



Motivation Research on Raising the Attention of Generation Z to Traditional Chinese Music: A Qualitative Study on the Digital Music Industry

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Abstract. The digital age of music industry provides new opportunities for Traditional Chinese Music to become more innovative, shareable, and hereditary. This study examines and explores the motivation of Generation Z to increase their attention to Traditional Chinese Music in the digital music industry. The qualitative research methodology is applied in this paper. Results show that, from the Generation Z's experiences of music and music streaming, their motivation can be improved through four dimensions, namely Product Packaging, Media Promotion, Music Recreation, and Cognitive Ascension.

Keywords: Consumer motivation, Generation Z, Traditional Chinese Music, Digital music industry.

1 INTRODUCTION

Since 2003, with the growth and the incremental innovation of iTunes, the global music industry has changed a lot and is now stepping into the digital era [1]. In China, in spite of the COVID-19 pandemic, Chinese digital music market still keeps stable growth [2]. Nowadays, digitalization has become a new trend in Chinese music industry, shifting the main revenue sources for digital music platforms to user payments, advertising revenues, and copyright activities [3]. During 2017-2022, the market scale of China's digital music industry increased from RMB 19.58 billion to RMB 48.27 billion.

In this study, the author focuses on the motivation of Generation Z in taking interest in the Traditional Chinese Music in digital music industry. Although numerous studies and data have established the incremental growth of Chinese digital music industry, little attention has been paid to the development of Traditional Chinese Music. According to the NetEase Cloud Music, one of the top four most popular music streaming platforms in China [2], Traditional Chinese Music fails to make the top 50 or even the top 100 in its 2020 Music List. Therefore, a study on Generation Z's motivation for listening to Traditional Chinese Music would provide music producers a better understanding of their consumers, most of whom are Generation Z.

The aim of this research is to address the gap between Traditional Chinese Music and other popular music, providing additional insights to music producers on how to

adapt their approaches to increase Generation Z's attention. The study has made contributions to the existing literature from three aspects, illustrating Generation Z, Traditional Chinese Music, and their relationship in digital music industry. Furthermore, in the methodology part, the study examines the motivation of Generation Z in listening to Traditional Chinese Music by using qualitative research to interview 13 people, who were born in 1995-2006. Finally, the paper presents the developmental limitations and proves the value in the future of Traditional Chinese Music in the digital music industry.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Generation Z

Generation Z, or Gen Z, is the young consumer population born after 1995. They are familiar with the Internet and electronic technology. In the next 5 to 10 years, Gen Z will be the most dynamic player in the market, defined as a group that, due to their personality and habits, is not influenced by traditional sales and marketing activities [4]. Generation Z is a Do-It-Yourself generation [5]. They are more creative, trustworthy, and less financially motivated than Generation Y (the people born in 1980s-1990s) [6], but also impatient, materialistic, instant-minded, demanding, and with great spending power [7].

Generation Z prefers digital and online information such as video digital channels and online communication technology than traditional television [8]. Despite the increased use of the Internet, Gen Z is still heavily influenced by face-to-face communication, which helps Generation Z to make a connection between the real world and the online world [9].

Since Generation Z has greater purchasing power than previous generations, they currently constitute the majority of the market, establishing the largest consumer group. However, because of the huge disparities between Generation Z and others, Generation Z consumers are less loyal to retailers and markets, placing retailers under pressure and making it difficult for retailers to find new ways to attract customers [10]. Therefore, it is now requisite for the music industry and music producers to not only manage to find target audiences, but also to fully comprehend their behavioral patterns and attitudes, certainly in terms of social media platforms and trends.

Generation Z sees most advertisements through social media. They have multiple channels of information every day, receiving more information than any other generation, detecting which ads are relevant or not, and deciding which videos they want to watch or skip. Therefore, it is indeed pivotal for the digital music industry to capture their attention speedily before they move on to other things. Specifically, music is a common denominator for Generation Z, as they listen to it for an average of four hours per day, and it remains a powerful strategy for capturing their attention [10]. However, there are limited data that can reveal the relationship between Gen Z and Traditional Chinese Music. Although Generation Z is attracted by the digital music industry, they pay less attention to the Traditional Chinese Music. In other words, there is a disconnection between Gen Z and Traditional Chinese Music.

