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"All girls, buy it!": explore communication methods of Chinese male beauty influencers' on female consumer behaviour

Authors

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Abstract

Live streaming e-commerce, which has rapidly developed in China (Huang & Suo, 2021), involves audiovisual live broadcasts on internet platforms like Taobao, where influencers vividly showcase products to entice viewers, enabling immediate orders, live product demonstrations, and real-time Q&A sessions (Si, 2021). In this rapidly growing sector, a notable phenomenon has arisen, with male influencers promoting beauty products, such as lipstick, to female consumers. Male beauty influencers appear to significantly influence female purchasing intentions. For instance, on October 25, 2023, a popular Chinese male influencer, Austin (Chinese name as Li Jiaqi), renowned as the 'lipstick king' (Tan, 2021), sold products worth 9.5 billion RMB in a single day through live streaming e-commerce.

This conference paper aims to discover how male beauty influencers' communication methods influence female consuming behaviour in China in the case of Austin. This study will use qualitative multi-modal analysis discourse analysis to analyse the example from Austin public livestreaming videos. Multi-modal analysis will allow the researcher to analyse facial expressions, gesture, posture, vocal intonations and other non-verbal elements as well as spoken words (O'Halloran, 2011). Example will be chosen by critical incident techniques (Flanagan, 1954).

The study finds that Austin's signature phrases, such as 'Oh my god! ' and 'All girls, buy it,' have a captivating effect, arousing the audience's desire to make purchases. Additionally, the influencer uses humour during live streaming, along with leveraging current trends and other techniques to engage the audience. Simultaneously, the influence of Xiaoxianrou's popular culture in China, the appeal of male bloggers to female consumers, and the novelty of male bloggers endorsing cosmetics, all impact the sales of female products by male bloggers.

This article investigates the strategies and motivations behind the endorsement of women's products by popular male bloggers in China. It highlights how some Chinese men are moving away from traditional norms in beauty advertisements and promotional campaigns. Furthermore, this phenomenon is not unique to China, as bloggers from diverse backgrounds, such as James Charles and Jeffrey Star in the United States, also adopt similar strategies across new media platforms. This phenomenon warrants further exploration and expansion within the field of popular media and cultural studies.

Keywords

Keywords: Chinese male beauty influencers, communication methods, Live streaming e-commerce

Locality, Regional & Globalization: Innovative Research on International Communication Strategies of Korean Drama in the New Situation

Authors

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Abstract

Since the beginning of the new century, under the strong promotion of South Korea's "cultural nation-building" policy, "Korean Wave" culture has swept Asia. During this period, Korean dramas and other cultural products devoted themselves to the external dissemination of Korean native culture. Based on cultural commonality and cultural proximity, the communication of Korean dramas in this period has a greater influence in Asia, but has little effect in the West due to cultural barriers and cultural discounts. In recent years, Korean dramas that have adjusted their communication strategies take Netflix, the international streaming media platform, as the main communication channel and Squid Game as the main representative work, and successfully enter Western countries, mainly the United States, with cultural content more in line with global aesthetics. This has promoted the international communication of Korean dramas to further achieve the strategic goal of "globalization" and show the characteristics of "local globalization". As a new stage of globalization, "local globalization" can break the thinking inertia of Chinese and Western cultural centralism in the process of Glocalization, and try to use "subject-subject" cultural dialogue and interaction to dissolve and deconstruct the one-way transmission of Western "subject-object" strong culture, and promote the formation of a multi-centralized pattern of world culture.

At the beginning of the 21st century, Korean TV series successfully set off the "Korean wave" in the international spread to China, Japan and other neighboring countries by taking advantage of the cultural proximity of Asia, especially East Asia, such as history, language and religion. After that, Korean dramas keep up with the trend of The Times and strive to cater to the preferences of female audiences, the main consumer of TV dramas. The construction of fashion in Korean dramas meets the needs of external communication in the new stage. On the one hand, the romantic love narrative mode of Cinderella and Prince Charming is followed, and the production mode with relatively fixed strategy is extended. On the other hand, the gorgeous and exquisite clothing, catering and home fashion are created by using modern consumerism, which promotes the acceptance of Korean culture in a wider range. With the help of this communication strategy, Korean dramas have been loved and sought after by Chinese, Japanese and Asian audiences such as Vietnam, Thailand and Malaysia, which has completed the expansion of the dissemination scope of Korean dramas and realized the international dissemination of Korean dramas from the local to East Asia and then to the pan-Asian region. Secondly, Korean dramas have realized multilayered cultural identities across regions through the global communication under the world platform. In terms of production mode, the cooperation between the international streaming media platform Netflix and the local TV drama team in South Korea is itself a "cross-regional" level of cooperation; At the same time, Korean dramas launched on the Netflix platform are either placed on the website page and equally selected

by global Netflix subscribers, or pushed to the user's home page through the platform's marketing promotion, "traffic preference", "intelligent algorithm recommendation", etc., to achieve "proximity" and explore "identity" from the technical level rather than the cultural level. In terms of script plot, TV dramas focus on the survival plight of people at the bottom of society, reveal the common problems facing the development of capitalist society around the world, show diverse marginal role Settings, and provide multi-directional emotional involvement, thus eliminating the strangeness of heterogeneous cultures, satisfying the emotional needs of different types of audiences, and helping to achieve a global cultural identity. The establishment of a complete "multi-level" system of Korean drama communication in the true sense of "from local to global". Through the method of multimodal discourse analysis, this study reviews the discourse innovation in audio-visual texts represented by the Korean drama "Squid Game", and finds that the Korean drama equipped with international digital intelligence streaming media has completed the strategic upgrade of localized narrative in line with global aesthetic through global resonance communication, and ensured the global communication effect of the Korean drama with shared values of the East and the West. Eventually, a multi-level cultural identity from local, regional to global was formed. This paper holds that the international communication strategy innovation of Korean dramas under the new situation further eliminates the negative impact of cultural discount, realizes the resonance communication of Korean dramas between Eastern and Western audiences, improves the communication effect of "local globalization", and contributes to the construction of a new international communication pattern.

Keywords

Korean dramas; Netflix; Local globalization; Cultural identity; Multimodal discourse

Hashtag“school name”: prestigious Chinese universities students’ content creation and new digital labor practices on social media platforms

Authors

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Abstract

Background: With the development of social media platforms, a growing number of university students in China are becoming bloggers or even Internet celebrities by creating content that garners a large following. “Being a blogger” among university students has not only become an emerging career choice, but also an important social issue that should be explored. One interesting and common phenomenon among these student bloggers particularly those from prestigious Chinese university is that they always like to include the hashtag “school name” in their social media posts, as though the school name holds the key to increasing their online visibility and gaining more likes and followers. So this paper wants to explore the reasons for their enthusiasm for using school names as hashtags or titles in content creation, as well as any potential political economy connections between “platform traffic” and “school name.” In the past, studies of platform have often applied digital labor theory to criticize the ways in which platforms exploit their users. However, I think that this focus on exploitation mechanisms ignores individual differences and the wider range of digital relational practices. **Theoretical Perspective:** Therefore, this study uses Bourdieu’s concept of “cultural capital” as a theoretical perspective to analyze the motivation behind these university bloggers’ acts of “hashtag school name” and their content creation practices on platform. “Cultural capital” theory goes beyond Marx’s account of “culture” as a “superstructure” determined by the “economic base”, and argues that “culture” itself can serve as a form of capital and generate material returns for its owners. This suggests that, in contrast to popular theory of digital labor, examining university bloggers’ content creation through the prism of cultural capital is a form of relational thinking that may foster a subjectivity among users and transcends the fundamental division between subject and object or structure and individual. **Methods:** To address these questions, I conducted in-depth interviews with fifteen student bloggers from major prestigious Chinese universities in order to gather firsthand information. **Results:** First, the research indicates that, while there may not be a direct causative link between the prestigious university school name and the platform traffic, there is a correlation between the two. Many interviewers think that the “school name” is just a folk theory or strategy to get attention and that the platform’s traffic algorithm is still an unknown black box, but the quality of the content—such as its readability, resonance, and altruism—is what really drives platform traffic; Second, the motives of hashtag “school name” among these student bloggers go beyond the simple economic motives mentioned in the digital labor theory, and include multiple motives such as altruistic sharing, endorsement of intellectual content, and self-worth transformation; Meanwhile, with the accumulation of cultural capital, they are not only consciously involved in the logic of platform capital, but also manifest their sense of subjectivity through cooperation and negotiation,

collaboration by avoiding platforms and other links in the process of "knowledge commoditization," realizing the transformation of cultural capital into economic and social capital finally. This leads to the development of a new digital labor practice that is more diverse and complex than the previous digital labor theory, which focused solely on the exploitation of users by platforms. **Conclusion:** Analyzing Chinese university student bloggers' platform practices of hashtag school name and content creation based on the theory of "cultural capital", this study transcends the unidirectional critical mode of previous digital labor research and, in part, offers another micro-level interpretation path for comprehending the expression of users' subjectivity in platform research. At the same time, it creates a space where we can comprehend the issue of inequality in the social structure on a larger scale. Just as these prestigious university student bloggers use such a strategic tactic as hashtag school name to intentionally fit the platform's traffic rules in order to enhance the visibility of their accounts and content, it is worth discussing further in the future whether, on a macro level, platforms also intentionally correspond to the external political and economic structures, more specifically, the dominant educational evaluation system and the hierarchical structure of university prestige, in their internal rule-setting to enhance the legitimacy of their own development.

Keywords

Social media, Cultural capital, Digital labor, Platform

Tencent Video (WeTV) In Thailand: How Chinese Streaming Platforms are Present in Overseas Cultural Markets

Authors

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Abstract

Tencent Video has disrupted the traditional international expansion approach of China's media industry under the guideline of the 'going out' policy. From transnational corporations (e.g., CGTN), to co-produced blockbusters, and then finally to the digitalised participatory platforms, the model of Tencent Video has broken down barriers between internet companies and the cultural industry with its blueprint of a global 'pan-entertainment' ecosystem. However, there is currently a lack of research on the underlying logic of this business formula, and close discourses of non-American big tech are absent in current academia. Although the "Superapp" logic initially proposed by Tencent is widely recognised in the tech industrial sphere (Jia et al., 2022; Huang, & Miao, 2021), there are few outcomes that concentrate on how to transfer this logic into cultural production. Therefore, this paper surveys how this strategy is adjusted when operating abroad in the digital content business.

This paper aims to fill this gap by examining the glocal operations of Tencent Video's overseas version, WeTV, in Thailand. The focus is on understanding the adoption and transfer of Chinese streaming media's internet business principles and IP economy strategies in overseas markets. I conducted in-depth, semi-structured interviews with ten key stakeholders and employed qualitative methods for content analysis. As a case study, the article uses Tencent's original Y-series (a unique Thai queer genre) to explore how business and IP economy strategies of WeTV are implemented in Southeast Asia markets, which delves into WeTV's transformation from a national brand to a regionalised practice, with the ultimate goal of becoming an integral part of global dynamics. The findings reveal that WeTV provides content resources, consumption channels, and distribution venues within Tencent's digital content ecosystem. It also tests the applicability of the Superapp business model and the potential for extending this success with wide applications. Results show that the Superapp logic constructs the up-middle-down streams of IP adoption, gets control of every step of media monetisation, and enhances the platform's effective utilisation and allocation of resources on the WeTV. Significantly, this model has become a widely referenced benchmark for other Asian-Pacific-origin tech companies, such as Line, Kakao, and Gojek.

Keywords

Streaming media, WeTV, Thailand, Transnational corporation, glocal, Southeast Asia, Superapp

Emotional Flow in the Hybrid ACG Culture: a computational study on the Japanese players of Genshin Impact

Authors

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Abstract

As a subculture loved by both Chinese and Japanese youth, ACG culture is naturally characterized by cultural hybridity. Since it spread from Japan to China, it has continued to change through hybridity with Chinese culture, with the transmutation of discourse from "ACG" to "Nijigen". The Japanese term "Nijigen" refers to the two-dimensional virtual worlds displayed in comics, two-dimensional animation, video games, etc. In China, the high-quality development of digital content has led to the rapid popularity of "Nijigen economy" since 2015, and ACG enthusiasts gradually being designated as "Nijigen" instead of Otaku. Online games have become a dominant form of entertainment for otakus or other players (Guan P.P., 2017), providing them with a virtual space for interaction (Tian F. & He Y.J., 2020). To explain the cross-cultural communication characteristic of ACG culture and the way Japanese players interact with it, this paper selects Japanese players of Genshin Impact, as research objects, analyzing their emotional flow towards the hybrid elements of ACG culture (Liyue & Inazuma, digital hybridity of Chinese and Japanese cultures) in the Chinese game with a computational approach.

The study of emotional flow or affect derived from the ethical tradition of Spinoza, who, in his work, *Ethics*, used a geometric analytic approach to link the mind and the body (as a response to Descartes' mind-body dichotomy), arguing that the mind perceives body's sensations of the external world through the flow of emotions and changing situations, and used "affect" to describe changes in the body's power of acting (B. Spinoza, 1677). Under Deleuze's development, the change of emotions also implies a continuous flux of the force of being (force) and the capacity to act (puissance), arguing on a philosophical level the completion of the closed-loop logic of the interconnectedness of mind and body (G. Deleuze & F. Guattari, 1987).

When the transformation of this concept from philosophy to other disciplines, it has unique repercussions in psychology and cultural studies, respectively. Drawing on Spinoza's "perception-imagination-action" chain, psychologist Tompkins used "affect" to refer to "biological portion of emotion", defined as the "hard-wired, pre-programmed, genetically transmitted mechanisms that exist in each of us" which, when triggered, precipitate a "known pattern of biological events" (S. Tompkins, 1962). Masumi, an important cultural studies scholar, extends the concept of affective action to the critique of the difference between the content and effect of an image, arguing that the intensity and timing of the content's effect on the audience can be expressed through the flow of emotions (M. Brian, 1995), i.e., by examining the traces that the content's intensity/effects leave behind at the level of form/content, one can feel the content's presence (Liu Q.Y., 1995).

Beyond the intrapersonal flow, emotions also affect others in the midst of expression, forming a community under the influence of a common emotional statute. Contemporary Internet youth culture embodies a strong emotional community, and the emotional structure is both a complex mapping of the reality in which they live and the source of ultimate action, with surface chaos and complex internal logic. Contemporary Chinese youth are full of confidence in the development of China while full of anxiety about personal development, and the seemingly nationalist or populist trends, the so-called "Western universal values" or liberal trends, and the seemingly Marxist trends are merging and mutating in young people, creating multiple communities, multiple aggregations of people sustained by emotions, interests, and benefits (Peng L., 2019), i.e., different youth circles.

As above, the affective theory and the concept of emotional community provide a theoretical basis for the empirical study of emotional flow in cultural fusion, helping researchers to reflect gamers' attitudes towards cultural fusion in digital products through the trend of emotional flow within the human body (vertically) and in interpersonal communication (horizontally), and to further elucidate their perceptions of the hybrid ACG culture:

- How do Japanese players feel about the hybrid elements in *Genshin Impact*?
- What is the perceived cultural orientation about ACG culture that *Genshin Impact* represents?
- *How does the emotion of Japanese players flow between each other in online community?*

Based on data mining of texts from Reddit & 5ch (Japanese/English texts of Japanese players), this study uses a machine learning model based on the bi-directional encoder BERT to perform sentiment analysis, while Natural Language Inference and Social Network Analysis will be conducted with important cases to explore their cognitive orientations and interactions. So far, the study has finished the data mining while computational analyses pending next stage of research.

Keywords

Emotion; Game study; ACG Culture; Player; Genshin Impact

Reading Wizard Chan's Earth Song as an Expression of Decoloniality

Authors

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Abstract

In the domain of artistic expression, music serves as a conduit for empowerment and nuanced introspection into individual and manifold identities. Scholars have extensively investigated music as a pivotal agent in socialisation, with particular emphasis on its impact on social interactions, emotions, and behaviours. Despite the global recognition of African musical traditions and their influence on diverse genres worldwide, concerns arise regarding the profound influence of Euro-North American-centric modernity on African music, language, beliefs, and culture. While this influence has contributed to the growth and global acceptance of African music, it has concurrently led to increasing explicitness in music lyrics and imagery, referencing themes such as violence, sex, substance abuse, adversarial relationships, and gender-stereotypical representations, thereby yielding serious repercussions for socialisation processes. African music has consequently evolved into a conduit for the perpetuation of coloniality. This ongoing research project explores the potential deviation from this norm in Wizard Chan's *Earth Song*, positing it as a potential expression of decoloniality and an alternative mode of "knowing, thinking, and doing" (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2015, p. 485) within African music. Wizard Chan, born Maxwell James Fuayefika, is a singer and songwriter of Okrika origin hailing from Nigeria's Niger Delta region. Chan's *Earth Song*, acclaimed with the 2023 Headies for Best Alternative Song, is subjected to Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis (MCDA). This systematic analysis aims to scrutinise the dominant meanings embedded in the semiotic resources of the song, including metaphors and themes in the lyrics, as well as elements in the video such as pose, objects, setting, and actors. Furthermore, the musical elements, encompassing tension, hooks, chorus, instrumentation, and melody, are methodically examined to unravel the potential expressions of decoloniality within Chan's *Earth Song*. This research contributes to scholarly discourse on decoloniality by detailing how African music as an important cultural and global artefact, is a site for decolonial narratives.

Keywords

Earth Song, Niger Delta, Nigeria, MCDA, Decoloniality.

Emotional Heterotopias and Digital Engagement: Navigating Middle-Aged and Elderly Fan Cultures in the Era of Short Video Platforms

Authors

Dr. ZAOZAO ZHANG - China - Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences

Abstract

[Background] This study explores the role of middle-aged and elderly demographics in digital fan cultures, particularly on short video platforms. It examines "emotional heterotopias," focusing on how fans create spaces for idol worship and repressed desires. The research shifts from youth-centric fan studies to include older generations, challenging digital engagement stereotypes. This study gains importance against the backdrop of a globally aging population and the increasing digital integration of older demographics, an area hitherto less explored in fan culture research. It seeks to fill the gap in understanding the unique interactions of middle-aged and elderly fans within digital fan cultures, aiming to unpack the dynamics of "emotional heterotopias" and their evolution among these groups while scrutinizing the influence of media technology and platform capitalism.

[Methods] Utilizing online ethnography and in-depth interviews, a four-month participatory observation was conducted, centering on "Xiucui," a well-known middle-aged online celebrity, and their fan base. The research spanned TikTok, Bilibili, and Weibo, analyzing social interactions, user-generated content, and thematic fan discussions. 13 participants, including fans and content creators, were selected through snowball and convenience sampling for detailed interviews about fan culture participation and interaction.

[Findings] ①The study reveals intricate cultural meaning construction by middle-aged and elderly fans, predominantly women from rural areas or third-tier cities, often engaged in lower-tier jobs or unemployed. Engaging with digital idols, they escape reality, revisit nostalgic narratives, and create unique identities. Their fan-driven fantasies, legitimized and spread through platforms, evolve into diverse "emotional utopias," blending technology with symbolic and embodied participation to meet emotional needs and foster self-rejuvenation. ②However, these "emotional heterotopias" are dynamic and contested, often clashing with younger demographics' tastes, leading to ideological debates and cultural conflicts. Digital platforms become battlegrounds for radical practices, fostering digital stigma and confrontational engagement. Influenced by platform capital, the downfall of idols and disintegration of "emotional heterotopias" create a stigmatizing environment where the presumed elite prevail. ③The study indicates that the ultimate benefits of these cultural dynamics are co-opted by platforms, perpetuating a cycle within the paradigm of platform consumerism. This aligns with the Frankfurt School's critique of the culture industry. The research reveals that all practices, including those of middle-aged and elderly fans, are encompassed within platform capitalism's logic. The emotional satisfaction, pleasure, and sense of belonging offered by platforms are illusory, merely driving engagement. Cultural bubbles are utilized to induce labor,

which is then integrated into value exchange mechanisms, leading to exploitation, particularly of middle-aged and elderly fans.

[Conclusions and Implications] This study provides insights into older demographics' digital participation, emphasizing the complex interplay between fan culture, digital platforms, and societal context. It reveals the manipulative role of platform capitalism and the exploitation within these spaces. The findings enrich understanding of fan culture among older groups for scholars and practitioners. For platform designers and policymakers, the study calls for ethically responsible platform design and regulation, considering the needs of older users, and contributes to debates on digital consumerism and technology's role in shaping cultural identities in modern society.

Keywords

Emotional Heterotopias, Digital Engagement, Middle-aged and Elderly Fans, Platform Capitalism

“To Get Justice, Sometimes You Need to Cross a Line”: Examining Feminist Snaps in Wentworth’s “Hell Bent” Episode

Authors

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Abstract

This essay explores how major characters on a globally popular and critically acclaimed prison drama wrestle with whether one can obtain justice by continuing to work within a system that has perpetually failed women. Using Foxtel’s *Wentworth* (2013-2021) as a case study, I examine this ongoing conversation, specifically as it manifests in Season Five, to showcase how this moral dilemma culminates for women inmates and men correctional officers alike in the “Hell Bent” episode. Specifically, I argue that in this episode *Wentworth* underscores the inefficacy of the prison environment in serving justice, by way of three major characters who ultimately decide that they cannot attain justice through the system and instead seek it on their own terms. Employing a theoretical discussion of desperation, oppression, and resistance, I foreground how the entirety of the fifth season places emphasis on how mostly those who have been reformed through their incarceration have learned to work within the system (as *Wentworth* positions those who do not as instead being reflective of corruption). More so, I discuss how it is precisely this dichotomy that causes the three characters to contemplate and come to grips with the inadequacy of their longtime “working within” path. Stated differently, working within the system can only get an individual so far when they are up against the actions of others who either continually work outside of the system or instead weaponize the system against them. To better understand the actions taken by the aforementioned three characters, this essay applies Sara Ahmed’s (2017) concept of the “feminist snap” to unpack each of their breaking points, situating these within a framework of resistance.

As a reimagining of Australia’s beloved cult classic and soap opera *Prisoner* (1979-1986), *Wentworth* follows women inmates—and the mix of correctional officers and prison administrators who interact with them—as they serve time at the fictional Wentworth Correctional Centre. In terms of its success and popularity, the prison drama has reached global appeal, “screening in 173 territories around the world” (Croll, 2021, para. 14). Furthermore, *Wentworth* has “become Foxtel’s highest rating and most successfully locally produced drama since episode one” (para. 14). While *Wentworth* recently concluded in 2021, its messaging still warrants continued scrutiny and discussion due to its aforementioned massive global appeal and the fact that the incarceration rate of women in Australian prisons has significantly risen (Meyer 2021). Given that mediated depictions have implications on public perception (which then impacts public policy), it is worthwhile to examine the ideological messaging of a popular television program like *Wentworth*, which features a particularly vulnerable population of society (i.e., women inmates). In this essay, I focus on the television program’s fifth season to demonstrate major shifts in approaching justice. More specifically, I center in on three of the ten major characters (i.e., Karen “Kaz” Proctor, Francesca “Franky” Doyle, and Will Jackson)—all of whom are combating the dreadful actions of a fourth

character (Joan Ferguson). Throughout my analysis, I elicit material from earlier seasons, where applicable, for juxtaposition.

Keywords

women inmates, *Wentworth*, Sara Ahmed, feminist snaps, incarceration, Australia

"Exoticism" or "Cultural Discount"? Research on the External Communication of Chinese Elements in the Game Genshin Impact

Authors

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Abstract

Genshin Impact (GI) has been one of Japan's top 10 mobile games by revenue for three years. As a prime example of Chinese gaming-culture-spreading-overseas, GI represents the reverse output to the strong market. Despite their deep cultural connections, China and Japan have a complex relationship due to historical entanglements and current conflicts. Against this backdrop, GI offers Japanese players a fresh perspective, enabling them to understand China more intuitively. This study is based on participant observation within the Japanese GI community and in-depth interviews with 8 Japanese GI players. It aims to investigate whether and how cultural differences indirectly affect GI players' experiences and how the game experience influences GI players' cultural interests and cognitions of Chinese culture.

