The Ecological Evolution of the Online Film Industry Chain in the Past Decade

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Abstract: <u>*Objective:*</u> *Over the past decade (2014–2024), China's online film industry has exhibited a diversified ecological landscape marked by significant industrial chain evolution. Regulatory frameworks have shifted from self-governance to professionalization, while the industrial structure has transitioned from fragmentation to institutionalization. Concurrently, genre content has evolved from hybrid forms toward a new quality cinema characterized by non-fictional themes, strong technological empowerment, and defamiliarization effects. Furthermore, dissemination has advanced from vertical niche-based private circles to matrix-based communication in the public sphere.* <u>*Methods:*</u> *The practices in China's online film industry over the past decade have culminated in a community centered on improving quality while reducing output, sustained refinement and high-quality development powered by the integration of art and technology. This offers strategic insights for exploring new frontiers in the online film sector.*

Keywords: Online Film, Chinese Modernization, Publicity.

1. INTRODUCTION

Online film is a convergent product of cinema's extension and implosion into the internet. Its audiovisual evolution aligns with the trajectory of Chinese modernization, reflecting macro-social conditions through comprehensive and panoramic innovation. On one hand, the public, open, and connective nature of the internet amplifies users' capacity for self-production and self-dissemination, creating a conducive environment for the emergence and growth of online film. On the other hand, technological advancements continuously rejuvenate cinematic art—from silent to sound, black-and-white to color, and theatrical screening to mobile viewing—now paving the way for new forms and models of online film.

2. STANDARDIZED PRODUCTION: FROM DISORDER TO ORDER

Rooted in the high-speed dynamics of the internet, the film industry chain is forging a new era—shifting from an art-led to a technology-driven paradigm. The evolution of standardized cinematic production inherently mirrors social development, contemporary aesthetics, and everyday life.

2.1 Shifting Boundaries: From Art-Led or Technology-Led Approaches to Dual Empowerment by "Art + Technology"

Embedded with characteristics such as "time fragmentation, internet grassroots culture, and personalized entertainment" [1], online cinema has broken through the constraints of secondary recreation and redistribution. It has forged a new creative landscape that integrates artistic ambition with mediated innovation. For instance, films like Fight Against Evil 2, Ace Bodyguard, Tian Fang Yi Tan, Couch Boy, The Home in the Tree2, and The Special Hero Huang Jiguang have all received Douban scores above 7. This shift in public reception reflects a growing audience willingness and anticipation, accelerating the transition toward high-quality online film production within the context of Chinese modernization.

Throughout the timeline, online film has demonstrated the vitality of a pioneer in new frontiers, with its conceptual definition evolving alongside advancements in productive forces. It was initially defined as an "instant, interactive, and original form of cinematic presentation" [2], highlighting how the democratization and participatory of production and broadcasting tools empowers internet-based imagery in the information flow era to challenge traditional theatrical industry chains. Later, reflecting the integration of producers, disseminators, and audiences, and aligned with the idea that "the essence of the internet is connectivity" [3], online film came to be understood as a mediated product characterized by strong co-creation and sharing, with "high participatory nature" [4]. Through comprehensive multidisciplinary evaluation, online film, characterized by its composite nature of "participatory, immediate, original, and interactive" [5], is defined as "a narrative audiovisual work primarily distributed through online channels" [6].

Between 2014 and 2024, against the backdrop of "Internet+" integration, industrial processes such as audience preferences, market box office, copyright distribution, and regulatory mechanisms focused on digital imagery began to take shape. The long-tail effect of online cinema accelerated the industry chain's leap toward high-quality development—shifting from low-quality and homogeneity to innovation. Forward-looking predictions now suggest new forms of expression in open-ended AIGC online film. For instance, the AI-assisted production of The Wild Blade of Strangers signals the pioneering of new markets. Disruptive technologies like 5G, Web3, and AIGC are reshaping the trajectory of Chinese modernist cinema, yet the over-saturated and unregulated intelligent media storm also harbors new ethical dilemmas such as infringement, misinformation, and crises of trust. Finding the balance between internet governance and high-quality development has become a critical juncture for the industry's transformation.

Grounded in digital intelligence, online film is advancing standardized, integrated, and collaborative governance to accumulate momentum for a new quality of imagery. Supported by digital technologies such as the Metaverse, AR/VR, algorithms, and AIGC, it underpins a digital economic supply chain enabled by omni-channel online marketing. The dual-driven integration of "art and technology" is injecting new kinetic energy into audiovisual services, expanding their application across all dimensions of the internet-based imaging landscape.

