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EXPLORING THE DEVELOPMENT, CHALLENGES, AND OPPORTUNITIES OF CHINESE FILMS RECEPTION IN MALAYSIA: A REVIEW ANALYSIS

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Abstract:

The global expansion of Chinese cinema has played a significant role in disseminating Chinese culture, particularly in regions with substantial Chinese populations, such as Malaysia. In the Malaysian market, Chinese films function not only as a source of entertainment but also as a vital medium for cross-cultural exchange and cultural diplomacy. Their presence has enhanced Malaysian audiences' understanding of Chinese society, values, and history. Analyzing the development of Chinese film distribution in Malaysia offers valuable insights into the broader internationalization of Chinese-language cinema. This study employs a systematic literature analysis approach, utilizing keyword-based searches to identify and synthesize relevant research. It examines the historical evolution of Chinese films in Malaysia and explores the key challenges they face in entering and maintaining a presence in the local market. Given Malaysia's diverse demographic composition, where Malaysian Chinese constitute approximately 23% of the population, the country provides a unique case for studying how Chinese films navigate foreign markets. This research traces the history of Chinese cinema in Malaysia from the 1920s to the present, assessing both the current state of the film industry and the primary obstacles posed by government regulations and cultural differences. While Chinese films encounter significant challenges in the Malaysian market, advancements in digital technology, policy reforms, and strategic partnerships present promising opportunities for their growth and expansion.

Keywords:

Chinese Film, Cultural Identity, Film Policy and Regulation, Malaysian Film Industry

Introduction

With the acceleration of globalization, cultural exchange has become a key driver of cultural development (Dang, 2024; Raikhan et al., 2014). As a vital medium of Chinese culture, Chinese cinema is increasingly embracing a global perspective and innovative spirit, particularly under the framework of the Belt and Road Initiative (Khan et al., 2024). The Chinese film industry emerged in the late 1950s and, after decades of development, has evolved into one of the most influential cultural symbols worldwide. The global dissemination of Chinese films has significantly contributed to expanding China's cultural influence, particularly in regions with large Chinese diasporas (Gao et al., 2024; Zhang & Dai, 2021). Malaysia stands out in this regard, as its multicultural society has shaped a distinctive cultural market. The country has developed cultural policies aimed at strengthening national unity while embracing ethnic diversity. As a result, Chinese-language films from mainland China and Hong Kong must navigate both cultural identity regulations and national approval procedures to enter the Malaysian market.

Beyond mere entertainment, Chinese films serve as crucial instruments for cross-cultural exchange and cultural diplomacy (Tian & Wang, 2025; Yi & Bexci, 2025). Their increasing presence allows Malaysian audiences to gain a deeper understanding of Chinese society, values, and history. Since China's reform and opening-up, cultural interactions between China and Malaysia have intensified, fostering stronger people-to-people exchanges and laying a solid foundation for cinematic cultural diffusion. Under the Belt and Road Initiative, bilateral cultural, economic, and educational exchanges have entered a new phase of development (Wang et al., 2023; Xu, 2021). Chinese films have reached Malaysian audiences through various channels, enriching their cultural experiences while injecting new energy into China-Malaysia cultural relations.

However, despite these opportunities, Chinese films face significant challenges in the Malaysian market, including limited market recognition and cultural differences, which may impede their broader acceptance and integration.

As one of the largest consumer markets in Southeast Asia, Malaysia has a diverse cultural and social landscape, making it an important case for studying the distribution and reception of Chinese films. Examining the development of Chinese film distribution in Malaysia provides valuable insights into the broader internationalization of Chinese-language cinema. This research aims to analyze how Chinese films expand within the Malaysian market and to identify the challenges they encounter in this unique cultural environment.

By leveraging historical data, this study traces the evolution of Chinese film distribution, explores their current status, and highlights key cultural barriers affecting their reception. Furthermore, it investigates how Chinese films achieve international success by integrating local cultural elements to enhance audience engagement. The findings of this study will offer practical insights for film producers, cinema distributors, and policymakers in both Malaysia and China, providing strategic recommendations for optimizing the global expansion of Chinese films.

