

The Analysis of the Phenomenon of Pan-Entertainment in the Era of New Media

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Abstract: Digital media, such as computers and cellular phones, have undergone a period of accelerated development since the second half of the 19th century, with the general public becoming increasingly immersed in the new media age. In the digital age, there has been a significant increase in the variety, scope and speed of mass communication, facilitated by a wider variety of technologies. The accessibility of information has also increased, especially compared to the era of traditional media. Entertainment as a component of communication has proliferated in many ways and has become a ubiquitous aspect of public life. However, in the context of contemporary society, the prevalence of pan-entertainment has given rise to the phenomenon of pan-entertainment, whereby almost every aspect of life is regarded as forms of entertainment, deserving social attention. This paper discusses the phenomenon of pan-entertainment in the context of the new media era, combining theory and case study. Using the example of comedian Li Haoshi (HOUSE) and his fans, the paper explores the role of media and capital, technological development, and social demand in the emergence of this phenomenon. Finally, the paper argues that while entertainment is positive, the public must be alert to its potential harm to aesthetics, spirituality and values. To this end, the paper suggests measures at the educational, law and platform levels.

Keywords: Communication, Pan-Entertainment, New Media, Stand-Up Comedy.

1. Introduction

In the context of the advent of new media, public discourse has increasingly assumed the form of entertainment, which has become increasingly pervasive and has brought about a multitude of adverse consequences for the general public. At present, there are many studies on the phenomenon of pan-entertainment, mostly focusing on the impact on a certain group of people, the cause of a certain aspect or the implementation of specific response measures. In these existing studies, it is rare to argue the field with specific cases, especially unprecedented in terms of stand-up comedies and their fans. However, stand-up comedies, as a popular topic and an important part of popular entertainment today, can be discussed as a typical case of the phenomenon of pan-entertainment. This paper places its research in the context of the new media era and examines the phenomenon of pan-entertainment through the lens of stand-up comedy as a contemporary form of entertainment. Through the two methods of literature analysis and case study analysis, the current situation, causes, specific cases, impacts and response methods of pan-entertainment are comprehensively elaborated. Thus, this paper

helps to analyze the phenomenon of pan-entertainment in a more comprehensive and complete way, and puts forward suggestions and solutions to the impacts that exist or may arise. In addition, this paper aims to arouse public vigilance and concern about pan-entertainment and to provide some reference value for other researchers in the same field.

2. The Phenomenon of Pan-Entertainment in the New Media Era

2.1. Concept and Context of Pan-Entertainment

Pan-entertainment refers to the widespread expansion of entertainment content, gradually evolving into a social trend. As a cultural phenomenon centered on consumerism and hedonism, it relieves tension and pursues physical and mental pleasure through shallow emotional expressions. However, this shallow quality has led to the negative effects of pan-entertainment outweighing the positive ones. As the mass media shifted from political propaganda to satisfying personal needs, entertaining inevitably emerged. Although pan-entertainment satisfies the psychological needs of the masses and forms an industrial chain, it also brings problems such as shallow cultural content and weakened values. Excessive entertainment has weakened the sense of social responsibility, making people pay more attention to personal enjoyment and neglect social problems. Economy-driven decline in cultural quality. Although pan-entertainment brings short-lived pleasure to life, its negative impact cannot be ignored. How to maintain cultural depth and avoid imbalance of values in entertainment is a problem that needs to be solved urgently.

2.2. New Media in Pan-Entertainment

New media play a pivotal role in the field of pan-entertainment, providing multiple avenues for the creation and dissemination of entertainment content, as well as promoting the diversification and verticalization of content. Users can not only share a wide range of colorful videos on short video platforms like TikTok and Kuaishou but also extend their reach into fields such as e-sports and anime through social platforms like Bilibili and Weibo. And this phenomenon has led to the formation of a unique community culture in which users interact with the content through actions such as liking, and sharing, facilitating the dissemination and exposure of quality content. New media has thus become a conduit between traditional entertainment and emerging entertainment modes, thereby constructing a more comprehensive entertainment ecosystem and facilitating the popularization of entertainment. Concurrently, it also provides more ways to consume, thereby leading to the gradual replacement of traditional in-store shopping with virtual goods and live-streaming channels [1]. The ascendance of virtual goods and live broadcasting has supplanted traditional shopping, while the flourishing of the entertainment industry has concomitantly fostered a surge in consumerism.

