

The Influence of Love View on Young People in Chinese Idol Dramas

—A Case Study of the Costume Idol Drama Lost You Forever

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Abstract: This paper presents a detailed investigation into the influence of love perspectives conveyed through Chinese costume idol dramas, with a specific focus on the popular series, *Lost You Forever*. Targeting a predominantly youthful audience, these dramas hold a significant role in shaping the views and values of young people regarding love and relationships. Using an extensive survey approach with 134 respondents, predominantly young females, this study delves into the demographic profiles of viewers, their motivations for engaging with *Lost You Forever*, and the subsequent impact on their perceptions of love and relationships. Results reveal that *Lost You Forever* effectively engages its target audience, with most viewers ardently following the series. Beyond entertainment, viewers seek relaxation and social bonding. Significantly, the drama influences respondents' views on romance, increasing their emphasis on qualities such as personality, shared interests, trust, respect, and emotional connection when considering partners. This suggests a positive impact on relationship values. However, it's vital to recognize the potential for unrealistic expectations, especially if viewers idealize certain character dynamics. Thus, encouraging media literacy and critical thinking regarding portrayals of love and relationships becomes crucial.

Keywords: love view, Chinese idol drama, young people

1. Introduction

Chinese idol dramas have become a significant cultural phenomenon, capturing the attention of a wide audience, especially among young adults and college students. These dramas often explore themes of romance, relationships, and personal growth, providing a lens through which viewers can examine various aspects of love and human connections.

The origins of modern idol dramas can be traced back to the dynamic entertainment industry of Asia, where pop culture, music, and television intertwine. Beginning as early as the 1980s, idol dramas gained traction across Asian countries, notably in Japan and South Korea, where they flourished alongside the rise of pop idol culture.

The introduction of Asian Idol Dramas to the Chinese mainland was gradual, with Taiwanese and Korean dramas initially gaining popularity among Chinese viewers. Iconic series like *Meteor*

Garden and *Full House* captured the hearts of Chinese audiences, opening the door for the domestic production of idol dramas in the Chinese mainland. Chinese mainland production companies began to create their own idol dramas, often drawing inspiration from the success of dramas from Taiwan and South Korea. Dramas like *My Fair Princess* and *Meteor Shower* gained immense popularity in the late 2000s and early 2010s. These productions featured attractive young actors and actresses while infusing unique elements of Chinese culture and society.

A distinctive subset of idol dramas is Chinese Costume Idol Dramas, which combine elements of fantasy, history, and martial arts. The rise of streaming platforms like iQiyi, Youku, and Tencent Video allowed Chinese Costume Idol Dramas to reach a broader audience. Titles like *Eternal Love* and *The Untamed* garnered immense popularity domestically and internationally.

Lost You Forever, an Internet drama adapted from the novel of the same name by renowned author Tong Hua, is a notable example in this genre. The series revolves around intricate relationships among a group of characters, focusing on the intertwined love stories of the main protagonists. With a central storyline featuring the female lead, Xiao Yao (played by Yang Zi), and her interactions with four male characters, the drama provides a multifaceted exploration of various forms of love, including romantic, platonic, and familial.

Released on 24 July, the drama quickly garnered attention and positive feedback, and became one of the most popular TV series on Chinese online video platforms. The show and its main cast have maintained high levels of popularity. Viewers were quickly drawn to various on-screen couples (CPs) and enthusiastically voted for the CPs they supported. As this drama mainly portrays the romantic entanglements among one female and four males, these four male characters perfectly represent four different types of partners. Choosing or supporting one of these men for the female lead reflects the audience's diverse perspectives and expectations of love. Additionally, as the plot unfolds, the various modes of love presented in the series, along with the female lead's choices (which reflect the underlying romantic concepts of the show itself), will also impact the audience's views on love.

The target audience for *Lost You Forever* primarily comprises Chinese youth, a demographic that is deeply influenced by these dramas. As avid consumers of media, this group engages with idol dramas not only as a form of entertainment but also as a reflection of societal norms and values. The paper aims to examine how the portrayal of love in *Lost You Forever* impacts the romantic beliefs and attitudes of this audience, shedding light on how media shapes their perceptions of love and relationships.

