

Innovative research based on Chinese fantasy film narrative - centered on the integration of film and game

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Abstract: *Background:* With the advancements in digital technology, Chinese fantasy films are developing rapidly. This study analyzed over 200 Chinese fantasy-themed films released online or in theaters from September 25, 2008, to July 20, 2023. The results show that the average audience score for such films is about 5.49 (Rating data comes from Douban). The narrative of Chinese fantasy films has fallen into trouble, gradually becoming a constraint for producing this genre. *Purpose:* The narrative model of Chinese fantasy films is the core of this type of film, representing East's openness to the oldest historical and cultural characteristics. Therefore, studying Chinese fantasy film narratives that integrate video games can better promote these films. It can expand the new direction of Chinese fantasy film narratives from immersion, cross-media, and expansibility perspectives. *Methods:* Analyze and study Chinese fantasy films' narrative problems and advantages and integrate narrative modes with similar film narrative modes (video game fusion films). In the first stage, through literature research, this article analyzes the development status of narratives in Chinese fantasy films and the narrative mode of film and game fusion from a general direction. In the second stage, through case analysis, it elaborates on the shortcomings in Chinese fantasy film narratives. In the third stage, comparative research analyzed the feasibility of innovative development of Chinese fantasy film narratives by focusing on the narrative method of film and game fusion. *Results:* This article systematically proposes that Chinese fantasy film narratives should be centered on film-game fusion narratives. Also, these narratives require improvement in immersion, cross-media, and story expansion perspectives. *Conclusion:* The following conclusions are drawn: 1) Enrich the interactivity of narratives and use the gamified narrative elements to increase audience stickiness; 2) Use cross-media to express stories, expand multiple story worlds, and focus on media narrative; 3) Build a narrative ecosystem. Emphasize the correlation between mutual narratives and shape the narrative world of Chinese fantasy films.

Keywords: Magical films, Narrative dilemmas, Narrative modes, Video game integration, Narrative innovation

1. Introduction

1.1 Research Background

In recent years, Chinese fantasy films have become popular with the maturity of digital technology. These films are known for their unique cultural connotations and fantastic visual effects with impressive development momentum. In 2008, the film "Painted Skin" jumped onto the screen for the first time with "Oriental New Magic" label. This film was regarded as a new "starting point" for Chinese fantasy films (Zhang, 2018). Since 2015, China's new fantasy films have entered a stable stage of type-based production, with increased output and showing genre characteristics developed and extended around IP (Jiang, 2020). Chinese fantasy films have become an important genre of Chinese films. In the growth process of fantasy films, there has always been a tense game between the appearance of special effects and the story's core (Zhang, 2016). First,

the setting and production of scenes and characters in Chinese fantasy films lack surreal sense of modernity and innovation (Wang, 2017). Secondly, regarding the story compared to the "The Lord of the Rings", there is a big gap in Chinese fantasy films (Luo, 2013). Compared with the visual spectacle created by digital technology, the narrative problem of fantasy films is the main reason for the current situation. Today, when fantasy films are so popular, there are also classics among domestic fantasy films. They have gorgeous visual effects. These visual effects effectively serve the film's narrative, forming a positive interaction between the two (Liu, 2017). Therefore, the authors start from the narrative dilemma. They analyze the constraints this type of narrative method needs to solve.

1.2 Research Purpose

This article aims to illustrate the importance of studying the narrative of Chinese fantasy films centered on the integrated narrative method of video games. First of all, the development of Chinese fantasy films is facing difficulties, and they need to seek opportunities for change. Secondly, the narrative method of film and game integration has shown good commercial value. It presents innovative ideas for integrating science fiction, fantasy, and other themes. This information shows a possibility of a narrative connection between the fusion of video games and Chinese magic. Since there are few related studies on combining the two in the existing literature, this article attempts to expand the narrative of Chinese fantasy films by integrating video games and narrative methods.

1.3 Research objective

This article organizes data on Chinese fantasy films and video game fusion films on relevant film data platforms. By analyzing specific situations and understanding the survey objects, the author can understand the creative trends of Chinese fantasy films, video game fusion films, and audience feedback. Using platforms such as CNKI, Google, and Wanfang, the authors studied relevant literature to understand the development trend of Chinese fantasy films and the narrative methods of film-game fusion films. From a macro perspective, it summarizes the development dilemma of Chinese fantasy films and the narrative characteristics of the integration of video games.

