International Journal of Law, Ethics and Social Sciences

Article

A Study on the Evolution of Chinese Film Titles from 1984 to 2024

Jiayi Lin[1,*]

[1] Hainan Vocational University of Science and Technology, Haikou, China
* Correspondence: Jiayi Lin, Hainan Vocational University of Science and Technology, Haikou, China

Abstract: Films serve as a profound mirror of their times, and film titles act as the essential labels of this mirror. This paper comprehensively examines the titles of films that won China's three major film awards, namely the Golden Rooster Awards, the Hundred Flowers Awards, and the Huabiao Awards, spanning a forty-year period from 1984 to 2024. By systematically analyzing the intricate relationship between film titles and various cinematic elements—including protagonists, settings, literary works, plotlines, historical events, and iconic symbols—this study explores the intrinsic connections between the evolution of film titles and the social development of the era. The research is divided into four distinct historical periods: 1984–1990, 1991–2000, 2001–2010, and 2011–2024. The findings reveal that the connection between film titles and plotlines has become increasingly close over time. Furthermore, the number of titles adapted from literary works first decreased and then increased, reflecting a significant trend toward literary intellectual property adaptation. Titles from different periods respectively reflected sociocultural themes such as reflection on historical transitions, economic modernization, the prominence of mainstream propaganda films, and the rise of mainstream commercial cinema. Ultimately, this study demonstrates that film titles are not merely linguistic phenomena but also serve as vital barometers of sociocultural change, offering valuable insights into the dynamic evolution of Chinese cinema and its broader societal context.

Keywords: film titles; social change; historical periods; cultural studies; chinese cinema

1. Introduction

The cultural industry functions as both a reflection and a shaping force of its historical and social context. Constructive and uplifting cultural expressions contribute meaningfully to societal progress, fostering unity, moral development, and shared values, whereas regressive or harmful cultural content may impede collective advancement and social cohesion [1, 2]. Within the evolution of Chinese cinema, shifts in creative orientation and thematic emphasis have followed broader socio-historical developments with notable clarity. Early cinematic practice emphasized narrative alignment with public aspirations and national development goals, gradually expanding into rich artistic exploration during periods of cultural flourishing. Subsequent generations of filmmakers deepened engagement with humanistic themes, aesthetic innovation, and diverse life experiences across urban and rural settings. These transitions reflect not isolated artistic choices but rather organic responses to changing social conditions, educational advancement, technological access, and evolving audience expectations—all within the framework of China's continuous modernization and cultural rejuvenation.

Film serves as a dynamic archive of social memory and cultural expression, preserving linguistic patterns, behavioral norms, spatial environments, and value systems characteristic of specific historical moments. Chinese cinema, grounded in the nation's unique civilizational heritage and developmental path, carries forward a distinctive cultural responsibility: to convey authentic life experiences, celebrate ethical integrity, highlight familial and communal bonds, and affirm shared ideals of harmony, diligence, and resilience. This study draws upon the official title corpus of films honored with the

Received: 16 January 2026
Revised: 01 March 2026
Accepted: 15 March 2026
Published: 18 March 2026

Copyright: © 2026 by the authors. Submitted for possible open access publication under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).

Golden Rooster Awards, the Hundred Flowers Awards, and the Huabiao Awards between 1984 and 2024—three nationally recognized accolades that collectively represent broad artistic merit, popular resonance, and exemplary contribution to national culture. Employing interdisciplinary methodologies from film sociology and cultural analysis, the research examines how title semantics correlate with thematic focus, character representation, temporal setting, and regional specificity, thereby illuminating underlying patterns in societal priorities, generational perspectives, and cultural confidence across four decades of sustained reform, opening-up, and high-quality development [3].

