

# Research on the Influence of the Nature and Behavior of Animated Characters on the Audience

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**Abstract**—Animation is a comprehensive form of film and television with unique charm. Characters play an important role in animation, and the performance of characters has become one of the key factors in determining the success or failure of animation. There are adults and children in the audience who appreciate the animation. Different audiences have huge differences in their ability of acceptance and judgment. This paper analyzes that how the animated characters to affect the audiences from the personality characteristics based on the psychological characteristics of the roles and different audiences. Through this analysis and discussion, the author tries to provide some reference for the production of animation, so as to contribute to the progress of social science.

**Keywords**—*animated character; character behavior; audience psychology; influence*

## I. INTRODUCTION

Animation is a comprehensive art, integrating painting, film, music, literature and many other art categories. It is now widely believed that the "Humorous Phases of Funny Faces" by the British Stewart Blaketon in 1906 is the world's first animated cartoon; the Frenchman Emil Cole, for his insistence on the exploration of animation and constantly researching and improving the form of animation, is called "the father of modern animation." Modern animation can be divided into three categories: traditional hand-drawn animation, computer animation and stop-motion animation. According to the expression, it can be divided into plane animation, 3D animation, ink animation, doll animation, etc.; from the broadcasting mode, it is an theater animation or OVA (an abbreviation of Original Video Animation, an animation produced directly on the basis of a video tape or a DVD) etc.

Animation is loved by a wide audience because of its unconventional plot and form, and the most important part of animation is the character image. In the more than one hundred years of the development of the animation industry, the animated character image has become the most competitive element in the industry chain. Therefore, a successful animated character can almost determine the success of the whole animation. At the same time, in the process of enjoying the animation, the audience will also be susceptible to role-related behavior. At present, a large

proportion of the animation audience in China is children and adolescents. Accordingly, studying the influence of characters in the animation on the audience has certain social value and reference significance.

## II. CHARACTERISTICS OF ANIMATED CHARACTERS

Animated characters are created with the unique artistic style of animation to produce a life-like image. A classic animated character must have a unique charm that suits its own characteristics. Animation is a relatively special cultural industry and many of its classic roles, such as, Snow White, Cinderella, Mickey Mouse, Altman, Astro Boy, Sun Wukong, and Nezha etc. have evolved into well-known brands. These animated images also have a certain national representation. Therefore, the high-recognition styling and the character trait of a successful animated character are its basic attributes. All aspects of animation creation also focus on the character's personality characteristics, including plot, modeling, and movement.

For example, the animation "Three Monks" with the characteristics of traditional Chinese ink painting was created based on folk proverbs. It mainly tells the story of three monks in a temple who refuse to carry water downhill and try to buck each other. Instead, an unexpected fire led to three people working together to put out fires and carry water together. This animation has become a classic memory of the post-80s generation because of its concise and lively story and vivid character modeling. In the animation, the three monks have different shapes and different personality characteristics. The little monk in red dress has round face and red cheeks, and embraces strong tension in modeling; he is lively, lovely and has a certain sense of justice, which meets the psychological needs of the audience. The tall monk in blue dress has thin lips and square head, and is selfish and mean. The fatty monks in yellow dress are lazy, greedy and somewhat foolish. The artistic effect of this animated short film is greatly enriched by three monks with unique personality characteristics and appropriate exaggerated image design.

Through this animated short film, it can be seen that the personality classifications often used in animated character design:

### A. *The Mode of Absolute Justice*

These characters tend to appear in lively, cute, honest, innocent and brainless images. They generally have strong inspirational colors. In the animated film "The Prince of Egypt", the mother of the Hebrew Moses, in order to protect his son from persecution, places him in a cradle and makes it sail downward with the current. Accidentally, the little boy is adopted by the Egyptian queen followed by serving as an Egyptian prince. The young Prince Moses lives a carefree life. After learning his true identity, Moses accepts the instructions of the gods and leads the enslaved Hebrews to find new homes. Moses experiences the transformation of the identity from orphans to the Egyptian prince and finally to the Hebrew saints. During the process, his temperament becomes calm and extremely mission-conscious. Generally, this type of character is mostly used for the main characters in animation because of its good, hardworking and brave quality.