1.4 Research Methods

The research methods of this article are divided into literature research, case analysis, and comparative research. 1) Based on literature analysis, find the current status of the narrative model of Chinese fantasy films and video game fusion films; 2) Based on case analysis, summarize the shortcomings of past narratives in Chinese fantasy films and the narrative attractions of film and game fusion films 3) Based on comparative analysis combined with the integrated narrative method of video games, analyze the development direction of Chinese fantasy film narratives.

2. Literature Review

The concept of "fantasy" is an imported name: the same is true for fantasy films. The release of Hollywood fantasy films like "The Lord of the Rings" and "The Harry Potter" set off a global wave for magic. In China, since the start of "New Oriental Fantasy" in 2008, excellent fantasy films such as "Painted Skin", "A Writer's Odyssey", "Nezha", "The Great Wall", "Creation of the Gods I: Kingdom of Storms" have been produced. This works presented the development potential of Chinese fantasy films(Reference Figure 1). Since 2020, more than 100 Chinese fantasy films have shown "high quantity" and "high industrialization" creation trend.

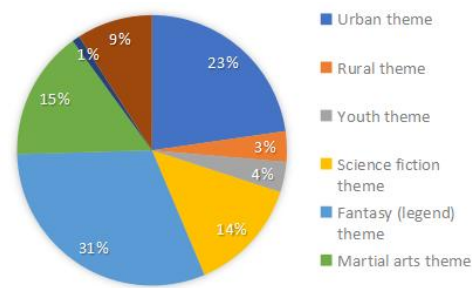


Figure 1: Analysis of registration of some online film themes in November 2019

Source: http://www.nrta.gov.cn/art/2020/1/10/art_113_49463

However, the overall ratings are not high based on the relevant film. Twelve films with reference significance were selected by observing the film data of related themes in 2023. The specific movie rating are shown in Table1. They had an average score of only 5.5, far lower than the average score of other theme types.

Table 1 : Titles, directors, and ratings of some Chinese fantasy films released in 2023

Source : <https://www.douban.com/>

Film title	Director	Rating
Zi Buyu: Night Walker	Xu Feiqing	6.1
Monkey King	Anthony Starkey	5.5
Cover the sky: restricted area	Luo Le	5.4
Creation of the GodsI: Kingdom of Storms	Urshan	7.9
Conferred God: Disaster Merchant	Zhang Zhe	3.2
Conferring Gods and Destroying Zhou	Zhang Bowei	4.4
River God-Story of Strange Waters	Liu Xuandi	5.3
Kunlun realm	Luo Le	3.3
The boy and the sea	Sun Aoqian	6.3
Mr. Illusion	Hu Haiming	4.9
deep sea	Tian Xiaopeng	7.3

Since Chinese fantasy films have become influential in the global film market, domestic researchers have started focusing on them. CNKI and Google's research on Chinese fantasy films mainly focuses on the following aspects:

1) From the technical dimension, it explores the construction of magical characters, magical scenes, and magical abilities through digital imaging and symbol systems. From a technical perspective, many scholars believe that "imaginary" films should not focus too much on picture technology but should be based on insights and stories about human nature (Yang, 2019).

2) From the genre perspective, it systematically analyzes the localization and genre integration to promote the local evolution of the Chinese fantasy film system.

3) Starting from aesthetic ideas, taking root in the Eastern aesthetic ideological system, and using digital technology to form the unique cultural power and confidence of Chinese fantasy films

4) Starting from creation, it studies the material forms of magic films that change traditional culture, compares them with Western creative concepts, and summarizes the unique features of Eastern creation (Peng,2023). There are few studies on creation, especially on narrative.

The narrative of Chinese fantasy films are derived from traditional Chinese stories. Although there is much content, long-term development may cause bottlenecks in their

creation. Chinese fantasy films should also have a sense of self-innovation in genres. While continuing to develop martial arts and fantasy films, they should incorporate more elements and interpenetrate with other film types to make Chinese fantasy films more diverse (Wang, 2017). Therefore, a narrative method that is diversified, contemporary, and has genre integration will be a breakthrough in solving narrative and development problems of Chinese fantasy movies and their genres, respectively. Games and films continue to integrate. This opens up a unique development path for film and television art (Song, 2023).

