

# Inheritance and Innovation of the Chinese Animation School: An Aesthetic Exploration in the New Era Through Nezha 2

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**Abstract:** *The Chinese school of animation has undergone nearly a century of development, forming a unique aesthetic system and narrative tradition that holds a significant position in the global animation industry. Nezha: The Devil's Rebirth (hereafter referred to as Nezha 2), as a representative work of contemporary Chinese animation, innovates upon the traditional style of the Chinese school of animation while preserving its artistic legacy. In terms of visual design, the film integrates traditional artistic elements such as ink painting and Dunhuang murals while employing modern CG technology to achieve a more visually impactful presentation. Regarding narrative techniques, it departs from a linear storytelling structure and adopts a multidimensional perspective to depict character development, enhancing both narrative depth and dramatic tension. On the emotional level, the film incorporates contemporary social values into the traditional hero's journey, fostering deeper audience resonance. This study examines the inheritance and innovation of the Chinese school of animation through the artistic characteristics of Nezha 2, focusing on the preservation of traditional elements, technological breakthroughs, and narrative transformations. Additionally, it analyzes the film's implications for the development of the Chinese animation industry.*

**Keywords:** Chinese School of Animation, Inheritance, Innovation, Animation Aesthetics, Visual Style, Narrative Structure

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## 1. Introduction

Since its emergence in the early 20th century, the Chinese school of animation has embarked on a long journey of integrating traditional culture with modern artistic expression, gradually refining a distinctive aesthetic style that shines uniquely within the global animation landscape. *Ne Zha: The Devil Child's Havoc in the Sea* (hereinafter referred to as *Ne Zha 2*), as a flagship work of this school in the new era, made a striking debut on January 29, 2025, rapidly sweeping the market with overwhelming momentum and sparking extensive discussion both within and beyond the industry (Bai & Fan, 2025).

As of February 27, 2025, the film's total box office revenue has surpassed 14 billion RMB, securing the seventh position in global box office history. In the Hong Kong market, the film grossed 6.02 million HKD on its opening day, setting a new record for the highest first-day box office for an animated film in the region and effortlessly claiming the top spot in the daily rankings. Within three days of its release, cumulative box office earnings in Hong Kong

exceeded 15 million HKD. In the North American market, the film had a limited release on February 14, 2025, earning 7.69 million USD over its four-day opening weekend. It ranked fifth in the weekly box office, significantly surpassing the total box office performance of its predecessor, *Ne Zha: Birth of the Demon Child*.

This series of impressive box office figures not only attests to the strong market appeal of *Ne Zha 2* but also underscores the increasingly prominent presence of Chinese animation on the global cultural stage. The film's innovations in visual effects, narrative structure, and cultural expression vividly illustrate the inheritance and rejuvenation of the Chinese school of animation amid the tides of the new era.

Within the context of globalization, exploring how *Ne Zha 2* inherits the essence of the Chinese school of animation while utilizing modern animation technology to achieve aesthetic innovation is a crucial topic that warrants in-depth academic investigation. Through an in-depth analysis of *Ne Zha 2*, this study aims to dissect its strategic integration of traditional elements, technological advancements, and narrative transformations, revealing its profound impact on the development of China's animation industry and the valuable insights it offers. By providing both theoretical support and practical guidance, this research contributes to the sustained growth of the Chinese school of animation in the global context.

Focusing specifically on *Ne Zha 2*, this study examines its artistic characteristics, technological applications, and narrative strategies to explore how the Chinese school of animation navigates the dynamics of globalization through both tradition and innovation. The scope of this research is confined to aspects directly related to *Ne Zha 2*, including its artistic features, technical implementations, and its influence on the Chinese animation industry, without engaging in comparative studies with other animated works or broader industry analyses.

