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DUAL CULTURAL RESONANCE AS A PROMOTION DRIVER FOR FILMS COMING FROM SMALL MARKETS

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Abstract

European markets showcase a rich tapestry of cultural diversity and unique nuances that reflect Europe's diversity and rich cultural heritage. A contributing factor in the success of films produced in smaller European markets is cultural resonance (Nielsen et al., 2024). This cultural resonance is not just an artistic endeavour; it plays a fundamental role in the film industry by facilitating meaningful dialogue within national contexts. We argue that this resonance has dual national and international potential, enhancing the export potential and success of European small-market films beyond their domestic contexts.

To illustrate this argument, we present a qualitative case study of the Irish-UK co-produced film *Kneecap* (2024), which focuses on a band from the North of Ireland and addresses the Irish language (Gaelic) and its relationship with British culture. The findings indicate four main elements of *Kneecap's* promotion strategy: 1) transmediality, 2) celebrity power, 3) tailored message, and 4) a lack of promotional censorship. We contend that both the film itself and its promotional campaign exemplify effective practices in realising the duality of cultural resonance through the interplay of universal and locally specific elements.

This proposal builds on research conducted under the EU Horizon project CresCine (ID: 101094988), which aims to enhance the international competitiveness and cultural diversity of the small European film industry.

Keywords: *Cultural resonance; Small European film industry; Film export strategy; Promotional campaigns; Cultural diversity*

Introduction

The film production industry in smaller European markets faces impactful competition with larger markets, such as the United States. The market share of US films decreased to 63%, down 6 percentage points from 69%, in 2023. European films increased their share of total admissions to 33%, up from 27.1% in 2023 (EAO, 2026). Despite a positive tendency – in 2024, European films reached their highest market shares in six years – identifying a single cause for less competitiveness of the European films, especially from small markets, is difficult; it is generally the result of a complex interplay of factors that influence overall market performance, including linguistic barriers and promotional challenges (Higson, 2018; Raats et al., 2018). Films produced in countries such as Portugal, Lithuania, and Croatia are frequently acknowledged for their artistic merit at film festivals (Nielsen et al., 2024). However, these films often face significant challenges in gaining broader acceptance and international distribution, which occur far less frequently than for productions from the “Big Five” European nations (the UK, France, Germany, Italy, and Spain) or the United States. Additionally, the competitiveness of local films varies considerably across the seven small markets examined in the CresCine (Grant ID: 101094988) research project (Nielsen et al., 2024). CresCine’s findings suggest that, barring exceptional cases, local films generally struggle to compete effectively within their domestic markets against larger entities. The key challenge in driving interest in films from small European markets is their potential to convey cultural resonance (or cultural proximity; Higson, 2018) within their local contexts and on the global stage. The approach of European markets embracing cultural resonance is based on local significance and its potential for expansion as broader topics through the elaboration of local cases. This strategic choice of European production can be a competitive advantage over the USA’s approach, which is based on neutrality and generalisation.

In this paper, we analyse the phenomenon of performance, the film’s cultural and temporal relevance, and the promotional strategy of the *Kneecap* film (2024) which, via creative production, serves as a catalyst for discourse within its domestic contexts by engaging with pertinent cultural narratives and social issues with temporal relevance. Concurrently, we argue that these narratives, while emphasising local specificity, can resonate with international audiences by incorporating societal problems that are both familiar and novel. We frame this phenomenon as the dual nature of cultural resonance, a central focus of this paper. We acknowledge the limitations of a single case study in justifying the dual cultural resonance at a general level. Hence, further work to expand the sample is required to demonstrate the potential for dual cultural resonance as an international promotion driver. We found a unique opportunity to observe and explore the subtleties of a specific film in greater detail, thanks to the producer, who shared with us their know-how on film marketing and the audience research conducted by Publikum to position the film.

This ability to connect local stories with universal, timely themes not only enhances the artistic value of *Kneecap* but also suggests it confers a competitive advantage on films from the small European market, primarily presented in non-English languages for export. By skilfully blending culturally-specific elements with universally-relatable motifs, such films can achieve broader recognition and acceptance, boosting their chances of success in an increasingly competitive global cinematic landscape. This paper proposes that cultural resonance extends beyond being a concept aimed at domestic audiences. Instead, it can serve as a competitive advantage for films originating from smaller European markets. By exploring familiar themes, such as language preservation as seen in *Kneecap*, these films can effectively engage broader audiences through their unique nuances, providing a knowledge component.

