Research on the Carnival Ritual Construction of Special Effect Bullet Chat at Bilibili from the Perspective of Carnival Theory

Yujia Yang[1], Kexin Zheng[2]
[1]South China Normal University, Guangzhou 510631, China
[2]Fujian Polytechnic Normal University, Fuqing Branch of Fujian Normal University),Fuzhou 350300,China
***Corresponding author E-mail: 2423399325@qq.com**

Abstract: In recent years, bullet chat with the development of the Internet has become an increasingly prominent cultural influence, bullet chat has become a subculture phenomenon. Compared with the ordinary bullet chat, special effect bullet chat appears in a more novel form, its existence can cause the audience more intense opinions and emotional expressions, resulting in an onlooking carnival effect. This study takes Bakhtin's Carnival Theory as the starting point and conducts research through a questionnaire survey and case analysis. The study finds that the number and the diversity of forms of special effect bullet chat can enhance the audience's interaction. And the study preliminarily discusses the influence of special effect bullet chat on the audience. At the same time, it reflects on the harm of the over-entertainment phenomenon behind the carnival effect on the audience.

Keywords: carnival theory; interactive ritual chain; bullet chat

1 Introduction

Bullet chat was originally a military term, referring to a scene in which gunfire is fired as intensively as a curtain in the sky. Later, bullet chat was introduced into the field of games and became popular as a vocabulary of quadratic element culture. In 2006, Japan created the first video website Niconico animation with an instant comment function. This comment text can be hung on the video screen and keep moving, forming a visual effect similar to the bullet screen, so it is also called 'bullet chat'. As a form of instant interaction, bullet chat has become a typical accompanying behavior when the public watches videos. Bullet chat culture has gradually developed from a subculture to popular culture, and even become the formation of a 'network carnival'. Special effect bullet chat refers to 'special style bullet chat', including 'BAS bullet chat' and 'code bullet chat'. Bilibili users can send bullet chat by applying to video publishers and paying corresponding points or Bilibili coins to the system. As a special form of bullet chat, special effect bullet chat can freely control the size, color, location, direction of text, etc., and

it appears more frequently in popular videos with higher views. Even if the special effect bullet chat not only increases the risk of computer downtime, but also blocks the original content of the videos, it can still produce an onlooking carnival effect in the relevant videos. This study takes the carnival phenomenon of special effect bullet chat in the Bilibili as the research object, and explores the formation motivation and construction process of the carnival ceremony of special effect bullet chat, as well as the impact on the audience and video content dissemination.

2 Literature Review

2.1 Research on Carnival Theory

Carnival Theory was raised by Russian thinker Bakhtin in the 1930s, [1] including three cores: Carnival, Carnival Ceremony, and Carnivalism. [2] Foreign scholar John Fiske, seeking reference from the Carnival Theory, put forward his own theory of popular culture. He believed that the carnival of popular culture is mainly manifested in three methods: subversion, pun, and parody. [3] Some scholars have applied Carnival Theory to the field of education and put forward the aggression of drama teaching method on students' cognition. [4] Other scholars have explored the carnival imagery and literary style in Rolando Hinojosa 's novels 'Klail City' and 'The Valley'. [5]

Some domestic scholars compare Carnival Theory with popular culture and put forward that Carnival Theory can not be used as the theoretical support of popular culture, but the two have a certain agreement in theoretical implication. [6] Domestic research on Carnival Theory mostly takes subculture phenomenon as the research object. From the perspective of Carnival Theory on UGC, some scholars have summarized the carnival characteristics of Bilibili and its application. [7] Other scholars used the method of Network Ethnography to explore the carnival representation in e-sports culture and the formation process of carnival groups. [8]

However, these studies did not study the carnival phenomenon caused by special effect bullet chat from the perspective of Carnival Theory, and therefore did not answer questions about the impact of carnival rituals constructed through special effect bullet chat on the audience and video content dissemination.

2.2 Research on bullet chat culture

Due to the short rise time of bullet chat culture, it is only popular in Japan and China. Therefore, the research on bullet chat culture is mainly concentrated in China and has not been widely concerned in Western academic circles. Foreign research mainly focuses on technical observation of bullet chat websites, and there is no specific research on the subculture of bullet chat.