Table 2: Names, directors, and ratings of American film and game fusion films/online dramas from 2018 to 2023

Source : <https://www.douban.com/>

Film title	Director	Rating
Ready Player One	Steven Spielberg	8.7
Free Guy	Sean Levy	7.5
Upload	Greg Daniels	8.3
Dungeons & Dragons: Honor Among Thieves	John Francis Daly	7.6
Jumanji: The Next Level	Jack Kasdan	5.9
Everything Everywhere All at Once	Guan Jiayong	7.6
The Hobbit: The Battle of the Five Armies	peter jackson	8.6
Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows: Part 2	David Yates	9.0
Witcher (Wizard)	Eric Sakharov	7.5
Black Mirror Season 6	Ali Pankiou	7.1

The integration of film and games is the product of the intersection of the two media fields of films and games. Its development process reflects the trend of emerging digital technology and media integration. The specific movie rating are shown in Table 2. Searches on CNKI and Google using "video game fusion" and "narrative" keywords focus on the three aspects. These are interactive, cross-media, and modular narratives. The narrative significance of film and game fusion film is mainly reflected in the following aspects:

- 1) Explore interactive narrative's immersive and hypertextual experience in video game integration films.
- 2) From the perspective of cross-media narrative, explore the "multiplicity" and "possibility" of the world-building narrative model in video game fusion films
- 3) From the perspective of modular narrative, explain the current development status of video game fusion films in today's films and combine the narrative models of related films and TV series to explain the narrative significance of modular narrative for genre films.

Based on the existing literature/research, the authors focus on integrating film and games to explore a path to innovate the narrative of Chinese fantasy films. First, film and game integration aligns more with young consumers' consumption habits. The younger consumers are diverse and have personalized demands for entertainment. They participate in entertainment rather than passively accepting content (Tang, 2023). Secondly, integrating film and games gives the narrative method wider dissemination power and more successful cases. It is more suitable for Chinese fantasy film stories focusing on IP creation. The narrative method of film and game fusion is represented by the mutual adaptation of film and game works in production form. Communication characteristics are represented by cross-media communication and brand marketing (Jin, 2019).

The narrative method of film and game fusion has narrative characteristics that Chinese fantasy films do not have today. Therefore, integrating research on the two

methods is meaningful. Throughout Asia, the <popularity of> evergreen fantasy works such as the "Lord of the Rings" series, "Warcraft", "Harry Potter" series, and "Percy Jackson" series have no decline. Their narratives no longer follow the traditional ones. Taking the series of films as the core, it continues to extend into multiple fields, such as games, animations, books, and accessories. Its creative techniques have gone beyond the fusion of a single type and turned to the narrative mode of film-game fusion films.

3. Narrative dilemmas in the development of Chinese fantasy films

The most prominent expression of the Chinese fantasy film narrative is its content, which is rooted in China and relies on Chinese traditional culture (Wang, 2017). As a film genre full of innovation and cultural characteristics, Chinese fantasy films have prospered and developed partly thanks to China's profound cultural traditions. These films often draw inspiration from ancient Chinese novels, folklore, myths, and legends. For example, the famous work "Painted Skin" is adapted from Pu Songling's classic novel "Strange Stories from a Chinese Studio", while other works such as "Painted Wall" and "A Chinese Ghost Story" also fully embody the magical elements in "Strange Stories from a Chinese Studio". In addition, the cases where the film works originated from "Journey to the West" are also quite representative, including "Journey to the West", "Monkey King: Hero is Back", "Havoc in Heaven", "Journey to the West: Conquering the Demons" and "Journey to the West: Havoc in Heaven"(Reference Figure 2). The selection and content of Chinese fantasy films are deeply rooted in Chinese culture. China is regarded as the background for the story's development, and the events unfolding are inseparable from Chinese culture and soil. Presenting traditional Chinese culture from a new perspective can arouse a strong sense of identification and intimacy among the audience. This also makes Chinese fantasy films contain profound Chinese cultural characteristics, giving the audience a unique and profound experience.

