



Analysis of Chinese Digital Music in the Context of New Media

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Abstract. Nowadays, people are accepting new technology into their daily lives. Computers and mobile phones have gradually become the main tools for people to receive information. The music market also changes its traditional platforms of radio, CD, and tapes to online applications following up with the trend. Digital music market has taken up the main part of the music market. However, advances in technology do not mean an improvement in the quality of music. Current music quality is much lower than music quality before. This paper focuses on the primary reasons for the decreasing of current music quality and gives out recommendations. The author analyzes the problems of the music market through the methods of current situation analysis and theoretical analysis. The author found that the reasons for the decline of music quality involved four aspects, namely music marketing, music production companies, music producers, and audience choice.

Keywords: Digital music · Social media · Music marketing · Music production companies · Music producers

1 Introduction

Music before the 21st century usually spread through traditional ways like CD, magnetic tapes, and broadcasts. People at that time had limited approaches to access music. However, in current time, along with the fast-developing of the Internet and technological devices, an increasing number of new music platforms have shown up. Instead of listening music using old traditional ways, people have multiple choices nowadays. Audiences are able to listen to music through their phones, their cars, or even their smartwatches. Following the development trend of the global electronic music industry, China has become a leading digital country in the music field. In 2016, China's electronic music development has already shown a large scale, according to the International Federation of Phonographic Industry (IFPI) Global Music Report 2016, music sales in China increased by 63.8% to 169.7 million US dollars [1].

With the more convenient ways of accessing music, definitions and standards of the music market are also changing. Digital music industry gradually replaces the traditional music industry in many aspects, such as content producers, users, telecom operators and so on [2]. Aside from applications that only provide service of listening to songs, short

video platforms such as Tiktok have become one of the most popular platforms for the new generation to access music. In order to coordinate with the short videos, the length of songs is getting shorter and shorter. In many situations, songs nowadays are composed in a splicing way, which means that these songs' qualities are uneven. In many songs, only the highlight part of the melody is beautiful, and the other parts of the song are not in harmony with the melody of the highlighted part. Whether from the perspective of music production companies or individual musicians, there are many problems, such as companies and musicians are not willing to pay as much money and effort into actually producing fine music work. Instead, they are focusing more on the profit they will make through music. Especially in the Chinese music market, it is hard to see artists devoting vast money and effort to their artworks. Also, many artists will organize world tours after only releasing one single album. Therefore, this paper will conduct an in-depth discussion on the problems existing in the quality of modern music in the Chinese market. The author will explore the reasons and impacts of these problems through comparative analysis and current situation analysis, and further propose solutions to the problems.

2 Overview of the Music Production Situation in the New Media Era

Music as a medium has been continually developed throughout human history. It transformed into several forms, and in the current time, along with the fast development and wide-spreading of the Internet, digital platform has become one of the most common places for people to access music [3]. Music producers change their original music styles and their basic process of songwriting in order to fit the platforms [4]. Short video platform is one of the most popular platforms. A short video platform means an application that contains multiple short videos (mostly less than 3 min), and people can switch to another video by sliding the screen. It has the advantages of fast spreading and creativity, which draws a large number of users. Take Tiktok as an example, as one of the largest short video platforms, Tiktok has a huge number of platform users. Tik Tok short video software has its own music library, which can provide users with various types of music as background music. Tik Tok offers people the opportunity to upload original video work and be seen by others [3]. Aside from the context of the video, music plays an important part in attracting people's attention and getting more browsing volume. Since the videos on the platforms are usually around 15 s, the background music has to be cut off into short sections and only leaves with the highlighted part of the song. Many artists regard this platform as an essential means of making their work popular. Under this circumstance, many artists create songs based on the purpose of fitting the short video platforms.

Since short videos require dynamic and rhythmic music to create shock in short period of time, many producers will create drops or specific designs for videos or challenges. It has become a trend that more and more artists are producing songs that have a decreasing amount of time. Many artists also change their ways of producing songs. In the traditional songwriting process, the author must understand the field of songwriting, In-depth study of song lyrics and melody, form and structure, rhythmic components,

harmonic components, accompaniment and arrangement [5]. Instead of following the most common and traditional pattern of writing songs, in which people first build up the whole song structure and then finish the arrangement, these artists choose first to produce the hook (the most highlighted part of the song). To let their songs be memorable, many producers replace thoughtful and meaningful melody and lyrics with brainwashing and simple melody and lyrics. In other words, these artists first compose a short section of their pieces and send these pieces out to tik tok. They create fun video shoot challenges to get more people like and use their songs as background music on short video platform. These musicians will then choose their most popular pieces to produce a complete song. However, this kind of song-making mode has weaknesses. For many music production companies, their main purpose is to maximize their benefits, so they may not willing to be responsible for the cost of producing complete songs with high quality.[6] They tend to put most money and effort into building the hook of songs and pay little attention to the integrity and completeness of the rest of the songs. This situation ends up with the result that most songs released in recent years have uneven levels of production which makes them sound like slicing songs. Although in many situations, some artists want to produce songs with more emotional connections and detailed production, they are limited by the external environment of the music market. To make their work released, these artists have to compromise to market mechanism.