3. Factors Contributing to the Phenomenon of Pan-Entertainment

3.1. Media and Capital

Media controlled by political or commercial forces often weave elaborate “media lies” designed to shape public values and gather people into a highly entertainment-driven society. This creates an almost indestructible, hegemonic cultural carnival [2]. This phenomenon is akin to the concept of a “pseudo-environment,” where people’s perceptions and behaviors are no longer based on genuine thoughts and experiences but are reconstructed under the invisible control of media, altering their true view of the world into something virtual rather than real [3]. The capitalistic system employs market orientation and contemporary technology for the large-scale production and dissemination of culture, integrating entertainment activities into production lines and ultimately providing homogenized

“cultural industry” products. To achieve capital appreciation, media is manipulated to cater to basic human desires and weaknesses, producing a vast array of entertainment products to continually provide cultural pleasure. Through so-called highbrow aesthetics, the media suppresses genuine needs, continually profiting from the public. Thus, the phenomenon of pan-entertainment, in the context of the cultural industry, is essentially an inevitable product of capital development and commercialization.

3.2. Social Demand

In an era of extreme material abundance, people no longer worry about basic needs and instead seek fulfillment in their spiritual world. At the same time, the fast-paced and high-pressure nature of modern society makes entertainment the best way to escape reality and relieve stress. The new experiences and pleasure provided by entertainment help people relax, maintain mental health, and tackle other life challenges with renewed vigor. Consequently, the demand for various forms and durations of entertainment continues to grow. Media, emerging to meet the public’s need for communication, always starts with fulfilling these needs. As the public’s pursuit of entertainment intensifies, media will produce large amounts of entertainment content to receive positive feedback. Whether it is the extreme fan culture or the extensive text editing and film editing, it reflects how people seek emotional satisfaction through entertainment in response to monotonous or stressful lives. This is also an inevitable outcome of social development reaching a certain stage.

3.3. Technological Development

From a historical perspective, human communication has evolved through four stages, namely oral communication, written communication, print communication, and electronic communication. The emergence of each new stage does not mean the disappearance of older media; rather, it builds upon them, driving continuous innovation and development in communication methods, hence making them increasingly diverse. Nowadays, with the widespread adoption of internet technology, online communication methods have rapidly multiplied, breaking down the barriers of time and space and greatly shortening the distance of information transmission [4]. The traditional media are gradually being replaced by new media, which now dominate various aspects of social life and rely on digital technology to broadly disseminate cultural and entertainment products. The entertainment industry offers a wide range of entertainment options to attract the public and also uses big data algorithms to provide personalized recommendations based on in-depth analysis of individual preferences and needs. This approach not only increases user loyalty, but also ensures continued engagement and consumption of entertainment content and products.

4. Pan-Entertainment Phenomenon: The Case of Stand-up Comedy

4.1. Relevant Events

In May 2023, comedian Li Haoshi (HOUSE) from Shanghai Xiaoguo Culture made a controversial comment during a performance in Beijing. He shared that he adopted two stray dogs because their chasing of squirrels reminded him of the phrase “exemplary conduct and victorious performance.” This comment then quickly drew widespread criticism on Weibo, with many arguing that it was disrespectful to the military and that no context should excuse defamation or ridicule. This wasn’t the first time Xiaoguo’s performers have faced backlash. Li Dan, a prominent artist and shareholder in the company, previously drew criticism for comments in a Ubras lingerie ad that were viewed as objectifying and demeaning to women. Despite the swift and decisive consequences faced by Li Haoshi, including being released from his contract and banned from performing nationwide, many

people still view his comments as part of the stand-up comedy art that uses exaggeration and satire to provoke laughter. This has led to concerns about the future of the stand-up comedy industry, with fans expressing frustration and attacking those with differing opinions online.

