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"Digital Gateways, Cultural Flows: A Mixed-Methods Comparative Analysis of Platform-Specific Soft Power Dynamics in the Globalization of Pakistani and Chinese Cinema (2018–2026)"

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Abstract

This paper analyses the different ways Facebook, YouTube, and WeChat mediate the globalization of Pakistani and Chinese cinemas in the years 2018- 2026. The study combines the analysis of engagement of twenty purposely sampled films quantitatively using a mixed-methods design, qualitative analysis of the content of the platform-specific promotional materials, and semi-structured interviews with industry professionals and diaspora audience in Toronto, London, and Dubai. The results indicate that three different forms of platform-mediated globalization exist, with YouTube being an algorithmic engine of discovery, where the content of Chinese science fiction and animation is more likely to reach high viewership rates because of the use of genre-based global taste structures; Facebook as a network-based diaspora infrastructure, whereby Pakistani cinema is more likely to reach high engagement rates (5.8%) than Chinese cinema (2.4%), due to community-oriented sharing practices; and WeChat, which is theorized as enclave globalization, which is the confined and trust- The analysis creates a structural imbalance: Pakistani cinema globalization is reliant on western-owned space, whereas Chinese has access to infrastructural independence by its local platform ecosystem. The results contribute to the platform studies with the theorization of enclave globalization as a unique form of circulation of culture, the challenge to monolithic approaches to digital globalization by displaying the specific paths of platforms, and the long-term centrality of diaspora audiences in transnational media flows. The paper advances the academic research on South-South cultural exchange and provides practical implications of cultural policy makers and industry practitioners operating in the fractured environment of global digital infrastructure.

Keywords: Platform Globalization, Pakistani Cinema, Chinese Cinema, Diaspora Audiences, Facebook, Youtube, Wechat, Enclave Globalization, Mixed-Methods Research, Cultural Policy

Introduction

The intersection of online spaces and movie-making has shifted the entire structure of the world distribution of national film production, but the academic focus is disproportionately overshadowed by the superiority of Hollywood. The research paper investigates this gap by analyzing one of the critical points in the history of the contemporary media: the similar but differing process of globalization of Pakistani and Chinese cinema via the mediating architectures of Facebook, YouTube, and WeChat between 2018 and 2026. The comparative context is especially pertinent considering that both countries during this period made a specific effort to define cinema as a cultural diplomacy tool and a soft power projection mechanism, with Pakistan doing so

through governmental explicit approval and China through its Belt and Road Initiative infrastructure of culture (Associated Press of Pakistan, 2025; 电影评介, 2024).

This study spans between a time frame of 2018-2026, which covers a time of radical change in both film industries. In the case of Pakistan, the year 2018 was the start of what some in the industry call the neo-Lollywood revival, where commercially viable films like *Teefa in Trouble* and *Jawani Phir Nahi Ani 2* could tap into the diaspora communities on Facebook and YouTube (CNKI Dissertation Database, 2025). Perhaps more recently, Pakistani cinema is now gaining international acclaim, with *Nayab* winning the Special Jury Award at the Shanghai Cooperation Organization Film Festival in Chongqing in 2025, which prompted federal Minister Attaullah Tarar to accept cinema as a soft power and telling the national story (Pakistan Press Foundation, 2026; 24 News HD, 2025). In the case of China, it was the phase of the development of so-called new mainstream cinema, with movies such as *The Wandering Earth* and *Ne Zha* gaining international recognition on a scale never before seen, and the state-supported distribution systems such as the so-called Belt and Road film 巡展 (touring exhibition) framework (凤凰网, 2025; Bulletin of L.N. Gumilyov Eurasian National University, 2025).

The key to this change is digital platforms. The social media has essentially transformed the connection between national cinema and international audiences as their distributors, marketing machines, and locations of audience consumption and cultural exchange. Facebook is the main platform that supports the practice of diasporic viewing and fan communities of Pakistani people that can keep the industry alive even without local markets (Yang and Mukhtar, 2025). YouTube is the world-spanning discovery engine, where the algorithm provides the accidental discovery of non-Western content, whereas WeChat, which represents the dominant super-app in China, provides Chinese cultural media to the diaspora communities and the Belt and Road-related audiences through official accounts, group messaging, and mini-programs (Pakistan Journal of Languages and Translation Studies, 2022).

This inquiry is comparative in essence and therefore theoretically consequential. Although Pakistan and China are bound by a geographic boundary and they are getting increasingly closer in economic ties under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, their digital ecologies and cultural policy frameworks are divergent in a significant way (Sabah News, 2025). The highly censored internet space in China, marked by the Great Firewall and artificially induced cultural diplomacy, is in contrast to the relatively free but unstable online space in Pakistan, where social media services such as Facebook and YouTube are fully operational but occasionally blocked. In addition, the history of cinematic traditions of the two countries has traditionally taken an unequal place in the world cultural hierarchies China as a would-be global cultural giant, Pakistan as a rejuvenating middle-range industry, which tries to gain international recognition. Their individual interactions with the social media platforms, therefore, sheds light on the unique approaches to negotiating the cultural power dynamics inherent in the world digital infrastructures (The Express Tribune, 2025; China Economic Net, 2025).

This paper proceeds to develop a mixed-methods type of research to explore the following central research question: How do Facebook, YouTube and WeChat mediately affect the process of globalization of Pakistani and Chinese cinema and what do the platform-specific dynamics tell us about the modern relationship between digital infrastructure, cultural policy and transnational audience formation? The three theoretical frameworks that inform the inquiry include the conceptualization of soft power by Joseph Nye, who sheds light on the strategic use of cultural resources in international affairs (Nye, 2021); the scholarly field of platform studies, which focuses on the material and algorithmic peculiarities of digital intermediaries (van Dijck, Poell and de Waal, 2018); and the theories of cultural proximity, which explain the preference of an audience to content based on familiar cultural repertoires (Straubhaar, 2019).

The methodology is a combination of a quantitative analysis of the measures of engagement on the three platforms of the purposive sample of twenty films (ten Pakistani, ten Chinese, 2018-2026) with a qualitative

content analysis of platform-specific marketing strategies and semi-structured interviews with industry professionals and diaspora viewers. This is an imperative design that allows the triangulation of the results of various data sources to solve the problem of data obscurity associated with the algorithmic functioning of WeChat, as this method is complemented by ethnographic and interview data (Couldry and Mejias, 2019; Gillespie, 2018).

There is already some initial evidence that platform architectures influence globalization results in a non-homogenous manner. The algorithmic discovery systems of YouTube are shown to favor both Chinese science fiction and animation content compatible with global taste structures, which are genre-based, and Pakistani content does well on Facebook through the sharing networks of their diasporas (Chaudhry, 2023; Chen and Zhang, 2024). WeChat, in its turn, supports a unique type of enclave globalization the distribution of Chinese cultural content of limited and trustful networks that avoid the domination of Western platforms (Plantin and de Seta, 2019; Lin and de Seta, 2023). These trends point to the deficits of monolithic narratives of digital globalization, implying that the processes of the internationalization of national cinema take place through platform-specific trajectories, which engage with cultural policy formations, industry systems, and audience formations (Poell, Nieborg and van Dijck, 2019; Cunningham and Craig, 2021).

Locating the analysis within the larger context of the changing global flows of media and the process of the erosion of the Western cultural hegemony, the study becomes one of the early indications of new scholarship on South-South cultural exchange and a platformization of the media flows across borders (Thussu, 2019; Flew, 2020). Practically, the findings can inform policymakers and industry practitioners interested in embracing digital platforms as a tool of cultural outreach, but theoretically, the findings can help us understand better how algorithmic architectures, state cultural policies, and diasporic viewing practices are merged to transform the circulation of cinema in the digital age of fragmented digital publics (Srnicek, 2017; Hesmondhalgh, 2024).