2.2 Certification Screening: Regulatory Oversight of Producers Has Shifted from Self-governance to Systematization

When highly autonomous online imagery emerged as a new artistic modality, this new wave inherently reflected broader national directives. Since the 18th CPC National Congress, General Secretary Xi has continuously emphasized that "the essence of modernization is human modernization" [7], underscoring the critical role of cultural and artistic practitioners in sustaining the film and television industry chain. In the 2014 Symposium on Literature and Art, it was clearly stated that upholding correct values is fundamental and central to advancing Chinese modernization in an era of vibrant intellectual debate, clashing perspectives, and cultural convergence. The address called on creators to align with overarching cultural orientations, maintain clear creative direction, adhere to a people-centered approach, embed core spiritual values, and strengthen institutional oversight—thus charting a new path for online film's transition from unregulated expansion to industrialized models.

Alongside the concrete implementation of phased policies to "enhance cultural and value confidence" [8], State Administration of Radio, Film and Television (SARFT)'s 2018 directive to "strengthen the regulation of television series, online dramas (including online films)" [9] steered the industrialization and marketization of online cinema toward supply-side structural reform. This encouraged new formats in content production and consumption models, supporting high-quality cultural practices that expand the possibilities of mass-mediated imagery. Simultaneously, it introduced systematic oversight mechanisms for selecting qualified producers and regulating disseminators within the digital public sphere.

The shift from "internet sensibility" to "internet certification" reflects a fundamental restructuring of online film's underlying logic—transforming from a peripheral "poacher" on the edges of the web to a curated presence on interactive digital platforms. Events such as the 2019 Online Film Forum, the 2021 Online Chinese New Year Film Season, and the establishment of the Online Film Working Committee by the China Film Association signalled the institutionalization of online film, marking the industry's proactive adaptation within the broader framework of modernization. Regulatory oversight of producers was simultaneously elevated to a systematic level. Unlike theatrical films constrained by time, space, and screen-based viewing, the geographical limitations of physical venues further accelerated public acceptance of online film. By breaking through traditional notions of public "presence" and enabling carnivalesque forms of expression, it redistributed societal attention and reshaped the discourse around Chinese modernist imagery, demonstrating a normative evolution from disorder to order.

"Starting from June 1, 2022, SARFT began issuing administrative permits for online films and series" [10], Grandpa Tea becoming the first officially certified online film. This fully reflects the transformative leap the industry chain has undergone over the decade. Regulatory governance has shifted from a state of platform-based self-regulation—lacking policy support, standardized frameworks, or procedural norms—toward a state-managed systematic approach. Through broad public supervision and collaboration, a transparent social safety valve mechanism has been activated to review and select qualified producers, achieving specialized oversight across the entire industry chain from upstream to downstream.

2.3 Product Formation: The Industrial Chain Process Shifting from Differentiation to Institutionalization

Following the extensive restructuring of state institutions in 2018, the regulatory oversight of both theatrical and online films, previously unified under SARFT was split: the former was placed under the China Film Administration, while the latter continued to be regulated by the NRTA under standards for online audiovisual content. This institutional separation led to distinct regulatory approaches and philosophies. Online film became subject to multi-agency coordination involving "Ministry of Industry and Information Technology, SARFT, State Council Information Office, and China Film Administration" [11], collectively shaping a new, integrated structure for the online film industry chain. Under state leadership and interdepartmental collaboration, a new blueprint emerged for the convergence and development of online cinema within the framework of Chinese modernization, aiming to integrate and institutionalize previously fragmented and varied industrial processes.

In contrast to the early closed-loop system of self-production, self-censorship, and self-distribution of internet-born content, the "wild" practices characterized by low cost, high returns, and short cycles were gradually phased out and rectified. Shedding weak legal awareness, utilitarian production values, and superficial aesthetics, online film evolved from post-production review and pre-shoot censorship to a structured process requiring pre-shoot approval. Through industry self-discipline and platform-led cleanup efforts, the entire industrial chain moved toward comprehensive standardization. The redesign of rules, refinement of filing procedures, and precision in content review have facilitated a more structured and coherent product ecosystem within the online film sector. Leading, mid-tier, and emerging institutions are collectively advancing the vision of high-quality development in Chinese modernist cinema, accelerating the arrival of a "theatrical-online convergence" era marked by premium content.

