

Importing Television Shows To Chinese Market: The Opportunity To Grow

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Dedications

To my grandma, Betty Tu and Ke Xu.

Acknowledgment

I would like to acknowledge my thesis advisor Janice Selinger for her continuous assistance throughout the research process. I appreciate her help so much.

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Abstract

Importing Television Shows To Chinese Market: The Opportunity To Grow

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Janice Selinger, Supervisor

Internet users in China reached 600 million in 2014, which ranks No.1 in the world for the number of Internet users.(Internet Live Stats, 2015). Internet users can access the entertainment video productions, not only shows made in China but also all over the world, especially U.S. produced shows. The increasing purchasing power of Chinese consumers and their desire to view the best and latest media content give foreign show production companies an opportunity to generate big profits. This potential for profit for importing foreign content to China is worth examining.

This thesis focuses on analyzing the Chinese television show market by observing the past history-and current U.S. television show transactions, rules made by State General Administration of Press, Publication, Radio, Film and Television(SGAPPRFT) on foreign content restrictions, how pirated content affect the popularity of the shows, and content gathered from speeches and interviews of the executives from Chinese media industry.

Also, this thesis paper launched a survey about Chinese audiences' viewing habits and their opinions toward the potential of foreign shows in the Chinese market. Analyzing these results, this thesis paper gives the reader a better understanding of the Chinese TV industry and the popularity of foreign shows.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Considering its large population, China is a country whose development and power cannot be ignored. The Chinese market is expanding and is already one of the largest markets in the world. According to Forbes China, Taobao, a Chinese shopping website similar to Ebay.com, is the largest platform with the greatest volume of transactions annually in the world. For large companies and entrepreneurs, including those in the media industry, the large population of China and potential related business opportunities are prospects that must be investigated. China has the largest number of people who use the Internet, and it is hard to image that a new show, even if not of high quality, would not be watched by hundreds of millions of people.

The situation is the same in the media industry. Globalization is influencing business and cultural exchanges all over the world. People in China not only watch shows that are produced domestically, but also those that are produced abroad. The United States has long dominated the international market in television programming, and the U.S. is still the country that exports the largest amount of television programming. Consequently, what is happening in the Chinese TV market should interest those in the U.S., as Chinese business opportunities are increasing. According to the 2014 Culture Blue Book of China, China spent 300 million Yuan (50 million dollars) on the importation of foreign shows in 2013.

Chinese video websites that provide entertaining shows and videos are developing quickly. These Chinese video websites started to import foreign shows in 2011.

Based on these facts, the researcher explored the cultural influence of foreign shows in China, as well as the size of the Chinese market for foreign shows, especially shows imported from the United States. Additionally, the researcher wanted to know the most popular medium Chinese viewers use to watch different kinds of programming, and how regulations affect audiences and the Chinese media industry.

1.2 Background

China has a history of importing foreign shows since the People's Republic of China was founded.

The culture and entertainment products of the United States have already had a great influence around the world, including China. The popular culture of advanced Asian countries such as Japan and Korea has also had a huge impact on Chinese audiences. Shows that are popular among Chinese audiences include those from the U.K., the U.S., South Korea, Japan, and Thailand. Such a trend in viewer preferences is due to two reasons. One reason is because U.S. shows have become the leader in the entertainment industry around the world. A second reason is that the quality and content of the shows produced in mainland China cannot satisfy all Chinese audiences, due to low production values and overly strict censorship. (Yang, 2015)

Shows produced in the U.S. are welcomed by Chinese audiences, with such shows becoming more and more popular among the young generation. There are many American

shows that are well known by Chinese: *Friends*, *24*, and *Prison Break*, among others. Chinese audiences are able to watch programs online, not just through television. The growing purchasing power of Chinese has changed the business relationship between Chinese media buyers and the U.S. entertainment industry. American shows are popular in China, but copyright protection needs to be improved. Additionally, government censorship is too strict, and there is room for piracy and illegal websites to survive. (Yang, 2015)

However, according to Yu (2014), Sohu, one of the most popular Chinese video websites had 2.54 million viewers in September, 2013. Based on the popularity of American shows, the researcher believes that the Chinese TV market has potential for global business and is a worthy subject of study.

1.3 Purpose of Study

By examining these problems, the researcher sought to draw a conclusion about the market potential of foreign shows in China, as well as the prospects for profit. The conclusion will allow a curious reader to understand media content purchases, and see the makeup of the Chinese program market, as well as the competitors in this market. As the opportunities for both China and foreign countries to make deals with each other are many, with benefits for both sides, this study will be valuable to media companies, TV stations, and video websites, as there is an observation and analysis of potential business opportunities and chances to cooperate internationally. This study also reviews current copyright issues and policy regulations in China, and provides a look at the future of Chinese media development. Lastly, it initiates a discussion about censorship policy.

1.4 Research Questions

First, when the number of viewers and audience comments on shows from different countries were compared on douban.com, a website similar to IMDB in U.S., there were fewer people that watched domestic shows, as compared to imported shows. Similarly, viewers did not give these domestic shows very high marks. As the rating of shows from foreign countries was generally high on Douban.com, the researcher assumes that there are fewer people interested in watching domestic programming, as compared to foreign shows.

Secondly, technology is updated everyday, and young people are more willing to use new technology such as the internet and mobile phones. According to Internetlivestats.com, there were 641,601,070 internet users in China in 2014. Therefore, it is assumed that there are many young people who watch shows online. Additionally, there are a lot of them who like to watch foreign shows. The researcher argues that the number of people who watch foreign TV shows is increasing and that viewership is huge. Additionally, since Chinese society and ideology has changed from decade to decade in the late 20th and early 21st centuries, people who grew up at a different times might have different views of the world and different preferences for shows.

Based on these assumptions, the research questions mainly focus on the potential of the Chinese television import market, in the environment of copyright and policy issues.

Question 1: Since copyrights are not well protected in China, it is a common phenomenon to see people watching foreign shows online by using illegal methods. Therefore, the first question is: "How does China currently regulate copyrights and is it effective?"

This question will help the researcher discover how piracy damages the profits of legal video websites and what would happen to both audiences and the price of shows if pirated content was diminished. The search method was used on this question. Using news articles and journals, the researcher found information related to the history of the Chinese government's copyright protection policies, and related laws and regulations.

The second question will be "What is the policy that the government set for importing foreign shows?" This is the key point that can help foreign shows expand their share of the Chinese market. Censorship and the cultural protection policies of China are also reasons why access to content is limited.