2. Research Design

2.1. Data Sources

This paper constructs a comprehensive corpus based on the official titles of feature films awarded the Golden Rooster Awards, the Hundred Flowers Awards, and the Huabiao Awards in mainland China between 1984 and 2024. The Golden Rooster Awards, founded in 1981, are widely recognized as a premier professional film accolade within the national film sector, emphasizing artistic merit and technical excellence. The Hundred Flowers Awards, initiated in 1962 and reinstated in 1980, reflect audience preferences through public voting mechanisms and serve as a key indicator of popular reception. The Huabiao Awards, administered by the China Film Administration under the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, constitute the highest-level governmental recognition for cinematic achievement, underscoring alignment with national cultural development goals and artistic standards. Together, these three award systems span professional evaluation, mass participation, and administrative endorsement—thereby offering a robust, multi-dimensional foundation for analyzing thematic evolution, linguistic patterns, and ideological framing in Chinese cinema over four decades [4, 5]. Their institutional longevity and official standing ensure high representativeness and typicality for longitudinal scholarly inquiry.

2.2. Analytical Framework

This analytical framework identifies six fundamental, deep-level semantic relationships that systematically connect film titles to their corresponding cinematic works: the central protagonist or principal character whose identity or journey is evoked by the title; the primary geographical, temporal, or socio-cultural setting that anchors the narrative world; pre-existing literary works—such as novels, poems, or plays—that serve as source material or intertextual reference points; core narrative elements including key conflicts, turning points, or structural motifs that define the plot trajectory; historically significant events, eras, or collective memories that inform the film's thematic resonance and contextual grounding; and recurring symbolic motifs—objects, colors, gestures, or metaphors—that function as condensed carriers of meaning across visual and verbal layers [6].

The chronological analysis is structured across four distinct historical periods—1984 to 1990, 1991 to 2000, 2001 to 2010, and 2011 to 2024—each demarcated to reflect major shifts in China's cinematic production landscape, including evolving state policies on film administration, technological transitions from analog to digital filmmaking, expanding domestic market dynamics, increasing international co-production frameworks, and changing audience reception patterns shaped by broader socioeconomic development and media consumption habits [7, 8].

2.3. Research Methods

This study adopts a mixed-methods research design integrating corpus-based statistical analysis, systematic case analysis of representative film titles across chronological periods, and a comprehensive literature review. Quantitative methods are applied to measure frequency distributions, lexical shifts, and collocational patterns within large-scale film title corpora, while qualitative interpretation explores sociocultural connotations, ideological framing, and aesthetic conventions embedded in title

construction [9]. This dual approach enables rigorous identification of correlations between linguistic evolution in film titling practices and broader historical, technological, and sociopolitical transformations shaping each era's cinematic landscape.

3. The Deep-Seated Relationship between Film Titles and Films

3.1. Film Titles and the Lead Character

The success of a film depends not only on the collaborative efforts of directors, producers, and investors but also critically on the contributions of performers—particularly the lead actor—whose portrayal often serves as the emotional and narrative anchor for audiences [10, 11]. Consequently, naming a film after its central character represents a deliberate and widely adopted strategy in cinematic titling, offering immediate thematic clarity and strong narrative cohesion. Such titles function both as identifiers and interpretive frames, enabling viewers to form preliminary expectations about genre, tone, and human-centered focus. Empirical analysis of Chinese-language feature films released over the past four decades reveals that protagonist-based titles have consistently constituted a substantial segment of annual releases. This pattern was especially prominent during the 1990s, with representative examples including Jiao Yulu, Kong Fansen, The Story of Qiu Ju, Ermo, The King of Masks, and Yellow River Lovers. These works reflect an evolving emphasis on individual experience within broader social contexts, aligning with wider cultural shifts toward nuanced character representation. From 2011 to 2024, while titles referencing protagonists—such as Xiao Hong, Norjigma, Champion, and Big World—remained present, their relative frequency declined, indicating a maturing industry increasingly embracing pluralistic naming conventions, including metaphorical, locational, symbolic, and tonal approaches. This diversification suggests growing sophistication in audience targeting, marketing strategy, and aesthetic intentionality across production and distribution channels.

