

Analysis of the Reasons for the Popularity of Teen-Campus TV Shows in China Since 2000

Dongrui Xiong

Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Nanjing Institute of Technology, Nanjing, Jiangsu province, 211167, China
Corresponding author's e-mail: angela@cas-harbour.org

ABSTRACT

Through analyzing the TV shows' market and investigating the tendency of the development of the mass culture, a new type of teen campus TV show has emerged. This kind of genre can meet the needs of the masses and will gain a high popularity among the audience. The storytelling in these new teen campus TV shows is such that the actors are taken straight out of high school students' real lives, and the plots presented are equally similar to real high school students' lives[1]. This is different from the representation of high school students in similar TV shows before 2000, in that time, these storylines were not as close to the students' realities. Today's teen TV shows, however, feel and look like documentaries, and are inspired by the reality television genre. Thus, watching this kind of movie provides people with memories to recall their own high school lives. The idea is that viewers can identify with the screen story through a personal connection. Therefore, this kind of movie makes full use of people's nostalgia and they're looking forward to pure high school romance to capture the audience's attention.

Keywords: Teen-campus TV shows, 2000, China, reasons, popularity

1. INTRODUCTION

This paper aims to study the reasons for the popularity of teen campus TV shows in China since 2000. With You will be used as the case study. This paper also uses other TV shows in comparison to make the analysis more precise and convincing.

This paper will analyze the reasons for the popularity of teen campus TV shows in China since 2000 through the following several aspects: the teen romantic novels that the TV shows have been adapted from; plot analysis of one TV show in detail (With You) and other ones in comparison; casting choice analysis of the main protagonists in the teen campus TV shows since 2000; actors' back-story analysis and the analysis of "Collective Memory" in teen TV shows. This paper will use screen shots and comparative analysis to study the above questions.

However, there is a controversy in this new genre. Some people, especially older people and high school students' parents, think that the stories in such high school romances are too digressive and misleading because high school students are supposed to study only. But this phenomenon is commonly seen in almost every high school because it is typically an age when students first fall in love. High school romance is a precious part of high school life and is also considered as a symbol of youth. So facing it is a better choice.

The paper will help people understand the audience's current aesthetics and their needs, thus providing people with more information to apply to other relatively unpopular movie types and promoting the diverse development of the film industry. It will further help people

better understand the difference of genres and the shift of narratives between the old teen campus TV shows and the ones discussed here that were produced after 2000.

2. A BRIEF INTRODUCTION OF TEEN-CAMPUS TV SHOWS

Teen campus TV shows are a kind of Teen TV shows. Teen TV shows describe teenagers' lives in details, show the protagonist's minor life with lyric and romantic colors, show boys and girls' dreams, vigor and adolescent psychology [7]. The love between two main characters are the main plot and the TV shows will focus mainly on campus lives of characters and focus less on lives after graduating. The ending is always that two main characters live together very happily. Nowadays, teen campus TV shows are mature in the mainland in China, such as *With You*, *My huckleberry friends*, *A love so beautiful*. They all attract many audience and watching them becomes a hot trend.

3. THE INFLUENCE OF TEEN-CAMPUS NOVELS ON THE AUDIENCE

Nowadays, many teenagers, especially teen girls are crazy about reading teen campus novels. Later, many teen campus TV shows and films adapt original novels and attract a large amount of attention from readers. This chapter will focus on the teen campus novels' influence on audience.

It is necessary for teen campus novels to become popular among the public. Firstly, it is people's living conditions and mental needs that promote the popularity of these kind of novels. Because contemporary people are under great pressure and they always feel exhausted about their life, it is highly possible that they feel very desperate. However, novels can be a great way for them to relax because teen novels are easier to understand compared with those complicated and profound literature. Secondly, the reason why people prefer teen campus novels is that plots in them are heartwarming and readers can always read some words which are full of positive attitudes. Besides, some plots are funny and while reading them, readers can laugh and relieve their stress. The love between characters is great and these kinds of plots are so sweet. For example, in *With You*, the boy who is called Huai Yu always strokes the hair of the girl who is called Geng Geng or they will speak out something which is sweet, such as Huai Yu said to Geng Geng, "You are important to me." People like hearing such words which can strike their chords. Readers are also influenced deeply by this kind of novels. They anticipate such novels can be acted out in the form of TV shows or films to satisfy their imagination of characters in novels. Furthermore, they also hope characters in TV shows or movies can live together in reality to satisfy their fantasy of love. For some people, they will watch TV shows after reading novels. For some people, after they watch TV shows, they may want to know more details about characters and plots and then they will read novels to satisfy their need. In this way, TV shows and novels promote each other and then they both develop.

4. THE ANALYSIS OF THE PLOT OF TEEN-CAMPUS TV SHOWS SINCE 2020

This chapter will analyze plots of teen campus TV shows and look for the similarity of different TV shows' plots, thus knowing audience's preference and designing better TV shows in the future.