By combining Cultural Discount and the Intercultural Sensitivity Development Theory, this study distills Japanese players' perceived cultural discounts in GI into three aspects: (1) familiarity, (2) national sentiment and ideological propaganda, and (3) cultural authenticity.

Firstly, in line with the Cultural Congruency Hypothesis, Japanese players are highly familiar with GI's traditional Chinese cultural content, given the affinity between Japanese and Chinese culture. In turn, such familiarity helps to minimize the adverse effects of cultural discounts, such as those resulting from language barriers and translation bias. Secondly, Japanese players are sensitive to content involving Chinese national sentiment and official ideology in GI. They indicated that evident Chinese national superiority sentiment or official ideological propaganda within GI and its marketing would trigger their adverse reaction or even discontinue their gaming behavior. In other words, this type of information might intensify conflicts and lead to players' defensive psychology. Thirdly, certain Chinese cultural elements in GI are not fully represented. They have been changed to accommodate the commercialization and to make them easier for players to understand. As a result, the presentation of Chinese cultural content in GI lacks authenticity. Although this problem has a limited impact on players' subsequent game experience, it prevents players from fully recognizing Chinese cultural symbols. And the effectiveness of the international dissemination of Chinese culture would be dramatically reduced.

In this regard, Japanese GI players with strong intercultural sensitivity and cultural interests will bridge the cultural discounts by engaging in active participatory practices. They actively explore information channels other than the official ones for text practice and learning. These players delve

deeper into and learn about less familiar Chinese cultural symbols. For instance, they can enhance their understanding of Chinese culture through the *Chinese Character Research Institute*, a research account that connects in-game content to the real world by explaining in-game references to poetry, obscure Chinese characters, ancient medical texts, and philosophical ideas. These players actively participate in the community's textual interactions and learn by appreciating cultural artifacts and taking Chinese characterization tests. They accumulate personal knowledge through this process and improve their intercultural communication skills. The texts are evolved and transformed during communication and interaction, producing rich intellectual textual practice. This practice has helped the broader community of players to understand the deeper meanings of Chinese cultural symbols and has effectively mitigated the effect of cultural discounts.

In conclusion, this study demonstrates that the mode of Chinese elements' external communication through GI is not only based on the game's content but is also critically influenced by the participatory practices of overseas players. When confronted with cultural discounts, Japanese GI players spontaneously engage in participatory cultural practices to bridge the cultural discounts. Also, they unconsciously deepen their knowledge and understanding of Chinese culture during this process.

Keywords

Cultural Discount; Intercultural Sensitivity; Participatory Culture; External Communication

Urban image and identity: A study on symbolic construction and interaction based on Citywalk short videos

Authors

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Abstract

Citywalk, which is distinguished by its "slow pace" and "immersion" features, has cracked up new avenues for commuters to travel, and it is worthwhile to investigate how it has reconstructed the relationship between human and their urban surroundings. Implementing "urban exploration" as a starting point to record the interaction between people and urban space, the intermediary of "city as communication" has concentrated on a group of capable urban explorers. In the process of aestheticization and self-presentation, creators generated Citywalk videos that establish the audiovisual landscape of urban humanistic life in the digital era. Based on symbolic interaction, the article employs the triple connection theory as an analytical framework and develops the issue in three directions: technological objects, symbolic texts, and spatial sceneries. The article uses content analysis and in-depth interviews to investigate how Citywalk, as a form of interpretation and expression of one's feeling of place in the metropolis, are developed, preserved, and shared via media. The study finds that Citywalk short videos help individuals realize the production and imagination of space.

Individual urban imaginations and identities are projected from the space to the media, which affects the public's perception of the city in the process of interaction between multiple subjects. As a "technological object", Citywalk short videos integrate people's experience of returning to offline life in the post-epidemic era to perceive the city's cultural and geographic veins by relying on the new media with its availability; at the textual level, the consumption of Citywalk content creates a kind of "co-presence" between the online and offline worlds, the virtual and the real, and the presence and gaze embedded in one another for users.; at the spatial scene level, Citywalk short videos form a connection between offline geo-communities and online communities, forming a social foreground for self-exhibition and an "interface" with the urban space, which embodies an individual's emotional labor, competition for attention and resistance to meaning in the urban space. It reflects individuals' emotional labor, competition for attention, and resistance to meaning in urban space.

Keywords

CityWalk, Urban Image, Symbolic Interaction, Digital Communication, Triple Connection

Cultural Representation in Role-Playing Games: A Postmodern Interpretation of Traditional Chinese Culture in Genshin Impact

Authors

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Abstract

In the evolving landscape of digital gaming, role-playing games have become pivotal platforms for cross-cultural communication and exchange. They not only entertain but also serve as gateways to diverse cultural representations, shaping global perceptions of heritage and tradition. Genshin Impact, a globally acclaimed role-playing game developed in China, which is renowned for its intricate portrayal of traditional Chinese culture, set against a backdrop of a fantasy world. This fusion of cultural representation in a digital context provides a unique opportunity to examine how traditional cultures are adapted and reimagined in the realm of modern gaming, and how these portrayals engages the development of cultural diversity.

This study delves into the intricate fabric of Genshin Impact, aiming to unravel the layers of its postmodern representation of traditional Chinese culture. The objective is twofold: to explore "Genshin Impact's" portrayal of traditional Chinese culture; to assess its impact on diverse players. It investigates how the game reinterprets cultural elements within its fantasy world and how these resonate with the Chinese player base. The study examines player interactions and interpretations, utilizing various theoretical frameworks to understand digital games as cultural mediums. This approach highlights the role of games in shaping contemporary engagement with traditional cultures, revealing broader implications of their cultural representations.

Jesse Schell's Elemental Tetrad Theory, dissecting games into mechanics, story, aesthetics, and technology, is pivotal in analyzing "Genshin Impact." This framework allows for a nuanced exploration of the game's Chinese cultural representation from the perspective of game design, examining how its mechanics reflect Chinese themes, its narrative intertwines with Chinese history and mythology, and its aesthetics and technology contribute to a culturally immersive experience. Simultaneously, Stuart Hall's Encoding/Decoding Theory is utilized to understand the dynamic between the game designers' intentions in showcasing Chinese culture and the varied interpretations of players from different cultural backgrounds. This dual-theoretical approach provides a comprehensive insight into the complex interplay between traditional Chinese culture, innovative game design, and global cultural dynamics.

In researching Genshin Impact, the study employs a combination of formal analysis, textual analysis, and in-depth interviews. The formal analysis entails a thorough exploration of the game's structure and mechanics, emphasizing how Chinese cultural motifs and historical elements are integrated into the gameplay and narrative. Textual analysis delves into the narrative structure, character development, and dialogues, highlighting their alignment with Chinese mythology and folklore. Additionally, in-depth interviews with players familiar with Chinese culture offer valuable insights into their experiences and interpretations of the game's cultural content. These methods

collectively enable a deep understanding of how Genshin Impact incorporates traditional Chinese elements and the diverse ways players engage with and interpret these elements.

This analysis of "Genshin Impact" delves into its representation of traditional Chinese culture, showcasing postmodern attributes and cultural hybridity. The game artfully merges Chinese aesthetics with global influences, reflecting a mixing and blending of culture. Its narrative interweaves traditional Chinese values within a fantasy realm, enriched by interactive storytelling. The gameplay, particularly the elemental combat system, is infused with Chinese philosophical elements, offering a modern interpretation of these concepts. Enhanced by cutting-edge graphics and sound, the game skillfully balances authenticity with broad global appeal, exemplifying the fusion of traditional culture in contemporary digital media.

Using Encoding/Decoding Theory, this study investigates player reactions to Chinese cultural elements in Genshin Impact, identifying three response categories: dominant, negotiated, and oppositional. The dominant mode indicates widespread acceptance and appreciation of the game's cultural portrayal. Negotiated responses involve more analytical engagement, with players discussing the game's adaptation of Chinese culture. Oppositional viewpoints critically examine the game's cultural representations, highlighting potential inaccuracies and stereotypes. These diverse responses underscore the complexity of depicting a rich culture like China's in a global gaming context.

The conclusion of this study showcases the reweaving of traditional Chinese culture in a global, digital landscape, highlighting the nuanced interplay of heritage and contemporary media. Genshin Impact becomes a platform for exploring commonality in mediated communication, challenging the typical power dynamics in mass media through its interactive and immersive experience. The cultural narratives in the game transcend conventional subject/otherness dichotomies, fostering a postmodern environment of equitable cultural exchanges. Its success reflects the potential of digital platforms in fostering a more inclusive, culturally rich media landscape, contributing to a broader understanding and appreciation of varied cultural heritages. In essence, "Genshin Impact" represents a step towards reimagining global communication, weaving together diverse cultural threads to create a richer, more inclusive tapestry of global storytelling and interaction.

Keywords

postmodern culture; representation; digital gaming; traditional Chinese culture; role-playing games

Expressing Sang: creativity and catharsis in the mediated emotional practice among frustrated youths in China

Authors

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Abstract

This article is devoted to providing a comprehensive understanding of Sang culture, mirroring the dynamic cultural landscape in China through an examination of the contemporary "frustrated youths" and their mediated emotional practices. These practices involve navigating modern challenges and pushing boundaries in terms of self-expression and creativity. Unlike Western subcultures characterized by radicalism, Chinese subcultures, including Sang culture, have emerged within the context of traditional Confucian culture. They express dissatisfaction with mainstream culture but do so with a generally subdued spirit of resistance, seeking self-expression through voices, hobbies, and self-entertainment. Sang culture, born on social media platforms, embraces defeatism and pessimism, intricately connected to China's socio-economic landscape and the dynamic emotional states of young people. It serves as a reaction to the challenges and disparities experienced by the younger generation in contemporary China. Meanwhile, *Douban.com* stands as a vital hub for the exchange of Chinese subcultural ideas due to the space given by social media to individual emotional practice (Cai & Huang, 2011). Within the context of Sang culture and the close attention to *Douban.com*, this article explores two specific behaviors proposed by Tan and Cheng (2021): sharing Sang memes and speaking bitterness to others. These behaviors serve as forms of affective identification, communicating a sense of disenchantment among Chinese youth. Based on this, this article asks two research questions: How do the *Douban* community shape the emotional practices of frustrated youths? How do both mediated emotional practices embody the interplay between individual resistance, mainstream expectations, and wider social structure in contemporary China? Employing the term 'digital affect culture' proposed by Döveling et al. (2018) and drawing on Williams's (1977) concept of the 'structure of feeling,' to conceptualize Sang culture, this article further examines the intricate relationship between frustrated youths, social media platform and their emotional practices. The study centres on a *Douban* forum titled "This Day Can Still Be Salvaged," and utilizes a combination of semiotic analysis of Sang memes and an 8-month online observation to provide a nuanced exploration of the emotional practices within Sang culture. The analysis of the online catharsis and creative practice of forum members offers valuable insights into the genuine causes of contemporary youth frustration and their strategies of resistance against dominant discourses. This, in turn, contributes to a more profound understanding of the current circumstances in China amidst ongoing social structural transformations

Keywords

Sang culture, emotional practice, creativity, catharsis, frustrated youths, China

How to represent nation without nationalism: Construction of Europeanness in Eurovision Song Contest

Authors

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Abstract

Popular culture in contemporary society remains linked to politics and ideology. Traditional forms and practices of national culture are supplemented and replaced in their impact by meanings and images drawn from popular culture—the multiple, shifting, and contested meanings of popular culture. Popular culture appropriates, represents, reformulates, and reproduces transnational cultural forms so that forms of national cultural identity are no longer recognizable.

Scholarly discussions revolve around two conceptions of the nation: the political ‘nation by an act of will’ and the nation defined by culture, which is often linguistically defined and ethnically based. Western Europe is considered the birthplace of ‘civic’ and inclusive nationalism that unites people living in the same country. At the same time, Central and Eastern Europe is associated with the ethno-cultural and exclusive nationalism that divides citizens along ethnic lines.

Nations can be viewed also as ‘systems of cultural representations’ – a discourse - a way of constructing meaning, through which an imagined community is reproduced. These constructed national identities can be considered discursive sketches - narrations of national culture (Hall, 1996a). The discursive formation of Europe in the Eurovision Song Contest (ESC) corresponds more with the political rather than the nationalist type of frame. The ESC is a popular culture media event that renegotiates national identity from a European perspective.

Representational practices that express the desire to belong to Europe challenge essentialist discourses of identity, that are usually anchored at the national level. At the same time, ESC performances in the contest are used for national representation - they have an official function to communicate traditional (received) normative self-perceptions of national identity. However, in a context where Europeanness dominates national issues, the nation can be staged in a way that contradicts traditional (national) discourses to appeal to European transnationalism.

One may question the authenticity of the normative national identity represented at the ESC by performers selected for this purpose at the national level contests: can pop music genres authentically represent a nation? Is it possible for a three-minute musical performance to convey the complexity of a nation? Isn't the discourse of Europeanness another threat to the nationalism of Eastern European ethnic nationalism that has become the driving force behind the liberation of many post-Soviet states?

Keywords

Popular culture, National culture, Eurovision Song Contest, Europeanness, discourse, representations

Online Moral Deliberations – Investigating The White Lotus audiences on Reddit

Authors

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Abstract

With the advent of streaming platforms enabling audiences to view their favourite shows across a variety of media in a time slot that fits one's personal schedule, the fragmentation of audiences increased. Television narratives' function as social cement, informer, and as a moral laboratory dwindled. However, (younger) audience members gather online to discuss what they saw, think, and feel about their favourite TV shows. This study centres on such online audiences, and questions streaming TV's function as a moral laboratory. Can TV shows still from a 'moral laboratory' for its viewers? In other words, can TV shows still offer audiences the opportunity to experiment and reflect on moral issues, in the safe environment of the imagination (i.e. without repercussions for everyday life)? (eg. Krijnen, 2011)/ The research questions is 'How do Reddit users construct moral evaluations of the upper-class characters in Seasons 1 and 2 of *The White Lotus*? *The White Lotus* is an interesting case as it is typified as a social satire (HBO Max, 2022) aiming to question and critique social class. As always, when TV shows claim to evoke some debate, it is interesting to investigate whether debate is indeed instigated, and if so, what it is about. Do audiences do what producers intended them to do?

Methodologically, the first two seasons of *The White Lotus* were investigated on a narrative level, with an emphasis on the moral messages embedded therein (cf. Krijnen, 2007). Next, 600 discussion threads that were active between December 2022 and February 2023 on Reddit for a 'r/TheWhiteLotusHBO' and 'r/WhiteLotusHBO' were saved. Of these 600 threads, those containing at least 15 comments engaging in moral deliberation were retained, resulting in 30 discussion threads. Rachels and Rachels' (2012) description of moral language was employed to unravel the moral discussions present in the Reddit data (eg. Krijnen, 2011). Hence, all threads were studied concentrating on an evaluation of good/bad, while aiming to influence conduct, and taking all into account all stakeholders involved in the issue.

The results show two interesting developments. First, the discussions suggest that the users' narrative imagination is engaged when it comes to the non-upper-class characters and the female characters. However, this imagination seems conspicuously absent when it comes to the upper-class men. Second, and worthy of more investigation, it became manifest how viewer literally reconstruct different narratives regarding characters actions and motivations, and what should be viewed as central to the narrative. This 'reconstructing narratives', we feel, might be an interesting addition in understanding the multiple interpretations, especially in relation to moral imagination.

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Keywords

moral imagination, online audiences, *The White Lotus*, narrative reconstruction

Everything Everywhere All at Once: odd narrative but still stereotype

Authors

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Prof. Yu-Wei Hu - Taiwan - Chinese Culture Unive

Abstract

The 2023 Oscar winner 'Everything Everywhere All at Once' scripted people's different decisions resulting in different lives in parallel universes. The film describes the reconciliation between traditional Chinese culture and global values with some stereotypes about the images of Chinese immigrants in America.

This study reveals Chinese cultural values in the film's narratives through metaphoric criticism, in which the culture matrix is a 'tenor' being translated by Chinese symbols (Qi, 2009:104). I.A. Richard proposed a model of 'tenor-vehicle' to analyze metaphors (Kövecses, 2002). Using metaphors is a way to decorate objects in obscure and let people comprehend the meanings of symbols through mutual conception (Bilsky, 1952).

The research puzzle is: Why did the film's odd narratives seem to liberate people's thoughts but still illustrate some traditional stereotypes in existing cultural contexts? Three research questions are raised in the study: (1) What characters and plots were used in the film to represent traditional Chinese values as a tool for cultural translation? (2) How to present a story appropriately between culture matrix and culture translation? And (3) So what about the research results?

In the film, 'VerseJumping' is a technology employed by the main character, Evelyn Shu-Lien, a Chinese mother, to transfer across parallel universes. In the beginning, Evelyn went to a universe where she was a famous martial arts actress, which was a 'vehicle' to present the definition of a successful life, and the life was a 'tenor' in the film. On the contrary, the reality in the film is that Evelyn managed a laundrette, that represented a Chinese immigrant's dreadful life.

In another universe, Evelyn adopted googly eyes on her forehead, and then she abruptly got a whole new vision. This plot displayed Evelyn's compromise between her traditional Chinese and Western values. In this plot, the 'tenor' is a new vision, the hidden meaning is the Western value, and the 'vehicle' is Evelyn's transformation from a very traditional Chinese woman into a tolerant mother. The film's culture matrix is a politically correct value system which contains sexual equality, respect, and understanding of different cultures. These values were used as a contrast to the stereotypes of Chinese traditional values.

The film's narratives presented the conflict between older Chinese immigrants' traditional values and their American-born children's identity, which became the third discourse in the film. This discourse talked about generations' negotiation and cultural integration, which is a new mode of 'in-between' for the Chinese who live in the U.S. with a compromised consciousness (Yu, 2015:166) .

In sum, although the film tried to present the possibilities of transformation and reconciliation between different cultures' value systems, it still contained some stereotypes of the older Chinese immigrants in the US. As Hyde-Clarke (2008: 153) indicated, it frequently appeared in American movies concerning foreign cultures.

Keywords

culture translate, metaphoric criticism, stereotype, film narrative, immigrant diaspora

“White People Food” Memes : National Identity and Gaze of Ethnicity in a Global Discourse of Food Culture

Authors

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Abstract

Being encoded in different cultural contexts, food culture becomes a marker of national and radical identity. "White People Food" is one of the hottest online buzzwords in China in 2023. It is widely used on Chinese social media to refer to Western style meals characterized by "cold", "plant-based" and "small portions" since a Chinese overseas student posted a video of a European woman having "a bag of lettuce" and "a few slices of ham" as lunch on a train in Switzerland. Though some people can relate to this convenient way of eating, most netizens use "White People Food" to generally express their teases or doubts of "Western eating style". "White People Food" soon aroused heated discussions on Tiktok and X, media such as CNN and The Guardian published articles introducing how "white people food" has become popular in China as social media memes.

The formation and dissemination of the "White People Food" discourse reconnects food culture, radical belongings, national identities and global communication. Combining critical discourse analysis (CDA) and cultural reading, this study tries to answer the following questions: How the discourse of "White People Food" was produced and transformed through social media interaction? What kind of social implications did this discourse reflect? What does this discourse bring for global communication? To collect the data, the study searched the web version of RED and TikTok for comments of the posts containing the hashtag #white people food, crawled 4000 comments on RED and Tiktok respectively and analyzed the social contexts of the texts.

As an online buzzword, "White People Food" didn't just refer to dietary things. Three Subtopics were derived from the discussions around "White People Food", including cultural racism and nationalism, social acceleration and dietary adaptation, class and superiority. The theme related to cultural racism and nationalism was especially dominant. The discourse of "White People Food" was generated within the internal context of nationalism and the external context of racism. First, it is notable that due to the premise of nationalism, a force of discipline was formed and some people confined themselves to the logic of "Chinese food centralism/Western food centralism". As for the radical context, the study finds a multiple mechanism of radical gazing on social media. Different races and even The East and the West gazed each other and interacted in the nested relationship, shaping the "White People Food" memes.

Also, this discourse regarding political identity reveals connection. The discourse of "White People Food" contributes to the decolonization of Western-centralism ideology. For China, this Internet memes can be understood as a cultural disenchantment of the West. Then the Western online users re-exam the discussions of Western food cultures on Chinese social media platforms, which can trigger the second and the third rounds of culture-exchange among users globally, and cultural discounts and grievances need to be gradually erased in such dialogues. "White People Food"

discourse reflects that social media platforms have the potential to bridge the gap and remove culture conflicts at the perspective of global communication.

Keywords

food culture, nationalism, ethnocentrism, gaze, social media, global communication

Ghosts of stereotypes past: Ethnic ambiguity and archetypes in intra-Asian romances on-screen

Authors

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Abstract

Over the past 20 years, the number of Asian actors and actresses appearing as romantic co-leads in Western film and television has increased significantly. However, most of those representations involve relationships with non-Asian co-leads as the romantic partners, often reifying an asymmetry of power along racial and gender lines. However, in recent years, the number of intra-Asian heterosexual romances on-screen has increased, creating new questions about how the co-leads are represented in relationship to their "Asianness" as well as their gender. In this paper, using textual analysis frameworks deployed by Paek and Shah (2003) and Balaji and Worawongs (2010), four Western romantic comedy and drama films, *My One True Love(s)*, *A Sugar and Spice Holiday*, *Boyfriends of Christmas Past* and *Five Blind Dates* are examined to highlight the ways in which Asian characters' ethnicities and gender performances are depicted. The analysis of these films, produced in the United States, Canada, and Australia, also underscores the ways in which Asian diasporic audiences potentially influence the ways in which relationships are depicted.

Keywords

Asian

on-screen relationships

diaspora

colonialism

textual analysis

Imagining “Ci Shan”: Exploring the Symbolic Meaning Construction of Charitable Behavior Among Chinese Youth

Authors

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Abstract

In September 2023, Tencent Public Welfare, jointly with WeChat, launched the online public welfare product “fen fen juan (cent cent donate in literal)” on WeChat Pay. For users, they could make charitable donations starting from ¥0.01 yuan. As a reward, participants get a red flower set for Wechat Status. The red flower refers to a household scenario in kindergarten for Chinese: The better-performing children will get a red paper-cut flower. The red flower, with its unique symbolic values, soon received tremendous attention and sparked the passion for participation in donation among youth. In pursuit of obtaining it, charitable donations are popularized.

Understanding charitable behavior has long been a focus of scholarly inquiry, as it not only contributes to improving the quality of life for others but also reflects individuals’ efforts in promoting social justice and welfare. While previous research has delved into the psychological mechanisms underlying charitable behavior, less attention has been given to the subjective meaning that participants attribute to such behavior. To address this gap, we conducted interviews with 24 participants of the Tencent Public Welfare “9·9 Red Flower Day” project.

Our findings reveal that participants’ donation behavior is driven by multiple motivations. They are motivated by the desire to help others, as well as considerations of low involvement costs. Furthermore, the red flower holds cultural significance, symbolizing distinctions between excellence and mediocrity, majority and minority, scarcity, and nostalgia for childhood. Participants construct multidimensional interpretations around this cultural symbol and its connection to themselves, which we refer to as the “imagination of charity.” The red flower not only represents a symbolic reward but also functions as cultural capital, shaping participants’ self-identity. It also serves as social capital, influencing their interpersonal interactions and facilitating the accumulation of social influence. Interestingly, participants tend to downplay the social and moral significance of charitable behavior itself, instead using it as a means of self-presentation to showcase their possession of the red flower.

In conclusion, we propose the concept of the imagination of charity to comprehend the multifaceted symbolic construction of charitable actions by young people. As an active and conscious process, the imagination of charity plays a central role in shaping participants’ understanding of charitable behavior while also complicating their motivations for engagement. Our research highlights the importance of considering the broader cultural implications of charitable behavior. Traditional

ritualized donation activities and certificate-style rewards may no longer hold the same symbolic appeal for young people. The routinization of participation and the singular meaning conveyed by these traditional approaches may limit the meaning and potential extensions of young people's involvement in charitable activities. Conversely, the red flower, as a more meaningful and adaptable cultural symbol, enriches the significance of charitable behavior, fostering greater motivation and possibilities for youth participation.