3.2. Film Titles and Setting

The three essential elements of a novel—characters, plot, and setting—are equally foundational to cinematic storytelling; indeed, the spatial and temporal framework of a film profoundly shapes narrative structure, thematic resonance, and audience immersion [12]. A film's setting is not merely a backdrop but an active agent that influences character motivation, conflict development, and symbolic meaning. Consequently, titling a film after its primary geographical or cultural locus can serve both functional and aesthetic purposes: it immediately anchors the work in a tangible world while inviting interpretive engagement with place-based identity, history, and environment. For instance, the film *The Taking of Tiger Mountain*, adapted from the literary work *Forests and Snowfields*, foregrounds the mountainous terrain of Weihu Mountain as a defining narrative and ideological space, where landscape becomes inseparable from struggle and resolution; the verb 'Taking' signals agency and transformation, reinforcing the centrality of location to action. Corpus-based analysis reveals that geographically titled films constitute a smaller proportion of the overall output compared to protagonist-centered titles, reflecting a broader tendency toward character-driven narratives in contemporary cinema. Nevertheless, when setting assumes structural primacy—as in *Grassland in the Sky*, *Kekexili: Mountain Patrol*, *Shanghai Story*, *On the Taihang Mountains*, *Operation Mekong*, and *Operation Red Sea*—the title functions as a concise yet evocative synecdoche for historical context, regional specificity, and collective experience.

3.3. Film Titles and Literary Works

Over the past four decades, cinematic adaptations of literary works have constituted a significant and enduring strand of Chinese film production. Such adaptations reflect evolving industry strategies, shifting audience expectations, and broader cultural dynamics. In certain instances, filmmakers have strategically selected widely read literary texts to leverage pre-existing audience familiarity and emotional investment—transforming literary popularity into measurable commercial outcomes at the box office;

the adaptation of Red Sorghum exemplifies this approach, where narrative resonance and visual reinterpretation converged to generate both critical acclaim and broad public engagement. In other cases, directors have been motivated by thematic depth and sociocultural relevance embedded in source material, choosing stories that offer nuanced commentary on historical memory, moral ambiguity, or intergenerational change—the film The Accused Uncle Shangang illustrates this orientation, foregrounding ethical dilemmas within rural social structures through deliberate aesthetic and narrative choices. Additionally, the inherent topicality and contemporary resonance of certain literary works serve as organic promotional assets, reducing reliance on conventional marketing expenditures while amplifying word-of-mouth circulation and digital discourse. Better Days demonstrates this phenomenon effectively, drawing attention not only through its subject matter—youth, justice, and institutional accountability—but also through its alignment with widespread public conversations surrounding adolescent well-being and educational pressure [13].

Quantitative analysis of adaptation trends reveals a distinct temporal pattern: the highest concentration of literary-to-film adaptations occurred during the mid-1980s to early 1990s, followed by a sustained decline through the 2000s, before registering a modest resurgence from 2011 onward. This fluctuation correlates with structural transformations across creative industries—including the professionalization of screenwriting, expanded funding mechanisms for original scripts, and growing confidence in indigenous storytelling capacity. The recent uptick, however, cannot be attributed solely to artistic autonomy; rather, it reflects the systemic integration of intellectual property (IP) logic into film development pipelines. With the maturation of digital publishing platforms, online literature has emerged as a rich, scalable, and audience-tested reservoir of narrative content. Its serialized format, genre diversity, and real-time reader feedback loops provide filmmakers with low-risk, high-reward source material possessing built-in demographic targeting and virality potential. Better Days, adapted from the online novel You Are So Beautiful, My Youth, typifies this paradigm shift—where platform-driven readership metrics, fan communities, and cross-media synergy collectively lower production uncertainty and enhance distribution efficiency. Consequently, adaptation practices have evolved from singular author-centric engagements toward ecosystem-based content curation, reshaping both creative hierarchies and industrial workflows in contemporary Chinese cinema.

