

Performance and Control of Tobacco in Chinese Film and Television Dramas

Dai Xiaoya, Lecture
He Suli, Professor
Wang Tingxuan, Postdoctor

Dai Xiaoya, Doctor Candidate in Mass media and documentary, Television School, Communication University of China, Beijing, China; Lecture in Mass media and documentary, School of Culture Communication, China University of Labor Relations, Beijing, China. He Suli, Professor in Documentary, Television School, Communication University of China, Beijing, China. Wang Tingxuan, Postdoctor in Media art and Documentary, School of Communication, Beijing Normal University, Beijing, China. Correspondence author: Wang Tingxuan; jackwang@bnu.edu.cn.

Objectives: China is the world's largest country in tobacco cultivation, production, consumption and smokers. The number of smokers accounts for nearly 30% of the total number of smokers in the world. 740 million people are endangered by "second-hand smoke", most of them women and children. To achieve the goal of healthy China, tobacco control is a very important link. Reducing the number of smokers is an important problem to be solved, and the mass media plays an important role in this problem. Once tobacco is shaped as a positive symbol in mass communication, smoking will become an unhealthy social atmosphere. Then, what kind of image tobacco generally appears in the mass media and what impact it will bring to the society, this paper attempts to explore the tobacco symbols in Chinese film and television dramas as the research object.

Key words: tobacco; smoking; metaphor of tobacco; Chinese film and television dramas; tobacco control

**Tob Regul Sci.™ 2021;7(6): 5257-5263
DOI: doi.org/10.18001/TRS.7.6.17**

China is the world's largest country in tobacco cultivation, production, consumption, and smokers. The latest Chinese adult tobacco survey shows that in China, the smoking rate of people aged 15 and over is 26.6%, accounting for nearly 30% of the total number of smokers in the world, and 740 million people are endangered by "second-hand smoke", most of them women and children.¹

China's tobacco control campaign has been on the government's agenda for 42 years since 1979. Although the Chinese government signed the WHO Framework Convention on tobacco control as early as 2003, the process of tobacco control has been slow and gradual due to various interests.²

This paper attempts to explore the role of mass media in this process by taking the tobacco symbols in Chinese film and television dramas as the research object.

METAPHOR OF TOBACCO IN CHINESE FILM AND TELEVISION DRAMAS

After entering Europe, tobacco was once the exclusive possession of royalty and nobility. Only high-ranking talents could obtain this precious herb. Soon afterwards, tobacco circulated around the world as a precious general equivalent, and its price was far beyond the range that ordinary people could bear. Owning tobacco was not only a symbol of wealth, but also a symbol of status. Although with the expansion of tobacco cultivation and the development of industrialization, tobacco has been popularized for a long time, and most people can use tobacco in their daily life, many high-grade tobacco brands are still high-grade goods that only a few successful people can want to use. Moreover, in the past historical process, many successful great

men known to the world are also tobacco lovers. Tobacco often appears in various literary works, film and television works and image materials about these great men. This connection also makes many general audiences imperceptibly establish a semiotic secret connection between tobacco and success.

Prime Minister Churchill once wrote in his memoirs of World War II: "this is a memorable moment in my life. On my right is the president of the United States and on my left is the master of Soviet Russia. Together, the three of us control most of the world's navy and three-quarters of the air force, can command nearly 10000 troops and carry out the most terrible war in human history." - what he called this memorable moment, that is, one night during the "Tehran conference" in June, they discussed the issue of opening up "the second battlefield in Europe". At this memorable moment, Prime Minister Churchill held a strong Heather pipe in his hand, marshal Stalin held a huge jujube pipe under his thick beard, and President Roosevelt smoked camel cigarettes, but he put his cigarette in a long cigarette holder. In this important information that people encounter, there will always be these high-ranking figures and tobacco at the same time. Such a social and cultural communication context can easily transfer many attributes of the metaphor of success to the ontology of tobacco use, which makes it easy for people to associate the two in a semiotic sense. Therefore, despite the changes of times, in people's ideas, tobacco is still deeply related to wealth and status.⁵The metaphor of success also frequently appears in various forms of mass communication.

Usually, high-ranking, and important figures and the boss behind the scenes will come out with a pipe or cigar. Zhou Runfa often takes out a cigarette and lights it slowly in "A Better Tomorrow Gangland Boss ". A group of elegant and decent gentlemanly demeanor. Moreover, many gang leaders in the film are also addicted to tobacco. Tobacco has become a powerful prop to show wealth and status in the film.⁶Such pictures often appear in the film. The gang leaders appear with their brothers. Their subordinates are either barehanded or holding knives and guns, while the leaders with the highest status often hold cigars or pipes in their hands. Tobacco has become a powerful symbol of status and identity.

