

Abstract

Nationalism in 21st Century Chinese Blockbusters

by

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This study is thematic analysis that sought to identify nationalistic themes in mainland China's box-office hits in the 21st century. Box-office hits as the study material were picked because of their potential to spread the message they carry. Altogether, 14 movies were analyzed through a deconstruction, identifying scenes and dialogues that contained nationalistic appeals of both political and cultural nationalism as defined by Greenfeld (1992). During the coding process, 22 nationalistic themes were labeled, defined and described. Additionally, the study examined nationalistic structures of the movies taking Gries' (2004) nationalistic narratives and Smith's (1995) ethnic myths as a basis. Movies' background, and historical context addressing China's movie industry and Chinese nationalism are included for clarification purposes.

The movies were found to exhibit manifestations of both cultural and political nationalism. It was found that movies financed and backed by government tend to show political nationalism while commercial movies exhibit cultural nationalism. For the movies' thematic structures, the shift from positive ones showing China's achievements towards negative ones expressing China's suffering was discovered.