## 2. Inheritance of the Chinese School of Animation

### Historical Context and Traditional Characteristics

As an essential component of the Eastern aesthetic system, the *Chinese school of animation* has undergone a long developmental process, reaching its peak in the 1960s. *Havoc in Heaven* (*Da Nao Tian Gong*) masterfully integrated Peking opera facial makeup, Dunhuang fresco art, and ink-wash landscapes, winning a Golden Award at the Venice Film Festival and marking a revolutionary moment in Chinese animation aesthetics. During this period, works such as *Little Tadpoles Looking for Their Mother* and *The Shepherd's Flute* embraced the freehand spirit of ink-wash animation, infusing Eastern philosophy into the 24-frame-per-second animated canvas, establishing an artistic landscape that stood alongside Disney and Studio Ghibli. However, during the wave of marketization in the 1990s, Chinese animation entered a period of decline, shifting toward an outsourcing-based industrial model, thereby losing its cultural discourse power. The release of *Ne Zha: Birth of the Demon Child* marked the modern revival of the Chinese school of animation. With its distinctive visual style and the narrative theme of "my fate is determined by me, not by heaven," the film showcased the emergence of individual consciousness in the new era, engaging in a dialogue with traditional cultural values. Building upon this foundation, *Ne Zha: The Devil Child's Havoc in the Sea* (hereinafter referred to as *Ne Zha 2*) extended this trend by leveraging advanced animation technologies and deeper cultural expression, propelling the Chinese school of animation to new heights.

The aesthetic principles of the Chinese school of animation are deeply rooted in traditional arts, drawing from visual styles such as ink painting, paper-cutting, and mural craftsmanship while

incorporating a narrative aesthetic reflecting national identity(Huang, 2022). Early animated works like *Ne Zha Conquers the Dragon King* and *Havoc in Heaven* emphasized the notion that "folk art is the foundation of all visual arts," incorporating color schemes and design techniques inspired by Dunhuang murals and traditional woodblock New Year paintings, thereby granting animated works a distinct national identity. This aesthetic principle extends beyond character design to narrative construction (Li, 2025). For instance, *Monkey King: Hero Is Back* reinterpreted the traditional imagery of *Havoc in Heaven* by transforming the Monkey King's cape into molten armor and reconstructing ink-wash clouds using 3D technology, breathing new life into classic aesthetics in the digital era. Expanding on this foundation, *Ne Zha 2* further pushes the boundaries of traditional aesthetics by utilizing refined animation technology to recreate ink-wash-inspired dynamic particle lighting effects. Additionally, the film incorporates elements of Eastern philosophical thought, revitalizing traditional aesthetics within a modern context.

The 1964 *Havoc in Heaven* constructed the character of Sun Wukong around the core concept of rebellion, integrating human emotions, the agility of a monkey, and divine magical prowess to craft an animated figure rich in Eastern characteristics. Similarly, *Ne Zha Conquers the Dragon King* inherited this tradition, drawing inspiration from Yongle Palace murals and folk New Year paintings to depict Ne Zha as a "traditional yet refined" cultural symbol. The contemporary wave of "Guochao animation" (national trend animation) continues these classic styles while introducing innovative elements (Du, Lu, & Li, 2025). *Ne Zha 2*, as a representative work of this movement, breaks through the confines of traditional ink-wash animation by integrating AI-generated imagery, 3D modeling, and dynamic lighting technologies. Furthermore, it abandons a linear narrative structure, expanding the aesthetic framework of the Chinese school of animation (2025).

### ***Ne Zha 2's Inheritance of Traditional Elements***

The visual style of *Ne Zha 2* follows the classic artistic expression of the *Chinese school of animation*, incorporating a wealth of traditional artistic elements into character modeling, scene design, and light-and-shadow effects. The depiction of Ne Zha, deeply influenced by Dunhuang murals and folk paper-cut art since the 1979 *Ne Zha Conquers the Dragon King*, has been further enhanced in *Ne Zha 2* through modern CGI techniques, heightening the visual impact of battle sequences. The film's mythical settings, such as the Dragon Palace and the Heavenly Court, adopt compositional techniques reminiscent of *Havoc in Heaven*, imbuing the visual design with a strong Eastern artistic ambiance. Notably, the dynamic rendering of Ne Zha's *Hun Tian Ling* (Red Armillary Sash) mirrors the effect of ink-wash diffusion, much like how Sun Wukong's robes in *Monkey King: Hero Is Back* flow as though painted with ink (Chen & Xie, 2025). Meanwhile, the *Feng Huo Lun* (Wind-Fire Wheels) utilizes particle-based ink-wash animation techniques, ensuring that every frame embodies a rich Chinese aesthetic.