Keywords

charitable behavior; meaning-making; donation; capital; self-presentation

Virtual Roleplay in the Magic Circle: a Case Study of the Identity of Otome Games' Text-based Role-player

Authors

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Ms. Yiyang Gu - China - School of Journalism and Communication, Tsinghua University

Abstract

Otome Game refers to a type of game especially for female players. It puts emphasis on romantic relationships, with players controlling the female protagonist and experiencing a series of plots with male protagonists. Text-based roleplay is a fan acting behavior based on books, films or TV dramas. On social media platforms, fans act as virtual characters or create their own characters based on the story world of the work. Therefore, the text-based roleplay of Otome Game is a new form of identity practice in the internet environment. Normally in this practice, two female participants are involved: one shares her daily life and thoughts (referred to “wife” in this circle) while the other responds to her in a way that the male protagonist of the Otome Game does.

The text-based roleplay of Otome Game is not only a new form of text-based roleplay developed within QQ chat groups decades ago, but also an extension of Otome Game. It acquires both characteristics of performance and play, and since performance and play are deeply integrated into daily life, the identity practice of consumers and providers of text-based roleplay represents significant changes. For “wives”, the overly lifelike experience leads them to fall into fake romantic relationships. For role-players, the triple identities of the self in real life, the role, and the provider of emotional labor are constantly switching, resulting overlap, conflict, and even chaos in self-perception.

This study adopts a research method of participatory observation and in-depth interviews to explore the identity practice of Otome Games' text-based role-player. On Chinese social media platform, the practitioners have posted many chat records, generating a rich data for researchers. This article also interviewed 5 “wives” and 10 text-based role-players, who range from 19 to 24 years old and roleplay characters mainly from *Light and Night* (i.e. the most popular Otome Game in China). This paper contributes a further understanding towards youth culture in contemporary China, revealing a new form of satisfying emotional needs among young people.

Keywords

text-based roleplay, Otome Game, identity practice, play, performance

Pop Mart Blind Box Consumed in China: Cultural Transduction under Intertextuality and glocalization

Authors

Mr. RAN ZHAO - China - School of Journalism and Communication, Renmin University of China

Abstract

The blind box, a pop art toy that conceals its contents until it is opened, has surged in popularity in China, particularly among Chinese adolescents. Initially originating in Japan, blind boxes mainly consist of miniature figures that are often associated with popular intellectual properties (IP) from movies, TV dramas, and animations such as "Naruto", "Jujutsu Kaisen" and "Frozen". Given the relative weakness of local IP storytelling and a reliance on imported ones, China has still cultivated a substantial localized blind box industry.

Uribe-Jongbloed and Espinosa-Medina (2014) proposed the cultural transduction framework to elucidate the process by which popular culture traverses borders and gains acceptance in new markets. This framework encompasses four key principles: market, product, people, and process. Building upon this framework, the study emphasizes the audience when analyzing blind box. Therefore, the study aims to **(1) depict the hybrid characteristics and intertextuality of blind box in China within the global context, and (2) to comprehend the underlying mechanisms behind Chinese consumers' embrace of this hybrid culture from the perspective of cultural transduction.**

This study employs **qualitative methods**, specifically **in-depth interviews** with consumers and **textual analysis** of representative blind boxes and their advertisements. By focusing on *Pop Mart* (a leading Chinese blind box company, that dominates the market with the largest share and an extensive retail presence in over 20 countries and regions) as a case study, the research investigates the glocalized processes involved in the production and consumption of Chinese blind box.

The findings highlight the significance of cultural hybridity and intertextuality in the growth of the blind box industry in China. These factors contribute to market proximity and form the product appeal. Moreover, they offer valuable insights into examining the relationship between different media forms and intellectual properties (IP), emphasizing the cultural industry positioning, sales strategy, and localization efforts in global expansion. However, the fetishistic allure of the mediated product and marketing model presents a paradox, as their popularity can simultaneously limit their development by both attracting and alienating audiences.

When consumers embrace new cultural products and their marketing methods, they typically undergo two layers of transduction. The first layer involves the localization of global culture. Scholars such as *Tsing* (2015) and *Satsuka* (2015) argue that cross-cultural business transaction necessitates cultural translation. Through this process, the ideology and cultural connotation of blind box is unveiled. The second transformation occurs from the market to the audience, as cultural products transition into consumer goods. In summary, these findings shed light on the global

popular cultural transduction research by emphasizing the audience's role, differentiating two layers of transduction, and uncovering the mechanism of glocalized cultural consumption.

Keywords

blind box, pop art toy, glocalization, cultural transduction, intertextuality, consumption

Fictional Narratives and Romantic Love: Examining the Influence of Female-oriented Romantic Video Games on Character Identification, Parasocial Relationships, and Romantic Beliefs

Authors

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Abstract

[Background]

As an indispensable part of Chinese popular culture, romantic video games (RVGs) refer to video games that incorporate romantic and dating themes, offering players the role of the central character in several narratives filled with tasks and opportunities to develop romantic relationships with designed characters of the opposite sex (Taylor, 2007). Experts have been concerned about the impact of romantic media (e.g., films, television series, and magazines) on audience perception and their worldviews (Holmes, 2007; Hefner & Wilson, 2013). China's RVGs at present, mainly in the form of mobile games, possess some new features such as simulating daily interpersonal communication to enhance the sense of interaction and companionship, which may exert impact on female players' romantic perceptions and beliefs. However, the focus of game research places on violent and sexual content of video games, with insufficient attention to female players and the exposure of RVGs. Unlike extant research, the study then centers on female players and female-oriented RVGs (FoRVGs), examining parasocial interactions and romantic beliefs with greater detail, thus enriching the literature on female game players and the effects of RVGs.

[Methods]

The study focused on female users of four prominent FoRVGs in China, specifically: *Mr. Love: Queen's Choice*, *Tears of Themis*, *Lovebrush Chronicles/For All Time*, and *Light and Night*. All four games are categorized as "romance, domestic, first-person, and mobile game," and have been accessible to the public for more than three months, boasting a substantial and stable consumer base. Set in modern or surreal contexts, the games are designed to immerse players in romantic interactions by featuring 3 to 6 male characters. Online questionnaires were distributed within Weibo fans communities, Douban Groups, and WeChat interest-oriented group chats of these games. All respondents confirmed their status as female consumers of FoRVGs. The questionnaire

encompassed aspects including game exposure, game experience (i.e., media character identification, parasocial relationships), and romantic perception (i.e., romantic beliefs, relationship-contingent self-esteem, and heterosexual script). A total of 318 questionnaires were collected, and the study employed AMOS as a statistical tool for constructing and testing structural equation modeling (SEM).

[Findings]

The results highlight the impact of FoRVGs on female players' romantic perceptions and beliefs. The proposed model demonstrates a good fit to the data, $\chi^2/df = 2.004$, GFI=.903, NFI=.909, CFI=.952, TLI=.944, RMSEA=.056. FoRVGs players who have a higher identification with game avatars possess a stronger sense of parasocial relationships ($\beta=0.691$, $p<0.001$). Regarding romantic perceptions and beliefs, the parasocial relationships with game avatars have a positive impact on players' real-life romantic beliefs ($\beta=0.56$, $p<0.001$). There is no significant relationship between parasocial relationships and the acceptance of gendered scripts. Female players having strong commitment to romantic beliefs are more inclined to embrace the heterosexual script including traditional gender role set by society ($\beta=0.328$, $p<0.001$). In addition, players' parasocial relationships with game characters positively influence their relationship-contingent self-esteem ($\beta=0.167$, $p<0.05$). The level of idealization of romantic beliefs significantly influences players' relationship-contingent self-esteem ($\beta=0.444$, $p<0.001$). The degree of players' agreement to heterosexual script also reflects their inclination to relationship-contingent self-esteem ($\beta=0.286$, $p<0.05$).

Keywords

female-oriented RVGs; romantic beliefs; parasocial relationships; Chinese popular culture

Transnational Movement in New Zealand-Irish Crime Series "The Gone" (2023—)

Authors

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Abstract

Since the 1990s, crime television series, especially in Europe, have become increasingly transnational in both production contexts and narratives. Traditionally national and local, this popular genre shifted to depictions of invisible borders and free movement in the process of European integration. In the wake of Brexit and, more recently, the Covid-19 pandemic, this development has been disturbed, perhaps permanently so; a greater focus is now placed on borders as obstacles, and on restricted movement.

Against this background, this paper examines New Zealand-Irish crime series *The Gone* (TVNZ/RTÉ, 2023) with regard to the various transnational movements performed by its characters, and its destabilisation of the crime genre. Set in the fictional town of Mount Affinity on New Zealand's North Island, it follows an investigation into the disappearance of an Irish couple living there. This investigation intersects with the town's local history of decades-old serial killings and positions its detectives Theo Richter (of the Dublin Garda) and Diana Huia (from the Auckland police) in liminal positions both towards their communities, and their institutions. Through its characters, *The Gone* connects Dublin with rural New Zealand in an investigation that involves an Irish crime cartel expanding its business to Auckland on the one side, and much of Huia's Māori family (as witnesses and suspects) on the other side.

In a post-pandemic context, *The Gone* both disrupts and reaffirms the distance between Ireland and New Zealand—two countries that do not actually share a national border. With the series set during the aftermath, but also in the complete absence of Covid, the crossing of national borders is relegated to the offscreen space: movements between continents are shown to be seamless, visible only in arrivals at airports. Meanwhile, movement within the North Island town is slow and highly restricted, as search parties on foot scale the mountain for traces of the missing couple. The series' multiple borders require constant movement from the characters, both (trans)nationally and vis-à-vis the wider institution of the police: navigating a semi-official joint investigation of the two police forces, as well as Huia's family history and Richter's detachment from a police force he is in the process of leaving.

The uncertain spatial and temporal constellations of past, present and potentially future crimes that the detectives find themselves in further distance them from their own institutions. At the same time, various connections—mostly of language and culture—are drawn between Irish and Māori characters: from an investigation that partially relies on (translated) interviews, to transcultural funeral scenes as the missing persons search turns into a homicide investigation.

Leaving the institution and, with it, the nation, behind is framed as dangerous in *The Gone*; and the series alludes (but does not entirely connect) to the invisible border crossings typical of the

transnational crime genre in recent years. But neither do nations—or the crime genre—provide a stable framework for character movement, or the investigation at large.

Keywords

transnational television, popular culture, borders, nationalism, postcolonialism, crime television

From Interest Fandom to Idol Politics: Based on the Qualitative Research of Chinese K-pop Fandom Cyber-Nationalism

Authors

Ms. TIANGE XIANG - China - Communication University of China

Abstract

One of the most socially engaging phenomena in popular Chinese culture is fandom culture. In the last 20 years, for example, complex factors have given rise to the K-pop fan community in China, leading to the creation of fandom and fandom culture in this era of big data. Chinese K-pop fans gather together due to their shared interest in the Korean Wave, generating a strong sense of synaesthesia and forming an interest fandom (Schneider, 2018). In the process, fandom culture merged with nationalism, giving rise to a new form of cyber-nationalism known as fandom nationalism, which is exerting a reverse and lasting impact on Sino-Korean relations. With the continuing spread of the internet, the traditional one-sided infatuation in fandom culture has gradually transformed into a mature, two-way, mutually beneficial relationship. In addition, interest fandom is evolving into idol politics as the power of fans continues to grow, indicating that fandom relationships based on shared interests are creating more complex social connections.

Fandom nationalism is increasingly focusing on self-reinforcement, largely influenced by fan communities and online communication. China is one of the key countries where the popular Korean Wave has been developing for almost 30 years. As one of the groups paying close attention to South Korea, Chinese K-pop fans scrutinise Korean idols and discussions on Chinese-related topics in Korean forums with a political perspective; this scenario provides a wealth of material for friction in public opinion. Consequently, contradictions between the development of the Korean Wave and the rise of cyber-nationalism are becoming increasingly pronounced (Hazony, 2018). For example, the issue of Jang Wonyoung's nationality reflects how Chinese K-pop fans triggered online nationalism. Using the online ethnography approach, this study conducted in-depth interviews and continuous observation of 16 K-pop fans. Grounded in John Fiske's popular culture theory and interaction ritual theory (Randall, 2004), this study explores the virtual presence rituals of online fandoms and the motivations and expressions of participatory, performative nationalist behaviours (John, 1992).

This study identified contributing factors to the formation mechanism of cyber-nationalism amongst Chinese K-pop fans, including fans' self-defence, group enhancement, idol and patriotism strategies, and shared emotions. Sudden public events involving celebrities have a collective impact that can lead to identity shifts among fans, their emotional deconstruction, and the exchange of emotional energy. An analysis of the internal development mechanism of cyber-nationalism amongst Chinese K-pop fans led to a focus on the social impacts of bidirectional influences between idols and fans and how these exert various effects on public opinion and other aspects (Cokoper, 2015). It can be concluded that a mutually integrated relationship can be established between subcultures, nationalism, and fans that follow their idols based on values that closely resemble mainstream norms.

This study contributes to a better understanding of the business chain and behavioural logic behind behaviours such as star-making, idol-following, and unfollowing. By dissecting the underlying core of cyber-nationalism and the influence of historical nihilism, this research holds significant value in addressing issues related to idol politics.

Keywords

idol politics,K-pop,cyber-nationalism,fandom,star-making

Parasocial Interactions in Otome Games: Emotional Experiences and Reconceptualization of Intimacy among Chinese Female Players

Authors

Ms. Qingqing You - China - Communication University of China

Ms. Xin Wang - China - Nanjing Normal University

Abstract

Research background and questions

Parasocial interaction involves the development of a relationship between audiences and media personalities, while a parasocial relationship denotes the more prolonged emotional connection that ensues. Continuous exposure to media figures can lead the audience to perceive these figures as familiar and intimate components of their lives (Horton et al., 1956). Intimacy encompasses emotional and physical aspects, which can coexist or occur independently within a relationship (Lewis, 1978; Strong et al., 2011: 139; Robison et al., 2017). Emotional intimacy emerges through interpersonal interactions, primarily through critical processes such as self-disclosure and peer response (Reis & Shaver, 1988). Otome games, aimed at a female audience, create a media space where women can engage with male characters in a risk-free environment (Erickson et al., 2018). The uncertainty reduction theory posits that increased interaction in interpersonal communication leads to greater self-disclosure and, consequently, a higher likelihood of developing deeper intimacy (Zhou, 2021).

In China, the advancement of urbanization and the elevation of living conditions have significantly enhanced women's autonomy in their social lives. Nevertheless, a considerable disconnect exists in their comprehension of intimate relationships, attributed to the persistent absence of meaningful engagement with the concept throughout their developmental years (Teng et al., 2015). Otome games have emerged as a popular medium, enabling young women to delve into romantic narratives and develop affection for male characters, thus filling a notable void.

Earlier research has dissected the portrayal of love in Chinese otome games, examining the psychological drives, consumer patterns, and how these games influence female players' perceptions of marriage and romance (Han et al., 2020; Gong et al., 2023; Wu et al., 2020). Yet, exploring the romantic bonds established through the games' parasocial interactions and their broader societal effects on women remains limited and narrowly focused.

Hence, this research delves into the mechanisms of emotional engagement between female players and male characters within the game, questioning the potential for fostering love. It investigates the influence of quasi-social interactions experienced in the game on female players' notions of intimacy and examines the tangible impacts these interactions have had.

Methodology

This study involved conducting in-depth interviews with 25 female players of prominent otome games in mainland China, aiming to grasp their gaming experiences, the evolution of their emotional relationships within these games, and the real-life consequences thereof. Concurrently, the study employed the walkthrough method to directly engage with, investigate, and interact with leading otome games in the Chinese market, seeking to uncover the individual perceptions and tangible effects of these games on female players.

Preliminary Findings

Preliminary findings from this study indicate that otome games have delivered positive emotional experiences to young women, offering psychological momentum to navigate real-life challenges and facilitating the enhancement of women's self-perception and the reconstitution of their subjectivity. Through parasocial interactions within the game, female players can heighten self-awareness, alleviate gender-related anxieties, and progressively reformulate their understanding of authentic, intimate relationships.

Keywords

Parasocial interaction; Emotional intimacy; Otome games

From margin to centre: How do the Chinese older people engage in the discourse on old age through the short video platform

Authors

Ms. Rui Hua - China - Beijing Foreign Studies University

Abstract

Popular culture is generally considered youth-dominated, where older people have less visibility. In the limited representations in popular media, ageing used to be portrayed negatively as a period of decline (Blaikie, 1999; Li, 2021). Owing to the quick advancement of new media technology, short video platforms are increasingly serving as a vital channel for older people to express themselves, assimilate into the popular narrative, and minimise the digital gap. Recently, people have been drawn to short videos featuring older adults. A group of senior creators of UGC have reached massive fans, and many young vloggers have aged people in their families as their protagonists. The expression of older people's understanding of life and their interesting reactions to popular things explains the growing appeal of this type of video.

Death is often considered taboo in Chinese culture, and this fear, to some extent, extends to public negative feelings towards ageing and nursing homes (Huang, 2016). Access to the Internet offers older adults an opportunity to change the "vulnerable image" portrayed by mass media and the negative attitudes towards ageing. Since April 2023, "Funny Things in the Funny Nursing Home", an account of Jingya nursing home in North China's Tianjin Municipality on Chinese short video platforms, has gained over 1 million fans online, and their most popular video has received over 200 million views (Global Times, 2023). In the videos, the nursing home residents engage themselves in the discourse of interests, life problems and anxieties among the young group by applying popular Internet memes and language styles. They are optimistic and cheerful, never avoid discussing ageing and death, and are considered "extremely healing" by young netizens. As media serve as a reference to the public's idea towards old age (Edström, 2018), it is argued that these videos help reframe the discourse of old age on social media in the public discussion of the hit of this particular account.

The study aims to analyse the short videos produced by "Funny Things in the Funny Nursing Home" on Douyin, the Chinese version of TikTok, from April to December 2023, with a total of 148. The study mainly draws upon Fairclough's three-dimensional model for critical discourse analysis, which includes text, discourse practices and socio-cultural practices (Fairclough, 1995). Following the procedure, the study attempts to analyse the written and visual language symbols to show the image of the aged people presented in the videos to answer the question of "what" of a discourse in the first dimension. Then, in the second dimension, the study analyses the relationship between the producers and consumers to find out the hidden agenda behind the production of the text. The study believes that these videos display a warm, wise and witty image of older adults engaging in the discourse of youth culture. They continuously produce videos based on the

feedback of young audiences, which shows the "intertextuality" in different contexts. These findings then introduced the analysis of the third dimension of the social and cultural background behind, indicating the role of society and media in helping promote older adults' presence in the digital popular culture.

With a growing proportion of older people becoming a demographic reality, ageing has become increasingly present on social media in China. The study will contribute to addressing the role older people play in the digital social environment, which is a rising issue that needs to be explored. It offers a critical perspective to re-examine not only the image construction of older adults in the era of short videos but also the intergenerational communication between different groups.

Keywords

Keywords: short video, ageing narratives, discourse analysis

Producing a post-postmodern space: An assemblage analysis of the space of Macau's Cotai Strip

Authors

Dr. Zhen Sun - Macao - Macau University of Science and Technology

Abstract

Macau, an internationally renowned gambling city, has experienced rapid growth in casino space expansion and tourism since 2002 when the new Macau SAR government liberalized gambling. Despite the impact of COVID-19 on the city's economy over the past three years, infrastructure construction and remodeling of casino resorts continues. This study uses the micro-dynamic assemblage theory and related concepts as a theoretical lens to examine the spatial production inside and outside the casino resorts in Macau and the identity of tourists. The study zooms in on Macau's Cotai Strip, a tourist precinct with various casinos, accommodations, and facilities that attract potential tourists. It aims to answer two main questions: First, how does the assemblage of Macau's Cotai Strip homogenize its material and expressive components and establish its territoriality? In other words, what are the relationships that hold the assemblage together? Second, what is the identity of Macau's casino tourists that emerges from the Cotai Strip assemblage or territory? Specifically, how do the casino tourists experimentally engage with the Strip and the city? The assemblage perspective of the city and its tourists is developed by analyzing the data from participant observation and tourist interviews.

Through a thorough analysis and interpretation of observation and interview data, the current study reveals that the Cotai Strip as an assemblage whole homogenizes its human and non-human components mainly through the process of establishing a multi-tiered enclosed territory, performing a repetitive rhythm on its main buildings, and providing tourists with homogeneous experiences. The Cotai Strip is an example of how its space has been territorialized and coded as a post-postmodern space characterized by intensification and control. The identity of casino tourists is temporally territorialized through their associations with other material and expressive elements involved in their spatial-temporal surroundings during the journey. They become de-differentiated visitors, programmed shoppers and sightseers, and photographic gazers.

The theoretical contributions of this study are at least twofold. First, drawing on Deleuze and Guattari's assemblage thinking, the study examines tourist city identity and the tourist-city relationship from a dynamic, relational, and becoming perspective, rather than a tourist-gaze and objectified view. Second, an empirical examination of the casinopolitan city of Macau, as an epitome of the Disneyized tourist city, enriches our understanding of the Disneyization of the world and the standardized and intensified experiences of people.

Keywords

assemblage, tourism, casino, Macau, Cotai Strip

Laughing while Māori: Humour in Aotearoa with Mātauranga Māori and Birmingham School Approaches

Authors

Mr. Daniel Burgess - New Zealand - Massey University

Abstract

The study of popular culture has historically been dominated by Western knowledges: with non-Western knowledge tending to be subsumed within these dominant frameworks rather than contributing towards mutually beneficial shared knowledge (Smith et al. i). However, through active engagement between communities and peoples, it is possible to realise the value of different knowledges, cultures, and histories. In this presentation, I will argue that although cultural studies—as a Western project—might seem separate from mātauranga (knowledge) Māori (Indigenous Peoples of Aotearoa New Zealand) approaches, they can be weaved together to provide a productive basis for critical work on popular culture in Aotearoa (New Zealand).

To demonstrate how these two knowledge bases complement each other, this presentation will present an interconnected theoretical framework for making sense of the social and cultural role of Māori humour: a wheke (octopus) model informed by critical humour studies, mātauranga Māori, and the Birmingham School of Cultural Studies tradition. Placed in conversation with relevant sources in te ao Māori (the Māori world), the Birmingham School's understandings of class, “postcolonialism, poststructuralism, nationalism, feminism, ... [and] studies of race and ethnicity” can help understand Māori humour and comedy productions as a site of contestation, “cultural and political expression,” and as an art form (Andrews 2020; Gilroy 76-77). Beyond comedy, however, the relationship between mātauranga Māori and Western cultural studies can also be applied to other aspects of popular culture in Aotearoa.

In doing so, I will draw out overlooked connections between writers such as Māori Marsden and Raymond Williams. Marsden stresses that Māori—specifically students—“need not fear to create and to expand the traditions and knowledge of their ancestors” (Royal xi). Likewise, Williams argues that culture is not fixed but a continuously evolving collaboration of shared knowledges grown within a community of people (18). Both Marsden and Williams indicate that sharing knowledge is a means for cultural survivance. Moreover, Williams also emphasises that a culture's “necessary changes are writing themselves into the land,” which is especially relevant for Māori as tangata whenua (People of the land) (18). In this, I am reminded of the whakataukī (proverb) ‘ko au te whenua, ko te whenua, ko au’ (‘I am the land, and the land is me’), which accentuates that the land nourishes te ao Māori and vice versa. Taken together, Williams and Marsden's connecting of land, people, and knowledge suggests that the creation and expansion of cultural knowledges (emergent elements) is just as important as preserving ancestral (residual) knowledges in the ever-changing Aotearoa cultural and socio-political landscape.