Research Methodology

In this study, a review analysis was conducted to evaluate the development, opportunities and challenges of Chinese films in Malaysia. A systematic approach was adopted to ensure a comprehensive examination of relevant literature.

The search process began with establishing keywords such as Chinese films, Malaysia film market, cultural identity, film policy and regulation. These keywords were used to conduct searches across multiple academic databases, including but not limited to, PubMed, ScienceDirect, and Google Scholar, to gather all available academic and peer-reviewed material.

The selection criteria focused on literature published within the last ten years, particularly studies that analyzed the development, opportunities and challenges of Chinese films in Malaysia. Articles that lacked relevance to the topic, were not peer-reviewed, or focused solely on general Chinese film studies without discussing their presence in Malaysia were excluded from the review.

After obtaining a specific set of articles through a systematic search using thematic keywords, the next step was to screen them based on the established inclusion criteria. Then, the abstracts and full texts of these articles were read to gather relevant information. Focused research and discussion on the historical development of Chinese films in Malaysia, current state of Chinese films in Malaysia, challenges faced by Chinese films in the Malaysian market. This methodological approach ensured a structured and balanced review of the factors shaping the development of Chinese films in Malaysia while highlighting the potential and constraints they encounter in this evolving market.

Systematic Literature Review

Historical Development of Chinese Films In Malaysia

(1) Early Introduction (1920s-1960s)

Chinese films from China and Hong Kong first entered the Malaysian market in the 1920s. In 1929, the Shaw Brothers from Hong Kong began screening films in Singapore, Kuala Lumpur, and Malacca (Bloom, 2020). The Shaw Film Company established its first theatres in the South China Sea region at four locations, including the Wah Ying Theatre in Singapore and the Man King Terrace Theatre in Ipoh. During this period, Chinese films primarily served to support the cultural activities of the local Chinese community, preserving Chinese traditions and reinforcing cultural identity. The films focused on traditional stories, folktales, and historical narratives, reflecting core Chinese cultural values. For the Chinese diaspora, these screenings were cultural milestones, providing a vital connection to their ancestral heritage at a time when their territory was under European rule (Dag, 2022; Tan et al., 2023).

The 1930s marked a significant advancement in Chinese cinema with the introduction of sound technology, which strengthened the influence of Chinese films among the Malaysian Chinese population. This technological innovation enhanced language-dependent cultural bonds, allowing audiences to feel a deeper connection to their linguistic and cultural heritage. The growing popularity of Chinese-language films attracted urban theater audiences, particularly in Chinese-majority areas. However, World War II abruptly halted Chinese film production in

Malaysia, as the Japanese occupation (1941–1945) imposed strict bans on Chinese-language media, including films. Following the war, as Malaya moved toward independence, Chinese films gradually reemerged, albeit within a transformed political landscape.

(2) Post-Independence Period (1960s-1980s)

Between 1960 and 1980, Malaysian Chinese cinema began to take its first steps toward development. During this period, local Chinese filmmakers sought to produce films that reflected the culture and lifestyle of Malaysia's Chinese community. However, they faced significant challenges, including strict government regulations and financial constraints, which limited them to producing low-budget films with niche audiences. The broader political climate in Malaysia also affected the Chinese film industry, as the government exercised strong control over cultural expression to promote a unified national identity.

In 1971, the Malaysian government introduced the New Economic Policy (NEP), which prioritized Malay interests and led to significant shifts in Chinese cultural industries, particularly in filmmaking. The nation-building initiatives following the May 1969 racial riots reinforced Malay cultural dominance in national policies, pushing Chinese cultural representation to the periphery (Lee, 2020). In 1981, the National Film Development Corporation Malaysia (FINAS) mandated that a film could only be classified as Malaysian if at least 70% of its dialogue was in Malay. This policy severely restricted opportunities for Chinese-language films, as films predominantly spoken in Chinese dialects were classified as foreign productions, subjecting them to additional restrictions (Li, 2021; Liu, 2006).

