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Exploring the Temporal Dynamics of Chinese Online Interest in the Thai Film the Teacher's Diary: An Analysis of Baidu Index Data

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Abstract

Objective: This study aims to systematically quantify and analyze the temporal evolution of public online interest in *The Teacher's Diary* since the film's release. By examining the dynamic patterns of online search trends related to the film, the study offers valuable insights for stakeholders in the film industry, the education sector, and related decision-making fields.

Methods: Utilizing the Baidu Index—an open-access data analysis tool that leverages Baidu's vast search engine data—this study used *The Teacher's Diary* as the primary keyword. Search volume data were collected from March 20, 2014, to March 19, 2025, across China. The analysis included identifying fluctuations in search interest over time, with particular attention to seasonal and event-driven patterns. **Results:** The findings indicate that public interest in *The Teacher's Diary* experienced an initial surge following its release, followed by a decline and subsequent stabilization, punctuated by periodic peaks. Notably, significant spikes in search activity occurred around China's Teachers' Day each year (September 10), while search volumes typically dropped during the Spring Festival period.

Conclusion: With its unique narrative perspective, *The Teacher's Diary* offers a realistic portrayal of educational realities in Thailand. The film not only provides audiences with aesthetic and emotional resonance but also stimulates deeper reflection on broader educational issues.

Keywords: the Teacher's Diary; the Thai Film; Search engine; Baidu Index; Temporal Dynamics

1. Introduction

Since 1977, Thai cinema has featured films that portray teachers and emphasize the respected status of the teaching profession, including *Ban Nok*, *Khru Tee Rak*, and *Sawasdee Khun Khru* (Jatuporn, 2023). A prominent example of this thematic tradition is the romantic drama *The Teacher's Diary* (2014), directed by Nithiwat Tharathorn and produced by GTH Company. The film premiered in Thailand on March 20, 2014, and follows the teaching journeys of two protagonists at a remote primary school. Praised for its nuanced storytelling and emotional resonance, the film earned a rating of 7.8 out of 10 on Douban, a popular Chinese online platform that connects users with shared interests in books, movies, music, and more. It is currently available on the LeTV streaming platform. *The Teacher's Diary* received six accolades from Thailand's prestigious Golden Swan Awards and was nominated for the Academy Award for Best Foreign Language Film in 2015 (Coonan, 2014). Beyond its critical and commercial success, the film has drawn considerable scholarly interest. For instance, some researchers have explored students' perceptions of teachers as depicted in the narrative (Galang, 2020), while others have examined the portrayal of the main female character to analyze constructions of femininity (Febriand, 2021). These studies not only deepen our understanding of the film itself but also offer valuable insights into teacher identity, gender roles, and the intersections between education and cultural representation.

In the digital age, search engines have emerged as the most iconic media channel, functioning as powerful information aggregation hubs that collect content from portals, news platforms, informational websites, and social media (Wang & Zhang, 2025). Notably, Google Trends was employed to predict flu outbreaks in the United States, marking one of the earliest and most influential applications of web search data for predictive analysis (Ginsberg et al., 2009). Similarly, Baidu Index—a sub-product of the Chinese search engine Baidu—leverages its vast user data to provide comparable insights (Zhang et al., 2017). Today, with their robust capabilities in data analysis and information mining, search engines have been widely adopted in academic research across a broad spectrum of fields, including tourism (Liang et al., 2021), medicine (Guo et al., 2024; Doganer & Zhang, 2021), education (Tan et al., 2024; Tan et al., 2022), finance (Shen et al., 2017), real estate (Zhang & Tang, 2016), and retail (Wu et al., 2023). Looking ahead, as technology continues to advance, the analytical potential of search engines will likely be further realized, offering increasingly accurate and comprehensive support for academic research and data-driven decision-making across

disciplines. Among these diverse applications, analyzing public interest in cultural products—such as films—has become a growing area of attention, particularly for understanding audience engagement and the social impact of media content. The purpose of this study is to utilize the Baidu Index to examine public online interest in the Thai film *The Teacher's Diary* since its release.