Such connections are indicative of how mātauranga Māori and the Birmingham school can be productively thought together via a common concern with identity, location, and (popular) culture.

Placing mātauranga Māori in conversation with British thinkers like Williams, Stuart Hall, and Paul Gilroy, I will outline a critical framework for analysing the role of Māori popular culture in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Keywords

Humour, Comedy, Indigeneity, Mātauranga Māori, Birmingham Cultural Studies, Postcolonialism, Knowledge.

Diverse, dynamic, and paradoxical: character masculinity in Chinese danmei fictions

Authors

Ms. YILING XU - China - Communication University of China

Abstract

Danmei, in which male-male romance is portrayed, is a flourishing literature genre in China. In danmei genre, male protagonists challenge normative masculinity with their dual association with homosexuality and pornography. Therefore, with the gender-political function carried by masculinity, danmei is assumed to have the potential to impact mainstream gender order. In recent years, while danmei has received significant attention from academia, Chinese scholars predominately pay attention to why danmei fictions attract women readers, and relatively little work has been conducted from the authors' perspective and linked with the reconstruction of masculinity. Researchers generally hold optimistic views about female consciousness contained in danmei works and regard danmei as a gender-equal space created via female imaginative power and affective engagement. However, in some popular subgenres of danmei such as androgyny and A/B/O, authors frequently apply traditional female features to male protagonists, which is still strengthening the traditional gender binary structure.

This study used text analysis to examine research questions: How do female danmei authors construct masculinity? Are traditional gender binaries inherited or broken? Drawing on Fang Gang's Cross Axis of Masculinity Practice, which based on Cornell's masculinity theory and the Chinese concept of 'hardness and softness', as analytical framework, researcher critically analyzes 3 strands of data from 10 danmei and 10 heterosexual fictions: (1) personality: behavioral style, appearance, and corresponding dynamic changes (horizontal axis); (2) relationship: subordination/dominance tendency in labor, power, and cathexis (vertical axis); (3) comparison with masculinities featured in heterosexual fictions to better assess the extent to the second question.

Text analysis reveals masculinities in male protagonists of danmei fictions are far more non-normative and dynamic than those of heterosexual ones and show tendencies towards equilibrium points in both axes. Focusing on danmei characters, notable differences can be found in the masculinities of tops and bottoms. Precisely, tops, who are usually handsome and virile in appearance, tend to be more decisive and sometimes violent, while bottoms are relatively softer in personality, with comely or handsome faces, ready smiles, and obliging carriage. In the relationship dimension, surprisingly, several bottoms are covert dominants, as described as extremely charming and universally admired. However, in terms of wealth and social status, more often, they are subordinate to tops.

With varying degrees of hegemonic traits, masculinities in tops are more similar and stable, which suggests writers' latent but pervasive expectation of the presence of an ideal traditional male figure. As for bottoms, despite their overall subordinate position, they are not consistent with traditional female features; on the contrary, they show the possibility of male effeminacy and masculinity

diversity, and in cathexis, they can take more initiative, indicating authors' desire for reciprocal and equal relationships. In summary, despite contradictions in the details, there are two facts embedded in the construction of danmei protagonists: the diversity of masculinity and the dynamic process of gender expression change. Simultaneously, although this genre has not completely broken the gender binary structure, it indicates female authors' attempts to reconstruct gender order by reversing hegemonic masculinity norms.

Keywords

masculinity; gender; danmei subculture; male effeminacy

Pawprints in Cyberspace: Navigating Pet Mourning and Generational Shifts on WeChat Moments

Authors

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Prof. Xuan TANG - China - Television School, Communication University of China

Abstract

"Cat-Monkey Coexistence" at the zoo emerged as the trending topic on Chinese social media platforms in early 2024. In China, passionate cat lovers expressed their anger and demanded the zoo's response on major social media platforms, concerned about the possible mistreatment of two cats by monkeys. Under the immense pressure of online public opinion, the felines were ultimately rescued and properly relocated. This is not the first time that "cats" or "dogs" have captured such significant attention on China's social media platforms. Especially, with the rise of China's pet industry, pets have become a popular choice for an increasing number of young Chinese. As of 2023, the pet market in China is expected to approach nearly 392.4 billion yuan. The younger generation, those between the ages of 18-35, has become the largest part of pet owners in China. Social media platforms have become an indispensable part of their daily interactions and documentation with their pets.

This study focuses on how social media platforms, as a medium for emotional documentation of pets among young people in China, interact with traditional Chinese mourning beliefs, as well as a better understanding of the special significance of pets for young Chinese generation, as distinct from older generations.

Social media platforms are considered as appropriate places for expressing grief and sadness and for remembering the dead (Usher, K. 2023). The death stories are framed as bearing significance and relevance to society (Navon, S. 2023). There are commonalities of pet and human bereavement and the loss of a pet receive greater attention (Lyons, M. 2022). Prior research might not have extensively explored the nexus between pet mourning and social media platforms, a theme that gains significant prominence on Chinese social media, primarily driven by the active participation of the younger demographic. As articulated in the introduction, the subject of pets stands out as one of the foremost concerns among young users on Chinese social media platforms. Simultaneously, the emotional recording and ceremonial commemorations associated with pet mourning offer insights into the funeral beliefs prevalent among contemporary Chinese youth. This may potentially diverge or even clash with conventional mourning perspectives rooted in East Asian cultural traditions.

This study conducted in-depth interviews with 14 young individuals in China who had experienced the death of their pets and mourned them on WeChat Moments, a semi-public social media platform similar to Facebook, relying on strong interpersonal networks. The available qualitative data analysis indicates that the various emotional experiences of these young people in online mourning on WeChat's Moments (e.g., relatively higher privacy leads to a higher sense of security; the

emotional catharsis of the writing process; online mourning breaks through the limitations of time and space, which gives them a chance to mourn at any time) are consistent with the fact that Chinese young generation are facing a complicated situation, and their views on life and death show clear generational differences. Additionally, participants noted their goals for online mourning, including better convenience, the significance of their pets.

Keywords

Online Grief Expression, Social Media Interaction, Qualitative research

Cyber Nationalism and Self-Orientalism: Unveiling China's "Chink Eyes" Controversy

Authors

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Abstract

Background

In recent years, with the proliferation of the internet, a series of nationalist discourses centered around the label "chink eyes" have emerged in China's cyberspace. "chink eyes" is commonly used to describe the appearance of East Asians, especially Chinese, characterized by small, narrow eyes, often linked to racial discrimination (C. Liu, 2021). A prominent example was the 2021 controversy over an advertising by the Chinese food brand "Three Squirrels," featuring a model with small, slanted eyes, criticized for reinforcing negative stereotypes and pandering to Western perceptions of Chinese people. This ignited widespread debate on national and cultural identity.

Research Questions

As the average age of Chinese internet users decreases and nationalist passion rises (F. Liu, 2012), this paper aims to investigate the following critical questions: What new characteristics have nationalist discourses on Chinese internet platforms exhibited in recent years? How do these changes reflect Chinese netizens' imagination and shaping of the national image?

Research Methods

This study focuses on the 2021 advertising controversy involving the Chinese brand "Three Squirrels." Employing discourse analysis, it conducts a detailed examination of comments made by netizens on Weibo, China's leading social media platform, regarding this incident. Additionally, it incorporates news reports from mainstream media to broaden the research perspective. Theoretically, this article engages with concepts of China's cyber nationalism (Wu, 2007) and Edward W. Said's Orientalism (Said, 1978) to explore the underlying implications of China's national image within cyber nationalist discourses.

Findings and Conclusions

The study has revealed that the cyber nationalist scrutiny has intensified. This scrutiny targets not only Western corporations but also subjects domestic Chinese companies to even more severe oversight. Additionally, even historical advertisements, once rediscovered, can trigger a new round of scrutiny and discussion.

Meanwhile, contemporary nationalism is closely intertwined with consumer culture, with both netizens and brands exploiting nationalist themes in consumer goods. Brands leverage the "GuoChao" (ethnocentric marketing) strategy to boost sales (Han & Guo, 2018) yet face backlash for employing aesthetics like "chink eyes," accused of perpetuating Western-centric stereotypes.

Netizens, adhering to principles of consumer ethnocentrism (Shimp & Sharma, 1987), actively engage in online criticism and, from a consumer standpoint, boycott the brand's products.

Moreover, the discourse on the "chink eyes" incident among netizens reveals scrutiny of women, placing the female model in the advertisement a doubly marginalized position due to her gender and race. Netizens continuously critique the model's eyes, makeup, and clothing, applying stereotypes such as "pale, young and slim" —highlighting preferences for fair skin, youthfulness, and slender body shape—as beauty norms (Y. Liu & Li, 2023), perpetuating gender oppression and objectification of Eastern women.

Discussion

Finally, the study will contribute to a deeper understanding of nationalist discourse on Chinese internet platforms by adopting an Orientalist perspective. It will highlight the prevalence of self-Orientalism within current social discourse, underscoring the need for a more subjective exploration of national image and the development of an autonomous concept of Asian modernity.

Keywords

cyber nationalism, Orientalism, self-Orientalism, chink eyes, China, national image

The Paleo Diet and Political Nostalgia

Authors

Dr. Tresa LeClerc - Australia - The University of Melbourne

Abstract

There is growing concern about far-right discourse influencing the online wellness space (Aubry 2020; Chang 2021; Delany 2021; Guerin 2021). How do discussions about race and superiority feature in seemingly innocuous conversations about food? Food is regularly discussed in terms of its purity and where it is produced, allowing it to become a metaphor for discussions about nationalism and racial purity. From Jordan Peterson's spruiking of a carnivore diet (Hamblin 2018) to 'culture wars' fought over meat, beef in particular features in far-right political ideology. The paleo diet, a focus of this paper, is seen as an ideological diet in that it also carries cultural values. It has been associated with masculinity and a return to simpler times. A similar technique can be noted in Trump's Make America Great Again campaign, which suggests there was a time in the past that was 'better' than the present, but ignores issues such as regressive racist and sexist politics (see Lammers & Baldwin 2020). Through a case study exploration of the Paleo diet, popular culture and politics, this paper examines the ways in which right wing ideology moves through online spaces and onto our plates.

Keywords

Paleo, food justice, racism

Panel Title

POP - Food, Nationalism, Race and Racialisation

Identity Crisis of Non-mainstream Group in Chinese K-pop Fandom: How to Balance National and Fan Identity?

Authors

Ms. Jiaxun Xu - China - National University of Singapore

Abstract

Korean pop music acting as a representative of modern Korean culture has been globally trendy, which can be traced back to the 1990s when the “culture-orientated national development strategy” was implemented by South Korean governments to vigorously export popular culture products (Shim, 2008). In China, K-pop music is also welcomed by the young generation, while anti-Korean sentiment has existed for a long time on the Chinese internet due to factual and cultural elements (Min, 2008). From culture inheritance controversies to global sports issues, part of Chinese netizens chose to resist the circulation of the Korean Wave on their own initiative. Since the deployment of Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) by South Korea in 2016, Korean pop culture has been boycotted not only at a grass-roots level but also at an official level as the “Hallyu ban (Xian Han Ling)” (Gong, 2022).

The problem of balance between fan identity and national identity has become acute for all Chinese K-pop fans for the first time (Lv, 2021). It was argued that those fans had adopted a “fandom nationalism” stance, which indicates that the fans put their national identity before their idols to relieve identity contradiction (Hu, 2021). When discussing K-pop fandom in China, previous researchers paid more attention to fans’ digital labor and commercialization of the fandom (Chen, 2018), while insufficient attention was given to the political stance and identity crisis of Chinese K-pop fans, especially to those minorities that reject to take “fandom nationalism” as a coping strategy.

This research attempts to focus on the non-mainstream group of Chinese K-pop fandom who refuses to adopt the “fandom nationalism” stance. The significance of this research displays in two aspects. At the practical level, this paper attempts to discard prejudice toward K-pop fans under increasing anti-Korean nationalist sentiment. At the theoretical level, the research intends to enrich ideas of audiences' identity crisis in consuming transnational popular culture by filling the gap of previous researchers' ignorance to the non-mainstream group in Chinese K-pop fandom.

A case study is applied to discover the non-mainstream group of K-pop idol BTS's Chinese Weibo fandom by looking closely at the community discipline and reacting strategy in dealing with their identity crisis. After conducting participant observation and reflexive thematic analysis, the results show that the non-mainstream group does not have a strict organizational structure. For the reacting strategy, one theme about balancing national and fan identity was generated: expression freedom. In other words, the non-mainstream group in the fandom takes their fan identity at first instead of the national identity, while attaching significance to freedom of expression.

Keywords

Chinese K-pop fandom, identity crisis, fandom nationalism, freedom of expression

Chinese Mother-fans: Nurturing Para-kin Bonds and Performing Motherhood

Authors

Ms. Bowen SHAN - Hong Kong - Hong Kong Baptist University

Ms. Yiping Li - Macao - Macau University of Science and Technology

Abstract

Mother-fans, as an emerging phenomenon in China's fan culture, refer to fans who treat the idols as their mothers. Evolving from para-social relationship, mother-fans create this new para-kin fan identity and build a pseudo mother-fan relationship (Horton & Wohl, 1956; Yan & Yang, 2021). From the perspective of motherhood performativity, mother-fans can be closely associated with motherhood even though they never give birth to babies in reality (Jeremiah, 2006). However, how mother-fans as "online mothers" interact with the motherhood in reality is rarely discussed. As a result, this research aims to explore the identity of mother-fans and how this identity reflect as well as resist the institutional aspect of motherhood.

In-depth interview was adopted in this research to understand practices and emotions of mother-fans. Through publicly recruiting participants on Chinese social media platforms Weibo and Red and asking the first several participants to snowball other mother-fans, 12 female mother-fans aged from 19-24 were interviewed in Chinese both online and offline. The interview transcriptions were analyzed following the guidelines of thematic analysis proposed by Braun & Clarke (2006). Finally, two major themes and four sub-themes were identified.

Under the first theme *Mother-fans Identity*, this research found that mother-fan is not a solid and permanent identity but an ambiguous and fluid condition aroused by the cuteness. Though this subculture term overlaps with and can transform into other so-called fan identities such as career fans (fans who value idol's achievement most) and life fans (fans who only require the idol to be alive), one of the most distinctive features of mother-fans is the non-sexual idol-fan relationship, which is also a feature of kinship in reality. Under the second theme *Painless Mothering: Compliance and Defiance*, this research found that mother-fans actively act under the good mothering ideology such as caring for children's education and the emotion of being worried is a necessary condition to maintain this imagined mother-son relationship. However, mother-fans are not blind to the effort and cost brought by motherhood. Instead, they treat being a mother-fan as a kind of painless mothering, through which their maternity can be satisfied without taking any responsibility.

By exploring the identification of mother-fans and how this online mothering is related to motherhood in reality, this research discovered how young female fans in China paradoxically comply with and reject the ideology of motherhood in reality and enriched the concept of para-kin fan.

Keywords

Mother-fan, motherhood, para-social relationship, para-kin relationship

Exploring inclusion of minorities in contemporary Japanese literature and visual works

Authors

Dr. Makoto Sakai - Japan - Associate Professor of Meiji University

Abstract

A recent trend within Japanese literature involves young female writers crafting personal novel-like narratives that delve into the inner lives of individuals broadly classified as having mental disorders, often culminating in prestigious literary accolades. Notable examples include Sayaka Murata's *Covini Ningen* (English meaning: Convenience Store Human), Nanae Aoyama's *Hitori Biyori* (Good Weather Loneliness), Junko Takase's *Oishigohan ga taberaremasuyoni* (May You Eat Delicious Rice), and Sao Ichikawa's *Hunchback* (A Person with a Bent Back). Mental illness has impacted a specific portion of the population, and many writers grapple with it. Hence, there is profound significance in portraying their inner lives through literature.

Additionally, a recent shift in Japanese literature is observed with works featuring immigrants as protagonists, a departure from traditional narratives. Such narratives, often penned by writers who were born in other countries but immigrated to Japan, are increasingly winning prestigious literary awards. Natsuo Kirino's *OUT*, nominated for Edgar Allan Poe Awards by the Mystery Writers of America, showcases a Brazilian-Japanese individual working in Japan as the main character. Akira Higashiyama, who won the Naoki Prize for *Ryu* (English meaning: Flows), is a Taiwan-born writer who completed higher education in Japan. As Japan grapples with declining birthrate and aging population, the acceptance of immigrants is gradually becoming more and more common, and therefore the portrayal of the inner lives of immigrants has gained great significance.

The purpose of this research is to analyze works shedding light on the emotions and realities of minorities in Japan, a facet that has not received much attention so far. These narratives serve as a medium for conveying new values.

The research will draw inspiration from Jonathan Culler's *On Deconstruction: Theory and Criticism after Structuralism* and Kojin Karatani's *Origins of Modern Japanese Literature (Post-Contemporary Interventions)*. Psychoanalytic concepts will be employed to explore the inner lives of individuals living in the postmodern era. Employing the analytical methodology of literary criticism, this research analyzed the representation of minorities in contemporary Japanese literature and cinematic adaptations based on Japanese literary works.

Keywords

inclusion of minorities, literary criticism, cultural studies, media studies

#Gamergate @ 10: The death of the playful, vernacular web

Authors

Dr. Adrienne Massanari - United States - American University

Abstract

For many feminist scholars and critics, 2014's #Gamergate (a public harassment campaign targeting women in gaming) was a painful reminder of the resistance to women and marginalized groups in public life (Chess & Shaw, 2015; Gray et al., 2017). For fandom researchers, the moment also marked a public recognition of the power of fans and unmasked the sometimes-toxic nature of their discourse. But for those of us who had been studying online communities for years, it served as a kind of reckoning. It challenged the suggestion that participatory culture (Jenkins, 2006) was necessarily democratic and instead highlighted the ways games and play could be easily weaponized in an algorithmic landscape (Donovan et al., 2022). No longer could we ignore the ways that the early 2000s "internet ugly" (Douglas, 2014) aesthetic could be mobilized for deeply antisocial ends, nor could we simply discard the ways that it was embedded within a "white racial frame" (Phillips & Milner, 2021).

Whitney Phillips and Ryan Milner (2017) highlight what they term the "ambivalent" nature of the vernacular internet, awash as it is in memes and inside jokes which seem at moments as a repudiation of the crass commercialism that increasingly marked everyday life online. At the same time, spaces like Reddit and 4chan are hotbeds of racism, sexism, and transphobia (Massanari, 2017). Humor and play blur these lines, making it possible for the same image macro template to elicit a wry chuckle out of someone exhausted by the pressures of late capitalism to just as easily be used to recruit converts to White ethnonationalism. And while humor has also been a critical form of critique within marginalized spaces online (Massanari, 2019; Sundén & Paasonen, 2020), it's hard not to wonder if the playful web of the 1990s and early 2000s sometimes championed by early internet researchers ever actually existed.

In this paper, I revisit #Gamergate and its fallout to remind us how marked a new era online. I suggest that while the pre-#Gamergate web was no less precarious for marginalized communities, the increased visibility and algorithmic logics of the post-#Gamergate world make it impossible for us to ignore the ways that humor and play are being marshaled for antisocial and antidemocratic ends. I argue that media studies scholars share some culpability in uncritically celebrating meme culture in the pre-Gamergate years, unintentionally amplifying material and practices that were embedded in Whiteness and which often celebrated toxic geek masculinity (Kendall, 2011; Salter & Blodgett, 2017). Finally, I end with some thoughts about the possibilities of humor and play in the post-#Gamergate world, drawing on the work of Black feminist thought and games studies (Ahmed, 2017; Trammell, 2023).

Keywords

digital culture, games, participatory culture, vernacular web, fandom, gamergate

“Layered Emotions”: A Multidimensional Perspective on Fan Digital Labor in Fan Circles —An Ethnographic Observation of Jackson Yee's Fan Community on Weibo

Authors

Ms. yidi Luo - China - School of Humanities, Central South University

Abstract

Internal differentiation within the group is a prominent manifestation of Chinese digital labor's uniqueness. Existing research frequently focuses on the general exploitation mechanism, with little attention paid to interpreting diverse digital labor and exploitation paradigms.

This study examines the digital labor of various types of fans on Weibo's Super Topics, explaining their heterogeneity and assisting in developing a digital practice era's circle group dynamics framework.

Fan circles have distinct quasi-organizational characteristics, including hierarchical layering and internal professional division of labor (Mao Dan, 2021). Kemper and Collins proposed the emotion theory based on power and status, which holds that power and status generate emotions in social contexts and that changes in these states elicit positive or negative emotions, influencing individuals' behavior (Kemper T D, 1990).

This study employs online ethnography and semi-structured deep interviews. Between September and December 2023, it investigated the digital field of celebrity Jackson Yee's "Sina Weibo Super Topic," conducting in-depth interviews with 30 fans chosen using a multi-stage snowball sampling method.

The study categorizes fans into four tiers based on the titles they receive on Weibo Super Topic.

Activity levels are the primary metric for assessing fans' participation in digital labor. Fans who reach level 12 are considered major influencers, and they are divided into two categories: big fans with the "host" or "content officer" title, and "loyal" fans without notable titles. Based on their level, fans below 12 are divided into regular and passerby fans.

Big fans with unique identities organize and motivate other fans to work digitally. They are in an elevated social position among fans, with high emotional energy and a large and tight social network, resulting in the most consistent and proactive digital labor.

Most senior fans without titles follow the lead of big fans, engaging in digital labor such as data beautification through ranking and product consumption labor demonstrated through sharing purchases, resulting in emotional value. Fans in the second tier exhibit strong self-mobilization and emotional expression.

Being on the third level, regular fans have more autonomy. Their digital labor is more relaxed, unconstrained by the rules of the Super Topic, and measured by individual preference, indicating strong opposition to labor control within fan circles.

The passerby fans represent the fourth level of emotional energy. Their emotional connection to the stars is the weakest. They primarily engage in browsing and liking. Their passive digital footprints validate their digital labor.

Weibo resembles a "factory" that nurtures fans' digital labor. These labors become collective rituals within the fan circle, forming internal hierarchical structures that strengthen circle layers and increase virtual closeness to celebrities. Fans' laborers, whose emotional energy is influenced by their hierarchical status and the circle context, create various forms of digital labor, shaping the overall fan circle ecosystem and influencing the spread of entertainment culture.

Keywords

Digital labor ; Fan circle

From the Margins to the Center: Engaging with Decoloniality in High on the Hog

Authors

Prof. Tewodros Workneh - United States - Kent State University

Dr. Ikram Toumi - United States - Kent State University

Ms. Nahla Bendefaa - United States - University of Oregon School of Journalism and Communication

Abstract

Food is a means through which we identify with others, construct our personal identities as well as organize and situate our relationships. The universal experience of getting together around food—from the everyday family dinner to large functions—makes it a site of communication and meaning-making. The idea of food as communication has become even more commonplace in American cultural industries, most notably in the reality television terrain. While cooking remains to be a core component of culinary television, food reality shows are taking a leaf from recent trends of the genre that experiments with the cross-pollination of travel, suspense, and adventure. For reality TV shows, such malleability embodies “hybrid reality entertainment” (Ouellette, 2013, p. 1), which might have led the genre to be considered as a catch-all phrase that incorporates programming involving real people demonstrating intersections of information, entertainment, documentary and drama (Hill, 2005).

This trend is probably most evident in what came to be known as culinary adventure programs (CAPs), shows that feature a celebrity chef or prominent food critique who travels to different geographical locales, both locally and globally, to taste, indulge in, and pass judgement on what is usually considered to be a “divergent” cuisine to the American taste, and bringing that experience to popular spectacle through television. CAPs typically are as much about cultural encounters as they are about food. Most prominent CAPs such as *Bizarre Foods with Andrew Zimmern* and *Gordon Ramsay: Uncharted* channel the commodification of “the culinary other” by amplifying the drama and “mystery” of intercultural contact that permeates audience reaction ranging from marvel to disgust, and empathy to exceptionalism. Recently, however, there has been a stream of CAPs that diverge from the mainstream narrative optics of exoticizing “foreign” and “alien” foodways to a more mindful, reflexive approach that celebrates gastronomic traditions of various cultural groups in America.

