

A Research of Emotional Construction in the Community Culture of the Chinese Music App NetEase Cloud Music

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Abstract: With the infiltration of network community culture, some music platforms represented by NetEase Cloud Music began to create community functions with unique attributes, which were welcomed by users and led to users' ownership and identification of the platform. This circumstance has incited the authors to contemplate the fundamental essence of the community culture within the context of NetEase Cloud Music, a music platform that encompasses essential functionalities. Moreover, the authors aim to elucidate the mechanisms by which users of NetEase Cloud Music engage in this established social community. This paper uses the content analysis method to investigate the music social behavior of NetEase Cloud music users. With the help of mobile music media platform, users will be daily life media, based on the common emotional experience, so that "emotion" as a social bond, completely in the virtual community built by NetEase Cloud music. Its significance is to enable us to explore the relationship between emotional needs, community culture and music media from a practical perspective.

Keywords: emotional construction, NetEase Cloud Music, community culture, music app

1. Introduction

NetEase Cloud Music is a music platform developed by NetEase (China) in 2013, which has an extremely large user base. One of the features of NetEase cloud music attracting users is that there are emotional audience cultures in everywhere, including resonance comments and stories users left on some classic songs. These things also attract mutual attention between users, enhancing the user stickiness of NetEase Cloud music. The number of comments on a song has also become a reference indicator of a song's popularity. At the same time, NetEase Cloud Music according to the user's listening records, with the help of a powerful recommendation system, provides users with the function of a daily song list, of which the recommended songs are very likely to meet the tastes of users. Moreover, NetEase Cloud Music provides users with certain social functions, so that the emotional culture is more deeply embedded in the community.

In the Q1 of 2023, the performance of NetEase Cloud music developed healthily, and gross profit margin increased significantly from 12.2% in the same period last year to 22.4%, hitting a new high. NetEase executives said that the monthly active users (MAU) of online music platform have grown steadily. The rate of Q1 online music membership payment is about 20%, and the

number of paying users continues to grow. It is worth noting that NetEase Cloud music continues to focus on the online music track, upgrade product experience around core music services, and promote sustainable and healthy business development. In the Q1, NetEase Cloud Music increased its support for domestic original music, and by the end of March this year, on the platform registered independent musicians had exceeded 630,000, continuing to lead the industry. Recently, NetEase Cloud Music launched musician support programs such as “New Voice Force” and “Ladder Plan 2023” to explore and cultivate Chinese music talents through professional courses and traffic recommendations. In general, NetEase cloud music gross profit margin reached a new high, paying users continued to grow, and the ecology of the platform seemed to have a benign development.

For NetEase Cloud Music, community culture has always been a focus area. “The music community is one of our most important strategies this year.” In 2022, Zhu Yiwen, the CEO of NetEase Cloud Music, announced the strategic direction of the new stage and officially announced that “social” would be the breakthrough for the next development of it. The “cloud village”, “circle”, “square” and other functions that appear in constantly updated versions of NetEase Cloud Music also showed the official ambitions. NetEase Cloud music plans to establish the connections between music and people, music and content, and individuals through these functions. With connection between online and offline scenes with content, NetEase Cloud Music focus on community relations, at the same time, leave more imagination for future commercialization.

The music social has become a weapon for NetEase to break through the competition of multiple music platforms in China. In fact, the social genes of NetEase Cloud Music can be traced back to its inception. In April 2013, NTES.US founder and CEO Ding Lei defined NetEase Cloud music as a “mobile music community”, focusing on social elements to achieve user social interaction, around the discovery and sharing of music. For NetEase, which is lack of music copyrights to a certain extent, “playlists, reviews, user-generated UGC content” have become a magic weapon to attract fans. So much users lamented: “Watching NetEase cloud music reviews is like watching their lives.” and many users even joked: “NetEase cloud music is still very comfortable, in addition to no songs.”

However, with the proliferation of user content and the growing of competitive products, the initial stage of music social attempts have been unable to meet the requirements of NetEase Cloud Music, and a space for music lovers to fully and freely express themselves has become an urgent need of NetEase Cloud Music. In this way, social content no longer seems to revolve entirely around music, but freely expands its boundaries. From the daily life sharing to the discussion of entertainment news, NetEase Cloud community in the continuous evolution of the revision and even towards the direction of a concentrated social media, like a small twitter (or X). Music seems to have been unable to summarize the NetEase Cloud community culture. In this process, the authors gradually noticed that it seems that “emotion” is the most popular and representative attributes of these content.