As a result, Chinese-language films were systematically marginalized in Malaysia's film industry, creating significant barriers to their growth and diminishing their position within the national cultural landscape. Despite these limitations, the Malaysian Chinese community continued to rely heavily on imported Chinese films from China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan, as local filmmakers struggled to establish themselves within the industry (Barker, 2018; Szeto & Chen, 2011).

(3) Policy Changes and New Opportunities (1990s-2010s)

Globalization and the shifting attitudes of Malaysian society in the 1990s created new opportunities for Chinese-language films in the country (Yu, 2024). As Malaysia experienced economic growth and deeper global integration, the government gradually relaxed restrictions on cultural practices. The nation's multicultural identity became increasingly recognized for its economic and social significance, prompting a shift in public policy toward greater cultural inclusivity. In 2011, the National Film Development Corporation Malaysia (FINAS) introduced a new policy that expanded the criteria for Malaysian film recognition. Under this policy, films with more than 50% local investment qualified as Malaysian productions, making them eligible for mandatory screenings in theatres. By prioritizing ownership over language, FINAS created greater opportunities for Chinese-language films to be included within Malaysia's national cinema.

In 2013, the Malaysian government introduced further incentives to support local film production. Productions that employed more than 30% local workers became eligible for a 30% cost reimbursement, significantly encouraging the growth of Malaysian Chinese film production. As the government developed a deeper appreciation for cultural diversity, it implemented new policies that actively supported the development of Chinese-language films

(Hu & Chen, 2023; Su, 2014). Additionally, Malaysia's expanding economic ties with China and East Asia fueled both cultural liberalization and film industry growth. Increased business and investment exchanges between Malaysia and China strengthened the market potential for Chinese cultural products, leading to greater collaboration between the Malaysian and Chinese film industries.

(4) Contemporary Malaysian Chinese Cinema (2010s-Present)

The development of Malaysian Chinese cinema has flourished since the 2010s, with local Chinese filmmakers producing films that reflect the experiences of the Malaysian Chinese community. These films have gained critical acclaim, winning awards at both local and international film festivals, marking a new phase in Malaysia's Chinese-language film industry. Kuan (2019) found that Malaysian Chinese filmmakers often exhibit anti-China nationalistic tendencies by emphasizing local identities and replacing Chinese cultural symbols to distinguish themselves from China. This trend toward localization highlights how Malaysian Chinese individuals define their distinct cultural identity, asserting autonomy over their cultural narrative within the context of globalization.

The global recognition of Malaysian Chinese cinema has been significantly shaped by filmmakers such as Chong Keat Aun, Tan Chui Mui, and Lau Kek Huat. Major productions, including *The Story of Southern Islet*, *Barbarian Invasion*, and *Boluomi*, achieved international acclaim at prestigious film festivals from 2019 to 2021. These films provide a Malaysian Chinese perspective, exploring cultural identity through historical events that have influenced the nation's multicultural landscape.

Despite its progress, the Malaysian Chinese film industry continues to face challenges, particularly in professional migration and limited market penetration (Kang et al., 2021). Many Malaysian Chinese film professionals relocate to Taiwan, Hong Kong, or Singapore, where Chinese-language film industries offer greater market potential and superior production facilities. Additionally, while Malaysian Chinese audiences remain the primary consumers of these films, other ethnic groups in Malaysia show limited engagement with the genre. However, recent international festival successes demonstrate the growing artistic excellence and creativity of Malaysian Chinese filmmakers. As their work gains greater international recognition, digital distribution channels may provide new pathways for expansion and broader audience reach (Haris et al., 2023; Kabiraj & Joghee, 2023).

