

Aesthetic Interpretation of Chinese Fan Culture in the New Era

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Abstract

Fan culture, as a subculture, was formed in the 20th century. With the development of digital technology, Chinese fan culture in the new era presents four major characteristics, such as participation, group, organization and commerce. To decipher the reasons for the formation of fan culture, it can be roughly analyzed from three levels, including emotional resonance, interpersonal attraction and external driving force. Fan behavior is not only a simple pursuit of celebrities, but also a reflection of emotional projection, self-confirmation and group belonging. Although fan culture suffers from the prejudice of "vulgarity", as a kind of popular culture, it actually intersects with elite culture and jointly promotes the development of culture.

Keywords

Chinese fan culture; aesthetics; popular culture; interpretation.

1. Introduction

At the beginning of the 21st century, with the development of social progress, media technology and the entertainment industry, TV dramas and movies became a new type of entertainment, and in the 1980s and 1990s, fans of the idol group "The Little Tigers" rode their bicycles all the way to the performances, thus giving rise to the term "chasing after the stars". The term "star chasing" was coined. The fans were also called "star chasers", which later evolved into "fans". The word "fan" is derived from the English word "fan", meaning an avid follower of someone or something. After entering the 21st century, the rise of talent shows such as "Supergirl" has made the culture of chasing stars popular in mainland China, and fan groups and fan culture have gradually formed. In star-chasing culture, "star" refers to the star artists in the entertainment industry, and fans are the star-chasers. The object of fans is not only "stars", but also TV dramas, movies, cartoons, operas, dances and other arts, and even animals have a large number of supporters, and the fan groups formed around stars are only a branch of the fan culture.

2. Characteristics of Chinese fan culture in the 21st century

With the enhancement of digital technology, star chasing is also developing in the direction of data. 21st century fans support idols collectively, and gradually take on characteristics such as organization, forming fan culture, which has the following four characteristics:

2.1. Participation

Fans actively participate in celebrity-related interactions and make friends in groups, display their talents and express themselves. Jenkins (1992) has pointed out in *Textual Plagiarists* that fans of cultural products not only read or watch them, but also enjoy adapting and re-creating the original text according to their own wishes and preferences, thus producing their own cultural products and disseminating and communicating them through the Internet. [1] Contemporary fans actively participate in activities about their idols, and they bring some idol elements such as classic phrases, photos, and stickers into their daily lives to attract fellow fans and manifest their fan identity. In this process, they are friends and family members, and they

exchange their experiences of chasing idols together, which increases the sense of intimacy and greatly enhances the pleasure and meaning of the process of chasing idols.

2.2. Groupness

Groupness is another important feature of fan culture. With the development of digital technology, fans take the initiative to gather to form an idol-centered group with the help of social platforms such as Baidu Post Bar, Weibo, Xiaohongshu, Facebook and other social platforms, and platforms specializing in bringing together information on idols and the creation of homo sapiens such as the Super Star Rice Crew app, LOFTER, and AiGen. Individuals find a sense of belonging in this group, and regardless of social identity, they can maintain the same goal, forming a united and cohesive high-quality group.

2.3. Organization

Organization is mainly reflected in the organizational structure of fan groups. Fan groups, especially the "rice circle", have a strict internal hierarchical division of labor system, they support each other, help each other and love each other, and under the leadership of the leader to increase the influence and exposure for the star in an organized manner. The publicity group is responsible for publicizing their favorite stars on the Internet; the purification group is responsible for guiding public opinion and solving negative news; and the planning group is responsible for writing all kinds of programs. Fans are involved in all aspects and carry out star chasing activities in an organized manner.

2.4. Commercial

Most stars are engaged in commercial activities, and their fans are consumers of commercial products. Fans focus on "doing data" for the star to increase exposure, they will also be organized to buy products endorsed by the star, for the star to "punch sales", this purchasing power is also the embodiment of the commercial value of the star. Out of love for the stars, the fan base is like a smooth-running publicity machine, commercial capital and brokers will also participate in the operation of the fan groups, the "data" and "exposure" into high income.

3. The psychological analysis of fan culture

When discussing and understanding the phenomenon of "chasing stars", we should not simply use the relationship model and interaction logic of daily life to interpret the spiritual and emotional world of "fans".

