

Emotional Deficiency and Compensation: A Study on the Compensation Mechanism of COS Commissions and Goods Consumption Among the Dream Girl Group

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Abstract. In the rapidly expanding era of the "she-economy," the subculture of otome games has shown a trend of significant development. New ways of emotional compensation have emerged and continued to expand under this new social background. As the main fans of otome games, dream girl community actively place their unmet emotional needs from real life onto virtual game characters. Based on this behavior, a new form of economy centered around emotional consumption has appeared, known as the dream girl economy. This paper focuses on the emotional compensation methods of the dream girl community, especially the combination of "paid otome game cosplay companion service" and "goods consumption." By using both questionnaires and personal interviews, the study carefully examines how young dream girl emotions change through this kind of emotional compensation. The research finds that through these two methods, dream girl can gain emotional comfort that is hard to find in daily life. They can experience a sense of romance similar to real relationships, while also enjoying the feeling of companionship brought by goods. In this way, they enrich their emotional lives and gain spiritual support and strength.

Keywords: emotional compensation, cosplay commission, goods consumption, otome games.

1. Introduction

Under the background of steady economic growth and continuous improvement of education level, women, as the key demographic of the consumer market, have injected a strong impetus into the market economy, allowing the "she- industry" to grow quickly. The continuous enhancement of women's subjective consciousness makes them less and less dependent on getting a sense of love and companionship from real life, but turn to virtual game scenes such as otome games, and the dream girl culture was born. Dream girl means that on the basis of otome games, players fall in love with the characters in the game by bringing themselves into themselves, attaching the desire for love in real life to the game characters, and creating immersive "love" with the game characters. While this kind of game enriches women's emotions, it also brings the core problem of not being able to communicate between virtual and reality. In order to make up for the problem between virtual and reality, various emotional compensation methods continue to arise, and the forms of "COS

commissions" and "goods consumption" have gradually become the main choice of the dream girl group." COS commissions" refers to the form of cosplay, through the client's payment to ask the role-player to dress up as a two-dimensional character that the dream girl likes, and carry out commissions dating companion service with the client. In "Goods consumption", "goods" is the English translation of "goods" in English, which refers to peripheral products such as games, animation, and "goods consumption" is the consumption mode generated around such peripheral products. Common otome games include: pins, acrylic stands, and plush cotton dolls, etc. Most existing academic research focuses on the impact of single consumption on women's emotions, while the discussion on the composite emotional compensation model and its value of the combination of COS commissions and goods consumption is relatively limited. Therefore, this article focuses on the new promotion and value of the combination of the two compensation methods on women's emotional experience. On the basis of combing the existing literature, this article adopts a combination of questionnaires and personal interviews. A total of 53 valid questionnaires are collected, 16 questions are set up, and the research covers many regions across the country. Under the condition of protecting privacy, objective data is obtained; by selecting the valid data in the questionnaire, select two interview subjects for in-depth interviews. The research path can not only present the basic characteristics of the group on a large scale, but also reveal the differences and internal logic of individual selection through a single case. This study aims to investigate whether there is a progressive or interactive mechanism between COS commissions and goods consumption on the emotional needs of dream girls.

2. Literature review

With the rapid development of society, the women's economy has gradually grown into the backbone of economic development. The development of "she-economy" has brought new momentum that cannot be ignored to China's economic development. Otome games have grown as part of this economic trend under the she-economy. Its core narrative expression is deeply compatible with women's emotional needs, value expression and the current social situation. In recent years, it has shown an immeasurable development trend [1]. Otome game are built around three key design elements that connect with the inner world of female players: one is the branch narrative and multi-ending, which completes the construction of the story world in the form of narrative; the second is the intimacy and interactive feedback system, which attracts female players by shaping diverse characters; its The third is the realistic scene construction driven by technology to create an immersive game world. The three jointly build a systematic otome game world, so that women can build an omote game world by themselves, continue to strengthen the experience and satisfaction of the game, and then generate trust in the payable game and form a stable consumption investment [2]. This perceived value not only affects the game itself, but also shows that while the value of the game continues to rise, it also promotes the development of the dream girl industry. Female subjects trust games more and rely on game characters, which also promotes the development of the dream girl industry more [3].

The cultural phenomenon of "dream girl" does not originate from the trend of otome games that began to be popular in China at the end of 2017, and the trend of "dream girls" culture is more "official" under the promotion of otome games. In the games, players can only choose male characters that have already been created by the game developers. These are the characters they can try to build a relationship with. Because of this, the "dreaming" aspect becomes somewhat limited. It mostly focuses on romantic feelings alone [4]. The emotional connection that "Dream Girl" to two-dimensional characters is essentially an imagination of intimate relationships under the digital media

experience. Because of the action of the unique interaction mechanism of the otome games, this relationship shows the characteristics of highly symbolic and emotionally intensive communication, forming a distinctive mediated emotional practice [5]. The dream girl industry is a product of the development of "she- economy". The motive for promoting its economic development is the compensation psychology hidden behind the behaviour, that is, when the emotional state in real life cannot meet one's own needs, it actively entrusts emotions to the two-dimensional virtual role, so as to make up for the gap in one's own emotions [6].