2. Literature Review

The portrayal of romantic relationships in media has long been a topic of interest in the field of psychology and communication studies. The present literature review aims to provide an overview and synthesis of research articles that investigate the relationship between romantic media consumption and individuals' romantic beliefs and relationship satisfaction.

Lippman, Ward, and Seabrook explore the associations between different genres of romantic screen media and individuals' romantic beliefs. Their study reveals that individuals who consume more romantic movies and marriage-themed reality shows are more likely to endorse romantic beliefs characterized by destiny and idealization. The authors suggest that exposure to such media content could contribute to unrealistic perceptions of romantic relationships by fostering the idea of a "perfect" love. On the contrary, high exposure to sitcoms leads to the opposite result, lowering viewers' fantasies about romantic love [1].

Kretz examines the relationship between television and movie viewing habits, romantic ideals, and relationship satisfaction in adults. Contrary to previous expectations, the findings reveal that various genres of television and movie viewing, including relationship-focused reality TV shows,

TV drama, TV comedy, soap operas, and romantic movies, are positively associated with romantic ideals. Mediation analyses further highlight that specific media genres positively influence relationship satisfaction through the shaping of romantic ideals. This research also suggests the need for a deeper exploration of the mechanisms by which media influences relationship dynamics beyond just romantic ideals [2].

Hefner and Wilson investigate how exposure to romantic ideals in popular films influences young individuals' beliefs about relationships. The research suggests that individuals who are heavy consumers of romantic films are more likely to endorse ideals such as love at first sight and the concept of a soul mate. In addition, the motivation behind watching these films may play an important role in shaping romantic beliefs. Watching romantic comedies, especially with the intention of learning, is associated with a stronger endorsement of romantic beliefs, particularly the idealization of one's partner [3].

Galloway, Engstrom, and Emmers-Sommer focus on the cultivation of unrealistic expectations about love and marriage through movie viewing among young people. The study finds that heavy exposure to romantic films is associated with greater endorsement of idealized beliefs about love and marriage, such as the notion of a perfect partner and a fairy-tale relationship. Moreover, these unrealistic expectations are linked to decreased relationship satisfaction. The research emphasizes the role of media consumption in shaping individuals' perceptions of romantic relationships [4].

Ye, Wang and Chai explore the rising phenomenon of dating-themed variety shows in the Internet age, shedding light on their rapid popularity and multifaceted impact on the romantic perceptions of young audiences. These shows, driven by emotions and diverse in format, cater to modern viewers' aesthetic and emotional cravings while subtly shaping their views on love and values. While acknowledging the positive aspects of these shows, such as experiential learning and self-identity development, the authors also underscore the concerns of emotional commodification, formulaic narratives, and symbol-driven consumerism, potentially nurturing unrealistic romantic ideals among youth [5].

Examining the influence of sweet romance-themed Internet dramas, Zhang and Zhang focus on their effect on the romantic attitudes of female college students. Their study highlights how these dramas, with idealized portrayals of love, often lead college girls to unconsciously identify with and adopt these romantic patterns, shaping their views on love. The paper delves into the reasons behind this influence, discussing factors like emotional resonance, media influence, and varying interpretations among college students. It also explores specific manifestations of this influence, such as simplified romantic motivations, idealized partner standards, and a more open and rational view of intimacy. Ultimately, it acknowledges that these dramas offer an escape into a world of idealized romance but emphasizes the potential pitfalls, including unrealistic expectations and emotional dependency [6].

Kang's study on the influence of Korean dramas on Chinese university students' perceptions of love reveals that these dramas have a significant impact on their love-related values, partner preferences, and romantic behaviors. The findings indicate that students, particularly females, who frequently watch Korean dramas tend to prioritize love in their lives, seeking idealized and sometimes impractical romantic relationships. On the positive side, exposure to these dramas can promote qualities like dedication and faithfulness in romantic relationships. However, there are also negative consequences, including unrealistic expectations, the sacrifice of other life priorities for love, and an excessive focus on materialism [7].