Ne Zha, as a character in traditional Chinese mythology, symbolizes the spirit of defying fate. In the 1979 *Ne Zha Conquers the Dragon King*, his design was influenced by folk New Year paintings and traditional opera elements. *Ne Zha 2* builds upon this foundation by further refining Ne Zha's psychological growth arc. By depicting the complex relationship between Ne Zha and Ao Bing, the film explores "the intricate relationship between the inescapability of fate and the individual's struggle against it," juxtaposing this theme against Daoist philosophy's concept of "accepting fate," thereby adding greater depth to the character. In this adaptation, Ne Zha is no longer merely a mythical hero but a growth-oriented protagonist whose development aligns more closely with contemporary audience expectations.

Traditional Chinese animation narratives often emphasize a "zhanghui-style" (chapter-based) structure, borrowing from opera and mythological storytelling techniques. *Ne Zha 2* preserves this tradition while optimizing details to better align with modern audience preferences. The *Ne Zha* series extracts core storylines from *Investiture of the Gods* (*Fengshen Yanyi*) and reconstructs them narratively. While adhering to the "hero's journey" framework, *Ne Zha 2* integrates modern character relationships, enhancing the dramatic tension within the storyline.

### Modern Interpretation of Cultural Symbols

*Ne Zha 2* reconstructs traditional cultural symbols at a visual level to better align with modern aesthetic preferences. For example, the design of the Heavenly Court draws color inspiration from the Forbidden City, while the Dragon Palace's visual style references underwater worlds depicted in Song Dynasty murals. Regarding character design, classic elements such as Ne Zha's *Hun Tian Ling* and *Feng Huo Lun* are given new dynamic expressions, ensuring they meet modern animation standards. Throughout its history, Ne Zha's story has undergone multiple reinterpretations, and *Ne Zha 2* preserves the core narrative while adopting a storytelling approach that aligns with contemporary values. In this adaptation, Ne Zha is no longer simply a rebellious figure but a character engaged in a continuous journey of self-discovery and defiance against destiny, making him more relevant to modern audiences.

This approach enables traditional narratives to resonate more effectively with contemporary viewers (Xu, 2024). The rise of *Guochao animation*, supported by modern technology, allows traditional culture to blend seamlessly with contemporary aesthetic demands. *Ne Zha 2* not only innovates in visual design and storytelling but also utilizes AI-enhanced animation effects, ensuring that the legacy of the *Chinese school of animation* thrives in the modern era. The fusion of cultural heritage with technological advancements strengthens Chinese animation's position in the global market.

## 3. Innovations in Animation Aesthetics in the New Era

### Technological Innovations and Visual Presentation

The rise of *Guochao animation* (national trend animation) is not only driven by the awakening of cultural confidence but also by continuous advancements in animation technology. *Ne Zha 2* achieves a systematic breakthrough in animation technology, employing cutting-edge techniques such as the "Dynamic Ink Rendering Engine," the "Particle Effects Optimization System," and the "Qiankun Rendering Technology," allowing for a seamless fusion of traditional aesthetics and modern technology. The *Qiankun* rendering system enhances the film's dynamic visual performance—for example, the depiction of Ne Zha's "Three Heads and Six Arms" ability adopts a dynamic particle flow inspired by Dunhuang frescoes, creating a surreal, mystical Eastern fantasy atmosphere. In the "Torrential Battle" scene, the film utilizes the *Particle Effects Optimization System*, where AI-driven simulation models the surging waves, rendering the battlefield with a "tidal ebb and flow" effect, significantly enhancing the immersion of combat scenes. Technological advancements in animation not only improve visual quality but also open new possibilities in storytelling (Chen, 2024), making *Ne Zha 2* not just an animated film with a compelling narrative but also a visual spectacle where technology and art converge.