3.1. Emotional resonance

Chasing stars is a kind of spiritual entertainment. The works of stars, such as catchy and easy-to-understand lyrics, express the joys and sorrows of life, and to a certain extent, they play a unique role in understanding, comforting, motivating and even catharsis for ordinary people, causing their emotional resonance.

When fans are in the spiritual world of "chasing stars", they try to find the common points between themselves and the stars to meet the psychological needs of emotional compensation, emotional catharsis, value recognition and organizational belonging. In this group, fans are free from the restrictions of social roles and emotional norms, interpreting their own emotional experience. The modern group of stargazers lives in an era of excessive fast pace and emotional barrenness. They need emotional comfort and thought exchange; therefore, the stars with fresh and fashionable image and touching performances constitute a unique communication bond with their fans, and the stars who shine brightly for a moment become the most distant but the closest friends of the fan groups.

In the emotional space they construct, fans dissolve the social boundaries of emotional genres, and with the help of shared emotional perceptions, they endow universal emotional resonance with their own personal and unique understandings and narratives. They are not only fans of their favorite stars, but also fans of themselves. The diverse emotional expectations that fans place on stars and the imagined intimacy that transcends social norms are the embodiment of their exploration of the unknown and their understanding of society through themselves.

3.2. Interpersonal attraction

Research shows that factors such as an individual's ability, appearance, similarity, and familiarity affect the degree of interpersonal attraction. The general public prefers people with beautiful appearance. Being beautiful in appearance triggers an obvious radiation effect, and it is assumed that people who are beautiful in appearance also have other good qualities, although this is not the case. But in terms of personal traits, whether it's a superbly powerful opera star or a carefully packaged entertainment star, almost all of them have a beautiful appearance, a dashing demeanor, and a decent manner of speech, and these qualities are most favored by the public.

Similarity is another important factor in interpersonal attraction. Homogeneity is a central feature of social network formation. [2]The theory suggests that similar people are more likely to be attracted to each other. Stars may attract an individual's attention due to similar beliefs, values, interests, hobbies, age, and one or more other traits, which becomes an opportunity to learn about the star, and eventually the individual is attracted and becomes a fan. In the process of following a star, fans meet many friends who are like-minded and share similar preferences with them. They have common hobbies and aesthetics, the same point of view, preferences are concentrated, and have a strong desire to express and gather, so the "circle" is gradually formed, such as chasing the star of the "rice circle", supporting the corner of the "parties The "circle" is gradually formed. In this group, fans create their own circulation system and gradually form a unique culture within the circle.

The process of human growth goes from self-confusion to self-confirmation. When people begin to explore the meaning of self, they need an "idol" as a representative of self, so among public figures, they choose their favorite stars. Looking at the glittering star, the fan sees a reflection of "success". Everyone aspires to have a successful life. Ordinary people see the popularity of stars and celebrities and the honor and wealth that comes with that popularity, and they think that if stars can stand out from the masses, they must be extraordinary people, so they become followers of stars and celebrities. Whether it is chasing the star or holding the role, the fan base's dedication to the star is essentially a kind of self-projection, and the star is a manifestation of their self-ideal and self-confirmation.

3.3. External driving force

The communication media is another major driving factor of stargazing. The communication media here refers to mass media, such as modern newspapers and magazines, modern movies and television, impression products and so on. The image and activities of celebrities are packaged in a high-frequency and three-dimensional way to make them a household name in a short period of time. Similarly, some entertainment companies borrow online media to present a specific event to individual fans in an intermittent or uninterrupted form through big data algorithmic push in the form of graphic, video or other forms, thus giving fans the opportunity to learn about a particular star. The media constantly creates media situations and events to expand the reach of relevant information. Fans also gradually identify their emotions towards a particular star in the process, eventually choosing to follow the star and engage in data labor and emotional consumption. Entertainment companies have created a large number of "traffic stars" by hyping topics and selling personas, and they use star chasing rules and traffic algorithms on various communication platforms to attract more fans to converge, quantify fans'

emotions, and become a means for capital to make money. A part of the fans were "brainwashed" by the image and persona of the stars packaged by the entertainment companies, and no longer valued the business ability of the stars, but instead carried out unpaid and obligatory digital labor, which is also the negative image of the current stargazers.