As online film platforms function as both distributors and exhibitors, integrated management often results in redundant labor, resource overlap, and operational complexity. The self-contained cycle of production and review faces challenges such as ill-defined boundaries and ambiguous mandates across domains. Although the intensive involvement of third-party policies remains in a run-in period, its influence has already permeated the entire industry chain. The 2019 regulatory shift from "platform-led filing" to "producer self-filing" ostensibly granted studios greater autonomy, yet it actually diluted platform authority, streamlined procedures, and raised production thresholds. This triggered significant industry realignment, including content removals and cleanup campaigns. Continued regulatory cycles and rigorous scrutiny have eliminated opportunists, enabling policy-driven content to market restructuring that filters for creators and distributors with both artistic capability and genuine dedication.

As the core arena for online film's growth, platforms have aligned with Chinese modernization by adopting Premium Video-on-demand (PVOD) models, offering early access ahead of Subscription Video-on-demand (SVOD) windows. This incentivizes high-quality production to capture public attention, while Advertising-Based Video-on-demand (AVOD) and Freemium models collectively shape a diversified industrial ecosystem aimed at maximizing value. Furthermore, the trend toward "output reduction" has led major platforms like iQIYI, Youku, and Tencent Video to embrace co-broadcasting strategies to meet higher quality standards. Customized revenue-sharing algorithms, based on internet-driven rules, reflect a new industrial landscape: macro-convergence with micro-diversity. Quality-driven, standardized, and genre-based development has become the industry's definitive direction. As Chinese modernist cinema evolves, normalization is fostering increasingly innovative and diverse forms of expression.

3. GENRE-BASED IMAGERY EVOLVING FROM HYBRID FORMS TO NEW QUALITY

Genre-based imagery has evolved from hybrid experimentation toward a new qualitative cinema, driven by technological empowerment and aesthetic refinement. This transition reflects deeper industrial standardization and creative maturation, paving the way for more structured and innovative visual expression.

3.1 Themes Evolving from Flat to Diverse: Content Production Shifts from Surface Realism to Nuanced Representation

During its nascent phase, online cinema was marked by uneven quality, relying on supernatural phenomena, illogical narratives, and dramatic effects to break into an untapped market. Through cloning, parody, and imitation, it focused on genres such as mystery, sci-fi, and action—often centered around myths, monsters, sensational tales, eroticism, violence, and horror. Liberal, unrestricted, and highly sensational themes defined this period. As the industry matured, it embraced more popular and accessible narratives. drawing from public memory, social realities, media convergence, and comedic aesthetics in alignment with mainstream Chinese modernist cinema. By

integrating high-quality content from literature, games, films, series, and comics, online films strengthened their realistic expression—meeting elevated audience expectations with refined, "small yet refined" productions. This fostered a multi-value ecosystem combining strong storytelling, substantial investment, and professional teams.

The trend of "theater-to-online" releases signified growing convergence between big-screen and internet-based cinema. Driven by advances in viewing, distribution, and interactive tools, this blend incorporated both cinematic depth and internet engagement. Low-budget yet socially conscious works like The Spring of the Salweven, Donkey on the Tree 2, and Full Moon addressed major themes such as poverty alleviation, rural revitalization, and cultural heritage—themes that represent non-commercial domains that are challenging for high-budget theatrical productions. Meanwhile, films such as Goodbye, Look Up and See Joy, Dreams of Getting Rich, and The Wedding Game portrayed everyday life—funerals, family relationships, marriage, and generational dynamics—with humor, nuance, and authenticity. A longitudinal view of online cinema's thematic evolution reveals that qualitative innovation in genres is transforming internet-born content beyond mere hybridity into genuine integration between digital and cinematic expression.

3.2 Audiovisual Expression Evolving from Imagination-driven Consumption to Technology-enabled Creation: New Quality Productive Forces Revitalize Novel Spectacles

Rooted in China's localized cultural landscape, online cinema anchors its aesthetic tendencies within the nation's modernization. Through production and reproduction, encoding and re-encoding, it condenses fluid signifiers into aggregated signifieds. Empowered by new quality productive forces, imagined realities are visualized, mirrored, liberated, and reconstructed—ultimately leaping into social, class, cultural, and self-identity.