This exploratory paper examines the work conducted under the CresCine Horizon Europe initiative. The paper uses a combination of primary and secondary data, mainly desk research and two rounds of interviews with the *Kneecap* film producer, who provided data from the Publikum agency to support the argument. The objective of this paper is to elucidate the competitive advantage of the *Kneecap* film, which arises from a confluence of factors: its strategic focus on fostering cultural resonance at a national level, its capacity to engender international cultural appeal with culturally relevant and timely narratives and the implementation of a tailored marketing strategy responsive to specific audience demands and interests. Furthermore, the film's inherent versatility enables it to engage diverse audiences across markets, including the United States.

The authors of the article are not part of the Irish community and have taken an outsider position to develop their argument. We intentionally refrain from evaluating or discussing the political beliefs and affiliations of *Kneecap*'s members. Instead, this article examines the potential implications of audience exposure to disparate viewpoints for specific demographic groups and mainstream perspectives. Such exposure may serve a dual purpose: enhancing the visibility of independent film productions while cultivating an environment that encourages public discourse. This intersection of media and civic engagement underscores the importance of diverse narratives in enriching societal discourse and fostering a more inclusive public dialogue.

The function of cultural resonance as a competitive advantage for films from small European markets

Rosa (2019) describes resonance as a way of engaging with the world in which the individual and the environment mutually influence and transform one another. Resonance acts as a remedy for the alienation often felt in contemporary society

(Rosa, 2019), and it can be understood through three dimensions: the horizontal dimension, which pertains to our interpersonal relationships; the diagonal dimension, involving material interactions with our surrounding objects; and the vertical dimension, also known as the existential, which relates to our engagement with broader themes such as history, politics, and religion. The concept of resonance encompasses both a factual, knowledge-driven aspect and a normative, value-oriented dimension. As scholars argue (McDonnell et al., 2017), it does not fully replicate the complexities of the world. Instead, it adds an extra layer of understanding that enhances one's problem-solving mechanisms at various levels. This framework clarifies the characteristics of internal and international cultural resonance and their potential in combining novelty and familiarity to achieve a competitive advantage for films from small European markets. Ultimately, resonance fosters a shared experience that can engage the audience and motivate their participation in global relationships.

According to CresCine's research, a comparative analysis of films from smaller European markets (Croatia, Denmark, Estonia, Flanders (Belgium), Ireland, Lithuania, and Portugal) reveals a diverse range of orientations within their respective film industries. These orientations include: 1) cultural resonance, 2) exports, 3) production service, and 4) cinematic art (Nielsen et al., 2024). The differences between these categories can be clarified by several key parameters, including the primary policy domains that establish the regulatory framework for each orientation, the foundational financing structures, and the criteria used to assess legitimacy and success within each sector. CresCine posits that the success of films aligned with a cultural-resonance orientation is often assessed by their domestic reception, particularly through box office/admissions, as these metrics indicate effective engagement with the target audiences (Nielsen et al., 2024).

As CresCine explains, the main challenge of a cultural-resonance orientation is establishing connections with domestic

audiences through cultural proximity and nuance (Nielsen et al., 2024). Productions that adopt this approach also aim to fulfil the film industry's broader social and political responsibilities, including but not limited to generating public discourse and promoting representation. In the realm of filmmaking, the strategic choice to emphasise cultural resonance is a powerful influence. It highlights the deep connection a film can create with the values, lived experiences, and collective identity of its domestic audience, fostering rich engagement and paving the way for success in its home territory.

CresCine's report explores the concept of culturally-resonant films within the film industry and cultural production (Nielsen, 2024). These films leverage their intrinsic cultural relevance to navigate a competitive cinematic landscape effectively. They participate in the commercial race for viewership and align with broader political objectives, fulfilling culturally significant functions. Cultural resonance refers to a film's ability to evoke a sentiment by drawing on prior knowledge and opinions (even if fragmented) about the topic being explored. By drawing on shared cultural "repertoires," films can evoke feelings of familiarity and belonging (Hjort, 1999). These repertoires encompass shared values and the fabric of collective identity, interwoven with well-known narratives and symbols that resonate deeply within the audience's collective consciousness. Importantly, the topic can be controversial and conflictive without reaching a compromise. This resonance generates a communal sense of sharing or rejection.

On a national level, cultural resonance can be understood in the context of national and neighbouring environments. We advocate for a broader interpretation of cultural resonance as a key driver of international success for European small market films. Transnationally, this concept reflects the challenges of identifying and locating a person's sense of belonging within a familiar social context. We differentiate between national and international levels of cultural resonance and suggest that reaching both levels may enhance the competitiveness

of films from small European markets. The first level, national resonance, refers to a film's ability to depict and represent causes in a familiar setting for its audience, who likely share a similar background. This resonance provides representation, depicts the local environment, and highlights the complexities of the regional context. The second level of analysis offers a sense of relatability through shared sentiments or phenomena. Additionally, the introduction of the new puzzle depicting the novel context enriches our understanding of the complexity of the world, providing valuable learning opportunities, as will be illustrated in the case of *Kneecap*. When these elements come together, they create a competitive advantage for small-market productions.