As a mysterious gift brought back by adventurers

from the distant continent, tobacco exuded a strong sense of adventure at the beginning of its introduction into Europe. Moreover, the pungent smell of tobacco use is also difficult for ordinary people to accept, so tobacco has become a tool for adventurous people to prove themselves. At that time, one person's use of tobacco means completing an exciting challenge. Although later, with the rise of the tobacco industry, smoking has become an ordinary daily leisure activity, for many people who try to use tobacco for the first time, using tobacco is not only a new adventure, but also an exciting challenge that can show their courage. Moreover, because the original users of tobacco are explorers who take risks all over the world, the tobacco symbolic metaphor of adventure has been formed from the beginning. Therefore, the tobacco symbolic metaphor of adventure is still recognized by most people and appears in all kinds of mass media in the change of times.

In film and television works, tobacco is usually an essential prop for these virtual heroes to carry out adventure activities. They smoke and carry out dangerous activities. When the hero overcomes all kinds of difficulties and finally completes all kinds of dangerous tasks, the tobacco that always accompanies him in the work has also successfully branded in the hearts of the audience, and it is easy to leave the audience with the impression that if you want to experience the same adventure and challenge as the hero, tobacco is an essential prop.

In the classic Chinese TV series "Shanghai beach", the legendary gangster hero Xu Wenqiang often appears in such a dress: dressed in a long black windbreaker, surrounded by a white scarf, and holding a cigarette in his mouth, tobacco has become an important prop to reflect Xu Wenqiang's masculinity, and accompanied him through life and death to bravely experience various challenges. Every time a big gang activity is carried out, Xu Wenqiang will appear first and finish smoking a cigarette calmly.

While these virtual heroes bravely experienced various exciting challenges, the tobacco that always appeared around them was naturally given the symbolic metaphor of adventure, which skillfully affected the audience's cognition and attitude towards tobacco, and finally prompted more potential consumers to try to use tobacco.

In Wong KarWai's classic film "In the Mood for Love ", the tobacco symbolic metaphor of pleasure

appears many times. When tenants and landlords get together to play mahjong, they are always surrounded by smoke. Tobacco and mahjong, a leisure activity with Chinese characteristics, complement each other and easily create a leisure and comfortable sense of pleasure. When the protagonists and heroines talk about their troubles and feelings to each other in the house, they also smoke cigarettes at the same place. Tobacco has become a symbolic prop to solve boredom in the film. These indirect hedonic metaphors also indirectly affect the audience of these films and television works and provide another reason for potential consumers to try to use tobacco.

The smoke in the film "The Message" is to show that the protagonist in a highly tense working environment alleviates his mood by smoking. At the same time, the drunken life of Kuomintang officers is also in sight. In the film "Let The Bullets Fly ", smoking is the symbolic habit of the protagonist Zhang Mazi. Zhang Mazi in the smoke is both dignified and calm, and his control of power leaps to the screen.

For historical figures with special identities, from the perspective of respecting history and restoring reality, actors should not "cut across the board" completely quit smoking when playing roles in the film. For example, the older generation of proletarian revolutionaries such as Mao Zedong and Deng Xiaoping are very addicted to smoking. It can be said that "people all over the world know it". Mao Zedong once said, "There is no smoking in his hand. When thinking about problems, it seems that there are some shortcomings". The lens of Mao Zedong working while smoking or concentrating on thinking in smoking has become a historical classic; At the "two sessions" of that year, Deng Xiaoping took over the advice to quit smoking note handed over by the deputies to the National People's Congress and snuffed out his cigarettes with a smile. If the characters are forced not to smoke in the film and television drama showing the military careers of two great men, it will damage the historical truth. In the early films such as "The Birth of New China " and "Decisive Engagement ", to restore history and show Mao Zedong's two habits - smoking and eating tea, there are not many such scenes. The film even designed a plot for Mao Zedong and Zhou Enlai to discuss smoking.

THE INFLUENCE OF SMOKING SCENES IN

FILM AND TELEVISION DRAMAS ON TEENAGERS

The impact of smoking scenes in these film and television works on teenagers cannot be ignored. They not only let children see cigarettes and imitate them, but also make teenagers think that smoking is a positive event. Smoking is associated with charm, maturity, sexuality, and fashion. In the hearts of many boys, smoking represents "man" and "success". For girls, women who smoke have a high and cold mystery. The report of the tobacco control office of the China Center for Disease Control and prevention pointed out that more than one-third of teenagers learn to smoke after watching movies and television. If non-smoking teenagers see their idols smoking, they will be 16 times more likely to identify with smoking behavior. Especially, more than half of China's smokers start smoking before the age of 20. The prevention and control of adolescent smoking needs the attention of the whole society.