2. Methods

Since its launch in 2006, the Baidu Index has become one of the most authoritative tools for analyzing open Internet big data in China. It primarily captures user behavior across two major access platforms: PCs and mobile devices (Tan et al., 2024). As a free service, Baidu Index uses keyword search frequencies on the Baidu platform as its core data, enabling researchers to intuitively observe public interest trends (Zhang et al., 2017). Among its various features, the "Trend Research" module stands out by offering insights into overall trends, PC (Personal computer) trends, and mobile trends. This function allows for a clear visualization of fluctuations in keyword popularity over time, thereby helping users to precisely trace shifts in public interest across different periods.

This study aims to quantify public interest and online search behavior regarding the film *The Teacher's Diary* following its release, as reflected by overall, PC, and mobile search trends. The data were collected using the Baidu Index, covering the period from March 20, 2014, to March 19, 2025, within the Chinese mainland context. All search queries and data extraction were conducted on March 19, 2025.

3. Results

Since the release of the film *The Teacher's Diary*, the online search volume for the corresponding keyword has undergone distinct phases. Initially, there was a sharp increase in interest, followed by a gradual decline, and eventually the search volume stabilized with minor fluctuations, though occasional peaks were observed throughout the period (Figure 1). In terms of search platforms, the trend in mobile searches closely mirrored the overall pattern (Figure 3), while PC searches also demonstrated a similar trajectory, rising initially, then declining, and ultimately stabilizing (Figure 2). Notably, the keyword search behavior exhibited clear seasonal and cyclical patterns. Around China's Teachers' Day (September 10),

search volumes showed marked increases, whereas during the Spring Festival, interest typically dropped to its lowest levels.



Figure

1 Overall Search Trend of the Baidu Index (PC + Mobile) for the Thai film “the Teacher's Diary” from March 20, 2014 to March 19, 2025.

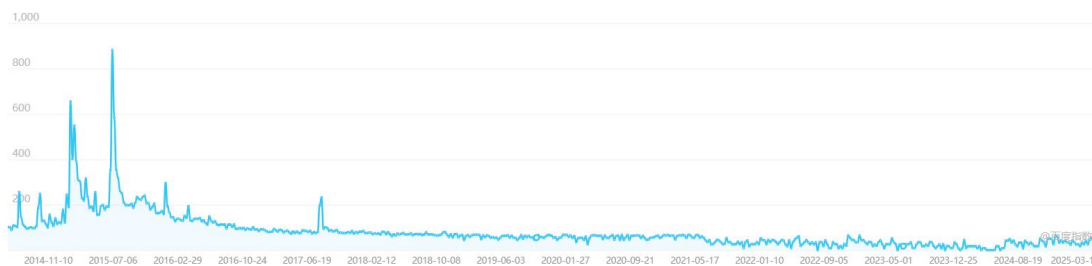


Figure 2 PC Search Trend of the Baidu Index for the Thai film “the Teacher's Diary” from March 20, 2014 to March 19, 2025.



Figure 3 Mobile Search Trend of the Baidu Index for the Thai film “the Teacher's Diary” from March 20, 2014, to March 19, 2025.

4. Discussion

With the advent of the Internet era, digital technologies have profoundly transformed various sectors, including education (Wang, 2023), healthcare (Zhao & Liu, 2024), finance (Li & Ma, 2024), trade (Han & Zhu, 2024), and agriculture (Ma, 2023). Among these transformations, the rise of Internet search engines has significantly changed the way people access, share, and interact with information. These tools not only enable users to obtain knowledge conveniently but also to participate in discussions about current social issues. Search engine data, as a reflection of collective user behavior, have become a valuable source for understanding social dynamics and public interest trends (Lin & Wang, 2024). According to recent statistics, by December 2024, China had 1.108 billion Internet users, with an Internet penetration rate of 78.6% (CNNIC, 2025). This widespread connectivity and massive user base provide a robust foundation for studying societal phenomena through online behavioral data—particularly those captured via search engine platforms such as Baidu.

Against this backdrop, examining how the public searches for specific cultural products can offer meaningful insights into broader patterns of social interest and media consumption. Since the release of the Thai film *The Teacher's Diary*, the topic has generated widespread online interest across various sectors. The film's educational themes and emotional narrative have sparked public discussion and sustained engagement on digital platforms, making it a valuable case for analyzing temporal search trends using Baidu Index data.

