Entertainment Platforms and Algorithmic Ideology: Shaping Values, Identities, and Social Power

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Abstract. Contemporary entertainment platform is highly developed, online entertainment platforms have become an important infrastructure that influences public values, and the structure of social consciousness. With the algorithmic recommendation mechanism and data driven business logic is fully integrated into the entertainment production system, based on that, entertainment is no longer merely cultural consumption but has gradually evolved into an ideological mechanism that shapes standards of success, lifestyles, and individual identities. This article takes platforms such as IQIYI and Douyin as examples, combining platform studies, data colonialism theory and cultural ideology critique. Through text analysis and theoretical synthesis, it explores how entertainment content and algorithms jointly construct mainstream ideology and influences on users' cognitive and emotional structures. The research finds that platforms, through predictable content structures and algorithmic incentive mechanisms, facilitate the normalization of idealized lifestyles, the normalization of idealized lifestyles, reshaping of users' cognitive-emotional frameworks, and the formation of algorithmic subjectivity aimed at "visibility". At the social level, platforms exacerbate cultural homogenization, promote the entertainment of public discourse and commodify "happiness" as a consumable emotion. The article ultimately points out that digital entertainment platforms have become ideological devices that implicitly discipline individuals and serve platform capital, and there is an urgent need for a more in-depth critical examination of their cultural and social impacts.

Keywords: Platformized Entertainment, Algorithmic Ideology, Participatory Conditioning, Cultural Authority Shift.

1. Introduction

Contemporary entertainment is no longer merely a form of leisure activity; instead, it is systematically encoded and disseminated within highly commercialized and technologize platforms carrying specific ideologies such as consumerism, individualism and social norms. These contents, in conjunction with algorithms, influence the values, identities and desire structures of the audience. Therefore, it is necessary to reexamine the ideological role of entertainment today.

This article focuses on how platform logic, content forms and algorithmic mechanisms collaborate to shape and reinforce these ideologies. By employing a literature review method, it aims

to sort out relevant academic achievements to gain a clearer understanding of how platforms produce and distribute meaning.

The objective of this research is to reveal how digital entertainment affects individual consciousness and social cognition. To achieve this, the analysis will be conducted from three aspects: platform mechanisms, user influence and cultural consequences.

2. Conceptual definition

Contemporary diverse entertainment is no longer serves as a form of leisure time entertainment for people, instead, it has become an ideological production machine. The widely circulated platforms have reshaped cultural identities and the public's life [1].

Entertainment ideology has formed a systematic structure by content writing, technical manipulation and mechanism participation, this also indicates that diverse entertainment is a centralized ideological battlefield. In 2018, Nieborg and Poell point out that platforms is transforming the culture into commodities based on data-driven methods, which controlling the masses in multiple aspects [2]. This also shows the driving force of the platform has led to a form of data colonization [3]. Behind the platform, capitalism controls the data and influences the selection and ideology choices of the public.

2.1. Evolution of entertainment and the contemporary landscape

With the development of internet, the structure of entertainment forms and cultural expressions have gradually changed.

In the last century, the theater and sports shows were widely popular, these types of collective entertainment activity had fixed times and rhythms, which forming a centralized code, it was controlled by professional teams and aesthetic standards to represent the collective culture. At the beginning of this century, it transformed into broadcasting, it enabled more people to participate in entertainment activities at the same times. However, the entertainment coding rights remained a highly concentrated in TV organizations and production institutions, which further forming public culture [1]. In past few years, people have gradually joined online social groups and platforms, which carried out a series of entertainment activities based on the social platforms. Under the scheduling of the internet and platforms, the audience relationships and participation methods have been reorganized, and an asynchronous consumption entertainment model has been create based on personalized recommendations. However, this does not mean that people's choices have become more independent, rather, it is a symbol of the reorganization of cultural rights structure.