Cinematic productions from smaller ecosystems often face constraints in terms of economic and technological resources compared to the vast capabilities of Hollywood and larger European markets, limiting their competitiveness. The narrative conventions typical of Hollywood have been extensively analysed and classified by numerous scholars, such as Schatz (1981), Bordwell et al. (1985), and Berliner (2017). These conventions are defined by a consistent, standardised framework that operates across two interconnected areas: the aesthetics of film style and the economics of production. The aesthetic and industrial model of Hollywood cinema, often termed Classical Hollywood Cinema (CHC), is defined by a style built on narrative clarity aimed at mass audiences (Bordwell et al., 1985). Schatz (1981) elucidated how the pre-existing system of genre functions as an economic and cultural regulator within the film industry, positioning genres as vital industrial frameworks that mitigate risk for studios and shape audience expectations of box-office success. In his 2017 work, Berliner articulates a contemporary perspective on the aesthetic significance of this style, positing that Hollywood's primary accomplishment is its capacity to elicit profound aesthetic pleasure among mass audiences. This is achieved through structural clarity and by effectively engaging audiences' emotions through familiar ideological

constructs. It is essential to acknowledge the strengths of the American film production industry while recognising that Hollywood's success stems from its transparent appeal (Olson, 1999).

This study posits that the *Kneecap* exemplifies intrinsic cultural and historical significance that has the potential for global expansion. Following several waves of academic debate around US cultural/industrial hegemony and even imperialism (Boyd-Barrett, 2015), the competition between US-American and European films is often in focus (Barthel-Bouchier, 2012; Crane, 2014). Scholarship on this competition emphasises the advantages of US productions such as the English language (Collins, 1989) that supposedly increases with the English proficiency of importing nations (Fu, 2013), Hollywood's industrial scale, its films' alleged narrative transparency (Olson, 1999), and the persistent exposure that creates familiarity where other imports face a cultural discount (Hoskins & Mirus, 1988). To counter the narrative of unabashed US dominance, concepts such as the appeal of cultural proximity (Straubhaar, 1991), emotional proximity, cosmopolitanism, and grapevine proximity (Jensen & Jacobsen, 2020), as well as cultural 'mark-up' (Jensen et al., 2022), have been used to explain the counterflows of non-US content on the global market, such as the worldwide success of Danish TV dramas in the 2010s. More recent scholarship is finding evidence of a resurgent challenge to geo-linguistically proximate content with English-speaking materials (Bengesser et al., 2023; Straubhaar, 2021), focusing on the competition between US and non-US content in terms of exports, and calling for an explanation of why European content depicts a lack of the exportability factors present in US content. The United States market has traditionally relied on universality and generality as its key marketing strategies and competitive advantage (Thompson, 1999). The linearity and predictability that have historically provided long-term stability have been significant strengths for US production. However, the recent growth of international diversity among streaming services

is challenging the dichotomy between local specificity and global appeal. In Europe, where commercial pressures are lower (though still increasing), the combination of public and private funding often creates a more conducive environment for unrestrained creativity and experimentation, as well as a focus on resonant narratives and topics.

Small European markets, with their openness to experimentation and cultural diversity, offer a contrasting approach to commercial Hollywood production. While Hollywood features eclectic diversity, it is essential to recognise that small European markets can achieve both national and international cultural resonance when supported by curated and strategic marketing campaigns. Given current trends and the stereotype-driven narratives commonly used in Hollywood films, these smaller markets have a competitive advantage. Their movies can foster a sense of belonging, introduce audiences to familiar nuances, and address contentious issues, all of which offer opportunities for greater international exposure for films from small European markets.

Kneecap's film performance and justification of the case study

Kneecap (2024) has been chosen as an example that successfully illustrates what we argue is an impactful resonance achieved by the combination of the film itself and its marketing efforts. This film is a co-production with the UK, a significant player in the film industry, and it benefits from featuring English-language parts, which enhances its exportability. However, the film is mostly set in Gaelic, the language native to Ireland.

Directed by Rich Peppiatt, it premiered at the Sundance Film Festival, making history as the first Gaelic-language film to debut there. The film has garnered recognition through both wins (Sundance NEXT Audience Award, being the first Irish language film to win; BAFTA for Outstanding Debut; 7 BIFA

wins, including Best British Independent Film; and 4 IFTA, including Best Film) and nominations (6 BAFTA, 14 BIFA, 17 record nominations of IFTA), as well as being short-listed twice at the Oscars in 2025 for Best International Feature Film and Best Original Song. It has been well-received by critics. The film, according to IMDb Pro, grossed almost \$5 million at the box office, including over \$1 million in the US, which is considered successful. The domestic box office accounted for 23.2%, while the international box office accounted for almost 77%.

