Analysis of the Reflection of Audience Participation in the Film and Television Drama

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Abstract: With the deepening of the current media convergence, the audience is changing from the receiver of communication content to the producer of communication content. In this context, when audiences watch movies and TV dramas through new media platforms, their sense of participation will become increasingly prominent. This paper will study the deepening of audience's sense and its relevant significance under the background of new media from the three aspects of early traditional media, bullet comments culture and interactive dramas.

Keywords: Participation, movies and TV plays, interactive play

1. Introduction

"Participatory culture" was first put forward in the book " Textual Poachers: Television Fans and Participatory Culture " written by Henry Jenkins, the American communication scientist in 1922 . It refers to a new media culture of freedom, equality, openness, inclusiveness and sharing that is created on the platform of Web2.0 network with all netizens as the main body, through a certain identity, and in the main form of active creation of media texts, dissemination of media content and strengthening of network communication.①

The current rapid development of science and technology has brought about the constant change of media environment, which has brought us certain convenience in both time and space. The changes in traditional life concepts and the changes in previous interaction mode are more vividly reflected in the new media era. The role of the audience has also changed, from a single, passive receiver to a deepening participant. As a new type of media culture, participatory culture appears in the constant change and development of media environment.

Since 2010,film and television industry in China has entered the era of omnimedia. Due to the omnimedic broadcast platform and omnimedic text, the creation of film and television plays has also undergone important changes. With the online generation audience becoming the mainstream crowd of watching TV dramas, the creation of movies and TV dramas has also been constantly showing a young and idolized feature.

The change of audience has become an important feature of the omnimedia era. The traditional TV plays exists in a single way. In such an environment, the medium is television, and the scene is in the house. In the era of omnimedia, audiences have more free and diversified choices in content, time, platform and other aspects. As a result, more and more "post-80s", "post-90s" and "post-00s" online generation have become new audiences watching movies and TV series. They pay more attention in participatory ways when watching TV plays, and their aesthetic trends are more alternative, which makes the creation of films and TV series need to take more into account the aesthetic taste, topic heat and acceptability of young audiences.

At the beginning of 2020, iPartment 5, which has lasted for four seasons, finally welcomed its final season. While maintaining the previous relaxed, humorous and funny comedy, iPartment 5 made some innovations. For example, in the drama increased the vertical screen parts, e-commerc live streaming, bullet screen comment culture and other new fashion ways, even play the interactive drama. In the thirteenth episode, the different destinies of the protagonists will be decided by the interactive choices of the audience. The biggest difference between this episode and previous episodes is that the plot cannot be fast-forward, which enhances the user's sense of immersion. According to the statistics, 97.4% of the users actively chose to participate in the interaction, and the per capita interaction reached more than six times among the users who entered the episode.

2. Changes of Participation Forms in Movies, Television and Drama

Roland Barthes, in his 1967 book The Death of the Author, pointed out that readers can read the text "freely" and can dismember the text after the death of the author at any time. After subverting the position of "author" in the text and deconstructing the "author-text-reader" structure centering on "author", Barthes establishes a new structure of "reader-text-author" centering on "reader".②

In his 1970 book S/Z, he divided texts into "readable texts" and "writable texts". "Readable text" refers to the traditional classical works, in which the reader's role is purely passive consumer, with only the freedom to accept or reject. With its multiplicity of meaning, openness of space and limitlessness of language activities, "writable text" provides different text modes for different readers and allows active participation of readers.③

Enhancing the interactivity of participation has always been the dream and constant pursuit of the film and television industry. The first film in history using interaction in plot design was Automatic Film inn 1966, made by two New Wave directors in Czech. It is a black comedy, and viewers can vote for the next plot direction by pressing the red or green buttons. There are 9 time plots in the movie. Every parts reaches a node in time, the performance will be suspended, and the host will come on stage and let the audience vote between the two scenes. Finally, the story chosen by most of the audience will be played.

2.1 Participation in the Media Transformation Period

In the early days, the interaction of traditional TV plays was almost all through letters, phone calls, text messages and other forms of audiences to participate in the interaction with TV programs, which was considered by most people as one of the regrets of TV plays. After entering the era of Web2.0, the interaction between audiences and creators is mainly reflected in the fact that creators of films and TV dramas not only regard audiences as receivers of content communication, but also as participants in the process of it.

The "shooting when broadcasting" mode is more popular in the United States and South Korea,, and its purpose lies in this.

In American TV series, the large audience base provides Netflix, YouTube and other video platforms with rich audience information, such as audience's viewing preferences, viewing time and regions. Through the collation of big data, online platforms can know which types of works are most popular with which types of users. South Korea implements a system of "writing and filming while broadcasting". Before the broadcast, the crew usually shoots several episodes first. After the broadcast, the crew will start to collect feedback from the audience, including the plot development and actors' costumes, and then adjust the content according to the audience's opinions to make the content more close to the audience's aesthetic needs.