2.2 Traditional Chinese Music

Traditional Chinese Music encompasses a variety of musical genres that have been passed down through generations in China [11]. Song, song and dance music, rap music, opera, and instrumental music are the five categories of traditional Chinese music. Most colleges and universities, however, include song and dance music into folk songs in their education. Therefore, Traditional Chinese Music is then divided into four categories: folk songs, ethnic instrumental music, *quyi* (or "rap") music, and opera music [12]. Based on the discovery in the Neolithic Age, Traditional Chinese Music can be traced back to 7000-8000 years ago [13]. It began to develop in the court throughout the Xia, Shang, and Zhou dynasties, and only the music favored by the nobility was made with chime bells. Singing and dancing grew popular and spread from the palace during the Tang Dynasty, particularly during its height. Exotic religious melodies were absorbed into Chinese music and admired by Chinese people at temple fairs staged by temples with the arrival of Buddhism, Islam, and other foreign religions. Original dramas such as *Zaju* and *Nanxi* were performed in teahouses, theaters, and other performance venues during the Song Dynasty. *Qufeng*, another literary style based on music, became prominent during the Yuan Dynasty. It was also the time when several traditional musical instruments, including *pipa*, flute, and *zither*, were developed. The traditional opera grew swiftly and diversified in diverse places during the Ming (1368-1644) and Qing (1644-1911) periods. Traditional Chinese Music is divided into three categories [14]: instrumental, Chinese opera, and folk music. People in China can listen to Traditional Chinese Music through social media. Under the Chinese digital age, the four different social media categories in China have formed into social networking, forum boards, content communities, and blogs [15]. In modern China, social media has gradually become the tool for people to enter the internet transmission age. Using and exploring complex social networking has formed and changed the way of communication in Chinese society [16].

2.3 Digital Music Industry

The music industry consists of individuals and organizations that make money by writing songs and musical compositions, generating and selling recorded music and sheet music, presenting concerts, as well as assisting, training, representing, and supplying music creators. With the introduction of extensive digital distribution of music via the Internet in the first decades of the 2000s, the music industry witnessed dramatic transformations [17]. Total music sales are obvious evidence of these changes: the sales of recorded music have declined significantly since 2000 [18]. The world's largest recorded music retailer was a digital, Internet-based platform run by a computer company: Apple Inc.'s online iTunes Store [19]. The music business has shown sustained sales growth since 2011, with streaming currently producing more cash per year than digital downloads. In terms of the subscriber number, Spotify, Apple Music, and Amazon Music are the most popular streaming services [20].

In China, the COVID-19 pandemic severely impacted the music market in 2020. Offline music events, such as concerts and music festivals, were halted or moved to the

cloud. Despite this, the Chinese online music market has remained stable. The digital music industry has emerged in the recent decade due to the consolidation and expansion of a diverse variety of digital platforms for accessing and playing digital music, such as streaming services, downloads, and major digital media players and so on. As a consequence, in music consumption, the digital music accounted for more than half of all the income generated by the music industry in 2017 [21]. China's digital music market has witnessed steady growth along with the popularization of the mobile internet and relentless official efforts to combat piracy, and Generation Z consumers-born between the mid-1990s and the early 2010s-are increasingly willing to pay for copyrighted online music [22]. In China, the digital music market was worth approximately RMB 35 billion by the end of 2020, with a projected value of approximately RMB 42 billion in 2021, in the first half of 2020, around 70% of consumers chose music streaming platforms over all other frequently used channels, followed by 54.3 percent short video platforms and 44.6 percent social media [2].

The most popular streaming services in China include QQ Music, Kuwo Music, Kugou Music, NetEase Cloud Music and so on [23]. Over 90% of active users from NetEase Cloud Music, a famous music streaming app in China, are under the age of 29, and 60% of the new users in 2020 are post-00s [24]. This shows that the size of China's digital music market is growing. Additionally, as a consequence of COVID-19, online music has gotten a new round of development dividend, and new types of music industry, such as Cloud Live and IOT home music, have seen rapid development. As a result, the internet music industry will accelerate market expansion. However, the most popular songs are mostly pop music and are sung by the new generation of stars [25]. Traditional Chinese Music does not make the top 50 or even the top 100. Moreover, the top 5 social media sites in China include TikTok, TouTiao, Wechat, Zhihu, and XiaoHongShu [26]. Of the five social media sites above, TikTok provides a short-form video hosting service and has partnered with six certified Sound Partners to make sure that all licenses are correct, and fees are paid, offering a music and sound effect library to both individuals and commercial users [27]. The top ten music genres in TikTok in 2021 include Hip Hop / Rap, Pop, Dance / Electronic, R&B / Soul, Indie / Alt, Latin, Rock, Soundtracks, Country, and Comedy. However, there is no Traditional Chinese Music in the top ten music genres [28].