The film *Kneecap* is a fake biopic, a parody within the music biopic genre, with it being used as a genre because it is an “*entertaining dynamic to present these issues, an array that happens around them essentially*,” according to the producer. *Kneecap* narrates the fictionalised account of the real-life band *Kneecap* from Belfast, in the North of Ireland, while delving into the intricate dynamics of British and Irish relations. The narrative intricately weaves together historical contexts and the contemporary political tensions between opposing factions, elucidating themes of language preservation, colonisation, and its enduring impacts. Despite being a fake biopic with most of the storylines being fictionalised, the line about DJ Próvaí (JJ Ó Dochartaigh) being a schoolteacher and performing in a balaclava to hide his identity is largely true. Moreover, the film is the first official public reveal of the JJ Ó Dochartaigh persona, which bridges the fictional part of the film with its unique real-life value and sensation.

The producer of the film mentioned a “gut feeling” and “perfect timing” when choosing the *Kneecap* band as the centre of the film, noting the suitable social and political context unfolding for the project as the topic of Irishness was gaining popularity:

– “They were nowhere near as popular as they were now. And like, I think they had like 30,000 monthly listeners at the time. Now they have like 1.5 million monthly listeners. It’s just a pure belief, I suppose.”

The producer shares the increase in popularity and sentiment toward the Gaelic language in the North of Ireland. In the most recent North of Ireland census (NISRA, 2022), an increase in individuals identifying as Irish or Northern Irish is demonstrated, while the number identifying as British has decreased. Recent research by Amárach et al. (2026) indicates a notable trend among 18 - 24-year-olds, where 73% express a desire to see the increased use of the Irish language by businesses and public organisations. This represents a significant increase from the 48% recorded for the same age group in 2024, highlighting a clear and growing enthusiasm for the language among young adults, as supported by the interviewed producer:

– “*That’s like the only way to really learn Irish properly is to, like, immerse yourself in the community. It was the same year that *The Quiet Girl* was nominated for an Oscar, and it was the first Irish-language film to be nominated as well. So it was really already having this resurgence moment*” (Producer)

The film is vocal about language preservation as it captured the growing sentiment in Ireland, a trend that the producer believes could be further intensified by the 2016 Brexit referendum. Additionally, the campaign for the Irish Language Act is reflected in the Identity and Language (Northern Ireland) Act 2022, which overturned the long-standing colonial law from 1737 (the Administration of Justice Act 1737) prohibiting the use of Irish in court proceedings. The final provisions of the 2022 Act were enacted in Westminster on January 28, 2026, granting the Irish language official status for the first time, giving it the same status as the English language. The song “C.E.A.R.T.A” by *Kneecap* was inspired by the arrest of member Móglaí Bap in 2017, who was charged with spray-painting “Cearta” (meaning rights in Gaelic) on a wall just before a significant march supporting the Act.

The usage of the Gaelic language is still seen as political in the North of Ireland, as mentioned by the producer:

– *“Irish is a political statement in the North because it was the language of how the IRA spoke to each other privately, so they could basically speak to each other and communicate without English and intercepting it and understanding it. So there still is that fear dynamic.”*

The value of the *Kneecap* as a film is also presented, and further perceived, as the contemporary representation of the North of Ireland without a historical setting, focusing on the North of Ireland’s specificity, including the vocabulary.

– *“It’s always about the troubles, or it’s completely ignoring the troubles. It was never acknowledging what it’s like to live in a post-Troubles era now and grow up within that”*

Kneecap’s marketing variables

Music meets film: the synergy of transmedia storytelling and cross-brand in film production.

The integration of transmedia storytelling (Jenkins, 2006) and cross-brand synergy has evolved into a sophisticated marketing strategy in today’s film industry. This approach extends narratives and enhances brand presence across multiple platforms. It is not a new concept; it builds on established practices from other creative sectors, such as gaming and literature (Jenkins, 2006; Scolari, 2009). The success of this strategy is particularly evident in the sub-genre of musician biopics, which capitalises on artists’ pre-existing recognition to amplify a film’s commercial and cultural impact. Films like *Bohemian Rhapsody*, *Rocketman*, and *Elvis* exemplify how a film’s market performance can be significantly boosted by leveraging an artist’s established brand identity (Marshall & Kongsgaard, 2012). This synergy between the film and musical brand reinforces both, and creates a powerful marketing

tool. In the case of the *Kneecap* film, this synergy proved beneficial as it seemingly facilitated the growth of the band from niche to festival headliners, which has been achieved by simultaneous development in their music and film releases:

– *“They weren’t as big as they are now. When we first boarded the project, they were certainly on the rise, and the awareness around them was kind of constantly building”* (Producer)

The film’s producers succeeded in timing the release and promotional campaign to coincide with the band’s rising popularity, maximising audience interest and capitalising on the versatile ways to connect with the band. A crucial aspect of this campaign was the band members’ active involvement, serving both as actors and musicians.

