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Research on Problems and Countermeasures of Fan Text Production: A Case Study of Major Domestic Online Variety Shows (Postprint)

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Date: 2023-03-24T00:00:00+00:00

Abstract

The advancement of internet technology has enriched the development of fan culture, with fans' text production methods and types becoming increasingly diversified. This paper examines major domestic online variety shows to explore the positive significance of fans' text production in idol-chasing and program promotion, as well as the series of problems arising therefrom. It further proposes countermeasures to address these issues, thereby promoting the healthy operation of domestic online variety shows and the benign development of fan culture.

Full Text

Preamble

A Study on Problems and Countermeasures in Fan Text Production: A Case Study of Major Chinese Online Variety Shows

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Abstract: The advancement of the internet has enriched the development of fan culture, making the methods and types of fan text production increasingly diversified. This paper examines major domestic online variety shows to explore the positive significance of fan text production in the processes of star-chasing and program promotion, as well as the series of problems that arise from these activities. It proposes countermeasures to address these issues, thereby promoting the normal operation of domestic online variety shows and the healthy development of fan culture.

Keywords: fan culture; text production; variety shows

(I) Research Background

In recent years, online variety shows have developed rapidly, with both viewership and variety types showing overall growth. Influenced by fan culture, major Chinese variety shows have adjusted their production orientation based on fan preferences, comments, and behavioral activities, investing increasing funds to pursue large-scale production and high-end presentation effects. The entertainment market has increasingly entered a fan-dominated era.

The manifestation of fan culture in the new era is primarily reflected in fans' participatory text production. Fans re-edit content from variety shows in their own ways, generating expressions in forms such as text, images, and videos, which they share on social platforms within fan circles or other audience groups. Today, an increasing number of fans participate in text production, and the forms of production are becoming more diversified, which greatly enriches fan culture. However, while fan text production generates positive significance, it inevitably creates certain problems, such as issues with individual fans' media literacy, conflicts among fan groups, and copyright infringement in secondary creation, causing significant adverse effects on the online ecological environment. Therefore, identifying appropriate response strategies for these problems is of great significance for the positive development of fan culture.

(II) Research Significance

The advancement of internet technology has brought forth many emerging cultures. Major online variety shows, riding the wave of mobile networks, possess enormous development potential. Upon emergence, they have attracted large numbers of fans with their characteristics of being relaxing, entertaining, and educational. The commercial and cultural value of online variety shows relies on fan culture for support. As the role of fan culture becomes increasingly prominent, many production companies directly position program types according to fan group preferences, resulting in more diversified types of domestic online variety shows and continuously increasing quantities. For example, music competition shows like *The Coming One* and *Flashing Band*, dance culture programs like *Street Dance of China* and *Dance Storm*, idol development shows like *Youth With You* and *Produce Camp*, and debate shows like *U Can U Bibi* and *Roast*—these programs precisely target various types of fan groups, transmitting values to fan communities from more professional perspectives.

Fans' participation enthusiasm has been enhanced as they comment on and forward posts about their favorite idols and celebrity dynamics from the programs, or share images, edit videos, and create peripheral products, thereby generating rich text production methods that enrich fan culture. Studying fans' participatory behavior in text production through various domestic variety shows, conducting in-depth research on both its positive aspects and emerging problems, and providing corresponding strategies for these problems can offer certain reference value for regulating fan group behavior and promoting the healthy de-

velopment of fan culture.

II. Positive Significance of Fan Text Production

(I) Individual Level—Stress Relief and Media Literacy Enhancement

1. Relaxation, Entertainment, and Stress Relief As the pace of social life gradually accelerates, the general public, especially young people, faces increasing life pressure. Beyond work and daily life, they more often feel loneliness and anxiety, needing to find appropriate channels to release pressure and achieve life balance. The pleasant and relaxed atmosphere of online variety shows easily liberates the public from their burdened lives into a new space, causing most viewers to become fans of these programs during the viewing process. After this identity transformation, fan groups do not merely watch programs to find happiness but also express emotions and showcase individuality through extensive text creation or by integrating into shared fan communities. In the virtual space of the internet, everyone can construct new social roles. For instance, while watching *Youth With You* or *Produce Camp*, fans may fictionalize stories about their favorite idols and insert themselves into these narratives. With such story prototypes, fans then create fan fiction. During this creative process, fans maintain a pleasant mindset, allowing them to cast aside daily life troubles and achieve stress relief.

2. Skill Enrichment and Capability Enhancement The development of social networks enables individual fans to easily find like-minded people and form fan groups. They collect various types of information related to programs or celebrity idols through different social platforms, share it in exclusive virtual communities, and organize offline fan meetings, sharing various resources to promote and support their favorite idols or programs. These processes require fans to master certain skills, such as photography, photo editing, video editing, and text writing. These are skills that fan groups learn to promote and express their love for their idols or programs, and they invest in these activities with enthusiasm. Therefore, to a certain extent, fans also acquire additional skills that have important additive effects on their own development. Additionally, when fans participate in offline meetings or other community activities, an opinion leader is needed to gather fans from various locations and manage activity order and itinerary arrangements, which in a sense tests an individual's leadership and organizational abilities and stimulates the potential for skill cultivation and development within fan groups.