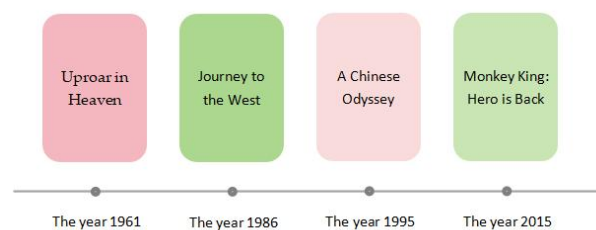


Figure 2: Series of films extended by Journey to the West IP

However, Chinese fantasy films face a series of complex narrative problems at the current stage, which harm the quality and audience appeal of the genre. On domestic film rating websites, these films have low scores of 3 to 4, accounting for 56% of the total (Zhang, 2018). In some films, the audience may not truly immerse themselves in the story world and establish a deep emotional connection. This may be because the storyline is too fantastical or lacks emotional depth, making it difficult for the audience to establish emotional resonance. With the rapid development of the digital age, the "Internet Generation" has gradually become the main consumer. The filmmakers must effectively integrate different media to complete a Joint narrative to increase the audience involvement and the attractiveness of the narrative and enrich the narrative experience. Chinese fantasy films are weak in expanding narratives. This shows that they fail to provide enough depth and detailed narrative world, which may lead to difficulties in the audience's understanding, insufficient emotional connection, and failure to construct a "real" world concept.

3.1 Not enough immersion

"Immersion" has had a huge impact on the fields of art and communication. It has become a keyword for creating art, broadening senses, and creating experiences. It represents a new trend in public aesthetics. In the traditional view, the audience expects to establish a spiritual connection with the work that transcends time and space, obtaining a richer aesthetic experience (Zhao, 2021). However, Chinese magic films have challenges in immersive narratives, which are reflected in the fact that their presentation of magical narrative elements under complete digital technology is still superficial without digging into its core. The reason why Chinese fantasy films are facing the current situation is that they only have "magic" shell but no "magic" soul: that is, they are in an "empty shell" without a system (Zhang, 2018). Chinese fantasy films have failed to effectively use corresponding narrative methods to establish a sense of immersive experience.

Take the film "Genghis Khan" as an example. The magical world it constructs lacks clear rules. It is difficult for the audience to understand the characters' spells and behavioral logic, resulting in plot conflicts. However, Western fantasy films usually carefully construct a world with certain magical rules to serve the narrative and theme. Western films also introduce some unique cultural elements to enhance the interactive atmosphere. Chinese fantasy films must integrate cultural traditions and digital technology. Also, they must pay attention to the narrative environment and interactive atmosphere to adapt to the aesthetic needs of Chinese audiences and cultivate their narrative aesthetic style. Some Chinese fantasy films use simple and traditional narratives. In contrast, the narratives of most fantasy films seem to be mass-produced from an "assembly line". For such content, the audience cannot form a good spiritual connection with it, naturally leading to the audience's distrust of the story world. Emotional investment and sense of identity are reduced, and a good immersive experience cannot be obtained.

3.2 Weak cross-media storytelling

Cross-media storytelling plays a key role in film development today, especially in building deep and engaging story worlds. Narratologists such as Mary-Laura Ryan have summarized the cross-media narrative as "cross-media world construction" (Chen, 2019). This narrative mode emphasizes the intertextuality between different media. It uses multiple linear narrative logic, metaphor, anaphora, coupling, and branch extension to create a more diverse and open narrative experience for the audience.

The Chinese fantasy film "Fengshen" has impressive effects and scene design. It presents pictures with a unique oriental aesthetic style. However, it has some problems with the appearance of the story world. The film narrates the story world of the "Creation of the Gods" film. It results in a poor understanding of the cultural concepts behind it and the effect of the experience being insufficiently sustainable. Jenkins proposed that cross-media storytelling is the art of creating a world whose texts are as rich as an encyclopedia (Tang, 2015). A typical example is Hollywood's Marvel Cinematic Universe (MCU). MCU story world is composed of films, TV series, and comics. Various text forms are intertwined and influence each other, building a large and coherent fictional universe. Audience can learn about the world of stories by watching films and TV series and reading comics. Each medium contributes some elements to the construction of the entire universe. Cross-media storytelling allows viewers to deeply explore characters, plots, and settings for a more comprehensive and rich viewing experience. Chinese fantasy films still have much room for development in cross-media storytelling. Many Chinese fantasy films rely too much on special effects and visual spectacle, neglecting the story world's depth and consistency. The producers/directors of these films can learn from the concept of cross-media narrative and expand the story world through intertextual narratives in different media forms, allowing the audience to understand the story in depth from multiple angles. Chinese fantasy films must strengthen innovation and experimentation to provide a more

engaging and diverse narrative experience and to attract audience attention and support. By building a unified and in-depth story world, Chinese fantasy films can gain more competitive advantages in the global film market.