2. Literature Review

With online communities developing more and more rapidly in today’s digital age, many scholars have done some related discussions and research on this topic. As early as 1993, Howard Rheingold mentioned the concept of online community as a type of social aggregation based on cyberspace [1]. Sun Xiangyun’s explanation of this concept is more specific. He proposed that the development of mobile network technology has given rise to a virtual space that coexists with the real space, thus providing a new platform for individual interactions. This type of interaction makes the relationship between people become networked, and through various social software, individuals are aggregated into new social groups [2]. As real space and virtual space begin to deeply intertwine, spatial norms and community patterns slowly emerge on the Internet [3], and community culture is formed.

As for how the community culture is constructed, different scholars have put forward different insights, while the main viewpoints mostly focus on the fact that the community satisfies the social identity of users. Pang Zheng and Zhou Heng found that the purpose of individuals joining a community is not to gain a favorable position within the community, but to obtain information, express their demands, and then seek a sense of identity and belonging [4]. Xia Wenkai and Lu Rongwei also analyzed that in many aspects, members of online communities have a strong sense of group consciousness, group belonging and collective action. Online communities provide support for members, and members gain satisfaction from the process of group activities [5]. Zhang Ru's study goes a step further, using social identity theory to illuminate that people's self-identification comes largely from comparisons between in-groups and relevant out-groups. Because of the variety of online communities, people categorize themselves and then join a particular community. Through the comparison between in-groups and out-groups, people find the strengths of their own groups on this basis, and then positively differentiate themselves from other groups. This increases the level of self-esteem and deepens the identification with the in-group [6].

When it comes to the object of this study - NetEase Cloud Music, its basic situation has been analyzed in the "Introduction" part, so the author will briefly describe the relevant research of scholars here. Qu Qingqing analyzed that NetEase Cloud Music has given full play to the social attributes of music. Through various functions, it enhances users' sense of belonging, promotes interaction and stimulates sharing, making it a music social software [7]. Ding Lei, CEO of NetEase, said at the NetEase Cloud Music product conference, "No interaction, no music." It is evident that social attributes occupy a very important position in the operation system of NetEase Cloud Music [8]. It is because NetEase Cloud Music provides a good social platform, users show a high degree of loyalty. Scholars have found that users are usually satisfied in three aspects: first, audio-visual enjoyment and relaxation; second, recording moods and expressing emotions; third, sharing and communication [9]. And according to Guo Bei's research, users can construct their own communities within NetEase Cloud Music to satisfy different needs such as music search, sharing and interaction. What NetEase Cloud Music does is to form a collective network ecosystem of these decentralized users through social interaction, thus forming its own unique interactive mode of music socialization [10].

These findings allow the authors to better understand the basic information about community culture and music platforms, but since community culture has not been developed for a long time, the scope of existing research is still relatively limited. For instance, scholars generally study the construction of community culture from the perspective of users' social identity, but it is clear that there are other emotional causes that drive the construction. In addition, scholars usually focus on theories or user behavior, and seldom conduct research by analyzing the content of comments, posts, etc. posted by users. So the authors' research will help fill these research gaps and help people understand the community culture of NetEase Cloud Music more comprehensively. This research will use content analysis to study how the community culture of NetEase Cloud Music is constructed through the diverse emotional needs of its users.

3. Methodology

The authors used content analysis to conduct their study. In the first step, the authors chose the NetEase Cloud Music platform to study the composition of the community, because NetEase Cloud Music's social attributes are more prominent, and its platform provides many interesting ways to provide users with social opportunities, and many users choose NetEase Cloud Music among many music platforms for this reason. The second step was to directly ask about cases on the NetEase Cloud Music platform, as users who were able to post comments on the platform tended to be more active on the platform, so the authors did not need to investigate whether they were active and

interactive on the NetEase Cloud Music platform. In the third step, the authors conducted a separate call for content on NetEase Cloud Music's community, song comment section and plaza. That is, screenshots of the selected content were taken on different pages of NetEase Cloud Music, and then the content was analyzed based on the screenshots. The authors used these screenshots to observe various behavioral moves of NetEase Cloud Music users on the platform, such as posting comments, interacting with others, sharing with each other, and chatting privately. Finally, the authors explore how they form communities through interactions and other behaviors.