Current State of Chinese Films In Malaysia

(1) Market Size And Share

Industry reports indicate that Malaysian Chinese films account for approximately 20% of the total annual film production in Malaysia, a figure that closely aligns with the percentage of the Chinese population in the country (Wang, 2024). While these films cater to the entertainment needs of the Malaysian Chinese community, they struggle to attract audiences from other ethnic backgrounds.

The Malaysian film industry experienced a significant decline in box office revenue, with ticket sales dropping from 8 billion MYR in 2015 to 4.6 billion MYR in 2016. During this period, locally produced films captured 50% of the total market share. Although the Malaysian Chinese film industry remains resilient, it faces intense competition from Western studio productions

and Malay-language films. Additionally, mainland Chinese films secure only a small share of Malaysia's box office revenue, lagging behind Hollywood films and locally produced Malay-language movies. However, despite these limitations, high-quality Chinese productions, particularly animated films and blockbusters with universal themes, demonstrate significant growth potential in the Malaysian market.

The success of Chinese films in Malaysia depends largely on genre and thematic content. Audiences tend to favor action comedies and animated films over dramas and historical productions, as these genres offer entertainment value beyond cultural familiarity. Consequently, the market performance of Chinese films in Malaysia is heavily influenced by film type and audience preferences.

(2) Distribution Channels And Platforms

In Malaysia, cinema chains remain the primary platform for watching Chinese films. Astro Shaw is the largest distributor of Chinese films in the country. Major cinema chains such as Golden Screen Cinemas (GSC), TGV Cinemas, and MBO Cinemas operate the majority of screens nationwide. Chinese residents primarily access movie theatres in urban centres, particularly in Kuala Lumpur, Penang, and Johor Bahru. The expansion of cinema infrastructure follows economic potential, with theatres developing in affluent communities where demand for entertainment is high (He et al., 2021; Wang, 2024).

In recent years, Malaysian Chinese filmmakers have increasingly collaborated with Taiwanese producers to gain access to China's expansive Chinese-language film market. These partnerships have allowed Malaysian Chinese filmmakers to broaden their audience base and enhance their financial returns. Collaborations with Taiwanese production and distribution networks provide better resources and greater market reach beyond Malaysia.

The rise of streaming platforms has further transformed the distribution of Chinese-language films in Malaysia. Independent, small-budget productions, which may struggle to secure theatrical screenings, now find distribution opportunities through digital platforms such as iQiyi, Tencent Video, and Netflix. Meanwhile, local streaming services like Astro GO and Tonton also offer Chinese-language channels, though their commitment to Chinese films varies.

Advancements in digital technology have reshaped how Chinese films reach Malaysian audiences. Online distribution via streaming platforms has expanded access to films, altering traditional viewing habits and potentially attracting new audiences. The increasing fluidity of distribution channels enables filmmakers to circumvent commercial limitations and censorship regulations, allowing for greater creative and commercial flexibility.

(3) Audience Demographics And Preferences

In Malaysia, the majority of Chinese film audiences belong to the country's 23% Chinese ethnic population, primarily residing in urban areas. Malaysian Chinese audiences are drawn to Chinese films due to shared cultural connections, including language, traditions, festivals, education, and lifestyle. According to Liang et al. (2023), several cultural factors influence Malaysian Chinese audiences' film preferences, such as spoken language, religious traditions, educational themes, and daily life experiences. When viewers recognize familiar cultural elements, they develop a deeper understanding and stronger emotional connections with the

films (Chen & Liu, 2023; Rubin et al., 2022). Consequently, Malaysian Chinese audiences favor Chinese-language films, as these productions reflect their cultural heritage and lived experiences (Hee, 2021; Kang et al., 2021).

For many years, Malaysians have preferred Hong Kong films and celebrities over films from mainland China. The popularity of Hong Kong actors such as Jackie Chan, Chow Yun-fat, Stephen Chow, and Donnie Yen has attracted widespread fan followings across different ethnic groups in Malaysia. While mainland Chinese actors historically had limited influence, their recognition has grown in recent years due to increasing cultural exchanges between China and Malaysia (Wang et al., 2021).

