





Research on the Influencing Factors of Immersion Experience of Domestic Myth-themed Animated Films

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Abstract. In recent years, the emergence of high-quality domestic animated films featuring mythological stories has attracted a great deal of attention from audiences and researchers alike. As the demand for content reflecting rich traditional cultural elements continues to grow, it has become increasingly important to understand how to enhance the immersive experience provided by these engaging films. This study examines the impact of three key factors - visual design, sound design, and narrative - on audience immersion during movie viewing. Through an in-depth analysis of recent representative works, this study finds that the intricate design of scenes and characters, elaborate soundtracks and voiceovers, and the fusion of traditional culture with innovative modern narrative techniques play a crucial role in shaping audience engagement. The findings provide valuable references for the production of such films, and this study emphasizes the important role of multi-sensory integration, emotional resonance, and meticulous storytelling in creating engaging and immersive viewing experiences for diverse modern audiences.

Keywords: Mythological themes, Animated movies, Immersive experience.

1 Introduction

Domestic mythological-themed animated films have achieved remarkable success both at home and abroad in recent years, such as *The Descent of Nezha the Magic Boy* and *The Return of the Great Sage*. These films not only display China's rich mythological culture, but also achieve innovation in audiovisual language and narrative style. As more and more viewers are demanding traditional cultural content in animated films, it is particularly important to study how such animated films can enhance the immersion experience through narrative, graphic design and emotional resonance. The purpose of this paper is to analyze how the three major factors, namely visual, auditory and narrative, affect the audience's sense of immersion in domestic mythological-themed animated films. Through in-depth study of the specific performance and role of these factors, this paper aims to reveal how they work together to enhance the audience's level of moviegoing engagement and emotional resonance. This study focuses on the effects of visual, auditory and narrative on audience immersion through case studies of several

representative Chinese mythological animation films, combined with a literature review. The study focuses on key elements such as visual scene design, character design, background music, character dubbing and narrative structure.

2 Definition of Immersion Experience

2.1 Theoretical Background of Immersion Experience

The concept of immersive experiences is derived from psychologist Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi's Flow Theory, a term that has no single inventor and has evolved from multi-disciplinary research. Immersion refers to a state of deep mental engagement that results in a shift in attention and an experience of detachment from the perception of the physical world. Based on a review of previous research, there are two main perspectives on immersion: one is the mental state of the individual and the other is the objective properties of the technology or system [1]. In short, the former refers to the subjective experience where the user is fully immersed and feels disconnected from the real world while interacting with the media, whereas the latter refers to the multi-sensory integration of technological features, such as high-quality visuals and sound, that create a virtual environment for deep user engagement.

Three academically recognized causes that can lead to psychological immersion are: subjectively feeling surrounded or experiencing multi-sensory stimuli; being immersed in a narrative or depiction of a narrative; and immersion in the face of a strategic or tactical challenge [1], therefore, this study will explore the factors influencing the immersive experience of domestic mythological-themed animated films in terms of these three aspects.

2.2 Sensory Immersion

Biocca and Delaney refer to the degree of immersion of the user's perceptual system in the environment as perceptual immersion [2]. Perceptual immersion can be measured objectively by 'counting the amount of sensory input from the user and the degree to which the input from the physical environment is blocked' [3], in other words, sensory immersion is a method to enhance the user's immersion experience through rich sensory stimulation and effective blocking of external distractions. Standing in the perspective of animated films, perceptual immersion reveals two key factors that can enhance the audience's viewing immersion: rich sensory stimulation and effective shielding of the physical environment. Firstly, the film provides a great deal of sensory stimulation for the audience's viewing immersion through high-quality visual effects, high-level set design and appropriate music. Secondly, when watching a film in a cinema, both the dim, closed viewing environment and the comfortable seats effectively provide realistic distraction shielding for the audience's immersive viewing.

2.3 Narrative Immersion

Adams and Rawlings generalize immersion in storytelling as ‘the feeling of being in the story, of being fully engaged and seeing the world and events of the story as real’ [4]. This idea, also known as narrative immersion, has important implications in the creation of animated films. Firstly, because animated films need to build a huge animated world, their narratives need to be logical and unified in order for the audience to feel the authenticity of the story. Secondly, the characters’ emotional expressions and growth trajectories need to be realistic and believable, so that the audience can empathize with the characters and psychologically put themselves into the characters’ situations. A fluid narrative and a challenging plot are also essential to ensure that the audience stays tuned in and engaged with the film. Finally, the film also needs to have some details of life to stimulate the audience's imagination and create a sense of immersion. Overall, using narrative immersion as a guiding theory for creating animated films can help creators to enhance the audience's immersion experience more effectively and make it easier for viewers to become immersed in animated films.

2.4 Challenging Immersion

Arsenault, who argues that one does not have to accept a challenge in order to be immersed, suggests modifying challenge-based immersion into systemic immersion: systemic immersion occurs when the player accepts the game system (rules, laws, etc.) and at the same time refuses to accept the laws of physics observed in the real world [5]. Regarding challenging immersion, the author incorporates it into the narrative structure of animated films in order to facilitate an effective immersion experience for the audience. The film is created by introducing challenging or complex elements so that the audience is deeply invested in facing these challenges. Plot dilemmas, internal conflict and growth of characters, and complex world-building can increase the audience's emotional investment and cognitive engagement. The plot of a film enhances overall immersion by resolving these challenges in such a way that the audience not only experiences a strong emotional response and cognitive satisfaction, but also becomes more deeply invested in the story and the characters' journeys.