3.3 Lack of ability to expand the narrative

Expanding the world story as a narrative strategy deepens the plot and film's characters and can create a rich and fascinating story world. In Chinese fantasy films, the understanding and application of expanded narratives are currently insufficient. This deficiency is mainly reflected in the limitations of subject matter, lack of diversity, and changes in character relationships. Firstly, regarding subject matter limitations, Chinese fantasy films often rely on traditional Chinese culture and mythological stories as their subject matter. This traditional dependence leads to the limitations of a subject matter. Take "Journey to the West" as an example. Although this ancient work has profound connotations, it has been constantly adapted and lacks new thinking. It makes Chinese fantasy films too dependent on a single theme and makes it difficult to develop a more diversified worldview.

In comparison, Western fantasy films such as "The Lord of the Rings" have greater freedom in expanding their narratives and can cover a wider range of themes, not limited to traditional mythology. Therefore, Chinese fantasy films need to be more active in finding new sources of subject matter to enrich their narrative and expand narrative possibilities. Secondly, the lack of diversity is another shortcoming in developing Chinese fantasy films. Although China is rich in traditional culture, myths, and legends, this does not mean all fantasy films should follow the same narrative model. Chinese fantasy films are often similar in narrative style and story structure. They emphasize emotion and love clues and ignore universal themes such as growth, friendship, peace, and freedom. Take "Painted Skin 2" as an example. It is a film adapted from "Strange Stories from a Chinese Studio". Its story clues mostly focus on complex love relationships while ignoring other possible story elements. After the popularity of "Painted Skin", the audience may feel aesthetic fatigue if the sequel continues. Its because the theme and emotional focus of the film are too similar. Chinese fantasy films need more diverse narrative methods to attract different types of audiences and better reflect the diversity of contemporary society. Finally, changes in character relationships are also a problem in Chinese fantasy films. When adapting traditional stories, some films may change character relationships to adapt to the aesthetic needs of modern audiences. However, such changes may sometimes affect the audience's identification and emotional resonance. Take "A Chinese Ghost Story" as an example. The film changed the relationship between the characters in the original story and introduced a love triangle plot. However, the audience may feel that this change is out of touch with the original story, making it difficult to resonate emotionally. Therefore, Chinese fantasy films need to consider character relationships more carefully when adapting traditional stories. This ensures that the audience can understand and identify with the characters. Chinese fantasy films have problems expanding narratives, including limitations of subject matter, lack of diversity, and changes in character relationships. Chinese fantasy films must actively look for new themes and provide more diverse story elements. They must maintain awe and caution when adapting traditional stories to ensure that the audience can truly understand and identify with the worldview and role in the film. Only in this way can Chinese fantasy films gain global attention and recognition and achieve their continued development in the film industry.

In the future, Chinese fantasy films must explore an innovative narrative path combined with the integrated narrative model of video games. This will help provide a more immersive film-watching experience and enhance interactivity. It can also unfold stories on different media platforms, expand audience participation and understanding, and build a "story world". In addition, Chinese fantasy films should focus on innovation,

broaden the selection of themes, and deepen character relationships to construct a richer and more fascinating "world story" to meet the audience's needs for diversity and depth.

4. Promote the innovative development of Chinese fantasy film narratives with the integration of film and games as the center

The integration of film and games processes reflects the trend of emerging digital technology and media integration. Refer to Figure 3 for specific relationships.

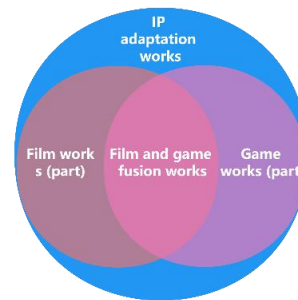


Figure 3: Film, game, film, and game integration relationship

The film "Gattaca" mainly tells stories in virtual and real space. It has attracted widespread attention. According to Liao, "Film and game integration is an innovative attempt at cross-media integration and cross-industry integration" (Liao, 2023). Nowadays, the boundaries between films and games have become blurred. Films and games have expanded into the cross-media field, organically integrating films with multiple media platforms such as video games, virtual reality, and social media. The audience can have an immersive experience by participating in the extended content of the story through different media. Some pioneering works emerged during this stage, such as the films "Ready Player One", "Free Guy" and "Source Code". These film works rely on the narrative logic of games and combine with today's advanced digital technology to construct a time and space different from traditional film narratives.