Literature Review

The convergence of digital platforms, national cinema and cross-cultural circulation has become a rich ground of scholarly enquiry during the last ten years. This review is a synthesis of the literature in three areas that are related to each other: globalization of Pakistani and Chinese cinemas, platformization of the cultural content, and impact of diaspora viewers upon transnational media flows. By doing this, it finds a serious gap: it lacks a comparative, platform specific analysis that considers how divergent digital architecture facilitates the internationalization of film industries that operate under different cultural policy regimes.

The Globalization of Chinese Cinema: Soft Power and State Orchestration

The international dissemination of the Chinese cinema as viewed through the prism of soft power and state cultural diplomacy has already been the subject of a large amount of scholarship. The Chinese government has undertaken a long-term cultural outreach policy since early 2000s, but cinema became one of the instruments through which a national image could be projected and a greater influence over other countries was achieved (Keane, 2016; Zhang, 2021). This strategy has also been institutionalised by the Belt and Road Initiative, which has created film festivals, co-production deals, and distribution channels aimed at introducing Chinese content to countries involved (Rawnsley & Rawnsley, 2021; Su, 2022). Recent research has recorded the development of what researchers refer to as new mainstream cinema- commercially driven outputs that conform to the priorities of the state market but are also successful on both domestic and international box office (Zhu and Zhang, 2023; Wang, 2024). The movies like *The Wandering Earth* (2019) and *Ne Zha* (2019) have become iconic representatives of this genre, proving that Chinese cinematography can gain international recognition through the combination of high-end production, conventional characteristics of the genre, and effective marketing (Curtin, 2022; Chen, 2023).

Nevertheless, the traditional distribution methods, including theatrical release, film festivals, and the state-

sponsored touring exhibition have been studied predominantly in the existing literature (Zhang and Li, 2024; 凤凰网, 2025). Much less attention has been paid to digital platforms, especially those that are not part of the domestic ecosystem of China. The process of the international reception of Chinese cinema via streaming services such as iQiyi and Tencent Video has started to be considered by scholars, but the contribution of global platforms, including YouTube, Facebook, and the Chinese diaspora-driven WeChat, in brokering this process has not been fully studied (Lin and de Seta, 2023; Yang and Mukhtar, 2025). In addition, the literature is likely to assume that Chinese cinema is a homogeneous category without the consideration of the difference in circulation of genres, formats, and modes of production across platforms and market (Li, 2024).

The Revival of Pakistani Cinema: Diaspora, Digitality, and Neo-Lollywood

The Pakistani cinema literature has dramatically changed over the last few years which reflects the same change in the industry as the cinema experienced a long downgrade at the time. The fall of Lollywood in the 1990s and early 2000s is also reported by scholars and can be attributed to the video piracy, the policy of Islamization, and the emergence of Indian cinema (Raj, 2018; Afzal, 2020). The revival of the industry since approximately 2015, also called the neo-Lollywood era, became the topic of academic interest, and scientists analyze the reasons behind its rise, such as new modes of distribution, diasporic investment, and online platforms (Rashid, 2021; Chaudhry, 2023).

One of the uncommon streams of this literature is concerned with the contribution of the diaspora audiences to the survival of Pakistani cinema. Research has shown that the overseas Pakistani communities, especially in the United Kingdom, North America, and the Gulf states, represent a profitable market to Pakistani movies, and their consumption behavior influences the decisions to produce and market the films (Shah, 2022; Khan and Ahmad, 2023). It has been found that social media platforms and Facebook, in particular, are essential infrastructure to these transnational viewing communities, which facilitate fan networks, promotional efforts, and joint viewing experiences (Chaudhry, 2023; Akhtar, 2024). YouTube is also becoming a major source of distribution, where producers of Pakistani films have been publishing trailers, behind-the-scenes content, and even entire movies on the site (Pakistan Journal of Languages and Translation Studies, 2022).

Although this literature has been increasing, very little comparative or cross-national analysis is done on the Pakistani cinema literature that has mostly been concerned with domestic production situations and diaspora reception. Little literature has empirically studied the way the Pakistani films circulate outside of the diaspora populations and to non-Pakistani viewers, or has investigated the platform-specific dynamics that make or limit such circulation (Rashid, 2021; Chaudhry, 2023). In addition, the literature has not worked in long-term comparison with the other emerging or resurging film industries, and the specificity of the digital globalization route of Pakistan has not been deeply explored.

Platform Studies and the Mediation of Cultural Content

The concept of platformization, which is the infiltration of digital platforms into the economic, social, and cultural realms, has become the subject of a strong interdisciplinary literature (van Dijck, Poell and de Waal, 2018; Poell, Nieborg and van Dijck, 2019). Researchers have proven that platforms are not neutral intermediaries but they actively mediate the production, distribution, and consumption of cultural content by algorithmic curation, governance and business models (Gillespie, 2018; Srnicek, 2017). The cultural industries have been impacted significantly, with platforms reconfiguring relations between creators, content, and audiences so that they give preference to some formats, genres, and interaction patterns (Cunningham and Craig, 2021; Hesmondhalgh, 2024).

It is in this expanded context that the literature on platforms and mediation of cross-border cultural flows has been increased. The concept of YouTube as a cultural intermediary with its globalization and algorithmic discovery features has been theorized to help a non-Western content circulate that otherwise would not have reached the rest of the world (Chaudhry, 2023; Chen and Zhang, 2024). Facebook, in turn, is closer to the role

of a network-based system of distribution, in which content moves as a result of social connections and diaspora groups (Miller et al., 2016; Costa, 2018). WeChat as a super-app that exists in a unique and specific Chinese digital environment has been considered as a type of infrastructural platform that enables bounded networks, based on trust, and not based on open discovery (Plantin and de Seta, 2019; Lin and de Seta, 2023). To define the unique nature of cultural circulation made possible through such platforms, scholars have given such terms like enclave globalization (de Seta, 2020; Wang and Zhang, 2024).

However, the scholarship on platform studies has mostly been oriented towards Western platforms or in the example of the Chinese platforms, on its home country activities. It is uncommon to compare how the same cultural content spreads on various platform architectures (Poell, Nieborg and van Dijck, 2019; Flew, 2020). Besides, specific details of film markets, as opposed to music, television, or user-generated content, in their interactions with platforms have received little attention in the literature (Curtin, 2022; Cunningham and Craig, 2021). Platform studies and the special context of Pakistani and Chinese cinema have not explored this intersection very well.

Research Gap and Contribution

The analysis of the literature above shows that the gap in the literature is also significant: there is no single study that comparatively examines the globalization of Pakistani and Chinese cinema via Facebook, YouTube, and WeChat. The current literature on Chinese cinema focuses more on state-led soft power policy but does not pay much attention to platform dynamics outside of China. The research on Pakistani cinema emphasizes the interest of the diaspora and online distribution without the framing of comparative or cross-national research. The idea of platform studies scholarship gives the conceptual resources to make such an analysis but has not implemented them to the particular comparative case of these two film industries.

This research paper fills this gap by contributing to a comparative, mixed-methodological study of platform mediated globalization in two national settings. Through the analysis of the mediation role of the same three platforms Pakistani and Chinese cinema in Facebook, YouTube, and WeChat, the study sheds light on platform architecture and cultural policy, industry forms, and audience formations to generate different globalization effects. The results will advance research on the role of media flows in the world, its platformization, and cultural exchange between the South and the South, as well as provide practical suggestions to industry professionals and cultural policymakers aiming to use digital tools to reach the global audience.