4.2. Specific Performance

Unlike stand-up comedians who address serious topics like politics, history, and gender, many stand-up comedy fans are shaped by an entertainment-driven mindset marked by blind loyalty, prejudice, and arrogance. With the rise of the internet and new media, access to information has become much easier, and the variety of ways information is spread has increased. This, combined with rising consumption levels, has led to a booming entertainment industry. While this has met the public's emotional needs and provided substantial emotional value, it has also caused entertainment to overly invade everyday life. In the current digital landscape, a term can rapidly become an internet phenomenon with just a few clicks, and content that is designed primarily for entertainment may be either factual or deceptive. Media-generated illusions often incite heightened enthusiasm, while the proliferation of online traffic can lead to obsessive behaviors [5]. And popular phrases are increasingly turning into internet memes. Besides, fans are obsessed with their idols, experiencing fluctuating emotional states and seeking temporary respite in fragmented online interactions. Public discourse is progressively adopting an entertainment-oriented format, evolving into a dominant cultural influence [6]. In this incident, both the performers and their fans are primarily focused on entertainment, highlighting the pervasive nature of hyper-entertainment culture.

5. Negative Effects of and Responses to the Phenomenon of Pan-Entertainment

5.1. Value concept

The Li Haoshi incident reveals the pervasive influence of pan-entertainment culture. Both the comedian who made the inappropriate comments and the fans defending him have failed to grasp the deeper meaning of the phrase “exemplary conduct and victorious performance.” This highlights a core aspect of pan-entertainment: treating entertainment as the supreme value and using hedonism and consumerism to obscure its deeper significance. In this environment, entertainment becomes the sole standard, overshadowing cultural and social responsibilities. The public, influenced by this atmosphere, increasingly seeks immediate entertainment gratification, neglecting the depth and context of content, leading to a distortion of cultural values. Driven by hedonism and consumerism, entertainment content production and consumption become dominant, diminishing cultural depth and social responsibility. And media outlets, in their pursuit of traffic and profit, tend to produce low-quality content that stimulates the senses, which includes sensational, pornographic, or violent material. This trend intensifies the impact of pan-entertainment, hence making it a dominant force in cultural and social discourse.

5.2. Aesthetic Concept

Li Dan's use of vulgar comments to objectify women in advertisements, along with “Crazy brother Yang” and “The yellow light of the traffic light” attracting viewers with crude images, exposes the erosion of culture by hyper-entertainment. Pan-entertainment reduces all phenomena to mere entertainment, leading cultural content to prioritize the lowest level of sensory stimulation while neglecting aesthetic standards. Although aesthetics is subjective, it is not entirely without basis. While there is no universal standard of beauty, various aesthetic theories offer frameworks for evaluating beauty. Beauty involves not only visual pleasure but should also connect with the soul through visual means, providing deeper satisfaction [7]. Artistic aesthetics aim for elevated values and imbue beauty

with philosophical significance. However, pan-entertainment simplifies artistic content to fleeting sensory experiences, diminishing the depth of aesthetics and leading to the degradation of aesthetic values and the spiritual world [8]. Individuals should respect themselves and pursue higher aesthetic standards [9], but many of them ignore this respect in their pursuit of vulgar entertainment, which not only devalues the quality of cultural entertainment, but exacerbates the effects of over-entertainment.