"In the history of world cinema, every technological innovation will impact film narrative to a greater or lesser extent" (Wan, 2021). The narrative mode of video games integrating films has created an emerging and unique film narrative idea, which is innovative and forward-looking in the film industry. It integrates interactivity, modularity, and cross-media narrative. It provides audiences a richer, more diverse, and interactive viewing experience. It brings new possibilities to film narratives and attracts audiences from different backgrounds and interests. Therefore, as an emerging narrative model, the video game integrated narrative model provides a significant opportunity for Chinese fantasy films to make up for narrative shortcomings. This model provides innovative changes in the narrative of Chinese fantasy films in many aspects.

4.1 Enrich narrative interactivity

Interactive narrative usually refers to the audience participating in film and television works through various interactive methods, assuming the role of characters and influencing the story's development. Our film-watching habits usually focus on "watching", mainly focusing on visual experience by visually perceiving the information the film conveys. No matter how the director arranges the plot's progress, the audience only needs to sit back and wait for the story to unfold. However, interactive storytelling breaks this traditional paradigm and returns some narrative control to the audience. In this new film form, the audience can interact with the story, take on a role, grasp the story's progress, and even achieve a certain ability to lead the narrative direction. Audiences have become more active and can shape the narrative direction of the film

through their own choices and decisions. They are specifically divided into spatial interactivity(Reference Figure 4) and time interactivity(Reference Figure 5).

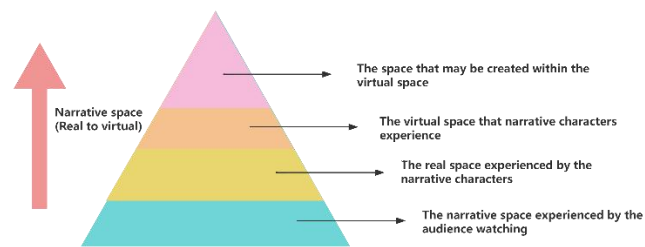


Figure 4:spatial interactivity

For example, in 2018, the launch of "Black Mirror: Pandasniki", the domestic micro drama "Antiques Bureau of the Buddha's Head Origin", "IApartments 5", and steam platform(steam) launched a series of interactive games such as "Invisible Guardian" and "His Smile".A common feature of these works is that they allow the viewer to make choices within the story that will directly affect the progression and ending of the narrative. For example, the popular TV series "Love Apartment 5" and "The Broker Elite" remind the audience to use mobile phones and other media to experience it. It is often accompanied by multiple choices, storylines, audience unlock choices, achievements, characters, and endings. This method allows the audience to have an interactive experience different from traditional narratives. Such a narrative mode is a kind of time interaction for the audience.

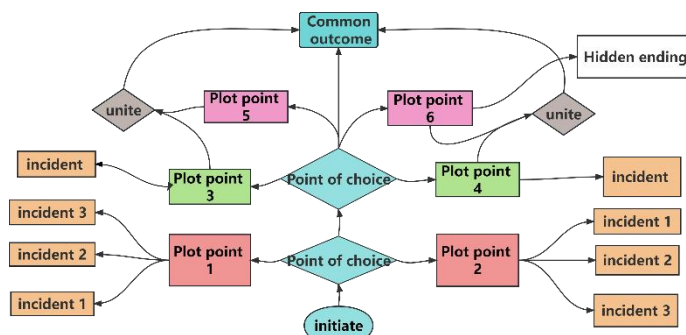


Figure 5:time interactivity

Plot-Emotion Theory believes that the audience's emotional experience is closely related to the connection between the characters and the plot (Du, 2023). Traditional films often fail to provide enough emotional depth because the audience has a limited emotional connection to the characters. However, in the film-game fusion narrative, the audience can participate in different spaces through interaction and experience the sense of experience brought by space transformation, thereby gaining a deeper understanding of their motivations and emotions. This emotional resonance can increase the audience's emotional investment and make the character more attractive. In " A Writer's Odyssey " a fantasy film that has received a good response in recent years, the narrative uses a game-like logic to tell the story of two spaces; this is the interactivity of space.