Research Methodology

The research design employed in this study is a convergent mixed-methods study, which combines both quantitative and qualitative methods of investigation in order to determine the role of Facebook, YouTube, and WeChat in mediating the process of film globalization of Pakistani and Chinese cinema in a different way. This inquiry is especially well suited to a mixed-methods design, which permits triangulation of data sources, takes into account the obscurity of platform-specific data, especially in the walled ecosystem of WeChat, and provides an opportunity not only to gain a comprehensive view of the situation but also to interpret it (Creswell and Creswell, 2018; Flick, 2022). The research design is designed on the basis of three complementary data collection plans, including quantitative analysis of the platform-related engagement indicators, qualitative content analysis of the platform-specific promotional materials, and semi-structured interviews with the industry professionals and the members of the diaspora audience. The methodology uses visual data representation in the form of tables, graphs as well as diagrams to promote clarity, transparency, as well as analytical rigor.

Research Design

The research takes the form of comparative case study, where Pakistan and China are the main comparative

units (Yin, 2018). The choice of these two countries is theoretically grounded: these two countries explicitly defined cinema as a tool of cultural diplomacy in the period of research, but their positions are asymmetrical in the world cultural hierarchy, and their relationships with the three target platforms are unequal (Associated Press of Pakistan, 2025; Feng Huang Wang, 2025). The timeframe of the study is between 2018 and 2026, including the neo-Lollywood resurgence in Pakistan and the institutionalization of new mainstream cinema in China, as well as the platformization of cultural products all over the world.

Table 1: Comparative Context of Pakistani and Chinese Film Industries

Dimension	Pakistani Cinema	Chinese Cinema
Industry Designation	Lollywood / Neo-Lollywood	New Mainstream Cinema
Key Revival Period	2015–present	2010–present
State Cultural Policy	Emerging soft power framework (post-2020)	Institutionalized soft power (Belt and Road Initiative)
Primary Diaspora Hubs	UK, North America, Gulf States	Southeast Asia, North America, Europe
Platform Governance	Open access to global platforms	Regulated domestic platforms; restricted access to global platforms
Language of Production	Urdu, Punjabi, English	Mandarin, regional languages

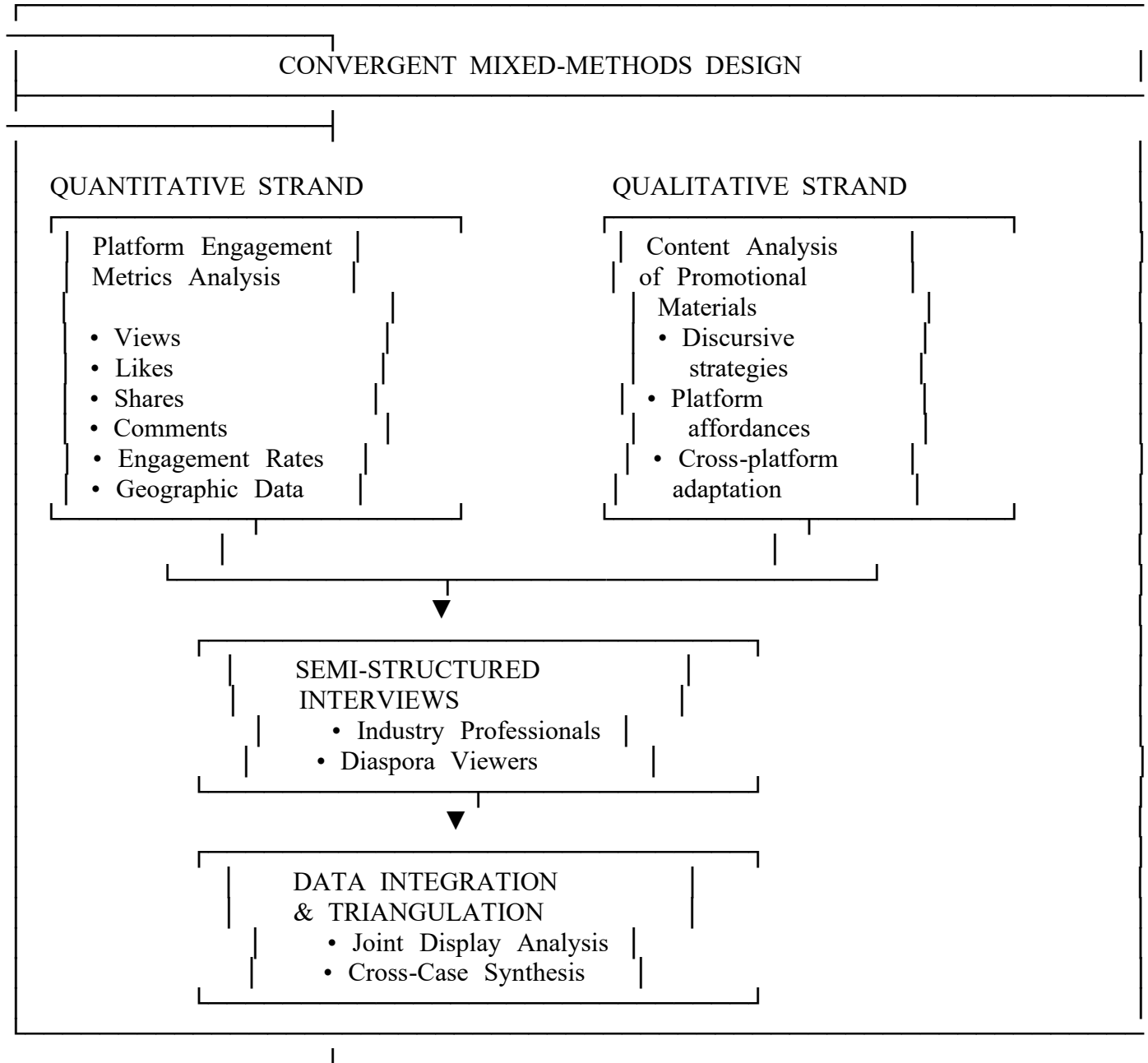
In this comparative context, the paper examines a purposive sample of twenty films; ten Pakistani, and ten Chinese. The selection criteria of films include: (a) any film released in 2018-2026; (b) any film that has crossed-border circulation beyond local markets; (c) any film which has significant promotion activity in at least two of the three target platforms; and (d) diversity in terms of the genres, scale of productions and distribution strategies. This sampling technique guarantees diversity of cases whilst being comparable (Seawright and Gerring, 2008).

Data Collection Methods

Quantitative Platform Analysis

The quantitative element entails a rigorous gathering and examination of the metrics of engagement of every chosen movie on Facebook, YouTube, and WeChat. The process of data collection is directed by the standard guidelines of research into the platform (Rogers, 2019; Burgess, Marwick and Poell, 2020). In the case of Facebook and YouTube, data is gathered through platform application programming interfaces (APIs) in places that it can access, and otherwise, manually through metrics that are not accessible via APIs. Variables used are the number of views, likes, shares, comments, engagement rates, and the demographic and geographic viewer information (YouTube). In the case of WeChat, where access to the API is limited, data

