

# *Dual-Dimensional Analysis of Women's Value in the Film Market*

**Xinyao Du**

*Xiamen Foreign Language School, Xiamen, China  
duxinyao888@outlook.com*

**Abstract:** In recent years, the global feminist film industry has shown explosive growth, and its development trajectory has broken through the traditional film and television framework. At the same time, some women's films have used the advantages of women's tracks to build a mature IP industry chain, and the commercial value of women's films has been continuously improved. This trend is reflected not only in the structural transformation of the main body of creation, but also in the deep extension of the industrial chain. From the publication of film and television-linked books to film-derived goods, a complete IP ecological closed loop including film and television, publishing, games and peripheral goods has been formed. Feminist films have created a high market scale in the world through narrative innovation, technological empowerment and consumer scene reconstruction. Against this background, this article summarizes the concept and definition of women's films through literature analysis and data analysis methods and explains the development trend of women's films. Not only has the narrative subject changed, but women as creators have gradually joined the production of films. At the same time, it also reveals the women's consumption market and provides specific reference opinions for future film and television creation.

**Keywords:** feminist film, double dimension, film market

## **1. Introduction**

Feminist film theory was born in the 1970s. In 1975, Mulvey.L put forward the male gaze theory in her book *Visual Pleasure and Narrative Theory*. In this genre, they are often portrayed as housewives, sexy secretaries, and emotionally unstable laymen. Chick-flicks are often a difficult field to define. Chinese scholar Dai Jinhua said that feminist films are not simply marked by the presentation of female roles or the participation of female directors. The real value of feminist films lies in breaking the "male gaze" under traditional patriarchy through the innovation of film language and narrative structure and providing women with an independent perspective and expression space.

In 1972, the first editorial in the American magazine *Women and Film* said that women in the film industry were not only limited to low-end service jobs but also alienated into sexualized symbols. At the same time, film theory and creation system ignored female subjectivity for a long time, and often stigmatize women and other vulnerable groups. From the conclusion of the above research, we can conclude that female films are female-centered narrative films, and women are a subjectification image rather than a controlled one. Women break through the restrictions of patriarchy to become the spiritual subject of the personal world, with the rights of men in the movie, as the protagonist of the movie.

In recent years, more and more female-based films have appeared on the big screen, making obvious progress in expressing women's consciousness and female subjects. At the same time, the academic themes of women's films are also increasingly rich, covering suspense, urban, science and technology, politics, etc. At the same time, the number of female new editors and directors in the industry has also gradually increased, and women's right to speak in the film industry has also gradually increased. Taking the development of feminist films as the theme, this article explores the market development potential of such films and provides specific suggestions for the production and release of films.

## 2. The transformation of female films

### 2.1. Theme narrative changes

According to film critic Ashlia Malone, half of all Hollywood films from 1900 to 1920 were written by women. However, due to the transformation of the film industry from silent to sound, as well as the mature development of the film industry chain, after the film has completely become a commodity, the number of female practitioners in the film industry has declined rapidly due to gender discrimination (mainly referring to the fact that investors think female practitioners do not have business brains) and technical problems [1].

Based on the Bechdel test, we can infer that male screenwriters are more likely to write about characters of their gender. So, Hollywood and even the world for a period prevalent patriarchal film, with male protagonists, the portrayal of female roles full of male gaze. Just like the film *The Truman Show*, the main man of the film is a man, while the female characters in the film appear in the form of wife, mother, girlfriend and so on. There are many films of this kind such as *Smell a Woman*, *Beautiful Legend from Sicily* and so on, although these works are indelible classics in the history of film, he is still a male-themed narrative film [2].

With the popularity of the Internet, media such as TikTok and YouTube have promoted the development of female films to a certain extent, and the number of female directors and screenwriters in the film industry has gradually increased compared with the end of the last century. The change in the narrative subject matter of female films cannot be separated from the grace of chick films. Initially, according to the definition of Hollywood, chick films are female-targeted films, while from the content point of view, they are female-led love films, focusing on interpersonal relationships and emotions. Relatively early chick films include *Legally Blonde*, *Sophie's Revenge*, *The Devil Wears Prada* and so on [3].