4.1. Plots' Analysis of *With You*

With You describes high school life from the beginning of senior one. It describes military training and meeting new friends in senior one. In senior two, it describes the division of arts and science, independent recruitment and matriculate in advance. In senior three, it describes The National College Entrance Examination and the tense atmosphere in that time. The time line is really clear in the period of high school in this TV show and high school life presented in the TV show always focuses on grades, which is really true. Then different kinds of small plots stretch according to those big events. *With You* restores real high school life greatly. In the aspect of emotion, the TV shows describes the pure love between characters and the friendship between classmates. The setting of this kind of plots are really similar to high school students in reality. In

With You, Huai Yu and Geng Geng like each other, Dan Jian likes Xu Han, Niannian Jiang likes her teacher. These plots present that high school students are eager to pursue love. Someone may think it is really ridiculous, however, the phenomenon exists widespread in our real high schools. Because at that time, they may think parents don't understand their real thoughts and then they look for a place to entrust their feeling. Therefore, it is common that they will trust peers and then fall in love them. However, in high school of the reality, students are not mature enough and they may not understand what real love is. Maybe they like their classmates but they don't know how to express their feelings. For example, in *With You*, Huai Yu and Geng Geng like each other but they never tell each other. They may think if they say it out, it may be embarrassing if who they like refuses them. Besides, Zhi Luo likes Huainan Sheng in secret and she never expresses her feeling in front of others. She just hides her feeling at the bottom of her heart. Xinghe Lu is also a representation of a kind of person who is brave to pursue their love and express their feeling directly. In reality, someone is like Zhi Luo and someone is like Geng Geng and someone is like Xinghe Lu. Almost every person has their own favorite person but they will deal with this likes in different ways, like characters in TV shows. Besides, in the TV shows, Geng Geng has her true friends. They play together and share their secrets. The friendship is really stable and it is also true that in the high school, friends always accompany with each other.

Furthermore, in the aspect of study, the grade of each student is different to a large extent. Huai Yu and Mo Zhou are top students and they study hard to win a prize in the physical competition. The TV show sets a lot of scenes about competitions, grades, tests, which show the importance of grade. In the end, Huai Yu's mother is in illness and he also fails in the most important test, which is a turning point in the relationship between two main characters. Luckily, they meet each other after many years and start their new life. This happy ending satisfies audience's willing towards beautiful love and audience can easily be touched deeply by plots, thus this TV show being pursued by many people.

4.2. Comparison Between the Plots of *With You* With Other Teen Campus Movies

After *My Best Summer*, many similar TV shows and films have emerged, such as *myhuckleberry friends*, *A love so beautiful*. These TV shows have a lot of plots which are the same. They all stretch high school students' life with the focus on the pure love between two main characters. All of them are full of positive and negative plots and audience will also experience different tastes of life, which may be bitter or sweet. After watching this kind of TV shows, audience are easy to get the impulse of falling love with others.

4.3. Audience's Views Towards Plots in Teen-Campus TV Shows

For *With You*, different people have different opinions towards Geng Geng's choice. Someone thinks she should choose Xinghe Lu because of his persistence, while someone considers she should choose Huai Yu. Sometimes, audience are even immersed in characters that they treat themselves as characters considering they find self identity from characters. This phenomenon can be explained as transference. Transference is a conception mentioned by Carl Gustav Jung, a Swiss psychologist, in *The Psychology of The Transference* published in 2014[2]. Carl Gustav Jung pointed that when psychological consultants use hypnotherapy and free association to treat patients, patients will have a strong emotion towards psychological consultants[2]. This is because patients will project their emotions towards some important people in their past lives to psychological consultants[2]. This can be applied to audience considering they feel like they are in the same situation as characters in TV shows, feel what characters feel[3]. Under this circumstance, we can see that audience are thinking about TV shows and give their own opinions according to their analysis and views towards love. Different people's various views can also guide film market's direction of development because film makers will better master audience's expectation. *With You* is a good TV show and it gets a lot of positive comments. Many audience said that they saw themselves in this TV show and wanted to go back to that period, which is pure and beautiful.

5. ANALYSIS OF THE FIGURES IN THE TEEN-CAMPUS TV SHOWS SINCE 2020

Firstly, characteristics of figures will be analyzed. In *With You*, everyone has their own distinct characteristics. Geng Geng is a student who is not good at study but is really helpful. Huai Yu is a top student. Niannian Jiang is a person who is concerned about others all the time. These figures are unique and they all have their own advantages and disadvantages. Each of them represents a person or a kind of person surrounding people when people are in high school. Every high school has students of different characteristics. This setting of figures are reflections of people's classmates and can bring true feelings and affinity to audience when they watch this kind of TV shows.

Besides, the main characters in teen campus TV shows are emotional specificity. For example, Huai Yu and Yang Lin, they all like one girl all the time and give her the best. This setting of characters satisfy many girls' fantasy to have a perfect boyfriend. Therefore, more teenagers prefer to this kind of TV shows. This kind of TV shows all make audience believe love. The settings of characters also make influence in audience's life attitude. For example, some audience believe that they will meet a person who love them as Huai Yu loves Geng Geng. Therefore, they will be eager to go ahead and be willing to be positive to lives.