3.4. Film Titles and Plot

From a narratological perspective, the plot constitutes the structured discourse through which narrative meaning is conveyed to the audience, shaped deliberately by the filmmaker's authorial choices. Film titling functions as a strategic communicative act: titles are carefully selected not merely as labels but as condensed semantic anchors that foreground central thematic concerns, character arcs, or pivotal narrative events. For instance, the title A Woman for All Seasons—directed by Wu Zhennian—encapsulates the protagonist's enduring moral resilience across shifting historical and ideological contexts, thereby offering immediate interpretive orientation without revealing plot specifics. Empirical analysis of Chinese-language film titles from 2011 to 2024 indicates a marked trend toward plot-anchored nomenclature, second only in frequency to adaptations drawn from established literary sources. This evolution reflects a broader industry-wide recalibration toward narrative coherence and audience accessibility, wherein the title serves both as an entry point into the story world and as a distillation of its structural logic. Notable examples include American Dreams in China, which evokes transnational aspiration and generational transformation; The Dead End, signaling existential impasse and social constraint; So Long, My Son, foregrounding filial rupture and temporal dislocation; The Champion, emphasizing individual triumph amid systemic challenge; The Wandering Earth, invoking planetary-scale stakes and collective survival; and Light of Life, suggesting renewal and humanistic perseverance. Such titles demonstrate

increasing lexical precision in mirroring narrative architecture, underscoring filmmakers' heightened commitment to story-driven conception and execution [14].

3.5. Film Titles and History

A cinematic title is by no means merely a simple symbol or an insignificant abstract concept. The specific choice of words used to refer to a particular historical occurrence can deeply reflect the societal perspectives of a given period, as well as the ethnicity, social background, historical context, religious beliefs, moral traditions, political stance, and cultural values of the creators who utilize them. The incorporation of historical events in movie titles generally occurs in military-themed cinema or historical dramas. Comprehensive corpus statistics demonstrate that, over the past four decades, relatively few award-winning films at the three major international film festivals have been explicitly named after specific historical events. Furthermore, most of these cinematic works depict occurrences in modern Chinese history, with a significant number centered on the mid-twentieth century national defense campaigns and the late 1940s national unification period. This trend is closely related to the profoundly important significance of these mid-century defense and unification campaigns to the development of the modern state. Prominent examples include The Xi'an Incident, Founding Ceremony, Decisive Engagement, The Great Turning Point, The 1840s Trade Conflicts, My 1919, Back to 1942, The Battle at Lake Changjin, and The Volunteers: To the Frontlines. These carefully crafted cinematic productions deeply resonate with diverse audiences and successfully inspire a profound sense of national pride, cultural identity, and collective self-confidence among the general public, thereby reinforcing shared historical memory and societal cohesion across multiple generations of viewers [5].

3.6. Film Titles and Symbolic Objects

In cinematic studies, 'iconic objects' denote material artifacts that occupy structural and thematic centrality within a film's narrative architecture. These objects function not merely as props but as narrative catalysts—advancing plot progression, crystallizing character psychology, and deepening symbolic resonance across multiple interpretive layers [15]. Among internationally recognized films honored with prestigious accolades, a notable pattern emerges wherein the title itself is drawn from such an object, thereby foregrounding its conceptual weight and inviting immediate hermeneutic engagement from viewers. For instance, *The Black Cannon Incident*, directed by Huang Jianxin, centers on a single black cannon chess piece whose disappearance precipitates a chain of bureaucratic missteps and social absurdities; this seemingly trivial item becomes a potent metaphor for systemic rigidity and epistemic limitation in a transitional societal context. Similarly, *Old Well* employs a centuries-old water source as both literal infrastructure and allegorical vessel for cultural continuity and resilience, while *Red Sorghum* uses the vibrant crop to signify vitality, collective memory, and historical endurance. *The Wandering Earth* leverages its titular celestial mechanism to explore themes of intergenerational responsibility and planetary stewardship. A precisely calibrated title rooted in such symbolic objects enhances aesthetic coherence, stimulates imaginative anticipation, and significantly contributes to audience engagement and interpretive depth.

4. The Relationship between Film Titles and the Era and Society

4.1. 1984–1990: Reflection on the Cultural Revolution and Reform and Opening Up

Following the pivotal policy adjustments initiated in the late 1970s, China entered a phase of profound socioeconomic transformation, which significantly influenced cultural production, including cinema [16]. During the period from 1984 to 1990, cinematic expression evolved toward greater thematic breadth and narrative complexity, reflecting broader societal recalibrations. Film content during this era exhibited a marked shift toward introspective storytelling, humanistic exploration, and historical reinterpretation, often grounded in everyday experiences rather than ideological abstraction. Three dominant thematic currents emerged: first, narratives centered on personal resilience and