(II) Social Level—Development of Fan Economy and Prosperity of Cultural Industries

1. Promoting the Development of the Fan Economy As social theorist Herbert Marcuse proposed in his concept of “false needs,” “people no longer aim to satisfy material living needs but pay more attention to the symbolic

and emotional value of items” [1]. Today’s fan consumption is no longer simply about purchasing albums, dolls, and other peripheral products for their idols but involves support through various forms of consumption, with both online and offline activities conducted simultaneously. This has promoted the development of corresponding support service industries and further extended the industrial chain of the fan economy. Sponsors of popular online variety shows can also benefit, as can products endorsed by program guests or idols. For example, the mobile game “Zhu Xian” endorsed by THE NINE, formed through *Youth With You*, saw their fans promote it by downloading and installing the game, which both increased the group’s exposure and provided enormous commercial benefits for the game manufacturer.

2. Enriching Popular Culture and Promoting External Cultural Output Fan culture is “an intensified form of popular culture in industrialized society, where all audiences under popular culture can create pleasure and meaning related to their own social contexts from cultural industrial products” [2]. Fans engage in diverse types and styles of text production. In addition to secondary creation based on program content, they also edit original texts from variety shows and present them in ways that are popular among the masses. With the rise of short videos, major social platforms have gradually developed short video functions. Fans clip humorous segments, cultural education, and values presented in variety shows and bring them to public view through short videos. During viewing, the public can grasp the emotions or viewpoints that a variety show aims to convey through just a dozen seconds of short video, thereby attracting interested viewers to watch the full program. At this point, fan text production becomes an embellishment of popular culture, making it richer. Meanwhile, popular online variety shows also embark on internationalization paths, and corresponding text production attracts overseas viewers from various countries to watch. These variety shows possess the uniqueness of Chinese culture, so fans also play an important role in China’s cultural output.

III. Emerging Problems

(I) Emergence of Digital Divide and Participation Gap

The advancement of the internet, characterized by its low threshold and decentralization, has enabled every audience member to become a communicator in the new era. However, for disadvantaged and marginalized groups, it remains difficult to integrate into the tide of technology, which increases usage disparities and thus forms a digital divide. Regarding the digital divide, British scholar Steven believes that “there is no sign of these inequalities diminishing, and these inequalities affect the application of any new information and communication technology” [3]. Extending this concept to fans, the wealth gap among fans creates disparities in information access pathways, and over time, this gap becomes increasingly larger. “Video payment” is a typical example. Today, most online variety shows only present the main parts of the recording process to the public,

but much behind-the-scenes exciting content requires users to purchase memberships or pay to watch, which significantly exacerbates stratification among fans. This stratification further promotes the payment trend.

In fan text production, through this “digital divide,” the amount of information obtained by fans differs, and the various texts created also show significant gaps, thus creating a “participation gap.” Fans who obtain sufficient information have more creative materials, relatively higher participation levels, and play more important roles in the prosperity of fan culture. However, other fans only participate simply, so these elite fan groups to some extent also limit the democratization of fan culture.

(II) Irrational Behavior Among Fans

Since the rise of various online variety shows, different types of fan groups have emerged. “Professional fans” are a group that takes fandom as a profession. The time, money, and energy they devote are entirely for work purposes. They master entertainment industry information and information, with the main goal of planning and packaging celebrities or variety shows. They guide public opinion to incite fans to promote celebrity idols or programs, and they further penetrate into “true love fan” groups to share relevant news and information with them, thus possessing high discourse power within these groups.

In an era where traffic is king, for a program to achieve high ratings, the most important factor is having sufficient heat support. This heat, besides the celebrity status of program guests, requires fan groups to accumulate traffic for the program, mainly through forwarding and liking official Weibo posts of the program and guests, and improving super topic rankings. When heat declines, professional fans release relevant inflammatory texts to encourage fans to raise funds for ranking. Irrational fundraising and ranking behaviors like the fan milk-dumping incident during *Youth With You* attracted social attention, created unfavorable repercussions for the program and idols themselves, and ultimately led to the program’s suspension. They even incite conflicts and verbal battles among various fan groups to hype heat for publicity purposes. This tactic largely influences fans’ emotions. Fans themselves are a group; once negative comments about their followed idols or programs appear, the situation can easily become one-sided. Emotional fans, to protect reputations, are easily led by professional fans to generate irrational behaviors, creating adverse effects on cyberspace through text production methods such as video spoofs and text attacks.