In the process of continuous exchange between Chinese and foreign films, the concept of "chick flick" has been consciously introduced into the Chinese film industry. In 2009, the film *Sophie's Revenge* starring Zhang Ziyi was promoted by its producers as China's first true chick flick. In 2013, eight chick flicks achieved a box office revenue of over 2.6-billion-yuan, accounting for about 20% of the total domestic film box office of 12.5 billion yuan for the year. This also proves that the proportion of women-oriented films in the box office is increasing, and their audience is becoming broader.

Now chick movies are no longer limited to girl love but introduce a higher concept. Women can appear in the industry, women can be the protagonist of any movie, and she can also be the savior of the world. This kind of new chick movies mainly include *Her Story*, *There Is No Tomorrow*, *Prima Facie*, etc., which also means that the narrative theme of female films has ushered in another shift, the male gaze has decreased, the female gaze has increased, and the woman is not only the protagonist of the film, but also an indispensable part of the film industry.

## 2.2. Achievements of female directors/screenwriters

In the contemporary film industry, female directors usually rely on dual strategies to change the entrenched gender bias in the film industry, which is not only a subversive experiment on traditional films, but also a good balance with the commercial system of the industry. Taking the war film genre as an example, Kathryn Bigelow's *The Hurt Locker* has sparked controversy due to its "disembodied" narrative. However, it has objectively paved the way for subsequent female creators in the military genre. With *Barbie*, Greta Gerwig has become the world's highest female-directed film, which breaks people's standards of perfection for Barbie, also reflects the satire of the vulnerability of the male-centered society, and *Barbie* has won eight Oscar nominations. In the international screenwriting field, Phoebe Waller-Bridge has subverted the traditional portrayal of the "perfect girl" in TV shows and films by creating a self-mocking anti-perfect heroine in "Fleabag". This work has been described by the journal *Screen* as a disruptive experiment in post-feminist narrative.

Chinese filmmaker Jia Ling, a comedian-turned-film director, has struck a chord with millions of audiences by writing a screenplay about her experience with her mother. The film *Hi, Mom* directed by Jia Ling has achieved remarkable success, ranking fourth in China's all-time box office chart. Jia Ling herself was also nominated for Best Directorial Debut at the Golden Rooster Awards. This success not only reflects the film's popularity but also highlights Jia Ling's talent as a director. Shao Yihui is a representative of China's new generation of female screenwriters and directors. In 2021, her film *B for Busy* won acclaim, and she also won the Golden Rooster Award for best screenwriter. The film *Her Story* directed by her shows a single mother who is unique in the eyes of the world. It breaks the fantasy of a good wife and mother in patriarchal society [4]. Any single mother has the right to open a new life, a new love and a new career while raising her children.

These female filmmakers continue to break the gender bias, to prove that women also have the right to the table, female directors are not inferior to any male directors in both business and vision as well as the film itself, and women can still shine in the film industry.

## 3. Development of consumption power of female film and television market

According to the 2023 China Film Market Annual Report, women aged 20-35 contributed 58% of the annual box office revenue, driving the breakout success of female-narrative films such as *Hi, Mom* and *B for Busy* (National Film Administration) [5]. The 2024 China Film Audience Trends Report indicates that in the 2024 Chinese film market, women and the post-1995 generation have become the main force in film consumption. Female audiences account for 58%, viewers aged 25 and above account for 79%, and audiences from third- and fourth-tier cities account for 41%. Research from Hollywood shows that from 2018 to 2023, female-led films had an average box office return rate of 23% higher than male-led projects. The global box office of *Barbie* at \$1.43 billion further confirms the explosive potential of the "she economy" [6]. At the same time, the proportion of female protagonists in the top 100 North American box office in 2024 is equal to that of male protagonists for the first time. These data have proved that whether it is the film audience, or the development prospects of female films are good, and the probability of becoming the mainstream of the market in the future.

Surveys at home and abroad show that gender roles determine that women are often the decision makers of household consumption, and their purchasing power has a significant impact on the retail industry. According to the survey 2005 China (8 cities) Women's Consumption Situation, the daily consumption of Chinese families is basically decided by women, of which 77.3% of married women decide the choice and purchase of food, clothing and daily necessities for the family. 22.7% of married women in the family buy a house, or car, purchase valuables and other large expenses by themselves

(8 City Women's consumption report) can be seen that women's spending power has become an indispensable part of the market.

