

The Negative Impact of the Internet's Pan-Entertainment Trend on the Aesthetic Cultural Values of College Students and the Corresponding Strategic Research

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Abstract: *In the era of Internet plus and the contemporary big data background, we should realize that the Internet world shaped by the media is more colorful than the real world. With the rise of online live streaming and mobile short videos, the continuous development of contemporary online media has attracted an increasing number of university students to construct their selves within these media. Compared to the real world, they tend to trust more in the world presented by online media. In pursuit of commercial interests, online media caters to the "lowbrow" aesthetic tastes of the university student audience, thereby creating a booming online entertainment market. From the perspective of contemporary aesthetic culture, the educational and guiding functions of online media have been suppressed. Consequently, "over-entertainment" has become a significant issue affecting the aesthetic values of university students in the online media environment. Under the impact of such cultural trends, it is inevitable that the aesthetic values of university students will be influenced, leading to erroneous value judgments. Therefore, it is urgent to re-cultivate the aesthetic literacy of university students.*

Keywords: Aesthetic Culture, Pan-Entertainment, Aesthetic Values, Aesthetic Literacy of College Students.

1. IDEFINITION OF AESTHETIC CULTURE

Aesthetic culture, as a social perceptual culture centered on human spiritual experience and aesthetic perspective, has its roots in the continuous evolution of modern cultural systems and the increasing maturity of the artistic and cultural framework. This cultural form is a product of the continuous aestheticization of contemporary civilization and culture, delving into the authentic state of human existence. As Hegel posited, ancient Greece was an era of aesthetic prosperity, where aesthetics were closely linked with religious activities and were restricted to the freemen, not truly integrating into the public aesthetic space. However, contemporary aesthetic culture has evolved into a phenomenon shared by all, closely intertwined with everyone's life and becoming purer. Although it is interwoven with various cultural forms such as consumption, politics, and religion, each individual possesses unique aesthetic standards. In his work "Aesthetic Promenades," Zong Baihua asked, "Where does beauty come from?" He proposed that "beauty is not only an objective existence independent of our will, but, in turn, it influences and educates us, enhancing the realm and interest of life." How, then, is our aesthetic formed? In fact, our aesthetic views are largely determined by the knowledge we acquire and the experiences we undergo. An individual's aesthetic perspective from childhood is shaped by what others say. If many people describe someone as good-looking, then one tends to believe so. As one grows up, the aesthetic perspective essentially solidifies, yet one can still learn about others' aesthetics through various means, representing a global aesthetic, a broader standard of beauty than one's childhood circle.

What we refer to as "contemporary aesthetic culture" certainly denotes the aesthetic culture of our era. What kind of era is "our era"? It is difficult to provide an accurate answer, but one thing is quite clear: "our era" represents a period within the progression of modernity. What does "the progression of modernity" refer to? The answer is also challenging, but it is equally clear that it signifies a separation from ancient societies. Generally speaking, the Western progression of modernity began with the Renaissance, while China's began at the end of the Qing Dynasty. The "contemporary" aspect of our era refers to the historical consequences of the Western and Eastern modernity processes under the backdrop of globalization. Therefore, our structural analysis of "contemporary aesthetic culture" must be conducted in conjunction with the evolution of overall social history.

2. THE TRANSFORMATION OF CONTEMPORARY AESTHETIC CULTURE

With the vigorous development of the economy and profound societal changes, people's aesthetic activities have undergone significant transformations. Entertainment activities such as tourism, film and television productions, and music have exerted a profound influence on people's aesthetic tastes, judgments, standards, and pursuits. Particularly with the advent of the digital era, aesthetic experiences have become increasingly inclined towards all-encompassing visual entertainment, fostering a fast-food-like aesthetic paradigm. This phenomenon is particularly evident among contemporary university students, whose aesthetic preferences tend towards secularization and superficiality, leading to a blurring of their understanding of high-brow art and a lack of aesthetic pursuit towards it. This type of aesthetic value system, imbued with a strong secular and commercial tint, poses a certain challenge to the formation of correct life values among the youth.

The rapid pace and haste of modern life have propelled contemporary aesthetic culture towards a fast-food and pan-entertainment orientation. As the American futurist Alvin Toffler has pointed out, temporality is a key criterion distinguishing modern individuals from those of past eras. Acceleration, a characteristic closely related to temporality, has profoundly influenced our consciousness, altering our relationships with others, external objects, as well as with ideas, art, and values. Contemporary aesthetic culture, as an embodiment of fast-food culture, is characterized by the disruption of temporal continuity, focusing solely on the immediate, isolated 'present'.