The popularity of Hong Kong films in Malaysia can be attributed to their distribution networks and distinct cinematic style, which blend Eastern and Western elements with entertaining, fast-paced storytelling. Hong Kong's longstanding presence in Malaysian film markets has solidified audience habits and viewing preferences, making its films more widely accepted across diverse demographics.

Meanwhile, local Chinese-language films resonate more deeply with Malaysian Chinese audiences because they address community-specific issues and narratives that are not always reflected in mainstream national cinema. Although mainland Chinese production companies face challenges entering this market, co-productions between Chinese and Malaysian filmmakers present a promising opportunity, as content reflecting local cultural heritage is well received by Malaysian Chinese viewers.

Younger Malaysian Chinese audiences (under 30), however, exhibit more diverse viewing preferences, often consuming content from various international markets. This shift in audience behavior presents a challenge for Chinese filmmakers in Malaysia, who must adapt to evolving preferences while preserving cultural relevance in their productions.

Finding and Discussion

Challenges Faced by Chinese Films In The Malaysian Market

Regulatory bodies in Malaysia closely monitor non-Malay films, enforcing strict content examinations on political themes, cultural differences, and other sensitive topics. Benares (2024) reported that Malaysia intensified content restrictions on foreign films, with a particular focus on Chinese productions. The Film Censorship Board (LPF) oversees the review and approval process, screening all films before public release. The censorship framework assesses political messages, religious themes, violent content, sexual material, and cultural representations. Chinese filmmakers must modify or remove politically or religiously sensitive content to align with Malaysian social standards before receiving distribution approval. Navigating Malaysian content regulations and censorship remains a significant challenge for Chinese filmmakers, as they must balance artistic integrity with cultural sensitivities and regulatory compliance (Ting-Toomey & Dorjee, 2018).

In addition to content restrictions, foreign films—especially Chinese productions—face import quotas that limit their market entry. These restrictions, while not explicitly targeting Chinese films, reduce the number of available slots for distribution, intensifying competition among international releases. Despite policy adjustments allowing for increased Chinese-Malaysian

film collaborations, the regulatory landscape remains challenging. Recent reforms redefining the ownership criteria for Malaysian films have facilitated co-productions, yet Chinese filmmakers still encounter both barriers and opportunities in the Malaysian market.

Language poses a significant challenge for Chinese films attempting to enter the Malaysian market. These films require subtitling or dubbing, both of which alter how audiences experience the film and influence their emotional engagement with the story. This language barrier affects not only the technical aspects of translation but also the audience's ability to establish a meaningful emotional connection with the film. Malaysia is a linguistically diverse country, where Malay serves as the national language, English is widely spoken, and various Chinese dialects are used within the Chinese community. While Mandarin remains the primary language for most Malaysian Chinese, its usage varies across different age groups and regions. Since the majority of non-Chinese speakers cannot understand Mandarin, Chinese-language films often struggle to attract a broader Malaysian audience. Wang et al. (2021) note that many Malaysian viewers perceive Chinese films as misaligned with their multicultural values and storytelling preferences. Furthermore, Malaysia's multi-religious and multi-ethnic society makes cultural representation particularly complex, as audiences may reject films that promote ideological perspectives originating from mainland China if they do not reflect Malaysian social realities.

Beyond language, differences in storytelling approaches also hinder the appeal of Chinese films in Malaysia. Many mainland Chinese films incorporate historical and cultural elements that may be unfamiliar to Malaysian audiences, including those of Chinese descent. As a result, Malaysian viewers struggle to fully engage with these narratives, leading to lower reception and market performance. Research indicates that audiences tend to assign lower value to cultural products that stem from unfamiliar backgrounds. Moreover, high production costs alone do not guarantee success if a film fails to resonate with local viewers. Chinese films that rely heavily on cultural knowledge specific to China often struggle to gain widespread popularity in Malaysia, as the audience does not share the same cultural references.