In the current study, we examine Netflix’s *High on the Hog*, a culinary adventure program that not only adopts a reflexive and celebratory approach to culinary storytelling but also deploys a decolonial narrative that places African American contributions to American cuisine from the margins to the center. Drawing from emancipatory propositions of postcolonial theory, we examine the narrative repertoire used in the eight episodes of the *High on the Hog* docuseries through multimedia discourse analysis. Specifically, the purpose of the study is to demonstrate the modalities, functions, and critique of culinary decoloniality in the context of mediated

communication through the example of *High on the Hog*. In doing so, we critically engage with the potential of emerging forms of CAPs in producing emancipatory sense-making for marginalized communities, while also offering avenues for global and intercultural understanding. By their very format that necessitates intercultural encounters, we contend culinary adventure programs such as *High on the Hog* have a potential to educate viewers about different cultural groups and their lifeworlds.

Keywords

culinary adventure programs; cultural industries; decoloniality; postcolonialism; reality television

Race and Crime Dramas on Mainstream Over-the-air television in the US: Progressive nationalism in action

Authors

Dr. Esra Ozcan - United States - Tulane University

Abstract

Over the air broadcast TV is still the main medium of entertainment for millions of American viewers who cannot afford subscription and streaming services. Yet, the programming and the content of broadcast television receive little scholarly attention because of the growing interest on streaming services like Netflix and similar digital platforms. This article aims to bring broadcast television back into the conversation by focusing on crime dramas. No other genre dominates the prime-time schedule of the broadcast TV as much as programming about crime. These programs have long been considered as spaces where racial and ethnic stereotypes have been reproduced in the United States. Yet, an in-depth textual analysis of the contemporary crime dramas on broadcast television suggests otherwise: today's crime dramas feature a wide variety of progressive and successful African American, Asian, Latinx, LGBTQ and Middle Eastern characters, among other previously excluded characters. This paper argues that racial and ethnic stereotypes in crime dramas have indeed changed for the better, yet this has happened within a discourse glorifying the nation and the nation state. The paper discusses the implications of this shift for audiences.

Keywords

Broadcast television, race, crime dramas, nation, stereotypes, United States

The Globalisation of Korean Cultural Production in the Era of Platforms: The Case of Kakao and Naver's Webtoon Business

Authors

Dr. Taeyoung Kim - United Kingdom - Loughborough University

Abstract

This study examines how Kakao and Naver, the leading platform giants of South Korea (henceforth Korean), expand their business to cultural production, focusing on their webtoons/webcomics services. *Webtoons* are important in the nation's cultural production because many of them have been used as original intellectual properties for transmedia storytelling—“a remediation of one particular cultural form as original to other cultural forms (Jin 2019: 1).” Given that transmedia storytelling aims at creating, marketing and merchandising a fictional world with original intellectual properties which would be delivered to audiences in different media formats (Long 2007; Evans 2011), the *webtoon* business is expected to provide new characters and storylines that might be adapted to different genres across cultural production (Park, Lee and Lee 2019; Yecies, Shim, Yang and Zhong 2020).

Much of the growth of *webtoon* business has been driven by *Kakao* and *Naver*, the nation's platform giants. In retrospect, both companies launched their *webtoon* distribution outlets in the mid-2000s. They played vital roles in building the genre's production and delivery mechanisms. Thanks to their success in the market, both Kakao and Naver have expanded their business to other cultural genres, from pop music to film production. Granted, seeking opportunities to utilise the intellectual properties of their *webtoon* distribution has been one of the key growth strategies of these platform giants to expand their business to foreign markets while triggering the platformisation of the Korean cultural industries (author 2023). Driven by their success in providing webtoon services in the domestic market, both companies launched a handful of online webcomic outlets to penetrate the global digital comic market—including China, Japan and the United States.

Based on the explanation, the paper investigates how the entry of Korean platforms into these markets interrupts global webcomics' production and consumption mechanisms by analysing relevant statistics, business reports, and newspaper articles. The findings will shed light on understanding the changes in the Korean cultural industries triggered by the entry of domestic platform giants. Also, given their growing market shares, the cases of two Korean companies illustrate how non-Western companies have become major actors in the global webcomic business with their platform technologies and the complex nature of the globalisation of cultural production in the platform era.

Keywords

Kakao, Naver, Platformisation, Webtoon

Playing politics in Minecraft: Monarchy, rebellion, and just staying out of it in YouTube series Hermitcraft

Authors

Dr. Kim Barbour - Australia - The University of Adelaide

Dr. Caitlin Adams - Australia - The University of Adelaide

Mr. Tariq Osman - Australia - The University of Adelaide

Abstract

Hermitcraft (2012-present) is an unscripted, episodic YouTube series produced by a community of gaming content creators (Hermits) who make and share videos as they play together on a Minecraft world. Playing on a shared world enables the Hermits to interact with others, therefore making their content more enjoyable to watch. The interactions also work as a built-in recommendation network: audience members hop between channels to get multiple perspectives or updates on events and activities. This is essential as most Hermits are professional content creators, and being a member of *Hermitcraft* has been a substantial driver in building and sustaining their popularity. Hermits are a wholesome, largely child-friendly presence in their YouTube videos, and are highly productive media producers: during each season, active Hermits may release multiple *Hermitcraft* videos each week, in addition to livestreaming gameplay and cross-platform engagement with fans and followers.

To sustain audience interest in their content, the Hermits develop their own storylines within their gameplay and videos. In amongst the mini-games and prank wars, a recurring theme has developed around different leadership models. The group have ‘played politics’ by building stories around mayoral races and monarchies to determine who will make decisions regarding the design and function of shared space, and the resulting rebellions as those ‘in power’ exercise increasing levels of authoritarianism. These engagements with different political forms bring the players together as they record videos of their interactions and shared activities, before the Hermits once again retreat to their own spaces within the world to complete individual projects. To be successful, there must be a degree of buy-in from the group, even if individual creators may participate in these stories – and feature them in their own videos – to different degrees. Collaborative play sessions are recorded and edited by each Hermit, finding a balance between collaboratively produced and creator-focused material. Together, these produce what Barbour (2023) terms ‘collaborative emergent transmedia storytelling’, a form of narrative entertainment that we argue is substantively different from both legacy media such as television serials, and from other forms of digital gaming content such as streaming or Let’s Plays.

In this presentation, we use textual analysis of the ‘RentheKing’ storyline (season 9, 2022-2023) to unpack how the popular series engages with in-game politics, and how Hermits balance collaborative story arcs with individual play styles. Strategies the Hermits use for directing and managing audience behaviour and interpretation is also addressed.

Keywords

storytelling, online video, collaboration, Minecraft, YouTube, content creation, transmedia

Indigenous food cultures and the consumption of Indigenous knowledges

Authors

Dr. Eugenia Flynn - Australia - RMIT University

Abstract

Indigenous storytelling modes and contemporary literatures are known within Indigenous communities as sites of knowledge, knowledge production and knowledge dissemination (Maracle 2015; Martin 2008; Moreton-Robinson 2002). However, Indigenous storytelling modes, literatures and knowledges have been subjugated in a context of power and domination by many historical publishing frameworks (Flynn 2021). More recently, the majority non-Indigenous publishing sector has seen a rise in the popularity of published texts related to Indigenous knowledges, written by both Indigenous and non-Indigenous authors such as Victor Steffensen, Bruce Pascoe, Tyson Yunkaporta, and Bill Gamage, highlighting the reading public's desire to engage with Indigenous epistemes, particularly those that attend to issues of climate change and other environmental concerns.

Within this contemporary literary milieu, several books, news items and other forms of digital writing highlight a burgeoning interest in Indigenous food cultures, particularly as they relate to environmentally sustainable agricultural practices and native ingredients that align with 'wellness' discourses. This paper operationalises a theoretical framework of Indigenous paradigm – Indigenous ontology, epistemology, and axiology – to reading and critically interrogating recent writings related to Australian Indigenous food cultures. Books and other texts published by and about Bruce Pascoe, Damien Coulthard and Rebecca Sullivan are presented as case studies through which to interrogate emergent interests in Australian Indigenous foods and related practices. By analysing writings by and about Bruce Pascoe, Damien Coulthard and Rebecca Sullivan, the Australian reading public's interest in Indigenous knowledges which support 'wellness' discourse (related to both environment and people) are unmasked. Further, through applying Indigenous paradigm as a theoretical framework to these case studies, this paper makes visible the way in which racial essentialism and white possession operate to enable non-Indigenous consumption of Indigenous knowledges.

Keywords

Indigenous food, Indigenous knowledges, Whiteness, Indigenous literature, Indigenous writing

Panel Title

POP - Food, Nationalism, Race and Racialisation

The Gender order and Chinese imagination in recent Chinese-American films in Hollywood

Authors

Prof. Xing Zeng - China - Communication University of China

Mr. Kejiang Liu - China - School of Journalism, Communication University of China

Abstract

This article examines the "radicalized gender order" in Chinese-American films and the Chinese imagination of mainstream Western society behind it through an intersectional discourse analysis of three recent Chinese-American Hollywood films: *Everything Everywhere All at Once*, *Turning Red* and *Crazy Rich Asians*.

The study finds that Hollywood Chinese-American movies represent the gender characteristics of Chinese-American women as strong and fragile. The description of Chinese-American women's labor and family relationships in film texts shows the dominant position of Chinese-American women in the family, but this dominant position brings dedication and hard work, rather than power and comfort, and is often mentally fragile. As immigrants to the United States, Chinese-American women show obedience, compromise and cooperation when facing the external Western social order, political system and cultural values. The film's extreme focus on Chinese-American female characters as "the double other" of patriarchy and Western society also makes Chinese-American women an ideal representation of Western society's imagination of China. It shows that current Western society wants to place Chinese, and even today's China, in a position of collaborators who are both capable and capable of being manipulated.

At the same time, the films represent the gender characteristics of Chinese-American men as invisible or powerless. In Chinese-American movies, women control everything at work and at home, while men appear as weak and dependent characters. Chinese-American men are in the gender order of "strong women and weak men" constructed by Hollywood for the Chinese-American. This racialized gender order places Chinese men in the "secondary position" of women in the traditional gender order. This allows Western society to imagine a image of China that is "feminine" and does not cause "rape anxiety" to the West, and that can obey, assist, and rely on the West in today's global order rather than compete with the West.

In addition, the stripping away of the political and economic elements and social activity space of the Chinese-American community in these films has turned the community into a destructured, decontextualized, static and stable utopia with no fundamental conflicts or contradictions with the outside world. And because Hollywood has an affirmative (at least uncritical) attitude towards the static utopia of the Chinese-American community, Chinese-American films have actually avoided a series of issues such as patriarchy and unequal division of labor in social production that exist in traditional Chinese culture. As an oriental imagination, Chinese-American films create a new Western subject position in the context of Eastern and Western cultural confrontation by narrating the collapse and restoration of modern Chinese utopia. The modern utopia created in Chinese-

American movies in Hollywood is nothing more than an extension of Western-centrism, awareness of postmodern Western society's own problems, and "political correctness," successfully concealing the essence of Hollywood's ideological industrial production.

Keywords

radicalized gender order Chinese imagination Chinese-American films in Hollywood

“We are fans, but also female workers prioritizing data”: Affective Labor of Chinese Fans Intertwined with Datafication, Subjectivity, and Exploitation

Authors

Ms. Wei Lu - China - None

Dr. Xianwen Kuang - China - Xi'an Jiaotong – Liverpool University

Abstract

This study focuses on the affective labor of a specific and influential fan group that has emerged in China's digital fan community in recent years. In this fan group, most members prioritize their idol's online traffic data and willingly embrace the process of turning their affective responses, contributions, and online activities into data through algorithms on various social media platforms and the management of online fan groups. To boost their idol's online traffic data, these fans frequently organize collective online activities strategically and proactively engage with algorithms to ensure that their online actions and behaviors can be optimized for algorithmic identification and data processing.

Despite the rapid expansion of the fan group and the Cyberspace Administration of China's call for regulation and partial cessation of its fan activities, academic attention to this fan group and its affective labor has been minimal. Existing studies on this fan group and its affective labor primarily focus on two themes: "exploitation" and "subjectivity." Some scholars have examined how such affective labor, characterized by strong motivation and significant commercial value, has been manipulated and exploited by commercial entities (Chen, 2018; Lin, 2018; Yang, 2020; Zhuang & Dong, 2019). Alternatively, others, influenced partly by the interpretation of Hardt and Negri (2000), argue that this affective labor can evoke positive affect among fans, such as a sense of achievement, and enhance individual agency (Zhang & Negus, 2020). They posit that it can contribute to the production of subjectivity and self-valorization and even aid in rebelling against alienation (Lin & Feng, 2019; Liu, 2019). However, this rigid "exploitation-subjectivity" paradigm seems unable to flexibly examine the intricacies and issues within this fan group (Liu & Su, 2022). Furthermore, studies rarely delve into the details of how datafication, a crucial concept that dominates these fans' interactions and activities, impacts the online fan group and fans' affective labor.

To gain a deeper understanding of this fan group and their distinctive affective labor, this study conducted a two-month digital ethnography that combined participant observation and in-depth interviews within a WeChat fan group comprising approximately 200 members. The study sought to explain: 1) how datafication influences the management of online fan groups and the organization of fan activities; and 2) how affective labor, which prioritizes datafication and online traffic data, simultaneously and flexibly maintains subjectivity and encounters exploitation. The goal of this study is not only to modestly contribute to addressing this academic gap but also to provide a more comprehensive and unbiased examination of this underrepresented fan group, which has endured

prolonged stigmatization and public criticism. Furthermore, the authors believe that in an era where datafication is pervasive and "data colonialism" (Couldry & Mejias, 2019) has become a common concern, this data-oriented fan culture and the fans, the majority of whom fully accept and even support the datafication of their affective labor, may provoke more considerations and reflections on datafication and digital society.

Keywords

fandom, online fan group, affective labor, datafication, subjectivity, exploitation

Resonance with Time: The Slow Practice of Film Photography Enthusiasts in an Accelerated Society

Authors

Ms. Mengqian Cai - China - Shanghai Jiaotong University

Abstract

The return to slowness is leading a fashion revolution that turns the old into the new in China. Along with trends such as Slow Delivery, Scrapbook, Slow Games, Podcasts and Slow Journalism, etc., film photography is one of the deceleration practices in an accelerated Chinese society, in which practitioners shape the emotional experience of “slowness” through the application of old technology. Through semi-structured in-depth interviews with 12 film photography enthusiasts and participatory observations of their online participation, this paper completes the convergence of grounded theory and theoretical deduction.

Acceleration is a central feature of structural change in velocity, which acts as the structural formation and culturally shaping force that underpins modern society (Hartmut Rosa, 2015:28). The history of photography has been developing in a direction of “dematerialisation” (Ma,2023), which has demonstrated an obvious time dimension: the shortened exposure time, the reduced operational steps and the increased efficiency. Therefore, practitioners’ emotional experience concerning time and velocity becomes a key perspective that resonates with what Accelerated Social Theory concerns. The difference between the “temporal structure” of the practitioners behind the old and new photographic technology raises 3 research questions:

1. Why film photography enthusiasts call for slowness in an accelerated society?
2. How does the slow practice of film photography enthusiasts shape emotional experience through the reconstruction of time and space?
3. How can film photography enthusiasts balance the emotional experience of fast and slow through the strategic application of old and new photographic techniques?

According to the research, the resurrection of film photography as an old media can be understood in this way. The acceleration of technology, social changes and the pace of life are increasingly deepening the fear of time dissipation when individuals encounter changes in life. In some circumstances, film photography, as a form of technological culture that points to the pre-digital age, acts as a self-salvation of culture in the cracks of super-rapid technological development, reflecting certain autonomy of individuals in the social and cultural scene. By recreating the limitations and empowerment of old media, reshaping social interactions, and resisting the shrinkage of the present, film photography constructs the practitioners’ sense of slowness and empowers a confrontation to the accelerated life style.

However, the practitioners’ need for slowness is entangled with the thirst for efficiency and performance, suggesting that slowdown performs as a subordination to accelerating power. The deceleration practice of film photography enthusiasts is not necessarily with the rejection of new

technologies that symbolize “fast”. By contrast, they are adept at taking advantage of fast/digital technology to enhance slow experience. When the individual reluctantly synchronizes with the pace of accelerated society again, the need for functional deceleration is usually suppressed so that the practice of film photography itself is abolished or relegated to consumerism and performancism.

In addition to explaining the resurrection of an old media in China, this paper also attempts to break the understanding of unidirectional and linear media evolution empirically. Concentrating on practitioners’ emotional experience of velocity may provide a new way to understand the phenomenon of media nostalgia that goes beyond the technology ontology by dealing with the relationship between Old and New and Fast and Slow through a temporal structure-emotional path.

Keywords

Accelerated Society, Media Nostalgia, Film Photography, Deceleration

Beauty practices online: Culture, corporeality, and commerce

Authors

Mrs. Anuja Premika - India - University of Hyderabad

Abstract

Beauty as a category has been a mainstay of online culture from the early Internet days of blogs (Hund, 2023) to the current video-dominated social media space (Silva, 2023), leading to some experts even declaring that in today's content-saturated environment, "beauty culture *is* culture" (Sullivan & Matlin, 2023). Seen as mundane, everyday, and trivial (Hollows, 2000), beauty practices often escape critical attention. However, online beauty culture—co-created by beauty brands, influencers and audiences—forms a rich field within which to examine a range of phenomenon: social media platform affordances, the state of representation, the labours of content creation, and the modes of gendered identity privileged by a culture at a given point in time. In this paper, I make an exploratory attempt to map the practices of Indian beauty influencers by examining 385 Instagram posts and 25 YouTube videos from the five most followed (as of November 2021) beauty influencers in India. Drawing from a long line of feminist literature that studies "body work," particularly Elias et al.'s notion of "aesthetic entrepreneurship" (2017), as well as Couldry's understanding of "media as practice" (2012), I conceptualise beauty as practice, interrogating not only what the content, tools, and outputs of beauty practices are, but also what people are doing that is related to beauty. I suggest that the creation of beauty-related social media content is a distinct way of doing beauty, entailing visible and invisible labours, contentions with notions of gender and "acceptable" self-presentation, and negotiating authenticity and commerciality (see Arriagada & Bishop, 2021). I conduct a mixed-methods content analysis of the Instagram and YouTube photos and videos to elaborate how shifting platform dynamics, relationships with the industry and audiences, popular ideals of beauty and femininity, and influencers' own experiences of labour and visibility shape the beauty content that populates social media today, and how this content speaks to broader cultures around gendered self-presentation and the nebulous nature of influence in today's media environment.

Keywords

beauty culture, influencers, self-presentation, gendered identity, digital cultures

How to Extend Beyond Pseudo Intimacy: A Study on Fans Yingyuan Practices to Entertainment Idols in Three Countries

Authors

Ms. Jiaying Liu - China - School of Journalism and Communication, Tsinghua University

Prof. Jiang Qiaolei - China - School of Journalism and Communication, Tsinghua University

Abstract

"Yingyuan" was first used to refer to cheering for athletes in Japanese sports competitions, but later spread to the Japanese idol industry and became popular in the global entertainment industry, including China, after the formation of a yingyuan culture in South Korea. As a trendy fan cultural practice, the generation of the emotional relational space and meaning space it involves has a certain specificity and historical transcendence. Past studies have referred that there is a "pseudo-intimacy" between fans and idols, that is, an imagined intimacy established in cyberspace, a concept based on para-social relationship. As a kind of social relationship, it is essentially characterised by "being together". However, pseudo-intimacy is defined as a one-way relationship to a person, leaving the state of fans and idols "being together" only in the imagination. With the development of the entertainment industry and the intervention of digital technology, new logics of idol-making may bring special emotional experiences to fans and create new understandings of their action. Therefore, this study will explore how fan yingyuan practices extend beyond pseudo-intimacy. In addition, the study also examines the impact of different national entertainment industrial systems on the emotional psychology of fans. Using fan identity, the researcher recruited a total of 30 fans for semi-structured interviews based on convenience sampling in the fandom of idols in Mainland China, South Korea and Japan. The results show that, first, the strong emotional involvement of the fans leads to a transition from a "pseudo-intimate relationship" to a "quasi-real intimate relationship", which means the emotional relationship is not completely unidirectional. In the case of unequal two-way relationships, the practice of yingyuan is an attempt to compensate for the unbalanced state under the premise of emotional drive and rule utilisation. Second, the affect between fans and idols is a mixture and transcendence of intra-normative and pre-existing established relationships and is in fluid situation. Rather than the idolatry of traditional fan studies and the romantic love or family affection of social norms, this relationship points to a community of shared honour and shame and is in a constant fluid situation among multiple components of affection. Third, this affective involvement also carries with it a simultaneous self-consciousness about the perception of commodity relations, but will choose different interpretations in different states of affective intensity. Emotional involvement in the fan-idol relationship serves as the energy that motivates the act of responding to the support, and furthermore drives the fans' meaning involvement. Through fans' dynamic assignment of meaning, yingyuan becomes a node converging into their emotional and life course, assisting them in gaining insights into the meaning of life and reflecting on their personal growth. In addition, the study also found that fans of idols in Mainland China, Japan, and South Korea differ in their expectations of idols' recognition and reciprocation of

yingyuan, further illustrating the impact of the development of the entertainment industry system on the identity and emotional structure of fan relationships.

Keywords

pseudo intimacy, fan culture, idol, yingyuan

Perception of Chinese Web Novels in High & Low-Context Cultures: An LDA Analysis on Wuxiaworld Comments

Authors

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Abstract

This investigation rigorously explores the domain of Chinese web novels, with a particular emphasis on their reception within the disparate realms of high and low-context cultures. Employing the advanced analytical methodologies of Latent Dirichlet Allocation (LDA) topic clustering and sentiment analysis, this research meticulously examines commentary from Wuxiaworld, the foremost platform for the English translations of these narratives. This methodological approach facilitates a detailed exploration of the complex perceptions that foreign readers hold towards the intricate incorporation of Chinese cultural motifs within these texts. As Chinese web novels continue to garner a growing international audience, understanding the nuances of their cross-cultural appeal is crucial for their widespread dissemination.

This scholarly endeavor elucidates the themes that resonate with and repel foreign readers in Chinese web novels. It reveals how narratives centered on the protagonist's personal development, their interactions with others, and the integration of traditional Chinese cultural elements engross foreign readers. Specifically, the uniqueness and novelty of martial arts, the Xianxia genre, and mythological narratives are highly valued for providing an escapism that satisfies a deep-seated psychological yearning for accomplishment and liberty, unattainable in their mundane reality. In contrast, themes involving harem dynamics and the clichéd depiction of female characters invoke significant disapproval from foreign readers, a reaction predominantly attributed to the dissonance with Western gender equality and feminist principles. Moreover, grievances regarding the protagonist's sluggish character development and the protracted pace of updates and translations markedly diminish the reading experience for some.

This study constitutes a pioneering venture into the scholarly terrain of cross-cultural communication, applying the analytical framework of high and low-context culture theory to dissect the reception of web novel commentary. Through a rigorous analysis of reader feedback employing LDA topic clustering and sentiment analysis, our research not only uncovers the captivating allure of Chinese web novels but also accentuates the paramount importance of nuanced translation in capturing the subtleties of cultural intricacies. Our findings impart strategic insights for the global promotion of Chinese web novels, underscoring the imperative for cultural sensitivity and superior translation skills. Characterized by its innovative application of text mining techniques to the examination of web novel commentary, this study contributes a novel perspective to the academic discourse on digital literature and cross-cultural communication.

