

# Why Don't People Like Hong Kong Films Anymore?

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In the 90s, Hong Kong (HK) films were famous: Kung Fu films were exceedingly popular in the Western market, while comedies and romantic films were the highlights in the market in mainland China. At that time, Hong Kong was the leader of the Asian economy. Bruce Lee and Jackie Chan became superstars because of the popularity of HK films. Even today, quite a few fans still miss the days various HK stars were shown in the theaters. People still cherish the memory of Bruce Lee, miss his unique understanding of Kung Fu, and miss his philosophy of martial arts. Even Mike Tyson said, "Bruce Lee had an awesome philosophy about life: you hurt your man, do as much damage as you can and then you get out." His "Be Water" theory is also famous:

*"Empty your mind. Be formless, shapeless, like water. Now you put water into a cup, it becomes the cup. You put water into a bottle, it becomes the bottle. You put it in a teapot, it becomes the teapot. Now water can flow, or it can crash! Be water, my friend!"*

Another example is the website Rotten Tomatoes. Senh Duong, who created Rotten Tomatoes, was a fan of Jackie Chan. After collecting all the reviews of Chan's Hong Kong action movies as they were being released in the United States, he began to collect other films, extending the website beyond Chan's fandom.



Bruce Lee with Nunchakus

Source: <https://www.instasaver.org/hashtag/bruceleefans>

While Kung Fu films got a huge success in the Western market, other types of Hong Kong films also swept China. For example, *In the Mood for Love* made thousands of girls have a dream to have a cheongsam, which is a traditional dress for Chinese women. It's known as expressing the women's bodyline.



Maggie Cheung wore 23 different cheongsams in *In the Mood for Love*  
Source: <https://www.pinterest.co.uk/pin/121667627414098242/>



Anne Hathaway wore it in *One Day*  
Source: [http://k.sina.com.cn/article\\_6422373372\\_17ecda3fc001003xke.html](http://k.sina.com.cn/article_6422373372_17ecda3fc001003xke.html)

Chinese swordplay films made thousands of boys dream of becoming swordsmen. And Stephen Chow has been regarded as Hong Kong's King of Comedy because he has appeared in more than 50 films and won numerous Hong Kong Film Awards.



Stephen Chow mimicked Ultraman

Source: [http://h5.china.com.cn/wm/doc\\_1\\_4\\_5731529.html](http://h5.china.com.cn/wm/doc_1_4_5731529.html)

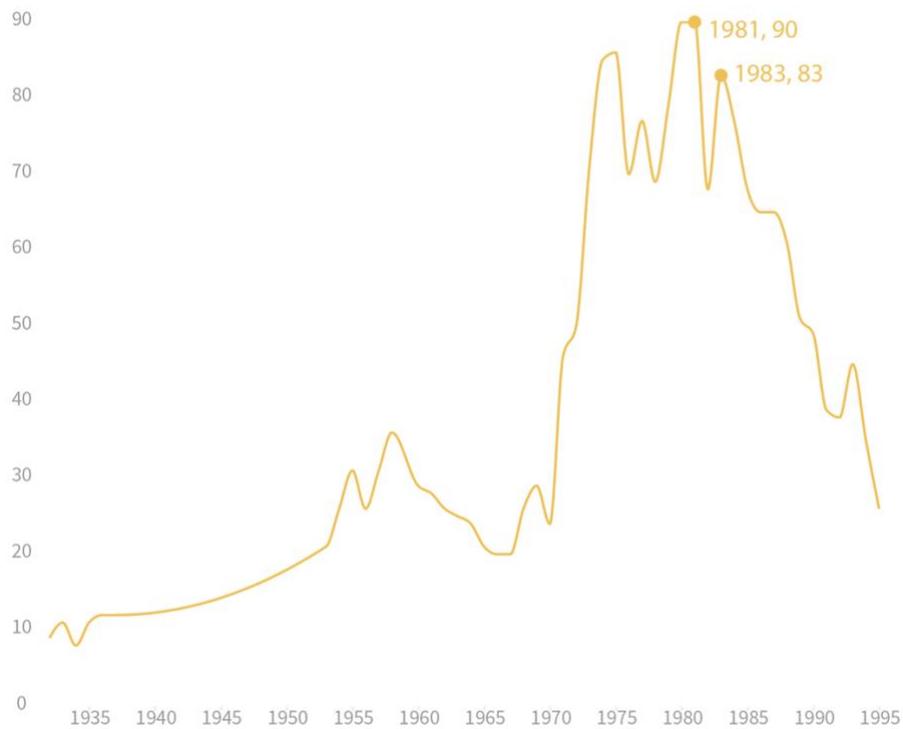
When people constantly miss the past Hong Kong films, the reality is that they don't watch Hong Kong films now. In the 90s, the Hong Kong film industry produced over 200 films per year, compared to less than 50 today. Back to today, even the HK people don't enjoy native films anymore, let alone Western audiences. If we compare the top 10 box office films in 1992 and in 2018 in Hong Kong, WE will find a surprising fact: the top 10 films in 1992 are all made in Hong Kong. In 2018, 8 of the top 10 films were made in America; most of them are also superhero films. The last 2 are Korean films.