The popularity of Traditional Chinese Music and other music genres in Chinese music industry still presents a huge difference. When compared to the traditional music industry, customers are more likely to purchase digital music online than physical recordings [29].

3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Data Collection and Sample

The data was collected through an interview of Generation Z on Wechat and telephone. The study obtained a convenience sample of 13 interviewees. All the interviewees were born after 1995. The sample was heterogeneous in terms of sex, age, and education level.

3.2 Methodology Design

The data collection methodology uses four semi-structured interviews. The interview questions are intended for exploring the motivation of Generation Z for raising their attention to Traditional Chinese Music in digital age.

The study attempted to research the following questions:

Question 1: Do you have the habit of listening to music? What kind of music do you like?

Question 2: Which platform do you prefer to listen to music on? What are the reasons for choosing this platform? What appeals to you most about music on online platforms?

Question 3: Why do you listen to music? What aspects of a piece of music do you focus on?

Question 4: Are there any music genres (eg. Pop, rock, etc.) or songs that you think are better promoted/marketed? What's the reason?

Question 5: What are the most attractive elements of music industry marketing to you? (From a personal perspective)

Question 6: Do you know Traditional Chinese Music? What do you think of Traditional Chinese Music in the Chinese music market today? What are the disadvantages of Traditional Chinese Music in the music market?

Question 7: Have you ever listened to traditional Chinese music? If so, for what reason? If not, why don't you listen to traditional Chinese music at all?

Question 8: How is traditional Chinese music different from what you usually listen to?

Question 9: If China's traditional music industry is going to improve, what do you think will expand its influence? What attracts you to traditional Chinese music?

4 EMPIRICAL RESULT AND ANALYSIS

The integration of information is presented in Table 1 and Table 2.

Table 1. Generation Z's attitude toward music and music streaming.

Music Type	Purpose of Listening	Attractive Factor	Type of Music Streaming
Jazz	Cultivate mind and relax	Lyrics, melodic rhythm	NetEase cloud music: 1) Being influenced by people around you. 2) A wide range of tracks and genres. 3) The platform has attractive and innovative design: year-end summaries are launched according to consumers' listening habits, comments are set up in an interesting way, and playlist sharing and sorting functions are convenient. 4) The layout of the platform interface is comfortable and the color is nice.
Classical Music	Comb and adjust emotions	The mood and feeling that a song brings	QQMusic: 1) Rich music library and many Copyrights. Some of the older songs are copyrighted. 2) It is used by people around it. 3) Functional design: You can see comments on the same song.

Pop Music	Spare time	Singers and stars popularity	Kuwo Music: easy to operate. Others (bilibili): Has the copyright of some type of music that fewer people like.
Chinese Operas	Others	Compose purpose: the story behind a song and the creator's motivation Visual experience: MV	

Table 2. Generation Z's opinion toward Traditional Chinese Music.

Opinion	Motivation to listen	Reason why not listen	Ways to improve
Fewer people listen to, not popular	Influenced by others: parents or grandparents are listening	Less exposure to Traditional Chinese Music	Improve the quality of music itself, add innovation on the basis of maintaining the tradition, and appropriately change the melody and rhythm of music
Not enough publicity and no digital album was released, celebrity endorsements, no marketing	Purely to enjoy Traditional Chinese Music	Prefer other types of music	Drive national attention, emphasize cultural inheritance.
Has deep historical connotation and time sense, but contains single form, outdated	Heard it in movies and short videos		Strengthen marketing and we-media publicity, combine with current hot spots for linkage. Show on variety shows to get more exposure, and do more offline activities. Celebrity endorsements, product packaging.
High threshold, not universal	School curriculum includes traditional Chinese music	People around them don't hear much.	Emphasize the story behind the music, so that people can have a pictorial sense and emotional resonance when listening to music
Melody is gentle, without intense music style	Learn traditional Musical Instruments and enjoy listening to them.		Use visual elements: Chinese dance is combined with music, and traditional costumes become selling points

The objective of this analysis is to improve Generation Z's motivation and attitude toward Traditional Chinese Music. The study sorts the answers from interviewees into homogeneous clusters as shown in Table 1 and Table 2. The result of the current study presents that Generation Z has limited knowledge toward Traditional Chinese Music. At present, they believe Traditional Chinese Music has deep historical connotation and

time sense, but it is also outdated with a bland melody, lacking publicity and universality and having a high threshold to listen to. Additionally, their ways of accessing and exposing to Traditional Chinese Music have been limited due to the lack of marketing. For the interviewees who have never listened to Traditional Chinese Music, it is not just because they do not like it, but more essentially, there are few ways for them to be exposed to Traditional Chinese Music since it is not as popular as other types of music in either music streaming or social media apps.