moral integrity amid periods of social upheaval; second, portrayals of evolving professional and familial roles in response to shifting economic conditions; and third, historically grounded works emphasizing national unity, cultural continuity, and collective memory. These films avoided overt political framing, instead foregrounding universal human concerns—such as justice, dignity, intergenerational understanding, and artistic aspiration—through carefully constructed character arcs and evocative visual language. The emphasis was consistently on individual agency within changing social contexts, rather than systemic critique or institutional commentary. This approach enabled filmmakers to engage deeply with historical experience while maintaining aesthetic autonomy and broad audience resonance. Cinematic techniques also matured during this time, with increased attention to mise-en-scène, naturalistic dialogue, and psychological realism, contributing to a more nuanced and empathetic representation of lived experience across diverse regional and occupational settings.

A number of prominent films from this era explored themes of perseverance, reconciliation, and quiet moral courage in the face of prolonged adversity, often using symbolic landscapes and restrained performances to convey emotional depth without explicit exposition. Works such as The Legend of Tianyun Mountain employed allegorical structures to examine questions of truth, loyalty, and personal conviction, focusing on the protagonist's unwavering commitment to ethical principles despite decades of misrecognition and hardship. Similarly, Love on Lushan, Laughter at Moon Bay, and Hibiscus Town utilized lyrical cinematography and subtle character development to highlight emotional authenticity and interpersonal harmony as foundational values. Concurrently, cinematic depictions of professional life—particularly in medicine, education, and rural development—gained prominence, exemplified by Middle Age, which portrayed the dedication and quiet sacrifices of mid-career specialists navigating evolving institutional expectations. Blood Is Always Hot and Wild Mountains further expanded this trend by emphasizing communal responsibility, environmental stewardship, and the dignity of labor in transitional settings. Historical narratives such as The Xi'an Incident presented pivotal moments through a lens of national cohesion and diplomatic resolution, underscoring shared purpose and peaceful negotiation. Joyful Heroes offered a celebration of regional culture, revolutionary legacy, and grassroots leadership, framed entirely within the context of constructive social contribution and enduring patriotic sentiment. Collectively, these works contributed to a rich, multifaceted cinematic tapestry that prioritized humanistic values, cultural affirmation, and artistic excellence over polemical engagement.

4.2. 1991–2000: Mainstream Ideology and Nostalgic Sentiments

During the 1990s, Chinese cinema experienced a notable shift toward thematic coherence and socially constructive narratives, reflecting broader national priorities in cultural development. As market-oriented reforms deepened across society, the film industry increasingly emphasized works that aligned with public values such as integrity, service to community, and intergenerational continuity. This period witnessed sustained institutional support for cinematic projects that foregrounded exemplary conduct, historical resilience, and grassroots contributions to social progress. Rather than prioritizing commercial spectacle alone, many productions integrated aesthetic expression with substantive engagement—depicting everyday challenges, ethical dilemmas, and collective aspirations in ways accessible to diverse audiences [4]. The emphasis on socially grounded storytelling contributed to a distinctive cinematic landscape characterized by narrative sincerity, visual restraint, and moral clarity. Such orientation supported the broader objective of fostering cultural confidence through authentic representation of lived experience, regional diversity, and shared humanistic concerns.

State-supported cinematic works from this era frequently centered on figures whose lives exemplified dedication, perseverance, and principled action—such as public servants whose commitment to rural development and civic responsibility inspired

widespread admiration. Films portraying pivotal moments in modern history emphasized strategic foresight, unity under challenge, and the enduring significance of collective effort in shaping national trajectories. Simultaneously, rural-themed narratives offered nuanced portrayals of life in less urbanized regions, addressing issues including legal awareness, educational access, and community resilience. For instance, certain films explored how procedural misunderstandings could lead to unintended consequences, prompting reflection on institutional literacy and civic education. Others illuminated structural constraints affecting teaching quality and student opportunity in remote areas, underscoring the importance of equitable resource allocation and pedagogical innovation. In parallel, cinematic explorations of intangible cultural heritage served both preservation and revitalization functions: one notable production drew upon traditional Peking Opera aesthetics—not merely as stylistic ornamentation but as a vehicle for intergenerational dialogue about artistic discipline, symbolic language, and cultural memory. Similarly, another work engaged with folk performance traditions to examine questions of transmission, authenticity, and adaptive continuity in rapidly changing social contexts.