Likewise, Lin and her colleagues delve into the influence of Korean dramas on the marriage and relationship values of male and female university students. They also find that Korean dramas have a more substantial influence on female college students, particularly in shaping their romantic motivations, where they tend to focus on personal growth and career development. However, the

report also notes that while these dramas do impact students' views, societal factors and long-standing marital norms may also play a role [8].

Li examines issues in university students' love outlook in the new era and proposes guidance strategies. Key findings include varied motivations for romantic involvement, emphasizing personal qualities in partner choice but also considering superficial attributes, the importance of maintaining a balanced relationship dynamic, the influence of family background and parental marriages, and recognition of both positive and negative effects of romantic relationships. This research underscores the need for comprehensive guidance and education to promote healthier attitudes in the new era [9].

Yan investigates the influence of urban love-themed TV serials on university students' attitudes towards love and marriage. Urban love serials, as a form of drama, depict modern love and marriage experiences, highlighting the emotional complexities of individuals in the context of societal transformation. University students, as a target audience, are impacted differently based on their interpretation of these serials. These impacts include changes in their love motivations, criteria for selecting partners, attitudes toward love, love behaviors, marital happiness perceptions, and sexual attitudes. Some urban love-themed TV dramas subtly incorporate values emphasizing the importance of economic ability and social status in marriage, leading to an audience with more utilitarian attitudes towards love and relationships. Furthermore, the romanticization of emotional expression in these dramas also influences the romantic behaviors of university students [10].

In a study exploring the differences in love views among postgraduates in the new era, Zhao and Liu conducted a comprehensive analysis of male and female postgraduates' perceptions of love and marriage. They gathered data through questionnaire surveys of postgraduates in Hubei province and identified significant disparities in love views between genders. These disparities encompassed aspects such as relationship status, attitudes toward love, motivations for love, mate selection criteria, and marriage concepts. Notably, the research revealed that a higher proportion of female postgraduates expressed satisfaction with being single compared to their male counterparts. The study attributed these differences to various factors, including the empowerment of women through social development, the influence of economic factors on love, disparities in gender culture, and the impact of family and marital ideals [11].

Gong employs qualitative and quantitative research methods to investigate the current situation and reasons for the negative impact of social media on students' love views. He also presents specific strategies to enhance the positive effects of social media on students' love perspectives. The research delves into gender, grade, major, school type, birthplace, and single vs. non-single students' varying degrees of susceptibility to social media influence. It finds that social media's impact on students' love views is influenced by factors like the prevalence of "love-related negative news" and the type of social media used [12].

Liu's study focuses on the love views of college students born after the year 2000, a generation known for its distinct characteristics as mostly only children with excellent living conditions. It identifies several noteworthy findings: the majority of "post-00" college students possess a healthy and rational understanding of love motives; they pursue love freely with both genders showing initiative; they prioritize compatibility over materialistic concerns in relationships; and they approach breakups with resilience. However, there are concerning trends, such as impulsiveness in love attitudes, open-mindedness towards premarital sex, and a lack of commitment in relationships. The study attributes these issues to the impact of complex societal factors, including Western multicultural influences and media distortions of love concepts, which have led some college students to prioritize pleasure over emotional connection and responsibility [13].

In the reviewed literature, several commonalities and trends emerge regarding the influence of media, particularly television, movies, and social media, on individuals' romantic beliefs and

attitudes. Overall, exposure to romantic media content, such as romantic movies, reality shows, and dramas, tends to shape individuals' perceptions of love and relationships. These influences often lead to the endorsement of idealized and sometimes unrealistic romantic ideals, including the belief in destiny, love at first sight, and the concept of a perfect partner. Furthermore, there is a notable gender difference, with female audiences being more influenced by these media portrayals of love and often seeking idealized relationships. Despite some positive aspects, such as promoting dedication and faithfulness, there are concerns about the potential for these media influences to nurture unrealistic expectations and impact relationship satisfaction negatively. A recurring theme is the need for further exploration of the mechanisms by which media influences individuals' romantic beliefs and the potential consequences beyond just shaping romantic ideals. Moreover, the research highlights the role of various factors, including motivations for media consumption, cultural contexts, and societal norms, in shaping individuals' love views. However, there is a research gap in the literature. While the literature review covers the influence of various types of romantic media, including Korean dramas and urban romance dramas, there is a lack of research specifically focused on Chinese idol dramas. These dramas have unique characteristics, cultural elements, and fan followings, which may result in distinct effects on viewers' love views. This paper addresses the research gap by narrowing the focus to a specific genre of romantic media popular among young Chinese audiences, which is important due to its cultural specificity, contemporary relevance, and potential implications for media literacy and education. It has the potential to provide valuable insights into how Chinese Idol Dramas, particularly those with historical and cultural elements, impact the love views of young viewers in the digital age.