3 Analysis of the Reasons for the Decline of Music Quality

3.1 Marketing

In the past, the main way to listen to music is through CD, tape and radio, the songs people have access to are limited, so people will focus more on the quality of the songs. As a result, the music market focused more on the quality and the production of songs. In the 2000s, the Chinese music scene was in a state of flourishing. Artists were composing songs with enchanting melody and touching stories [2]. There were many elaborate artists rising in this music market. For example, Jay Chou who debuted in 2000 has great talent in building melody. Jay Chou's Western-style combined with Chinese-style pop forms represent a new musical style. Jay Chou combines Western productions while retaining the Chinese character of the songs. The music produced is not only a fusion of Chinese and Western with "Chinese characteristics", but also a form of pop culture. Most of his songs have meaningful topics and express specific themes which can remind people of their own experience. These songs were all produced by himself with high quality, so he became famous at that time period and continued being welcome by the new generation [9]. However, in current time, the tides are changing rapidly, and the short video platform goes viral. In order to follow up with the hottest trends and the short video duration, companies and producers have to give up producing high quality songs which require more time and effort. Instead, they choose to produce songs which are brainwashing and blank. These songs only require simple harmonic progression and repetitive melody. For example, there is a song called Snow Cat Jiao, which is widely circulated on short video platforms. This song has the lyrics "Let's imitate the cat's voice together", and the arrangement is not very good, but it is still widely circulated in China.

It is clear that the quality of songs generally begins to decline as the new model of the music market takes shape.

3.2 Music Production Companies

Music production companies mainly care about the profits they can make through a song instead of its quality and value of it. As a result, they will mostly invest money into songs who have the potential to be popular. These companies have their criterion to determine whether a song will be in favour or not. Following up with the changes in the music market throughout the time, the standard of songs music production companies require has a huge difference from before. Before, the key factor for a song to be popular in the music market is the song's well production. So, music production companies would pay attention to improving the quality of their artists' songs and building up their artists' brands. In contrast, because of the wide use of short video platforms, music production companies figure out a better way to reduce the cost on producing songs [6]. They require songwriters to first compose the hook section of the songs and let them send these demos to the companies to audit. These demos are sent out to music platforms to collect feedback from listeners. The companies then choose pieces that pop out to produce the entire song. Since most of these songs play roles as the background music for short videos, companies only pay effort to the highlighted part which is being used in videos and spend little money on completing the whole song. In this mode, without financial support from companies, producers have to produce songs that have lower quality than before.

3.3 Music Producer

Especially in Chinese music industry, there are few rules about copyright and plagiarism. Musicians do not have to be punished if they copy others' works. Since this music market requires a huge amount of music workpieces, some music producers choose to copy the melody or arrangement from songs that have already become popular. In this way, these producers can compose songs using much less amount of time and effort. Besides, since the melody from the previous song has already been proven to be welcomed by listeners, there is a high possibility that producers can compose a song that will be accept by most people. For example, Li Ren Chou was once a popular song in the Chinese music market. Many people were attracted by its fetching melody and archaistic music style. However, it was then denounced that it had copied Yan Hua Yi Leng and Hong Chen Ke Zhan from Jay Chou [7]. But the author of this song didnot receive a harsh punishment for his behavior.

The method of copying other's work pieces pulls down the average standard of being a music producer. Songs usually have their basic structures, so people are able to take these structures and use them to compose their songs. Some musicians directly take other songs' arrangement structures and do small changes to make new songs. In this situation, people who know less about music can produce music pieces. Using the same example mentioned above, in one TV show, the author of LiRenChou was asked to use a common harmonic movement to perform his song. Normally, this was the basic knowledge for music producers. But LianJie Li said that he did not understand what the request was.

Therefore, many people have questioned LianJie Li. If LianJie Li originally produced this song, it is impossible for him not to know the related music theory.

3.4 Audience Choice

Audience is an essential factor in the music market. Audience is the target group musicians produce music for and is a effective promotion way to advertise songs. The popularity of a song depends on the amount of plays on music platforms. The more people listening to the song, the more payback received by the producer. Audience is also a reason for the decrease in music quality. Even if the market provides listeners with many low quality songs, audience still have their rights to choose to listen these songs or not. The phenomenon of inferior songs being wide-spread in China represents the aesthetics in music of most audiences. Music is not being treated seriously in Chinese students' education. China's music curriculum is still far below the demands of Chinese students, and there is still a gap between students learning popular music inside and outside the classroom [8]. This also shows that there are differences in the ability of students to appreciate music. In order to have more classes in major subjects like Mathematics, many high schools choose to replace music classes with other subjects' classes. As a result, many people do not know how to judge the quality of music and lack a certain ability to appreciate music. The great differentiation of music aesthetics has also led to the popularity of low-quality songs, and the quality of songs in the music market has begun to decline.

4 Suggestions for Improving Music Quality

This part will make some suggestions on music quality from three aspects: new media platforms, individuals and governments. From the perspective of new media platforms, the platform manager should pay more attention to the copyright of authors, and have more perfect audit standards for song uploads. Individuals are mainly divided into creators of music works and audiences. Creators should pay more attention to the improvement of personal music literacy and regulate their own behavior. The audience also needs to supervise and report works suspected of plagiarism. The government should develop specific rules and penalties to protect the copyrights of music creators, such as fines for plagiarized songs. In addition, schools should also strengthen the music education for students Music should become one of the compulsory courses for students.

5 Conclusion

In conclusion, this paper explores the reasons for the decline in music quality in the context of new media. Traditional music market gradually being replaced by digital music market because of the development of technology. The approachable ways for accessing music have changed to online applications and short video platforms. Changes in the way of music transmission also affect the quality of music to a certain extent. The author analyzes the decline of music quality from the aspects of marketing, music production

companies, music producers, and audience selection, and puts forward corresponding suggestions. This paper still has limitations in data analysis and research methods. In subsequent research, the author will use quantitative analysis methods such as questionnaires to further explore the platform audience.

Acknowledgements. I would like to give my heartfelt thanks to my parents, for their endless love and care for me. Whatever I need and wherever I go, they are always there supporting me without any requirement in return. I thank my loving family and family is where I can forever turn. I also want to thank to all the people who help me, care about me and wish me for the best. The achievement of the thesis belongs to us, testifying our cooperation, our diligence, persistence and perpetual friendship.

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