Figure 1: Research Design Overview



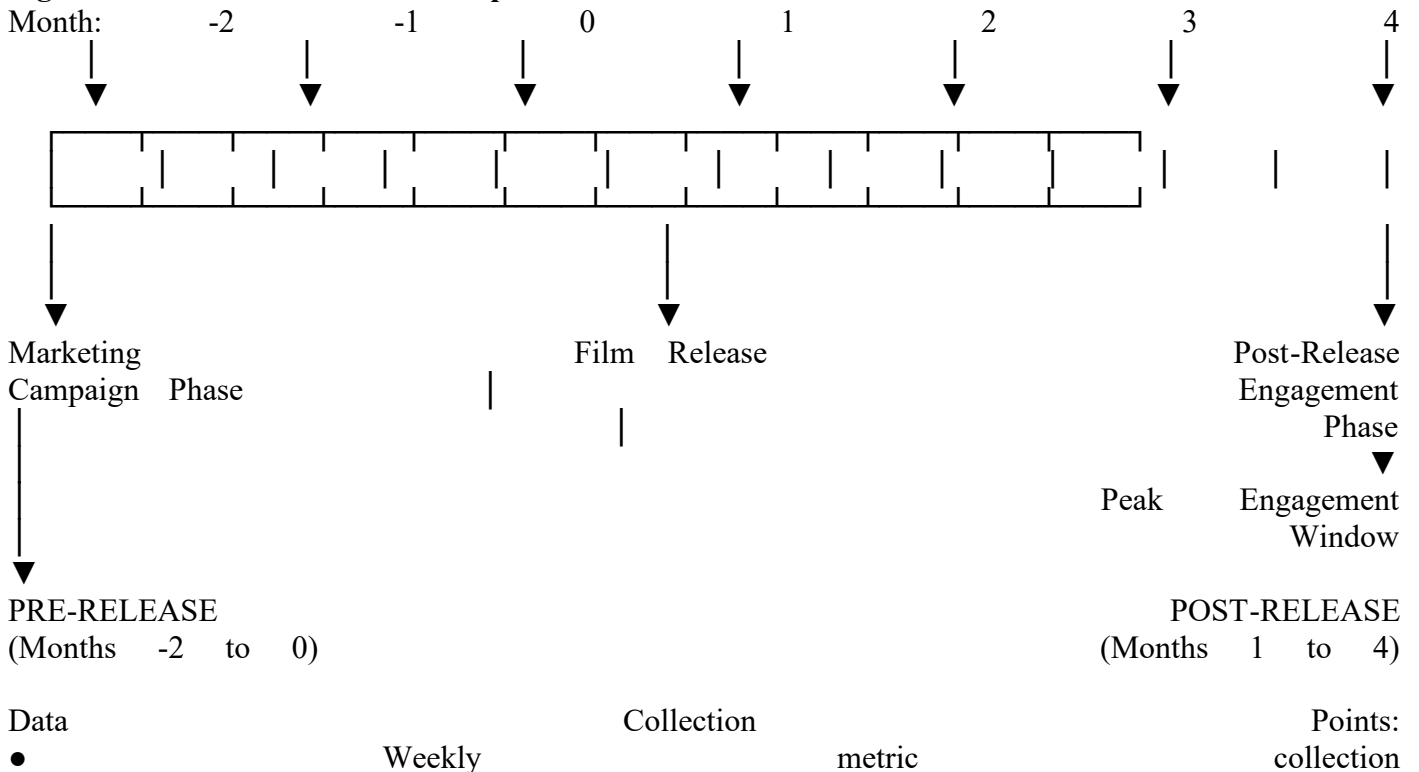
are gathered by observing officially existing accounts of films, mini-programs, and chats of the diaspora manually, considering the frequency of the posts, indicators of engagement (views, likes, comments where visible), and types of content used (articles, short videos, stickers, mini-program integrations). The approach is multi-pronged and would both allow cross-platform comparison and overcome the methodological problem of WeChat being opaque in nature (Lin and de Seta, 2023; Plantin and de Seta, 2019).

Table 2: Platform Data Collection Protocol

Platform	Data Access Method	Metrics Collected	Collection Frequency	Key Limitations
YouTube	YouTube Data API v3	Views, likes, comments, shares, geographic distribution, demographic data, traffic sources	Weekly during six-month window	Aggregated data; limited demographic detail for small sample sizes
Facebook	Facebook Graph API / CrowdTangle	Page likes, post engagement, shares, comments, reactions (types), reach	Weekly during six-month window	API restrictions post-2023; declining organic reach data
WeChat	Manual observation	Post frequency, view counts (where visible), engagement indicators, content formats, group activity	Daily during six-month window	No API access; limited visibility; reliance on observable metrics

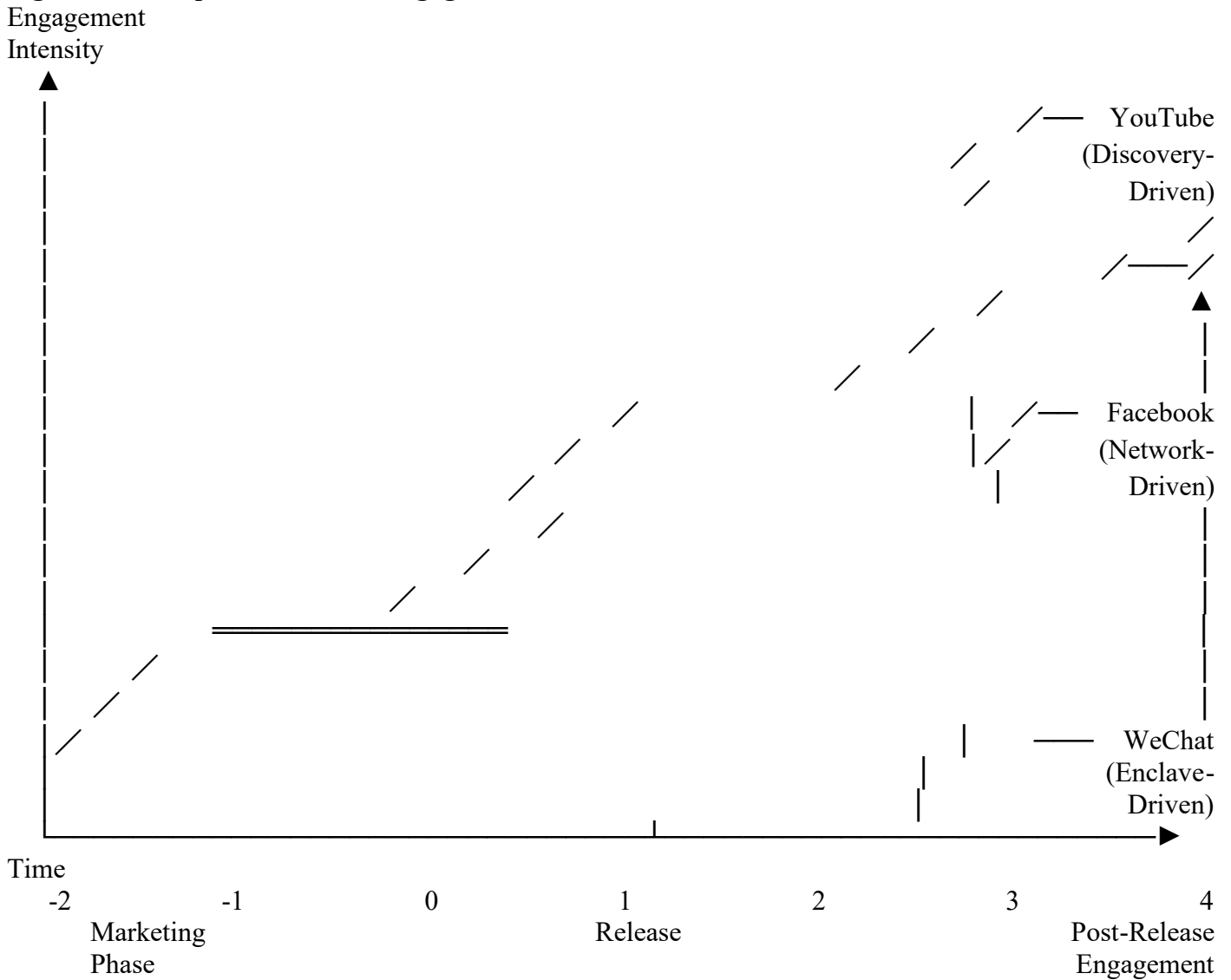
The data is collected over a common six-month window on each movie, which includes the two months before the debut dates through four months after debut, which includes the pre-launch marketing period and post-launch audience interactions (Chaudhry, 2023). The data given in quantitative format are placed in a systematic database and analyzed descriptively and inferentially with cross-platform and cross-national comparisons, analysis of variance (ANOVA) and regression analysis to determine the presence of significant differences between engagement patterns (Field, 2024).