4. Results

4.1. Little Daily Love

Netizens share stories of couples' daily interactions. Netizens brings readers stories about love, which often contain a lot of positive sentimental value. For example, a girl shared that when she and her boyfriend were chatting and sending messages, his boyfriend would reply to every message carefully and respond to the girl at all times.

A girl shared that when she was studying in the library, she was given a small note by a boy, which reads "Hello, can I get to know you? You're really cute! It's okay if you don't want to, I'm sorry" The girl thought it was cute what the boy did too and felt she was healed.

4.2. Failed Love/Crush

Netizens share their stories of failure in the pursuit of love. Those that are posted often contain negativities, and the comments will often have warm positive sentiments from well-wishers. A netizen shared that she had a crush on someone for a long time, and every time her friends asked why she didn't confess, she always said, "We're just ordinary friends". The phrase "ordinary friends" made them miss the whole life.

4.3. Lamenting Life

Netizens share their feelings and thoughts on life. They contain the different perceptions and opinions of netizens, who often interact and discuss with those in the comments section. Netizen shares that when she was a child she was very confident and used to perform on stage and was often complimented by everyone. She doesn't know when she started to avoid and be afraid of socializing, and had low self-esteem because of some failed relationships. Until one day, when netizen gave a speech while standing on the stage again, she was very nervous, but she still finished her speech, and she felt her self-confidence coming back at the moment she finished.

4.4. Depression/Insomnia

Netizens share some of their sad stories and what makes it hard for them to sleep. They want to vent their negative emotions in this way, and they also want to get messages that resonate with them, and they want to get messages of positive emotions to alleviate their negative emotions. The netizen shared that he once advised depressed patients to be optimistic, telling them that there are still a lot of very good milk tea and food in this world. Later, the netizen got depressed himself and realized that the milk tea was not good at all after depression, and he couldn't sleep the whole night. The netizen suddenly found his discouragement at the time hilarious because "it's too agreeable to discourage a depressed person as a bystander, but you don't really know what he's going through."

5. Discussion

Little Daily Love: There are many aspects of emotions, but the theme about love is the most popular, so in the community of NetEase Cloud Music, the authors can see thousands of comments or posts about love, especially in the comment section of those songs that celebrate love or marriage, this phenomenon is more common. And in these comments about love, there are two main categories, one is about happiness when falling in love and the other is about sadness when falling out of love. As for the latter, the authors intend to talk about it in the next paragraph. So, why do so many people like to share stories or feelings about their relationships? The reason is simple. People want to be blessed and encouraged by others in such a way as to deepen their happiness and fulfillment. Moreover, in the days before music apps, people mostly shared their love experiences with offline relatives and friends, or through social media such as blogs or Facebook. At that time, if they heard a song about love, even if they wanted to take the opportunity to share their feelings, there was no corresponding channel for them to express themselves. But now, with the emergence of specialized music software, people can easily post their emotional experiences in the comments section or community, and find a large number of users who feel the same way. NetEase Cloud Music, as the music software with the best user experience in China, has naturally become people's first choice. The authors believe that the number and proportion of comments and posts about relationships will continue to increase significantly in the future, and it is likely that more categories will be subdivided again.

Failed Love/Crush: Aside from comments or posts about the sweetness of being in love, content about falling out of love is also everywhere in the NetEase Cloud Music community, especially in the comments section of those sad ballads. Some express their sadness and pain after falling out of love, some accuse their partner of betraying them, while others calmly analyze the reasons for their breakup and admit their mistakes. The reason why people will talk about their lovelorn experience in music apps is also very understandable, because people need a channel to vent their bad emotions after suffering the pain of falling out of love, and they need to be cared for and consoled by other people, so that they can calm down and better resolve their bad mood, so as to continue their life. Moreover, music apps trigger the emotions they want to vent more than any other software. This is because when people hear a certain sad ballad, they will often bring their own experiences into it, thus causing them to enter a very emotional stage. At this time, it is easy for them to have an emotional outburst in the comment section. The authors believe that releasing emotions in the music community is a good way to regulate emotions. When they type and see the warm response of others, their original bad mood will be reduced a lot. However, rather than seeking solace online, the authors think it is better to talk to their parents, classmates, colleagues or close friends, because these people understand them better and can provide them with more appropriate advice. In addition, the problem of love is usually not one-way, after they vent their emotions, they should also take the initiative to find what shortcomings they have exposed in this love, and then try to get rid of it, so that they will get better and better. Meanwhile, music apps and government departments can also offer tips on how to cope with the lovelorn emotion, so that more people know how to deal with it properly.