The film targets audiences interested in specific brands associated with the band to maintain affinity and lifestyle. The dual role of marketing and creative collaboration contributed to the development of accurate and consistent brand identities. This alignment between the band’s identity and the film’s messaging ensured a seamless integration of the film’s image, resulting in a unified transmedia experience. The strategic coordination of marketing with the music group’s established brand likely led to increased film attendance and the broader cultural recognition of *Kneecap* as a music brand, creating a cohesive, multi-platform brand narrative:

– *“We did a lot of cinema partnerships as well. The guys were very themselves because, you know, the film, the promotion of the film is kind of nothing without them and their support and then giving their time.”* (Producer)

Worldwide celebrity as earned credibility

A significant challenge in the commercial distribution of the film is its subject matter: the group is an active but not

globally mainstream, thus being an “underground” musical act. This aspect gives the film a documentary feel, which can be advantageous and disadvantageous when it comes to theatrical exhibition. It is particularly notable for its positioning as a fictional narrative that parodies the biopic genre, while simultaneously risking misinterpretation as a documentary. This presents a marketing conundrum, as the film’s producer notes: how to attract a diverse audience while preserving the film’s distinctive artistic vision. Marketing has to contribute to the production’s “seriousness.” This has also been approached by the poster design, using relevant review quotes from critics:

A crucial strategy for navigating this ambiguity and enhancing the film’s appeal beyond a niche market was including a globally-recognised actor. The incorporation of a Hollywood star functions as a significant mechanism alleviating genre confusion and amplifying audience interest. The presence

of a well-known actor introduces a level of “seriousness,” respectability, and commercial viability that a cinematic portrayal of a lesser-known band might lack. However, it is essential to note that scholars discuss the lack of guarantee of success due to the famous cast (De Vany & Walls, 1999). In the context of the *Kneecap* film, the strategic casting of Michael Fassbender represents a deliberate effort to harness this “star power.” Fassbender’s established reputation within major Hollywood productions provides a familiar and trusted visage for international audiences who may not be acquainted with the band’s background, thus bringing “seriousness”:

– “There were people who were worried, I’d say, about being like, ‘Can they act? Can they pull it off?’ But many international people relaxed when Michael Fassbender came on board. They’re like, OK, we have something we can sell” (Producer)



Fassbender's participation in the film went beyond a simple casting decision; it emerged as a significant promotional asset that enhanced both the project's visibility and credibility. His attendance at high-profile events, such as the London premiere, exemplified his commitment to the film and generated substantial media coverage and scrutiny, reinforcing its legitimacy in an increasingly competitive cinematic landscape. This strategic involvement not only drew attention to the film but also contributed to a broader discourse surrounding its themes and artistic vision.

Fassbender's ties to Irish culture played a critical role in establishing an authentic match between him and the film's thematic concerns. The synergy between Fassbender's identity and the film's core themes effectively validated the project's artistic intent. It helped to elevate the narrative beyond its classification as a European market release, transforming it into a global subject of interest. Fassbender's involvement amplified the project's marketing efforts and facilitated deeper discussions regarding the portrayal of Irish culture and identity in contemporary cinema. This highlights the multifaceted role that actors play in shaping the cultural landscape of film, demonstrating how effective casting can resonate beyond the screen, influencing both audience perceptions and critical reception.

Internationally-tailored positioning and exposure to conflict as marketing instruments

The production of the film collaborated with the company Publikum, which analysed and clustered data scraped from the social media of the audience of *Kneecap* as a band to market the film. We had access to this report, which proves the importance of the concept of resonance to the audience. The clusters formed about the music band by the Publikum are as follows: Language and History, Music, Universal Hip-Hop, and Bond and Attitude. The film employed various positioning strategies tailored to different markets.

According to data from Publikum, viewers in the North of Ireland appreciated the representation of contemporary culture. The State of Ireland supported the shared pride and cause's representation on the screen. For these territories, using Rosa's (2019) concept, it covers both dimensions of resonance, diagonal and vertical, representing and capturing the factual and value-oriented levels familiar to these audiences. For audiences in the UK, as presented by Publikum, the *Kneecap* movie is associated with educational value, raising awareness and providing contextual information about their country's societal complexities.

Conversely, the marketing approach for the US market primarily focused on the film's musical aspects. This divergence highlights the multifaceted nature of cultural resonance, suggesting that a work can transcend a single national context and gain relevance through its connection to conflicts or contemporary issues. Music is often seen as a universal topic that can resonate on a personal level. However, the question of Gaelic language preservation is not a primary concern for audiences in the USA. As an English-speaking country, the USA can play a role in educating its citizens and fostering an appreciation for linguistic diversity, similar to the UK.