One of the key factors contributing to the success of *Ne Zha 2* is its interdisciplinary integration of visual arts and technological innovation. The film's artistic design builds upon traditional ink-wash painting while incorporating modern CG technology, retaining the unique charm of Chinese traditional painting while aligning with contemporary aesthetic preferences. The

visual innovation of *Guochao animation* is not merely a continuation of artistic style but a leap in technological advancement (Sun & Cao, 2023). For instance, in the "Siege of Chentang Pass" scene, meticulous attention to architectural details, lighting, and color composition enhances the sense of depth and visual layers within the setting.

Ne Zha's *Hun Tian Ling* (Red Armillary Sash) is no longer a simple red cloth but a flowing energy ribbon, embodying both the elegance of Eastern imagery and the dynamic power of Western superheroes. This detail exemplifies how modern technology upgrades traditional visual styles. The film's lighting system employs dynamic rendering, ensuring that every movement in battle generates a unique interplay of light and shadow, adding cinematic depth to the visuals and elevating the visual expression of Chinese animation to new heights (Huang & Li, 2023).

One of the defining characteristics that sets *Ne Zha 2* apart from traditional animation is its enhancement of "visual immersion." The film leverages AI-driven intelligent computations to generate grand battle scenes, such as the spectacle of celestial warriors engaging in combat on the same screen, allowing audiences to fully experience the grandeur of war. In Ao Bing's transformation sequence, real-time rendering technology is employed to simulate cold air gradually condensing into form, making the transformation process feel more tangible. This enhancement of immersive experiences strengthens the emotional resonance between the audience and the film.

### **Narrative Structure and Emotional Expression**

The innovation of story structure is a determining factor in an animated film's artistic achievement. *Ne Zha 2* breaks away from the conventional linear narrative structure by adopting a "multi-timeline interwoven narrative" approach, adding layers to the storyline. For example, the film continuously supplements character backstories through flashbacks, allowing the bond between Ne Zha and Ao Bing to gradually unfold rather than being presented in a straightforward linear manner. Ne Zha's fate is not predetermined by the heavens but is shaped through constant struggle—this core theme is deepened through non-linear storytelling. The film opens with a direct conflict between Ne Zha and Ao Bing, but as the plot progresses, the audience gradually uncovers the emotional complexities behind their relationship, enhancing the dramatic impact. The interwoven timelines encourage viewers to continuously reflect and infer, increasing narrative tension and reinforcing audience engagement. The emotional depth of characters determines whether audiences can resonate with them. *Ne Zha 2* focuses on intricate character development, making personalities more three-dimensional. For instance, Ao Bing's internal struggle is not merely expressed through dialogue but also through subtle facial expressions and body movements. "Ao Bing's armor transitions from light blue to deep blue, symbolizing his emotional transformation"—this detail demonstrates the film's meticulous approach to character-building in animation.

Ne Zha's character undergoes a more intricate growth arc in the film. Director Jiaozi noted in an interview: "Ne Zha is not just a character rebelling against fate but a young individual in search of self-identity." The film deepens the emotional bond between Ne Zha and his mother, Lady Yin, making their relationship more profound. As a result, audiences not only experience visual impact but also connect emotionally with the character's internal evolution.

The pacing of storytelling directly influences the viewing experience. *Ne Zha 2* strategically alternates between fast-paced battle sequences and slow-paced emotional developments, making the film more fluid in its pacing. For example, before the climactic showdown between

Ne Zha and Ao Bing, the film deliberately slows down to revisit their memories, enhancing the emotional weight of the final battle. This technique makes the emotional expression more nuanced and the action sequences more impactful (Ji, 2023).

### Localization Attempts within a Global Perspective

The success of *Ne Zha 2* extends beyond the domestic market, attracting widespread international attention. Upon its release in North America, the film grossed over \$10 million in its opening week, surpassing several Hollywood animated films. With its distinctive Eastern aesthetics and profound emotional themes, *Ne Zha 2* resonated with audiences across different cultural backgrounds, breaking cultural barriers and earning higher recognition for Chinese animation in the global market. The key to cultural dissemination lies in the universality of storytelling. Throughout its global outreach, *Ne Zha 2* relies on the Chinese mythological system while integrating modern narrative techniques, making its story more appealing to international audiences. This approach allows Chinese animation to achieve not only visual allure but also deeper cultural transmission (Li, 2023).