Under the influence of participating culture, the mode of "shooting while broadcasting" has become the first attempt to interact between movies and TV series and audiences. The so-called media consumers become media producers and "shoot while broadcasting" became the thinking mode of implementation, content creators are now trying to establish a platform which provides a screenplay dialogue with the audience of sharing the content creation, the writers take the advice from audience or fans, and timely change the plot and characters, or in the selection of actors and story ending.

The ancient romance TV play called "Song in the Clouds of Love" was played on Hunan TV. A poll was conducted online for the endings of multiple versions. The presentation of the four endings has caused a lot of controversies among fans of the original work and between respecting the original work and reinterpreting it. Needless to say, it made the show even more popular before it ended.

One of the fans said, "A re-interpretation is the perfect answer. Although I haven't read the novel, I have been getting better with the plot. I still hope to see the ending I expect, so that letting we audience vote is more in line with our ideas.""Now that the author has written what he thought was the perfect ending, why not respect the book and maintain the same tone?" said another fan of the novel.

Lu Xun once commented on A Dream in Red Mansions: the meaning of destiny alone is varied according to the readers' eyes: the scrists see the yi, the moralists see the adultery, the intellectuals see the love, the revolutionaries see the full row, the gossipers see the chambers' secret affairs. The saying "A thousand Hamlets for a thousand readers" is true. Therefore, the drama conducted voting activities on the official microblog of four versions of the ending, allowing fans of the original work and the audience to vote and choose from the unpredictable version of the plot, and play the ending plot that is more

acceptable to the audience to broadcast.

2.2 Participate in the Deepening Bullet Screen Comment Culture

The first video websites that introduced the bullet screen comments to China are Acfun and Bilibili. Due to the unexpected special effects shown by the bullet screen when watching video works, the major mainstream network platforms have been used one after another gradually. Now Youku, iQiYi, Tencent, Mango and other video websites also have the function of bullet screen, which also began to be used and popular in China.

It can be said that the promotion of technology is the fundamental reason for the appearance of the bullet screen. The extremely strong participation and interaction of the bullet screen itself is unprecedented, which is just in line with the rapid development of the Internet era. What the bullet screen forms is a text space jointly established by the audience, and there has always been "resonance" between them as a bridge connecting them. The interactive ritual chain is constructed in the current era of omnisedia, so the bullet screen has become a ritual for each of us to share empathic content. Therefore, when the video is played and the interaction with the bullet screen comments frequently pop out, the audience will keep a high degree of attention. The emotion between the audience begins to be expressed through the bullet screen, so they will feel less lonely behind the screen and have a certain emotional resonance. Therefore, this is also an important reason why young audiences like to use the function of bullet screen.

The appearance of bullet screen function further urges audiences to comment on the content of movies and TV plays through various media, and realizes real-time interaction with other viewers. For example, they can send their feelings when watching, and even reply to the latest bullet screen or thumb up for it. After the appearance of the bullet screen, the loneliness of the audience when watching the video was completely broken. Therefore, bullet screens have become a part of watching video content, and now most of the audience are willing to turn on or even send bullet screens for interaction.

The sitcom Ipartment 5, in the 13-episode "bullet screen space", takes the bullet screen as the point and establishes a strong sense of interaction with the audience in front of the screen in the form of interactive mode. As an inclusive text on video websites, bullet screens are closely related to participatory culture. Through spontaneous participation and sending of bullet screens, audiences can realize their self-identity and also give certain feedback to the content of video works. It can be seen that the bullet screen itself is a typical representative of participatory culture.

2.3 Active Participation in Interactive Drama

The development of interactive drama is based on the emergence of new media such as PC terminal and mobile terminal. It is the emergence of these media that makes the emergence of interactive drama possible. The biggest difference between interactive drama and traditional media in form is that according to the needs of the audience, "passive acceptance" has been changed into "active selection", so as to meet the needs of the audience for information acquisition.

"Interactive" behavior can be seen as a common behavior in the current overall environment. The desire of Internet users to have a voice in the Internet world has been amplified. In the field of video content, alternative broadcasting forms such as bullet screen screen, "see TA only" and double speed viewing have gradually become indispensable content. However, the self-awareness of the audience continues to grow. Their participation in short videos and TV dramas is no longer limited to bullet screens and comments, they begin to hope to influence the storyline with the "God's perspective", and to intervene in film and television works in an interactive way similar to games, so as to bring better immersing experience and satisfaction.

Interactive drama can also be said the interactive games by the combination of technology and entertainment. It adopts design concepts from games, loyalty programs and principles of behavioral economics to promote user interaction and participation. The plot continues mainly through the audience's choice, and the user controls the choice button to realize participation. Such TV plays based on the interactive relationship between users and creators put the core on the interaction between the audience and the content text. Through this interactive narrative process, the audience participates in and chooses the potential plot to turn it into reality, so as to make the film conform to the story imagination in the audience's mind.

