The Political Economy of the Korean Film Industry: Focusing on the Korean Blockbuster and the Dominance of Multiplex

Sung Kyung Kim
Sungkonghoe University
Institute for East Asian Studies
Statistical Facts

[Audience, Korean / Foreign film]

<table>
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<th>Year</th>
<th>Korean Film</th>
<th>Foreign Film</th>
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<td>2000</td>
<td>2,271</td>
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<td>2001</td>
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<td>2006</td>
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<td>2007</td>
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<td>2009</td>
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Statistical Facts

Market share by country (2010)

Market share by country (2011)
Brief history of Korean Film Industry

Regulatory Period
- [small film related company]
  - Independent 0000
  - Local distributor
  - Theater

Promotional Period
- [big company]
  - Samsung, Hyundai, Daewoo, SKC, CJ

Stabilised/Stagnation Period
- [3 majors]
  - CJ, Orion, Lotte

Stagnation Period
- [3 majors]
  - CJ, Orion, Lotte

Management
- Corporate

[2 major telecommunication]
- SKT, KT

[2 major telecommunication]
- SKT, KT

[others]

[others]
The Regulatory Period (1960~84)

**Industry**
- Import business dominated
- Hostess film
- Strong star systems

**Policy**
- Licence System (dominance of government control)
- Import Quota System
- Consorship (against any political message)

Affluent workers
Urbanization
Rapid increase of audience

“Gold Age of Korean Cinema”
인기 영화의 경우, 3~4 시간 줄서기는 기본!
KOREA, 1960's

Image description: A crowd of people gathered, possibly for a protest or demonstration. The scene appears to be from the 1960s, as indicated by the text "KOREA, 1960's."
62년 7개월간 징기 식역, 70만 명 관람 (당시 서울 인구 250만명) 이라는 흉생 대기도 수십 만, 이후.
KOREA, 1960's
### The Promotion Period (1985~2002)

#### Industry
- More freedom for production
- Korean New Wave (1987-97)
- Rapid decrease of import business
- Big Conglomerates considered to start business in the film industries
- Various support and incentives from the Korean government
- More funds from finance sector arrived

#### Policy
- The fifth amendment of Motion Picture Law in 1984 (licence to register)
- U.S. direct distribution in 1987
- Culture Industry Department established in 1993
- Abrogate the limitation of print in 1994 (wide-release system)
- Screen Quota System (up to 140 days – 109 days)

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The Industrialization of Korean Film Industry
Government’s promotion for Korean Wave
Korean Blockbuster

1) Korean materials + Blockbuster form
2) Strong narrative over spectacle
3) The phenomenology of national audiences
The Stabilised Period (2003~2007)

Industry
- Second generation of conglomerates managed to set up vertical integration (production-distribution-exhibition)
  - CJ (CJ Entertainment + CGV),
  - Orion (Showbox+ Megabox)
  - Lotte (Lotte Ent. + Lotte Cinema)
- The three majors occupy over 80% of the market
- Rapid Increase of multiplex

Policy
- Roh regime (2003~2007) focuses on supporting Korean Wave in foreign market; Relatively less support for ‘non’ profit films
- Weakening Screen Quota: 146 days to 73 days in 2006

Heyday of Korean Blockbuster with the dominance of multiplex
Number of Screen: Multiplex

No. of Screen


373 373 344 309 280 302 301 321 314 300 305 301 292
588 720 818 977 1,132 1,648 1,880 1,975 2,004 2,055 2,009 1,974

No. of Theater


373 373 344 309 280 302 301 321 314 300 305 301 292
588 720 818 977 1,132 1,648 1,880 1,975 2,004 2,055 2,009 1,974
Silmido (2004)

Taegukgi (2004)
2nd Wave of Korean Blockbuster
- The host (2006)

‘The blockbuster is no longer American owned. The idea may be borrowed and translated, but this should not be understood in terms of the original and the copy, where divergence from the original marks failure of authenticity. Instead, in the postcolonial politics, and globalized economics of blockbusters, borrowing and translation are only the first step on the road toward agency and creativity’ (Berry, in Stringer, 2003: 218).
### Industry

- Third generation of Conglomerates entered the market (Two major telecommunication conglomerates)
- More interest on media content for mobile network
- Three majors use film industry in particular exhibition sector for attracting more people for their major business (department store, mega store, and etc.)

### Policy

- Less friendly towards ‘culture industry’
- Major players in the film industries fail to get a fund because of their political view
- Several films funded by right wing group have produced and distributed via major distribution network.

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**Changing Meaning of Cinemagoing**
Possible Research Topics
1. Shopping Mall and Multiplex

- Reconceptualising the existing meanings of cinemagoing;
  1) cinemagoing as a cultural event;
  2) cinemagoing as consumption of film text
     → the possibility of replacement

- Film Theatre:
  Democratic space?
  Or Space for middle class consumption?

- Phenomenology of space:
  Sensing cinemagoing practice

- Ethnography of cinemagoing practice in multiplex
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2. Regional Blockbuster?!
Asia Culture Industry

- Cooperation within region
- Funding within region
- Distribution across region
- Imagining cinematic place in the level of region
- Phenomenology of audience in regional level
- *

Asia Culture Industry