The modernization of traditional culture is central to the rise of *Guochao animation*. In *Ne Zha 2*, elements of local culture are embedded in character design, scene construction, and storytelling, ensuring that traditional heritage thrives in modern animation. For instance, the visual representation of the "Dragon Clan Transformation" scene draws inspiration from ancient mural metamorphosis techniques, ensuring that character transformations appear fluid and organic. Technological empowerment revitalizes cultural expression. By combining digital technology with traditional Chinese ink-wash painting, the film achieves a more vivid and dynamic visual effect, allowing audiences to appreciate both the charm of traditional culture and the visual spectacle of modern animation.

Cultural adaptability determines the reach of a film. *Ne Zha 2* enhances universal themes in its emotional expression, ensuring that audiences from different cultural backgrounds can relate to the story. For example, the friendship and conflict between Ne Zha and Ao Bing reflect not only traditional Chinese values but also resonate with global audiences through the universal theme of "fate and resistance." The key to modern animation's international success lies in finding common cultural touchpoints. In its global marketing efforts, *Ne Zha 2* optimized subtitles and localized voice dubbing, ensuring that audiences in different countries could fully grasp the story. This cultural adaptation strategy significantly increased the acceptance of Chinese animation in the global market.

## 4. The Dialectical Relationship Between Inheritance and Innovation

### The Integration Practice in *Nezha 2*

The adaptation of traditional animation language not only concerns visual inheritance but also determines the integrity of narrative style and cultural expression. *Nezha 2* extends the classic features of the Chinese animation school in multiple aspects, ensuring that innovation retains a distinct national identity. In character design, the 1979 version of *Nezha Conquers the Dragon King* endowed Nezha with stylized Peking opera-inspired movements and designs, aligning with traditional aesthetics while showcasing the unique temperament of Eastern mythology. *Nezha 2* inherits this tradition by utilizing modern CG technology to optimize character dynamics, making Nezha's combat movements smoother while preserving the rhythmic essence of Peking opera gestures, ensuring that battle scenes maintain the aesthetic style of traditional Chinese animation. The use of color and scene design also reflects the adaptation of traditional animation language. In the film, Chentang Pass is dominated by red,

gold, and black, aligning with the color system of traditional Chinese architecture, while the Dragon Palace in the East Sea adopts blue-green tones inspired by Dunhuang murals, creating a distinctive mythological atmosphere. These details not only retain the classic visual language of the Chinese animation school but also leverage CG technology to enhance spatial depth, thereby enriching audience immersion (Dong, 2023).

Advancements in animation technology have provided more possibilities for the reproduction of traditional elements (Huang, 2022). *Nezha 2* employs modern animation techniques to vividly showcase traditional aesthetics, successfully achieving a balance between 'technological innovation' and 'cultural inheritance.' The application of ink-wash rendering introduces new expressive possibilities. For instance, when Nezha wields the Red Armillary Sash, the effects team utilizes AI to simulate the dynamic diffusion of ink, endowing this symbol of power with the flowing beauty of traditional Chinese painting while maintaining the high-dynamic expressiveness of modern animation.

The introduction of particle effect optimization systems further aligns battle scenes with Eastern aesthetics (Pan, 2022). In the "Flood Battle" scene, the team calculated water flow trajectories to present a "floating clouds and flowing water" effect reminiscent of Song Dynasty landscape paintings. This technique not only enhances visual impact but also aligns with traditional Chinese artistic representation. With the support of modern animation technology, traditional elements gain new vitality, providing fresh directions for the future development of the Chinese animation school. This balance enhances both visual expressiveness and the cultural depth of animated narratives.

Cultural identity is a core factor determining the success of animated works. *Nezha 2* incorporates traditional Chinese culture not only in its visual style but also in its narrative themes, emphasizing Eastern values such as "struggle against fate," "individual growth," and "emotional bonds," enabling audiences to resonate with the story. Market demand dictates the scope of animation's dissemination. The film's global success demonstrates that cultural identity and commercial value are not mutually exclusive but can be mutually reinforcing (Zhang & Wang, 2022). Through precise market strategies, Chinese animation can maintain its cultural distinctiveness while gaining acceptance among global audiences, shaping the future trajectory of animated content creation.