This kind of emotional compensation method has a variety of expressions. At this stage, the research mainly focuses on practical methods such as "goods" economy, "COS commissions" and "commissioning self-insert art". At present, academics mainly take a single real economy as the research object, and define the "goods" economy and "COS commissions" respectively: "Goods" is rooted in a specific IP character. According to this image, different peripheral products are created and have the function of collection value and community communication. It can be regarded as a dual cultural product driven by symbolic consumption theory and emotional economic theory [7]. The COS commission is in the form of real-life cosplay, in which the client plays the role in the game and spends time with the client players for a single day, including Cosplay offline exhibitions, store visits, travel and other entertainment activities [8]. Extending the intimate relationship of the virtual world to the real scene to get a sense of satisfaction and love, the COS entrusted activity is defined as a love emotional consumption activity that breaks through the dimension [9].

This article refers to the research methods in Huang Tao's "Research on the Cultural Communication of Online Dream Girls in the Vision of Emotional Sociology" and partially simplifies them. It mainly combines questionnaires with personal interviews, and uses the Internet and social media as channels to conduct research on the dream girl group, the focus is on understanding why they make the choices they do and what thinking lies behind their actions [10].

On the basis of previous research, this article combines the two forms of "goods" economy and COS commissions, and tries to explore the emotional change mechanism of the dream girl group towards their favourite characters under the joint action of these two ways, and how to meet their emotional compensation and fulfill their emotional desires.

3. Research methods

This article mainly adopts the research method of combining questionnaire survey and individual interview. Based on the survey methods used in earlier studies that were reviewed in the literature, it tries to derive a more objective survey data. The combination of anonymous questionnaires and case interviews is obviously more advantageous: at this stage, due to people's puzzlement or economic pressure, under the multiple obstacles of reality, it is difficult for some "dream girls" to directly express their true feelings after COS commissions and goods consumption. Through the anonymity of the online platform, the dream girl group can express deep true feelings more freely.

Through the questionnaire survey, the real feelings of the relevant groups about the two compensation methods can be understood on a large scale in the first place, and more accurately understand the current situation of COS commissions and goods economy. After the questionnaire was collected, two representative cases were selected for in-depth interviews, so as to more comprehensively analyse the mechanism and impact of the two methods in different individual situations. This questionnaire was published on WeChat Moments, Rednote, Weibo and other platforms, and obtained a total of 53 valid questionnaires, including 20 on WeChat Moments, 29 from Rednote, and 4 on Weibo platforms. The questionnaire is also in the form of adding relevant

tags, mainly adding related topic words such as: "otome Game", "dream Girl", "goods consumption" and so on, which is greatly accurately pushed to the relevant people.

In terms of the establishment of specific questions, the questionnaire is mainly divided into three parts. The first two parts set up independent questions for the dream girl COS commissions with six questions and the goods economy with four questions respectively; the third part sets up five questions around the related part of the two to explore the common role and impact of the two on the emotional subject of the dream girl; after collecting the questionnaire data, two representative cases are selected for interviews. The topic content includes the reasons for choosing cos commission to improve the sense of companionship, the way of acquisition, real feelings, and the frequency of buy goods, the degree of dependence, etc. A key focus of the interviews was to understand how the combination of both practices influences their emotional state and financial situation in real life.

4. Research results

According to the questionnaire, on the whole, some respondents will choose to meet their emotional needs by COS commissions. Nearly 90 percent of the respondents will choose to buy goods to satisfy their compensation for game characters. However, only a few players choose to meet their emotional needs in a balanced way. The personal case interview selected two representative investigators for in-depth interviews based on the results of the third part of the questionnaire. The results showed that the investigators could obtain a sense of companionship of near-realistic love through the form of COS commissions, and maintain the link with the role through goods consumption. In different ways, both methods to a certain extent It meets the emotional needs of the investigators in their daily lives.