3. Method

A structured online questionnaire was developed to gather insights into the impact of the costume idol drama *Lost You Forever* on the love views of young individuals. The questionnaire consists of the following sections: The first section collects basic demographic data from respondents, which will help categorize and analyze responses based on gender, age, occupation, and relationship status. The second section investigates the respondents' viewing situation of *Lost You Forever*. It focuses on their experience with the TV series itself, including their viewing progress, motivations for watching, and emotional engagement. The final section evaluates the impact of love views in *Lost You Forever* on viewers. It asks the respondents themselves to assess the influence of the TV series on their romantic perspectives and ideals.

To ensure a diverse and representative sample, purposeful sampling was employed. The survey link was distributed to "Sina Weibo", which is a popular Chinese microblogging platform and social media website. It has a large and active user base, with nearly 600 million monthly active users. The survey link was shared with specific groups or communities related to *Lost You Forever*, ensuring a more targeted sample. After that, quantitative data from the surveys will be analyzed using descriptive statistics.

4. Results

4.1. Demographic Overview

The survey collected responses from 134 individuals, with a clear majority being female, accounting for 70.15% of the sample. This gender disparity reflects a common trend in the viewership of idol dramas and may indicate that the drama series holds particular appeal for young females. In terms of age, the respondents are all under the age of 35, with the highest representation (76.87%) falling within the 18-25 age group, which aligns with the primary target audience of young adults for idol dramas.

When it comes to occupation, a significant portion, 55.97%, are employed individuals, while 40.3% are in-school students. Regarding relationship status, the survey reveals a relatively balanced distribution, with 38.06% being single since birth, 50.75% in a relationship, and 11.19% having had a relationship but are currently single. The decision of many Millennials and Generation Z individuals to remain single since birth can be associated with the unique characteristics of their generation. Many young adults prioritize personal growth, education, and career advancement before committing to romantic relationships. They may have high expectations for their partners and relationships, seeking compatibility, emotional connection, and shared values. They may prefer to remain single until they find a partner who meets these criteria. In addition, some individuals prioritize their mental health and well-being and recognize that a healthy relationship requires self-care. They may choose to stay single until they feel emotionally ready for a committed partnership.

A considerable number of participants (44.03%) expressed a strong inclination towards love, while 37.31% had a moderate desire. This indicates a high level of interest in romantic relationships among the respondents.

4.2. Viewing of *Lost You Forever*

4.2.1. Drama Viewing Patterns

The analysis of respondents' viewing habits of *Lost You Forever* reveals that a majority, 61.94%, are actively watching the series, while 18.66% have completed it once without re-watching. Additionally, 11.19% are engaged in re-watching or multiple viewings. These viewers are likely to be more influenced by the drama's portrayal of love, as repeated exposure can reinforce certain messages and ideals. The primary motivation for watching the drama is entertainment and relaxation, as indicated by a significant 86.57% of respondents. Furthermore, 62.69% watch for social interaction, such as discussing the plot with friends or on social media platforms.

4.2.2. Perceived Benefits of Watching

Respondents cite various benefits from watching the drama, with 72.39% seeing it as a source of entertainment and a way to pass the time. A substantial 64.18% find emotional comfort and fulfillment in the series, while 45.52% believe they have learned some romance skills through their viewing experience. There's also a notable percentage (20.15%) that recognizes the drama's potential for correcting unhealthy love views, while a similar percentage (20.9%) acknowledges its ability to reinforce such views.

4.3. Evaluation of Love Views in *Lost You Forever*

Firstly, the concept of an ideal couple and the drama's likability present a mixed landscape of viewers. Respondents have varied opinions on the ideal couple within the drama, indicating diverse preferences among viewers. When assessing the drama's likability, it is generally well-received, with over half, 55.22%, expressing a high level of fondness for it.