Keywords

Cross-Cultural, High-Context and Low-Context Cultures, *Web Novels*, LDA

Unravelling the Threads: A Critical Analysis of Hanfu Discourse in Online Space

Authors

Ms. Jiahui Xing - Australia - The University of Sydney

Abstract

Since its rejuvenation in 2003, Hanfu, the modern incarnation of traditional Hanfu Chinese clothing styles of various ancient dynasties, became more significantly witnessed in the last decade and garnered heightened attention after the Dior Horse-face Skirt Event in July 2022, where the French brand Christian Dior was accused of appropriating the traditional Chinese horse-face skirt (mamianqun). Within this context, social media platforms have become hubs for online content sharing and discussions about Hanfu. Such content has been evolving noticeably, while previous research coverage on related topics is clichéd, outdated, and tenuous. This paper aims to unpack and de-simplify the myth of the transformation of Hanfu discourse, addressing the central research question: how do social media discussions surrounding Hanfu reflect the dynamics between cultural nationalism, transnational capital, cultural inequality, and youth taste and aesthetics formation?

Employing a corpus-assisted critical discourse analysis approach, this work delved into the latest social media discussions surrounding Hanfu, focusing on over 600 tagged posts and comments on the Chinese lifestyle platform RED (an increasingly popular platform among the young generation with non-Chinese users involved while still comparatively less studied). The chosen topic, #全球同袍點亮世界地圖 (Global Hanfu Lovers Lights Up the World Map), initiated by the platform and amassing over 9.2 million views, is selected for its coverage, timeliness, and relevance. Criteria of relevance to research purposes and discussion popularity guided the data selection for analysis.

Preliminary findings reveal ongoing debate regarding the authenticity of Hanfu worn by individuals, with critiques focusing on deviations from traditional styles and historical accuracy. Additionally, comparisons with other Asian countries, such as Korea and Japan, in attires often emerge, always containing emotions of ethnic superiority. Sensitivity surrounding discussions within Chinese politics is also acknowledged, with considerations for minority perspectives and potential hesitance discussed.

Overall, by framing the analysis within a conceptual framework of cultural nationalism, transnational capital, cultural inequality and taste, this ongoing research contributes to a deeper understanding of Hanfu discourse in contemporary society, shedding light on the complexities of cultural representation, identity formation, and power dynamics within online discussions surrounding Hanfu.

Keywords

Hanfu discourse, cultural nationalism, ethnic comparisons, cultural inequality, transnational capital

Laughter as Liberation: Unpacking Gender, Mental Health, and Resistance in Female Stand-Up Comedy

Authors

Ms. Gina Junhan Fu - Singapore - National University of Singapore

Abstract

This study proposes an innovative examination of how female stand-up comics weave together narratives of gender, mental illness, and resistance to stereotypical representations of female mental illness, thereby contributing to a broader tapestry of social cohesion and understanding. As historical narratives have consistently framed female mental illness within a sexist framework that suggests women's biological predisposition to madness (Johnston et al., 2013), this study delves into the performativity of gender in public comedic spaces to demonstrate how humour can be deployed for feminist resistance against such labelling. Specifically, the research questions focus on the strategies female comics use to confront and navigate the social stigmas tied to their gender and mental wellness as they conform to, negotiate, and subvert the stereotypes of 'madwomen' in their performances.

By integrating Fairclough's (1995) critical discourse analysis to consider interlocking systems of oppression at the confluence of sexism, ablism, mentalism and patriarchy, the research critically examines how comedic narratives about women's mental health struggles either perpetuate, negotiate, or resist entrenched ideologies and inequalities. This approach allows for a nuanced analysis of the power dynamics and social orders that relegate women to subordinate roles and marginalise their mental health issues.

The analysis is underway and is focusing on various female comics' stand-up specials. A preliminary examination of Taylor Tomlinson's *Look at You* Netflix special shows how metaphorical language exposes the ideological bases for constructing a patriarchal framework of common senses that trivialises and dismisses women's psychological traumas (e.g., the juxtaposition of panic attacks with a 'werewolf' as perceived by Tomlinson's father). This study identifies discursive strategies used by female comics such as self-deprecation and subversive affirmation to overtly embrace and amplify stereotypes, such as the notion that only 'hot and talented' women with mental health issues are noteworthy, to underscore their absurdity. Through this exaggeration, the ridiculousness and harmfulness of such stereotypes is exposed so that the toxic societal norms are undermined. Tomlinson's performance illustrates how comedic narratives can reconstruct social identities beyond conventional gender roles, particularly in how women discuss their relationships, mental health, and societal expectations. Using humour as a means to validate female psychological experiences, Tomlinson positions herself as a 'vocal subject' rather than a 'gazed object'. The stage becomes a platform for critiquing the infantilisation of women and the power dynamics within social relationships, showcasing the potential of stand-up comedy to question and invert entrenched social hierarchies.

With an emphasis on communicators' agency, a feminist use of humour by stand-up comics exemplifies an alternative model of communication that not only contests dominant public imaginaries and gendered histories but also promotes social change through shared recognition of systemic inequalities. This study contends that stand-up comedy, with its discursive and performative elements, offers a transformative space for feminist discourses and enables a transgressive exploration of female mental well-being. By analysing the rhetorical influence of gendered psychiatric discourses within comedic performances, this research contributes to a broader conversation on gender, mental health, and the power of humour as a form of resistance and liberation.

Keywords

Stand-up comedy, gender, feminism, mental health, critical discourse analysis

Wanghong as 'vessels': the emergence and evolution of a keyword in the Chinese internet context

Authors

Dr. Luolin Zhao - China - School of Grammar and Law, Huazhong Agricultural University

Ms. Wanyi Mao - China - Wuhan University

Abstract

[Research background]

The term *wanghong* in Mandarin refers to cyber-space celebrities or influencers, and its historical roots can be traced back to the 1990s, aligning with the trajectory of Chinese internet development. The initial wave of *wanghong* featured writers who gained fame through contributions to online bulletin board systems (BBS). Subsequently, with the advancement of internet technology, a growing number of personalized grassroots individuals achieved notoriety through diverse mediums such as images, videos, and webcasts. Notably, the year 2016 witnessed the proliferation of over one million *wanghong* in China, and by 2022, the market size of the Chinese *wanghong* economy reached an impressive 1.3 trillion yuan. Unlike its English counterpart “influencer”, the term *wanghong* has become ubiquitous in China, serving both as a noun and an adjective. This linguistic flexibility allows everything from cities to pets to be labeled as *wanghong*, elevating them to the focal point of attention. Consequently, *wanghong* has emerged as a pivotal keyword in the exploration of Chinese web culture.

[Research significance]

While prior research on *wanghong* or influencers primarily adopted cross-sectional approaches, there is a notable absence of longitudinal observations concerning the evolving nature of the concept itself. To address this gap, our study employs the conceptual history paradigm and leverages Fairclough's three-dimensional analysis (text, discourse practice, and social practice) as frameworks. Through this approach, we aim to unravel the transformations undergone by the *wanghong* concept and understand the reciprocal construction of social reality. Our study has the potential to offer key insights into understanding the distinct nuances in the internet histories and cultures of China and the West.

[Methods]

In addressing the aforementioned research questions, our study adopts a keyword-based methodology, constructing a corpus comprising 5,515 internet text units related to *wanghong*. Utilizing high-frequency word statistics and semantic network analysis, we delve into the nuanced and evolving meanings of *wanghong* within the Chinese internet context. Employing critical discourse analysis, we scrutinize how *wanghong* is interpreted and applied by various actors in political, cultural, and economic practices.

[Research Findings and Discussion]

Our findings reveal that *wanghong*, akin to Meyrowitz's concept of a 'vessel', encapsulates a diverse array of content and meanings:

1. In the textual dimension, the pragmatic aspects of the *wanghong* concept have witnessed significant evolution, with the image of *wanghong* becoming increasingly diversified.
2. In the discourse dimension, we explore the production and consumption dynamics involving the state, capital, and fans. Multiple actors, including fans and *wanghong* themselves, creatively employ cultural resources, resulting in the emergence of numerous internet memes as spin-offs.
3. In the social practice dimension, *wanghong* is construed as an ideal societal vessel, playing a pivotal role in knowledge dissemination and evolving into a multifaceted vessel encompassing fans, financial transactions, and passion. Furthermore, *wanghong* reflects various social concepts, including consumerism, postmodernism, patriarchy, and distinct notions of 'public' in China and the West.

Keywords

Wanghong; Internet celebrity; keywords research; Critical discourse analysis; Corpus

Popular Visual Dichotomies: Exploring #ThatGirl and #NotThatGirl on Instagram

Authors

Dr. Ana Marta M. Flores - Portugal - University of Coimbra

Dr. Rita Basílio Simões - Portugal - University of Coimbra

Abstract

The work explores the visual narratives and connotations associated with the popular Instagram hashtags #ThatGirl and #NotThatGirl in the context of wellness and self-representation on social media. The methodology involved a systematic approach to analyse posts with the hashtags #ThatGirl and #NotThatGirl on Instagram (n=2000). It combined Digital Methods (Rogers, 2013) extraction tools to a thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) of the static images. It followed four main steps: 1) Data Collection; 2) Data Cleaning; 3) Coding Recurring Themes and 4) Parallel Analysis. Delving into the themes that emerged, we shed light on their distinct characteristics and implications. Themes from #ThatGirl Posts: 1) Food Diary: #ThatGirl posts frequently revolved around meticulously curated food diaries, often showcasing healthy and aesthetically pleasing meals. These posts conveyed a sense of discipline and control over one's diet, reflecting a pursuit of the idealised self through dietary choices. 2) Ideal Body: The theme of the ideal body was prevalent in #ThatGirl posts. These images often depicted individuals who were slender and physically fit, reinforcing the societal emphasis on a particular body type as a symbol of perfection. 3) Skincare & Make-up: Many #ThatGirl posts featured individuals showcasing flawless skin, often achieved through a regimented skincare routine. Similarly, meticulously applied make-up accentuated the quest for perfection in appearance. These themes underscored the idea that self-improvement, both in terms of physical appearance and skin care, was a central focus of #ThatGirl. Themes from #NotThatGirl Posts: 1) “Real” Food: Although the theme of food appears in both hashtags, their meaning is divergent. While in #ThatGirl the food images were highly aestheticised and mostly focused on healthy nutrition, the posts in #NotThatGirl are mostly focused on foods that are popularly deemed to contain sugar, carbohydrates or beef, as well as images of junk food, namely pizzas and doughnuts. 2) Self-Acceptance: #NotThatGirl posts celebrated self-acceptance and comfort with one's authentic self. These images often depicted individuals who were content with their bodies, embracing their uniqueness and individuality. These images conveyed a sense of ease and satisfaction with oneself, free from the pressure to conform to external standards. 3) Celebration of Authenticity: #NotThatGirl posts frequently celebrated authenticity, highlighting that each person is unique and should be celebrated for who they genuinely are, rather than conforming to societal ideals. Unlike #ThatGirl, #NotThatGirl posts celebrated a wide range of diverse bodies, skin tones, ages, attitudes, and genders. This diversity was a central theme, emphasising the acceptance and praise of individuals who “deviated” from conventional beauty and lifestyle standards. It highlighted the appreciation for a broad spectrum of appearances and identities. The most prominent narrative identified in the #NotThatGirl corpus centred on themes of Acceptance and Representativeness. These themes conveyed a message that every individual, regardless of their

appearance, could find acceptance and representation in the digital narrative, fostering a sense of belonging and self-worth. The empirical research finds that #ThatGirl is associated with the pursuit of conventional beauty and wellness ideals, while #NotThatGirl celebrates self-acceptance and diversity. The analysis underscores the #ThatGirl ultimately reinforces and reproduces the stereotype of what it means to be feminine while stimulating the pursuit of an unattainable ideal.

Keywords

Instagram, Self-representation, Social Platforms, Wellness, #ThatGirl trend

Aqoon La'aan Waa Iftiin La'aan: Somali Home Spaces as a Site of Cultural Transmission and Preservation

Authors

Dr. Suban Nur Cooley - United States - Michigan State University

Abstract

How does one learn about their cultural identity and gain a sense of belonging and pride in who they are? In displaced Black diaspora communities like the Somali, this literacy is often gained in home spaces as a site of learning and the teachers are its women.

Many Somalis in the diaspora are familiar with cultural customs, moral and ethical values, and conceptual notions attached to Somaliness through a connection to women elders they have known and the knowledges they have passed on. Elder Somali women pour their memories and cultural knowledge practices into future generations to ensure there is a shared rootedness to a cultural identity outside of the homeland. “Women have played, and continue to play, an enormously influential role in the developing Somali sense of self and identity” (Berns-McGown, 236).

Through storytelling and kitchen dwelling, diaspora Somali women become the linkages and networks of knowledge and information, as Hamilton expressed, who have “transmitted and circulated within, between, and across communities of the diaspora.” (405). Children are told stories, are spoken to in their mother tongue, are taught how to cook, clean, and present themselves as Somali by watching their mothers, grandmother, and aunties.

For this panel, the presenter will emphasize how home spaces have become a site for the collective survival of the knowledges of a Black/African community displaced and dispersed across the globe.

Keywords

Migration, Displacement, Storytelling, Kitchen Dwelling, Black/African, Somali Foodways

Panel Title

POP - Food, Nationalism, Race and Racialisation

Farewell to China: The Genrification of Taiwanese Historical Drama and the Making of Multicultural Taiwan

Authors

Prof. Shuling Huang - Taiwan - National Yang Ming Chiao Tung University

Abstract

The term “historical drama” in Taiwan used to refer to “a dramatic story that may spread across several generation throughout Chinese history and literature” (Tsai, 2000, p. 179). This genre has been a staple of TV consumption across the Chinese diaspora and various Chinese societies, in which Taiwan and Hong Kong had been key exporters for a long time. As the Chinese-made “historical costume drama” began to dominate the market since the late 1990s, Taiwanese TV industry turned to produce low-cost idol dramas and native dramas for survival. In spite of that, recent years have seen the emergence of so-called “Taiwanese historical drama,” which portrays significant historical events or figures of the Island. This re-genrification of historical drama marked a departure from the China-centered history and focus on Taiwan’s own people and destiny over the past 400 years, starting from the Dutch rule in the early 17th century.

Following Mittell (2008), this study adopted the cultural approach to genre analysis, investigating the discursive formation of Taiwanese historical drama. In particular, I focus on how the generic practices of different participants shape this genre over the past two decades and identify the characteristics of its content. I argue that the genrification of Taiwanese historical dramas should be understood through the interactions of Taiwan’s nation branding project and the reconfiguration of the TV content global value chain (Chalaby, 2016). On the one hand, cultural authorities in Taiwan in the early 2000s began to promote and subsidize TV dramas that probe into “forgotten” Taiwanese history. This mission of “telling our stories” by “rediscovering lost history” has been mostly carried out by the Public Television Service. Government support laid the foundation for the production of historical dramas, particularly cultivating talents across various TV sectors. On the other hand, the rise of global video streaming platforms like Netflix and their synchronized global distribution model have disturbed national media systems. The global platforms’ thirsty for distinctive local content provide opportunities for local producers to circulate their works beyond national borders. Historical drama, an exemplary genre of “quality TV,” became a strategic cultural product for branding Taiwan. The notion of “letting the world see Taiwan” (or making Taiwan visible in the world) through historical dramas permeates public discourses.

Then what constitutes Taiwanese historical drama, in addition to its focus on Taiwan history? I took two TV dramas for analysis—*Seqalu: Formosa 1867* (2021), an epic about a conflict between Westerners and Taiwanese indigenous peoples, and *Gold Leaf* (2021), a series depicting the golden age of Taiwan’s tea industry. I found that two nationalist discourses dominated these dramas: multiculturalism and marine nation. First, the portrayal of Taiwan as a historically multiracial and multicultural society dilutes its Chineseness and therefore strengthens its uniqueness. Second, the discourse of marine nation positions Taiwan geographically in relation to the world rather than to

China. These two recent constructed discourses are used to portray Taiwan's past in such a way as to bid farewell to China.

Keywords

historical drama, genrification, multiculturalism, national identity, Taiwan, China

Beyond the Fandom Curtain: Unveiling Power Dynamics and Marginalization in China's Idol Talent Shows and the Rise of 'Baipiao'

Authors

Ms. Shitong LI - China - Communication University of China

Abstract

In the realm of Chinese idol culture, the phenomenon of *Baipiao*, initially denoting 'freeloaders', has garnered attention within fandom discourse. Originating from the talent show 'Youth with You 2' aired on Aqiyi in 2020, where 109 contestants vied for stardom, the term 'Baipiao' gained prominence as fans labeled individuals who did not actively engage in fandom activities such as voting and purchasing merchandise (Cai, 2023). *Baipiao* shares similarities with the notion of 'ordinary fans', denoting individuals fascinated with their idols but unwilling to participate in community activities (Sandvoss & Kearns, 2016).

Evolving from passive consumers to active participants and promoters of pop culture, Chinese fans are undergoing a transformation influenced by East Asian fandom cultures, particularly those of Japan and South Korea (Wang & Luo, 2023; Zhang & Negus, 2020). This shift has led to the categorization of fans into distinct groups based on their level of engagement and monetary contributions, creating a hierarchical structure within fandom (Li Tong, 2022). Despite this, *Baipiao* remains marginalized and stigmatized within the fan community, reflecting broader issues of exclusion and discrimination. Current fan studies focus on presumption behaviors such as digital labor and the fan economy (Fiske, 2002; Hills & Greco, 2015; Jenkins, 2012; Sun, 2020), focusing on opinion leaders with discursive power within the fandom, further reinforcing the image of fans as serving the production of the idol industry as shaped by the logic of affective capitalism, and ignoring the diversity of fan practices and the marginalized fans.

This study seeks to diverge from traditional fan studies focusing solely on 'fanatics' and instead aims to amplify the voices of marginalized groups within fandom, specifically *Baipiao*. Through an exploration of their discursive constructions and experiences, the following research questions are addressed: How do *Baipiao* construct and rationalize their fan identities? How do they understand and negotiate with the fandom rules? How does the discrimination manifest against them?

Employing a combination of participant observation and semi-structured in-depth interviews, this research examines the dynamics of *Baipiao* within the context of 'Youth with You 2'. Participant observation commenced within Idol A's Weibo chat group, spanning three months from September 2020. Additionally, 21 fans of the program were interviewed between December 2020 and May 2021, offering insights into their perspectives and experiences.

'Youth with You 2' serves as a microcosm of the larger idol industry, characterized by commercialization and emotional capitalist ideologies (Bai, 2021). While spending money is deemed reasonable by the fandom, *Baipiao* challenges this norm by enjoying the fruits of fandom

labor without financial contributions, resulting in a perceived 'free-rider effect', which leads to their marginalization within the fandom.

Despite facing stigmatization, *Baipiao* actively rationalizes their fan behaviors as a form of resistance against the capital-driven idol production mechanism. Rejecting the labels of 'lazy' or 'abnormal' fans imposed by the fandom, they assert their subjective and critical engagement, navigating fandom boundaries autonomously.

In conclusion, the study sheds light on the multifaceted dynamics of *Baipiao* within Chinese fandom culture, highlighting their marginalization and resistance within the idol industry. By amplifying their voices and experiences, this research contributes to a more inclusive understanding of fandom practices and identities, challenging dominant narratives within fan studies.

Keywords

Baipiao; fan studies; fandom hierarchy; ordinary fans; consumerism

Research on the Female Images in Hou Hsiao-hsien's Films

Authors

Ms. Zhenting He - China - Shenzhen University

Abstract

One of the core of artistic creation lies in characterisation. As a director who was born as a screenwriter, Hou Hsiao-hsien has a more personalised understanding of cinema and characterisation. As an important director in Taiwan, China, Hou has created many different styles of women for the world during his more than 40 years of directing, and he firmly believes that 'characters come to life with more energy than any story'. In his characterisation, Hou has demonstrated his concern for women and human issues, and after the mid-1990s, the narrative point of view in his films has gradually shifted from a male point of view to a female point of view. It is this transition that draws the attention of this paper. In this paper, we will mainly use textual analysis as a research method to sort out and classify the 31 female characters portrayed in the 19 films directed by Hou Hsiao-hsien, and divide the typical female characters into two categories: women in the family and women in the society. On this basis, the film is then interpreted, refined and dialectically considered: from a semiotic point of view, the template of women's image in film and television is summarised; through the literature of the director's experience and point of view and the system of comparison of similarities and differences, women in the eyes of the director are analysed; and social relations and human nature are explored in the context of the film. Studying Hou Hsiao-hsien's images of women, from the perspective of gender, helps people to think about gender relations in the deep-rooted power mechanism through the medium of film and examine the real living space of women; from the perspective of film studies, it facilitates beginners to understand Hou's way of constructing women's roles, and to pay attention to the growth of his personal creativity as well as the characterisation of his films; from the perspective of the social and contemporary contexts, the women in the films reflect a particular period and space for women. From the perspective of film studies, it is easy for us research students to understand Hou's way of constructing female characters and to look at the growth of his personal creativity and the portrayal of characters in his films.

Keywords

Key words: Hou Hsiao-hsien's films; female images; gender

The Digital Amusement Hunters: Fandom, intimate public of trolling practices, and online censorship in China

Authors

Ms. Yiming Wang - Netherlands - Maastricht University

Abstract

On the Chinese Internet, where institutional restrictions and content moderation are on the rise, experienced internet users agree that the range of topics and spaces available for blameless discussion is shrinking. Fans are typically regarded as well-organized and media-literate among those experienced internet users. Over the past decade, organized fans have established and followed a set of autonomous rules to preserve and safeguard their online spaces against internet censorship and external pressures, such as social stigma and misogyny. The focus of online satire has also shifted from critiquing the government and authorities to mocking individuals and groups with lesser power and influence. However, content and emotions that are suppressed by increasingly restrictive rules and spatial constraints have been tactfully released through online trolling, especially among young female fans.

This article proposes to put into dialogue censorship studies and fandom studies, highlighting their overlap in the realm of fan interactions and content creation on social media. By investigating trolling practices of female fans in China and the unique dynamics shaped by online censorship, this article articulates the framework of productive censorship (Butler 1997; Foucault 1980; O’Leary 2016) and the intimate public (Berlant 2008, 2011) by answering the research questions: “How trolling practices of female fans in China function differently (compared with western) due to online censorship?” and “what structure of feelings does this environment manifest?” Methodologically, this article draws on a comprehensive analysis of social media data gathered through a combination of formal and informal digital ethnographic observations spanning from November 2022 to January 2024, complemented by discourse analysis. The research focuses on Chinese fan communities, particularly those engaged in trolling practices, on a Twitter-like social media Sina Weibo, to observe their interactions and cultural productions.

The term “Amusement Hunters” (*lezi ren* 乐子人 in Chinese) discussed in this article denotes female fans who engage in trolling practices for pleasure. Trolling is a prevalent online behavior in various online cultures, especially in popular culture. It involves posting provocative, offensive, or disruptive comments to shift the focus of discussions, disrupt online conversations, and provoke or infuriate others. I argue that the specificity of the trolling practices in China is the collective response produced by the censorship. The production process embodies the theory of intimate publics in the context of the contemporary China. The crisis that censorship brings to society and the individual and its effects are reflected and emphasized.

By navigating the framework of productive censorship and intimate public, the study explores the production outcomes of censorship, manifested in the practices of Amusement Hunters. It underscores the agency of fans in recognizing and subverting censorship through trolling practices,

challenging hegemonic structures. Through an exploration of fan communities rooted in popular culture, this paper elaborates on the pervasive impact of everyday censorship on individual experiences and reimagines the boundaries between private and public spheres in the internet era.