2020The theme of World No Tobacco Day in is "protecting young people", which is to keep young people away from tobacco, to stop them from imitating stars, to prevent them from becoming a new generation of smokers, and to create a fresh smoke-free environment for the public.

Since 2007, the China Association for tobacco control has regularly monitored the smoking scenes of the top 30 popular films and TV dramas, which has been monitored for 12 consecutive years. The monitoring results show that the number of films with tobacco scenes in films and TV dramas shows a downward trend.

The proportion of tobacco lens is more than that of TV series.

Monitoring shows that among the 30 domestic films in 2019, 22 films with tobacco lens, accounting for 73.3%;The total number of tobacco lenses was 389, with an average of 17.7 per film; The total length of tobacco lens is 2300 seconds, with an average of 104.5 seconds each; The places with the most tobacco scenes were public places, accounting for 53.2%, followed by workplace 31.4%, transportation 2.1%, family 8.5%, and the least was school. The scene of teenagers in smoking places was still found.

Among the 30 domestic TV dramas, there are 18 TV dramas with tobacco lens, accounting for 60.0%; The total number of tobacco lenses is 1062, with an average of 59 per film; The total time is

7609 seconds, with an average of 422.7 seconds per unit; The places with the most tobacco lenses were workplaces, 62.3%, followed by public places, 26.3%, families, 9.4% and vehicles, 0.1%. No Tobacco lenses were found in schools.⁷

Film and television smoking scenes showed a downward trend. Compared with the monitoring results in 2007, the monitoring results in 2019 show the following four characteristics:

1. The number of films with tobacco scenes in films and TV dramas showed a downward trend. Films decreased by 15.5%, TV dramas decreased by 33%, and the number of films without tobacco lens was significantly better than films.

2. On average, the number of tobacco scenes in each film and TV play showed a downward trend. Films decreased by 23.7%, TV dramas decreased by 63.5%, and the decline of TV dramas was significantly higher than that of films.

3. The average length of tobacco scenes in each film and TV play showed a downward trend. Among them, the number of films decreased by 37.8%. TV dramas decreased by 66.2%.

4. The places where the most tobacco scenes appear in the film are still public places, while the workplace is the hardest hit area of tobacco scenes.

In view of the monitoring results, the China Tobacco Control Association believes that the number, number, and duration of films with tobacco scenes in film and television dramas have decreased, indicating that the notice on strict control of smoking scenes in TV dramas issued by the State Administration of radio, film, and television in 2009 and the notice on strict control of smoking scenes in films and TV dramas in 2011 have produced obvious results. However, films and TV dramas with tobacco scenes are still as high as 73.3% and 60.0% respectively, indicating that the documents have not been fully, and effectively implemented, and relevant departments need to strengthen supervision and management.

Therefore, the China Tobacco Control Association calls on the SARFT to strengthen the supervision and review of tobacco scenes in film and television works in accordance with the spirit of the notice on strict control of smoking scenes in films and TV dramas; For film and television works with tobacco lens, their qualification for excellence and award shall be cancelled, and their broadcasting in the prime file shall be restricted.

TOBACCO CONTROL ACT AND LAW IN CHINA

The Framework Convention on tobacco control formulated by the World Health Organization was fully implemented in China in 2011. This means that China will realize its commitment to a comprehensive ban on smoking in indoor workplaces, public transport, and indoor public places within three years.

Our government signed the Convention in November 2003, becoming the 77th signatory. In August 2005, the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress ratified the Convention; In January 2006, the Convention officially entered into force in China.

2003 In May, at the World Health Assembly held in Geneva, Switzerland, 192 members of the World Health Organization unanimously adopted the first global Convention on tobacco restriction - the Framework Convention on tobacco control, which provides a legal framework for global control of tobacco hazards and joint maintenance of human health.

The Framework Convention on tobacco control entered into force on February 27, 2005. At present, there are more than 170 Parties, covering 86% of the global population.

The Convention and its protocol have made clear provisions on the composition, packaging, advertising, promotion, sponsorship, price and tax of tobacco and its products. The main objective of the Convention is to provide a framework for parties to implement tobacco control measures at the national, regional, and global levels, to significantly reduce the frequency of tobacco use and exposure to "second-hand smoke", to protect current and future generations from the devastating effects of tobacco on health, society, environment and economy.

To promote the implementation of WHO FCTC in China, China has promulgated a series of laws and regulations from the central to local levels.