The third question is "How many foreign TV show deals occurred in China in the past?" and "What is the history of foreign TV show deals in China?" These questions will help the researcher and reader gain knowledge of the decision history of the SGAPPRFT. The search method was used for these questions. These questions will also answer why the SGAPPRFT changed their policies towards importing shows due to concerns about cultural protection, which is the policy of protecting content produced in China.

The last question is "What is the size of the Chinese audience for foreign shows?" It is necessary to know the specific characteristics of Chinese viewers, such as "What age groups enjoy watching foreign shows?", "Which country's shows are enjoyed by each age group in China?" and "How many hours in a week do Chinese audiences watch these shows?"

1.5. Research Method

Questions 1-3 can be thought as general broad-scope research on the industry. The methods the researcher will use are database, literature, and news research.

The researcher also did a survey of different viewers about their personal opinions and preferences. Through the actual preferences of Chinese audiences, we can better understand these questions through a practical approach.

In conclusion, to gather all the information on this topic, the researcher used the survey and literature research method.

1.6 Significance to the Field

Through this research, knowledge of Chinese regulations and copyright situations will be advanced. Similarly, media production companies from foreign countries will want to include China in their business plans, and advertisers will be willing to invest in copyright videos. More purchases could be done and more content would be provided.

This research will urge viewers to legally consume foreign and domestic films and programs. It will also advocate the idea that the market and regulations in China become regulated and more mature, similar to the business model in U.S. By importing more shows, the hope is that the Chinese media production industry will learn more techniques and skills from foreign shows.

1.7 Definitions

Nielsen ratings are the audience measurement systems developed by the Nielsen Company in an effort to determine the size and composition of the audiences of television programming in the United States.

SGAPPRFT: State General Administration of Press, Publication, Radio, Film and Television, a branch of the State Council of the People's Republic of China. It censors and manages news publications, radio, TV and other media in China.

Soft power, in the Chinese definition, means the power a country has beyond its economic and military strength, when dealing with international affairs. This includes the ideology, policies, and cultural influence a country has.

QVOD and Baidu Player: These two video players were once famous in China. In 2014.4.16, the Chinese government arrested the CEO of QVOD because QVOD violated copyright law. The famous illegal video players that followed the demise of QVOD and Baidu Player are Xigua and Jiji Player.

Sohu.com: Sohu is a Chinese Internet company headquartered in Beijing. This company and its subsidiaries offer advertising, a search engine, on-line multiplayer gaming, and other services. The Sohu video channel is one of the largest video-sharing website in China.

Tudou.com: Tudou.com is a video-sharing website in China, where users can upload, view, and share video clips. Tudou went live on April 15, 2005 and by September 2007 which serves over 55 million videos each day.

CCTV: China Central Television. It is the dominant state television broadcaster in Mainland China. CCTV has a network of 45 channels broadcasting different programming and is accessible to more than one billion viewers.

1.8 Limitations

In research on this topic, the researcher was not able to access the exact motivations of Chinese regulators in their laws, decisions, and restrictions on foreign shows. It is hard to predict regulations in the future as the Chinese government does not provide much information and does not plan to be more transparent about the media production industry.

Furthermore, some of the business deals are confidential information that media companies will not want to reveal. Additionally, the business research on the Chinese TV show market is a detailed research document concerning market information on the entire TV industry of China. The most recent edition costs 22,000 dollars to purchase and the edition accessed by the researcher was not the most up to date resource.

Another limitation is that the survey was only taken by a small number of people, and thus cannot fulfill sample diversity.

1.9 Ethical considerations:

The research is finished by personal interviewing and survey, and cited properly from media industries' research or report.

CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

With its massive population, China is a country whose rapid development and power cannot be ignored. Taobao, a Chinese shopping website which is similar to Ebay, has already become the biggest online shopping platform in the world, with the greatest volume of transactions annually. China has the largest numbers of internet users, and a show posted online could be watched by hundreds of millions of people. Therefore, the business potential of China needs to be valued. A report from *Broadcasting & Cable TV in China* from Marketline is worth review for this study. This market research analyzes the current television market in China, and provides basic data on market value, market geography segmentation, and predictions on the industry's future development.

The Analysis of the Status Quo of the Chinese Market indicates that the Chinese media market is growing fast. According to Lu D, broadcasting companies mainly gain revenue through the sale of advertising time and subscription fees. A production company holding the rights to a successful television series, is generally most concerned with the quality of the show.

Although it is rare to see foreign shows on Chinese television, the amount of content that Chinese television stations produce is limited. Jonathan Cheng noted that "China might be the most content-hungry place on the planet". Cheng observed that there was "little variety in programming and a dearth of quality material at a time when Chinese consumers

and advertisers are growing more discriminating about the programs they watch." This article strengthened the aim of this research paper to start analyzing the viewing habits of Chinese audiences.

A report written by Pete Sweeney called *China to restrict satellite TV stations to one foreign program*, stated that the Chinese government has put a strict limit on cultural imports. The report states that at the beginning of 2014, China allowed satellite television stations to buy the right to broadcast only one foreign program each year as part of new restrictions to push "morality-building" and educational shows.

Shabai Liu is the Vice President of Hunan Province TV. He gave a lecture about the television industry and marketing research. Liu talked about the relationship between supply and demand in the television industry. He did not think that the supply and demand in the industry matched. The supply of content is not enough as most television stations replay old TV series and do not run new shows. He also talked about the way profit distribution occurs in this industry and that it needs to change. He said that production crews do not get paid enough. He also discussed the major players of the American television industry, such as Comcast, which purchased NBC. He used them as an example to argue that Chinese TV stations should merge so that resources could be used efficiently. However, since government policy in China does not allow TV stations to become business corporations, they are discouraged from quality content production and better management strategies.

The China TV Television Production Industry Report focuses on the preference for shows from different countries. This report is relevant to the topic of the thesis particularly

because it concerns the international television production industry. From the data collected by the researcher of this report, multiple conclusions have been drawn such as: 1. Restricted by China's various policies, the introduced foreign TV dramas have seen decline as a whole. 2. Some types of overseas TV dramas have witnessed fast growth in popularity. In 2011, Thai dramas quickly became popular in China, with a high performance-price ratio, passing South Korean dramas as the second most popular country of origin for foreign shows in China, following Hong Kong dramas.

Playing to the World's Biggest Audience: The Globalization of Chinese Film and TV is a book with a number of articles. From the title, we can see that this book is useful to the present research. There are several chapters in this book related to globalization and international trade such as an introduction of the influence of Hong Kong movies, the growth of the international syndication market, and new opportunities in China, and Asia. The book claims that this decade is a new era for the Chinese TV industry as new technology, transnationalization, and political realignment are changing the current environment.