At present, the domestic research on the bullet chat mainly from—the audience behavior,

text analysis, and communication perspective—three aspects, and these researches combined with different theories. Some scholars from the Theory of Uses and Gratification and Carnival Theory analysis of the bullet chat usage of the audience, propounded the existence value of the bullet chat and development issues, and put forward in all areas of social cooperation to prevent excessive carnival and entertainment to death, to jointly promote the future development of the bullet chat recommendations [9]; other scholars from the perspective of Semiotics, interpreted that the use of bullet chat language allows bullet chat groups to reap the feelings of the group, to build a code of conduct belonging to the self-sphere, which promotes the quadratic element subculture spread in the local [10] ; some scholars have explored the emergence and evolution of bullet chat interactive rituals based on the theory of interactive ritual chain, and believe that 'bullet chat group' completes the ritual resistance to external culture by sending bullet chat to construct the discourse space of interest-related groups [11].

Although the number of domestic research on bullet chat culture is large, these are mainly for ordinary bullet chat. The research about the carnival phenomenon of special effect bullet chat had not been classified and in-depth discussed. Therefore, this study will analyze the carnival ritual construction of special effect bullet chat from the perspective of Bakhtin's 'Carnival Theory', so as to make up for the current domestic research gap on special effect bullet chat, which has certain innovative significance.

3 Research Methods

3.1 Questions and hypothesis

This study will start with the Carnival Theory, trying to answer the following questions:

What is the motivation for the audience to choose to send special effect bullet chat?

In the process of special effect bullet chat display, how is the carnival ceremony generated and constructed?

What impact does the carnival phenomenon of special effect bullet chat have on the dissemination of video content?

This paper uses the research method of a questionnaire survey to try to answer the above questions. The questionnaire survey method, also known as the questionnaire method, is a survey method in which the investigator uses a uniformly designed questionnaire to understand the situation or consult the selected respondents.

Based on the above questions, the corresponding hypothesis is proposed here:

H1: The more special effect bullet chat, the stronger will for the video interaction;

H2: The more various styles of special effect bullet chat, the stronger will for the video interaction;

3.2 Sampling selection

The research object of this hypothesis is the users of Bilibili.

This survey completed the process of data collection, collation, and analysis on October 9, 2022. The survey is mainly based on open and closed questions. The main contents are: (1) Basic information confirmation: including age and gender. (2) The dimension reduction statement part of the independent variable special effect bullet chat of Bilibili. (3) The dimension reduction statement is part of the dependent variable video interaction power. This questionnaire contains 16 questions, including 8 single-choice questions, 1 multi-choice question, and 7 matrix questions. In order to coordinate with the COVID-19 epidemic prevention policy, this survey chose to put the questionnaire on the Internet, through WeChat, Weibo, and Questionnaire Star Sample Library for distribution.

4 Results

4.1 Descriptive analysis

A total of 313 questionnaires were collected. The samples aged 18-30 accounted for more than 90%. More than 80% of the samples are female, and 19.81% of the samples are male. From the distribution of the first degree, most of the samples are 'undergraduate', with a total of 277, accounting for 88.5%.

Through the survey, it was found that 75.4% of the respondents said that they had sent a bullet chat at Bilibili. Among them, 50 respondents had sent special effect bullet chat at Bilibili, accounting for 21.2%. There were 196 respondents who had seen special effect bullet chat at Bilibili, accounting for 83%. As can be seen from the data, the bullet chat usage behavior of Bilibili users is more common.

4.2 Structural analysis

In this study, the 'video interaction' is reduced to the audience's Likes, Comments, Coins, Collections, and Forwarding. In the questionnaire analysis, these five variables are summed and averaged to generate a new variable 'video interaction' for data analysis.

4.2.1 The number of special effect bullet chat has a significant impact on the video interaction of the audience

Through Pearson Correlation analysis, it is found that there is a significant positive correlation between the number of special effect bullet chat and audience’s interaction ($r=0.681$, $P=0.000$), indicating that the more special effect bullet chat in the videos of Bilibili, the stronger will for the audience to interact. Research hypothesis H1 is supported.