Lamenting Life: In addition to love, there are also many comments or posts in the Cloud Village that express users' emotions about life, about their careers, or about something that has happened to them. Some of these emotions are positive and some are negative, but their essence is the same, all based on people's desire to share and express. People want to use this platform as a carrier to convey their attitudes or opinions to other users, in order to trigger understanding and empathy from others. This kind of purpose is essentially the same as the previous two points, except that the content is different. The authors believe that it is a very normal thing for people to express their life

sentiment in NetEase Cloud Music. It also shows that NetEase Cloud Music's user activity is quite high, and demonstrates that the community construction of the platform has achieved better results, so that users are willing to bare their hearts on it. The authors also hope that NetEase Cloud Music can go further. It can learn some lessons from social media, combine its own advantages, and constantly optimize the community environment. For those well-written comments or posts that can arouse people's empathy, the platform can give certain rewards or recommendations; For some content that violates regulations or even laws in order to attract people's attention, the platform should promptly prevent its spread, and punish the content publisher or hand it over to the public security organs.

Depression/Insomnia: Among this emotional content, there is another kind that is relatively special and extreme, and that is some very depressed content. In such comments or posts, people often describe their very negative or abnormal emotions, or even describe some symptoms caused by long-term negative emotions, such as insomnia. While it can't be ruled out that some people are grandstanding, most people who distribute such content are genuine victims. They want to seek help from others in this way. When this happens, the platform has to take it seriously. The authors suggest that the platform can open a communication channel specifically for this group of people and let professionals to communicate with them, so as to solve their emotional problems. Because if this kind of problem is not solved in time, those people's depression may continue to worsen, which will eventually lead to very serious consequences. If the situation is so severe that the platform cannot solve it, it is necessary to call the police at the first time and contact medical personnel for assistance. At the same time, the government should also pay attention to the increasing prevalence of depression. The rapid development of society makes people's life more and more stressful. As a result, many people suffering from depression. To deal with this problem, the government should formulate corresponding policies to appropriately reduce the pressure of people's study, work and life, and increase the publicity of mental health so that people will better know how to avoid depression. For individuals, when they find themselves prone to depression, they must find ways to restore their vitality. If they can't do it on their own, they should actively seek help from people around them, or go to a psychologist for consultation.

6. Conclusion

Emotion is not only contained in the melody and lyrics, but also expressed in the content of social communication. Each post contains different emotions, and together build the emotional culture of NetEase Cloud music, where they resonate, comfort each other, become friends, but also provide emotional value for strangers across the network. Such a culture makes NetEase Cloud break away from its music platform attributes, extend a broader space for development, and meet the richer emotional needs of users. This article analyzes the content of more than 2000 NetEase Cloud music posts, extracts their common features, summarizes, collates and analyzes them in detail. Start with four emotional experiences: Little Daily Love, Failed Love/Crush, Lamenting Life and Depression/Insomnia, and explore the user needs and psychology hidden behind these contents. It shows the reasons for the success of the emotional community built by NetEase Cloud music. At the same time, it also provides reference and inspiration for the development of other music platforms: under the trend of the development of Internet community culture, how to adapt to the spiritual needs of users and build a common interest circle of users, so as to shape the spiritual community of platform users. The authors do not know that in the future, with the development of emerging technologies, the presentation form and social mode of music platforms will change into what kind of appearance, but the case of NetEase Cloud music reminds us that the combination of emotional culture and music platform is a feasible route.

Authors Contribution

All the authors contributed equally and their names were listed in alphabetical order.

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