What happened to Hong Kong films? Why are they not popular anymore?

### **Reason 1: The Death of Bruce Lee**

From the line chart, we can clearly notice there is a significant decline in the line of "Number of Countries importing HK films" after 1981, which is 90. That's also the year the last film that Bruce Lee was shown, the *Game of Death 2*. With his death, people's interest in Kung Fu seemed to decrease a lot. A Jackie Chan movie called *Action 2*, which is a brilliant Kung Fu film, was shown in 1983. This movie reversed the decline of the export of Kung Fu films to the world. However, Kung Fu stars' hard work still can't stop the decline.

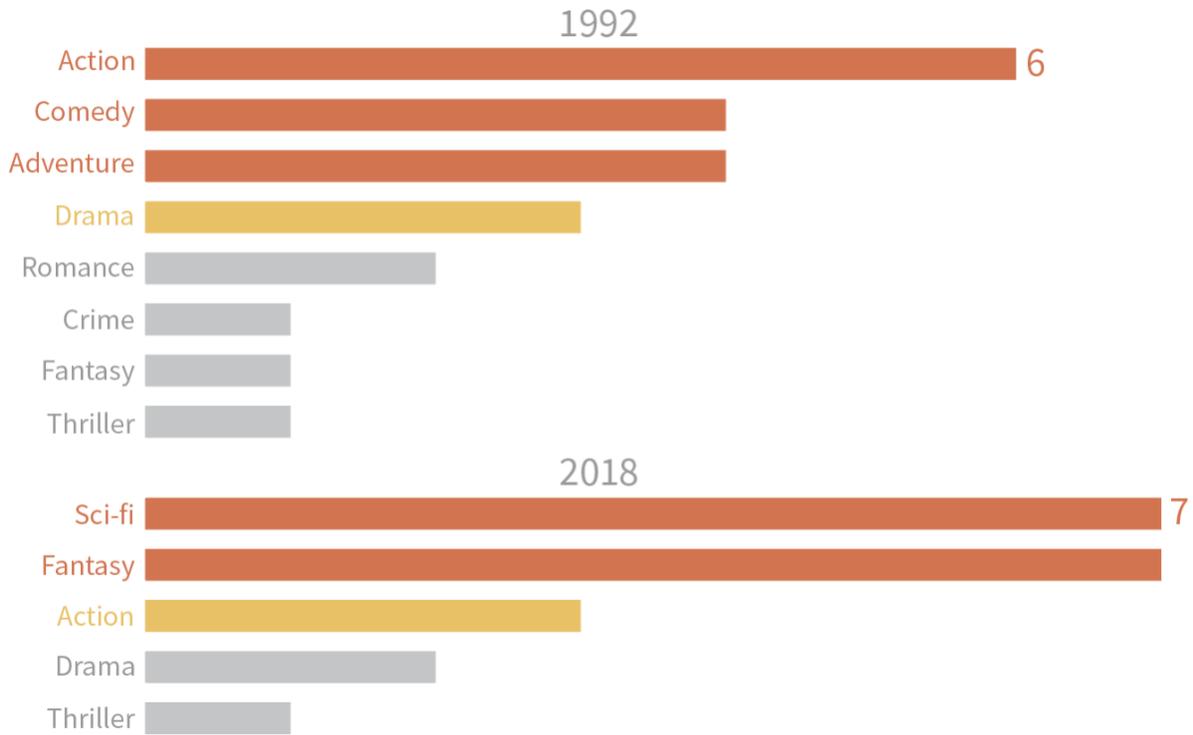
The Change of Number of the Countries that Imported HK films



**Reason 2: Hong Kong film industry can't create great visual effect films.**

If we compare the genres of the top 10 films in 1992 and 2018 in Hong Kong, we notice a change in people's tastes in movies. People used to like "action", "comedy", "drama". But they are now big fans of "sci-fi", "fantasy". The key point behind "sci-fi", "fantasy" is the science in movies.