From the descriptive analysis, it can be seen that the respondents' will to watch videos with a large number of special effect bullet chat is higher than that of videos with various styles of special effect bullet chat. The mean values of the two are 3.1 and 2.8, respectively. Among the many interactive behaviors, the respondents' will to like videos with special effect bullet chat is the strongest, with an average of 2.96. This may be because the carnival phenomenon formed by the videos with a large number of special effect bullet chat is more intuitive and has a strong visual impulse. At the same time, it takes less energy to like the videos than other interactive behaviors such as sending bullet chat, comments, and forwarding, and can express recognition of the videos and their bullet chat.

4.2.2 The style of special effect bullet chat has a significant impact on the audience's video interaction

Through Pearson correlation analysis, it is found that there is a significant positive correlation between the styles of special effect bullet chat and audience's interaction ($r=0.741$, $P=0.000$), indicating that the more various the style of special effect bullet chat in the videos of Bilibili, the stronger will for the audience's interaction. Research hypothesis H2 is supported.

To sum up, the number and the style of special effect bullet chat are important factors to enhance audience interaction. As a participatory culture, bullet chat builds an open interactive platform based on videos for the audience. Video creators allow the audience to transform their interpretation of the videos into explicit text, providing a platform for communication and interaction between different texts. The bullet chat phenomenon has become one of the components of the videos in this way. In addition to the content, the special effect bullet chat plays the same role as the ordinary bullet chat in meaning expression and dialogue. Its various and novel styles can fully express the audience's emotions and feelings, enhance the sense of the carnival ceremony, and finally form a carnival atmosphere of emotional catharsis. Under the influence of a number of bullet chat and various styles of bullet chat, the audience will also participate in it unconsciously.

At the same time, the audience interaction under the influence of special effect bullet chat can create a new round of carnival. Compared to the text expression of ordinary bullet chat, special effect bullet chat in the technical upgrade allows the audience to express more abundant emotions in more styles, the audience through the styles of special effect bullet chat established a new carnival ceremony. The promotion of videos by the website largely depends on the interaction between the audience and the videos. Taking Bilibili as an example, Bilibili will rank the videos according to the amount of videos played, the number of likes, the number of shares and the amount of bullet chat sent, which means that the videos with a larger amount of audience interaction is more likely to be pushed on the popular list and the home page, and it is easier to gain more audience's attention. In the pushed videos, there is a carnival world formed by special effect bullet chat. As the audience stays in it, the ritual sense of carnival is ignited, and the interactive behavior of the audience will form a new round of carnival.

5 Summary and Discussion

Through Audience Survey and Case Analysis, this study makes a carnival theoretical study on the use of special effect bullet chat in Bilibili, trying to answer the question of the influence of special effect bullet chat on the interaction between the audience and videos. Through the research, it is found that the more special effect bullet chat and the more various the styles, the stronger the interaction between the audience and the videos. Therefore, this study believes that the number and the diversity of style of special effect bullet chat can cause the carnival phenomenon of video interaction.

5.1 Special effect bullet chat creates a virtual public space of personalized communication

The carnival ceremony of bullet chat is loved and welcomed by the public today. To a large extent, it breaks the boundaries of time and space and creates a virtual communication space for video viewers. The audience can interact with others in various forms of bullet chat, highlighting their own personality, which is the embodiment of the self-creativity of the audience. The special effect bullet chat attracts more groups' attention and participation with the three-dimensional and colorful styles. When a famous scene in the videos can trigger public empathy, the audience will express their emotions in the form of repeated special effect bullet chat, indicating empathy and recognition for the videos. In these videos with superimposed special effect bullet chat, the audience's sense of group identity and belonging will be enhanced through the repeated emphasis on content and form. In order to attract more audience’s attention to the videos, video sites will take the initiative to introduce a new style of special effect bullet chat to meet the needs of the audience’s personalized emotional identity. For example, Bilibili will provide the audience with a special style of special effect bullet chat in line with the festival atmosphere during the traditional festival. At the Mid-Autumn Festival Flower Moon Festival, the audience watching the videos can send the Mid-Autumn Festival blessing in the form of the Mid-Autumn Festival special effect bullet chat. These blessing words will be accompanied by the Mid-Autumn lanterns falling in the videos. The festival atmosphere created by this kind of special effect bullet chat provides the audience with an emotional expression port, which enhances the sense of group belonging in the process of interaction.

