

Research on the Communication Mechanism of y2k in Social Media

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Abstract:

Y2k “refers to the cultural and fashion era from the late 1900s to the early 2000s, which was the intersection of the old and new centuries. Y2K culture is characterized by vivid colors, strong technological and futuristic feelings, reflecting the cultural and aesthetic characteristics of the late 1900s to early 2000s. With the continuous development of new media technology, “y2k” culture has also entered our field of vision at an extremely fast speed and in different forms, forming a new fashion trend. This article starts with the dissemination methods and effects of “y2k” on social media, to understand how Y2K culture forms fashion trends through social media. The article uses literature research and case analysis methods, 10 literature related to Y2K culture were selected through databases such as CNKI and Web of Science. Although there have been studies on various aspects of Y2K culture design, there is still a lack of in-depth research on its dissemination methods and effects on social media. There is no systematic analysis and explanation of the practical significance of Y2K style in forming fashion trends.

Keywords: Y2k culture; new media; social media

1. Introduction

In today’s digital age, social media has become an important platform for information dissemination and cultural exchange. Various aesthetic concepts and cultural trends are rapidly developing and spreading under the promotion of social media, affecting people’s daily lives. Among them, the Y2K (year 2000) style that has become popular in recent years is highly sought after by people. The Y2K style, with its extremely saturated colors and technologically advanced design, awakens people’s memories of the past and their aspirations for the future.

The full name of Y2K is “year 2 Kilo Peoblem”, which originally referred to a vulnerability in early

computer calculation programs when processing dates, known as the “millennium bug problem”[1]. At first, “Y2K” referred to computer program errors, but later it referred to a special visual sensory style culture that emerged in Western countries from the late 1990s to the early 21st century[2]. This “technology panic” contrasts sharply with another kind of people’s fantasy of “omnipotence” in technology. At that time, people were full of endless fantasies about the future world. Therefore, creative workers also integrated this aesthetic style that combines technology and retro into movies, music, and clothing at that time, recording people’s crazy imagination. Over time, it gradually became the unique “y2k aesthetics”

of today.

2. The dissemination of “y2k” on social media

The dissemination of the “Y2K” style on social media is diverse and influenced by various factors. At first, the “Y2K culture” was only spread in film and television works, but with the development of social media, the dissemination of Y2K culture has become more convenient and diverse. Social media provides a good place for the spread of “Y2K culture”. For example, open platforms such as Tiktok, Xiaohongshu, and Weibo provide a good communication environment for the spread of “Y2K” and promote the spread of “Y2K”[3].

2.1 Promotion and influence from users and y2k culture enthusiasts

Nowadays, the growing development of the Internet does make more and more people begin to accept and use the Internet frequently. Social media plays a crucial role in this era, as its users are both recipients and disseminators of information. During the spread of y2k, a large number of y2k lovers made full use of short video platforms, such as Tiktok, Xiaohongshu and other influential short video production platforms, and enthusiastically shared their own y2k clothing, exquisite makeup, and profound insights into this culture. These enthusiasts devote themselves to creation and sharing with great enthusiasm. The short videos they produce are rich and colorful, some showcasing their fashionable looks on the streets wearing y2k style clothing, some detailing the unique techniques of y2k makeup, and some delving into the historical significance of y2k culture. Through continuous discussions and reposts among enthusiasts, y2k culture quickly spread like a strong trend. More and more people are beginning to understand and gradually accept the y2k style, attracted by its unique charm. At the same time, it has also encouraged more and more people to actively participate in the heated discussions of the “Y2K culture” and share their feelings and perspectives. As the Western scholar Emanuel Sturt said, “All processes of our individual and collective existence are directly shaped by new technological media.” Media provides a space for subcultural groups to communicate and engage in activities, making the dissemination of that culture more convenient and efficient, breaking through the limitations of time and space, eliminating cultural barriers, and directly affecting the development of Y2K style[4]. Encouraging more and more users to try this style has gradually made “y2k culture” a popular trend nowadays.

