

Analysis of Media's Effect on People's Aesthetic: A Case Study on Tiktok

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Abstract. According to the Frankfurt School theory, the popularity of TikTok and its close connection with the culture industry has had various effects on the aesthetic preferences of users. The rise of the culture industry with the profitable industry chain behind it and the relationship between this and TikTok make TikTok tend to be uniform and vulgar in the aesthetics of the user group. The recommendation and use of algorithms has also further consolidated its negative trend. It has also had many indirect effects, and the current state of traditional culture being stifled in its development trend should not be underestimated. However, the rise of new media has simultaneously provided new avenues for traditional culture to be presented directly through modern media, providing more channels for its dissemination and expanding its reach. The use of modern technologies such as video, audio and photos allows traditional culture to be presented in multiple forms, which facilitates its preservation and dissemination.

Keywords: Frankfurt School; Aesthetic; Culture Industry; New Media; Traditional Culture.

1. Introduction

At the end of 2021, major platforms opened the year-end summary mode. When the topic of Chinese music was brought up during the music debate, it immediately shot to the top of the charts. A contentious annual top ten song list was generated by the 3rd TEMA Music Entertainment Festival, promoted as the Chinese music scene's year-end celebration. When the name appears, people might not immediately recognize the song or the names, but once the beat starts, they will realize that they have heard these patterns before, some even sing them.

"Ten years ago it was a fairy fight between singers, ten years later it was garbage sorting" With netizens complaining about the "Top Ten Hot Songs of the Year", this is a comment on the Internet. The term "music tailor" was hotly discussed by netizens. Those so-called "original innovative songs" produced through patchwork and seams have turned into popular hits through the push and propaganda of the TikTok platform. This kind of low-cost, effortless composing music and lyrics can have a high-yield "creation" method that made a group of fans chant: "Is the Chinese music finished?"

The biggest contradiction in this hit song list is that the songs are shoddy but highly spread. On the night of the announcement of the "Top Ten Hot Songs", there were many doubts in both Weibo and the moment of friends in WeChat, some people thought that there was a problem with the award rules, and some people thought that the general environment of Chinese songs was going wrong. In fact, it is not difficult to find out after careful research that there is nothing wrong with the hot song list itself. The evaluation standard is the popular songs that the public has loved to listen to in the past year, and netizens who complain about the list on Weibo have not used these songs as BGMs for TikTok videos. This playlist may not be a playlist in first- and second-tier cities, but a vast market pays for it.

Moreover, when it comes to "a broader market", who exactly does this market represent? It can be seen that in 2021, TikTok has become inseparable from the Chinese music scene because most of the songs on the list have a massive streaming and usage number on the TikTok platform. The logic of listening to music on TikTok differs from that of music software, which means as long as the ears are "satisfied", the lyrics are set meaningfully, and the melody composition is resonant, it is "good"[1].

Thus, it is possible to examine how modern social media platforms affect aesthetics. As an extension of this, the focus of this essay will be on the transmission of current Chinese traditional culture. The deepest spiritual aspiration of the Chinese people and the wellspring of their cultural confidence is their superb traditional culture. Excellent Chinese traditional culture depends on the expansion of its communication and technological infrastructure as well as the development and abandonment of its own cultural connotations. The development of new media has altered both the traditional modes of cultural exchange as well as the psychological and behavioral conditions under which the general public accepts information. This essay will explore the effective ways to promote the dissemination of excellent Chinese traditional culture by exploring the characteristics of new media.

2. Explanation of Such Phenomenon According to the Frankfurt School

In essence, this music industry chain, which has a strong correlation with TikTok, has become a mature cultural industry. Moreover, in this industry, the huge potential benefits continue to stimulate record companies one after the other while also letting singers hitchhike on the trend. In order to make a profit, many singers and companies will rush to produce some shoddy craftsmanship, which corresponds to the Frankfurt School's definition of the cultural industry. They believe that the cultural industry is an entertainment industry system that relies on modern science and technology to reproduce and disseminate cultural products on a large scale, including commercial radio, film, television, newspapers, magazines, popular music and other mass culture and mass media [2].

In 1947 Horkheimer and Adorno presented their essay "The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception" in their book *The Dialectics of Enlightenment*. In this work, they revealed for the first time that culture in the developed capitalist countries of the time was characterized by a large industry [3]. This industrialized cultural production was different from the mental work of individual workers in the pre-capitalist era. At that time, culture was the privilege of a few "geniuses" who produced what was known as elite culture and aristocratic culture. Nowadays, thanks to the development of technology, the means of producing literary works are becoming more and more widespread, and literary creation has been transformed into an activity based on science and technology that can be produced and reproduced in large batches. The author argues that the development of capitalism has transformed 'cinema and radio from art' to 'industry', and therefore uses the term 'cultural industry' to refer to these new cultural phenomena.