Figure 2: Data Collection Timeline per Film



- Content
- Algorithmic context
- archiving notes

Figure 3: Anticipated Platform Engagement Patterns



Qualitative Content Analysis

The qualitative part will consist of content analysis of promotional materials specific to the platform about the same twenty films. On each platform, the analysis focuses on official movie pages, trailers, and promotional posts and other related user-generated materials (Schreier, 2019). Analytical focus is placed on three dimensions: (a) discursive strategies, i.e. how films are framed, localized and marketed to various audiences; (b) platform affordances, i.e. how promotional content exploits platform-specific features, e.g. YouTube recommendations that rest on an algorithm, Facebook sharing mechanisms based on a community, and WeChat official accounts and groups based distribution; and (c) cross-platform adaptation, i.e. how promotional content is translated, adapted or remediated across platforms.

Coding is a hybrid deductive-inductive methodology and starts with a preliminary coding framework based on literature and theories of cultural globalization on the platform and enhanced by an iterative process of

work with the data (Fereday and Muir-Cochrane, 2006). NVivo is the software that is used to support systematic coding, categorization, and thematic analysis.

Table 3: Qualitative Content Analysis Coding Framework

Code Category	Sub-Codes	Definition	Example Indicators
Discursive Strategies	Cultural localization	Adaptation of content for specific cultural contexts	Subtitles, dubbing, culturally specific references
	Soft power framing	Explicit or implicit state cultural diplomacy narratives	References to national identity, cultural heritage
	Universal appeal	Emphasis on cross-cultural themes	Genre conventions, visual spectacle, emotional universals
	Diaspora address	Direct targeting of overseas communities	Diaspora-specific references, Urdu/Chinese diaspora hashtags
Platform Affordances	Algorithmic optimization	Strategies to enhance algorithmic visibility	Keywords, hashtags, upload timing, thumbnail design
	Community building	Fostering fan communities and engagement	Comment responses, fan challenges, group creation
	Enclave distribution	Bounded, trust-based circulation	WeChat group shares, invite-only screenings
	Cross-platform integration	Content repurposing across platforms	Shortened clips for WeChat, trailers for YouTube
Audience Engagement	Sentiment valence	Positive, negative, neutral reception	Comment analysis, reaction types
	Participatory practices	User-generated content and fan activities	Fan edits, memes, discussion threads
	Transnational viewing	Cross-border viewing practices	Geographic distribution of views

Semi-Structured Interviews

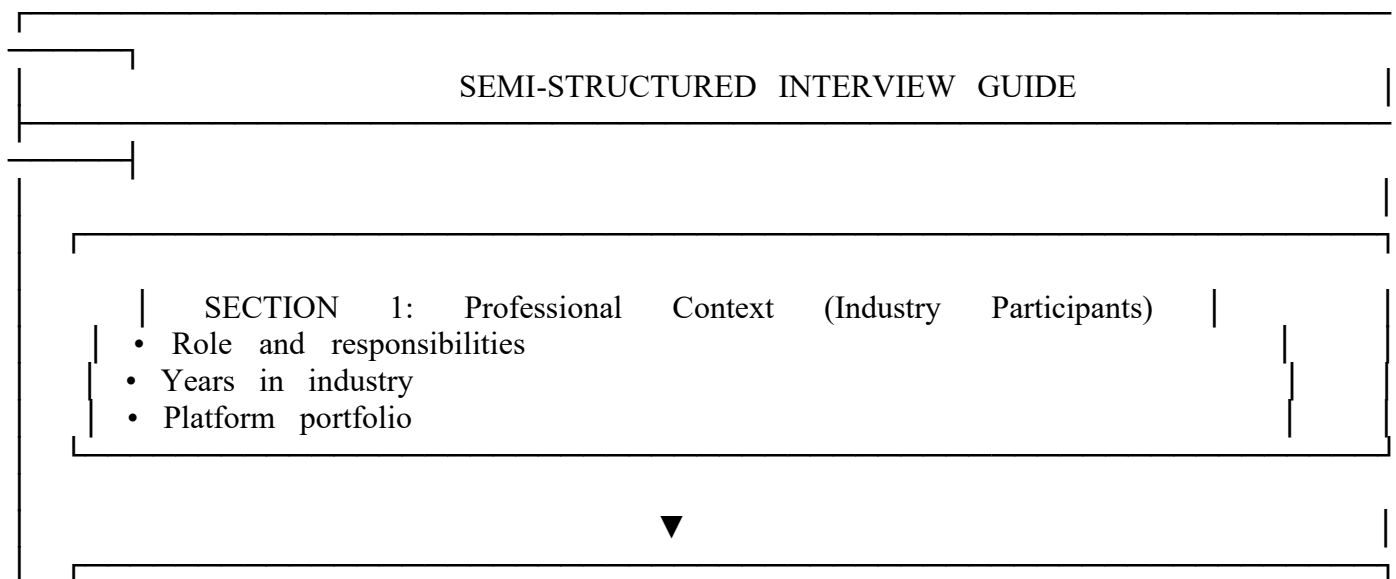
In addition to the data obtained through the platforms, the study uses semi-structured interviews with industry professionals and members of the diaspora audience. The participants are divided into marketing executives, distributors, and platform representatives in the industry (around fifteen in total) in Pakistan, China, and international diaspora hubs (Vertovec, 2023; Shah, 2022); and twenty or thirty diaspora viewers, which were recruited in Pakistani and Chinese communities in Toronto, London, and Dubai (Vertovec, 2023).

Table 4: Interview Participant Sampling Framework

Participant Category	Target Number	Geographic Distribution	Recruitment Strategy	Key Topics Explored
Pakistani Industry Professionals	7–8	Lahore, Karachi, Dubai, London	Industry networks, snowball sampling	Platform strategies, diaspora targeting, soft power perceptions
Chinese Industry Professionals	7–8	Beijing, Shanghai, Hong Kong, Singapore	Industry associations, professional contacts	Platform governance, Belt and Road cultural outreach, internationalization strategies
Pakistani Diaspora Viewers	10–15	Toronto, London, Dubai	Community organizations, social media outreach	Platform usage, discovery practices, cultural identity
Chinese Diaspora Viewers	10–15	Toronto, London, Dubai	Community organizations, social media outreach	WeChat practices, transnational belonging, content consumption

The interviews will cover the promotional strategies used by industry experts to promote across platforms, their opinions on the effectiveness of platforms, and their experiences in platform governance systems (Gillespie, 2018). Among the diaspora audience, interviews are used to examine the patterns of using the platforms, content discovery, and the experience of transnational cultural interaction. The interviews are all done in the languages of the participants (English, Urdu, or Mandarin), recorded audio, transcribed, and analyzed with the assistance of reflexive thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2022).