4.3. 2001–2010: Art Films and Feminism

Following the turn of the millennium, China's accession to the World Trade Organization on December 11, 2001 marked a pivotal moment in the structural transformation of its film sector. This milestone catalyzed a broader policy shift toward recognizing cinema as an integral component of the national cultural industry with demonstrable commercial potential. As a result, institutional frameworks were refined to support diversified production models, enabling greater participation from independent filmmakers and creative collectives alongside established state-affiliated studios. While large-scale, nationally coordinated productions maintained their prominence in terms of distribution reach and public visibility, a parallel ecosystem of small- and medium-budget cinematic works flourished—characterized by formal experimentation, regional specificity, and sustained engagement with everyday social realities. This period witnessed increased technical capacity, expanded exhibition venues beyond first-tier cities, and growing audience receptivity to narrative approaches that prioritized psychological depth and socio-historical nuance over conventional spectacle-driven storytelling.

The art-house film movement matured significantly during this decade, yielding critically acclaimed works such as Together With You, And the Spring Comes, Blue Love, and Kekexili: Mountain Patrol—films distinguished by their aesthetic rigor, ethical inquiry, and commitment to authentic representation. Concurrently, gender perspectives gained heightened visibility across multiple genres, with numerous feature films centering women's lived experiences, interiority, and evolving social roles. Notable examples include Jasmine Flowers, Awakening Insects, Life Show, and Nuan, each contributing to a more complex cinematic discourse on identity, labor, kinship, and resilience within rapidly modernizing Chinese society. These narratives often foregrounded intergenerational dynamics, rural–urban transitions, and the subtle negotiation of tradition and individual agency. Moreover, cross-regional cultural exchange was increasingly reflected through stories emphasizing shared heritage, familial continuity, and collective memory—reinforcing the principle of national unity and common civilizational roots across all regions of China.

4.4. 2011–2024: Mainstream Commercial Films and Social Issues

The most significant characteristic of this period was the development of the 'Internet Plus' era, marked by the widespread adoption of mobile internet technologies and the proliferation of social media platforms. Intensified competition among major online video services catalyzed structural transformation across film production, distribution, and audience engagement models [17]. This digital ecosystem enabled rapid content iteration, data-driven audience targeting, and diversified financing mechanisms, thereby reshaping the theatrical landscape. Genres flourished in unprecedented variety: large-scale mainstream productions coexisted with scientifically grounded speculative narratives,

formally innovative independent works, and regionally grounded cinematic expressions reflecting diverse cultural landscapes across China's vast territory. The convergence of technological infrastructure, policy support for high-quality content creation, and evolving audience expectations collectively fostered a more pluralistic and responsive film ecology.

Mainstream commercial films assumed a central role in shaping public discourse, balancing entertainment value with socially resonant themes. Works such as Operation Red Sea and Operation Mekong emphasized collective responsibility, professional dedication, and national cohesion through narratives centered on coordinated institutional action and cross-border crisis response. Back to 1942 offered a historically grounded reflection on resilience during periods of extreme hardship, underscoring enduring values of solidarity, resource stewardship, and intergenerational continuity. Films set in grassland and pastoral regions—including Under the White Clouds, Norjigma, and Wolf Totem—explored adaptive strategies and cultural sustainability amid modernization, portraying communities navigating economic transition while preserving ecological awareness and traditional knowledge systems. Contemporary social concerns were addressed with increasing nuance: Better Days examined the psychological and relational consequences of peer conflict in educational environments; Champion highlighted perseverance, teamwork, and long-term commitment within elite sports training frameworks; The Dead End engaged philosophical questions concerning moral choice and ethical boundaries under pressure [1]. Subsequent releases—including Hi, Mom (2021), Light of Life (2022), Hidden Blade (2023), and Article 20 (2024)—demonstrated sustained artistic responsiveness to evolving societal priorities, integrating legal literacy, caregiving ethics, historical memory, and civic consciousness into accessible narrative forms that resonate across demographic groups.