Bucher pointed out in 2018 that algorithms represent a new mechanism of power [4]. Capitalists used the ultimate algorithms behind the platforms to covertly manipulate people into accepting new cultural forms; besides, it weakens the cohesion of social groups. In the contemporary discussion of entertainment culture, the scale of participation id often regarded as an important indicator for measuring the active of culture. However, this intuitive judgment of "the more participation, the stronger the culture is" neglects the issue of how cultural meanings are organized, which encoded and distributed the contemporary culture, the entertainment-oriented media system still has the function of organizing public culture. When diverse entertainment activities transform from collective activities, the central of the culture and structure will lose a unified direction, the encoding power will be separate among different groups, and the symbolic power of culture will be weakness, which also shows in Jia's theory in 2025, entertainment will transform from "co-present experience" to "individual experiences under system scheduling" , which not only reduces cohesion but also

reorganizes aesthetic rights and the directionality of dissemination [5]. The Public needs to find the right direction required by ideology in entertainment activities dominated by media communication platforms, and discover the structure of aesthetic power, not just be a participator.

2.2. Focusing on streaming media and social media variety shows

Cultural activities do not depend on the number of participants, but rather on the encoding rights and distribution structure. Modern platform- based entertainment reassembles the framework through mechanisms and algorithms, it influences people's ideological encoding.

Garajamirli argues that the gatekeeping mechanism is a structure that concentrates the power of content selection, which is also means determination in the hands of specific entities [6]. Its essence lies in "who decides what the public can see". If the gatekeeping in the algorithmic era is regarded as a new form of power, then what Peking Opera demonstrates is the centralized gatekeeping system of the traditional era, the opera troupes, art committees and stage systems hold the right to define the content of the performance, the symbolic system and norms, besides, they can controlling the encoding and dissemination methods of meaning. In contrast, modern entertainment platforms achieve interaction with users through Big Data search and algorithm matching and consolidate the encoding authority through decentralized participation. Contemporary entertainment programs are different. By grasping value propositions and showcasing individual breakthroughs, the programs reinforce, select and repeat the values of people. "The Rap of China" is the first program in China that only focuses on the rap category, it has received high attention through the competition format, the narrative of contestants' growth and the discourses of the judges. The program circulates videos on streaming platforms, such as highlights and conflict segments, which has changed the dissemination logic and formed a new data promotion chain by the platformization of media. The public's participation is not the free creation of meaning, but the emotional internalization of ideology [7].

Therefore, entertainment programs not only increase participation and higher entertaining, but also provide a perspective on how ideology is systematically encoded and naturalized on the platform, which together form the embedding mechanism of values and social frameworks.

3. Case analysis

New media platforms such as Douyin, TikTok and Xiaohongshu, those platforms achieve customer retention through "platform logic" to access their business goals based on data and algorithms. This algorithmic logic is not a neutral technology, instead, it actively shapes the cultural values hierarchy and visibility.

Couldry and Mejias proposed in 2019 that the most fundamental mechanism of contemporary capitalism is to gain profits by extracting consumer's data [3]. The platform conducts user statistics based on the users' likes, viewing duration and program participation, and them pushes different content through big data, all these are regarded as calculable data. However, the content that users can see do not depends on themselves, it depends on the data push. Thus, the platform determines the visibility of the content and determines the culture that users receive. This forms a clearly transparent but actually controlled by data.

The entertainment system exhibits a significant amplification of popularity bias [8]. After "The Rap of China" was promoted through algorithms and systems in China, the strong emotions, high dissemination power and commercial values were magnified by the online platforms, this led to a situation where the programs were pushed to users, and the disadvantaged culture was continuously

marginalized. The algorithm platform has expanded the coverage of dissemination, which creating a false "universal aesthetic", it promotes cultural dissemination, but its shaped according to the preferences of the platform. This popularity bias also shows why traditional arts such as Peking Opera have difficulty to gain visibility in the platform environment: The platform does not reward cultural depth, they only content the culture that can quickly generate interaction and data.