They argue that the cultural industry is manipulated by commercial forces to satisfy the needs of the "masses" and to entertain and amuse and that it produces spiritual and cultural consumer goods that lose the spirit of negation and transcendence that is the essence of art [3]. At the same time, this approach to artistic creation relies on mechanical technology, and the works are uniform in content and style, lacking artistic value. Cultural products 'tend to be uniform', with only minor differences between them, not seeking artistic perfection, but only keen on investment effects; they control and regulate the needs of cultural consumers, fettering human consciousness, depriving people of their emotions and hindering the development of their autonomy; they are a means of manipulation and deception, a means of stabilizing the existing order "social cement" [2]. The cultural industry is, in fact, an accomplice to social domination. On the other hand, by virtue of its monopoly on the media, the cultural industry controls the daily life of the masses right down to their innermost desires, eliminating the individual's critical spirit and sense of negation, making them "one-dimensional" human beings.

According to Business Insider, TikTok has an internal music department that works closely with the major record labels as well as monitoring music trends on the app on a daily basis [3]. The team involved has a range of measures in place to increase the popularity of a particular song - such as adding the track to playlists or using keyword settings to make the song more likely to be searched for.

To promote a new song, start by getting 20 bloggers to place content. Get the artist to cooperate by streaming some clips of the new song in advance to pique users' interest. Keep an eye on the trending topics and user behaviour on TikTok, and have singers interact with them whenever they can, and so forth. Some music companies are aiming for a 'hit' at the production stage in order to make the video go viral. Adding remixes that young people like, using more straightforward lyrics and adapting them to a fast-paced dance track for easy secondary creation. A "TikTok hit song" is born as quickly as 2 hours. The emergence of TikTok and the use of algorithms is precisely one of the things that have made these cultural commons increasingly sophisticated. People are deprived of choice, and users are sometimes forced to accept the recommendations given to them by the software, which makes TikTok somewhat of a hindrance to choice and pulls down the aesthetic level of the users.

3. The Connotation and Characteristics of New Media and Excellent Chinese Traditional Culture

With the development of the times, the medium of information dissemination and cultural inheritance is also constantly changing. The intergenerational transmission of excellent Chinese traditional culture depends on the support of communication media, and the characteristics and effects of communication vary from one medium to another depending on its own characteristics and expressions. In recent times, the form of communication media has evolved from newspapers and journals to radio and television to new media. Grasping the characteristics of new media and the characteristics of Chinese excellent traditional culture is conducive to promoting the modern transformation of Chinese excellent traditional culture in new media communication and expanding the path of survival of Chinese excellent traditional culture in media.

Paul Levinson points out that the evolution of media is a kind of self-regulation and self-organization in the system, the mechanism of which is the "later media" to the "first media". "Any media is a "remedy and supplement" for the missing functions of the old media. New media remedy the deficiencies of traditional paper media, sound media and sound and picture media, and also have a profound impact on the dissemination of excellent Chinese traditional culture [4-6].

3.1. The Unification of Aesthetics

Short videos of various types and styles have created a "landscape society" for readers and are leading them into a landscape society with diversified information. For example, they can follow and learn videos related to like painting, calligraphy, music, and reading, on the Jitterbug platform according to their interests, which not only broadens readers' aesthetic horizons to a certain extent but also broadens and extends their aesthetic choices and aesthetic awareness. However, although the dazzling short videos are different from each other, the messages convey a trend of entertainment and homogenisation. While improving readers' aesthetic videos appear, various vulgar, spoof and false, short videos also stimulate readers' eyeballs and impact readers' aesthetic values. "Unlike the long video era, there are few 'aesthetic' demands left in the short video wave that focus on ornamental, replaced by 'aesthetic ugliness'"[7]. The aesthetic value of readers is unstable, and the information projected by the short videos under the influence of pan-entertainment leads to the phenomenon of readers' aesthetics blindly following the trend or following the current. For example, the popular songs and dances played on the Jitterbug platform are changing more frequently than readers can react to. What readers pay attention to is not the connotation of the songs and dances themselves and whether they are professional, but the fact that everyone is singing and dancing and blindly following them, just for the sake of following the trend and fun. For example, Li Jiaqi and some other flow V in the major platforms live recommended products, regardless of good or bad, will instantly be "out of stock", and the reason for the out-of-stock is that some readers do not consider whether the product is suitable for itself and their own financial situation blind consumption caused. These phenomena eventually lead readers to focus only on sensory enjoyment, only care about whether the content is

entertaining and funny, so they cannot resist the invasion of short video content pan-entertainment, aesthetic awareness gradually towards uniformity.