### B. *Negative Energy Mode*

Such characters are generally insidious, cunning, fierce, aggressive and vindictive and lack of care from others. Psychology holds that everyone has two sides and the dark side. People with dark personality are more likely to be angry with others when they meet with failure; they become arrogant when they achieve certain success, and actively retaliate against the object of hatred; they are indifferent and selfish towards those who suffer. Chaos, the ultimate villain in *Monkey King: Hero is Back* is a good example. As the monster king in the *Wuxing Mountains* originally, he became a fair-complexioned scholar, devoting himself to eating boys and girls to maintain his own magic. Chaos is cunning, vicious and unscrupulous. Such characters are mostly used for negative or minor characters in animation.

### C. *Yes-man Mode*

The feature of these characters is calm, rational, conservative and not good at changing. The Master Raccoon in *Kung Fu Panda* is such a role. Master Raccoon is serious, conscientious, and even indifferent. He is very strict with Po when he practices Kung Fu. What's more, because of his status and identity, he is often too arbitrary and arrogant. But Master Raccoon loves his apprentice very much like a strict father, but he is not good at expressing himself. Most of these characters are supporting roles.

### D. *Funny Little Role Mode*

The character of this kind of roles is very grim and unconstrained, and often accompanied by lazy, sloppy and untouched role modeling. For example, Muxulong in Disney animated film *Mulan*. When Hua Mulan joins in the troops on expedition instead of her father, the elders in her family send a fairy "Muxulong" to protect her. Muxulong's incessant chattering and competitiveness all the way bring a lot of laughter to the audience. The characters of this kind of character are generally "small parts" in animation, mainly the supporting roles in charge of making quips and jokes, and adjusting atmosphere for relaxation.

The roles of the above types of personality are the basic "configuration" in an animated cartoon. Combining the various abilities and background created by animation scriptwriters for characters, more types of character can be derived. And different characters also lead to their different behaviors in animation. For example, some animated characters are calm and rational, while others are full of violence and destruction. The unique charm of animation lies in its distinctive character image. If the animated character lacks self-characteristics and lacks real-life behavior, the whole animation will not attract the audience, and its vitality will not last long.

## III. THE PSYCHOLOGICAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE ANIMATED AUDIENCE

The audience refers to the recipient of information dissemination. Information can come from books, radio, film and television, and the Internet. The audience in the macro sense is a collective, and in the micro sense is an independent individual. The audience of animation can be divided into adult and children according to age structure; according to fun, it can be divided into science fiction, myths and legends, girls, fantasy, criminal investigation, sports, etc.; according to cultural level and aesthetic needs, it can also be divided into more detailed levels. Dividing animated audiences based on age structure is a more intuitive and easy way to generalize.

### A. *The Psychological Characteristics of Adult Audience*

Freud believes that personality consists of "id, ego, and superego." The "id" is the most primitive instinct part of personality, composed of human nature. These natural instincts have no morality and values. Many of the primitive desires of mankind, such as destruction and killing, are prohibited by civilized society. The adult audience appreciating the animation is closer to the "id" state, pursuing the principle of happiness and venting the suppressed desire in daily life. It is increasingly fierce competition in today's society and ubiquitous impetuous social sentiment that directly cause the situation. The psychological needs of animated adult audiences are mainly entertainment relaxation, pursuit of their own ideals or catharsis of negative emotions in life. What's more, they pursue the freshness and depth of animation works more. Domestic animation "Bad Man" notes "H-Game" in its eye-catching headline position, because the animation does contain some nudity, bloody, conspiracy and some other similar plots not suitable for minors to watch. Yet, it still attracts a large number of adult audiences because of its exquisite style of ancient costume painting, distinct character, and bizarre story structure.