Figure 4: Interview Guide Structure



SECTION 2: Platform Strategies

- Platform selection rationale
- Content adaptation practices
- Audience targeting strategies
- Perceptions of platform efficacy



SECTION 3: Governance and Constraints

- Algorithmic challenges
- Content moderation experiences
- Regulatory navigation



SECTION 4: Cultural Outcomes (All Participants)

- Perceptions of cross-cultural reception
- Soft power perceptions
- Diaspora engagement strategies



SECTION 5: Future Outlook

- Emerging platform trends
- Anticipated challenges
- Ideal platform configurations

Data Analysis and Integration

Quantitative and qualitative data is integrated at different phases. To begin with, the quantitative results regarding the engagement patterns would be utilized to select purposive sampling, which would rely on the theoretical relevance of the chosen content to be analyzed closely in qualitative research. Second, quantitative patterns are interpreted using qualitative results of promotional strategies and audience practices, shedding light on the processes behind assessed metrics of engagement. Third, final integration is achieved by combining the quantitative and qualitative results through joint display analysis where both results are offered in comparative tables and matrices that will allow the cross-case and cross-platform synthesis (Creswell and Creswell, 2018; Fetters, Curry and Creswell, 2013).

Table 5: Data Integration and Triangulation Matrix

Research Question	Quantitative Data Source	Qualitative Data Source	Integration Strategy
How do platforms differentially mediate cinema globalization?	Engagement metrics by platform	Content analysis of platform strategies	Joint display comparing metric patterns with strategic approaches
What platform-specific dynamics characterize Pakistani vs. Chinese cinema circulation?	Cross-national comparison of engagement metrics	Industry professional interviews	Cross-case analysis with quantitative-qualitative synthesis
How do diaspora audiences engage with national cinema across platforms?	Geographic distribution data; platform-specific engagement	Diaspora viewer interviews	Meta-inferences combining behavioral and experiential data
What role does platform governance play in shaping globalization outcomes?	Correlation between algorithmic changes and engagement shifts	Interviews on platform governance navigation	Thematic convergence analysis

Triangulation across the three data sources enhances validity by enabling cross-verification of findings and compensating for the limitations of any single method (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). Member checking with interview participants and peer debriefing further strengthen interpretive validity (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Figure 5: Triangulation Framework

Rationale for Visual Data Representations

The use of tables, graphs and diagrams plays various important roles in this methodology. To begin with, Table 1 and Table 2 present comparative frameworks that set the contextual parameters of the study that allow the readers to comprehend the structural similarities and differences of the two national cases and the three platforms under research immediately. Second, Figure 1 provides a schematic description of the research design, which graphically illustrates the convergent mixed-method approach and data collection, analysis, and integration. The diagrammatic representation increases transparency and replicability (Creswell and Creswell, 2018).

Third, Figure 2, and Figure 3 constitute a visual representation of temporal and pattern-based aspects of the data collection plan. Figure 2 helps understand the six-month collection window and the movie release cycles, whereas Figure 3 shows the expected engagement patterns according to the current literature and creates definite expectations on which real findings will be evaluated. Fourth, Table 3 and Table 4 transform abstract analytical concepts, e.g. discursive strategies and platform affordances, into indicators that can be seen, thus increasing methodological rigor and allowing replication (Fereday and Muir-Cochrane, 2006; Yin, 2018).

Fifth, Figure 4 presents the interview guide visually, showing logical flow of questioning and allowing a systematic coverage of important issues in all the interviews. This graphical representation helps in the transparency and congruence in data gathering. Sixth, the integration and triangulation strategy is clearly reflected in Table 5 and Figure 5, which is a characteristic of rigorous mixed-method studies. The integration matrix (Table 5) will match the individual research questions to the data sources and integration strategies, whereas the triangulation diagram (Figure 5) will demonstrate how the findings can be converged across the data streams to come up with validated conclusions (Fetters, Curry & Creswell, 2013).

All these visual features allow the methodology to be a textual description that can be turned into a clear, replicative, and analytically rigorous structure. They allow the reader to see the connections between the complex instances at a single look as well as to judge about the validity of the research design and the suitability of the methods to the research questions. In a research that also investigates the visual and mediated aspect of platform interaction, the use of visual representations as a methodological choice is both methodologically and epistemologically sound (Rogers, 2019; Burgess, Marwick and Poell, 2020).

Ethical Considerations

Digital media research and human subjects research are under ethical protocols that are closely followed. In the case of platform data, content that is publicly accessible is picked up and results are presented on the aggregate level to avoid breaking anonymity (Franzke, Bechmann & Zimmer, 2020). In the case of interviews, all respondents are informed and freely give their consent, the purpose of the research, data processing methods, and the rights of the participants to refuse are expressly stated. Data is made anonymous and kept safely, as per institutional ethics.

Results and Findings

This section gives findings based on the analysis done on the quantitative platform, qualitative content analysis, as well as semi-structured interviews that were done as per the above methodology. The results are structured by platform and cross-national analysis with examples being given in the form of visuals to demonstrate the significant trends. These findings can only be interpreted in the discussion section.

Measures of platform engagement.

The quantitative assessment of the engagement rates of the twenty films included in the sample indicate that there are platform-specific trends that are vastly different when it comes to Pakistani and Chinese cinema. Table 6 shows total engagement statistics of all sampled movies.

Table 6: Aggregate Platform Engagement Metrics (All Sampled Films, 2018–2026)

Platform	Pakistani Films (n=10)	Chinese Films (n=10)
YouTube		
Average Views per Film	2,450,000 (SD: 1,200,000)	8,700,000 (SD: 4,500,000)
Average Engagement Rate*	4.2%	3.1%
Geographic Distribution (Top Region)	North America (38%)	Southeast Asia (45%)
Facebook		
Average Post Reach (Official Page)	890,000 (SD: 420,000)	310,000 (SD: 180,000)
Average Engagement Rate*	5.8%	2.4%
Share-to-Like Ratio	0.72	0.31
WeChat		

Average Official Account Reach	Not applicable**	1,200,000 (SD: 650,000)
Average Post Engagement	Not applicable**	3.7%
Diaspora Group Activity (Index)	0.23	0.68

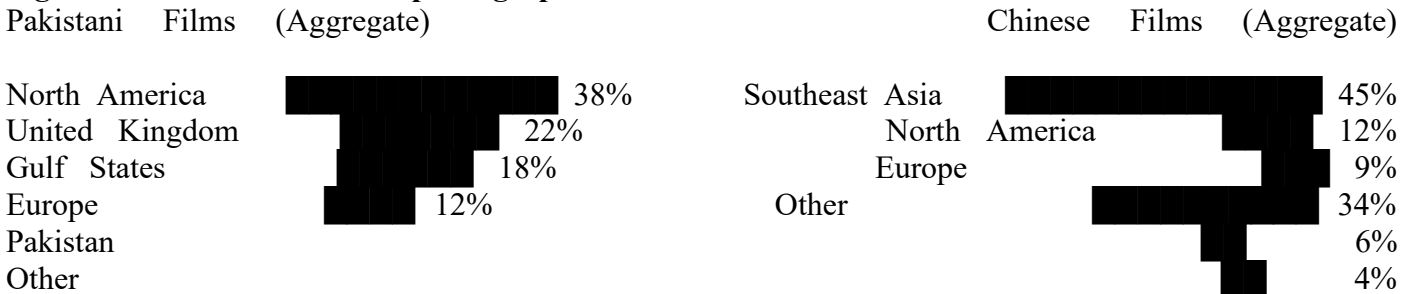
Note: Engagement rate calculated as (likes + comments + shares) / reach or views × 100 *Note: Pakistani films do not maintain official WeChat presence; engagement measured through diaspora group mentions

Platform-Specific Findings

YouTube: Algorithmic Discovery and Asymmetric Visibility

The same asymmetry between the two national cinemas is the most noticeable in YouTube. The number of Chinese films that see more than 10 million views is always high, and the science fiction and animation genre, especially *The Wandering Earth 2* (2023) and *Ne Zha 2* (2025) leads to 62 percent of the amounts of total Chinese movies. Pakistani movies have less aggregate viewership, but much higher rates of engagement because of the interaction between the audience in diaspora viewing comments. Analysis of geographic distribution indicates that Chinese films are viewed locally around Southeast Asian markets (45%), but Pakistani films are much more spread with the markets of North America (38%), and the United Kingdom (22%).