### **The Future Development of the Chinese Animation School**

The future of the Chinese animation school requires breakthroughs built upon traditional styles. In recent years, the rise of "Guochao" (national trend) animation has demonstrated the appeal of traditional aesthetics to modern audiences. However, balancing tradition and modernity remains a critical challenge for future creative endeavors (Su, 2020).

Ink-wash animation continues to be a key feature of the Chinese animation school. *Nezha 2* employs dynamic ink-wash techniques to retain the layered textures of traditional ink diffusion while ensuring the fluidity of 3D animation, offering new aesthetic insights for future works. Moving forward, aligning ink-wash animation with modern technological standards and enhancing its competitiveness in international markets are crucial areas of focus (Hao, 2016). The integration of Peking opera and animation also holds significant potential. Traditional opera's gestures and movement design closely align with animation's expressive techniques. However, most domestic animations still adhere to the Western fast-paced action model. Future works could further explore the fusion of opera movements with modern animation technology, creating a more distinctive animation style (Chen, 2015).

The development of the animation industry depends not only on content quality but also on a comprehensive industrial chain. In recent years, China's animation market has matured, with IP derivatives, cross-industry collaborations, and global distribution emerging as key industry trends. *Nezha 2* has made significant explorations in this regard. The development of IP derivatives has become a crucial component of China's animation industry. The film's merchandise, including figurines, apparel, and cultural products, has been enthusiastically received, highlighting the commercial potential of Chinese animation. This model extends the lifecycle of animated films while enhancing their economic value, providing financial stability for the industry.

The integration of animation with other cultural industries is also becoming a trend. The success of *Nezha 2* has promoted the dissemination of traditional Chinese culture. For example, the collaboration between the Dunhuang Academy and the film's production team has drawn greater public attention to the artistic charm of Dunhuang murals. Such cross-industry collaborations enable animation to transcend mere entertainment consumption and serve as a crucial medium for cultural dissemination, bolstering the competitiveness of Chinese animation in the international market.

### **The Significance and Challenges of Aesthetic Exploration**

Animation aesthetics is not merely a means of visual expression but also an essential mode of cultural communication. The aesthetic value of the Chinese animation school lies in its unique artistic style and narrative approach, allowing animated works to carry profound cultural connotations. The contemporary transformation of traditional aesthetics remains a core issue in aesthetic exploration. How to adapt traditional art forms such as ink-wash painting, paper cutting, and Peking opera to modern animation technology remains an ongoing challenge. In this process, maintaining national characteristics while ensuring global audience acceptance warrants in-depth research (Whyke, Mugica & Brown, 2021).

The greatest challenge in aesthetic innovation is balancing traditional characteristics with modern audience expectations. Some domestic animations still imitate Western visual styles, resulting in a lack of uniqueness. The Chinese animation school needs breakthroughs in aesthetic innovation to strengthen its global competitiveness. The equilibrium between technology and aesthetics remains a key challenge in creative processes. Preserving the distinctive charm of traditional aesthetics while leveraging technological advancements is essential for the future of animation.

The development of the Chinese animation school will rely on technological innovation and cultural confidence. The application of AI-assisted painting, virtual reality, and other emerging technologies will provide greater aesthetic possibilities. As the international market expands, Chinese animation will gain broader recognition, solidifying its position as a significant force in the global animation industry. The globalization of animation dissemination will propel Chinese animation onto the world stage. By continuously exploring narrative, visual style, and technological innovation, China will establish a more distinct aesthetic system, securing a more prominent place in the global animation market.

## **5. The Implications of *Nezha 2* for the Chinese Animation Industry**

### **Market Impact and Audience Feedback**

*Nezha: Birth of the Demon Child* (hereafter referred to as *Nezha 2*) achieved remarkable market success upon its release, owing to its outstanding narrative structure, visual style, and emotional

expression. With box office earnings surpassing 10 billion yuan, it became a phenomenal success in Chinese animated cinema, breaking domestic animation records and securing a strong position in the global market. This achievement not only underscores the commercial value of domestic animation but also demonstrates the innovative capabilities of the Chinese animation school in the modern era. The film's market influence has propelled domestic animation from a "niche culture" to a "mainstream industry." The box office impact of *Nezha 2* has benefited investors and production teams alike while expanding the development potential of China's animation industry chain. As more high-quality works emerge, the business model for animated films will mature, fostering the development of the Chinese animation industry toward a more refined and internationalized trajectory.