From the conference paper *Similarity and Difference or Similarity in Difference?: China's TV Programming in Global Trend of Neo-liberal Imperialism* written by Shuang Xie, we can see that the TV industry is expanding rapidly and Chinese television stations have to depend on advertisers and other forms for revenue; however, government regulations are still restricting this industry. According to Xie, Chinese censorship is "moving from cultural anti-foreignism to a less severe form of cultural protectionism, censorship and

quotas, [and] limited landing rights granted to selected trans border television broadcasters."

In Huang Jian's research paper-*The tendencies of Chinese television industry development and the entrance of foreign investment*, he tries to locate tendencies in the development of the Chinese television industry and the entrance of foreign investment. The research follows recent developments in the Chinese television industry and analyzes correlations between changes in China's media policies and the outlook of foreign investment, based on governmental documents, press articles, and journal reviews. This research has found that foreign investment is likely to play the role of "content provider" as its core strategic theme and that it will ally with Chinese media institutions to co-produce, thus avoiding political entanglement. As a result, entertainment shows will become foreign sales' major products to sell to China.

The article *Keeping Up with the Neighbors: China's Soft Power Ambitions* mainly discusses the international trade issues related to films and TV programs in China. Soft power, in the Chinese definition, means the power a country has beyond its economic and military power when dealing in international affairs. These powers include the ideology, policy, and cultural influence a country has. The article notes that the export market for Chinese programs is weak, and that the domestic market is not a free market. China's TV industry struggles to compete with the East Asian counterparts of its neighbors, largely because of a lack of compelling content. The term "soft power" is now commonly used in plans and proposals circulated by China's film and TV industry. How to use and acquire soft power is a problem China is facing.

To analyze how the Chinese TV market functions, we can take a look at Lu's *Analysis of the Status Quo of the Chinese TV Market*. The article analyzes the status quo of the Chinese TV market in terms of administration, specialized market, and comprehensiveness. The article then analyzes three abnormal phenomena: fair play disfavored, monopoly preferred; incomplete market system, immature conglomeration. This situation is the weak media industry and production companies not working or collaborating with each other, and stronger content providers or TV stations becoming so powerful that they do not have competitors. In the end, it analyzes the future development of the Chinese TV industry.

Due to the popularity of some famous TV shows overseas, the TV shows format became a product that TV station would like to purchase and used it to produce shows with local celebrity. *McTV: Understanding the Global Popularity of Television formats* is a good research paper about format deals. TV formats are also products for sale. This article talks about the copyright of TV formats and gives examples of violations, punishments, and the privatization demand of this market. This is a classic example of the international trade of media products. This article is related to globalization and technical development, it also explains how cultural differences have an impact on the content that media companies produce for their audiences.

TV China: A Reader on New Media is a collection of several articles about the television industry of China. It focuses on several aspects of this industry such as institutions from different areas, the programming methods of TV stations, the reception of certain TV programs, and global forecasts. This book provides a deep analysis of audience

behavior and the thoughts of TV management. The articles in this book are related to global trade. Language issues are also the main focus for the researcher.

Copyright violation issues are severe in China and pirating is harming the sale of international programs. For a better understanding of the copyright situation in China, *New challenges of Chinese copyright law in the digital age* is worth studying. This book has subjects related to telecommunication policy in China, copyright issues, Chinese laws and legislation concerning the Internet, and laws concerning television broadcasting and sports. A basic knowledge of regulation is helpful for understanding the basic problems of copyright issues in China and how China protects content (or copyrights) through legislation.

Another reference on copyrights is *Description of Shows' Copyright Transaction From Domestic And Overseas*, an article that introduces trade agreements on international program format copyrights. The article is written by a Chinese media magazine, and gives opinions from the Chinese media. Copyright issues regarding international programs are treated seriously by China, and the laws and agreements the Chinese government has set are very strict in order to protect copyrights.

Coonan's article, *Chinese Appetite for U.S. TV Shows Grow*, discusses the potential market of Chinese websites. China's largest online video companies, Youku and Tudou, announced that they will crank up the number of top U.S. skeins in its international library this year. The new entity has focused in recent years on providing licensed content, which is good news for Hollywood and other overseas content providers trying to break into the Chinese market. In another article by Coonan, he notes that the merger of these two

companies would be good news for Hollywood and overseas content providers that are trying to break into China. In this article, Charles Zhang, the CEO of the online giant Sohu, said that piracy needs to be overcome if webcasters are to realize their full potential.

Guanxi is a good lens through which to analyze business negotiation styles in China. Cultural differences make the process of business in China more complicated when dealing with a relationship between two groups. *When Does Guanxi Matter? Issues of Capitalization and Its Dark Sides* is a useful article to study. Guanxi refers to personal connections. This study examines how and when Guanxi operates as a governance mechanism that influences the market competence and performance of firms in the transitional economy of China. Its findings confirm Guanxi's direct effects on market performance and its indirect effects mediated through channel capability and responsive capability.

Hille's *News Corp. Sells Control of China TV Channels* is a report about Rupert Murdoch's News Corp selling control of its three Chinese television channels to a local state-controlled private equity fund. This move was in recognition that its ambitious plan to build and control a broadcasting business in China has failed. Although China has restricted media content policy control, News Corp still wants to operate in the Chinese market.

Stipp's *The Branding of Television Networks: Lessons from Branding Strategies in the U.S. Market* invites the reader to reconsider some of the assumptions about the importance of branding, as well as the strategies employed to brand television networks and other media companies. The author presents an historical analysis of the branding of television networks in the United States which outlines a number of factors and conditions under

which branding was important to the success of a network. The author, however, also lists a number of circumstances under which branding was largely superfluous and not related to the fortunes of a network.

CHAPTER 3: METHOD

3.1 Introduction

According to the different research questions, the methods for each question vary. In this thesis, the researcher will use the methods of survey and literature research to ascertain answers.

Literature research method: The literature research method will be used to answer the first 3 research questions that the researcher listed in the beginning of the thesis paper.

These are:

1. How does China currently regulate copyrights and is it effective?
2. What is the policy that the government has set for the importation of foreign shows?
3. What is the history of foreign TV show deals in China?

To learn more about important aspects about the topic such as new Chinese government policies, the Chinese TV market and culture, and historical influences, the researcher reviewed the newest policy documents, news reports, and literature regarding the topic.

For the last research question: How large an audience in China likes watching foreign shows? This will be researched and analyzed through two methods: the survey of Qualtrics and the research method.

The survey will answer the questions from a quantitative aspect. The survey will give people a more nuanced understanding of the opinions of normal Chinese viewers.