In 2018, Netflix in the United States broadcast Black Mirror series Black Mirror: Pandasneki, and the

form of interactive video further aroused great attention and discussion. Viewers can make individual choices at different points, and the plot could in theory have tens of thousands of permutations.④ Since 2019, the domestic entertainment industry has been undergoing great changes due to the multiple influences of users' movie-watching demands and technological level. During this period, the wave of "interactive" film and television content has begun to swept across China, and all major platforms in China have also seen the development potential of the new mode of interactive drama.

In June 2018, Youku proposed the development trend of "interactive film" at its film strategy press conference, and then launched its first interactive series, "Female Medical Examiner of Tang Dynasty", In May 2019, iQIYI released the interactive drama "His Smile" and released the world's first interactive video standard, aiming interactive video as one of iQiyi's innovation directions in the future.

The Episode 13 of Iapartment 5 is an interactive drama that gets viewers involved in the story more quickly. In the plot, Hu Yifei receives a mysterious box with a red button "271" on top of it. Viewers can manipulate the red button to control direction according to the hints. In this way the audience get involved in the interactive mode. There will be options in each key node there, and the audience can choose according to their own preferences. Thus the different choice make the different results, which also leads to various versions of the denouement. The plot of the episode was nearly three times as long as that of the normal episodes. This novel experience of watching the drama aroused strong curiosity among the audience.⑤ In this way, the audience will participate in the construction of the virtual world, and one-way communication will turn into interactive communication, thus improving the experience of participating in the interaction. The interactive drama also helped ipartment 5's rating on Douban increase to a certain extent.

3. The Significance of Audience Participation and Interaction

The research on the audience's participation in the interaction in films and TV plays has always been an important topic for film and television creators. At the end of last century, some scholars put forward the theory of "leaning forward" and "leaning back", namely active or passive, in view of the two different psychological states of using personal computers and watching TV. So obviously the PC is considered a "forward leaning" device, because the user is actively engaged in whatever they are doing, which is an active activity; Television, on the other hand, is considered to be a "reclining" device, because the audience can lean back on the sofa in a relaxed posture to watch the program, which is a passive behavior.⑥

Currently, as the audience participates in the creation of film and television dramas and broadcast of related information, the wall that exists between the audience and the media has been broken. In the process of such two-way interaction, the speed of information transmission is obviously showing a rapid upward trend. With the continuous maturity of mobile terminal platforms and 5G technology, audiences can thumb up, comment and publish bullet screen on the basis of received information, and can also forward and share them to other social platforms for real-time interaction.

In 2019, the program called Xinwenlianbo launched a new short video program, Anchor Talk, which opened a new round of interaction mode with the audience by entering Kuaishou, Tik tok and other short video platforms. In the program, the host actively responds to the hot topics that the audience pays attention to. The increase of interactivity and participation makes the program full of new vitality and encourages more young people to pay attention on it.

In the context of omnimedia, the initiative of the audience has been further strengthened. Now, the voice of the audience has been expanded and the degree of freedom has also been enhanced. On this basis, the all-round interaction of opinions has been realized. Most of the audience actively participate in the media environment, so that they generate UGC, PUGC and other contents, and they timely and effectively feedback their thoughts. While increasing their interest in the creation and broadcast of media content, they are also constantly stimulating the audience's attention to all kinds of media.

During the construction of the Mount Vulcan Hospital, which was set up earlier this year to combat the epidemic, a "slow live show" was broadcast. This live show attracted the attention of the people all over the country. Through interactive bullet screen, it increased our participation in epidemic prevention and control, hospital construction and related events, topics and public opinion orientation, to some extent, produced the effect of secondary transmission. There is even a new identity of "cloud supervisor". "Slow live show" gives audiences a longer time to realize the transition from "onlooker" to "participant", from "listening to him" to "listening to me", so as to weaken the uncertainty of information and relieve anxiety

through their own practical actions.

Through audience participation, our media platform is no longer a single mouthpiece, but a new tool to express the aspirations of each of our audiences. In the process of the audience participating in the communication, the real and vivid content will have a stronger communication effect by praising the truth, the good and the beautiful and castigating the false, the evil and the ugliness. This action will undoubtedly have an active promoting effect to the construction of whole social spiritual civilization.

4. Conclusion

In the new media environment, the audience's participation is deepening day by day. New cultural and artistic forms are constantly being created among producers, media and audiences. Our film and television art has expanded the road from one-way to two-way communication. Through interaction, selection, bullet screen comments and other participation methods, more audiences participate in the generation of video content. Audiences are deeply involved in the construction of culture and art. Generally speaking, passive, isolated and silent receivers in the era of traditional media have become more active, active and get involved in the current era of media convergence. But we have realize that there must exists certain problems in the involvements. The problems refer to the media getting same and vulgar. How to make the media industry healthy and sustained, build a green network space, and be both fair wind and down to earth, is our mission as a media worker.

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