The marketing strategy employed for the film *Kneecap* signifies a purposeful departure from conventional Hollywood tactics, which typically aim to unify "catch-all" diverse audiences through non-controversial, universally-appealing messages. Instead, this film's marketing campaign deliberately embraces and accentuates conflict as a fundamental component of its promotional efforts:

– *"We always have to kind of navigate that. But we were never going to censor anything. We always knew that's kind of their strength, you know, they're always gonna be political. They're always gonna be outspoken, and people love them for that, and people admire them for that."*
(Producer)

– “They’re controversial in themselves, but they know how to spin it.”

This reflects the findings of the Publikum Bond and Attitude cluster regarding audience perception. Before the film’s release, the audience had already come to appreciate the systematic criticism and active politicisation of the band members. Hence, the film producers adopted a non-censorship media strategy, which could compromise the film’s success metrics. At first glance, this approach is exclusionary, as it may limit the film’s audience by prioritising content that

resonates solely with viewers’ pre-existing preferences and beliefs. However, this strategy can also enhance the film’s competitive potential by fostering controversy and conflict, both within the narrative itself and throughout its marketing campaign. This approach may stimulate deeper engagement and discourse, thereby increasing visibility and interest. By doing so, it not only aligns with the band’s pre-existing brand identity, maintaining cohesiveness, but also effectively engages with the film’s socio-political themes. The decision to adopt an unfiltered, uncensored media presence for the musicians and actors reinforces the film’s



Poster for the UK

authenticity. This authenticity creates a strong affinity, inviting viewers to engage more critically and personally with the content and participate in the parasocial debate.

By foregrounding conflict, the filmmakers challenge the status quo and invite viewers to engage in dialogue and debate, positioning the film as a catalyst for socio-political discourse. This strategy generates significant media coverage, as controversies typically attract public interest and facilitate discussions across various platforms. As a result, the marketing campaign not only enhances the film's visibility but also aligns more closely with the values and passions of its intended audience. Through this approach, *Kneecap* aims to transcend the traditional boundaries of film marketing by enticing audiences with complex narratives that reflect local conflicts while remaining familiar across cultures.

The band members' commitment to articulating their political perspectives through the film, their musical compositions, and public engagements serves as a fundamental impetus for their strategic approach. Rather than pursuing a broad and ambiguous appeal, their communication is intentionally crafted to resonate deeply with individuals who share their values, while simultaneously provoking those who hold opposing views. This methodology prioritises brand consistency over mass-market accessibility. The film's promotional materials, alongside the band members' public personas, are cohesively united by recognisable symbols that articulate their political stance and Irish identity (the Irish flag-patterned balaclava, Gaelic language, and the Palestinian keffiyeh).

By adopting this unwavering position, the film cultivates a robust and consistent brand narrative. This strategic choice generates considerable media attention, as the contentious nature of their messaging ignites debate and dialogue, providing valuable additional publicity and temporal relevance. While this approach may alienate some audience members,

it fosters a profound loyalty among the core demographic who value the film's steadfast commitment to its principles. Consequently, this tactic transforms potential conflict into a potent promotional asset, reinforcing the film's authentic brand and facilitating audience growth through genuine engagement rather than passive consumption.

The film is poised to have a considerable impact by cultivating earned media during the promotional campaign, particularly as politicians discuss and debate *Kneecap*'s statements and behaviour. This heightened awareness has the potential to facilitate substantive conversations and serve as a platform for diverse perspectives and arguments. Beyond its societal implications, earned media significantly contributes to the film's recognition and audience awareness. In this framework, the intentional use of conflict serves as a powerful yet risky driver of narrative and societal engagement. In cinema, conflict is not just a narrative device but a catalyst for deeper reflection and discourse. Traditional resonance typically suggests a harmonious echo of shared beliefs or values among the audience. In contrast, the inclusion of conflict disrupts this harmony, creating a tension-filled response rich in contradiction and complexity. Paradoxically, this sense of alienation can foster belonging and communal ties, even if it initially appears to do the opposite. When cinematic narratives incorporate real-life issues, they can effectively break the fourth wall, allowing the audience to engage more deeply with the film. This connection influences public discourse across various media platforms and contemporary political debates. By doing so, audiences are invited to participate in a collective dialogue, enhancing their engagement with the film's themes. Through this engagement, films not only mirror contemporary phenomena but also become one. It stimulates critical discussions, positioning audiences as active participants exploring shared experiences and societal challenges. When a film employs conflict, it does not aim to provide a comfortable viewing experience. Instead, it engages the audience by confronting

them with uncomfortable truths or unresolved tensions that permeate society. The disruptive nature of conflict in storytelling facilitates a critical examination of these issues, compelling viewers to grapple with the implications on both personal and collective levels.