Over the past decade, the artistic treatment of online cinema has evolved from raw mobility to refinement. This is first embodied in the return to intimate framing, where imagery—constrained by the limitations of devices, equipment, and media—remains confined within the boundaries of aspect ratio, resolution, and spatial expression. Audiovisual minimalism performs "subtraction" on ornate, polished, yet redundant imagery, striving to compete with the grandeur of the big screen through clever and tangible qualities within the vast online viewership. Simultaneously, targeted "addition" enhances weaker aspects to sustain vitality. In a market defined by tight timelines, high demand, and rapid returns, spectacular visual effects often yield to narrative coherence. Yet the exponential growth in online film investment has stimulated digital effects' new vitality, advancing it from practical application to artistic and industrial maturity, thereby enhancing immersion in desktop viewing.

In its nascent phase, genres such as sci-fi, horror, and myth visualized supernatural symbols—immortal arts, magic, monsters—yet early digital applications revealed rudimentary and unpolished effects, relying on symbolic expression to convey meaning while supporting scene realism, costume integration, and localized context. During the exploration phase, films like Thousand Faces of Dunjia, The Enchanting Phantom, Snake Girl, Biubiubiu, and The Town of Ghosts allocated 30-40% of their budgets to large-scale effects for combat, supernatural, and gaming scenes, with investments reaching millions. This phase moved beyond 2D compositing and interactive actor choreography, embracing instead motion path simulation, pose tracking, and algorithmic tuning to achieve an artistic texture aligned with Chinese modernist imagery through 3D reconstruction. In the integration phase, films such as Under the Three Rivers, Get in the Dark, The Grey Men, Blocking the Horse, and Eye for an Eye 2 have moved beyond mere technical spectacle. Aligned with the evolution of intelligent media in modernization, they precisely target audience profiles, emphasizing quality over quantity to advance the industrial aesthetics of online cinema. Through measured enhancement and refinement, new quality productive forces are shaping novel spectacles, revitalizing an imagined community that reflects national sentiment and cultural roots.

3.3 Immersive "presence" Enhances the Defamiliarization Effect

Flowing through the digital realm, online film is dissolving the synchronicity of spatial ritual fields. Through virtual communities and distanced connectivity, it reinforces a sense of collective presence, shifting content supply from homogeneity toward participation, and outlining a new landscape of shared cinematic expression within Chinese modernity. Formulaic plots, stereotypical characters, and schematic symbols serve as shortcuts for short-form content to achieve viral resonance. For instance, comedies often use "misadventure journeys" as a clue and propel narratives through" save the cat", while romances rely on archetypes like "prince and Cinderella" to deliver audience satisfaction.

During its early and middle stages, online fil—shaped by industrial expansion, new production paradigms, layered

fandoms, and cross-media platforms—deviated from Hollywood's continuity editing and star-driven spectacle. Instead, it drew on genre cinema's "duality," repetition, and predictability to inscribe diachronic, synchronic, and contemporary dimensions onto the image. This process dissolved the hegemony of cultural consumption, transferring discursive power to the public. Unlike the roughness of the pioneering phase, narrative has become the core of modernist cinematic expression. Yet, in the age of mechanical reproduction, the exploitation of the "aura" of artistic imagery is yielding to a return to authenticity. Breaking free from homogeneity, online cinema has redirected authority toward the public, turning standardized production into co-creation between producers and audiences. For example, the interactive film On the Wings of an Angel adopted a "shoot-as-you-stream" model, enabling viewers to undergo a transformative shift from passive spectators to active participants, engaging in the discourse of the public sphere.

The carnival of danmu (bullet comments) creates a communal space that fulfills the interactive ritual chain of "crowning and decrowning," weaving hypertext modalities into participatory discourse. Repetitions of fantasy and rhetoric extend into recyclable content, self-organizing into subcultural spectacles within the industrial chain. Users may voluntarily disconnect from public engagement, exiting immersion to reflect on the constructed nature of imagery, transforming shared knowledge into philosophical contemplation. Rooted in blockchain logic, online cinema navigates the construction and reshaping of danmu spaces with greater agency, actively bridging subjective spirit and collective identity. It fosters a shared "presence" that enhances defamiliarization effects, completing the transition from homogeneous supply to participatory creation.

4. MATRIX-BASED COMMUNICATION EVOLVING FROM PRIVATE DOMAINS TO THE PUBLIC SPHERE

Amid the peak of the intelligent media wave, the dissemination of modern online imagery is evolving from disorder toward an ordered composite landscape. It has progressed from fragmented small-scale production to integrated high-quality domains, driven by elevated standards and rigorous requirements that foster matrix-based, systematic, and industrialized communication in online film.