In recent years, in the face of the endless emergence of aesthetic cultural phenomena in society, there has been the rise of the culture of ugliness appreciation, abnormal fan group culture, and online trend-following keyboard warriors, among other abnormal cultural phenomena. Many traditional aesthetic cultural categories, such as beauty and nobility, are almost incapable of elucidating contemporary aesthetic representations. Contemporary scholars are compelled to introduce suitable concepts from other fields or delve into the realm of culture to construct a system of aesthetic cultural categories. Compared to previous aesthetic cultures, contemporary aesthetic culture can be summarized into three significant characteristics: first, the prevalence of consumerism and hedonism, with pleasure driving straight into the core of culture; second, in modern culture, visual elements have risen to a central position, becoming an indispensable link, displaying a tremendous role in creating, depicting, and disseminating meaning; third, due to the trend towards pleasure-oriented, visual, and irrational contemporary aesthetic culture, issues of meaning representation and identity recognition have become focal points of contemporary aesthetic culture. These three points coincide with the impact of media on humanity. With the continuous innovation in the field of media and the rise of new media, the integration of media, aesthetics, and human daily life is deepening, giving rise to a new aesthetic concept. In this process, people are continuously exposed to, cognizant of, and experiencing the new face and culture of media, while also deeply understanding and feeling the unique charm brought by the new media aesthetic. While using online media for communication and dissemination, people pursue commercial maximization and artistic aestheticization, striving for sensory stimulation and attraction, thus generating media aesthetic culture.

3. THE 'PAN-ENTERTAINMENT' PHENOMENON

In contemporary times, the rapid development of media technology and the openness of people's ideological concepts have fostered a cultural phenomenon known as 'pan-entertainment'. This phenomenon, relying on modern media and high-tech information dissemination methods, entertains the packaging of figures and events from different fields, primarily aiming to pursue entertainment effects and attract public attention. This trend has significantly diminished the seriousness of the cultural market, endowing non-entertainment matters with entertainment attributes, and widely permeating into various fields such as economy, culture, and society, satisfying people's sensory needs. Although this low-level sensory stimulation satisfies the psychological needs of some individuals and promotes the expansion of the pan-entertainment market, it also leads many to pursue superficial revelry, neglecting the importance of rationality and morality.

The phenomenon of pan-entertainment possesses three distinct characteristics. Firstly, it has an extremely broad dissemination scope, involving not only a wide range of participants but also rapidly spreading its influence across various social domains. With the popularization of big data and the Internet, both political issues and daily life can be presented in an entertaining manner, and the speed of dissemination is extremely fast, with a wide impact. Secondly, pan-entertainment has made 'entertainment' the primary criterion for measuring cultural value, thereby neglecting the educational and heritage value of culture. It pursues formal magnificence and humor, overlooking the authenticity and significance of content, catering to people's vanity and sensory needs, leading to a lack of humanistic literacy. Thirdly, there is a deviation in the value orientation of pan-entertainment. Many mass media excessively pursue economic benefits, neglecting social benefits, intentionally or unintentionally spreading erroneous values such as materialism and hedonism, which has had a negative impact on society.

The primary factor is the rapid development of electronic information technology in our modern life. As a portable mobile network carrier, the smartphone has become the primary choice for college students to acquire information and engage in daily communication. Under the trend of pan-entertainment, online media often relies on commercial Internet platforms, with a core orientation towards pleasure and consumerism. Against this backdrop, the evaluation criteria for product value are often simplified to whether they can effectively attract the attention of the audience. This trend reflects, to some extent, the current characteristics of online media content production and dissemination, which pursue commercial interests by creating eye-catching content. Consequently, there has been a widespread vulgarization and entertainment trend in online content, which, in the current era of big data, is overly prevalent, leading to the emergence of the viewpoint that 'entertainment is paramount'. However, beyond its commercial role, online media also serves educational, supervisory, and guiding functions.