Additionally, to support the idea that the quality of Chinese shows is generally thought to be poor relative to shows from other countries, the researcher also collected data from the largest Chinese movie commenting website, Douban.com, to analyze the quality and popularity of Chinese and U.S. programs in China.

The study combines quantitative and qualitative methods to analyze different statistics about the preferences and motivations of viewers.

Next, the researcher will explain each of the methods in detail:

3.2. Research Method

The research questions regarding copyrights, past international trade history, and current government policy will be answered through an analysis of current news reports and statistics, as well as related literature. The researcher found recent news articles, such as the report *U.S Show Business Is Not Easy To Build In China* (2014), which discusses the popularity of U.S. shows in China by interviewing buyers from Chinese video websites and the CEO of a media import company. Additionally, there is literature that discusses successful video website companies, and that details the histories and culture of Chinese media development. There are also speeches from important figures from Chinese TV

stations, and data from market research on Chinese TV programs. All of this helped the researcher better understand the business model of the current Chinese media industry.

3.2.1 Survey Method

There is a set of 11 questions for this survey, to keep the average time of completion at around 2 minutes so that respondents would not feel bored or quit prior to finishing the survey. In the survey, there are three basic questions regarding to respondents' age, education level and gender. The survey then addresses questions regarding to several specific questions, and asked respondents about their national preference for shows, the genre (Drama/Comedy/Reality) they liked the most, and how they are willing to pay for the show. In the next level of questions, the researcher asked respondents why they liked particular shows, how they accessed shows and why they chose this way to watch the show. The researcher also wanted to know the opinion of viewers towards SGAPPRFT. The complete survey is attached to the end of the research.

3.2.2 Participants

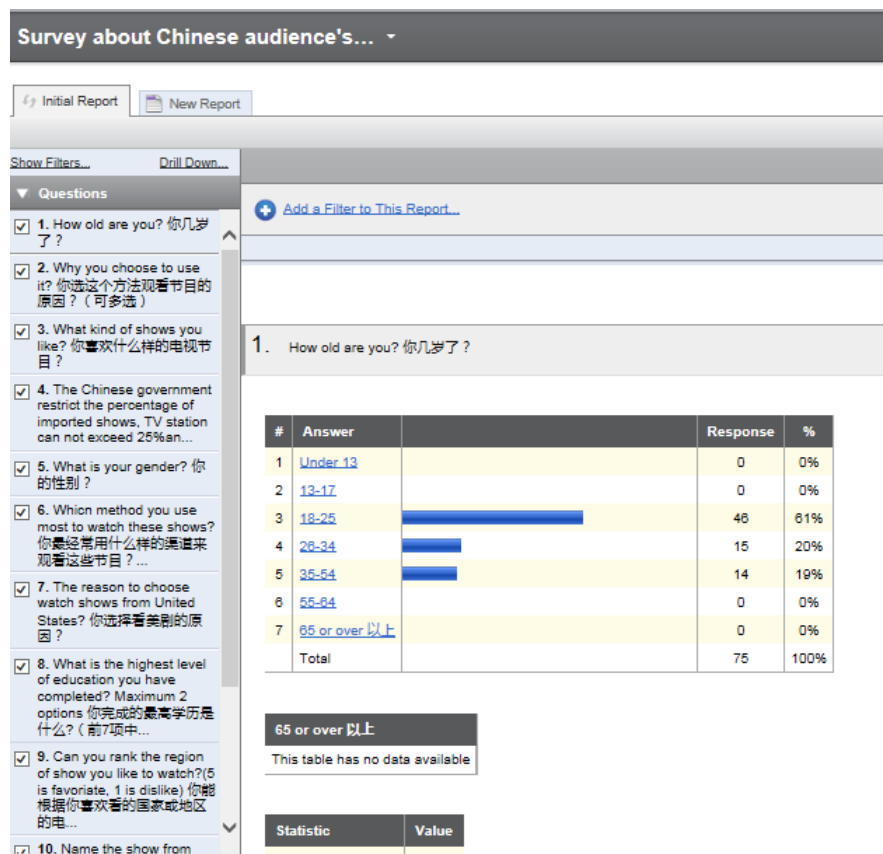
The sampling procedure used by the researcher was convenience sampling. The participants were restricted to those at the researcher's school site and the researcher's Chinese acquaintances. Participants included college students, retired seniors, white-collar workers, and businessmen. The participants came from different regions of China and have different cultural backgrounds, however the most important variety the researcher wanted was age, which can represent the massive amount of Chinese viewers who have the ability to access foreign shows.

3.2.3 Tools of Analysis

Qualtrics is a software package that enables a researcher to do many kinds of online data collection and analysis. It is a powerful tool that not only displays results but also helps researchers analyze data. If researchers want to know how many people who like an American TV show are female, and how many of them are male, he or she only needs to click this question and see the respective numbers and percentages. By using this function, the researcher was able to answer questions such as "What do 35-54 year old people like to watch" and "What do people who graduated from college like to watch?"

The survey was launched in September of 2015 and ended on January 8, 2015.

There were 4 months of survey time, and a total of 75 people who answered the survey.



Image(3.2-1)Qualtrics Result Page

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

4.1 Literature Research Results

4.1.1 Disadvantages of Chinese Drama as Compared to Others countries.

Zhang Xinjian, the deputy director of the cultural market department of the Ministry of Culture noted, "Most exported Chinese TV dramas are old fashioned and poorly packaged by international standards, which doom them to fail" (People's Daily Online April 19, 2006)

The quality of Chinese shows is generally thought to be poor relative to shows from other countries. To test this statement, the researcher used Douban.com, the most popular movie and show review website in China (similar to IMDB) to compare the popularity and ratings of Chinese and American shows, categorizing them as either liked or disliked shows. To define "shows audiences like," the researcher set two standards for the shows:

Standard 1: The rating is higher than 8.5.

Audiences can rate the shows on the website, similar to IMDB.



Requiem for a Dream (2000) Top 5000


R | 102 min | Drama | 27 October 2000 (USA)

Your rating: ★★★★★★★★ -/10

8.4 Ratings: 8.4/10 from 489,312 users Metascore: 68/100
Reviews: 1,881 user | 223 critic | 32 from Metacritic.com

The drug-induced utopias of four Coney Island people are shattered when their addictions become stronger.

Image(4.1-1)Rating system on IMDB



梦之安魂曲 Requiem for a Dream (2000)

导演: 达伦·阿伦诺夫斯基
编剧: 达伦·阿伦诺夫斯基 / 小胡伯特·塞尔比
主演: 艾伦·伯斯汀 / 杰瑞德·莱托 / 詹妮弗·康纳利 / 马龙·韦恩斯 / 克里斯托弗·麦康纳 / 更多...