Keywords

censorship, fandom, online trolling, intimate public, structure of feeling

Alternative Sub-culture for Free Self-expression: Case study of Skateboarding Feminism in Mainland China

Authors

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Abstract

What happens when skateboarding feminism is contextualized in a non-Euro-American background? How does skateboarding culture, a traditionally male-hegemonic domain, become an alternative site of skateboarding women in freely expressing their self-identities? This study addresses the role of popular media in promoting social, historical, and cultural feminist discourse in forming and shaping an inclusive skateboarding subculture in Mainland China, in which young women's free expression of identities are encouraged and celebrated. Skateboarding culture has long been perceived as a male-dominated domain, in which skateboarding women experience stigmatization, objectification and sexualization (McCarthy, 2021). However, the situation is quite different in China, where more women participate in skateboarding than men, face few marginalization, and are celebrated for their skills, as well as diligence in both skateboarding places and commercial representation. Such a circumstance allows women to contribute this skateboarding subculture with free expression of their identities, such as risk-taking, challenge-embracing and self-achieving, and other traditionally masculine traits (Vans, 2021).

How to explain the emergence of this subcultural space and this counter-intuitive phenomenon? Previous literatures tend to have a liberal focus on individual resistance (Carr, 2017). This paper, instead, adopts Foucault's theory of discourse and power relations as well as technologies of the self, which highlights the process of multiple sources of power to form an alternative social cultivation on individuals, which then shapes the intrinsic culture of a group (Foucault, 1982; Miller, 2011). Such a relationship can be contextualized to how economic, cultural, and political influences shape skateboarding feminist discourse in constructing Chinese skateboarders' identities, which then forms a unique, dynamic and inclusive subculture for skateboarding women's self-expression. The study uses a qualitative approach, conducting semi-structured interviews with skateboarding participants who share a variety of demographic traits as well as on-site observation at skateboarding cultural spaces. The empirical section will trace the formation of this inclusive space and alternative discourse for woman. Conclusions fall into three areas: The first summarizes how participating in skateboarding promotes self-expression and growth; the second examines how Chinese economic, political and socio-cultural discourse impact skateboarders' choices; the third explores how multiple media channels shapes and constructs an inclusive skateboarding space.

This study combines Foucault's theories to explain why the Chinese skateboarding subculture is more feminist than most, and how popular media's discourse impacts the individual, which then is reflected back to the larger subculture. It contextualizes skateboarding feminism under Chinese culture of economy, politics and society. By tracing the formation of such an inclusive space for skateboarding girls' free self-expression, this study expands people's imagination of how a skateboarding subculture could be.

Keywords

Skateboarding; Feminism; Mainland China; Pop-culture; Foucault

Human–technology entanglement in digital-human themed talent shows programs: Multi-interactivity of biopower in *Alter Ego*

Authors

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Ms. Wanyan Wu - China - Zhejiang university

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Abstract

With recent technological advancements, such as conversational artificial intelligence (AI), deep learning, and natural language processing (NLP), digital-humans are increasingly being used in live streaming, social networking, online gaming, short videos, and television (TV) shows. The world's first AR virtual-singing competition on FOX, *Alter Ego*, was created by the real-time animation and virtual production studio Silver Spoon, claiming to employ the participants' digital-avatars to help them solve real-life problems or achieve real-life unattainable goals. After the show was aired, its format was quickly emulated by TV shows worldwide, including China. With *Alter Ego* as a case study, this study explores the integration of digital-humans in talent shows and its ramifications, thereby contributing to the literature on human-machine interactions and biopower. Specifically, the research questions include, *who needs digital-humans? How does biopower operate in relation to physical bodies and digital human beings? and does technology empower or disempower humans?*

We combined textual discourse analysis (Halliday 1985) of the show's lines with a visual discourse analysis (Kress 1997) of choreographic sets, onsite audience reactions, and actual contestants' physical and digital-avatar appearances with a comparative approach. The novelty of the study is highlighted through identifying the power relationships among judges, hosts, contestants, and audiences, and found the multi-interactivities of the 1) empowered, 2) divergent, and 3) disempowered biopower. Our findings reveal a teeter-totter pattern while *Alter Ego* demonstrates digital-human technology's potential to enhance self-expression and creativity, it also reveals the prioritization of technological innovation over more nuanced, context-specific approaches to addressing complex human experiences. In other words, *Alter Ego* is a manifestation of the solutionism trend prevalent in Silicon Valley, which emphasizes technology as a universal remedy for complex, diverse, and contentious issues: enabling contestants to create digital-humans to represent them performing onstage, *Alter Ego* promotes the idea that technology can facilitate the new potential for personal growth, creativity, and overcoming barriers related to appearance, discrimination, or physical limitations. However, this assumption may oversimplify the complexities and nuances of their real-life experiences, the underlying social, cultural, or psychological factors contributing to these challenges.

Based on these findings, the following two concerns are suggested to consider while developing the application of digital-human technologies: First, the application of digital-humans requires a

nuanced understanding of the complex social categories and groups to which their human counterparts belong. Rather than encouraging a hasty and homogenous convergence of humans into machines, a human-centered approach that acknowledges the diversity and complexity of social categories and groups, such as sex, race, disability, age, and ethnicity, is required. Second, neoliberal logic is the main recurring textual feature of talent shows and the material conditions of their productions. In a neoliberal post-welfare society, talent shows portrays individuals navigating various life challenges as architects of their own destinations through the skillsets, decisions, and efforts of the internalized, psychologized self rather than socioeconomic factors. Accordingly, talent shows becomes a compelling manifestation of what Berlant (2011) refers to as ‘cruel optimism’ within a capitalist society. This becomes especially significant within the realm of talent shows such as *Alter Ego*, which reinforce established aesthetic standards and the importance of maintaining a positive image, thereby suppressing any notion of contradiction. This tendency could be redressed to foster social inclusion and egalitarian outcomes.

Keywords

Human-technology; Digital-human; Talent shows programs; Biopower; HCI; HMI

Curry Nights and Kitchen Cabinets

Authors

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Abstract

Scott Morrison ‘curry night’ social media posts during his time as Immigration Minister and later Prime Minister of Australia caused significant anger among socially progressive critics, not due to his prowess (or otherwise) as a chef, but to his disclosure that he had discovered his love of curry during a ministerial visit to Sri Lanka. Morrison’s curry selfies tell a story not only about his own carefully-constructed persona, but also about Australian attitudes to India and to the nation’s rapidly-growing South Asian population. Australian policymakers and commentators have long described their nation’s relationship with India as being founded on the three Cs – curry, cricket and Commonwealth. But as historian Kama MacClean writes, “the dogged emphasis on ultra-competitive sport, misnamed masalas and colonial inheritances has comprehensively failed to build the rapport so desired by successive Australian governments”. More recently, a fourth C – China - has been added to the list, reflecting Australian hopes that India will prove to be a strategic asset against Chinese influence in the region newly-dubbed the Indo-Pacific.

Keywords

Food studies, gastronationalism, politics, South Asian studies

Panel Title

POP - Food, Nationalism, Race and Racialisation

Digital Threats or Opportunities? Navigating the Tension between Suzhou Embroidery's Tradition and Modern Popular Culture in the Digital Age

Authors

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Abstract

Suzhou embroidery was listed as one of the first representative works of China's national intangible cultural heritage (ICH) in 2006. As one of the four major embroidery schools in China, it has also become a symbol of Chinese history and artistic culture. Entering the digital age, the emergence of digital technologies such as short videos, live streaming, and virtual reality has the potential to fundamentally change our traditional communication environment, having profound implications for the preservation and dissemination of regional and ethnic cultures. These technologies allow Su embroidery to be more widely understood and appreciated by global audiences, further solidifying its position in popular culture. However, this has sparked a series of academic debates. Some scholars, like Wu (2021), express concerns that these technologies might overly focus on superficial modes of expression, neglecting the spiritual essence and cultural depth inherent in ICH, leading to its marginalization in the face of global modernity. Yet, scholars like Bekele et al. (2018) argue that advancements in digital technology offer traditional cultures new means of dissemination, such as visualization (Foni et al, 2010), enhanced narratives (Konstantakis et al, 2020), and immersive experiences (Hou, 2022), making them more palatable to the masses and a part of popular culture.

Against the backdrop of the digital age, the evolution of perceptions and attitudes of ICH inheritors, as the core force in this domain, towards digital technology and popular culture, becomes a crucial yet relatively overlooked research area. This research investigate how is the tension between tradition and innovation manifested in the practices of inheritors and industry professionals. By choosing Su embroidery as a case study, this paper aims to explore the intricate interplay between ICH inheritance, digital technology, and popular culture, striving to understand how these three elements collaboratively influence each other to ensure the core values and cultural depth of ICH are appropriately preserved and continued in contemporary society. Based on a seven-year longitudinal ethnographic study (2017-2023) in Zhenhu, Suzhou. It examines the digital influence on inheritors' perceptions and practices, combining fieldwork in embroidery locales with interviews of key stakeholders. Employing participatory observation and semi-structured interviews, the study adheres to ethical standards, ensuring confidentiality through pseudonyms. This approach highlights the evolving relationship between traditional crafts and digital technologies within the cultural heritage domain.

Our research describes three crucial changes in Suzhou embroidery in the digital age: the attitude of the inheritors, the communication channels, and the content. Inheritors, who were initially dismissive of digitalization, are gradually recognizing its important role in preserving cultural

heritage and reaching out to younger audiences, signifying a profound evolution of identity from traditional craftsman to digital creative labour. The pandemic and the shift towards digital lifestyles have underlined the importance of digital platforms in making Su embroidery accessible to younger generations and integrating it into contemporary popular culture. This shift in identity represents a broader reflection on the balance between tradition and digital innovation, highlighting a period of transformation where traditional craftsmanship meets modern technology. The study highlights the need for a nuanced approach to digitization to ensure that the authenticity and cultural depth of ICH are maintained amidst evolving digital landscapes.

Keywords

Su Embroidery, Intangible Cultural Heritage, Cultural Value Innovation, Digital Dissemination

Rethinking the "K" of K-pop: Racial Politics and Cultural Subjectivity in Non-Korean Idol Groups

Authors

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Abstract

Background

As a music genre characterized by its hybridity, boundaries of K-pop are being reshaped by the tension between the local (i.e., “K” as a specific reference to Korea) and the global (“pop” as a global music genre) (Ahn, 2023). The emergence of K-pop groups with no Korean/Asian members has sparked heated controversy about the definition of K-pop, and there is an intriguing shift in K-pop fans’ attitudes towards it. In contrast to xenophobic resistance faced by EXP Edition, an all-American K-pop boy band that debuted in 2017, BLACKSWAN, a later-established K-pop girl group with members from Brazil, India, Belgium, and US, has received much more tolerance and recognition. This study aims to identify the reasons for this change, and to analyze the racial politics and cultural subjectivity underlying online engagement of k-pop fandom.

Method

This research utilizes multimodal discourse analysis to investigate the responses of K-pop fans to EXP Edition and BLACKSWAN, based on media sources such as music videos, online comments, and news articles. In particular, I selected EXP’s “Feel Like It” and Blackswan’s “Karma” as the sites of data collection, and reviewed the relevant news reports from *Billboard*, *CNN*, *BBC*, *South China Morning Post*, etc.

Partial Findings

Compared to EXP, BLACKSWAN’s superior performance in both domestic and international dimensions has contributed to a shift in the attitude of K-pop fans.

1. For domestic fans, maintaining Koreaness constitutes the key factor in being recognized as part of the K-pop genre. BLACKSWAN’s proficiency in Korean and rigorous training as Korean trainees demonstrate respect and appreciation for Korean culture, while EXP’s appropriation of K-pop is seen as an exercise of White privilege.
2. For international fans, especially those from the Global South, supporting BLACKSWAN signals a sort of counter-hegemonic behavior. BLACKSWAN’s performance incorporates multiracial and multicultural elements, featuring group members from diverse nationalities and songs infused with Indian style. This provides a symbolic means for individuals in non-western and peripheral societies to challenge the White-dominant culture.

Discussion

Embrace of K-pop groups without Korean members reflects the expanding boundary of K-pop. The K-pop genre is no longer defined by nationality, but by industry standards. Increasingly hybridized

K-pop appears to create a cosmopolitan universe where racial tensions in the socially divided real world are concealed. However, when considering the member selection, training patterns, and marketing strategies, this global trend in K-pop still aligns with consumerist values and political correctness in the West. It could not provide racial minorities a roundabout way of distancing themselves from the Euro-American cultural products, nor could it defend the subjectivity of Korean culture due to its hyper-capitalist cultural hybridity.

Keywords

K-pop; race; culture subjectivity; BLACKSWAN; EXP Edition

Post-materialism in Chinese Style: Rustic (Tuwei) video trend and youth subjectivities in-between rural and hyper-modern experiences

Authors

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Abstract

Ronald Inglehart's theory of post-materialism mapped the value change of post-war generational in Western societies, which marks the turn of the younger generation from economic and materialistic concern to non-materialistic social values of freedom, self-expression, and social awareness.

China has experienced a fast-paced modernity in the past 20 years, with vast developmental disparity within the country. Mobility is extremely fluid under the power of national developmental projects and global capital investment. Together with job opportunities and rising living standards, the younger generation also experienced alienation in the hyper-modern transformation in cityscape, consumeristic culture, and social lives. It is under such social background that the trend of 'rustic' (or *Tuwei*) video goes viral in Chinese social media platforms.

'Rustic' video went popular in China arguably since about ten years ago, with previous versions called out and criticized by state media as demoralizing. But with the increasing prominence, or even dominance of visual popular culture, these video never ceased to be trendy. Circulated on Web 2.0 platforms, rustic videos often depict displaced, vulgar, weird, and frenzied actions of contemporary cultural lives, created by rural youth, in less prosperous settings in towns and villages. Unlike videos showing materialistic, exquisite, cosmopolitan lives; nor videos that depict countryside life in a romanticized manner, many rustic videos express a negation of developmental optimism, and a self-mockery of backwards village lives in a crude and even vulgar manner. In Chinese social media platforms, influencers producing rustic video often have millions of followers, who are mostly members of the Generation-Z. Rustic style is also being adopted to consumer marketing strategies aiming at younger generations. The reason why this younger generation, who lives in relatively affluent social material conditions but negates materialistic values in favor of simple and vulgar subculture that is regarded as low-taste by the dominant values in the society, is worth delving into.

Aiming to know how audiences understands or even appreciates the values of Rustic popular expression, and how rustic culture is related to post-materialism values in contemporary Chinese context, an online survey is conducted to explore among Chinese youth the relations between the

consumption of rustic video, and the audiences' social economic background and cultural values. Results illustrate the distinct trend of rustic popular culture from intellectual narratives of romantic ruralism, as a response to negotiate youth subjectivities under the disparities of modern experiences and the state-driven narratives of economic prosperity.

Keywords

Post-materialism, Rustic Videos, Rustic Influencer, Generation Z, Consumer Psychology

The Multimedia System of A Collaborative Writing Community: A Virtual Ethnography of Backrooms Chinese Wikidot

Authors

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Abstract

The Backrooms originated from a post on 4chan's /x/ board and saw widespread usage as an internet phenomenon back in 2019. As a writing style of weird core, the Backrooms requires authors to shape a space conveying confusion, disorientation, alienation, and nostalgia. Based on different languages, participants from various countries set up wikis to compose and communicate with each other. A Backrooms wiki was created soon after, and Backrooms Chinese Wikidot, the first Chinese wiki of Backrooms, appeared in January 2022. Involving members from both traditional and simplified characters, the community established communication platforms on Discord, QQ, and Kook apart from the wiki. With the technological help of multimedia systems and community rules in relevance, members can be attached to the ones from other regions and cultures, boosting the translation and collaborative stuff on the wiki.

Previous researchers have pointed out the connection between technologies and the participatory culture. To evaluate the phenomenon of collective intelligence, Henry Jenkins concluded three key elements of the new participatory culture: new tools and technologies, a range of subcultures promoting DIY media production, and economic trends. Thanks to new media technology, the audience gained greater power and autonomy. When it comes to a community as a whole, however, existing studies lay more emphasis on the issues of commerce, power, and so on, concentrating on the topic of virtuality-reality connections. So far, few studies have noticed the appliance of different platforms in collaborative communities like wikis. Aiming at the rise of participatory subcultures based on wikis, this study argues that we need shed more light on the multimedia system applied to the communities, which may help us better understand the interactions of a virtual community consisting of several platforms.

In this study, virtual ethnography and in-depth interviews are main methods to investigate how the multisystem contributes to the interactions. From October 2023 to February 2024, the author participated in and observed the Backrooms Chinese Wikidot as a formal member, taking part in the discussions and learning to write articles about backrooms as other members do.

To gain immersion in backrooms culture, the author spent 2 hours per day reading the chat records and the articles on the wiki. Meanwhile, the author joined its Discord service and QQ group to gather information. As a complement to observation, the author interviewed 10 authors online about their swinging between platforms.

We conclude that the multimedia system serves as a reliable framework to explain the interactions of a collaborative writing community. After blurring the front stage and back stage of reality, the virtual space reconstructed them again through different platforms. In matters of writing, the edit rules of wiki are mainly discussed in Discord. When discussing in wiki, members are likely to

communicate in a more casual way in Discord at the same time. By contrast, they are more likely to create longer comments in wiki due to the relatively high cost of posting, rather than in Discord or QQ groups. Additionally, a certain number of members do not actively participate in platforms other than wiki, the result of which is information disparity, leading to different behaviors during an event. Generally speaking, the more platforms a member joins, the more information he gets, and the less guesswork he has to do.

This article has referential values for the studies of other subcultures based on wiki communities, such as SCP Foundations and other collaborative writing communities. Methodologically, the paper explores the potential of multi-sited ethnography to be practiced in cyberspace. In addition, future research on backrooms may focus on the interactions of international communities, exploring how the multimedia system influences international subculture communication.

Keywords

wiki, collaborative intelligence, multimedia system, subculture, virtual ethnography

Localization and multi-culturalism: The transcultural content creators from foreign countries on Chinese digital platforms

Authors

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Abstract

Along with the development of digital technology and the creative economy, a number of international creators focusing on transcultural content have emerged on social media platforms around the world, drawing a new picture of transcultural communication in the new media era. Against the backdrop of the rapid development of platformization, digital creators in different political, cultural and economic environments are confronted with various opportunities and challenges. Among them, transcultural content creators from foreign countries, by virtue of the exoticism of their content, have rubbed interesting sparks with the commercial cultural production in specific regions.

This paper chooses “Y-China”, a creator team on Chinese digital platforms, as a case to understand the agency of foreign bloggers in China as "amphibian" creators. Y-China, having posted a lot of experiences and feelings of foreigners living and studying in China, goes viral on social media platforms such as Bilibili and Douyin, with a current fan base of more than 14 million. The content production of foreign bloggers in China on Chinese social media platforms is often considered as a mirror narrative of China from the Other's point of view, with the meta-text being the mainstream discourse of "Telling China's Stories Well". Such an instrumental perspective has obscured Y-China's agency as a subject of practice. Thus, this study aims to find out that, in the specific context of transcultural communication, does or how does Y-China manifest its subjectivity as a creator of transcultural content? To be more specific, what characterizes Y-China's transcultural content creation? In the production environment of Chinese digital platforms, how does Y-China respond to the prevailing platform norms of content production and national regulatory regimes, and how does the creator team decide on their topics and attitudes?

To answer these questions, this study collects videos and comments posted on Y-China's Bilibili account, as well as Y-China's public interviews, and analyzes Y-China's content curation through discourse analysis and in-depth interviews. The paper finds that in the process of localization, Y-China emphasizes its identity as a "foreigner in China" while intertwining it with Chinese national identity, and deftly navigates the complicated rules. On the one hand, Y-China manages to avoid the red line of censorship in Chinese socio-political context, creating audiovisual texts that are appreciated by Chinese consumers. On the other hand, this creator team is adept at finding hot topics that fit into the attention economy. Moreover, as a *wanghong* (micro-celebrity in China), they

are even able to take on the responsibility of promoting cultural exchanges and breaking down intercultural discrimination, stigmatization and stereotypes through positive media actions.

Specifically, the video text of Y-China mainly includes five narrative frameworks: demonstrating, rebutting, taking adventure, trying new things, and appealing for changes. Y-China implies a discourse of multi-culturalism with an attitude of anti-Euro-American centrism, which resonates with China's administrative term of "Telling China's Stories Well". With this eclectic narration strategy, Y-China applies its agency and activism to content production. Analyzing the interaction between various subjects in cultural localization from a relational perspective help us to comprehend to dilemmas and possible solutions in de-colonization of global communication.

Keywords

Transcultural content creator, multi-culturalism, agency, micro-celebrity, Chinese digital platforms

The Rise of AI Singers in China: The New Frontier of Popular Music or a Threat to Human Expression?

Authors

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Prof. Zhian Zhao - China - Communication University of China (CUC)

Abstract

Artificial Intelligence (AI) technology and popular music culture is highly intertwined in the global landscape. The popularity of AI singers has become a popular cultural phenomenon in China. The ability of training AI singers has entered the public domain and not just the prerogative of technologists. In China, AI singers are primarily trained by fans of human singers using collective intelligence. Many users train AI singers to cover songs and upload cover videos to Bilibili, a video platform with 300 million monthly active users in China, and the total views of these videos reach tens of millions. AI singers have fundamentally reshaped the music listening experience and the structure of fan-singer relationship to a certain extent. Traditionally, the songs that the public gets to hear are basically determined by the human singer and label. Nowadays, AI singers can meet the expectations of fans by learning the voice of their favorite human singers and covering songs designated by fans, presenting a new creative and entertaining cultural landscape. However, the ethical issues related to AI singers have attracted widespread attention of public discussion in China, and human singers' rights of personality and the instrumentality of their voice have been discussed. In the context of training AI singers, voice is no longer solely attributable to the individual, but has become a tool that can be taken, appropriated, and collaged at fans' will. Based on interviews with fans who train AI singers, this paper discusses the motivations and collaborative patterns of fans using collective intelligence to train AI singers and produce new cover songs. Additionally, to make AI technology adapt to human well-being, we extensively analyze representative cases and collect online comments about the ethics involved in AI singers, which might genuinely enhance critical understanding of the application of AI technology in popular music.

Keywords

popular music culture, AI singers, music fans, AI musical ethics

From 2D Affection to 3D Relationships: Investigating Emotional Labor in China's "Cosplay Commissions" Phenomenon through Grounded Theory

Authors

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Ms. Huang Mo - China - Communication University of China (CUC)

Abstract

In 2023, China witnessed the rise of a novel **"offline paid socialization"** trend, dubbed **"cosplay commissions"**, amassing over 15 million Weibo mentions. This phenomenon refers to **offline dates** where clients pay **cosplayers** to embody specific game or anime characters, **notably male characters from otome games**, mirroring their traits and behaviors.

Throughout this engagement, cosplayers not only portray specific characters but often also **adopt the role of the client's "lover"**. They must **regulate their expressions and movements** to meet with clients' expectations, aligning with Hochschild's concept of **emotional labor** (Hochschild, 1983), i.e., a form of labor that induces or suppresses self-emotions in order to meet the requirements of the job.

Recent emotional labor research has predominantly centered on new professions like webcasting (Wu, 2023; Yan, 2023), yet **cosplay commissions present a novel area of significant research interest**. The **commercialization of emotions** within this realm has led to issues, including client complaints about the lack of dedication of cosplayers and cosplayers deeming client demands excessive (e.g., kissing). Prolonged engagement has led some cosplayers to experience negative emotional states, including **feelings of self-loss and emotional exhaustion**, which are **the negative consequences of emotional labor** (Grandey, 2003; Judge et al., 2009). **There is an urgent need to explore the model of emotional labor within cosplay commissions.**

This study is expected to address the following key questions:

- 1) To **identify cosplayers' emotional labor types** in cosplay commissions ("surface acting" or "deep acting" or both).
- 2) To **construct a grounded theory-based model** for cosplayers' emotional labor construction and management.
- 3) To **investigate the emotional alienation faced by cosplayers** under this model, analyzing its causes and proposing recommendations.

A comprehensive **semi-structured in-depth interview** (n=20~25) involving participants from both clients and cosplayers in cosplay commissions will be conducted. Drawing on scholars like Hochschild, **coding categories** will be established by combining **online textual information** and

participatory observation practices, constructing a model for the construction and management of cosplayers' affective labor in cosplay commissions through **grounded theory** (Glaser, 1965; Strauss, 1968). This includes **a review of emotional labor literature** to explore potential negative outcomes and their causes in cosplay commissions.

