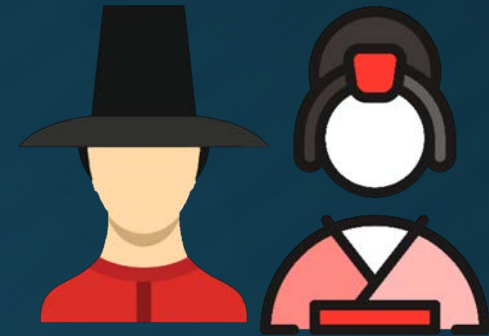


# China, Hollywood, Asia



- Audience more **tolerant** of Chinese movie
- Movie **quality** getting better
- More domestic movies on the want-to-see list
- Some Chinese **animation** and **web series** surprisingly good

- **Not excited** about Hollywood blockbusters any more, “watched too many of them”
- Cliché “**individual hero** theme”
- Watch some IP sequels “with a sense of **collective nostalgia** to revisit the past when we love to watch those movies”



- **Korean** movies greatly appreciated  
“reflection of **reality**,”  
“**premium** production,”  
“**groundbreaking** nature”
- **Japanese** and some **Southeast Asian** movies attract attention
- **European** movies good but can be too depressive



**IMAX<sup>®</sup>**



PART FOUR

**IMAX Image**



# IMAX Image

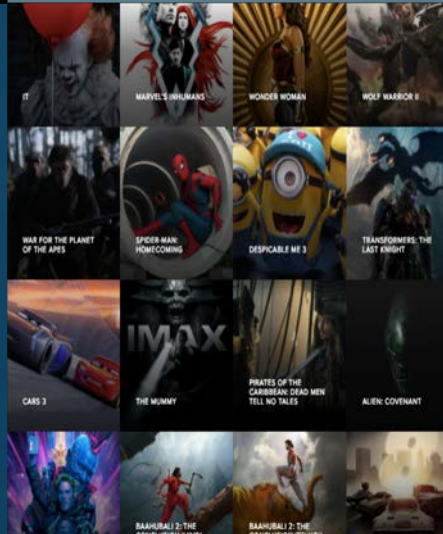


## IMAX - Not So Popular

- Most participants said that IMAX is not necessary "Icing on the cake," "cannot save bad story-telling"
- IMAX tickets are expensive
- Dizzy and uncomfortable if sitting in the front

## Few IMAX Screens in Tier 3-5 Cities

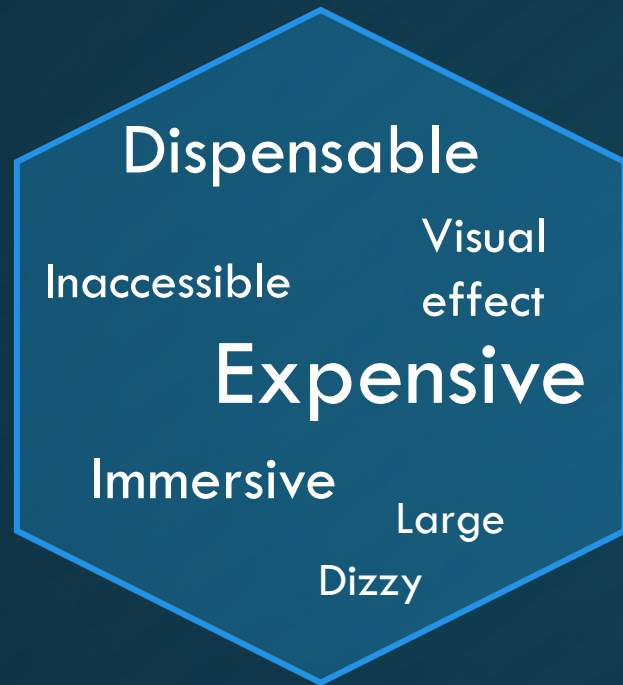
- Few IMAX screens within accessible distance in tier 3-5 cities
- So people less motivated to see IMAX



## IMAX Preferred for Visual-Oriented Movies

- Stunning visuals, spectacular scenes and first-rate special effects
- Examples: *Fast and Furious*, *Interstellar*, *Avatar*, *Star War Series*, *Legend of the Demon Cat*
- Not suitable: *The Return of the Exes*

# IMAX Image



Keyword to describe IMAX



## Chinese Audience Increasingly Sophisticated

- IMAX no longer considered rare and fancy
- Increasingly selective in movie choices
- Demand coherency in genres and formatting



## Possible Solution for IMAX

- Selective in movie investment
- Conscious on brand building
- Distribute more screens in tier 3-5 cities
- Lower ticket prices



PART Five

## **Further Discussion**

# Appendix: Research Method



## Focus Group

- Three focus groups conducted
- Five participants a group
- Tier 1-2: two groups; Tier 3-5: one group



## Demographic

- Chinese graduate students at USC
- Age: 22-25
- Gender: 13 Female, 2 Male



# Topics to Think About...



Will IMAX ever consider *The Return of the Exes*?



With Chinese arthouse movie market booming, how will IMAX's strategy change?



Disney's new *Mulan* ... risks?



2018

IMAX

# Thank you!

USCAnnenberg  
School for Communication  
and Journalism