5. Conclusion

Over the four-decade span from 1984 to 2024, Chinese film titles have evolved as dynamic linguistic artifacts, consistently mirroring broader societal transformations. Early titles from the mid-1980s through the early 1990s often engaged with historical introspection and shifting socioeconomic conditions, reflecting a period of institutional reconfiguration and cultural recalibration. Subsequent decades witnessed increasing thematic diversification: titles from the 1990s frequently emphasized collective narratives and regional identity, while those of the 2000s began incorporating more subjective, individualized, and gender-conscious perspectives. In the most recent period, titles have grown increasingly responsive to urbanization, digital mediation, intergenerational dialogue, and evolving audience expectations—often balancing commercial appeal with socially resonant motifs. Crucially, film titles function not only as nominal identifiers but also as condensed cultural signifiers: they encode implicit values, signal genre conventions, index temporal specificity, and mediate between artistic intent and public reception. Their lexical choices, syntactic structures, and rhetorical strategies collectively constitute a subtle yet persistent register of sociolinguistic adaptation. This sustained responsiveness underscores their role as both products of and participants in cultural discourse—serving interpretive, promotional, and normative functions without overtly prescribing meaning. As such, title formation represents a uniquely accessible site for understanding how cinematic expression interfaces with lived social experience across time.

Funding: Phased achievement of the 2024 General Scientific Research Project of Hainan Vocational University of Science and Technology: A Study on the Evolution of Chinese Film Titles from 1984 to 2024 (Project No.: HNKY2024-65)

References

1. Y. Zhang, *Chinese National Cinema*. Psychology Press, 2004.

2. Y. Zhou, "Cross the borders: the dual cultural devaluation of the Belt and Road co-production films," *Humanities and Social Sciences Communications*, vol. 12, no. 1, p. 493, 2025.
3. E. M. Bapis, *Camera and Action: American Film as Agent of Social Change, 1965–1975*. McFarland, 2014.
4. A. McRobbie, *The Aftermath of Feminism: Gender, Culture and Social Change*, 2008.
5. A. Singhal and E. Rogers, *Entertainment-Education: A Communication Strategy for Social Change*. Routledge, 2012.
6. R. Dengler, "The language of film titles," *Journal of Communication*, vol. 25, no. 3, pp. 51–60, 1975.
7. S. Goodman, *Teaching Youth Media: A Critical Guide to Literacy, Video Production & Social Change*, vol. 36. Teachers College Press, 2003.
8. C. Young, "Film and social change," *Journal of Aesthetic Education*, vol. 3, no. 3, pp. 21–27, 1969.
9. R. E. Dobash and R. P. Dobash, *Women, Violence and Social Change*. Routledge, 2003.
10. M. Greene, *Releasing the Imagination: Essays on Education, the Arts, and Social Change*. John Wiley & Sons, 2000.
11. R. Felski, *Beyond Feminist Aesthetics: Feminist Literature and Social Change*. Harvard University Press, 1989.
12. D. Limon, "Film titles and cultural transfer," *Cultus: The Intercultural Journal of Mediation and Communication*, vol. 5, pp. 189–208, 2012.
13. J. Dhungana, "Film as mass communication and its responsibility to social change," *Interdisciplinary Journal of Management and Social Sciences*, vol. 5, no. 1, pp. 58–66, 2024.
14. R. L. Cooper, *Language Planning and Social Change*, 1989.
15. J. McLeod and R. Thomson, *Researching Social Change*. London, 2009.
16. M. Schratz and R. Walker, *Research as Social Change: New Opportunities for Qualitative Research*. Routledge, 2005.
17. I. Shor, *Empowering Education: Critical Teaching for Social Change*. University of Chicago Press, 2012.

Disclaimer/Publisher's Note: The statements, opinions and data contained in all publications are solely those of the individual author(s) and contributor(s) and not of Publisher and/or the editor(s). Publisher and/or the editor(s) disclaim responsibility for any injury to people or property resulting from any ideas, methods, instructions or products referred to in the content.