To improve the current situation of Traditional Chinese Music in digital music industry, the study emphasizes several dimensions: Product Packaging, Media Promotion, Music Recreation, and Cognitive Ascension.

4.1 Product Packaging

From question 3 and question 5, some interviewees indicated the significant influence of the meaning behind music. When people listen to music, many of them feel the artistic conception behind the music, thus digging and exploring the real meaning of the author's compositions. Therefore, Traditional Chinese Music needs to be analyzed and positioned to capture its attractions. From one perspective, more history and touching stories can be attached to one piece of traditional Chinese music, letting Generation Z understand the heritage and preciousness of it, thus arousing their emotional resonance. In addition, the sensory experience for consumers in the music market is also a prerequisite approach. The visual effect can influence consumers' decision-making, such as creating music videos for each piece of Traditional Chinese Music and emphasizing the relationship between music and visual art, such as Han Chinese clothing and Chinese classical dance.

4.2 Media Promotion

The findings highlight an accessible approach to solve the problem of less exposure of Traditional Chinese Music in social media and digital music industry: Media Promotion. First is the use of we-media. Traditional Chinese Music can be released and spread through social networks, short videos, Weibo, Wechat, TouTiao, and other platforms or Internet collaboration platforms and media to increase its usefulness and exposure. For example, the BGM of the short video on TikTok can inspire Traditional Chinese Music, making it a familiar track to people. Second, on social platforms, traditional Chinese music can also be linked with the current hot news to attract the attention of major brands and entertainment companies. Besides, it can also introduce its charm to a wider audience through variety shows by being applied in the BGM for short videos, TV dramas, and movies to increase exposure. Additionally, according to question 2, when choosing music streaming, Generation Z will weigh their user experience, including convenience, experience feeling brought by the design, practical utility, etc. This shows that Traditional Chinese Music should also pay attention to the choice of music streaming to access their copyright.

4.3 Music Recreation

The progress and rapid changes of the times lead to the unpopularity of Traditional Chinese Music, because it does not conform to the concept of short and fast pursued by contemporary people. Due to the fast pace of life, it is difficult for modern people, especially for Generation Z, to calm down and enjoy music. Therefore, the transformation and innovation of Traditional Chinese Music are necessary. Traditional Chinese Music can be packed as a piece of diverse cultural music which is not only inclusive, but also contains rich history of China, incorporating different music types and keeping up with the current trend. This will reduce the tedium thought by Gen Z on Traditional Chinese Music, thereby increasing its familiarity and lowering its threshold. Instead of just improving the spread and influence of Traditional Chinese Music externally, the study also shows that music itself is very important. Traditional Chinese Music must continue to produce good, generally accepted, and acknowledged pieces in addition to marketing and advertising in order to sustain people's affection.

4.4 Cognitive Ascension

The popularity of traditional Chinese music in schools and even in society is also very important. Only by driving national attention and emphasizing cultural inheritance can Gen Z be truly proud of Traditional Chinese Music, so as to enhance the influence of traditional Chinese music and extend it to the following generations.

5 CONCLUSION

This study examines and explores the motivations for Generation Z to access and increase their attention to Traditional Chinese Music in the digital music industry. Digital music industry is playing an increasingly important role in the spread of Traditional Chinese Music. Under this background, this study focuses on the effect that the digital age has on Traditional Chinese Music by exploring Generation Z's motivation to listen and expose to it. From the Generation Z's experience of music and music streaming, their motivation can be improved through the dimensions of Product Packaging, Media Promotion, Music Recreation, and Cognitive Ascension. The digital age in music industry makes it possible for Traditional Chinese Music to become more innovative, shareable, and hereditary.

One limitation of this study is the inevitable bias in semi-structured interviews when Generation Z offers their thoughts on the issue. Additionally, this research limits generalizability. Since the interviewees are all from big cities, and they are only a fraction of customers in music industry. Their opinion and preferences of music type cannot be concluded to all of the normal customers of Generation Z.

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