## The Type of Top 10 Box Office Movies in HK in 1992 and 2018

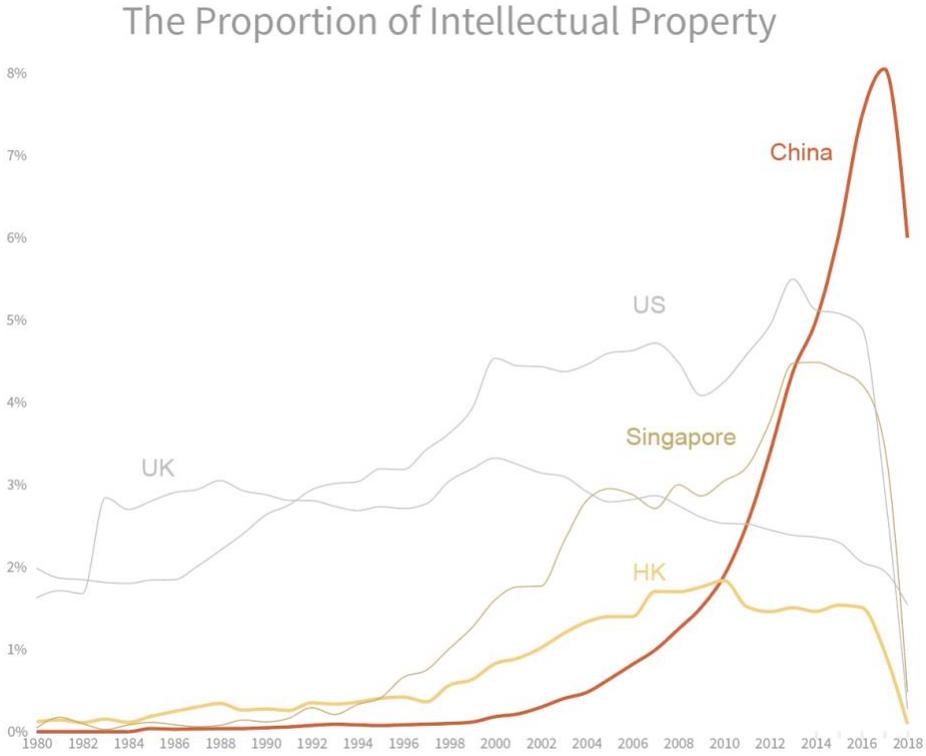


Visual effect technology ranges from motion capture film techniques (referred as mo-cap, means the process of recording the movement of objects or people. It is often used to animate digital character models in 2D or 3D computer animation), the science of perspective in chase scenes, state-of-the-art cameras, Computer-generated imagery (CGI), and the creation of 3D worlds. People's requirements for the science of movies became more and more strict. Seven of the top 10 films in 2018 are 3D films. And they all have IMAX versions. People have gotten tired of traditional films. They want fantasy, innovative, exciting films.

Type of TOP 10 Box Office films

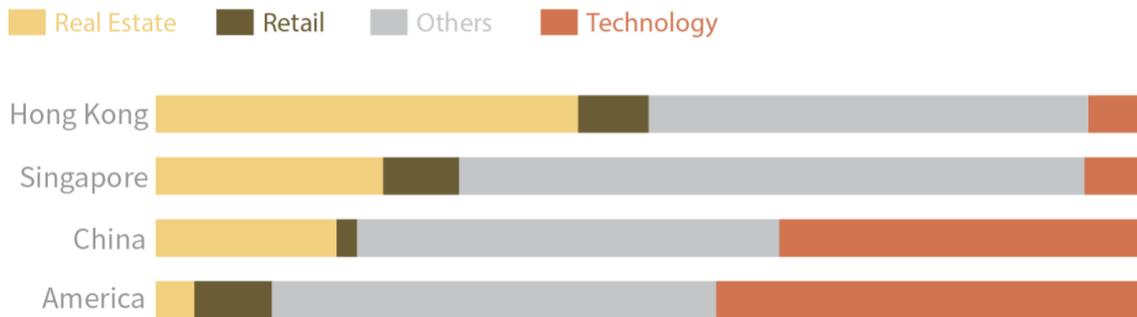


And the Hong Kong film industry can't do that. On the one hand, they cannot create films with advanced technology. If we compare the intellectual property proportion in Hong Kong, Singapore, China, the United Kingdom, and the United States, China used to be the last, but has since caught up and surpassed the other countries. Hong Kong has fallen to last place. That means Hong Kong lacks the core competitiveness of technology development, to some extent.



