

Apple sued in China over showing of war film from the 1990s

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China is an increasingly important market for Apple as it deals with a slowdown in global smartphone sales

Apple is being sued by a subsidiary of China's broadcasting regulator over a propaganda film more than 20 years old, in the latest legal wrangling for the tech giant in China in recent weeks.

A Beijing court says the case has been brought by a production center

that alleges that Apple has infringed its exclusive online rights to broadcast a film that depicts Chinese fighting against Japanese soldiers in northern China in the early 1930s.

The plaintiff is also suing the developer and operator of the Youku HD app available on Apple's App Store that it says enabled users to watch the film and caused it "huge economic losses," according to the Beijing Haidian District People's Court.

The court says it has accepted the case brought by Movie Satellite Channel Program Production Center that comes under the State Administration of Press, Publication, Radio, Film and Television.

The plaintiff alleges that Apple has infringed its exclusive online rights to broadcast "Xuebo dixiao," which loosely translates as "Bloody Fight with the Fierce Enemy" and was first shown in 1994.

The production center is also suing Heyi Information and Technology (Beijing) Company Ltd., which developed and operated the Youku HD app, the court said in an online statement Thursday.

The app is sold by Youku.com, according to information on Apple's iTunes site. The Youku site is one of China's best known movie and TV program streaming sites and is owned by Youku Tudou Inc., which is listed on the New York Stock Exchange.

The plaintiff wants the two companies to immediately stop broadcasting the film and is seeking compensation of 50,000 yuan (\$7,500) plus its "reasonable expenditure" of 20,158 yuan (\$3,000) in attempting to stop the infringement of its rights, the court said.

Emailed requests for comment to Apple spokespeople were not immediately answered Saturday, and a spokesman for Youku Tudou was

not able to immediately comment.

Apple Inc. has recently faced legal setbacks and other obstacles in China, its second-biggest global market.

In April, it suspended its iBooks and iTunes Movies services, reportedly due to an order by Chinese regulators.

In May, a Beijing intellectual property tribunal in Beijing ordered Apple to stop selling its iPhone 6 and iPhone 6 Plus in the city after finding they look too much like a model made by a small Chinese brand. Sales of the phones are continuing while Apple appeals.

Also that month, Apple suffered another setback when a court ruled that a Chinese company is allowed to use the iPhone trademark on bags, wallets and other leather goods.

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