4. THE NEGATIVE IMPACT OF THE PAN-ENTERTAINMENT TREND ON THE AESTHETIC VALUES OF COLLEGE STUDENTS FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF AESTHETIC CULTURE

As a burgeoning force within a nation, university students are confronting challenges posed by the digital medium. This group, having yet to fully engage with society, possesses limited life experiences and is not yet psychologically mature, with a comparatively weaker capacity to discern right from wrong. They are characterized by naivety and an instability in values, making them susceptible to misguidance. Particularly under the subtle influence of the digital medium, there is a tendency for conformity within the university student population, making it challenging for them to develop independent aesthetic preferences and accurate judgments of aesthetic value. From a holistic perspective, the trend towards pan-entertainment represents a negative phenomenon in online culture, which can adversely affect university students in several ways

4.1 It is prone to foster utilitarian and hedonistic ideologies

In contemporary times, various video platforms such as Tiktok and Kwai are saturated with internet celebrities who achieve "overnight fame." Microblogs are further permeated with gossip about entertainment stars and parodies of classics. Some parasites within these online mediums, buoyed by popular adoration, prioritize base interests and the superficial trappings amassed through money, potentially fostering a culture of materialism and competitive behavior among university students. A subset of these internet celebrities, known for their live streaming, appear in the university demographic with labels such as appearance value, extravagance, and brand names, which can mislead students' perceptions of money, leading them to embrace hedonistic ideologies. The emergence of these internet celebrities induces unrealistic fantasies in some university students, with severe cases even resorting to online loans on illicit platforms for cosmetic surgery, purchasing luxury goods, and traveling, to establish their false "persona" and satisfy their deplorable vanity. These individuals willingly become accessories of "entertainment," contradicting the down-to-earth, proactive, and industrious values of contemporary university students' aesthetic and value systems.

4.2 The Dilution of Political Ideological Consciousness and the Weakening of Social Responsibility

In contemporary society, it is not difficult to observe that information on social media is being rapidly adapted and entertained by "jokesters," with even the most serious content potentially becoming fodder for their "meme" creations. While this trend reflects a certain degree of diversity in life and freedom of entertainment, it becomes particularly dangerous when serious topics are overly entertained. Traditional historical, social, and debate programs, which originally carried profound cultural and educational significance, are now frivolously presented in an entertainment format under the onslaught of new media, losing their original gravitas. For instance, a short video insulting heroes and martyrs released by a comic platform in 2018 not only hurt national sentiment but also tarnished social atmosphere. Similarly, major events such as the COVID-19 pandemic have been ridiculed by some netizens with absurd and inappropriate remarks, undoubtedly exacerbating societal impatience and frivolity.

This 'entertainment-oriented' digital culture, in the process of creation and dissemination, often overlooks the value and significance of culture, leading to the trivialization and distortion of information. As Neil Postman feared, amidst an abundance of information, individuals gradually become passive and selfish, and culture progressively degenerates into a vulgar pursuit of sensory stimulation. This trend has a particularly significant impact on university students. They often lack rigor and a sense of responsibility towards political issues, preferring content that is light and entertaining. If this trend persists, it will not only lead to a weakening of political awareness among

university students but may also result in a lack of social responsibility. Therefore, we must be vigilant against this 'entertainment-oriented' trend, maintaining respect and reverence for serious topics. At the same time, it is necessary to guide university students in establishing correct values, cultivating their political awareness and sense of social responsibility, and facing the development of society and the nation with a more proactive attitude.

4.3 The commercial vulgarization has led to the vulgarization of aesthetic values among university students.

Although the current rapid development of technology has laid a solid technological foundation for the era of big data and the Internet, it is regrettable that many media have not fully utilized this advantage to disseminate positive and healthy mainstream culture as their core objective. Instead, they choose to use vulgar commercial methods to cater to the majority with low aesthetic tastes, creating inferior aesthetic culture. May I ask, what positive impact does such aesthetic culture have on our aesthetic values? In his work "Aesthetic Promenades," Mr. Zong Baihua proposed that "'shifting my emotions' and 'shifting the world' are the conditions for the emergence of beautiful images." Can the current beauty be considered true beauty? Some irresponsible contemporary portals and live streaming platforms, in order to earn high profits from ratings and online attention, do not consider whether their content will have a negative impact on society, discussing sensitive topics without hesitation. Compared to classic mainstream literary works and artistic culture, college students are more inclined towards celebrity variety shows and literature of youthful pain. Moreover, the aesthetic standards conveyed by various internet celebrities on the platforms are based on appearance, thereby neglecting our ancient focus on the beauty of the human soul. This has, to some extent, led to the vulgarization and sensationalization of college students' aesthetic preferences, no longer advocating for restraint and frugality, but pursuing a flashy and free lifestyle, eroding the scope of social culture.