Several provisions of Beijing Municipality on the scope of smoking prohibition in public places were officially implemented in Beijing on May 1, 2010. Indoor areas of medical institutions; Nurseries and kindergartens; Middle and primary schools, secondary vocational schools; Teaching areas of institutions of higher learning and other

educational and training institutions; Cinemas, concert halls, exhibition halls, museums, art galleries, libraries, science and technology museums, archives, children playing palaces, memorial halls and other scientific, educational, cultural and artistic places; Business halls of Commerce, finance, postal service and telecommunications; Buses, taxis, rail transit and other public transport vehicles and their ticket halls and indoor platforms; Cultural relics protection units open to the public; Gymnasium and fitness center; The fitness ground, the competition area and seating area of the stadium are non-smoking public places.

On March 24, 2011, the new version of the detailed rules for the implementation of the regulations on health management in public places was issued by the Ministry of health and implemented on May 1, 2011.

On December 24, 2012, the China tobacco control plan (2012-2015) released by the AQSIQ the day before yesterday proposed to study and formulate national laws and regulations on smoking prohibition in public places and comprehensively implement smoking prohibition in public places. The plan is jointly prepared and implemented by the Ministry of industry and information technology, the Ministry of health, the Ministry of foreign affairs, the Ministry of finance, the General Administration of customs, the General Administration for Industry and commerce, the General Administration of quality supervision, inspection and quarantine and the tobacco bureau. The plan proposes to further revise and improve the advertising law and the Interim Measures for the administration of tobacco advertising and expand the scope of prohibited tobacco advertising media and places to the Internet, books, audio-visual products, museums, libraries, cultural centers, and other public places, as well as the building control areas and public transport means of hospitals and schools.

On December 29, 2004, the general office of the CPC Central Committee and the general office of the State Council issued the notice on leading cadres taking the lead in banning smoking in public places, which put forward five requirements, including that leading cadres at all levels should not smoke in public places where smoking is prohibited, that party and government organs at all levels should be prohibited from smoking in official

activities, and that party and government organs at all levels should be built into smoke-free organs.

On November 24, 2004, the Legislative Affairs Office of the State Council announced the regulations on smoking control in public places (Draft for approval) drafted by the health and Family Planning Commission and solicited public opinions. This is the first time that China plans to formulate administrative regulations to comprehensively control tobacco throughout the country.

The draft for review clearly states that smoking is prohibited in all indoor public places; At the same time, smoking is also prohibited in outdoor areas of public places where minors are the main activity groups, outdoor teaching areas of colleges and universities, outdoor areas of maternal and child health care institutions, children's hospitals and maternity hospitals, outdoor audience seats and stadium areas of sports and fitness venues, and outdoor waiting areas of public transport tools.

The image of tobacco in the mass media will have an impact on the society that cannot be ignored. If it is not handled properly, it will create a bad atmosphere with smoking as the glory in the society, especially the potential temptation and attraction to young people.

In August 2014, the revised draft of the advertising law was submitted to the 10th meeting of the Standing Committee of the 12th National People's Congress for deliberation. Among them, there are only stricter restrictions on the media, forms, and places of tobacco advertising, but there is no "comprehensive ban on tobacco advertising". During the deliberation, some members of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress called for not leaving a "back door" for tobacco advertising and "a comprehensive ban on tobacco advertising" should be written into the advertising law.

The TV advertisement 'crane dances white sand, my heart flies', and earlier only publicized the words 'Marlboro' and 'health'. The pictures of the advertisements are very beautiful, and there is no word 'smoke' or tobacco itself. However, everyone knows that they are trademarks of tobacco, and knows what they are promoting and what they want to do, and this kind of behavior of publicizing the name and trademark of tobacco enterprises should also be prohibited. And it should be explicitly prohibited in the law. "It is necessary to prohibit not

only tobacco advertising, but also its promotion, sponsorship and other acts, fundamentally eliminate the behavior of tobacco enterprises in publicizing their trademarks and names to the public, and do not leave a "back door" for tobacco enterprises in advertising.

According to the draft for review, those who publish or disguise tobacco advertisements or carry out promotional activities in violation of the provisions shall be punished by the administrative department for Industry and commerce according to law. For those who provide sponsorship, the administrative department for Industry and commerce at or above the county level shall order them to make corrections, give a warning and impose a fine of not less than one time but not more than three times the amount of sponsorship; The sponsored unit shall be ordered to make corrections, confiscate its sponsorship amount, revoke its title and eliminate the impact; The person in charge shall be warned or criticized by the sponsor or the competent department of the sponsoring unit.

