

The Influence of Otome Game on Women's Thought in China

Xun Zhang

College of Media and Communication, University Of New South Wales, Sydney, NSW, 2052, Australia

Keywords: Female Independence, Female Staring, Social Relationship Development, Feminism.

Abstract: Otome Game have become increasingly popular among Chinese female players, not only because of its aesthetic appeal and famous voice actors, but also because its plot and character design are in line with contemporary women's pursuit of independence. Through multi-modal narration and immersive experience, such the game provides a virtual world for female players perfect partner image, strengthen female independence consciousness, and provide a space to female players for self-identification and social relationship development, reflecting contemporary women's pursuit of equality and respect. As the number of female gamers increases and the gaming market expands, Otome Game is becoming a cultural phenomenon that promotes social progress and focuses on women's rights. In the meantime, the female characters show the phenomenon of "staring" in the game, including the mutual staring between women and women become the main body of staring, which is the outstanding feature of the current Otome Game under the growing development of feminism. Through its unique narrative and interaction, Otome Game giving a space for female players to develop self-identity and social relationships, while entertaining players. The game reflects contemporary women's pursuit of equality and respect, and promotes social progress and concerns the realistic rights and interests of women.

1 INTRODUCTION

Otome Game is a love simulate game targeting women players. Such games are characterized by beautiful pictures, beautiful roles, and majority of them have famous dubbers throughout the dubbing. All of them are love themed games, but Otome Games can not be equated with love games, Because the female game is often accompanied by friendship, family and other emotions, as well as the female career line and other plots of personal life, different from the love game in which the female can only rely on the male life. According to the latest statistics, in 2019, the number of women users is 300 million, accounting for 46% of the total game users in China, and the marketing revenue is 526.8 million, accounting for 22.8% of the total revenue. In fact, prior to 2017, women represented a smaller share of the gaming market due to product development, operations, and fewer female-only mobile games. However, this situation changed in 2017, because the appear of highly representative Otome Game lovers and producers led to the development of the female mobile game market, in the Chinese game market the consumption scale of female users grew rapidly from 312.3 million yuan in 2016 to 430.7 million yuan in

2017. Data statistics as of February 2018, women mobile game users penetration rate reached 34. 6%, the users size reached 2. 900 million. The average number of installs per female mobile game user is approximately 3. 77 mobile game apps. Among them, the local Otome Game in China Love and producer with a high penetration rate of 66.9% ranks second on the list of female users' preference (Chen, 2020). Through the data can be analyzed, in contemporary society, Otome Games are more and more popular among women, because modern and contemporary women pay more cautious about the idea of women independence, so Otome Games help women bring the perfect partner in their minds to reality, also guide or support the idea of female independence through the plot. The popularity of these games is also closely related to the changes of the times and the young generation's view of love and mate selection, which is a kind of fast food emotional consumption and subjective practice. Otome Game can use the role to express and construct their own views of love and mate selection, and the game experience also gives the player a richer and more fulfilling life experience. Similarly, these games construct a new social structure for women in which the status of women is promoted, and in some games the female figure can

be the pharaoh of Egypt, the queen of the empire, or the leader of the game of life and death. They use this plot design to help women pay attention to their social status, while emphasizing women's rights and interests, and through these events, feminism has become a hot topic in society recently. The research topic of this thesis is about the influence of Otome Game on Chinese women's thoughts and the promotion of feminist development.

2 DEPICTIONS OF WOMEN IN OTOME GAMES

The women character images of Chinese women in the game show the female subjectivity consciousness and the post-feminist thoughts of striving for women's individuality, autonomy. Breaking the patriarchal barrier in physiognomy, ability setting, professional identity and character. At the same time, the female roles in each game are completely different, reflecting the diversity of female social images (Ganzon, 2022). Such as the game Light and Night, the female image is an intern designer who opens her own brand step by step through her own efforts. In the game Pending Matter Book is an administrative lawyer. And professions such as lawyers or designers are generally considered to have a strong degree of independence. So that independence has gradually become a prominent feature of women characters in games, and women characters have not only achieved economic independence, but also have independent personalities and thoughts. At the same time, the female characters exhibit the phenomenon of staring. This kind of gaze not only includes the female gaze between each other, but also includes the female to become the main body of the gaze, which is the outstanding feature of the current Otome game. When creating a female role, women will be given more choices, such as contact with different pursuit objects at the same time or make choices. This practice makes women the subjects of the gaze and men the objects to be stared at. It can be seen that in today's media culture, the objects to be stared at are no longer limited to female, and everyone will experience "staring and being stared at" (Liu and Cheng, 2024). With the appearance and progress of Otome games to a mature stage, female characters in games gradually grasp a higher right to speak and initiative, from the weak position at the edge of the game to the core position of controlling the game orientation, feminism has become a new daily. To a degree, the female characters in Otome games embody the

characteristics of female individuation, independence and autonomy advocated by feminism.