With the help of this film as a reference, if the narrative of Chinese magic films integrates spatial interactivity and time interactivity, it can help build a long-term audience group and encourage the audience to accept magical stories more actively. The audience's participation is not only reflected in emotions. Regarding resonance, it also profoundly impacts the dissemination and commercialization of films. Through participatory experiences, audiences feel closer to the film and are more likely to become

loyal fans of the film. This kind of audience stickiness can help the film build a long-term audience group and encourage the audience to promote the film more actively, which is crucial to developing Chinese fantasy films.

4.2 Storytelling across media

Transmedia storytelling is the presentation of a story across multiple media platforms, with the text on each platform making a unique and valuable contribution to the overall story (Wan, 2022). Cross-media narrative is also one of the most prominent narrative features of video game fusion films(Refer to Figure 6 for specific presentation). "Cross-media communication" refers to the narration of the same story on different media, while "cross-media narrative" refers to the narration of different stories based on the premise of stipulating the worldview and world structure (Long, 2007). It was first proposed by MIT scholar Henry Jenkins in 2003 <citation required>. He believed that the expression of "cross-media narrative" is that each media performs its duties and fulfills its responsibilities, and any product is used as an entry point for the overall product series (Li, 2018).

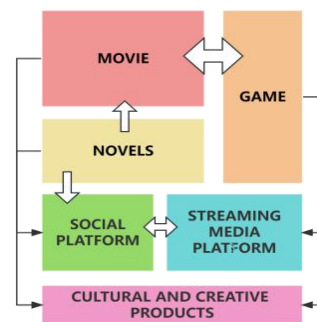


Figure 6: The concrete presentation of cross-media narrative

In video-game fusion films, different media platforms will share stories described by the same IP (intellectual property), including films, animations, novels, and mobile games. These different media forms are intertwined to build a unified world. For example, Hollywood's Marvel series of films, from comics to games to films, jointly construct the "Marvel Universe" through different media. The domestic "Detective Chinatown", Crimaster's world-famous detective rankings run through the story, and Crimaster's mystery detective mobile game has already been launched and is linked to the story in the plot. By providing additional information, such as Easter eggs, the audience has more opportunities to explore the story world. Another example is the large number of Easter eggs in "Ready Player One". They use the power of emotion and nostalgia to connect different media, stimulating the audience's deeper desire to participate and explore. The film pays tribute to many classic images, elements, and object details from film, television, and game works. It also interacts with other media platforms to achieve a unique experience where the audience can still participate in the narrative while watching the film.

Traditional Chinese fantasy films usually use traditional Chinese culture and mythological elements as their themes and incorporate "love" and other genre elements. It limits the narrative expression diversity to a certain extent. However, the integrated narrative model presents more dimensions of Chinese cultural stories to the audience through multi-media interaction. The theory of cross-media narrative believes that there is intertextuality between different media, and the audience can have an in-depth understanding of the story world through multiple media forms (Liu, 2023).

The story world focuses on multiple interrelated texts. The story world is constructed using multiple texts rather than the approximate telling of a story in

multiple texts. It focuses more on the correlation between each text rather than the "pair" of texts. Differences in adaptation between correspondences.(Li, 2016). Chinese magical stories use films as the core media and collaborate with other media forms to build a complete story world that can be understood through multiple platforms, such as films, games, and social media. The audience can participate in the story to experience Chinese culture more fully.

4.3 Build a narrative ecosystem

The modular narrative was earlier seen in relevant Li Fenglian and Sun Yaru research. Influenced by the module theory in the fields of computers and education, they defined the modular narrative of TV programs as consisting of several independent or related program modules based on certain principles. Each module completes a specific function and is combined to complete the overall function of the program to form a program as a whole (Wan, 2021). Compared with TV series, the modular narrative in the video game fusion films breaks through the limitations of traditional narrative and decomposes the film into multiple independent modules or segments, each of which has a relatively independent narrative function. These modules can be expanded according to different film narratives, so modular narrative provides producers with greater narrative freedom and creative flexibility.