The majority of Malaysian moviegoers prefer watching Hollywood films, primarily due to their extensive global market presence and established brand recognition. This popularity significantly limits the space and viewing opportunities available for Chinese films in the Malaysian market. Hollywood dominates the Malaysian film industry, creating substantial barriers for Chinese films to achieve meaningful market penetration. The success of Hollywood films in Malaysia is driven by well-established business practices, viewer loyalty, a vast global sales network, and superior production quality, coupled with familiar filmmaking conventions. To compete, Chinese films must distinguish themselves by telling unique cultural stories or by achieving exceptional production quality and global promotion, a challenge that is often difficult to overcome.

Films produced in the Malay language are rapidly gaining traction, thanks to government support, and present significant competition to Chinese films in Malaysia. Films produced in local Chinese dialects resonate more with Malaysian audiences than those from mainland China, offering more familiar cultural narratives and thereby attracting a larger local viewership. The continuous expansion of the Malaysian film industry, fueled by government backing and improved production quality, makes it increasingly difficult for Chinese films to carve out a niche. Additionally, films from other countries, including Korean, Japanese, and

Indian productions, have established strong market positions in Malaysia. These foreign films, coupled with their dedicated fanbases, further limit the opportunities for Chinese films to enter the market. Many Malaysians show a strong preference for Korean films and actors, posing even greater competition for Chinese films. As the competitive environment intensifies, Chinese filmmakers must develop unique selling points that cater to specific Malaysian audience segments. To succeed, Chinese films must offer distinctive attributes, such as cultural content, high production value, star power, or specific genres, in order to stand out amid the diverse range of competing films.

Chinese films face significant challenges in entering the Malaysian market, primarily due to their reliance on international distributors without direct connections to local networks. The absence of stable agreements with local cinema chains and distributors negatively impacts the availability of film screenings and promotional efforts. When films rely on indirect distribution channels, they receive less effective marketing support and face limited screen access. Additionally, many rural areas lack convenient access to cinemas, which are predominantly concentrated in urban centers and shopping malls. As a result, Chinese films targeted at Malaysian Chinese audiences mainly reach urban moviegoers, struggling to penetrate rural markets where the Chinese population is smaller. Promoting Chinese films in Malaysia requires a tailored approach, as understanding local language and cultural preferences is essential. Promotional materials that directly translate content from Chinese films often fail to resonate with local audiences. Furthermore, the timing and channels of advertising frequently do not align with Malaysian people's media consumption habits and film preferences.

The disparity between Chinese and Malaysian usage of social media and online platforms further complicates promotional efforts. While the majority of Malaysian users favor local platforms such as WhatsApp and Line, Chinese social networks do not enjoy the same level of effectiveness in Malaysia as they do in China. As a result, Chinese film marketers may struggle to utilize popular local platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and online forums, as Malaysian audiences tend to gravitate toward different digital environments. Moreover, the piracy problem in Malaysia significantly undermines the profitability of films, including those from China. The use of illegal downloading services by audiences reduces theatre attendance, negatively affecting overall market performance. The early availability of pirated Chinese films further diminishes their commercial value, as these films often circulate in Malaysia before their official release dates.

Opportunities Within Challenges

Despite the challenges, numerous opportunities exist for Chinese films to establish a presence in the Malaysian market. Co-productions and film-related trade agreements offer strategic avenues for Chinese cinema to gain a foothold in Malaysia (Stone et al., 2018). Studio ownership control allows Malaysian-Chinese film partnerships to meet local criteria, enabling access to government film support. When Chinese production and Malaysian cultural elements collaborate, the partnership creates mutual benefits, tapping into the market potential of both nations. Digital platforms provide distributors with alternative means to introduce films to the market, bypassing traditional theater distribution (Ormanlı, 2019). These platforms allow for targeted outreach to Malaysian Chinese audiences, avoiding conventional distribution methods. Furthermore, Chinese content producers are presented with greater opportunities to engage younger audiences, as streaming services now cater to much of the Malaysian population.