4.1. Questionnaire results

According to the results of the questionnaire, among the 53 valid samples, there are obvious differences in the regional distribution. Overall, there are more in the south and relatively few in the north. Among them, there are 13 cases in Shanxi Province, and the second is a total of 5 cases in Zhejiang Province, while there are no effective samples in the northeast and northwest regions, which is inseparable from local regional development. The layout of related industries and the number of offline consumption places play a very important role in the impact of the industry. When it comes to age, women aged 19-25 account for as high as 83.02%; women aged 30 and above have no record of participating in this questionnaire. Judging from this situation, the demand of young women for these two emotional support is still at the core. The data shows that 52.83% of the respondents will choose to use the form of COS commissions to improve their sense of love, and up to 83.02% of women will choose to get a sense of companionship through the form of goods consumption, indicating that the popularity and acceptance of goods consumption are significantly higher than those of COS commissions. In terms of "loving and being loved", the sixth question of the questionnaire survey, "Is a sense of loving and being loved felt through COS commissions?" Among the responses, chose "some but not much" with a total of 19 answers, accounting for about 35.85% of the proportion; and the 15th question "Which of the following shows a 'stronger love' for the character?" Under this topic, 56.6% of people think that they have "equal value", and only 3.77% of the respondents have a negative perception. They think that the consumption of goods is a waste of money, while COS commissions is labeled as "cyber wifey". On the whole, nearly 90% of the respondents will use the consumption of goods as a way to emotionally connect with virtual

characters. Some respondents choose COS commissions to meet their emotional needs, and the proportion of the group that adopts both methods is relatively limited.

4.2. Interview findings

Based on the screening of questionnaire data, two respondents with typical differences were selected for in-depth interviews, and the two obtained the opposite data conclusions in terms of selection and emotional changes.

The first person interviewed is Ms. A. She shared that during the three years she has been into otome games, her attitude toward buying goods has been quite rational. She would only choose to buy when she encountered a specific preference, and was weakly influenced by the community. In the past two years, she has only made four COS commissions, all of which chose the same cosplayer. At the beginning, she thought that the commissions could strengthen her emotional link with the character, and the skilful work of the client could give her a more immersive experience. At this stage, she put the consumption of goods in a relatively secondary position. In the middle and late stages, with the increasing number of commissions, it gradually believed that COS commissions was more time-consuming and the economic cost was higher than goods consumption. The interaction experience with the client gradually decreased, and the funds and experience were gradually turned to goods consumption. In the end, her relationship with the cosplayer fell apart. As that happened, her feelings for the character she loved also began to fade. Eventually, she pulled back from buying goods and stepped away from the community entirely.

The second person interviewed is Ms. B. She said that she had a strong emotional dependence on COS commissions, with a frequency of up to four times a month at the beginning, but she said that buying goods could only play a companion role in daily life and could not meet the needs of love. In the middle and late stages, the frequency of cos commissioning gradually decreased. Now, she only takes part in them on special occasions, such as her birthday or other important dates. Up to now, it has formed a stable model of combining COS commissions and goods consumption. She believes that the combination of COS commissions and goods consumption has been integrated into her daily life and has become an important way to maintain the emotional link with virtual characters.

5. Discussion

5.1. Discussion on questionnaire results

According to the results of the questionnaire, at this stage, the overall age of the dream girl group to meet their emotional needs with the help of COS commissions and goods consumption is relatively young. They are under the age of 25, and the acceptance of emerging cultural consumption forms is relatively high. The overall education level of this group is often relatively high, with strong self-awareness and self-service awareness. In real life, the standards for choosing a mate are often high, and they are more inclined to experience love through otome games. Compared with the group under the age of 18, they have sufficient disposable income from game time, which leads to the above reasons. The group around 25 years old has become the core consumer group of the dream girl cultural industry.

Among the interviewees, nearly half of the respondents are willing to invest more money and time in COS commissions. The investigators can gain emotional love in the process of COS commissions, and believe that this experience can alleviate the pain of not being able to meet virtual characters to a certain extent, so they will be more add full dedication, at the same time, they also

have high expectations for how well the cosplayer can stay true to the character's image. It is worth noting that the group as a whole maintains a high level of rational cognition. Even though they may view the cosplayer through a filter shaped by their love for the character during the commission, most of them can clearly tell the difference between the virtual character and the real person playing them. At the same time, most of the respondents have a phenomenon of more love for virtual characters after experiencing COS commission.

Most of the dream girl group is more willing to satisfy their projection of characters and their desire to collect through the consumption of goods. They believe that through this more affordable way, but can maintain the sense of attachment to the characters in daily life. Goods also has the advantage of being more portable. However, at the same time, the questionnaire shows that the dream girl group has a contradictory attitude towards people in the same community. On the one hand, they are eager to integrate into the community, and goods consumption has become an important medium for integration into the same community; On the other hand, they remain cautious and keep some distance from other members. They rarely buy goods they do not truly like just because someone else shows off their collection online. Overall, they keep a kind of "maintain a ambiguous distance" relationship with the community. In addition, they are able to keep their spending under control. They only use a small part of their disposable income for buying goods. They clearly understand that goods consumption is just one part of life and not the main focus.