3 Visual Influences

3.1 Visual Characteristics in Scenography

The visual influences on the immersive experience of animated films include high-quality effects, color and lighting, detailed scene and character design, camera use, frame composition, fluidity and pacing, and visual narrative. This study focuses on scene and character design, analyzing how these two aspects affect the immersive experience.

Scene design is crucial for creating atmosphere and advancing a movie's narrative. Through detailed backgrounds and smart spatial layouts, films immerse audiences in vibrant, mythical worlds. For instance, *The Return of the Great Sage* uses stunning

visuals and realistic environments to craft a magical fairy world, enhancing audience immersion and enriching the story's backdrop. Similarly, in Ne Zha's *Descent of the Magic Boy*, color contrasts highlight plot tension and reveal characters' inner worlds, with warm and cool tones reflecting their emotional shifts and boosting the narrative's impact.

3.2 Character Design Influences

Character design significantly influences domestic mythological films, enhancing audience identification through a blend of visual appearance and action elements. Appearance design shapes the audience's initial impression and visual attraction. In *White Snake*, employs detailed facial expressions, a simple hairstyle, and muted costumes to create a blend of traditional charm and modern aesthetics, allowing the audience to quickly connect with and admire her.

In character design, their behavioral traits should be based on background, personality, motivation and plot needs to ensure logical consistency. In *Yang Jian*, Chenxiang replaces the male protagonist Yang Jian and is set as the main 'action element', whose main task is to 'reorganize the Po Lin Lantern and split the mountain to save the mother'. On the contrary, Yang Jian, who should be the absolute male protagonist, is in a hurry, changing from 'searching for Chenxiang' to 'helping Chenxiang' and becoming the object 'action element'[6]. The transformation of Yang Jian's role makes his actions illogical and unmotivated, diminishing his heroic presence and leaving the audience confused, which undermines the narrative. To avoid these negative effects, the consistency of his logic and motivations must be improved.

Therefore, scene and character design serve not only as artistic expressions in mythological animated films but also enhance audience immersion. Subtle scenes foster an emotional atmosphere, while character design connects with viewers through their appearance and behavior, enriching the overall experience.

4 Auditory Influences

4.1 Influence of Background Music

The background music in domestic mythological animation films enriches the auditory experience, shapes the cultural atmosphere, guides audience emotions, and enhances immersion. In the ancient style and harmony music of 'Begonia', the audience can feel that the music with mysterious oriental colors, in the red, white and black color scheme, gently renders the ancient and beautiful background setting of the story [7]. The mysterious oriental colors of the music, along with the red-white-black color scheme of the ancient style, engage the audience aurally, visually, emotionally, and culturally. This sensory resonance, paired with a unique portrayal of oriental culture, immerses the audience in the movie's beautiful ancient setting. As a result, *Begonia the Big Fish* captivates viewers, allowing them to experience the story's details and evoke emotional responses.

Additionally, Background music influences audience emotions through rhythm and timbre. Upbeat music in tense scenes boosts excitement, while softer music in sad scenes fosters empathy, enhancing immersion in the plot.

4.2 The Impact of Character Voice Acting

Character dubbing is important for emotional expression in animation, and the voice actor vividly conveys the emotions of the character through vocal elements such as intonation, rhythm and tone. Different changes in tone can express joy, sadness and many other emotions, enabling the audience to visualize and understand the inner world of the character. Dubbing also strengthens the character's personality through the uniqueness of the voice, making it easier for the audience to understand the character's personality.

Character dubbing is also a facilitator of cultural identity. In the dubbing of *Nezha's Magic Boy Descends*, the cross-cultural production strategy was also implemented, and the strong local characteristics were retained in the design of lines and voices, which added color to the film [8]. Successful dubbing not only conveys the emotion and story of the original film, but also respects and integrates the target culture, so that viewers can find a sense of familiarity and belonging during the viewing process, enhance their cultural identity, and then enhance their viewing experience.

5 Narrative Influences

5.1 Balancing Cultural Heritage and Modernization

The transmission of culture involves not only the simple transfer of practices, but also their transformation and adaptation, reflecting the dynamics of the social context in which they are embedded; cultural elements are not static; they are constantly being transformed and reinterpreted as they are passed on from generation to generation [9]. In *NeZha: The Descent of the Demon Child*, the creators have redefined the image of NeZha from the traditional brave and rebellious child prodigy to a lonely demon child with an inherent conflict. This adaptation honors the core of the original myth and gives the character a modern psychological depth that brings him closer to the lives of contemporary audiences, successfully balancing cultural heritage with modern elements.

5.2 Challenging Immersion into the Narrative Structure

Adding challenging elements to the narrative of a domestic animated movie can enhance immersion. The dilemmas in the love storyline are not only external obstacles, but also the character's inner conflict and growth journey. These dilemmas make the characters more realistic and three-dimensional, and the complexity of the emotions touches the audience making them highly invested both emotionally and thoughtfully. By observing how the characters find their way through the challenges, the audience develops a deep emotional connection to the characters and associates them with their

own experiences. This empathy not only allows the audience to become more deeply invested in the character's journey, but also inspires them to reflect on their own lives.

Introducing elements of challenge and complexity allows the audience to be emotionally and cognitively satisfied and engaged in the story. This emotional engagement enhances the immersive experience and boosts the appeal of the movie.

6 Conclusions

This study summarizes the influence of three major factors, namely visual, auditory and narrative, on the immersion experience of domestic myth-themed animated films. Visually, delicate scene and character designs enhance immersion; aurally, background music and voice-over deepen emotional engagement; and narratively, a reasonable blend of traditional culture and modern techniques is needed to bring about emotional resonance. The study is limited to the sample scope and methodology, and in the future, the sample can be expanded and combined with audience interviews for a more comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing the immersion experience.

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