Under the calculation of the media platform's logic, the importance and visibility of culture have been reordered based on their value, rather than being generated by users.

3.1. Layer1: content narrative coding

The development and dissemination of new media mainly analyze the way in which content encode ideology itself. Avila Torres and Beer in 2025 point out that the algorithmic management of contemporary entertainment platforms not only affects the way access content for users, but it also guides users to gradually adapt to the behavioral logic set by the platforms in their daily lives, which based on "trust mechanisms" and "goal setting" [9]. The platform "translates" the content into a "natural story" through narrative, characters and emotional structure. The content of the programmed mainly follows a same template, such as emphasizing the highlights, highlighting conflicts, emotional fluctuations and "heroic" struggle stories, highlighting the plot and character scripts, it helps maximize the matching between the communicative nature and the algorithm.

By strengthening the narrative structure of the story, Hailong pointed out in 2018 that the internalization of ideology is transformed through the physical and public's emotional expressions in communication [10]. The program can achieve success and complete multiple hit programs through the same model. It reaches targeted programs by grasping the emotional values. Through creating different "consumable character types", the program transforms social identities into circulating entertainment symbols. However, the selection of the program is targeted, for example, traditional art cannot be designed as a "quick consumption" symbol, its appeal is relatively low, which does not have an advantage in platform narrative. The content of entertainment programs influences the viewing and dissemination through public's emotional cues, such as surprise, anger and empathy. This creates an emotional connection between the audience and the program, which building a bridge for them. Besides, platform data represents the digital expression of users' emotions, the emotional structure itself serves as a medium for ideology.

3.2. Layer2: algorithmic distribution coding

The platform's distribution logic distributes content through non-neutral algorithms, which screening the public's ideology and conducting targeted push notifications. Firstly, the user's click rate, duration of stay, viewing path and search behaviors on the social platforms will be monitored. These behaviors are transformed into data models, which can be used to analyze the customer's dynamics [4]. Secondly, the platform builds user profiles through the data model, ranks and feeds similar user groups and predicted interests. Their aim is to increase the platform's retention rate based on leveraging user interests. Finally, the structure of the platform content is determined on public's interests, which effectively enhance the behavioral data.

The platform has a profound impact on users. Users will be surrounded by the same content, which form an "interest cage", which makes them unable to access diverse entertainment content, and it will be forced to unconsciously accept the homogenized content that provided by the platform. This results leads to shaping users' entertainment tases and aesthetic convergence. The seemingly freely chosen platforms are constantly being guided by algorithmic path planning, it is

difficult to adopt traditional narrative methods. Therefore, the visibility of niche entertainment is even lower. This structure not only alters visibility but also shapes the way users engage, enabling ideology to be internalized in the process of entertainment interaction.

3.3. Layer3: interactive participation coding ("participatory" ideological internalization)

Participations will all be converted into "calculable behaviors", but they will be incorporated into the revenue structure of the platforms. Participation has been reorganized into a form which supervised labor [7]. Users are transformed into data through activities such as commenting, these data will determine the content of the next round of push notifications as soon as possible to users. Eventually, this leads to a passive cycle. The platform enables users to internalize the platform preferences in a positive mindset; it has summarized various popularity rankings based on the data at the same time. The algorithmic logic varies among different platforms, which leads to an inconsistent ideology rather than a unified way, it resulting in a "fragmented and multicentered" situation [11].

The popularity ranking list is not based on the intrinsic value of the content itself, but on the collective behavior of users. The public effect pushes users to use the media platforms that has large members. The platform provides guiding prompts to users, such as "what to like" or "what to support". Programs without high interaction indicators will be reduce pushed to public. As a result, it is difficult for the platforms to accumulate "visibility capital".

At the participation level, ideology is no longer imparted through content, it is instead accomplished by users themselves. The platform entertainment enables ideology to be completed in an "autonomous participation" way.