6. ANALYSIS OF THE STAR EFFECT TOWARDS TEEN-CAMPUS TV SHOWS

Nowadays, choosing actor should consider lots of factors. Firstly, for some film makers, they will choose actors according to actors' popularity. For example, in *With You*, two main actors whose name are Haoran Liu and Songyun Tan, they already have a large number of fans. Therefore, these fans will watch their TV shows in order to pursue their idols or they are curious about their two cooperation, so they will watch the TV show.

Besides, nowadays, people attach more importance to appearance. Many people will watch a TV show because of handsome men or beautiful women. Therefore, film makers will choose those who are pretty or who has a face that makes people recall their first love. For example, in another TV show which is called *A love so beautiful*, main actors are all new but they are really pretty. Therefore, before the broadcast of this TV show, the poster has attracted a lot of attention and the main characters have attracted a lot of fans. Furthermore, some fans will support their idols by recommending their TV shows to others. In this way, the TV shows spread quickly and more people will be attracted to watch them.

In order to make audience feel like in high school, film makers should choose actors who look like high school students or whose age is the same as high school students' age in reality. For example, in *With You*, the actor Haoran Liu is actually a high school student at that time. Therefore, this kind of actors look more vigorous and they can express their characters better because they are experiencing this period[4]. So to some extent, they even don't have to act, they just need to be themselves. For some teen campus TV shows, they adapt from novels, so film makers always respect original novels and choose actors who fit in characters in the novel. In this way, novels' fans will also be attracted.

7. Analysis OF COLLECTIVE MEMORY IN TEEN-CAMPUS TV SHOWS

One of the most important reasons why teen campus TV shows are of great popularity is that music, scenes in them can arouse the memory of people's high school time. It is better to use *collective memory* to explain this phenomenon. In 1925, Maurice Halbwachs, a French sociologist first put forward *Collective Memory*, which means that people share, inherit and build something together in a group or modern society[5]. *With You* builds *collective memory* in two different aspects, music and scenes.

7.1. Analysis of the Music-Induced Collective Memory

In teen TV shows, bright music often rings when it is happy time, about being together or some other similar things, while sorrowful music often rings when it is about parting

or some other similar things. In a word, music is a tool that can not only match up well with different kinds of emotions in TV shows, but also stimulate audience's emotions considering it can make audience integrate in TV shows' scenes more and strike their chords. For example, in *With You*, in the end, when Geng Geng stood in the forest and turned around, smiling at Huai Yu, the music named *Take something to heart* rings and the rhythm is really gentle to match up with the beautiful and sweet scenes. In that way, either for people who are experiencing high school time or who have experienced, they can be brought back to that high school time which involves with both pain and happiness.

7.2. Analysis of the Scene-Induced Collective Memory

The scenes in TV shows are the specific products of that time. Firstly, some scenes can symbolize that age. For instance, in *With You*, the beginning of it is Beijing Olympic Games holding in 2008, which brings audience back to that time and stimulates their nostalgic emotions. Furthermore, some specific symbols of high school time can also arouse audience's nostalgia[6]. For example, the uniform which all people are forced to wear in their high school, the playground where students play, the classroom where students have classes the whole day. All of these scenes are of similarity to all people's high school life, which can bring people back to that specific time and arouse their high school time memory, strike their chords.

8. CONCLUSION

The teen campus TV shows are a type of TV shows which develop quickly and excellently in current China. This passage studies reasons for the popularity of teen campus TV shows since 2000 by analyzing characteristics of them and viewers' demands for this kind of TV shows. The result of this research can provide guidance for other types of movies and help the better development of different types of movies in China and promote the various development of the film industry. Meanwhile, the result can help people to know market's needs better. Mastering the market and mass culture can promote the film industry's spread and boom.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

First and foremost, I would like to show my deepest gratitude to my teachers and professors in my university, who have provided me with valuable guidance in every stage of the writing of this thesis. Further, I would like to thank all my friends and roommates for their encouragement and support. Without all their enlightening instruction and impressive kindness, I could not have completed my thesis.

REFERENCES

- [1] Rui Wang. Study on the reasons for the popularity of teen campus web series——Take With You for example. [J]. *Seeing and Hearing*, 2019(07):55-56.
- [2] Yue Gu. The analysis of why teen campus web series gain a large popularity from communication vision. [J]. *New Media Research*, 2018,4(01):71-72.
- [3] Mitao Lin. The way to survive of teen campus web series under new media——Take my huckleberry friends for example. [J]. *News*, 2018(05):81-84.
- [4] Shuang Yang. Analysis of domestic web series' current situation under new media——Take With You for example[J]. *Journalist Cradle*, 2019(01):96-97.
- [5] Qingmei Yang, Zhizhong Yuan. My Best Summer: Identity in Collective memory. [J]. *West China Broadcasting TV*, 2019(14):128-129.
- [6] Qiaoling Zhang. Explore and analyze the new guide of teen campus web series. [J]. *Media Forum*, 2019,2(15):165, 167.
- [7] Jinghan Yan. A dictionary of writing arts[Z]. Xi'an: Shanxi people's publishing press, 1990.