Furthermore, intentionally crafting conflict can lead to diverse audience responses, fostering interpretations that reflect the multifaceted nature of the societal tensions depicted. Through the lens of conflict, films can challenge dominant narratives and invite audiences to reassess their perspectives, encouraging a more nuanced understanding of contentious subjects and learning. The strategic use of conflict in film transcends mere entertainment; it becomes a significant conduit for societal reflection and dialogue. By resonating with the audience through the lenses of discomfort and disruption, filmmakers can uncover the relevance that permeates society's fabric, ultimately enriching complex cultural discourse.

While it has the potential to enrich public dialogue, it also risks alienating audiences by confronting their deeply-held beliefs. Cultural resonance can spark new conflicts and reignite old ones, exposing the audience to unfamiliar beliefs. This conscious shift away from sanitised communication reinforces cinema's role as a provocative and genuine expression, thereby contributing to greater societal tolerance and mitigating the effects of echo chambers. In conclusion, this integrated theoretical framework posits that for smaller European film markets, strategically utilising their distinctive cultural contexts and willingness to engage with internal conflicts presents a viable approach to fostering a sustainable and culturally impactful cinematic landscape. Such an approach not only enhances profitability but also ensures that cinema remains profoundly pertinent to its audience and expands its potential.

Discussion

In this paper, we explore the concept of dual cultural resonance and its potential as a competitive advantage for films originating from smaller European markets by applying the set of marketing instruments. This resonance extends beyond mere orientation toward national audiences and can enrich the cinematic narrative by fostering a deep connection to diverse cultural experiences. Films that successfully embrace this duality do not exclusively strive for universality or generalisation; they exemplify an eclecticism that evokes nostalgia and a sense of shared human experience. The dual cultural resonance framework follows an inductive methodology, in which specific cultural particulars pave the way for commonalities and shared sentiments. This contrasts with the deductive approach popularised by Hollywood, which prioritises broad generalisations that cater to a significant portion of the audience's experiences with a catch-all strategy. Hollywood producers prefer a catch-all strategic approach because it mitigates risk by addressing eternal issues familiar to the audience, usually requiring no preparation or background to watch.

The concept of cultural resonance involves a complex duality that can lead to conflict with the directions. On one hand, the potentially stereotypical aspects of cultural resonance in the domestic market can easily be exported to other markets due to an inherent sense of exoticism. However, this often does not receive a warm reception in the domestic market. Despite these challenges, examples of cultural commodification are evident, and achieving accurate representation is a nuanced and intricate task. Active involvement from knowledgeable representatives, along with careful consideration of the cultural context, can help to strike a balance between familiarity and novelty, supporting the strategic duality that increases performance potential. This balance reflects both the diagonal and vertical dimensions of resonance, connecting to proximate and familiar elements (such as cities, languages,

and people) as well as to universal themes that apply broadly (including politics and culture). The choice of topic in the *Kneecap* film illustrates a successful combination of political tension and language preservation, reflecting the audience's interests in these regions. This is wrapped up in the universal appeal of music, demonstrating an exemplary balance of these elements. We propose that a film should effectively balance the needs of both domestic and international audiences by combining authenticity with inductive reasoning. First and foremost, the credibility of the narrative is crucial for fostering respect for the cultures being represented. This necessitates thorough research and the involvement of cultural experts or representatives in the storytelling process. Authentic portrayals enhance audience trust and enrich the narrative by providing genuine insights into the cultural contexts depicted. Moreover, films should not merely explain the world as a whole; instead, they should add layers of complexity and nuance, avoiding overgeneralisation. By allowing viewers to piece together themes and character motivations through observation, filmmakers can deepen audience engagement. This approach enhances the narrative's relatability and promotes cultural awareness by appealing to shared human experiences and emotions.

The provocative and controversial elements inherent in films like *Kneecap*, which originate in smaller European markets, risk alienating audiences by engaging with conflicting themes, especially if viewers arrive with preformed opinions. In contrast to the Hollywood model, which often emphasises broad commercial appeal, the experience of confronting conflict in these films presents a challenge that viewers may find worthwhile to take on. Our research in the CresCine framework reveals that audiences clearly differentiate between films that provide substantive entertainment value and those that serve solely as background, easily overlooked and quickly forgotten. By concentrating on the unique complexities and challenges characteristic of smaller European film markets, filmmakers can craft narratives that are both exotic and

profoundly relatable. While this approach may initially seem unfamiliar, it possesses an intrinsic capacity for resonance and understanding that transcends superficiality, enriching the viewer's cinematic experience. In summary, the inductive nature of cultural resonance among smaller European films provides a fertile ground for storytelling that is both intricate and universally relatable, offering a distinctive alternative to mainstream cinematic conventions.