Looking at the results from the third part of the questionnaire, which focused on the connection between COS commissions and goods consumption, a clear pattern appears. Most respondents see COS commissions as a short but deeply immersive "dream." Goods, on the other hand, are seen more as something that provides daily companionship. The "dream" experience brought by COS commissions is brief, magical, and happens only once in a while. However, those who take part often choose to bring along related goods to the commission. They believe this helps strengthen the emotional connection with the cosplayer during their time together. In the same way, if the cosplayer also brings goods related to the character on the day of the commission, it is seen as a sign that they are staying true to the role. Respondents do not try to place more value on one method over the other. Instead, they see both as important ways to find emotional comfort and build a sense of close connection with virtual characters. In their system of emotional support, the two hold equal importance.

5.2. Discussion on interview findings

Based on the interview results, Ms. A showed a high level of independence in how she took part in games and invested her emotions. She maintained a weaker connection with the same community, so that she could focus more on the feelings for the character, so that she paid more attention to things with a stronger sense of companionship among the two. But this is also the reason why she can quickly withdraw from the relevant circle after stopping the COS commission. It clearly shows that there is an obvious difference between the client and the virtual role. Whether in the way they act or the way they speak, the cosplayer could never fully match the character. Because of this, she found it easy to break away from the dreamlike feeling created during the commission. She described it as watching herself "act out a romance" with the cosplayer, almost like an outsider looking in. Compared to COS commissions, she felt that goods offered a more stable and lasting sense of companionship.

The second person interviewed, Ms. B, showed a completely different pattern. She showed the exact opposite situation, showing a more addicted state to her favourite virtual character. She represents the highly obsessed and highly dedicated side of the dream girl group. The sense of love

and ambiguity created by high-frequency COS commissions makes it deeply immersed in it. Even if it is clear that the client is not a real "lover" at the psychological cognitive level, he is still willing to pay money, energy and time. Goods can only provide a limited sense of companionship and cannot bring an immersive sense of love. Ms. B said that the sense of love is what she most wants to get through the game. However, the combination of COS commissions and Goods consumption fills her spare emotional life, thus reducing the demand for love in real life. The state she represents is exactly the common situation represented by most highly dedicated dream women.

6. Conclusion

In today's society, women have become independent individuals with new ways of thinking. Their search for and exploration of "love" has become more rational and more diverse. Nowadays, the emotional needs that women may lack in real life are being filled through otome games as a form of media. However, within these games, there is still the emotional gap of not being able to meet or touch the characters. This gap is then further filled through COS commissions and goods consumption. On special occasions, going on a date with a "lover they cannot meet" becomes a way for dream girls to fully take in feelings of love. For them, it is like a deep and immersive emotional experience. Even though it only lasts for a short time, it gives them spiritual strength that stays with them for much longer. Some dream girls come from families with problems or have gone through difficult times in childhood. A single day of immersive companionship can help them find hope in life again and give them the strength to move forward. Others have very busy work schedules. For them, a commission date becomes a chance to take a break and let out their emotions after long hours of work. No matter what their personal situation is, dream girls are able to connect with their favorite virtual characters on a deeper, almost spiritual level through the act of cosplay. Goods consumption fills the emotional gap left by virtual lovers when they are not around in daily life. Dream girls buy goods, display them, and take part in activities like "display arrangement" to create a sense of companionship on days when they do not have commissions. Some younger dream girls shared that during the dull and tiring days of school life, the companionship of goods helped them get through many difficult moments of studying. Whether through COS commissions or goods consumption, women are able to gain spiritual strength from these experiences. This helps them build a more complete emotional system and further develop their sense of self.

Most of its related activities depend on the moral understanding between the two sides involved in a commission. If either side goes against the basic moral rules that are commonly accepted in this practice, the commission will not bring the expected sense of satisfaction or romantic feeling. Such cases can be seen as failed experiences. This situation shows that there are still clear gaps in both legal supervision and social oversight when it comes to the dream girl industry. There is an urgent need for deeper academic research in this area. At the same time, society needs to pay more attention to this topic and offer proper guidance.

However, there are certain limitations in the process of this survey: most of the respondents who are willing to participate in the questionnaire are a group that has received better emotional compensation in the process of COS commissions, while those who have not had a good experience often choose to avoid talking about it, which leads to a certain lack of the research subject in this questionnaire. Later researchers can continue this part of the true subject for in-depth research. Up to now, the dream girl subculture is still in a stage of natural growth, shaped by shared habits and unspoken rules. Most of its related activities still depend on the moral constraints of both parties entrusted. If either side goes against the basic moral rules that are commonly accepted in this practice, the commission will not bring the expected sense of satisfaction or romantic feeling. Such

cases can be seen as failed experiences. This situation shows that there are still clear gaps in both legal supervision and social oversight when it comes to the dream girl industry. There is an urgent need for deeper academic research in this area. At the same time, society needs to pay more attention to this topic and offer proper guidance.

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