From the lens of emotional labor, this research offers a scholarly analysis of China's "cosplay commissions" phenomenon, and **provides a scholarly response to this craze**, which will further **enrich the object and scope of the study of emotional labor** and **expand its analytical perspective**. At the same time, this study concerns about cosplayers in **the prison of emotional commodification**, and offers suggestions that are both theoretical and practical.

Keywords

COSPLAY, emotional labor, grounded theory, otome game

Identity constructions of 'Chinese Style' youth in Cyber Space: Case studies of bloggers on Bilibili and Xiaohongshu

Authors

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Ms. Xin Zeng - China - Chinese Academy of Social Sciences

Abstract

Identity constructions of 'Chinese Style'[1] youth in Cyber Space: Case studies of bloggers[2] on Bilibili and Xiaohongshu

In recent years, platform culture has entered young people's daily lives and platform economy have attracted ambitious youth to pursue traffic and reputation. When these spontaneously shared contents of traditional culture encounter with a global platform, how do these bloggers recognize their cultural identity?

The study has selected ten bloggers age between 18 to 25 who had experiences of regularly posting about Chinese-style and with more than 10,000 followers as cases. Through combination of online ethnography and interviews, we examine the presentation and construction of their cultural identities.

The study found out that traditional culture has been embedded in daily practice of young bloggers. They engage in reproducing traditional Chinese culture while constructing their self-images. In the process of cultural embodiment, their cultural identity has gradually shifted from grand narrative to daily performance. In addition, young bloggers' cultural identity present to be more generalized and embracing, with diversified elements from both Chinese and Western, from either traditional or modern. This cultural identity signifies the 'glocalization' with diversity and inclusiveness. Moreover, with the associability of platform, the bloggers 'self-identification presents to be transferable. Signs showing the possibility of cultural identity transferring to political identity and even participation.

Although this identity construction has shown characteristics of spontaneity and de-localization, we should be aware that the process is shaped by both platform regulation, influence of commercialization and is remodeled by political contexts. Despite of all these, Chinese style fashion has awakened the young generation of their consciousness of national identity, which becomes an opportunity for them to pin their own position and to signify "who am I" in the Cyber space and in reality as well. These phenomena not only reflect the unprecedented intermingled relationship between young people and traditional culture since the founding of the People's Republic of China, but also show the common progression of cultural identity and political identity, meanwhile suggest the potential of mutual growth of popular culture and traditional culture on Cyber space in contemporary China.

[1] Chinese style culture, also known as China-chic, is a kind of popular culture with adoption of traditional cultural elements. While embodying Chinese aesthetic characteristics, 'Chinese style' highlights the favor of Chinese culture and the spirit of tradition. Through innovative technique and symbol rhetoric, Chinese style is now penetrating music, clothing, modeling and scene with combination of traditional culture symbols and popular culture symbols. It is now widely spread in China and been recognized as the reproduction of traditional culture by means of symbol transmission and interactive mode.

[2] In China, the word 'blogger' (博主) is used broadly to indicate social media creators no matter whether they produce texts and pictures or make different types of videos. Xiaohongshu generally call its users bloggers while up-loaders are more frequently used by B Station. In this article, blogger/ up-loaders equates to social media content creator.

Keywords

Chinese Style, Identity, Youth, culture bloggers, Cyber space

From “Death” to “Mercy”: Negotiating Visibility and Safe Resistance in China’s Censored Hip-hop Scene Through Lyrics Adaptation

Authors

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Ms. Ge Zhu - China - Renmin University of China

Abstract

While hip-hop is traditionally known for its radicalism and anti-hegemonic nature (Stapleton, 1998), the genre has developed unique localized characteristics in China. Chinese hip-hop’s inherent political rebelliousness clashes with its recent use as a tool for ideological propaganda (Zou, 2019). Scholars have identified two strategies employed by the authorities to regulate hip-hop: suppression through strict censorship and cooptation through promoting “positive energy” themes in popular cultural production (Zhao & Lin, 2020).

However, the agency and resistance of hip-hop rappers and audiences in the censored environment remain overlooked (Zhao & Lin, 2020). Balancing the demands of authenticity and conforming to “positive energy” policies, rappers find subtle ways to express their anger. A notable example is the popular hip-hop program “The Rap of China”, produced by iQIYI, where radical lyrics are adapted to ensure smooth display. Nonetheless, rappers and fans utilize the bullet screen and comment section to emphasize and clarify the original lyrics, even questioning censorship. Thus, this study aims to explore the discourse strategies reflected in the adaptation of hip-hop lyrics in China, how hip-hop rappers assert their autonomy in the face of censorship, and how audiences perceive censorship.

We collected all performance songs from “The Rap of China 2023” (May to July 2023), selecting 122 songs with live and studio versions as research objects. Using Fairclough’s three-dimensional framework in critical discourse analysis, we compared the lyrics of each song’s two versions, extracting discourse strategies in lyrics adaptation. Then, through analyzing rappers’ social media statements, we explored their autonomy in censorship. Additionally, we conducted interviews with 20 participants recruited from online communities frequented by the show’s audience. These interviews explored the audience’s views on censorship-driven song adaptations and the relationship between subcultural content production and state governance.

Three discourse strategies were identified in this research regarding lyrics adaptation in censored hip-hop: individualization, re-contextualization, and depoliticization. Though avoiding sensitive topics, such as politics, religion, and weapons, many rappers strive to maintain a critical tone while adhering to censorship rules. These strategies are crucial for rappers to secure airtime and attract audiences, representing their autonomy in negotiating visibility.

A “safe resistance” against censorship emerges through unplanned collaboration between hip-hop rappers and audiences. Initially, audience consensus on censored lyrics adaptations triggers a backfire effect. As one of the interviewees stated, “When I encounter completely different lyrics, I would rather listen to the studio version repeatedly to understand the story.” Subsequently, the cultural practice of lyrics adaptation, along with its collapsed and narrowed expressions, has aroused a sense of resistance among hip-hop audiences towards the censorship system. After watching the live version, audiences re-emphasize and reinterpret the significance of songs in the comment sections of social media and music platforms. Rappers employ discourse strategies to negotiate conducive conditions for shows, while audiences participate in discourse resistance to safeguard the cultural space for hip-hop. This collective endeavor enhances the visibility of hip-hop, breathing new vitality and legitimacy into the genre.

Keywords

Hip-hop, Censorship, Resistance, Negotiation, China

Wings or Shackles:The Creative Revolution, Emotional Labor and Digital Exploitation of Chinese Fans Empowered by AIGC

Authors

Ms. Ying Qi Chen - China - Communication University of China

Ms. Yunfan Zhao - China - Communication University of China (CUC)

Abstract

The rapid development of AI technology and algorithmic culture has led to a major change in the production field, bringing new possibilities for fan culture and creation. AIGC is being used by some fans to create diverse content works, including AI cover, animations, face-swapping, paintings, and fan fiction. These creations have also garnered significant participation from the fan community, as well as attention and interaction from idols and the entertainment industry. As the application of AIGC in fan creation is still in its infancy and there is a lack of relevant research in academia, it is important to give more attention to the application of AIGC in fan creation and its deeper impact on the community.

So how does AIGC fit into fan creation? What impacts does emergent technology have on the emotional labor involved in fan engagement? How have these creations changed the landscape of the entertainment and creative industries, and what are the potential risks and challenges associated with AI-infused fan productions?

To investigate the aforementioned topics, this study selected popular Chinese fan content production platforms such as Bilibili, Weibo, Xiaohongshu, and Douyin. Empirical data was collected through textual analysis of works and semi-structured interviews with 25 creators.

The study discovered that the use of AIGC disrupts the conventional method of material reorganization in fan creation. Instead, it generates new material by duplicating the voice and portrait of idols, which enhances the creativity and expressiveness of the works. These new works make creation no longer just a fan group's revelry, instead the dissemination path breaks the community barrier to spread to a wider audience. The voluntary nature of fan creation and the satisfaction it provides have eased the emotional labor alienation. However, some fans, with the aid of AIGC, produce works that the idols have never created or performed, which further reduces fans to free labor for the entertainment industry. The entertainment industry uses the circle-breaking nature of AIGC works to increase fans and expand influence for idols, that's how digital emotional exploitation is further intensified compared to traditional creation. However, AI-based fan production currently faces technical barriers, rights infringement, and technological abuse.

Keywords

AIGC,fan creation,emotional labor,digital emotional exploitation,labor alienation,Chinese Content Production Platform,qualitative analysis

Under the Garb of Decolonialism: The Popular Appeal of RRR (2022) and its Majoritarian Politics

Authors

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Abstract

The Telugu language film *RRR* (2022, SS Rajamouli) not only became a blockbuster but it also managed to cross over and become popular in the West. Part of the appeal of the film to the Western audiences was its over-the-top mise-en-scene, striking visuals and audacious staging of action that reached a crescendo in the foot-tapping song “naatu naatu” that was also performed at the Academy Awards. What also endeared the film, to both Indian and Western audiences alike, is that the film’s narrative is a fictionalized tale of two real-life revolutionaries who fought against British colonial rule during British era India. The film’s anti-colonial tale was appreciated world over.

But a closer reading of the film reveals a much more insidious Hindu right-wing politics hiding under the garb of decolonial politics. By the second half of the film, *RRR*’s two male protagonists Alluri Sitarama Raju (played by Ram Charan) and Komaram Bheem (played by Jr. NTR) settle into their caste ordained roles. Sitarama Raju, with his sacred thread, is decidedly upper-caste and Bheem is a member of the indigenous Gond tribe i.e. traditionally kept outside the caste order. Though friends (and sometimes rivals) throughout the film, they settle into a hierarchy by the end while fighting the British. Sitarama Raju is re-modeled on Ram, the Hindu god-king and currently Hindu rightwing’s primary religious icon, whereas Bheem is re-modeled on Hanuman, the monkey-god of Ramayana and Ram’s loyal servant. This remodeling of anti-colonial freedom struggle on Hindu mythology serves a few purposes. Firstly, it inserts the Hindu Right within the narrative of decolonialism even though the Hindu Right was conspicuous by its absence in the freedom struggle. Secondly, it serves the colonizing mission of RSS (the mother organization of India’s current ruling party BJP) in which the organization wants to recreate India as a Hindu nation. A fundamental argument from the Hindu Right is that Hindus are the original inhabitants of the country. But the existence of indigenous people delegitimizes the claim, and hence, the mission to make India a Hindu nation. So, the RSS’s colonizing/ evangelical mission includes renaming the Adivasi/ indigenous people as *vanvasi*/ forest dwellers and bringing them within the Hindu fold. However, the film makes sure that the now-Hinduized Bheem/ Hanuman is kept as Sitarama Raju/ Ram’s subordinate, keeping the power dynamics of the caste order intact.

In this paper, I show how the film uses the rhetoric of decolonization, through narratorial and mise-en-scene choices, to push forward its fascist agenda (which is also an extension of the colonial rule). And I will also connect it with the larger Hindu right-wing politics which has consistently tried to rebrand its caste-driven Hindu majoritarian politics as decolonial while pursuing some of the same tactics as the erstwhile colonialists.

Keywords

RRR, Telugu cinema, decolonial, colonialism, majoritarianism, Hindu rightwing, Hindutva,

Digital Yellowface?: Unpacking Asianness in the TikTok RCTA trend

Authors

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Abstract

In late 2022, #RCTA, which stands for “Race Change to Another”, went viral as soon as it appeared on TikTok. These videos often depicted white/Western subjects identifying and performing as “Asians”, oftentimes specifically “Korean” girls. The racial tension it aroused sparked heated controversy and gave rise to another set of videos criticizing the trend. This study examines these cross-racial performances and the discourse surrounding them regarding the (re)construction of Asianness in the transnational digital space of TikTok, heavily influenced by global K-pop/K-beauty culture and the platform’s prominence in US popular culture. To unpack this complicated cultural scene, I build upon the critical race theory of Asianness, the critique of (digital) Blackface, and recently emerging TikTok studies.

Rooted in the historical legacies of blackface and yellowface performances, RCTA represents a contemporary form of digital Blackface, wherein racial hierarchies and boundaries are (re)affirmed through the embodiment of the racial others (Lott, 1992; Hautsch & Cook, 2021; Davis, 2022). However, what remains underexplored in discussions of digital Blackface is the consideration of how Asianness plays in building racial scripts. Thus, it is critical to examine the way that Asianness and Asian femininity are appropriated by white/Western users and how digital platforms facilitate these parodic performances of racial others. Adopting Kim’s (1999) theorization of racial triangulation, I interpret RCTA performance as a site where Asianness and Blackness are “triangulated” in relation to each other and whiteness.

Another consideration critical to interpreting the RCTA trend is the influence of global K-pop/K-beauty cultures, adding layers of complexity to the racial dynamics at play. The circulation of images and ideas of Asia(n) and Korea(n) on social media is refiguring the notion of “the Asiatic” and “the Korean”, shifting the cultural prominence of Koreanness (Kim, 2022). This renders it hard to simply conclude that the RCTA is a variant of digital Blackface switched into digital ‘Yellow’face. Not only does the #RCTA trend exemplify how social media reproduces whiteness through the construction of Asianness, but it also shows how the notions of skin color, race, and identity are debated and (re)negotiated in the transnational digital space.

Through an in-depth analysis of #RCTA videos and associated comments, I demonstrate that self-identification with “the Korean” works as a performance of self, embodying markers of Koreanness and Asianness as the racial other, implied by cross-racial desires and intimacies. With that said, I argue that the controversial space of #RCTA exposes the racial power relations between Asian and white bodies and the racialized meanings attached to those bodies, troubling the binaries of white and Black, Korean and Asian, and white skin and yellow skin. Capturing the complexities of racial

dynamics in the moment of global social media culture, digital economy, and K-pop culture, this study engages in the intersection of social media studies and Asian American studies. This examination expands the critical scope of digital Blackface, underscoring the significance of considering Asianness in an interpretation of cross-racial plays.

Keywords

Digital Blackface, Yellowface, Asianness, Anti-Blackness, Racial Triangulation, TikTok, Digital Economy

How games portray female character models/anti-stereotypical women: a textual analysis of gender representation in video games

Authors

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Abstract

Video games have been viewed as a realm of male norms and pleasure for male audiences (Fox & Tang, 2014; Paassen et al., 2017). Female characters are placed in a position of being watched and gazed at, they suffer the symbolic annihilation of underrepresentation (Williams et al., 2009) of specific groups (e.g., race, class, age, etc.), are often presented as sexualized (Labre & Duke, 2004), and exist as male rewards and appendages, perpetuating unfair gender stereotypes. These sexist depictions can influence viewers' perceptions of gender perception (Behm-Morawitz & Mastro, 2009), internalizing harmful gender beliefs (McCullough et al., 2020).

As more playable female protagonists have emerged over time (Lynch et al., 2016), the longstanding negative portrayal of female characters has gradually improved (Kondrat, 2015). 'Lara Croft phenomenon', for example, reflects a renewed and shifting portrayal of female characters. This shift has led to some controversy in recent years, with some male gamers not welcoming the portrayal of anti-conformist female characters (not beautiful, thin or muscular) and considering it an inaccurate representation of female characters (Tomkinson, 2022). These comments are actually revealing a subtle change in the gaming industry - the emergence of female characters who don't aim to satisfy the male gaze.

Most existing content analyses reflect the representation and sexualization of female characters in terms of number and degree, and such statistics are useful in providing clues about character demographics, but it is equally important to further assess the representation and placement of female characters throughout the game, and to understand the interactions of female characters with other characters and with the game, and focusing on gender power dynamics as well as gender interactions provides a lens for examining female character gender representations from one perspective. Based on this, we want to explore: 1. What kind of gender stereotypes do these anti-conformist female characters break, and how do they counter the three dimensions of symbolic annihilation (condemnation, trivialization, omission) ? 2. How has the sexualization of female characters and the portrayal of other aspects (e.g., ethnicity, ability, sexual orientation, etc.) changed ?

This study examined female characters in 19 games by using textual analysis, case studies analysis, and visual ethnography. The main criterion for selecting the games was based on the popularity of the female characters (amount of discussions, ratings and rankings). By studying video games as multimodal texts and analyzing them focusing on scenes, storylines, background information, dialogues and interactions, we found that 1) The number and representation of female characters in games has increased dramatically, and they now play important roles in the game's narrative. 2)

Female characters are more independent and powerful. They often have strong or specialized abilities, and can complete tasks on their own and take leadership roles in teams, even as villains. 3) The depiction of female characters is more in-depth, not only in terms of their growth trajectory, personality traits, living habits and social relationships, but also focusing on their inner activities or emotional demands. 4) Richer and more diverse portrayals of female characters, with more counter-stereotypical female characters (e.g., muscular, gay, ethnic minorities, practitioners in stem fields. 5) The overall sexualization of women has decreased, with highly sexualized female characters occupying a very small percentage and appearing only in specific scenes for narrative reasons.

Our study builds on the past literature on gender stereotypes to reveal patterns or ways in which video games have portrayed more strong, independent, and capable female protagonists in recent years. It can help to deconstruct benevolent or discriminatory stereotypes of female characters and provides implications for the video game industry's portrayal of more diverse and counter-conventional female characters.

Keywords

female character, stereotype, symbolic annihilation, game study, textual analysis

Decolonising entertainment media through translocal ethnic content on YouTube: The case of Ilocano video blogger Auntie Bangit

Authors

Dr. Jozon Lorenzana - Philippines - Ateneo de Manila University

Abstract

Popular culture is a site where decolonisation takes place through asserting local identities and foregrounding people's lived and meaningful experiences (Lydner, 2024). As a relatively open platform with potential for monetizing content, YouTube enables widespread participation in the production, consumption and circulation of popular culture. In global South settings where conventional media and content producers from the metropolises predominate, content creators from peripheral localities provide alternative voices, perspectives and narratives.

Most accounts of decolonising media have focused on established forms of popular culture such as music and cinema (e.g., Hitchcock, 2000; Lydner, 2024). However, scholars are now looking at practices and projects of decolonisation on social and digital media (e.g., Green, 2021; McLean & McLean, 2020). In similar vein, I examine how translocal ethnic content on YouTube contributes to practices of decolonising entertainment content in the Philippine setting. The paper analyses the case of Auntie Bangit, a video blog in Ilocano, the language spoken by and ethnic identification of people from the Ilocos region and nearby provinces in northern Philippines. Ilocanos are known as a migrant people. They are characterised as frugal and hardworking. Created by an overseas Filipino worker based in Oslo, Norway, Auntie Bangit is a persona that typifies an Ilocano woman who works overseas and takes care of her left-behind family. I looked at elements of Auntie Bangit video blogs (tone, mode of address, situation, content of speech) and identified themes in the comments section.

Auntie Bangit combines humour and sarcasm to make commentaries on everyday situations of an overseas worker, local practices in her homeland and trending topics on social media. She also spoofs movie scenes, fellow content creators and Filipino celebrities. Speaking in Ilocano allows her to frame her comments and observations in terms of local understandings and sensibilities. Responses to the videos show viewers relating with Auntie Bangit's humour, ethnicity and performance of being Ilocano. I will argue that the production and consumption of ethnic content on YouTube, such as Auntie Bangit, demonstrates how local ethnic sensibilities can find expression and become the framework to critique everyday life thereby providing alternative understandings and worldviews.

Keywords

ethnic media, YouTube, popular culture, decolonisation, Philippines

"You are who you follow": Entrepreneur worship and subjective experiences of "copresence" among tech entrepreneurs in China

Authors

Dr. Yanan Guo - China - Assistant Professor

Abstract

Entrepreneurship and pop culture share a dynamic relationship, influencing and reflecting each other in various ways. While entrepreneurial endeavors wield substantial influence in shaping pop trends, pop culture is able to play a pivotal role in presenting entrepreneurship as an alluring pursuit, motivating individuals to embark on their entrepreneurial quests. Through various forms of pop cultural productions, challenges, victories, and inventive ideation of entrepreneurial icons are often illuminated, creating a narrative resonance with audiences aspiring to replicate their success.

This study examines the phenomenon and the meso-micro processes of the formation of entrepreneur worship as a form of popular culture in contemporary China. It documents the everyday digital communication practices of grassroots tech entrepreneurs in Beijing, and argues that with the spontaneity and interactivity of digital virtualities, digital-media-based parasocial interactions may create subjective experiences of “copresence” among the public with the entrepreneurial icons, which contributes to the formation of entrepreneur worship.

In recent decades, waves of tech entrepreneurship have started in China under the national project of “Mass Innovation and Entrepreneurship”, attracting many grassroots citizens to join the trend and pursue such ideals. Ethnographic research conducted by the author in a tech coworking space in Beijing since 2017 reveals that two primary forms of digital practices are particularly essential in the everyday lives of grassroots tech entrepreneurs. They are 1) consumption, commenting and sharing of widely circulated popular texts and graphics about internet titans such as Jack Ma, Pony Ma, etc., on social networking sites, and 2) trying to virtually “follow” public/personal accounts of these successful entrepreneurs on these platforms for latest updates. Such digital practices mentioned above, though conventionally regarded as parasocial relationships in nature, are able to produce subjective feelings of “copresence” with spontaneous and interactive technological affordances of digital communication.

Through close examination of the digital texts, graphics, messages posted by grassroots entrepreneurs online and in-depth interviews conducted during the author's ethnographic fieldwork, the author discusses in this paper how new socialities and subjectivities among grassroots entrepreneurs are constituted in the very process, and how their subjectively experienced “copresence”, as a new form of interactions simulated by various forms of virtualities on social media, may actually lead to the subject's distorted perceptions of reality and reproduction of class differentiations in practice.

Keywords

pop culture, entrepreneurship, entrepreneur worship, copresence, class, parasocial relationship

Tár: contemporary lesbian representation. Progress or Problem the appeal of an anti-hero.

Authors

Prof. Sarah Baker - New Zealand - Auckland University of Technology

Abstract

Gay representation and narratives have been a problematic area in film and television for as long as gay characters have appeared in film and television. Academic writing that addresses the concerns and issues about gay representation has largely gone from cataloguing gay characters as visible and how long they live before tragedy befalls them approach (Russo, 1981) to more nuanced calls for authentic and meaningful representation. Audiences react strongly to various lesbian representation with those films often expressing disappointment with articles such as *Please Not Another Lesbian Period Drama* stating that “There are so many stories to tell about queer women, so why does it feel like Hollywood’s only choosing to tell the same stories set in the past?” (Guzzo, 2021). In 2023 the film *Tár* was to change the conversation again about lesbian representation. It presents an anti-hero that challenges the status quo and shows how problematic gay representation remains even against a history of greater gay representation in film and television. The film *Tár* (2003) is a film about a renowned and wildly charismatic conductor who ultimately comes unstuck at the top of her game. This is essentially a complicated representation of a queer character amongst a history of problematic gay representation in film and television. Cate Blanchett stars as Lydia Tar, in a field that has traditionally been represented by white men as she is a classical music conductor and winner of the EGOT. She is a lesbian with a wife and child in Berlin and she leads the city’s orchestra. As the main character she is at the top of her field, and as the film progresses the audience sees her lose all her mastery and privilege in a lesbian me-too storyline which raises issues about this representation. Lydia has it all, at first glance, and while the veneer begins to crack and it is revealed that she has preyed on younger female students and musicians, though there are questions about how extreme her ‘crimes’ are. Lydia essentially moves her female attractions on when she tires of them. Is *Tár* another example of the predatory lesbian trope or a more nuanced representation of a gay character who is not perfect. The film has divided audiences, and simultaneously Blanchett’s performance has been hailed as one of the finest of her career. This paper considers the reactions towards the film against a long history of problematic lesbian/gay representation and in the contemporary representation of gay characters in popular culture. It considers the contemporary issues of gay representation in popular culture and how the problematic examples continue to reinforce audience and critical reactions of gay representation.

Keywords

Lesbian representation, narrative, critical response, audience response, queer, film