4. Interpretation of fan culture from the perspective of popular culture

"Culture" is a concept with rich connotations and dynamic development, and its interpretation varies from time to time. Cultural anthropologist Edward Taylor, "Primitive Culture", believes that "culture, or civilization, in its broad ethnological sense, is a composite of all the knowledge, beliefs, arts, morals, laws, customs, and any other talents and habits that are mastered and accepted by people as members of a society." [3]For Taylor, culture is the sum total of experiences created and possessed by human beings. Modern stargazing is a form of popular culture and a form of mass culture. Popular culture is characterized by secularity, popularity, and universality, which is why star chasing is all the rage in modern times. Popular culture refers to entertainment that is watched, read or participated in by thousands or millions of people, and it is a kind of entertainment that is widely participated by the public. [4]In other words, popular culture is the popular culture that is popular among the masses with the help of mass communication media, such as opera, movies and popular music in the 20th century, and TV and talent show and other cultural products in the 21st century. In the process of society, some popular culture appears in every period, and popular culture not only maintains the diversity of culture, but also promotes the development of culture.

There are some preconceived prejudices against star-chasing culture nowadays, which on the one hand stems from the fact that excellent culture monopolizes the definition of elegance and classic, and on the other hand stems from the fact that some bad news in the star-chasing world distorts the ecology of the industry. Since ancient times, traditional Chinese culture has been invented by cultural elites and intellectuals in a dominant position in society, and then disseminated and indoctrinated the masses. With the development of economy and the equalization of cultural concepts, in modern times, the common people have their own channels of cultural interpretation and expression by using communication media such as newspapers at that time, and the traditional elites have been gradually marginalized. Some bad news in the world of star chasing is mainly that the stars who can't reach the hall of fame are packaged by capital and loved by a large wave of fans, who imagine these stars whose virtues are not worthy of their positions to be perfect, and over-indulge in fantasies about the stars. Excessive stargazing not only requires a lot of money and energy, but also brings the harm of escaping from reality, going with the flow and losing oneself to ordinary people, so there has always been no shortage of "enthusiasts", "stargazers" and other characters of the hunt for ridicule in China. Popular culture and elite culture are not completely antagonistic. On the one hand, popular culture still retains much of the essence of elite culture. In addition, many popular cultures are dedicated to reflecting the life interests of ordinary members of modern society, which is also closely related to elegant culture. Not only are there many links between them, but they will be on the same path towards synthesis. [5]Toward Synthesis. John Strawley's Introduction to Cultural Theory and Popular Culture argues that popular culture has dissolved the boundaries between "high culture" and "popular culture" and between art and commerce. [6]As popular culture, modern stargazing carries special symbolic colors and humanistic connotations.

5. Conclusion

By analyzing the origin, characteristics, psychological mechanisms, social impacts of fan culture and its position in the perspective of popular culture, this paper reveals that fan culture is not

just blind worship of celebrities, but encompasses the fulfillment of deep psychological needs, such as emotional resonance, interpersonal attraction, self-expression, and group belonging, as well as a unique organizational structure and business operation mode formed in the context of the digital era.

When facing fan culture, we should go beyond the simple dichotomy of traditional elegance and vulgarity and recognize its positive role in promoting cultural diversity, social interaction and individual growth. The collective wisdom and creativity of the fan community enriches the connotation of culture and demonstrates the trend of democratization of culture through participation, adaptation and dissemination of cultural content. At the same time, fan culture also reflects the impact of the media environment on individual behavior and cultural consumption patterns in the digital era, as well as the profound changes in cultural production caused by commercialized operations.

In the future, with the further development of science and technology and the deepening of global cultural exchanges, fan culture will continue to evolve, and its forms, functions and social impacts will become more diversified. Therefore, all sectors of society should adopt a more open and tolerant attitude in understanding and studying fan culture, exploring its potential value in promoting cultural innovation, enhancing social cohesion and mental health, while also paying attention to and guiding its healthy development, avoiding the spread of undesirable phenomena, and ensuring that fan culture can play a positive role in promoting cultural prosperity and social progress.

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