(III) Copyright Infringement from Secondary Production

To express their love, fans clip certain plot segments from variety shows or perform secondary creation on images to generate emojis, create video compilations or fan-made dramas for their favorite guests, and some fans even create fan fiction or comics based on their imagination. However, during these text

production processes, they can easily infringe upon the portrait rights, reputation rights, or content copyright of programs and guests, especially when works involve commercial interests, making copyright disputes likely to arise.

In recent years, similar fan infringement cases have become increasingly frequent. For example, fan fiction written with Xiao Zhan as the prototype was pointed out by his fans as infringing, and after the incident escalated, the fan fiction website was shut down, the artist's reputation was damaged, and he faced boycotts and insults from other netizens, forming the famous "227 Incident." Wang Yibo's performance in *Street Dance of China* was mixed into a video that was reported for infringement by the program team and forcibly taken down.

Therefore, fans' secondary creation is highly prone to generating infringement incidents. However, most of the time, fans are unaware of this problem. They believe they are simply editing videos and expressing their ideas through text or other creative methods, then promoting them within fan groups. But in reality, some creative content gets reposted by platforms and gradually ceases to be just a fan work but is used by other platforms for hype, thereby affecting the normal operation of variety shows and leading to infringement accusations. Therefore, it is necessary to define creation boundaries for fans and take necessary measures to prevent infringement incidents.

IV. Countermeasures for Problems in Fan Text Production

(I) Enhancing Fans' Media Literacy

Media literacy refers to whether audiences have rational judgment and thinking to handle affairs in the information age. It manifests audiences' "information selection ability, questioning ability, understanding ability, evaluation ability, creation and production ability, and critical thinking ability" [4]. Once audiences lack good media literacy and cannot correctly process information, it will affect the healthy development of the media ecology. Due to age and education gaps, netizens' media literacy levels differ. The digital divide and participation gap presented in today's fan culture inevitably cause fans to display different media literacy levels during text production. Some fans with less information or more emotional tendencies are highly prone to exhibit irrational behaviors. Therefore, to better develop in a complex media environment, media literacy education is indispensable.

First, fan groups for each variety show need to formulate corresponding normative treaties internally, conduct real-time supervision of fan behavior, and timely intervene and dissuade some fans' irrational behaviors. If circumstances are serious, relevant measures need to be taken for education and public relations handling. Additionally, fans themselves must establish a sense of social responsibility and maintain a cautious attitude toward their every word and action in the online world. Finally, besides fans' own self-awareness, relevant media platforms must also screen fans' verbal texts, videos, images, etc., in corresponding super topic communities and website forums to maintain clear and

healthy cyberspace development.

(II) Leveraging the Leading Role of Head Fans

Whether for celebrity idols or online variety shows, as heat rises and falls, fan numbers also undergo dynamic changes. Fans are fluid, but fan communities persist, within which there exists a head fan, or opinion leader, who maintains the order and development of the community. Head fans possess strong discourse power within the community and have excellent communication and organizational abilities, capable of timely alleviating conflicts within and between fan groups.

Therefore, when facing disputes and verbal battles among fans, head fans need to step forward promptly to intervene, understand the reasons, and conduct timely mediation to stabilize fans' emotions within the community and avoid unnecessary emotional behaviors. Second, regarding the fanning of flames by professional fans, head fans must keep their eyes open to prevent the entire fan community from generating malicious text production and blind consumption behaviors under the malicious guidance of professional fans. Finally, head fans should encourage various forms of text creation and resource sharing within certain ranges to make the fan culture of the community more positive and prosperous.

(III) Enhancing Copyright Awareness in Fan Creation

The emergence of the "sharing" concept has led to numerous infringement cases in recent years, and combined with fans' generally weak infringement awareness, fans are the main parties involved in related infringement incidents. Media, government, and schools must strengthen education and guidance on copyright to improve fans' copyright awareness during text creation.

First, platforms must emphasize copyright protection and improve relevant mechanisms. For example, various online variety shows should prohibit screenshots and screen recording during video playback and remind about or pursue relevant legal responsibilities for infringement behaviors. This can to some extent improve fans' copyright awareness and thereby emphasize the standardization of text production. Second, fans can negotiate beforehand with relevant copyright holders during text production about whether they can publish and share, and after publishing, they should also indicate material sources to avoid trouble caused by infringement during the sharing process. Finally, the government must strengthen supervision, actively publicize the seriousness of copyright infringement, and increase punishment for infringement behaviors. Law is a norm that everyone must abide by, and legal constraints can largely reduce infringement incidents.

While fan culture progresses, fan groups also need to pay attention to regulating their own behavior. The internet brings convenience while also becoming a venue for constraining fan text production. Fan text production enables fan culture

to flourish daily, but the problems arising from it also require fans to avoid and handle them, thereby ensuring the normal operation of online variety shows and achieving good publicity.

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