类型: 剧情
制片国家/地区: 美国
语言: 英语
上映日期: 2000-10-27

更新描述或海报 8.7

(73633人评价)

★★★★★	52.0%
★★★★	35.5%
★★★	10.7%
★★	1.3%
★	0.5%

片长: 102 分钟 / South Korea: 100 分钟
又名: 噩梦挽歌(台) / 迷上瘾(港) / 梦的挽歌

MPAA评级: R

Image (4.1-2)Rating system on Douban.com

If the rating (between 1 and 10) is closer to 10, this means the show is liked by most of the audience. Therefore, the first standard the researcher used to consider a program a "show audiences like" is that the rating on Douban.com should be higher than 8.5.

Standard 2: There must be at least 2000 comments on the page of a given show.

The number of audience comments can indicate a show's popularity. Some movies may have high ratings but a low number of audience comments, which means that they are not watched by many people, they are less influential, and that the sample size for the rating is too small. Thus, they cannot represent the majority of an audience. To ensure that the "movies that audiences like" are watched by a lot of Chinese viewers, the researcher set a standard that the show should have at least "2000 comments" to be considered a "show that audiences like."

If a show can satisfy these two standards, the researcher would consider it a "show that audiences like". According to a list of the best Chinese dramas on Douban.com, there are only 50 dramas that have reached both standards; however, the number of American shows that could satisfy these two standards reached 257, 5 times more than the number of Chinese shows.

The reasons for this are:

1. Control from the government. The content of the show mostly concerns history (the 80s, or ancient dynasty themes), war (particularly World War 2, i.e. the rivalry between the two main Chinese political parties, or the war with the Japanese), family drama, which always touches upon the relationship between mother and daughter-in-law).

2. The quality of shows is mediocre: low production values and outdated techniques make the effects in the show look bad. Graphic 4-1 is a screenshot of *Shigandang*, a show released in 2015. The quality of the effects looks dated and cheap.



(4.1-3) The quality of special effects in the drama *Shigandang*.

3. Due to rules in the market of Chinese show production, shows can only be sold to TV stations after a series is shot and edited. Consequently, TV stations are unable to cancel programming if ratings are bad. "The Chinese show production business decides that we cannot put money into production," according to Weiming Wang, a professor from the Communication University of China. "If we want to make a show better, it would cost investors billions of dollar, however TV stations would not raise prices if the quality were better. Besides, Chinese shows are only able to sell to the TV stations in China, not like the U.S., they also get revenue from other countries." (Han, 2012)

4.1.2 The history of Chinese television stations buying U.S. TV shows

In contrast to viewers in the United States, most Chinese viewers do not only like watching shows from their own country. U.K., U.S., Korean, Japanese, and even Thai shows are welcomed by Chinese audiences. One reason for this state of affairs is because American shows lead the entertainment industry around the world. Another reason is that the quality and content of the shows that are produced in Mainland China are not able to satisfy all Chinese viewers.

According to Sun Bing's report *35 years of U.S drama*, he divided the history of the importation of American shows into four stages: the Translated Drama age (80s), the Disc Age (90s), the Download Age (00s), and the Internet Age (2010 to now). (Sun, 2014)

Thirty years ago, U.S. television shows were translated and broadcast in China. The only channel where Chinese viewers could watch U.S. shows was on CCTV, and every show

that CCTV imported after 1980 became a hot topic for people to discuss. These included *Garrison's Gorilla*, *Hunter*, *Knight Rider*, and especially *Growing Pains*. According to Yu, these shows all became a phenomenon in China. (Yu, 2014)

Later, although the awareness of copyright regulations was not high in China, many illegal DVD's were produced. People could pay 1 dollar to get a movie. This was the so-called "disc" age. After this, when the Internet became more accessible, illegal downloading software encouraged Internet users to download video content. This is the so-called "download age." Lastly, after legal video websites started to purchase shows from the U.S., with the help of copyright regulations, more and more viewers began to choose to use legal websites to watch shows.

4.1.3 How popular are American shows in China today?

Adam Roseman is the CEO of FansTang. Through his connections in Hollywood, this company was able to bring many shows from the U.S. to China, including *Vampire Diary*, *Big Bang Theory*, *2 Broke Girls*, among others. Johnny Galecki, the lead actor of *Big Bang Theory*, was invited to China by Sohu.com in 2013. While staying in China, he was shocked that he was so welcomed by Chinese fans, which was completely unexpected by him. Fanstang helped Galecki set up a weibo account, which is used by Chinese like twitter. He "tweeted" in Chinese: "The popularity of our show here really scared me!"

Roseman said Galecki's trip is only an epitome of how popular U.S. shows are in China. Lots of information is being shared online. "What's most important is that a lot of U.S. stars don't know they are famous in China," said Roseman in an early interview. It is a new market that both sides need to explore.

It is a common phenomenon for the young generation in China to watch foreign shows. China has a potentially huge number of viewers from the young generation who like watching shows from foreign countries, especially those from Korea, Japan, the U.K., and the U.S. People can access various forms of information and content from the Internet and TV. Consequently, shows produced in the U.S. have become the choice for lots of young people who like American culture and are eager to learn English. It is also of interest to the researcher to see what the Chinese young generation thinks about foreign shows, the reasons they watch these shows, and their future preferences.

4.1.4 Chinese TV stations are not a good way to watch foreign shows, but video websites are.

Although there is a large audience who wants to watch foreign shows, there is only a limited amount of shows bought by large Chinese television stations. Another big issue that impacts television is the established regulations that the Chinese Ministry of Culture has set to limit the importation of programs. Funding from the government to TV stations is limited, however the government still puts a lots of restrictions on TV stations.

The restrictions the State General Administration of Press, Publication, Radio, Film and Television (SGAPPRFT) has for importing foreign shows include: first, every imported show needs to be censored and licensed to ensure that there are no pornographic scenes, violence, or politically controversial content in the show; second, the percentage of foreign shows cannot exceed 25% of all the aired shows per day; in addition, television stations cannot air foreign shows during primetime, and so on. As the commercialization of the Chinese market grows and Chinese people's awareness of globalization and freedom of

expression becomes stronger, it is time for TV stations to take back their right to control their content.

On the other hand, the restrictions imposed on video websites are not as strict as those imposed on television stations. Sohu.com has become the largest video website in China. Video websites are allowed to buy TV show licenses from other countries and have less limitations than television stations on broadcasting shows. In 2014, Sohu owned the licenses of 13 of the 15 top American produced shows.