2.2 The influence of celebrities and internet celebrities

On the one hand, top Korean girl group Blackpink and American pop queen Lady Gaga have both released dance makeup and performances with y2k culture as the main element, which has led their fan groups to publish and discuss these works on social media, thus promoting the spread of y2k. Some internet celebrities will also collaborate with brands to launch joint products of y2k, promote and advertise through social media, and attract more people to purchase and pay attention to “y2k culture”. For example, Chinese superstar Yang Mi endorsed the Miss Sixty x ANDR É SARAIVA brand, which combines trendy elements of street graffiti, skateboarding, and Y2K style in recent years[5]. This has led many of her fans to purchase the brand’s clothing in physical stores, and has also promoted the spread of the “Y2K” style from a certain perspective.

On the other hand, the celebrity effect has also had a certain negative impact on the spread of Y2K. Firstly, the participation of celebrities is often accompanied by commercial cooperation, leading to the excessive commercialization of Y2K culture, which has become a commodity that meets market demand. More and more people no longer explore the connotation of this culture, nor do they have a deeper understanding of Y2K culture, resulting in culture being only superficial. Secondly, excessive promotion of Y2K culture by celebrities can lead to a phenomenon of following the trend, making the essence of culture too monotonous. The excessive pursuit and convergence of fans weaken the uniqueness and innovation of culture, which also subtly affects people’s aesthetics, making them monotonous and single, thus limiting the diversified development of culture. Stars and online celebrities have a strong influence on the Internet. Their preferences often lead the trend. Their love and admiration play an important role in promoting the spread of y2k.

The participation of celebrities has gained a large number of likes and favorites from users online, providing a solid foundation for algorithmic recommendation systems on social media.

2.3 Hobby settings for social media algorithms

The algorithm recommendation system of social media platforms refers to the use of computer algorithms to analyze users’ basic information, network browsing behavior, and other behavioral data, in order to accurately recommend personalized content to users based on their interests and behaviors[6]. When users like, bookmark, or search for y2k related content through keywords, the platform’s powerful algorithms will come into play and

continuously push more similar content. These contents are like windows of knowledge, allowing users to explore various aspects of y2k culture more deeply. Whether it's eye-catching y2k fashion demonstrations, creative y2k style artworks, or in-depth analysis of the cultural background of the millennium, these fans or users can continuously deepen their understanding of "y2k culture".

As users continue to pay attention to y2k content, they are often attracted by this unique cultural charm, which in turn generates a strong desire to share. Through continuous sharing and forwarding by users, y2k culture has rapidly spread. People who were originally ignorant of y2k culture became curious after seeing the wonderful content shared by friends and took the initiative to learn about this style. In this process, y2k culture gradually breaks through the limitations of niche and is increasingly accepted by more and more people. It is no longer just exclusive to fashion enthusiasts, but has become a cultural phenomenon with widespread influence, bringing more colors and creativity to people's lives, and making more and more people begin to understand and accept this style.

However, while algorithmic recommendation mechanisms have promoted the spread of Y2K culture, they have also brought some negative impacts. Firstly, in order to achieve personalized recommendations, algorithm recommendations must extensively collect users' browsing records, deeply analyze their "digital footprints" to form more accurate user profiles, and so on[6]. In the process of using algorithm recommendations, it violates the privacy and information security of users. Secondly, as pointed out by the "filter packet" theory in the field of media research, users may be trapped in a homogeneous information circle by algorithms, which only exposes them to specific Y2K styles, limits their exploration of different styles, and thus affects the diversity of cultural dissemination, trapping users in a cycle of repetitive content and making it difficult for them to truly experience the diverse expressions of Y2K culture. On the other hand, excessive reliance on algorithmic recommendations can lead to a singularity in propagation, lacking innovation and thinking. Creators of short videos may tend to produce specific styles and content due to the influence of algorithm recommendations, deepening the singularity and repetition of culture.

2.4 Further exploration and dissemination of retro elements

Users will share music, movies and other retro cultural creation works around the millennium on the Internet. Some film lovers will publish their opinions on the Internet according to the costumes, scenes and visual effects in these film studies, so that more users interested in old

movies can understand the "y2k culture", promote the spread of the "y2k culture", and expand its influence. For example, the famous movie "The Matrix" used many typical Y2K elements in makeup and scene production, which gave the audience a deeper understanding of Y2K culture. Many viewers also search or share their viewing experiences through social media after watching the movie, deepening their understanding of Y2K while browsing and reading. Some social media accounts will specifically organize and publish retro materials such as posts, magazines, etc. before and after the millennium, allowing more people to understand the origin and development history of Y2K style, and helping to spread Y2K culture.