### 3.1. New trends in market development

Although the majority of films directed by women are romantic films and family theory films (61%), it is undeniable that more and more female directors are beginning to explore more types of films [7]. Some female directors are leveraging XR (Extended Reality) technology to challenge traditional film language. For example, some scholars used XR technology in her 2021 film *Eternals*. Through virtual production technology, the aesthetics of female epic is built in China. The natural landscape under the wide-angle lens is no worse than that of male directors, and some scholars call it the visual deconstruction of the male-centered grand narrative [8].

In *Portrait of a Lady on Fire*, director Céline Sciamma brought a lesbian story to the big screen, pioneering the “haptic cinema” paradigm. Her long-take choreography was praised by *Film Quarterly* as “subverting the colonial-patriarchal gaze through bodily experience”.

The screenwriter of *Searching*, Aneesh Chaganty, used the desktop movie format to reveal the oppression of women through technological surveillance. His digital realism style has been included in MIT's Feminist Media Archaeology course.

At the same time, the spread of the "ME TOO" movement helped her economic development and feminist films, more female filmmakers were mentioned on social platforms, and more female films were released in the world.

### 3.2. Derivative value brought by feminist films

With the improvement of the influence of feminist films, the derivative value it brings is also increasing. This chapter uses the 4I theory to analyze the derivative value brought by female films. The 4I theory consists of Interesting Interests, Interaction and Individuality. The 4I theory emphasizes consumer-centered individuality. Through fun, interest, interactive and personalized marketing methods to drive user participation and loyalty, to improve the business value of the industry. According to the 2023 global box office report, *Barbie* achieved a global box office revenue of over 1.43 billion US dollars, demonstrating the commercial potential of feminist IPs. Mattel collaborated with UN Women to launch “Leadership Barbie,” transforming the toy into an educational tool for gender equality.

The interaction Barbie-themed pop-up hotel (Barbie DreamHouse Experience) attracted 230,000 female consumers to punch in, forming an immersive IP consumption chain of movie-experience-social. Individualization Warner launched an interactive video platform where users can vote on Barbie endings (such as *Go back to the Dream House* or *Stay in the real world*) to generate a personal version of the movie poster. TikTok launched the #MyBarbieStory challenge, encouraging users to share non-traditional Barbie moments, such as the daily work routines of female engineers. The challenge received over 230 million likes. Influence beauty product companies NYX, benefits, and opi all co-branded with Barbie. Among them, the co-branded eyeshadow of NYX and Barbie was sold out on the first day, which reflects the extremely high derivative value brought by feminism [9,10].

In addition, some feminist films have also formed a relatively complete publicity industry chain. For example, the script of the movie *Hi mom* changed from a stage play to a movie, and then to the joint development of cultural tourism project with Xiangyang Film and Television Base, which led to a 37% increase in local economic revenue and continuous IP upgrade. Secondly, the slice promotion was carried out on streaming media platforms such as Douyin and RdeNote, which made

the plot of the movie more deeply rooted in people's hearts. However, the audience's discussion of the film did not decrease, so its commercial value has been continued [11].

## 4. Challenges

First, the proportion of female filmmakers is unbalanced. Some scholars found that from 2007 to 2023, female directors accounted for only 12.6% of the total sample, and the growth was slow (8.1% in 2017, and 17.3% in 2023). At the same time, only 3.8% of directors are women of color, and Hollywood is still dominated by white men.

Secondly, in some mainstream short video platforms, the flow of female creators is more easily restricted by the official. With the development of her economy, some capital packages the behavior of objectifying women as praise for women, which is still a consumption symbol of capital marketing. For example, the forced connection between luxury consumption and female empowerment in the TV series *Nothing but Thirty* undermines the public nature of gender issues. In addition, there is also a new type of commercial term "pink tax" on the market, and some bad businesses will bind female products with exquisite, beautiful and small, thereby increasing the price of goods. A survey by the New York Department of Consumer Affairs found that women's products were 7% more expensive on average than men's similar products, and the difference in personal care products was as high as 13% (such as razors, and shampoos) [12]. Research by the European Commission shows that 62% of toys and 45% of clothing in EU countries have gender price differences. These may also lead to a decline in women's spending power in the market.