If you don't think this chart is directly related to the lack of technology development in Hong Kong, we can see another chart:

## The Proportion of the Origin of Wealth of 50 Richest People



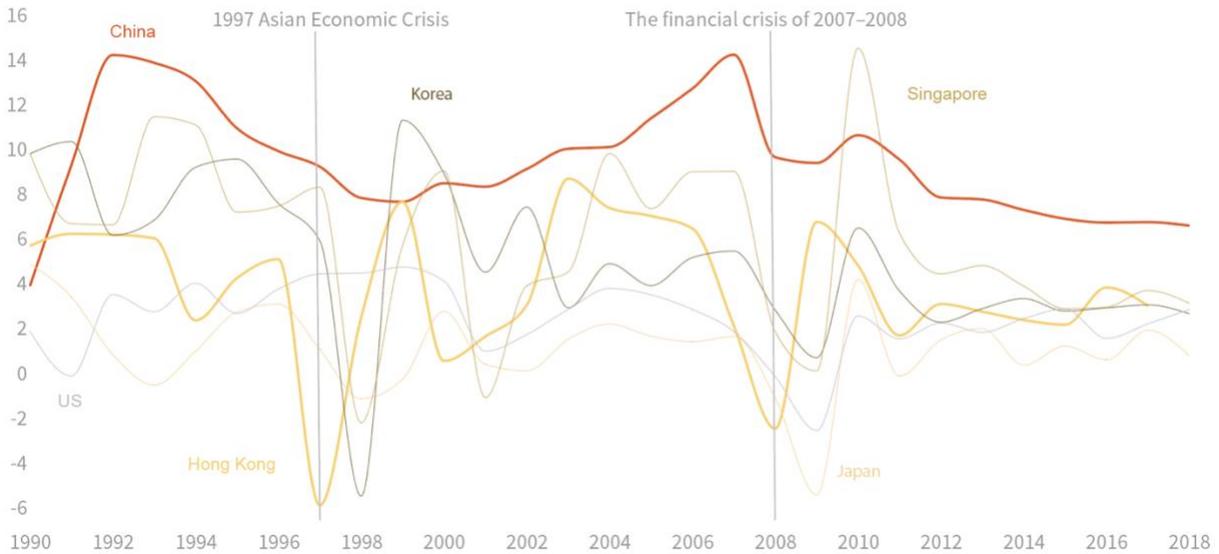
It's clear that the rich love investing in real estate in Hong Kong according to Forbes. Actually, 24 of 50 rich people's wealth originates from real estate investment in HK. Nearly half of the wealth is focused around real estate in Hong Kong.

Things are totally different in China and America. We are very familiar with Amazon, Apple, Microsoft, Alibaba, Huawei. Some people's wealth originated from their unique technology of making smartphone screens, or building social media platforms. But in HK, technology has no chance to get developed, because businessmen were not interested in high technology investment. However, technology is the core competitiveness for everywhere. Resulting from their decisions, HK business lacked the core competitiveness, even if Hong Kong is the economic center of Asia (In recent years it has gradually been replaced by Shanghai and Shenzhen). Hong Kong's technology can't support people to create a trusted brand. That causes the fragility of Hong Kong's economy.

### **Reason 3: The vulnerable economy in Hong Kong makes people reluctant to invest and consume films**

Because it relies on other countries' economies, Hong Kong is sensitive to crises. In this way, the rich are also sensitive to the vulnerable economy.

## The Change of GDP from 1990-2018



Films are expensive investment items. Many film budgets range from \$100 – \$150 million. For sci-fi films, it's more expensive. Take *The Avengers Infinity War* for an example. With an estimated budget in the range of \$316–400 million, it is one of the most expensive films ever made. People are too nervous to invest in expensive, high-risk items. They like to invest in water, electricity, gas, oil, real estate and so forth. Four rich families monopolize life's essentials in Hong Kong that hurt people's life, causing high living costs, huge income inequality. People could only buy a 22m<sup>2</sup> house with 1 million dollars in Hong Kong. They can't afford that, so they have to live in a "coffin room". Furthermore, theater tickets are expensive because of high rent and limited numbers of theaters. Because the revenue of the theater is less than the malls and apartments, the number of theaters is becoming less and less. Opening theaters more like to screen superhero films compared with native films, due to the pressure of monthly statements. In this case, consuming movies is not an easy thing.



Coffin room

### **Conclusion**

In the end, you know why Hong Kong film is not popular anymore. The death of Bruce Lee, the lack of advanced science of movie, and the vulnerable economy makes people reluctant to invest and consume films, cause the result: people don't like Hong Kong films anymore. We can say, HK films currently has its biggest crisis. If it can't fight its way out of double lines of besiegers, like mainland films, Korean films, Hollywood films, all of its luster will be gone. Well, I have a positive attitude toward HK films. In Hong Kong, they have the word "zap sang", which means that even in the worst wrecks, Hong Kong people still try their best to win a chance of survival. I believe, HK people will build a bright future with their hands.