3. The dissemination effect of Y2K on social media

In today's digital age, Y2K has shown amazing dissemination effects on social media platforms with its bold colors, exaggerated design, and unique sense of technology, constantly spreading among fans and different users. The significant dissemination effect is mainly reflected in the following aspects:

3.1 Formation of Circle Culture

The continuous spread of Y2K on social media has brought together users with similar hobbies and aesthetics, forming a circle and a circle culture. Professor Liu Shengzhi from Beijing University of Posts and Telecommunications believes that 'unlike the formation of traditional social circles, cultural capital has become the fundamental bargaining chip for these young groups to construct their self-identity and self-identity'[7]. Users share their views and experiences on the Internet on "Y2K Culture", which strengthens the connection and interaction between them, and also allows more fans or users with some views on the culture to gradually join this circle, expanding the depth and breadth of communication, forming a close social circle. Individuals satisfy their need for identity and sense of belonging by sharing a specific language within their circle'[4]. This social circle has also increased fans' love and loyalty to Y2K, thereby expanding the influence of the culture and the size of the circle.

3.2 Enhancement of brand and commercial value

The popularity of Y2k on social media undoubtedly brings significant commercial value to related business activities. Nowadays, many brands are keenly aware of the Y2K style trend and have carefully planned commercial activities related to it on social media. The brand spares no

effort in releasing product images related to Y2K, creating exquisite promotional posters, etc., with highly attractive visual presentations, arousing users' strong desire to purchase.

Many fashion brands make full use of the advantages of the Internet to vigorously launch Y2K style clothing and accessories. With the strong communication power of the Internet and social media, these brands can often harvest a gratifying total turnover. By cleverly combining with Y2K style, the brand has successfully created a fashionable and avant-garde image, greatly enhancing its influence and popularity in the minds of consumers. Consumers are frequently exposed to Y2K style content on social media, and their demand for related products is also increasing.

The growth of this demand has to some extent driven brands to increase their production efforts for related products. The strong demand in the market has effectively promoted the continuous spread of Y2K style, thereby forming a virtuous cycle. In this cycle, Y2K culture has been widely spread, its unique charm has been fully demonstrated, and it has also injected new vitality into economic development. This mutual promotion between culture and economy not only enriches people's fashion choices, but also brings new opportunities and challenges to the business field.

However, excessive commercialization has led to the hollowing out of culture, even turning it into a marketing tool. Enthusiasts no longer spend a lot of time studying its cultural connotations, but instead spend a lot of time and energy on how to promote Y2K style products. Balancing cultural uniqueness and creativity has become a serious issue for brands when commercializing Y2K culture. Firstly, brands should invest time and effort in researching the connotation, historical background, and core elements of Y2K culture, understanding its unique design, as well as the social status and cultural values reflected behind this culture, such as the yearning for technology, and so on. Only by truly achieving these can brands maintain their independence in the process of commercialization. Secondly, when launching Y2k style products, brands should not only promote the simple Y2k style of the past, but also innovate designs based on inheriting this culture. Brands can combine modern technology and design concepts with y2k culture to create products that are more in line with today's aesthetics. Then, brands can encourage consumers to participate and jointly create new Y2K style products. Brands can encourage consumers to participate in the innovation and development of Y2K culture through organizing design competitions and other means. Consumers can not only bring new ideas to the brand, but also enhance their sense of identification and participation in Y2K culture. In the process of interaction, brands can better understand consumers' needs, maintain cultural

uniqueness, and improve the market competitiveness of product.

The emergence of a large number of related products is changing people's aesthetics and giving them different perspectives on Y2k style.