4. Discussion: impact, benefits and social consequences

4.1. Current impact on individual ideology

Andrejevic pointed out in 2020 that participation itself would become a source of value extraction [7]. The platform has shaped value through entertainment-oriented means, influencing people's values under the impetus of algorithms, it has defined the templates for success, failure and a good life, actively being "utilized" to complete self-training, catering to the platform's content and image. The platform also drives people to automatically adjust to the same "network values" under the public mentality. By leveraging the public's empathy ability, it has created different programs, and re-dividing the hierarchy on the internet, quantifying identities, which establishing new identity constructions. The high-frequency content rhythm and the structure of short videos have changed the attention schema and emotional expectations. Platforms repeatedly influencing users' emotions and altering their cognitive paths, the platform achieves the reformation of users' knowledge frameworks, which enables the overlap between users' content and the framework, thereby promoting the development of the platform's revenue.

4.2. Behind the platform

The fundamental driving force of the platform steams from the exploitation of capital. Capital extracting data and transformed into commodified physical items. The platform exchanges emotions and time with users through "free entertainment", which is a symbiotic relationship between the platform and capital. Commercial interests affect the quality of knowledge [12]. The platform id responsible for providing traffic and data so that capital can utilize it to transform into commercial

materials. This behavior also accelerates the circulation of capital, and users have become the core elements of the symbiotic structure.

The entertainment content has collaborated with celebrities and well-known IP, which has formed brand cultural capital. The brand can establish a unique tone through platforms and the image of celebrities, which influence users' participation in brand activities through ideology, achieving the goal of attracting new advertisement. In this way, the platform and then product form a strong cycle. Within the competitive landscape, contemporary brands and capital collaboration can enhance their competitiveness and differentiate themselves from other brands.

4.3. Contemporary social impact and reflection

The overly formulaic entertainment content has led to the suppression of diverse cultures, its cause a single cultural chain. Traditional cultures and niche cultures have their living spaces continuously squeezed, which niche expressions are difficult to be amplified by algorithms. Mainstream narratives receive more attention and repetitive content types frequently emerge. In this long term, the cultural innovation ability of the country has declined, replication and plagiarism have received more attention, diversified values have been marginalized.

Public news and serious issues have also been distorted under the influence of new media platforms. Many public discussions have been "entertained" and rewritten according to entertainment logic. Only when they are packaged as "consumable content" can they gain attention on new media platforms. The socialization issues have gradually become more dramatic and emotional, which has compressed the space for public rationality and also allowed platform governance to shape the legitimacy of cognition [12]. Digital platforms have restructured social and cultural relationships, which resulting in the public being exposed to biased content [5]. The platform's mode pf value and visual stimulation take precedence over deep thinking, which has led to a decline in the quality of public discussions.

5. Conclusion

The results of this article indicate that contemporary entertainment forms have fully become platform-based, and their ideological functions are not mainly carried out by the text content itself, but they are realized through the algorithmic distribution logic and participation mechanisms of the platform. This finding leads to the conclusion that contemporary entertainment platforms id proceeding in an "enjoyment", "participation" and "computability" manner, its naturalized commercial logic, cultural norms and value orientation have become a structured ideological environment.

This study has significant implications for entertainment research, cultural research and also platform research. The article emphasizes that cultural authority is not determined by the scale of participation, by based on encoding rights, distribution rights and visibility structure, and these decision-making rights are mainly concentrated in the hands of capitalists. This provides a theoretical framework for explaining the reason why traditional cultural forms such as Peking Opera are weakened visibility in the era of high participation, while platform-based variety shows and short videos have rapidly risen, which also provides a new perspective for understanding how platform capital reshapes public's values and aesthetic preferences.

Future research should more focus on the following aspects: First, the long-term impact of algorithms on cultural diversity and the visibility of traditional arts. Second, whether the participation mechanism can be redesigned to restore cultural subjectivity. Third, it is necessary to

explore comparative studies across multiple platforms, which can reveal the differences in the naturalization of ideology under different business models.

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