Secondly, a significant change emerges regarding the significance of love in viewers' eyes. 66.42% of the audience report that the drama has increased the importance of love in their lives. This suggests that the drama's depiction of romance has a profound emotional impact on its audience, leading them to prioritize love more.

Thirdly, the drama initiates a shift in the emphasis placed on various facets of love within relationships. Respondents signal a heightened focus on elements such as mutual respect, shared interests and values, emotional connection, financial independence, trust, effective communication, and mutual understanding.

Furthermore, this shift extends to the criteria for partner selection. Viewers now place greater importance on qualities like personality, character, individual capabilities, and future prospects when evaluating potential partners.

Additionally, the drama seems to kindle romantic fantasies and provide clarity in the selection of partners. Many respondents report experiencing these effects after watching the series, suggesting its ability to influence their romantic aspirations and decision-making.

Lastly, respondents' agreement with specific love concepts in the drama showcases a diverse range of perspectives. Some concepts resonate more strongly than others. For instance, a noteworthy portion, around 46.27%, resonate deeply with the notion of always being their loved one's first choice. Similarly, about 47.01% endorse the idea that love involves unconditional support and acceptance of one's partner. In parallel, a substantial 50% of respondents concur with the belief that love is not the most important thing in life, aligning with the drama's portrayal.

5. Discussion

The survey findings shed light on the impact of Chinese idol dramas, exemplified by *Lost You Forever*, on the romantic beliefs and attitudes of young viewers.

The demographic characteristics identified in the study, such as gender, age, relationship status, and love-related desires, provide valuable context for understanding the influence of idol dramas on young people's love views. Firstly, young viewers, such as those in the 18-25 age group, maybe more impressionable and open to the influence of media in shaping their love views. For they are often exploring and forming their identities and beliefs about love and relationships and idol dramas can serve as a form of guidance or exploration during this critical developmental stage. Secondly, the gender distribution in the sample also influences the tendency of the audience's love views, as well as their perceptions of the love depicted in television dramas. Idol dramas, like *Lost You Forever*, often featuring romantic storylines and attractive male leads, are particularly appealing to young women seeking romantic fantasies and emotional connections. Compared to males, female viewers may find the characters and situations in idol dramas more relatable, leading to a stronger connection with the content. This relatability can enhance their emotional engagement and influence their perceptions of love. Thirdly, respondents in different relationship statuses may interpret and relate to the drama's love themes differently. For example, those in relationships may compare their experiences with those depicted on screen, while single individuals may seek inspiration or guidance from the drama. Lastly, viewers who express a strong desire for love may be more emotionally engaged with the romantic narratives presented in idol dramas. These shows might offer them a sense of hope or provide a source of comfort.

The findings related to the viewing situation of *Lost You Forever* provide valuable insights into how audiences engage with and perceive the drama. Young people who actively engage with the drama are more likely to internalize its depictions of love and relationships. The emotional investment in characters' love stories can result in a heightened susceptibility to the drama's influence on their own love views. Furthermore, repeatedly watching the drama could lead to a stronger alignment between the viewers' love views and the romantic narratives depicted on screen. As for the reasons for watching *Lost You Forever*, most viewers cited entertainment and relaxation as their primary motivations. While primarily seeking entertainment, viewers may be more receptive to the drama's romantic narratives. The escapism and emotional engagement they experience during relaxation can lead to a desire for similar romantic experiences in real life, potentially shaping their love views.

The evaluation of love views in *Lost You Forever* by viewers presents intuitive results for this study. The drama's overall likability suggests that it successfully resonates with the audience, engaging them emotionally, which contributes to its influence on viewers' perceptions of love. At

the same time, positive emotions generated by the likable characters and their interactions may lead to a more favorable view of love portrayed in the drama. Emotional connection with the characters and their romantic journeys may trigger viewers' own desires for meaningful and profound love experiences. When it comes to mate selection, the increased importance placed on personality, character, personal abilities, and prospects indicates that viewers have reassessed the qualities they value in potential partners. Possibilities are that exposure to diverse characters and their relationship dynamics prompt viewers to align their partner selection criteria with the attributes depicted in the drama.