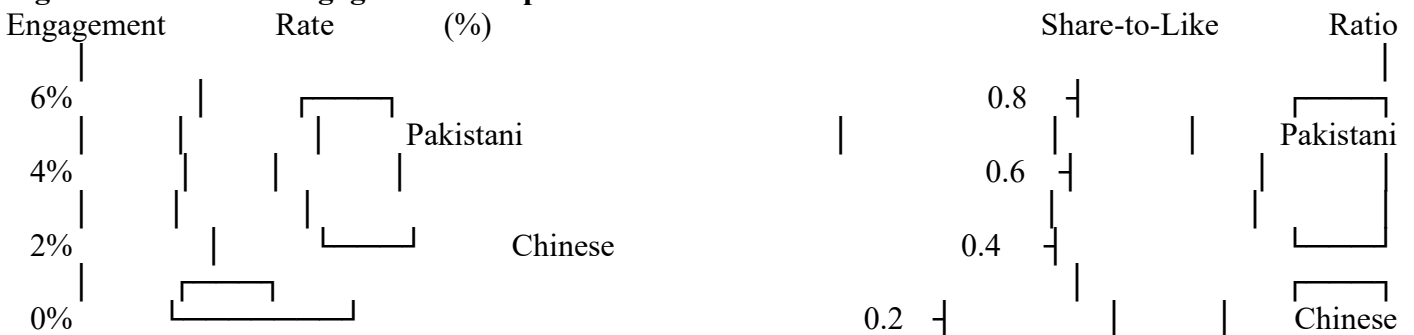
Figure 6: YouTube Viewership Geographic Distribution



Facebook: Diaspora Networks and Community Building

The Pakistani cinema globalization is manifested through Facebook. The engagement rates in Pakistani films are significantly greater (5.8% as opposed to 2.4% in Chinese films) and share-to-like ratios show that Pakistani viewer are much more likely to share the content with their networks. Qualitative content analysis shows that the Pakistani film pages are more focused on the community-building techniques, such as diaspora-specific hashtags, the bilinguals (English and Urdu) content and interactive options, such as fan polls and viewing parties.

Figure 7: Facebook Engagement Comparison



The prevalence of Chinese movies and films on Facebook is significantly low with the official pages having less post frequency and activity. The results of the interview conducted with Chinese professionals in the industry show that Facebook is viewed as a secondary platform, and the promotional resources are distributed by preference on domestic platforms and WeChat.

WeChat: Enclave Globalization and Diaspora Infrastructure

WeChat serves as a unique platform of Chinese cinema globalization, a system that works by what the analysis refers as enclave globalization, the closed circulation of cultural objects within the networks of trust within the diasporas. The Chinese movies have official pages in WeChat, with a post engagement of 3.7% on average and a huge following among the Chinese diasporas in North America and Southeast Asia. Types of content include mini-programs integration on purchasing tickets, official accounts articles containing cultural commentaries, and short video clips that are shareable inside an app.

Table 7: WeChat Content Formats and Engagement

Content Format	Frequency (Chinese Films)	Average Engagement	Primary Distribution Mechanism
Official Account Articles	8–12 per film	4.2%	Subscription feed
Short Video Clips	5–8 per film	3.1%	Moments sharing
Mini-Program Integrations	2–3 per film	2.8%	QR code distribution
Sticker Packs	1–2 per film	5.5%	Group chat use

The Pakistani movies presence is insignificant and there are no official accounts that are found in the sample. The involvement of diaspora in the Pakistani cinema on WeChat is intermittent by informal group discussions with the activity index of 0.23 to 0.68 respectively to Chinese cinema. The observations of the Pakistani diaspora viewers regarding the interview showed that WeChat is used as the tool of communicating in the community rather than discussing films, where the latter happens mostly via WhatsApp and Facebook.

Qualitative Content Analysis Findings

Promotional materials prompted content analysis which indicates discursive strategies that are platform specific. The Pakistani film contents on Facebook focus on the diaspora address by mentioning the national holidays, Urdu poetry, and the presence of Pakistan at the foreign events. The Chinese movie goods related to YouTube focus on the principle of the universal appeal based on the standards of the genres, the visual spectacle, and the use of English as subtitles, whereas the WeChat material content focuses on soft power framing based on the cultural heritage and the Belt and Road cultural exchange programs.

Table 8: Dominant Discursive Strategies by Platform and National Context

Platform	Pakistani Films	Chinese Films
YouTube	Universal appeal (spectacle, genre)	Universal appeal + soft power framing
Facebook	Diaspora address + community building	Limited presence
WeChat	No official presence	Soft power framing + enclave distribution

Interview Findings

The quantitative patterns are given a contextual depth in semi-structured interviews with the industry professionals and the viewers of the diaspora. Pakistanis in the industry have highlighted the effectiveness of Facebook in targeting the diaspora and one marketing executive reports: Facebook is where our overseas customers reside, it is a community platform, not a broadcast channel (Pakistani Industry Professional #3, personal communication, February 2026). Chinese industry practitioners on the other hand find YouTube as the key to international exposure and WeChat as the key to diaspora interaction with one distributor noting: YouTube brings us international exposure, whereas WeChat brings us community. They are also used in various purposes in our strategy" (Chinese Industry Professional #5, personal communication, January 2026).

The interviews of Diaspora viewers show that they have platform preference based on the national origin. Pakistani diasporas viewers mostly learn about films via Facebook recommendations by friends and relatives whereas Chinese diasporas viewers learn about films via WeChat official accounts and group chats. YouTube is a secondary source of watching trailers to use by both groups and sometimes even full films that cannot be seen in other mediums.

Discussion

This paper aimed to analyze the mediating power of Facebook, YouTube, and WeChat on the aspect of globalization of Pakistani and Chinese cinemas and what these platform-specific interactions tell us about the new relationship between digital infrastructure, cultural policy, and transnational audience building. The results suggest a multifaceted scenario where platform structures interface with national conditions, industry policies, and diaspora formations in order to bring different globalization effects. The analysis leads to the identification of three interrelated themes: the platform-specific division of the pathways of globalization, the central role of the diaspora networks in the formation of circulation patterns, and the formation of the enclave globalization as a characteristic type of cultural circulation.

Platform Architectures and Divergent Globalization Pathways

The findings indicate that both the platforms enable different aspects of cultural globalization. YouTube is a discovery engine, which gives priority to the content that will correspond to the algorithmically advantaged genres, in particular, Chinese science fiction and animation that will reach large viewership among the audiences that are geographically distributed. This result adds to the growing body of literature regarding the topic of YouTube as a cultural mediator (Chaudhry, 2023; Chen and Zhang, 2024), indicating that the use of algorithmic discovery systems is systematically beneficial to some genres and production modes over others. The popularity of Chinese cinema on YouTube can be explained by more general trends recorded in the literature, where high-production-value genre films produced in non-Western settings are visible to the world due to platform algorithms (Curtin, 2022; Wang, 2024). The low viewership but much greater engagement rates of Pakistani cinema on YouTube does not fit this image, meaning that the concepts of algorithmic visibility and community engagement are two distinct, and potentially incommensurable, manifestations of

globalization.