3.2. The Vulgarization of Aesthetics

When people entered the visual age, scholars voiced their concern about the superficialization of aesthetics caused by the turn of visual culture. If images weaken our ability to think deeply and imagine more than words, then images are even worse than words. As Negroponte said: "Multimedia representations are too concrete, so it is increasingly difficult to find room for imaginative play. In contrast, words can stimulate imagery and metaphor, enabling the reader to derive rich meaning from imagination and experience"[5]. Looking back at the development of contemporary micro-culture, from Weibo to WeChat, and then to short videos such as ShakeYin and Racer, in general, people are experiencing the change of "text - picture - long video - short video", which This also shows that the aesthetic thinking of the public is gradually inert, and the aesthetic experience is gradually superficial. Short video aesthetics are becoming vulgarised and "ugly". "The aesthetic significance of ugliness is to arouse the subject's emotion to negate ugliness, so as to understand the connotation of beauty better and appreciate its existence, and then actively discover the beauty and firmly pursue it. However, when the phenomenon of "ugliness" enters the Internet, various kinds of ugly images spread rapidly and are watched, forwarded and imitated by the majority of netizens, forming the "ugly flow" and "ugly economy" unique to the Internet. This has created a unique "ugly traffic" and "ugly economy" on the Internet. The impact of "ugly" short videos on contemporary society is complex and multi-faceted, with positive effects of revealing social problems and warning the public but also negative effects of alienating cultural ecology and misleading social morale. From the perspective of the current state of content production, short videos on ugliness can be roughly divided into the following categories.

Firstly, promoting beauty with ugliness and demonstrating by oneself. In the "ugly" short videos, some of the works face the prominent social problems and the falsehood and hypocrisy in human nature, trying to help people face up to the ugly phenomena in life with strong reality and ugliness and then establish correct values and firmly pursue the truth, goodness and beauty.

Second, beauty and ugliness are not distinguished from right and wrong. The problem of "ugliness" is not only a formal problem but also a distortion and deviation in ethics, morality, social norms and spiritual cultivation. The "indistinguishability of beauty and ugliness" in short videos is the infiltration and transfer of irrational emotions and wrong values of art subjects (including creation and acceptance subjects) through the non-harmonious content output of creative subjects. Recently, "Buddhist women" has been frequently on the hot search, and netizens have twisted and harmonized "Buddhist style" and "pure desire" together to form a new style of famous women with "enlightenment and meditation" as the core. "The new style of the celebrity, the solemn Buddha Hall, the temple, has become the new netroots vulgarity hitting the spot. From the "single celebrity" to the "school lady", "nucleic acid lady", and "Buddha lady", they are known for their "novelty" and "newness". The most important thing is that they are not only a "novelty", "high class" and "soft porn", but also a distorted materialistic value of life. Under the beautiful appearance, they hide their rotten hearts but still do not know it, and this kind of content is not distinguishing beauty from ugliness and right from wrong.

Thirdly, ugly is beautiful, and ugly is alienated. In the virtual network, "ugly" has gradually deviated from the traditional aesthetics, and a large number of contents are produced with ugly as beauty, resulting in the alienation of "ugly", which is characterised by the alienation of the creative subject and the acceptance subject, and the alienation of content production and content consumption. The root of this is the alienation of cultural views and values. For example, the net popularity "Charming Teacher Guo", who initially tried out the online platform as a "beauty blogger", succeeded in "cashing in" after winning attention by accidentally "playing ugly". After the "cash", she went to the path of alienation of anti-circuit performance - in front of the camera recklessly farting, smelling feet, screaming loudly, creating "Guo Guo language", and others, in the netizen speech attack, she said "Originally is to earn this money, others scold me two sentences are acceptable." It can be seen

that "Ms. Guo" has a clear understanding of her own production content, but still attempts to create short video hits with non-nutritious cultural output and meaningless social value expressions, insisting on the creative logic of "ugly is beautiful", and eventually sinking into the quagmire of ugly alienation. The viewers' perception of the beauty in short videos could be better.

Last, the viewer's perception of beauty in short videos mostly stays at the level of sensory pleasure caused by vision, hearing and touch, and short videos construct an "anthropomorphic" world so that the viewer is immersed in the orgy brought by the senses and the deep aesthetic is obscured by the instantaneous pleasure. Bozeman once said, "There are two ways to let the spirit of culture wither; one is Orwellian - culture becomes a prison, and the other is Huxley - culture becomes a burlesque. "Huxleyan" means that culture will become a vulgar culture full of sensual stimulation, desire and games [6]. Today's short-form video culture has this trend. In order to meet the aesthetic interests of the audience, the phenomenon of ugliness and vulgarity has emerged in short videos. Some creators, in order to attract attention, cater to the audience's interest through curious video content, the so-called kitsch, as Calinescu said, "is actually everything that obeys the judgment of fun [7]. For example, the short videos of self-mutilating drinking and self-mutilating eating on the platform "Racer" are vulgar and unattractive, but they still attract some viewers with curiosity. Short videos, in order to attract attention, cater to the audience's low interest, whether with linguistic banter or ugly visual content, to meet the reader's sensory stimulation. In the final analysis, "kitsch" is a kind of cultural pollution. This is undoubtedly a vulgar aesthetic value.