Most respondents perceive a degree of similarity between the drama's love storyline and real-life love, and feel that watching the drama has deepened their understanding of love. Although *Lost You Forever* is a costume drama set in an ancient mythical world inspired by Chinese mythology, where the characters' lifestyles, speech and manners differ significantly from contemporary society, it essentially remains an idol drama that explores romance with modern perspectives. The heroine's initial portrayal as calm and composed, not reliant on love or men precisely reflects the rise of female consciousness and the current trend of anti-love dependence. This partly explain why many viewers find it useful in understanding modern love and relationships.

Another thing is that many viewers believed they had learned romance skills through their viewing experience, reflecting the drama's capacity to serve as a source of informal education in matters of love. The drama's portrayal of different romantic situations and characters might have provided viewers with insights into various approaches to love. Positively, this could empower viewers to navigate their own relationships more effectively. However, the potential negative consequence is that viewers may emulate behaviors and strategies that are not applicable or healthy in real-life relationships. So it would be beneficial for viewers to engage in self-reflection while consuming media. Promoting mindfulness about how media content influences their understanding of love and relationships can help viewers make informed choices about their actions.

The positive outcomes of idol drama watching include heightened emotional fulfillment, improved understanding of love, and a reshaping of relationship priorities. The drama appeared to inspire viewers to place greater importance on elements such as mutual respect, common interests, trust, and communication—qualities vital for healthy relationships. This shift toward valuing healthier relationship attributes can be attributed to the drama's portrayal of deep and meaningful connections. Viewers might have been inspired by the drama's depiction of genuine, supportive relationships. Positively, this shift suggests that media can influence viewers to seek more balanced and fulfilling relationships. However, the drama's idealized representation of love could also set unrealistic standards, potentially hindering real-world relationship satisfaction.

In conclusion, idol drama can both inspire positive relationship attributes and foster unrealistic expectations. To address these influences, media literacy education and open discussions about the distinctions between fictional portrayals and real-life relationships are essential. Balancing the positive ideals presented in media with practical relationship dynamics remains a significant challenge in the age of media consumption.

6. Conclusion

This study delved into the influence of the costume idol drama *Lost You Forever* on the perspectives and values related to love and relationships among its predominantly young, female audience. The comprehensive analysis of survey data revealed several critical insights that illuminate the drama's impact on its viewers.

First and foremost, the drama effectively targets its intended demographic of young women with a strong inclination toward romance. This alignment between the viewers' demographics and their romantic inclinations underscores the drama's success in engaging its target audience. The drama

also proved to have a substantial impact on viewers' lives. The majority of respondents actively followed or completed the drama, indicating its significant influence. Moreover, a substantial proportion reported an increased emphasis on romance in their lives after watching the series. This demonstrates the drama's ability to shape the viewers' perceptions and priorities, emphasizing the power of media in moulding societal values. Motivations for watching the drama were primarily centered around entertainment, relaxation, and social interaction. This highlights the multifaceted role that such media plays in the lives of viewers, not merely as a source of entertainment but also as a platform for social connection. The drama's influence extended to the values viewers placed on their relationships. Post-viewing, respondents reported heightened importance on traits such as personality, common interests, trust, respect, and emotional connection in partner selection and relationships. This suggests that the drama promotes positive relationship values and preferences. Moreover, viewers exhibited varied degrees of alignment with specific love concepts presented in the drama. This indicates receptivity to the messages conveyed by the show, suggesting that viewers are not passive recipients but actively internalize and apply these concepts in their own relationships. However, it is crucial to acknowledge the potential for both positive and negative effects. While the drama may encourage healthier relationship choices and values, it may also foster unrealistic expectations, particularly if viewers idealize certain character dynamics. Therefore, fostering media literacy and critical thinking about the nuanced portrayals of love and relationships in media is paramount.

In conclusion, *Lost You Forever* wields a substantial influence over its viewers, primarily young women with a penchant for romance. It shapes their perspectives on love and relationships, fostering both positive values and potential pitfalls. Media producers and consumers alike must recognize the profound impact of such content and actively engage in discussions to navigate its implications effectively in today's digitally connected world.

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