We argue that achieving dual cultural resonance in film requires a balance between specificity and universality in promotional strategies, as demonstrated by *Kneecap*. Some aspects of the film, such as the preservation of the Gaelic language, open discussions of conflict and themes of colonisation that are specific to its content. In contrast, others, such as celebrity influence and transmediality, are more broadly utilised in the industry. The film's innovative and "unfiltered" promotional campaign stands out when compared to Hollywood's media-trained strategies. This refreshing approach effectively engages audiences by broadening the discussion around the film and fostering discourse. To address universality, a data-driven campaign tailors messages for different audience segments. The collaboration between the film production team and the agency conducting preliminary research significantly enhances the film's positioning. This partnership helps create value for the film by enabling it to reach a diverse range of audiences, particularly in smaller European markets, and to adjust its messaging to highlight the most compelling elements of its appeal.

When combined, these elements significantly enhance a film's ability to engage and resonate with diverse cultural perspectives. Thoughtfully executed, they can bridge gaps, foster understanding, and create a shared cinematic experience that celebrates both the familiar and the novel. Ultimately, this leads to a richer dialogue among audiences from different backgrounds, utilising the power of dual cultural resonance. This approach not only strengthens a film's impact but also

contributes to the broader landscape of global cinema, promoting eclectic representation, awareness, and appreciation for cultural diversity.

Conclusion

This study underscores the pivotal role of cultural resonance in fostering the success of films produced in smaller European markets. An examination of the case study *Kneecap* reveals that cultural narratives are not only artistic expressions but integral components of national identity formation and public discourse. The film exemplifies how engaging with local themes, such as the Irish language and its intricate relationship with the UK, can foster meaningful dialogue among diverse audiences, providing a sense of collective identity and a platform for challenging established beliefs. While obstacles such as infrastructural limitations and language barriers persist, the strategic invocation of cultural resonance is a powerful tool for filmmakers seeking to carve out niche markets and articulate unique cultural perspectives.

The concept of dual cultural resonance offers a valuable opportunity for films from smaller European markets to stand out from mainstream cinema. They can open the window to less-represented territories, enhancing audience understanding and contributing to critical societal discussions. The essential elements of this framework, outlined in the discussion section, enable filmmakers to engage effectively with various cultural perspectives. Ultimately, this strategy not only enriches the cinematic experience but also presents a distinctive alternative to the broad generalisations often seen in Hollywood productions.

As we argue, the *Kneecap* film employed dual cultural resonance, and the marketing variables have reinforced it. The marketing strategy for *Kneecap* offers a significant case study in the effectiveness of transmedia storytelling and cross-brand synergy within contemporary cinema. This approach

harmoniously integrates the film's promotion with the musical act's burgeoning popularity, thereby enhancing audience engagement and expanding the narrative's reach. By leveraging the band's established brand identity, the marketing campaign successfully cultivates a compelling cultural resonance that transcends traditional film marketing paradigms. The strategic involvement of band members as both actors and ambassadors is paramount, enabling the film to maintain authenticity while fostering a robust connection with both existing fans and potential new viewers. This alignment with the band's authentic identity underscores the importance of cohesive messaging in film promotion and illustrates how effective marketing can serve as a vehicle for deeper cultural engagement.

However, it is crucial to acknowledge the specific challenges associated with the film's underground status. While *Kneecap* navigates the complexities associated with being part of a non-mainstream musical genre, this uniqueness allows the film to explore pertinent socio-political themes that resonate with broader conversations about identity and representation. The producer's concerns regarding audience perceptions of non-actor involvement highlight an ongoing tension in the industry between the authenticity of representation and commercial viability. Ultimately, *Kneecap* exemplifies the potential of combining artistic vision with strategic marketing initiatives to create a layered narrative that reflects contemporary sociopolitical realities. This case study shows the dynamic interplay between creative expression and commercial strategy, indicating how collaboration between filmmakers and musicians can yield a nuanced and multifaceted narrative experience. This synergy not only broadens the film's audience but also meaningfully contributes to the cultural dialogues at the intersections of music, film, and identity in today's rapidly evolving media landscape.

In summary, as the European film industry grapples with the challenges of globalisation and competition, this study's

insights emphasise the need to embrace cultural resonance as a pathway to both local and international success. By championing films that reflect the diverse narratives of smaller markets while engaging with broader societal issues, stakeholders can cultivate a more resilient and dynamic cinematic ecosystem. This research lays the groundwork for future inquiries into the intersection of culture, identity, and film, inviting further exploration of how European cinema can navigate the complexities of a culturally diverse, independent, and integrated region.

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