4. The Feasible Route for Promoting Outstanding Chinese Traditional Culture in the Context of Modern Media

It is both a difficulty and an opportunity since the modern media environment has created new options for the wonderful Chinese traditional culture to be shared. People should begin by focusing on three areas: updating our understanding, taking action, and improving reviews in order to innovate the way that good Chinese traditional culture is disseminated through the use of new media.

The easy-to-transmit qualities of modern media provide the opportunity for the innovative adaptation of superb Chinese traditional culture. Innovative distribution strategies are used. Breaking through the barriers of time and space, interactive communication, and many-to-many mass communication methods greatly increase the dissemination efficiency in the new media era, enabling the traditional culture dissemination method to become more creative and enjoyable. This is especially true for China, where the excellent traditional culture dissemination method is known for its innovation and enjoyment. For instance, a lot of traditional cultures are now represented online. Even if some traditional civilizations' tangible culture has vanished, these cultures have been preserved in other ways thanks to digitisation. These traditional cultures can be preserved in digital museums and then handed down from one generation to the next, keeping some of the traditional cultures that have vanished in people's minds and even allowing for their transmission. The organization and gathering of a huge number of rich information resources on the great Chinese traditional culture is the first stage in its creative development. In the age of new media, it is easier to search for different categories of traditional culture and the storage database of excellent Chinese traditional culture has a larger capacity, making it possible to effectively gather resources for the creative transformation of Chinese excellent traditional culture [8].

New media allows users to interact with traditional culture in a personalized way. The algorithm-based information recommendation on new media can directly recommend traditional culture to users who are interested in traditional culture, i.e. to realise the accurate dissemination to users who are interested in traditional culture. The users who are interested in traditional culture usually have their own communities, and they can share traditional culture in these communities [9]. This can spread to more people in a short period of time. Besides learning traditional culture, users in the community can discuss the issue with each other and deepen their understanding of traditional culture and further spread it. Expand the scope of dissemination. For example, regional food culture and regional material

culture are originally limited to a specific area, but new media can quickly expand the scope of influence. For example, Li Ziqi, who has more than 53 million fans, has spread Chinese rural culture and agricultural civilization through short videos, so that more domestic and foreign people can understand Chinese farming culture [10].

5. Conclusion

The excellent traditional culture of China is the foundation and source of socialist culture with Chinese characteristics and one of the main sources of human civilisation. To promote the construction of advanced culture in China today, people must inherit and carry forward the excellent traditional culture of China. For example, ancient Chinese Confucianism still has a positive effect on our development today, emphasizing the harmonious development between man and nature, man and society, and man and man, and the concepts it advocates are also asking readers to establish a correct worldview and values, the essence of China's excellent traditional culture is still worth learning and carrying forward today. However, with the development of network technology and the popularity of short videos on the Internet, the mainstream culture that reflects the excellent Chinese culture and the core socialist values is no longer popular, but the popular culture that reflects the readers' daily life and entertainment has emerged and become popular. Popular culture is usually a form of culture that is profit-oriented and can meet the aesthetics of the public, spread through the mass media and serve the public. With the development of modern science and technology and the continuous improvement of mass media, from newspapers, books, and popular music to movies, television and advertisements, popular culture has become the mainstream culture of society, resulting in the marginalization of good traditional culture. To a certain extent, mass culture has promoted democratic development and improved the quality of citizens, but its disadvantages are even greater adverse effects on readers. Because it focuses more on the usual and mundane events in daily life, promotes practicality, self-interest and enjoyment, and is highly purposeful in terms of profit, entertainment and trends, it is still welcomed by many people, and the influence of popular culture is gradually increasing. From today's short video platform, there are fewer videos spreading socialist core values and excellent traditional culture, but what frequently appears in the readers' view is a large number of vulgar, vulgar and popular short videos, which attract attention by spoofing and cheap fun, plus short videos are the most direct and naked way to pass information to the audience, causing various wrong values and vulgar culture to take the place of mainstream values gradually. Popular culture itself has commodity properties, using culture and aesthetics to obtain maximum benefit, precisely in catering to the current social trends and the aesthetics of the public, resulting in the audience immersed in entertainment without knowing. Some of the implied negative factors are dissolving the correct values, advocating the pursuit of power and wealth, and the prevalence of consumerism, leading readers to overly pursue the external and neglect the spiritual.

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