4.1 Channels Shifting from Fragmentation to Aggregation: New Management Directions for Leading Platforms Like iQIYI, Youku, and Tencent Video

The shift of power within the modernized image industry chain has empowered streaming platforms to shape a new "decentralized" landscape. The ritualistic space of traditional theater chain has been transposed into the mobile-interconnected public sphere, integrating co-creative production models such as PGC, UGC, and PUGC. Online content leverages big data and algorithms to precisely profile user "taste clusters," establishing a comprehensive matrix that extends from production and distribution to consumption across diverse terminals.

New quality productive forces are facilitating the formation of public discourse and public values within communal spaces, constructing rational spiritual arenas around shared issues. For instance, early online film's "sense of placelessness" extracted bodily and realistic elements from imagery, yet its overly divergent thinking prevented niche works from engaging with public relevance. As modernization advances, online film's interpretation of virtual space flows into the social realm, connecting landscape with order, locality with geography, and restoring a "sense of place" within aggregated publicness. Unlike the earlier opposition among online blockbusters, online micro-films, and theatrical releases under spatiotemporal constraints, high-quality pure-online production chains have transformed online cinema from a new format into a new art form. This renewal shifts the "being-here" of public domains into "being-as-such," elevating the interpellation of subjective consciousness from physical to cloud spaces. The long-tail effect of minor aggregations—co-presence, resonance, and empathy—now feeds back into the mainstream market of online film.

The matrix-based deployment of leading, mid-tier, and emerging players is optimizing the management paradigm of the online film industry chain. Structural reforms on the supply side of internet-based imagery are shifting focus from quantity-driven expansion to quality-enhanced efficiency. In response to earlier market stagnation and contraction, platforms are proactively adapting to meet the new expectations of Chinese modernist cinema. According to real-time data from the three major platforms—iQIYI, Youku, and Tencent Video—their 2023 releases were as follows: "iQIYI 221 titles, Youku 64 titles, Tencent Video 129 titles" [12], compared to their 2022 outputs: "iQIYI increased by 20 titles, Tencent Video decreased by 69, and Youku saw a slight rise" [13]. Through macro-control and micro-regulation of the market, leading platforms are integrating services such as Mango TV, Sohu Video, Migu Video, LeTV, and Bilibili into a multi-platform co-broadcasting strategy. In collaboration with

distributors including New Studios Media Group, Dreamaker, Jolimark, Qishu Youyu, and Fanku, they are advancing into the new landscape of premium content production. Comprehensive upgrades in revenue-sharing algorithms and distribution processes are strengthening the sustainable internal drive of online film.

iQIYI has moved away from the limitations of the "first 6 minutes" rule, adopting instead a dual-window model of "35-day pay-per-view + 180-day membership revenue sharing." Effective October 1, 2024, it refined rules for "member premiere" and "cloud cinema debut" under both "exclusive" and "non-exclusive" categories. The tiered thresholds were adjusted from ">1000; >600, ≤1000; ≤600" to three brackets: "≤200; >200, ≤600; >600," with total revenue fluctuating in real time. This time-based sharing model shifts the attention economy from concentrated elements like titles, posters, and the first 6 minutes to sustained content quality per minute. The removal of platform-led grading empowers audiences to steer market choices. Youku employs a model where "revenue sharing = effective views × fixed content price," eliminating content tiers and standardizing pricing. This simplified approach helps the market identify high-quality productions and leverages the long-tail effect of traffic to reclaim share within the competitive space of online series, short dramas, and theatrical films. Tencent Video continues to apply the formula "revenue = tier-based price × effective views," introducing a six-tier rating system (S Pro, S+, S, A, B, C) to strategically segment the branded marketing landscape. Gradually shifting focus from competing for market share in online films, it has turned attention to the short drama sector in response to new industry trends.

Matrix-based communication enables expanded release windows for online films, while the industry's shift toward DTC (direct-to-consumer) models is driving digital-intelligent innovation across the entire value chain. This transformation promotes high-quality development through pioneering vision, innovation capability, and sustainable practices.

4.2 Audiences Shifting from Resistance to Acceptance: Information Cocoons Dissolve into a Cacophony of Voices.

Emerging from the fusion of internet hypertext and cinematic persistence of vision, online film has faced multi-dimensional challenges since its inception. With the comprehensive advancement of Chinese modernization, internet-based imagery is cultivating public subconsciousness, transforming highly self-organized cultural layers into a participatory culture characterized by freedom, equality, openness, inclusivity, and sharing. Through multi-dimensional, chain-reactive, and trigger-driven mechanisms, it disrupts information concentration, leading audiences to shift from resistance to acceptance of new online film.