3.3 Visual impact and changes in aesthetic concepts

The spread of Y2K has to some extent influenced people's aesthetic concepts. Nowadays, people advocate minimalist style. Y2K style breaks traditional aesthetic standards and mainly presents electronic numbers, space, mosaic images, etc. It reconstructs simple clothing and cleverly breaks through the dimensional wall with retro technology, approaching binary infinitely.[8] It emphasizes technology, personality, innovation, and a sense of the future. In terms of color, Y2K style emphasizes high saturation colors and the use of strong contrasting colors, which are eye-catching. In terms of graphic selection, Y2K style uses regular geometric shapes interspersed with chaotic lines, enhancing the three-dimensional and technological sense of the pattern, creating a unique visual effect, bringing people a new visual experience and a different visual shock. This unique visual style has a strong impact on social media, and many users are attracted by Y2K style images and videos, which makes them start to pay attention to and understand this style. This aesthetic concept has gradually permeated into other fields such as art and design, and has also become a part of daily life. Many women's accessories are made in Y2K style, with silver as the base color and set with highly saturated colored diamonds, which are eye-catching. Y2K has truly integrated with reality, making this style no longer so "incomprehensible and difficult to understand".

Displaying one's beautiful body shape on social media is a yearning for beauty. When showcasing one's outfit on social media, one needs to face the viewing and evaluation of users, as well as the gaze of oneself during video shooting. This forms Foucault's panoramic view, where people do not know what they are showcasing. Whether the body is beautiful enough, these people who publish works often pay special attention to others' evaluations[9]. The Y2K culture also carries a sense of 'rebellion' and 'freedom', using strong visual impact to break traditional aesthetic concepts, allowing people to dare to express themselves and their unique personalities. Becoming an interpretation of young people's pursuit of uniqueness and individuality, it is changing people's definition of "beauty" and reflecting a stronger female power to define their own self-worth attitude[10], allowing girls to no longer be anxious about their body shape and appearance, and boldly showcase themselves.

Users' views on Y2k culture and its connotation of break-

ing the tradition have also made it widely discussed on the Internet.

3.4 High topicality and extensive discussion

The hashtag popularity of Y2K related topics on major social media platforms has remained high. According to data, as of March 29, 2023, the number of discussion posts about “# Y2K” on Tiktok has reached 16 billion, which fully demonstrates the high level of discussion on this globally popular short video platform. The hashtag # Y2K on Weibo has reached 37000 discussions and 52.523 million views, further confirming the high popularity of Y2K on domestic social media.

These data clearly indicate that Y2K has a relatively high level of discussion and popularity on social media, and user engagement and activity are extremely high. A large number of users actively participated in the discussion, enthusiastically sharing their unique understanding of Y2k style and rich dressing experience. They promote the continuous fermentation and dissemination of topics through publishing various forms of content such as graphics, videos, etc. In this process, users are not only participants in the topic, but also disseminators, and their interaction and sharing inject strong impetus into the dissemination of Y2K culture.

The discussion scope of Y2K is extremely broad, and it is not limited to fashion and fashion alone. In the field of electronic and digital technology, flip phones, CCD cameras, and other electronic products with a millennium style have also become popular on the internet. These electronic products, with their unique retro design and nostalgia, evoke people’s fond memories of the millennium. At the same time, in the field of film and television, Y2K style is also reflected, and some millennium elements such as clothing and scenes that appear in film and television works have also sparked discussions among audiences. This fully reflects the widespread dissemination of Y2k and greatly enhances the dissemination effect of this culture. Y2K culture seems to be a strong trend sweeping through every corner of social media, immersing people in the unique charm of the millennium.

4. Conclusion

The dissemination of Y2K culture on social media is a complex and lengthy process that requires not only user support and forwarding, influencer promotion, platform operation, enthusiast exploration and discussion, merchant promotion, and other methods to achieve efficient and widespread dissemination. The dissemination effect of Y2K is significant, not only promoting the formation of circles, enhancing brand and commercial weight loss, but also changing people’s consistent aesthetic concepts,

bringing people a different visual experience, and receiving high attention and discussion from users in different social applications. However, due to its widespread dissemination, its aesthetic has become monotonous, and businesses have overly commercialized the Y2K style for marketing purposes, causing Y2K culture to stagnate and increasingly lack innovation and improvement.

In the future development, it is necessary to further strengthen the supervision of the Internet and the quality control of goods, use more environmentally friendly materials, such as using waste fabrics to reduce environmental pollution. At the same time, it is also necessary to encourage people to participate in discussions about Y2K culture, introduce Y2K culture teaching content in art, fashion and other related courses, and let students understand the history and development trends of Y2K culture through classroom lectures, practical operations and other methods.

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