The partnership between Malaysia and China facilitates the exchange of cultural elements, enhancing opportunities for Chinese films in the Malaysian market. Cross-cultural communication fosters mutual understanding, helping to reduce the cultural discount effect. To further promote Chinese films in Malaysia, cultural interactions and film educators should work to introduce Chinese culture to local audiences, thereby increasing the long-term appeal of Chinese cinema. Chinese films that incorporate universal themes, coupled with high production standards, are more likely to succeed across demographic groups (Kyong-McClain et al., 2022). Films with global messages and compelling storytelling will resonate with Malaysian viewers from diverse ethnic backgrounds. Films addressing universal themes, such as family dynamics, personal development, or fundamental human experiences, have broad appeal, regardless of ethnic differences. Additionally, action-comedy-animated films present significant growth potential as they offer entertainment content that transcends local cultural boundaries. These genres effectively communicate through visual elements and emotional engagement, making them accessible to diverse audiences. Chinese film studios have already seen stronger returns from action, comedy, and animation films in Malaysia and should continue to focus on these genres to expand their market presence.

Future Development Trends

Multiple factors will influence the development of Chinese films in Malaysia. Collaboration between Chinese and Malaysian filmmakers is expected to increase in the future, expanding from market connections to artistic partnerships and the sharing of professional knowledge. Young filmmakers in Malaysia will collaborate with Chinese counterparts to create content that bridges both cultures, while preserving their respective traditions.

Industry progress will foster new methods of combined development, starting with the integration of ideas from Malaysian and Chinese production teams. When producers from both countries collaborate, they naturally create culturally blended products that incorporate elements from both nations. Digital advancements will continue to open new avenues for Chinese films in Malaysia (Ormanlı, 2019). Streaming platforms, combined with internet marketing and online content delivery, will provide a means for filmmakers to reach Malaysian audiences, particularly the younger generation. Digital platforms allow for greater content diversity by enabling the distribution of Chinese films that may face difficulties in traditional theatres due to profit constraints or government regulations.

The growing Malaysian Chinese film scene will continue to expand, offering both competitive and collaborative opportunities for mainland Chinese films. As more Malaysian Chinese filmmakers develop unique filmmaking styles and content, they will forge connections with Chinese producers to deliver locally relevant content to the Malaysian market. As cultural exchange between China and Malaysia intensifies, the Malaysian audience will become more familiar with Chinese cultural expressions. Increased exposure to Chinese culture will create more favorable market conditions for Chinese films in Malaysia. Additionally, individuals who engage in educational exchanges or business dealings with China while visiting Malaysia will develop a better understanding of Chinese cinema.

Conclusion

This study analyzed the context of Chinese films in Malaysian society and highlighted the challenges they face in catering to this multicultural market. The research demonstrates that while Chinese films have had a long-standing presence in Malaysia, they continue to encounter

regulatory restrictions and intense market competition. However, opportunities exist for Chinese films to thrive by collaborating with Malaysia to create culturally relevant content and leveraging digital distribution channels to reach broader audiences.

The historical system of cultural development policies has directly influenced how Malaysian authorities regulate Chinese films today. During the nation-building period, Chinese cultural products had limited exposure, establishing enduring market rules and positions that persist even as regulations have gradually loosened. Understanding past policies is essential for formulating effective solutions to contemporary issues in the film industry. As cultural exchange between China and Malaysia strengthens, Malaysian audiences will become more familiar with Chinese cultural expressions. Increased exposure to Chinese culture will enhance market conditions for Chinese films in Malaysia, particularly among individuals engaged in educational or business exchanges with China.

Chinese film production in Malaysia is expected to grow through joint efforts between Malaysian and Chinese filmmakers, along with the distribution of films via digital platforms that appeal to both Chinese and global audiences. To navigate the challenges of movie reception, those involved in film distribution in both countries must study their shared history and develop collaborative strategies that foster stronger cooperation between Asian nations through cinema.

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