The smoking scenes of star idols in film and television dramas can often be appreciated, imitated, and followed by teenagers, which is regarded as fashion. We should further purify the screen by reducing or gradually eliminating smoking scenes and tobacco advertisements in film and television dramas, widely publicize the harm of tobacco, correctly guide teenagers to establish a correct outlook on life, values, and health concept, develop good living habits and stay away from tobacco.

According to the draft,⁸ the State Administration of press, publication, radio, film, and television is responsible for supervising and managing smoking scenes in films, TV dramas and other programs. For media that broadcast smoking scenes or tobacco products in films, TV dramas and other programs in violation of regulations, the competent department of radio, television, press and publication shall order it to make corrections within a time limit, give a warning and impose a fine of not less than 5000 yuan but not more than 30000 yuan; If the circumstances are serious, it shall be ordered to suspend business for rectification.

CONCLUSION

In China, there is no national anti-smoking law in the general sense, and the relevant provisions and punishment measures are not clear enough. Under this

background, it is difficult to simply require that there are no smoking scenes in film and television works.⁹

Some foreign experience seems to be worth learning from. For example, the film association of the United States lists smoking scenes as one of the factors considered in film rating. At present, it has considered to list all films containing smoking scenes as "R", that is, to restrict viewers aged 17 or under; Disney has announced that in the future, the company's films for family audiences will eliminate smoking scenes; In Europe, many countries directly write the words "there are smoking scenes in the film" on posters to warn the audience, which looks like the "smoking is harmful to health" marked on cigarette boxes; Thailand stipulates in the form of government regulations that smoking pictures in TV series or films must be treated by means of mosaics; As for Hong Kong, China and Taiwan, it is stipulated that film and television works with smoking scenes should be accompanied by parents.

Film and TV drama creators mostly think of the healthy growth of teenagers, strictly control the smoking scenes in film and TV dramas that have nothing to do with the plot and the characterization and minimize the smoking scenes.

Film and television "quitting smoking" cannot become empty words, nor can it become a burden on film and television works. Enriching our spiritual world and enriching China's cultural and entertainment market are inseparable from the hard work of film and television workers. The establishment of a harmonious and healthy social family is inseparable from the efforts of each member. The two should be an organic whole that complements and cooperates with each other. They should not be superficially regarded as conflicts and split them.¹⁰ Healthy film and television works can inspire people and promote the harmonious development of society, what does the film and television work full of pornographic violence bring? It goes without saying. It is hoped that Chinese filmmakers can properly handle the relationship between film and television works and "quitting smoking". At the same time, relevant departments should constantly improve the system, laws and regulations of film and television "quitting smoking", to make China's film and television industry healthier and more harmonious and make China's cultural market more colorful.

Conflicts of Interest Disclosure Statement

This research is not funded by any organization related to tobacco production.

The authors declare no conflict of interest in the authorship or publication of this work. The authors declare no sponsored financial sources for the undertaken study.

Acknowledgment

Supported by the Fundamental Research Funds for the Central Universities: (19ZYJS004)The influence of cultural leadership theory on the shaping of workers' images in documentary images

References

1. Mingjuan L. Countermeasures for Tobacco Industrial Cluster Development. *Tobacco Regulatory Science*. 2021;7(04):326-338.
2. Yang L. Tobacco Control Legal System Based on

Environmental Protection Law Under the Background of Framework Convention on Tobacco Control. *Tobacco Regulatory Science*. 2021;7(04):457-468.

3. Wang F, Zheng P, Yang D, et al. Chinese tobacco industry promotional activity on the microblog Weibo. *PloSone*. 2014;9(6):1-6.

4. Siu W. Social construction of reality. The tobacco issue. *Critical Public Health*. 2009;19(1):23-44.

5. Scheufele DA. Framing as a theory of media effects. *Journal of Communication*. 1999;49(1): 103-122

6. Rongxing L. Film and television "tobacco control" has a long way to go. *Reporters' Notes*. 2011;4(5):65-66.

7. Yonghai H. Looking forward to the "dirty ashtray Award" to reduce the "smoke content" of film and television dramas. *China Art Newspaper*. 2019-7-1.

8. Jianshu Z. Film and television works should not praise smoking. *Guangming Newspaper*. 2015-02-17

9. Lihua Y. Progress in research on prevalence and control of smoking and secondhand smoking among women in China: a review. *Chinese Journal of Public Health*. 2015;31(10).

10. Baijing H, Biaowen H, Wenting F. Mass media strategies for smoking cessation campaign: media leader and no-smoking culture. *Chinese Journal of Health Education*. 2012;28(12):1064-1066.