When Roseman started Fanstang, his original motivation came from the passion with which Chinese video websites purchased U.S show copyrights. According to iresearch.com, Sohu had 2.54 million viewers in September 2013, and the total amount of shows on Sohu that produced in American reached to 2000 episodes. "We would sign a contract with Fanstang. They would give us updates about famous TV stars, we also hope we could invite some TV stars here," said the editor of Tecent's U.S. series channel Fang Wang.

The international market for Hollywood started small in 1990. The box office in North America is 60% of global. 20 years later, box office overseas takes over 60% of the whole revenue. Much in the same way, we can see that China has passed the U.S to become the largest box office market in the world.

When *Prison Break* first aired in the U.S, its ratings in U.S. were not as good as the ratings for *24*, *Desperate Housewives*, and *Grey's Anatomy*. However, *Prison Break* became a blockbuster among China's young generation. The download number for the first season reached a million, and there were Chinese websites created to share information about the

plot, cast, and news. When the second season started, there were teams that could produce Chinese captions in 12 hours. In the 17 episodes of the fifth season of *Big Bang Theory*, there was a Chinese brand milk be placed on the table. According to the report *U.S Show Business Is Not Easy To Build In China* from Qdaily.com, this is the first type of product placement income that a U.S. show has earned from China. For Chinese investors, U.S. shows gather two powerful things: the Internet and young viewers who have strong purchasing power. (Yu, 2014),

According to Fang Wang, the editor of the video department of Sohu.com, U.S. produced shows are liked by advertisers. Most of the viewers of these shows come from the largest cities in China, and they are relatively young. "Lots of advertisers are willing to invest in U.S. shows, especially cosmetics, car, and luxury brands," said Fang. "U.S. shows could increase the advertisement inventory in big cities. The input is rewarding, very effective." said a salesman who deals in international trading.

4.1.5 The sales relationship between buyers and sellers has developed in recent years

Chinese video websites have already built a steady buying relationship with foreign entertainment companies. These increasing business opportunities are changing the attitudes of U.S. TV stations towards China. "In the past, it was always us continually asking them questions, but nowadays, they will synchronize their plans." Wan said. Among these large video websites, the advantage for Sohu.com was that they started their business early, and that they have programs like *"Big Bang Theory"* and also other past transaction experiences; however, tencent.com owns different media platforms and has a lot of avenues for promotion. It also has had more interaction opportunities, such as its

participation in a 2012 Los Angeles media summit. Tencent sent their top leaders to meet U.S. media companies to discuss opportunities for cooperation.

Compared to Hollywood movies, the production cycle of TV shows is shorter, which leaves less time for the negotiation of brand placement advertisements. "Chinese brands have a high control over product placement, such as how, when, and where to place a product," said Siru Liu, the sales representative of DreamWorks and Paramount in China. (Yu, 2014)

4.1.6 Censorship: the biggest obstacle

Censorship was not as big of an issue in the 90s when most of the media imported was pirated, because it was obtained illegally. However, when the Internet became popular and the media industry tried to profit from internet users, censors began to keep an eye on the Internet.

Before 2013, video websites did not have to follow the regulations that SGAPPRFT had imposed on Chinese TV stations, which restricted the time and percentage of foreign shows aired by every channel per week. This doesn't mean video websites would be able to choose what they wanted to play. The control from government would come eventually.

The case of *Big Bang Theory*: On April 1, 2013, SGAPPRFT asked video websites to take down the popular shows *Big Bang Theory*, *NCIS*, *The Practice*, and *The Good Wife*. SGAPPRFT and the video websites did not explain why these shows were removed. In an ironic twist, CCTV (the largest government controlled TV station) aired the *Big Bang Theory*,

with a censored, "healthy" translated version. One good thing about this is, when TV stations see the influence of U.S. shows, they try to "fight" to get the content.

The case of the TV box: In July 2014, all the U.S. television shows that were broadcasted through the "media box" (Letv box, which is similar to Hulu, and Amazon fire TV) were called to be removed, due to the "violence and pornography content" it has.

License Case: On September 5, 2014, SGAPPRFT announced that all foreign licensed programming needed to be censored before being played on video websites, meaning that synchronous updates for the shows (broadcasting the show at the same time as the U.S.) were impossible. These regulations took effect on April 1, 2015. Additionally, these changes did not mean that audiences could watch the show a week after it was released in the U.S. because SGAPPRFT required waiting until a whole season finished to decide if a show could be aired. Consequently, viewers might have to wait for a half year to see a show after it was broadcasted in the U.S. The "delay" lowered the price of importing shows, and also helped pirated content grow. These rules changed the Chinese market, negatively affecting the foreign show business. This state of affairs has disappointed many viewers, however it has helped the development of Chinese produced shows. (Yang, 2014)

4.1.7 Soft Power: Cultural protection

Soft power, in the Chinese definition, means the power a country has beyond its economic and military strength, when dealing with international affairs. Japanese animation and popular culture and Korean dramas have already been recognized by the world, however, China is far less known for exporting its own cultural products. This is due to the quality of Chinese media content. Zhang Xinjian, the deputy director of the cultural

market department with the Ministry of Culture noted: 'Most exported Chinese TV dramas are old fashioned and poorly packaged by international standards, which doom them to fail' (Keane, 2010).

According to Keane Michael's article *Keeping up with the neighbors: China's soft power ambitions*, the vice chairman of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, Li Wuwei, is against the ideas of scholars and policymakers, who believe that China is already doing very well in managing its media industries, and who believe that China should stick to churning out movies and television programming aimed at educating the masses. For such conservatives, the reinforcement of "cultural security" through distinctively Chinese ideas is the key to soft power. (Keane, 2010) This means that the strategy of China for developing soft power is to restrict cultural input from other countries, and to try to provide more opportunities for the original content created in China.

4.1.8 Pirated Content & Copyrights

Viewers who love U.S. shows devote their passion to translating their favorite shows, and put them online to share with others. Although these videos are illegal, such viewing increases the fans of such shows.

As video websites buy more and more foreign programming, these websites see pirated content as their greatest enemy, supporting the punishment of illegal software and websites by the government. According to Chaoyang Zhang, the CEO of one of the largest Chinese video websites, Sohu.com, the enforcement of copyright laws could bring the film industry \$130 billion in revenue. Along with the ban of the popular illegal video software QVOD and BAIDU player, copyright lawsuit cases worth millions of dollars are currently

ongoing, with the price of shows increasing from thousands of dollars to millions. Consequently, it is easy to see that Chinese media business are reinforcing the idea of copyrights and that videos selling industry is gaining a better status in China.