Unlike early unidirectional, monolithic, and single-channel communication, new quality productive forces are now comprehensively reshaping paradigms of theatrical-online exchange and mutual learning. Horizontally, serialized and scaled promotion networks are being deployed; vertically, integrated and in-depth public sentiment analysis is being conducted. These dual dimensions create a matrix-like overlay of synchronic and diachronic effects. Balancing between structured theatrical systems and internet-based freedom, online film is exploring new approaches to demassification marketing. Early private interactions—such as the traffic of KOC and Moment, consumer reviews, and lifestyle documentation—have evolved into public campaigns led by KOLs, including celebrities, experts, influencers, creators, and official accounts, who share and recommend content across physical and virtual public spheres to achieve full market coverage. This shift from private to public domains signifies Chinese modernist Internet-based imagery's breakthrough beyond information cocoons, further propelling Chinese stories, imagery, and voices to domestic and global audiences.

The dissemination of internet imagery within modernization has outlined a new ecosystem characterized by qualitative innovation, freshness, and novelty—evolving from the cultivation of new public spaces to the sustained visualization of discourse in the public sphere. The powerful engine of the media propels online cinema toward new horizons. Its matrix-based strategy is deployed throughout the pre-launch phase, leveraging the innate advantages of digital natives to integrate on- and off-platform resources. This enables deep analysis of audience segmentation and preferences, utilizing big data algorithms from short-video platforms like TikTok and Kuaishou to refine user profiling. Creative campaigns—such as trending topics, open calls, contests, advertisements, and events—are designed around published materials to enhance engagement and visibility. New quality productive forces thus empower the foundational construction of a cacophony of public voices.

During the release phase, collaborations with iQIYI's "Cloud Cinema," Tencent Video's "Cloud Premiere," Youku's "Super Premiere," and online festive events (e.g., Internet New Year Film Season) reinforce fan loyalty

through novelty-driven marketing. Joint news features create concentrated, timely, and interactive hot topics, while geo-targeted promotions in spaces like social feeds, subways, bus stops, elevators, and public squares integrate imagery into the fabric of daily life.

During the promotion phase, emphasis is placed on reproduction and redistribution as central drivers. AR, VR, MR, and XR technologies are used to refine interfaces and enhance immersive information integration, while micro-effects and creative sparks stimulate audience-led viral dissemination. Hashtags, trending topics, memes, edits, and video explanations converge into new multimodal pathways for online film distribution. Audiences evolve from resisting novel spectacles to becoming producers and spreaders of new narratives. The decentralization of discourse expands Chinese modernist imagery from niche communities to broader domains, bridging virtual and physical spaces through transmedia integration. Unlike the fragmented and informal influencer ecosystems of earlier stages, matrix-based communication now enhances implementation, practicality, and execution through: the convergence capacity of high-quality development, the additive momentum of participatory production, the innovative vitality of qualitative imagery, and the amplified efficacy of public discourse.

5. CONCLUSION: DEBATE, PROLIFERATION, CONVERGENCE

From 2014 to 2024, online cinema has evolved dynamically—from micro-online films to online blockbusters, and finally to a defined industry—signaling its progression from a new format to a new ecosystem. Responding to users' demand for high quality and lightweight content, online film has deepened integration, moving from novelty elements and fresh modes to qualitative innovation. Media convergence has interwoven "new technologies, terminals, content, users, and marketing" [14], driving the industrial and value chains to jointly shape online cinema's capacity to tell Chinese stories and amplify Chinese voices globally.

Amid globalization, online film represents new subjects, cultures, and communities born from cross-cultural engagement. "In 2023, China's media industry reached a total output value of ¥3,151.823 billion" [15], reflecting a diversified and multi-form ecosystem geared toward high-quality development. This demonstrates China's robust capacity to globalize its modernist imagery. The massive growth in mobile and internet-based media highlights the vitality of digital platforms, while the recovery of theater and screen numbers indicates market saturation and a shift in public space. Although short dramas—a media "new species"—are competing for market share, online cinema remains at the forefront of Chinese modernist imaging within the intelligent media wave. The "content + platform" model empowers high-quality "ship-building" paradigms, facilitating the global dissemination of Chinese stories, imagery, and voices, and rooting a sense of community worldwide.

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