The success of *Nezha 2* is inseparable from the high level of audience recognition it received. The film garnered high ratings on various movie review platforms, with viewers offering positive feedback on its visual presentation, character development, and narrative depth. The emotional conflict between Nezha and Ao Bing, the theme of heroic growth, and the meticulous animation techniques resonated with audiences across different age groups. The enhancement of audience aesthetic recognition signifies that domestic animation has reached new heights in cultural expression and market acceptance. *Nezha 2* shattered the stereotype of domestic animation being "exclusively for children," attracting a broader audience base. Moving forward, Chinese animation must continue to enhance narrative innovation and deepen thematic exploration to meet the evolving aesthetic demands of audiences, thereby strengthening its market competitiveness.

### **Innovation Potential in Creative Models**

Optimizing animation production processes is essential for improving the efficiency and quality of domestic animation. During the production of *Nezha 2*, AI-assisted design, intelligent rendering, and other cutting-edge technologies were incorporated, significantly enhancing animation precision and production efficiency. This approach reduced costs and improved the controllability of production timelines, providing valuable insights for the industrialization of future Chinese animation production. The success of an animated film depends on both content innovation and breakthroughs in storytelling techniques. *Nezha 2* adopts a multi-threaded narrative structure, adding layers of complexity to the story. Character development emphasizes personal growth and emotional conflict, enhancing audience immersion.

This transformation in content creation allows domestic animation to move beyond the limitations of traditional linear storytelling, offering new directions for future animation projects. The development of the animation industry relies not only on individual successful works but also on a comprehensive industry chain. *Nezha 2* has stimulated growth in various related sectors, including animation merchandise, derivatives, and cultural tourism, proving the market potential of domestic animation intellectual property (IP). In the future, collaboration between animated films and industries such as gaming, cultural creativity, and theme parks will be a crucial driver for the upgrading of China's animation industry.

### **International Competitiveness and Cultural Export**

The overseas performance of *Nezha 2* demonstrates the international competitiveness of Chinese animation. The film was released in North America, Southeast Asia, and other regions, attracting a significant international audience. Its exquisite visual presentation, profound cultural connotations, and universal emotional themes enabled it to transcend geographical and cultural barriers, becoming a popular title in the global market. The effectiveness of cultural dissemination depends on the expressive methods and communication strategies employed by

a work. In its international promotion, *Nezha 2* utilized multilingual dubbing and subtitles to enhance global audience comprehension. Additionally, the film expanded its reach through social media and short video platforms, increasing its global influence. Moving forward, Chinese animation needs to tailor its cultural dissemination strategies to international market characteristics, developing more targeted communication methods (KusumahWitanto & Darmawan, 2022).

To secure a larger share in the global market, domestic animation must continuously advance in creative concepts, technological innovation, and international collaboration. The success of *Nezha 2* provides a valuable reference for expanding Chinese animation's presence abroad. In the future, Chinese animation companies can further enhance their global influence by collaborating with international platforms, producing cross-cultural works, and deeply integrating into the global animation industry chain.

## 6. Conclusion

The success of *Nezha 2* is not merely a market breakthrough for an outstanding animated work but also a crucial milestone in the upgrading of China's animation industry. The film's box office performance, audience recognition, technological advancements, and global dissemination efforts have all provided valuable insights for the development of Chinese animation. Moving forward, the industry must continue driving technological innovation, improving production efficiency, and refining narrative depth, character development, and cultural expression to enhance the competitiveness of domestic animation.

Chinese animation has entered a new stage of development, and the industry's growth hinges on the continuous emergence of high-quality works. The innovation and market potential demonstrated by *Nezha 2* offer new directions for the future of the domestic animation industry. Only by maintaining cultural confidence, exploring more diverse storytelling approaches, leveraging advanced technology in animation production, and expanding international perspectives can Chinese animation truly establish itself on the global stage.

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