5.2 Special effect bullet chat carnival is a ritual resistance to popular culture

Bakhtin believes that the 'carnival spirit' is mainly reflected in the national, ritual, and subversive. In the survey, the release of special effect bullet chat is mainly distributed in the area of Animation & Comic (44%) and the area of Auto-tune Remix-themed (40%). These two

types of videos are mostly based on passionate style or style of spoof. In particular, the videos auto-tune remix-themed use highly synchronized, fast-repetitive materials with background music to achieve brainwashing or joyful effects, creating an entertaining atmosphere for the carnival. When the audience watches the videos, the meaning of the videos expression will be deconstructed and reconstructed. They form a mass carnival when constructing the carnival, through the text content of special bullet chat which is amplificated and emphasized by the number and style of bullet chat. This carnival carries the subversion of traditional cultural rules and communication modes, which is essentially an attempt to resist popular culture. In the videos of the Animation & Comic area, the audience uses the code to design the special effect bullet chat of the cartoon character portrait and cooperates with the picture to send the special effect bullet chat supporting the protagonist by means of magnification, coarsening, color transformation, etc. This kind of bullet chat contains the exclusive nouns and meanings of the culture, constructs the circle boundary of the interest-related group, forms the group unity, and maintains the atmosphere of the quadratic element group. This behavior is also a ritual resistance to the popular culture of the outside world in essence.

5.3 Special effect bullet chat entertainment leads to the excessive carnival

But it is worth noting that this study also found that the carnival effect of special effect bullet chat will also bring following without thinking, over-entertainment phenomenon. The Frankfurt School believes that new media technologies have reorganized social and cultural life. The characteristics of instantaneity, hypertext, and information flooding in the online world allow people to temporarily transcend the boundaries of the real environment in this virtual space and use new identities without assuming any responsibility. [12] Bullet chat builds a real-time virtual public opinion platform in the videos for the audience, the audience can send various styles of bullet chat to vent their emotions to obtain the pleasure of self-satisfaction. This one-way, fragmented, unorganized inner monologue is essentially a 'blameless ramble'. [13] Therefore, while the audience expresses themselves, it is inevitable that there will be 'screen brushing' unrelated to the videos and inferior bullet chat containing filthy words. The special effect bullet chat occupies the videos page with extremely fast speed, a large number, and various styles. The audience is easy to lose themselves and the ability to think in the flood of information. This kind of excessive carnival of special effect bullet chat misinterpreting the videos' original intention often appears in popular music videos of misheard lyrics in recent years. For example, the original sentence of the lyrics is 'rain one after another, the old hometown grass is deep', which is misinterpreted as 'rain one after another, the grass is deep in autumn pants'. This kind of special effect bullet chat reconstructs the original meaning of the videos, which makes the audience fall into the entertainment information and gradually ignore the original meaning of the videos. It can be seen that the excessive carnival of special effect bullet chat not only hinders the dissemination of video content but also causes negative effects such as reducing the audience's viewing experience and affecting the audience's deep thinking. If things continue this

way, popular culture will be constantly dispelled. People are addicted to the over-entertainment world and are infiltrated by the concept of entertainment supremacy. The spiritual civilization is gradually declining and becoming a vassal of entertainment.

6 Reflection

This study explores the carnival phenomenon and its ritual construction of the special effect bullet chat. The study finds that the number and style of special effect bullet chat are important factors affecting the carnival effect, which opens up research ideas for Carnival Theory research in the context of new media. On the one hand, the special effect bullet chat provides a personalized virtual communication space for the audience, which becomes the emotional outlet, and builds a carnival square with the special effect bullet chat publisher as the core. On the other hand, the excessive carnival will also hinder the dissemination of the meaning of the videos. However, this study only focuses on the impact of the number and style of special effect bullet chat on the audience's carnival effect. It has not yet involved the effect of special effect bullet chat content and technical operation on the audience's will to interact. In future research, we can expand the research and practice of the carnival effect on special effect bullet chat from the perspective of the audience's subjective initiative and Use and Gratification Theory.

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