China's online video anti-piracy joint action was launched on November 13, 2013. Sohu, Youku, Tencent, and several other video websites associated with the China Film Copyright Association, the Motion Picture Association of America, and other film industry groups declared war on illegal content providers. This action has led to hundreds of lawsuits, where 10 thousand or more video productions were involved. Baidu.com, the largest search engine website in China, similar to Google, said it would refine its pirated content filter system to not show any pirated content. They would clear illegal content in 24 hours if a report is received. They would also recommend legal content, and disconnect from all illegal video websites.

The case of QVOD: QVOD is a media player that allows users to download videos and watch them for free. It was used to download shows and porn, which is illegal in China. According to Ifeng.com's report, on April 16, 2014, QVOD announced it would remove all the pornographic and illegal content found on its player, and in May, 2014, the office of anti-pornographic and illegal publications announced that they revoked the business license of QVOD, and arrested the relevant personnel. Later, the Shenzhen Financial Market Authority issued QVOD a 260 million Yuan (around 40 million dollars) penalty. According to the *Jinghua Times*, QVOD could not afford to pay the penalty by March 19, 2015, and filed a lawsuit to waive the penalty. There has been no decision in this case at the time of the publication of this thesis. (Gu, 2015)

The case of YYeTs: It is a U.S. show forum created by a Canadian Chinese immigrant. YYeTs provides Chinese captions for U.S. shows and also illegal resources for download. In October 2014, the Motion Picture Association of America made a list called "*Request for public a comment on the 2014 Special 301 out of Cycle Review of Notorious Markets*," and YYeTs was on the list. Under pressure, YYeTs closed its website in December 2014. However, there are words translated as "please wait for the cocoon break "on YYeTs' website. Which means YYeTs might reform and appear again in the future.

The case of Shooter: Shooter is another caption sharing website, which enables users who love translating foreign shows to upload the captions users produced. On December 17, 2014, the national copyright administration announced that Shooter was shut down. (Sui, 2014)

All of these cases, which occurred in 2014, indicate the determination of the National Copyright Administration of China, and the trend of a legal business model for international trade. Nevertheless, censorship has also restricted legal websites from importing shows without censorship. This also provides a reason for the existence and survival of illegal content.

4.2 Survey Results

4.2.1 Survey overview

By checking Qualtrics, there are 75 people who participated in the survey.

After analyzing the results, the researcher divided the answers and questions into 6 topics, which are:

a. Basic information, b. Production region preference; c. Viewing medium (the way the viewers choose to watch shows); d. Reason to pay for the show; e. Reasons for watching U.S. produced shows; f. Opinions: audience responses to two specific questions.

4.2.2 Result:

a. Basic information:

- Age: Among the 75 people, there were 46 of them ages 18-25, 15 people between 26 and 34, and 14 between 35 and 54. There was no other age range chosen by the participants.
- Gender: Among the 75 people, 46 of them are female (61%), 29 of them are male (39%).
- Education: Among the 75 people, only 5 people have only a high school degree, most of the participants have Master or Bachelor degrees, and 23% of 75 the people have experience of studying abroad.

b. Production region preference:

The results of the question "Can you rate the regions of the show you like to watch? (5 is favorite, 1 is dislike)" are below (form 4-1). The answers change depending on country (China, US/UK, Korean/Japan, and Taiwan and Hong Kong) and age groups.

#	People/ppl	age			Gender		Total
		18-25 44 ppl	26-36 15 ppl	36-54 12 ppl	Women 46ppl	Man 29ppl	
1	China(Mainland)	3.14	3.32	3.50	3.10	3.48	3.24
2	Taiwan and Hongkong	3.20	3.21	2.94	3.19	3.13	3.16
3	United States/ United Kingdom	4.08	4.23	4.04	4.08	4.14	4.11
4	Korean/ Japan/ Thailand	3.00	2.15	2.00	2.94	2.20	2.67
5	Others 其他	2.13	3	2.20	2.55	1.86	2.37

Form 4-1: Can you rate the region of show you like to watch?

Conclusion:

- In this chart, American and British produced shows are the most welcomed by Chinese audiences (4.11 points). Chinese produced shows rank second, with 3.24 points.
- We can see that the value of Chinese shows go up when age goes up. In contrast, the value of other shows produced in Asia goes down. Shows from the U.S. and the U.K. remained steady, however the 26-36 group likes shows from the United States the most.
- Ratings are slightly different when comparing women and men. There are more women who like Korean/Japanese/Thai shows than men, and there are more men who like Chinese and U.S/U.K. shows.

- When the researcher put "education" as a filter for this question, it was found that each education level showed an equal amount of interest towards the different regions. What was perhaps the most surprising is that people who chose the option "I am studying/ studied abroad" did not have a special interest towards foreign shows. They still like shows produced in China.

c. Viewing medium (the way the audience chooses to watch shows) and the reasons for that choice:

#	Answer	35-54(14ppl)	26-34(15ppl)	18-25(46ppl)	TOTAL(75ppl)
1	Chinese TV stations	8(57%)	1(7%)	2(4%)	11(15%)
2	Chinese Video Websites	5(36%)	12(80%)	30(65%)	47(63%)
3	Illegal software	1(7%)	2(13%)	14(30%)	17(23%)
4	DVD	0	0	0	0
	Total	14	15	46	75

Form 4-2: What channel do you use to watch shows?

For No. 2, Chinese Video websites, include Youku, Sohu, Sina, and Tudou.

For No. 3, Illegal software, include Qvod, Xigua, Jvod and download software, such as Thunder.

The percentage after the number represents the percentage of each answer chose in the same age group.

Conclusions:

- Most of participants watch shows on legal Chinese video websites. However, there are still many who watch shows on illegal websites. No one uses DVDs anymore.
- For older people (35-54 age group), there are a higher percentage watching shows on TV. The use of TVs instead of websites decreased with age.

The following question is "why do they chose this medium to watch programs".

- Most people chose "It is free." (61%)
- The second highest rated answer is "Fast speed and high definition (40%),"
- The third reason is "I could not find another resource to watch it. (31%)" and the fourth reason is "No advertisements in the show"(27%).

The percentage adds up to more than 100% because people can choose more than one answer.

d. Reason to pay for the show:

- There are 43% of people who would like to pay for the shows they watch.
- Among these people, 41% of them prefer quality (speed, high definition) and 41% of them watch shows for free (use illegal software) because they could not find other proper ways to watch the shows they like.
- Compared with the people who do not want to pay for their shows, people who are willing to pay for shows think that a good watching experience

(speed and high definition) is also the reason to spend money on it. They also want to keep following the story presented in the show.

e. Reasons to watch U.S. produced shows

- There are 48 people who chose "better script writing, good story, complicated relationships."
- 9 people chose "High production values, better visual effects"
- For the rest of the answers, each of them only got 4 votes, so the researcher excluded them from the analysis.

f. Opinions: audience responses to two specific questions:

Question One: Can you write down one of your favorite U.S. shows?