5. THE TREND OF PAN-ENTERTAINMENT AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF AESTHETIC VALUES AMONG COLLEGE STUDENTS FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF AESTHETIC CULTURE

However, why do we see a phenomenon of college students lacking aesthetic value judgments? The primary reason lies in the lack of proper guidance from schools and insufficient regulation by government departments. In response to these issues, universities should prioritize aesthetic education, with the core being the cultivation of students' online media aesthetic literacy. Courses that can guide college students in aesthetic value judgments, such as Introduction to Aesthetics and Aesthetic Culture, should be established. It is even more essential to enhance college students' aesthetic appreciation, thereby mitigating the negative impacts of the ubiquitous entertainment phenomenon. Meanwhile, government departments should also intensify their regulation of the Internet, controlling the excessive development of the ubiquitous entertainment phenomenon. College students, when consuming cultural products, should maintain the initiative of independent thinking, consciously saying "no" to sensational cultural products, and adhere to noble spiritual pursuits. In addition, the college student population should persist in reading excellent literary works, cultivating the ability to think independently, so as not to fall into the aesthetic misconceptions of the ubiquitous entertainment phenomenon. For instance, actively participating in cultural and recreational activities organized by the school can provide a deeper aesthetic experience in aesthetic activities and enhance one's own aesthetic realm and aesthetic literacy.

Within the context of values, various concepts of value often possess characteristics of both collectivity and universality. They not only reflect the interests, intentions, preferences, and desires of contemporary individuals but also refract certain value orientations of social psychology. Aesthetic culture, as a cultural form profoundly influenced by the context of social values, has its values as both the cornerstone of its long-term accumulation and the guide for its spiritual core and external manifestations. Here, I attempt to explore the negative tendencies of aesthetic values reflected behind the phenomenon of pan-entertainment in contemporary Chinese aesthetic culture and their origins, aiming to provide new perspectives and strategies for the construction and research of Chinese contemporary aesthetic culture. Although this study adopts a critical perspective, it does not overlook the positive role of mainstream ideological concepts in contemporary China in the construction of aesthetic culture. Guided by Marxism, combined with the common ideal of socialism with Chinese characteristics, the national spirit centered on patriotism, the spirit of the times centered on reform and innovation, and the socialist concept of honor and disgrace with the "Eight Honors and Eight Shames" as the main content, these four fundamental elements together constitute China's socialist core value system. This system occupies a central position in the overall social value context of our country, playing a leading role. It not only determines the basic characteristics and direction of the entire value system but also provides a solid theoretical foundation and practical guidance for constructing a harmonious aesthetic culture.

Every tool created by humanity embodies significance beyond its own. In this epochal context, we may tend to perceive the world as it is presented to us by online media. If the college student population is exposed daily to social platforms filled with absurd social news and vitriolic roasts, they may perceive the world as problematic. Conversely, if they engage daily with literary classics and technological headlines, they will naturally develop a deeper understanding and contemplation of the world.

In contemporary society, it appears that our world is increasingly defined by network media, a process that occurs imperceptibly. Over time, the proliferation of entertainment-oriented content from an aesthetic cultural perspective gradually shapes new cultural traits and characteristics. Network media wield unparalleled influence and constructivism over aesthetic culture, which is intrinsically linked to aesthetic values. Aesthetic values constitute the core of aesthetic culture, and aesthetic culture, in turn, is the source of aesthetic value consciousness. The collision of aesthetic cultures promotes the integration of aesthetic value concepts, and the evolution of aesthetic culture is accompanied by the transformation of aesthetic value concepts. The world we inhabit is not an objectively real one but a social reality constructed through various media symbols. As one of the representations of aesthetic culture, media symbols continuously influence, define, and modify individual values and behaviors, potentially becoming an increasingly significant reference framework for modern societal culture. Particularly, the impact of contemporary network media and the pan-entertainment, fast-food culture on university students is immeasurable. Fragmented reading leads to pallid thoughts; almost no one completes watching a film or even reading a book. During classes, the heads-down tribe crowds out reading time, and gaming enthusiasts almost abandon reading, finding it difficult to extricate themselves. To guard against the negative impact of pan-entertainment from an aesthetic cultural perspective on aesthetic values, we must learn to harness technology and not become slaves to network media. Additionally, it is essential to guide contemporary university students in establishing correct aesthetic value orientations and to emphasize aesthetic education, thereby cultivating this group with good aesthetic judgment capabilities.

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