To investigate the evolution of this online interest, we conducted a longitudinal analysis using Baidu Index to track changes in search volume related to *The Teacher's Diary*. Our findings reveal a three-phase trend: an initial surge in search activity upon the film's release, a subsequent decline, and eventual stabilization with periodic fluctuations. This pattern reflects underlying mechanisms tied to public exposure and marketing influence. At the time of release, the film was largely unfamiliar to audiences. In response, distributors launched intensive online promotional campaigns to enhance visibility and boost box office performance. These efforts drove significant increases in online searches and public discourse. As the film reached wider audiences and familiarity grew, online interest gradually

diminished and eventually stabilized. This trend aligns with prior research suggesting that strategic marketing integrated into a film's production and release phases can significantly influence its visibility and commercial success (Xue, 2023).

It is noteworthy that the mobile search trend for the film closely mirrors the overall search pattern, showing periodic minor peaks within generally stable intervals. In contrast, the PC-based search trend remains relatively flat throughout the observed period. As of December 2024, 99.7% of Chinese Internet users accessed the Internet via mobile phones, up from 85.8% in December 2014, whereas desktop access declined sharply from 70.8% in 2014 to 30.2% in 2024 (CNNIC, 2015; CNNIC, 2025). These statistics clearly illustrate the dominance of mobile devices in online access among the Chinese population, which also helps to explain the higher levels of online interest captured through mobile search data. Beyond device-related factors, temporal patterns also contribute significantly to fluctuations in search activity. Search volumes for *The Teacher's Diary* consistently increase around China's Teachers' Day each year, while dropping to notably low levels during the Spring Festival. This pattern can be attributed to the film's thematic content, which is based on true stories from the education sector in Thailand. Around Teachers' Day (September 10), the film resonates with public sentiment about education, prompting increased searches and renewed discussion. In contrast, during the Spring Festival, public attention shifts toward holiday celebrations and social gatherings, leading to reduced interest in the film. Previous studies have also highlighted the influence of holidays on search behavior. For example, travel-related searches spike during extended holidays such as May Day and National Day, while interest in school-related topics tends to decline during summer and winter vacations (Zuo, 2010). These findings collectively suggest that specific time nodes and socio-cultural contexts play a critical role in shaping public search behavior.

It should be noted that although Chinese netizens have demonstrated strong online interest in the film *The Teacher's Diary*, the China National Knowledge Infrastructure (CNKI)—the largest academic database in China, providing full-text access to over 56 million articles from more than 10,000 journals—has included only two Chinese-language academic papers on the film to date (Wang, 2019; Cui, 2016).

This disparity between the film's popularity among the public and the scarcity of academic research suggests that scholarly engagement with *The Teacher's Diary* remains limited. Given the widespread online interest, it is noteworthy that the academic community has yet to conduct more comprehensive and in-depth studies on the film. Advancing research in this area could offer fresh analytical perspectives and enrich the current body of knowledge in film studies and cross-cultural education discourse.

Although Baidu Index provides valuable insights into public online interest, it has inherent limitations. Its user base is predominantly concentrated in China, which restricts its ability to accurately capture international audience engagement with specific topics. Moreover, the frequency and patterns of Internet use vary significantly across age groups, with younger individuals typically representing the majority of online users. Consequently, search data derived from Baidu may disproportionately reflect the interests and behaviors of younger demographics, rather than the general population. Despite these limitations, some studies have attempted to analyze public attention trends by identifying representative search terms and utilizing the most widely used search engines in specific regions. However, further methodological refinement and cross-platform integration are needed to improve the comprehensiveness and representativeness of such analyses. Looking ahead, advances in data collection and analytics technologies are expected to enhance the accuracy and breadth of online behavioral data. These developments will facilitate a more nuanced understanding of the concerns and interests of diverse population groups across different cultural and demographic contexts, ultimately providing a stronger empirical foundation for research and policy development in related fields.

5. Conclusion

Since the release of the Thai film *The Teacher's Diary*, public interest in the movie has experienced a notable surge. As audiences became more familiar with its storyline, interest gradually declined and eventually stabilized, with occasional minor peaks during specific periods. Notably, around China's Teachers' Day, public attention to *The Teacher's Diary* tends to rise significantly, whereas during the Spring Festival, search volumes typically drop, reflecting a shift in public focus influenced by holiday atmospheres. Through its unique narrative perspective, the film provides an authentic portrayal of Thailand's educational

landscape. It not only offers viewers both visual and emotional appeal but also provokes thoughtful reflection on broader educational issues.

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