- The result does not only address old shows like *Friends*. There are answers regarding current shows such as *The Strain*, *Modern Family*, and the most popular shows, *Big Bang Theory*, and *House of Cards* from Netflix, among others.

Question Two asked people's opinions about Chinese censorship-- SGAPPRFT:

"The Chinese government restricts the percentage of imported shows, TV stations cannot exceed 25% and video websites cannot exceed 30%. What is your opinion toward this?"

- 21 46% of people chose: The information we can receive from foreign counties is limited. I can know less about the world.

- 11. 24% of people chose: I cannot get access to my favorite shows. I am frustrated.
- 8. 17% of people chose: I can still watch those shows on other channels, it doesn't matter to me.
- 7. 15% of people chose: I approve what the government did. The policy can encourage the development of Chinese shows.
- 5 people chose "Others" options. Their reason are: 1. Government is too strict and not reasonable. 2. It is necessary to protect our own culture. 3 We could use other channels to watch the shows we like.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

5.1. Introduction

Based on literature research, news-gathering, a data analysis of Douban.com, and also a survey, this analysis of the Chinese market was conducted and tested through different perspectives and with the use of the opinions of Chinese viewers. Through this research, the researcher was able to answer the research questions.

5.2. Answers to the research questions

Question 1, How does China currently regulate copyrights and is it effective:

Pirated content cannot be eliminated unless the original versions are free. With the shutdown of several well-known illegal websites and software applications, the blooming of video websites show that copyright protection in China is improving. The number of viewers of legal websites like Youku.com or Sohu.com often reach millions per episode. However, strict censorship and policies that restrict video websites in their broadcasting of certain shows provide room and a reason for pirated and illegal video websites to exist. Ironically, it is pirated content that introduced foreign shows to Chinese audiences, which raises the popularity of U.S. shows in China.

Question 2. What is the policy that the government has set for the importation of foreign shows?

In the past, SGAPPRFT has had a series of regulations restricting the amount and quality of foreign content on Chinese television stations. These are that every imported show needs to be censored and licensed first, to ensure that there are no pornographic scenes, violence, or politically controversial content in the show. Second, the percentage of foreign shows cannot exceed 25% of all aired shows per day. Additionally, TV stations cannot air foreign shows during primetime. In the past these rules limited the choices of television stations, but not video websites. However, the policy towards websites changed in 2014, when the international trade in shows increased dramatically.

In 2014, SGAPPRFT first asked video websites to remove four popular shows (*Big Bang Theory*, *The Good Wife*, *NCIS*, and *The Practice*) from their sites, later, SGAPPRFT set new rules that all the foreign shows needed to be censored to be able to be broadcasted. This was a big strike to foreign show importation since audiences would not be able to enjoy the show until the whole season was finished. This policy ruined the best deals for foreign shows (the price is cheaper for old seasons) and also caused more viewers to use illegal websites.

Question 3. What is the history of U.S. TV show deals that have occurred in China?

From the earliest program, *Garrison's Gorilla*, which was censored and translated by the Chinese government in the 80s, to the latest, *Big Bang Theory*, imported by video websites chasing after profit, foreign show deals have always been occurring. Due to economic development and the rise of the Internet, privately owned businesses lead the

importation of foreign shows. U.S. show production companies have also realized the importance of a big Chinese market so the interaction between Chinese and U.S. media companies increased, including product placement advertisements and visits from big TV show stars.

However, with the boom of legal importation, SGAPPRFT realized video websites needed to be controlled and censored. In 2014, SGAPPRFT started to set rules for Internet companies and also took down four popular shows from the Internet.

Question 4. How do audiences in China like to watch foreign shows?

By analyzing the results of the survey, we can see that Chinese shows are not the main choice for audiences. There are a large percentage of foreign shows that are liked by Chinese audiences, especially shows from the U.S. Moreover, among all the audiences, young Internet users, who have the greatest purchasing power, are the biggest fans of U.S. shows.

Additionally, the answers from the survey show that most Chinese viewers are not supportive of the cultural protection rules set by SGAPPRFT, as the regulations limit the ways Chinese watch shows. Those surveyed would use illegal websites to view the shows they like.

5.3. Conclusion

The research results of data "show that audiences like" collected from Douban.com, and also the result of Qualtrics results shows that Chinese audiences love shows produced in the U.S. and other countries, and that the Chinese TV market is worthy of investment

from the U.S. and other countries. However, the policies from the Chinese government do restrict importation, and pirated content online also has a big share of the market. However, this does not mean that the desire for U.S shows will decrease: instead, pirated content stimulates the popularity of U.S. shows. Additionally, the communication and collaboration between Chinese buyers and U.S. sellers are not only on the show deal level. There are more potential opportunities for them to collaborate in future. The policies of the Chinese government changes from time to time, however, setting obstacles for international trade is not the best way to protect Chinese culture. Instead, the most important thing is to put more effort into producing better quality Chinese shows, and also to learn business model techniques from Western countries. People should have more rights on choosing what they want to watch, and it will also create a good competitive environment for all the shows, which will also help China build soft power.

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Appendix A: Qualtrics survey questions

Q1 How old are you?

Under 13 13-17 18-25 26-34 35-54 55-64 65 or over

Q2 What is the highest level of education you have completed?

Less than High School

High School / GED

Some College

2-year College Degree

4-year College Degree

Masters Degree

Doctoral Degree

Professional Degree (JD, MD)

Q3. What is your gender?

Male/Female

Q4. Which country's shows did you watch the most

China(Mainland)

Taiwan and Hongkong

United States/ United Kingdom

Korean/ Japan/ Thailand

Others

Q5. What kind of shows do you like?

Drama/Comedy/Reality

Q6. How do you watch these shows?

Chinese TV stations

Chinese Video Websites (Youku, Sohu, Sina, Tudou...etc)

Illegal software (Qvod, Baidu player, Xigua, Jvod) and illegal download(Thunder)

Q7. Why do you choose to use it? (be specific—rather than it)

Cost nothing

No advertisement

High definition, good translation quality

I can find almost all the shows I want to watch in here(Resourceful)

I want to keep the show in my laptop after watching

Q8. Name the show you watched most or you like most from United States

Q9. Would you like to purchase shows at a store or become a paying member of video website to enjoy more shows?

Yes/No

Q10The reason to choose watching shows from United States?

Better script writing, good story, complicated relationships

Cost a lot for production, better effects

It is a trend, U.S shows are popular nowadays