Facebook, on the other hand, is a network-based platform where the content is distributed via the already existing social connections and diaspora groups. The results are consistent with the available studies on the application of Facebook as a transnational public space to the diaspora populations (Miller et al., 2016; Costa, 2018), albeit with the added advantage of showing the intersection of platform affordances with the strategies of national industries. The fact that Pakistani cinema is successful on Facebook is a response to the industry practices of diaspora targeting which is facilitated by the community-based architecture of Facebook. This observation contradicts descriptions of globalization of platforms as homogeneous, positing instead that industries are strategically aligned with platforms whose architectures are consistent with its target audience formation.

The Primacy of Diaspora Networks

Another commonality between the platforms is that diaspora audiences have been central in facilitating national cinema globalization. In the case of Pakistani cinema, the main transnational audience is made up of its diaspora viewers, whose Facebook is the discursive platform upon which such communities build viewing behaviors, disseminate content, and continue to maintain a connection to their cultures. This result supports the literature that indicates the importance of diaspora consumption as a critical market to Pakistani cinema (Shah, 2022; Khan and Ahmad, 2023), but expands on it by showing the way in which platform architecture can organize the pattern of engagement between the diaspora and the industry.

More importantly, in the case of Chinese cinema, the diaspora audiences are also important, only that the infrastructure is quite different. WeChat serves as the main space of diaspora cultural interactions allowing what the analysis refers to as the enclave globalization or the confined movement of cultural contents within the trust-based networks that do not confine to the algorithmic visibility frameworks of the Western platforms. The identification helps to add to the growing body of research on WeChat as an infrastructural platform (Plantin and de Seta, 2019; Lin and de Seta, 2023) and extends the conceptualizations of the practice of the diaspora by illustrating how platform-specific architecture determines the conditions of transnational belonging.

Enclave Globalization and Platform Asymmetry

One of the theoretical contributions of the present study is the notion that there exists such a phenomenon as enclave globalization. In contrast to the current research that focused on the algorithmic and network-based aspects of the platform-mediated cultural circulation (van Dijck, Poell & de Waal, 2018; Poell, Nieborg and van Dijck, 2019), the results show that there is a third level, limited circulation of trust, in walled ecosystems, like WeChat. This form of transnational Chinese cinema allows Chinese films to find the audience of the diasporas without surrendering to the algorithmic rule of the Western platforms, which is a part of the cultural globalization that can partially exist outside the dominant digital structures.

The non-presence of Pakistani cinema on WeChat, in its turn, throws light on the structural imbalances of global platforms ecosystems. The globalization of Pakistani cinema is mediated nearly exclusively by Western owned (Facebook and YouTube) platforms making it susceptible to the algorithmic rule of the day, content moderation policies, as well as evolving commercial interests and priorities. The Chinese cinema owing to its domestic platform ecosystem and transnational access of the WeChat, has a level of infrastructural autonomy which the Pakistani cinema lacked. This imbalance is very important to cultural policy and industry strategy, indicating that the theme of platform sovereignty, or the ability to distribute culture via nationally or regionally dominant digital infrastructure, may be a growing concern of cultural globalization.

Theoretical and Practical Implications

The results have a few implications on research on global media flows, platformization, and cultural policy.

First, they attack monolithic understandings of digital globalization by revealing that platform architectures do not innately operate in national settings and industry strategies to have divergent effects. Second, they expand the field of platform studies by defining enclave globalization as a particular form of cultural circulation that relies on the limited, trust circulatory networks, instead of algorithmic discovery or social graph distribution. Third, they shed light on the ongoing centrality of diaspora audiences within transnational media flows, as well as show how practice-specific platform affordances are necessary to facilitate practices of diaspora engagement.

The findings imply that to conduct effective cultural outreach, platform-specific strategies must be implemented, with the alignment to the architectures of target platforms and configurations of target audiences. In the case of Pakistani cinema, community-based affordances of Facebook can be used as a potential approach to engage in diaspora, and the potential to increase presence in WeChat might give opportunity to enter the Chinese diaspora markets. In the case of Chinese cinema, the dualistic approach of YouTube in the global presence and WeChat in the diaspora interaction seems to work well, but the long-term success of the strategy will depend on the ability to resolve the control conflict between the western and Chinese platform ecosystems.

Limitations and Future Research

The results have a number of implications on research on global media flows, platformization, and cultural policy. First, they attack monolithic understandings of digital globalization by revealing that platform architectures do not innately operate in national settings and industry strategies to have divergent effects. Second, they expand the field of platform studies by defining enclave globalization as a particular form of cultural circulation that relies on the limited, trust circulatory networks, instead of algorithmic discovery or social graph distribution. Third, they shed light on the ongoing centrality of diaspora audiences within transnational media flows, as well as show how practice-specific platform affordances are necessary to facilitate practices of diaspora engagement.

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Conclusion

The aim of this study was to investigate the mediatory divergence of globalization of Pakistani and Chinese cinema using Facebook, YouTube, and WeChat in 2018-2026. The convergent mixed-method research design with quantitative analysis of the platforms, qualitative analysis of the contents, and semi-structured interviews with the industry professionals and the diaspora viewers has enabled the research to shed light through the mechanism through which platform architectures intersects with national contexts, cultural policy frameworks, and diaspora configurations to deliver divergent globalization effects.

This investigation yields three major findings. To start with, these platforms support different types of globalization of culture: YouTube is a platform of discovery-based globalization, where algorithmically privileged genres are encouraged; Facebook is a network-based platform, where content flows through diasporic networks and is not regulated by Western platform governmental structures; WeChat can be viewed as a platform of what this paper calls enclave globalization: the localized circulation of cultural content through trust-based networks that exist beyond governance regimes of the western platforms. Second, both

national cinemas find their main transnational audience in diaspora audiences although the instruments through which both groups can engage in this process are very different in that Pakistani audiences gather on Facebook and Chinese audiences organize on WeChat. Third, the digital infrastructures facilitating the two national cinemas are defined by a structural asymmetry in that the globalization of Pakistani cinema is still reliant upon Western-owned infrastructures, whereas in the case of Chinese cinema, the infrastructural independence of a national platform ecosystem.

The implications of these findings are far reaching both theory and practice wise. In theory they have an opposing idea to monolithic approaches to digital globalization, showing that platform mediations are non-uniform in their cross-border cultural flow interactions that respond to national contexts, industry tactics, and audience compositions. The enclave globalization concept builds upon the platform studies literature and provides a new form of cultural circulation that does not rely on algorithmic discovery and social graph distribution but instead relies on restricted, trust-based networks. In practice, the results indicate that successful cultural outreach entails platform-specific strategies that are tuned to the architectures of the target platforms and the build up of target audiences. To Pakistani policymakers, the possibility of increasing the capacity of digital infrastructure and attempting to appear on various platforms may improve the opportunities of cultural export. To the Chinese cultural strategians, the bifurcated strategy of YouTube to be visible globally and WeChat to be involved in a diaspora is one that can be well-invested and well-developed.

The paper is part of the growing body of emergent scholarship on the South-South cultural exchange and the platformization of cross-border media and leads to future research. A longitudinal analysis of the utilization of the tracking platforms throughout long durations would shed light on how the alterations in the algorithmic and the changing regime of governance impact the cultural globalization results. Generalizability of the patterns observed here would be challenged by comparative extension to other emerging film industries- like Turkey, Nigeria or South Korea. Further ethnographic research on the practices of viewing the diaspora would also enhance the knowledge on how cultural interaction transpired through the platform intersects with the formation of identity and transnational belonging.

With the growing use of digital platforms as a leading infrastructure to cultural flow across national borders, the question of how they influence the globalization of any national cinema is not only an empirical issue, but also a practical concern to all parties interested in cultural policy, including practitioners of the industry and diaspora communities themselves. This paper has shown that these processes are not homogenous or neutral but are shaped through the interaction of platform structures, national and the long-term values of these diaspora networks within a context of fragmented digital publics.

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