### 4.1. Lack of new film themes

Some scholars found that female directors concentrated on romantic films and family ethical films (61%), while action films and science fiction films were less than 9% of the directing opportunities. Domestic research shows that in successful female films, the portrayal of characters often falls into the paradox of traditional core under the surface of progress. For example, *Hello, Li Huanying* deconstructs the mother-daughter relationship through time travel but still fixates the mother image on the traditional motherhood frame of sacrifice and dedication. Although the movie *Love Myth* has broken people's fantasy of leftover women, the women in the sentence are inseparable from the arrogance of Shanghai locals. The usual chick movie is still about love. Some scholars pointed out that among the works of female directors who won mainstream awards in the past five years, biopics accounted for 41%, and their narrative mode was often reduced to the stylized expression of personal struggle against gender discrimination, resulting in the diversity of female experience being obscured.

### 4.2. Residual stereotype

Foreign scholars have analyzed the visual symbols of Oscar-winning films and found that 76% of female close-up shots still follow the composition rule of the object of gaze, and the male gaze does not decrease. Although Marvel films have introduced a number of females super British characters, relevant scholars pointed out that the deliberate emphasis on body curves and broken clothing in their battle scenes essentially continued Hollywood's visual tradition of sexualized heroism. Women have not yet broken through the objectification.

## 5. Conclusion

This article elaborates on the definition and development status of women's film and television and summarizes the development trend of women's films, which is manifested in the surge in the number of women's films, and obvious progress in expressing women's consciousness and female subjects.



At the same time, more and more female creators have joined the film industry. Through case analysis, the development of women's consumption power in the film and television market is further explained, which is manifested in the mainstream consumers of the market and the decision-makers of consumption in the family. Women's films are increasingly accepted by the market and favored by female audiences. At the same time, due to the emergence of streaming platforms, more and more people have begun to deeply analyze women's films. In the future, women's films are likely to become the mainstream of the market. However, at present, the development of women's film and television is still facing challenges. For example, female creators are struggling in the film industry, capital solidifies women through film and television character shaping, and it is difficult to achieve better development in character shaping. There is still a pink tax in the market, feminist film type solidification, etc. In the future, we can focus on helping flow. Media platforms break people's stereotypes about women, and more female creators use these platforms to publish their works to create a more diversified feminist film market.

## References

- [1] Mulvey, L. (1975) *Visual pleasure and narrative cinema*. *Screen* 16(3), 6–18.
- [2] Deck, M. (2019) *Reframing the gaze: How women filmmakers influence the portrayal of women on-screen*. [Unpublished bachelor's honors thesis], University of Oregon, Department of Cinema Studies & Robert D. Clark Honors College.
- [3] Zhou, P. (2015) *Interpreting the female gaze of chick movies from the perspective of "her economy"*. *Series on Women Studies* (1), 61–70.
- [4] Tasker, Y. (2015) *The Hollywood War Machine: Gender and Violence in Post-9/11 Action Cinema*. Routledge.
- [5] Woodward, K. (2020) *Breaking the Fourth Wall: Postfeminist Irony in Fleabag*. *Screen* 61(3), 412–428.
- [6] State Film Administration. (2023) *Annual Report of China Film Market in 2023*. China Film Publishing House.
- [7] Smith, S. & Choueiti, M. (2024) *Inclusion in the Director's Chair: Gender & Race of Film Directors across 1,600 Top Films 2007–2023*. USC Annenberg Inclusion Initiative.
- [8] Shaw, D. (2023) *Virtual Production and the Female Gaze: A New Frontier for Feminist Cinema*. *Journal of Film and Video* 75(2), 3–19.
- [9] Ciecko, A. (2023) *Asian Women's Autobiographical Cinema: From Post-Socialism to Platform Capitalism*. Amsterdam University Press.
- [10] Sundance Institute. (2023) *Gender Parity in Film: A Decade of Data*.
- [11] Banet-Weiser, S. (2023) *Empowered: Popular Feminism and Popular Misogyny*. Duke University Press.
- [12] Zhang, H. (2022) *Nostalgic Consumption and the Dilemma of Market-oriented Feminism*. *Literary Studies* (4), 88–95.