5.3. Spiritual Aspects

Since the rise of China's short video industry in 2016, entertainment culture has entered a new phase. Whether on the subway, during breaks, or while waiting at traffic lights, people are constantly scrolling through their phone screens. The convenience of short videos has led to the replacement of lengthy films and books with simplified information. The fast pace of modern life has eroded people's patience for in-depth content, leading more individuals to shift toward short, frequent entertainment consumption and develop a fragmented entertainment habit. Under the weight of societal pressures, fragmented entertainment has become a temporary escape from fatigue and mental exhaustion, yet it fails to address the deeper inner desires. The "mental fatigue" people experience is intensifying, with the search for "emotional value" seen as a remedy. However, while short videos and other fragmented content satisfy immediate sensory needs, they do not fill the deeper spiritual void or existential meaninglessness. The instant gratification of the virtual world exacerbates the escape from reality, creating an illusory sense of relief. This situation is akin to Zhuang Zhou's butterfly dream, blurring the boundary between the virtual and the real. People seek the authenticity missing in their real lives through virtual entertainment, mistakenly equating virtual experiences with reality. Hyper-entertainment does not offer genuine spiritual freedom but traps individuals in a mental straitjacket. People's suffering stems from an overreliance on entertainment, preventing them from reflecting on why they are addicted to virtual pleasures and understanding why contemplation and meaning have become scarce. Consequently, this superficial entertainment leads to a nihilistic mindset and spiritual emptiness..

6. Coping Strategies

6.1. Education

In the course of growing up, adolescents are easily attracted to external entertainment products, and due to their lack of judgment and self-control, they may become addicted to such entertainment contents. Therefore, the education system should strengthen education on media literacy and teach students how to select valuable entertainment contents critically instead of indulging in superficial stimulation only [10]. At the same time, students should be encouraged to participate in social practices and arts activities to enrich their extracurricular life and spiritual world, and provide more ways to relax. In addition, personal growth cannot be separated from imitation of those who have gone before. For adolescents who have not yet developed mature concepts, parents need to lead by example during the early stages of forming their thoughts and habits. They should avoid excessive indulgence in entertainment products to prevent setting a negative example for their children. Through such guidance and education, they can help their teenagers develop a healthy concept of entertainment and a more holistic path of growth.

6.2. Law

Legal regulations for the entertainment industry need to be quickly improved. It is crucial to investigate and penalize false or misleading content on major new media platforms and address various entertainment-related issues. Encouraging the public to engage with positive content while

resisting vulgar and superficial entertainment is essential. Recent implementation of real-name systems on social platforms and games has effectively limited minors' entertainment time and helped track those spreading harmful information. This system allows for accurate identification of offenders and legal action, contributing to a healthier online environment and promoting positive entertainment culture.

6.3. Platform

New media platforms should optimize their content ecosystem by reducing vulgar, curiosity-driven entertainment products and increasing high-quality, meaningful cultural and educational content to meet the public's deeper spiritual needs. Many platforms have made progress in promoting original content, and further improvements should focus on both quantity and quality to encourage the production of high-quality material. Additionally, new media platforms should collaborate with government agencies to monitor and manage user comments and speech. They should promptly restrict and warn against extreme fan statements or illegal negative comments, curbing negative trends in the entertainment industry and promoting proper consumption values and viewpoints.

7. Conclusion

Emotions are an inherent aspect of human nature, and entertainment plays a key role in sustaining positive emotions and releasing negative ones. A lack of entertainment can lead to a mechanized life. However, in extreme cases, an excessive pursuit of entertainment may lead to its trivialization, making it superficial and resulting in the distortion of values, vulgar aesthetic concepts, and spiritual emptiness. This turns entertainment from a means of relaxation into a source of mental numbness. In the new media era, despite the convenience and enrichment platforms bring to the spiritual world, the public must remain vigilant against the over-entertainment trend to ensure that technology serves humanity rather than dominating it. This paper analyzes the phenomenon of pan-entertainment in the new media era from multiple perspectives. Based on existing literature and social surveys, future research will need to conduct more in-depth empirical and qualitative studies to obtain specific and detailed results. Future research will focus on media communication modes within the pan-entertainment phenomenon and explore their impact on public behavior and mental state.

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