An obvious example is the Chinese films "My Hometown and Me" and "My Hometown and Me" which have attracted much attention recently. These two films chose different story modules to show the stories of small people in different periods and regions. Although these modules differ in plot and characters, they all revolve around the common theme of motherland and hometown, deepening the film's theme through multiple independent short stories. This narrative method provides the audience with a more diverse narrative experience. It allows them to establish connections between different story modules, thereby gaining a deeper understanding of the film's core theme. In film-game fusion works, many modular narrative works exist in dramas and films, such as "Love, Death, Robot" and "Big World Gacha Machine". These modular narrative works develop different styles based on the same narrative subject or a certain narrative element. Its advantage lies in its ability to attract different types of audiences. Modular storytelling offers a more engaging narrative structure. The audience can selectively focus on modules of interest while finding resonance in the overall narrative. This diversity and openness make modular storytelling an important tool. It allows contemporary filmmakers to create more challenging and engaging narrative experiences. However, modular storytelling is not without challenges and limitations. First, filmmakers must carefully design each module to ensure that they are both independent and interconnected to support the integrity of the narrative. This requires higher narrative skills and creative abilities. Second, viewers may need more thought and attention to understand and connect the relationships between the various modules, which may pose a challenge to some viewers. Nonetheless, modular storytelling has become a compelling trend in film storytelling. It gives filmmakers more freedom and creative space while also giving audiences a more diverse and rich narrative experience.

In recent years, the " Chinese Paladin " series has been a successful example of integrating video games and fantasy films. The entire " Chinese Paladin " story is constructed from two characters, Li Xiaoyao and Jingtian. It attracted audience and caused a stir. The modular narrative expands the film into a multi-dimensional world in the film, building a multi-level story ecosystem. Independent film narratives are no longer based on each film but complement each other by integrating the plots of the entire series. The integrated narrative of video games is based on this theory. Expanding the story more broadly allows the audience more space for understanding and reading.

This constructed story ecosystem makes film stories richer, more sustained, and more attractive. The Marvel Cinematic Universe (MCU) is an outstanding example of

successfully building a huge story ecosystem. MCU includes a series of films and TV series related to superheroes. These works are related on different media platforms and share the same story world. Audiences can learn about the MCU stories by watching films, following TV series, and participating in comic books. The success of MCU lies in its clever use of a modular narrative model that allows viewers to travel freely between different media and gain an in-depth understanding of different aspects of the story. This constructed story ecosystem inspires the audience's curiosity and desire to participate, making them active participants in the story. Audiences use online social media platforms to discuss the plot, speculate on developments, and even participate in virtual communities, jointly creating a unique film-watching experience. Now, as this model becomes popular with audiences, "Love, Death, and Robots" online drama version is also very popular. By telling different stories in different styles and values around the same theme and the same concept, a more complete "world" can be created.

The integrated narrative model of video games allows Chinese fantasy films to make up for the shortcomings of traditional narratives. By enriching narrative interactivity, multi-media story expression, and building a story ecosystem, this model enriches the narrative of Chinese fantasy films and enhances the audience's participation and emotional investment. Integrating the content of "story world" and "world story" makes Chinese fantasy film story a work and a multi-dimensional experience, further strengthening the appeal and influence of Eastern narratives.

5. Conclusion

Chinese fantasy films have shown an eye-catching early stage under the current situation. However, there is a weak stage in the narrative behind the flourishing existence. Through in-depth literature research, case analysis, and comparative research, it can be concluded that the narrative of Chinese fantasy films must improve immersion, cross-media, and expansibility. With the rapid development of the digital age, technology has gradually become the driving force for film development. Many films of similar genres are gradually merging, and video game narrative fusion, as an important cutting-edge narrative mode, has brought corresponding supplements to Chinese fantasy films. The narrative film mode integrated with video games deepens the audience's immersive viewing experience, expands the narrative dimension, and enriches the narrative interaction. By combining with game elements, travel narrative integration provides a variety of narrative themes, deepens character relationships, and opens up new avenues for Chinese magical stories.

In Chinese fantasy films, strengthening the sense of immersion can better break the boundaries between reality and fiction, allowing the audience a more authentic and careful feeling when watching the film and improving the overall film viewing experience. Narratives can include cross-border cooperation with creative ideas such as literature, comics, and games. In this way, the film can use other creative story resources to broaden the narrative's breadth and attract more audiences' attention from different fields. In addition, this also provides more possibilities for the extended development of the film and forms an IP ecological chain. Expansive narrative emphasizes the continuous expansion of the depth and breadth of the story in the narrative. In Chinese fantasy films, this can be achieved by introducing more convincing theme elements, deepening character relationships, and exploring more complex plot clues. In addition, it can better meet the audience's demand for story depth and make the film more thoughtful and layering.

These changes increase the appeal of Chinese fantasy films and bring new possibilities to Chinese film narratives, providing audiences with a richer and more diverse viewing experience.

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