### B. *Psychological Characteristics of Children and Adolescents Audiences*

Children have a natural interest in animation, which is a kind of "non-human" art works. Children's thinking is mainly characterized by specific imagery thinking, and transiting to abstract thinking. For example, when primary school students first learn mathematics, they usually use apples,

beads, sticks and other concrete objects as assistants, and then gradually develop abstract digital thinking. Children's attention duration is short and easy to be dispersed. It is not hard for their personality formation to be influenced by the outside world, which means that they have strong plasticity. Because of these characteristics, children prefer animations with simple stories, good characters, cute and funny shapes and bright colors, such as Big Head-Son and Little Head-Dad, Doraemon, etc.

#### IV. THE INFLUENCE OF CHARACTER AND BEHAVIOR OF ANIMATED CHARACTERS ON THE AUDIENCE

After entering the new century, China gradually attaches importance to the development of animation industry. The State Administration of Radio, Film and Television (SARFT) issued a circular on "Some Opinions on the Development of China's Film and Television Animation Industry". The State Council issued "Some Opinions on Promoting the Development of China's Animation Industry" in 2006. The Ministry of Culture also issued a number of opinions on supporting the development of China's animation industry. After decades of silence, the domestic animation industry began to show signs of recovery under favorable policies. For a time, animation channels and children's channels have emerged in television with rich and varied animation content. In response, animation fans have been greatly satisfied. However, under blowout type of progress, the quality of animation works is bound to be uneven, and it is difficult for animation audiences to effectively screen for a while.

The adult audience of animation is less influenced by the animation itself because of their maturity in intelligence, diversification of daily entertainment items and restriction of social ethics. Contrarily, due to their age, educational level and physiological factors, the audiences of children and adolescents are vulnerable to the influence of character and behavior in animation works. Animation, as a "frequent visitor" of movies and television, plays an extremely important role in the growth of children. An excellent animated character has a very positive impact on the formation of children's personality. It can be said that animated characters are children's "companions".

Hayao Miyazaki, a well-known Japanese animation director, once said, "From one city to another, you have to rely on your own efforts. You have to learn to grow up, learn to bear, and learn to cry. Then, you still can embrace your parents with a smile. In the animation "Kiki's Delivery Service", Hayao Miyazaki expresses this concept of "growth" thoroughly through the adolescent girl "Kiki", a 13-year-old girl who is simple, kind and lovely, and possesses the qualities of diligence and courage. Kiki comes to a strange city during her magic practice. With her broom flying skills, she works as a courier. She gets along with her friends better and better in the daily "trifles". Kiki also gradually recovers her self-confidence and becomes independent and happy from her previous frustration. This series of inspirational stories like magic girl Kiki highlights the significance of "growth". While children in the period of value formation appreciate Kiki's "daily life", they are deeply

and profoundly influenced by the character and behavior of animated characters.

On one hand, an excellent animated character can impose a positive and progressive impact on children and adolescents. On the other hand, inappropriate animated characters also have a negative effect. The incidents that children imitate the characters in the animation to take violent behaviors happen now and then; in addition, many other negative effects include making children's extreme personality and misunderstanding of historical facts. Moreover, the problem of the erosion from foreign animation on the national spirit of China's animation audience cannot be neglected.

#### V. CONCLUSION

Entertainment is the first attribute of animation, and a vivid, humorous and upright animated character can better satisfy the psychological needs of the audience, bring people visual and auditory enjoyment, and enhance the audience's thinking ability and aesthetic ability. Animated characters can't be separated from the cultural spirit. This spirit should always run through animated plots and animated characters, which has a great impact on the majority of animated audiences, especially for young children. The development of physical and mental health of children and adolescents requires spiritual support. Therefore, shaping a character image with good temperament and behavior in animation works will guide children to establish a correct world outlook, outlook on life and values. Its spiritual connotation embraces huge educational significance. As for the negative impact of "bad" animated character behavior on the audience, it is necessary for the animation practitioners, animation platform, regulatory authorities and the audience themselves to screen and guide together, resist and reject undesirable factors so that an active and healthy lifestyle can be delivered and ideological and moral construction will be strengthened.

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