3 THE INFLUENCE OF OTOME GAME ON WOMEN

3.1 Support for Women to Cultivate Independent Thought

First of all, game is a time-space medium unlike any other. In the virtual space created by computer, the game integrates multi-modal narration such as video, image, sound and text, which has the characteristics of time and space. Like other video games, Otome Game are interactive and expressive in a virtual electronic space. Compared with the mass media such as movies and novels, Otome Game have more spatial characteristics. As a medium of time and space, games can interweave players' time through multiple layers of space to form play ability, more complete reconstruction of the female player's experience in the Otome Game (Yan et al., 2024). By this means, the player is immersed in the process of reading the story, and unconsciously accepts the female survival rules from different situations. Such as, in the game Light and Night, when the heroine is faced with a forced marriage from her family, she does not choose to accept the constraints of inequality and unfreedom. On the contrary, she chose to give up the benefits brought by his family, escaped from his marriage, came to the city independently, and participated in the design competition on his own ability. After failing in the competition, he joined Wanzhen Group and grew step by step from the most basic intern designer to the studio brand manager. In Otome Game, although the female master's career can not be completely consistent with the real professional identity of all game players, the excellent quality of the female protagonist can make most players into it. Similarly, in the game, the men ignore factors such as appearance and social status, and fall in love with the master with excellent quality, providing a perfect situational space for the player to obtain an immersive experience (Li and Li, 2024). This perfect situation space is the world view built by the game company, taking the world view of love and producer as an example, in this world, the player as the heroine needs to run the company, unlock the story and explore the truth of the world. After her dad's death, she takes over her dad's film and television company. In order

to complete the agreement with her father and save the company that was about to close down, she devoted herself to the company's operation and program production after graduation. In the process of making the program, the female protagonist has met five male characters which can earn their favorability, and teamed up with them to find out the truth and resolve the crisis.

Otome Game creates story plots with female protagonists, break female stereotypes, and show another discourse system under the male-dominated social system. In the process of narrative, women play the protagonist and can choose the dialogue content by themselves, and the choice of dialogue content affects the direction of the plot of the game. This realization of women's right to speak carries a certain factor that can transcend the private sphere and the fictional sphere and establish women's dominant position in the emerging public circle. Female players are given the power to choose their own words, but also burdened with the mission of growth, "love and dreams must be matched" fully reflected in the game plot. The female protagonist played by the player not only has the right to speak, but also strives to chase dreams and love, representing the gender power advantage of women in the game, demonstrating their efforts to express female discourse and construct female subject status (Zeng and Zhong, 2022). So, in fact, one of the motivations of Otome Game is to help players gain self-identity and the confidence to develop social relationships.

3.2 The Help of Female Social Relations

The experience of female game is a kind of "cloud love" for single female players, by satisfying players' needs for narrative aesthetics and aesthetic audiovisual, satisfying female players' physical and mental needs from multiple angles, and building a new model of emotional satisfaction. The emotional satisfaction can help individuals complete self-construction in the virtual society and establish new pseudo-social relations; From the perspective of channels, the rise of Otome Game has brought new ways for female groups to meet. At present, the concept of "no marriage, no love" is increasingly popular among young groups. Studying the current situation and ways of single women's emotional satisfaction for Otome Game can effectively reveal the new characteristics of emotional satisfaction brought by Otome Game. Therefore it can explore the emotional needs of current single women, and

understand how single female players in Otome Game are affected by internal and external factors, build a bridge from emotional needs to emotional fulfillment (Wang and Yang, 2023). At the same time, the popularity of Otome Game reflects the spiritual dilemma and unmet emotional needs of modern independent women. However, this void is structural and cannot simply be filled with the pleasure of a certain type of game, but should promote the progress of the whole society, encourage people to pay more attention to the reality of women's situation, and pursue the real rights and interests of women.

3.3 Analysis of Otome Game Audiences

The majority of users of female games are young, urban women. In daily life, they experience the pressure of study or career, also encounter difficult problems, and become curious about the world outside their contact scope. In this psychological state, the player enters the game from the first perspective, in addition to pursuing the perfect love relationship, but also is given a new identity, can achieve certain success in the career field different from reality, and enrich individual life experience. At the same time, they are also touched by the good qualities of the characters in the game, so that they look forward to becoming better themselves in real life (Hu, 2022). The virtual world of Otome Game gives players the opportunity to explore the infinite possibilities of "another self", which helps women to break the old role norms, regain the possibility of mastering their own fate in parallel space, and even overturn all existing choices and try again, which shows the help of Otome Game for women to build their subjectivity. In reality, ladies may have emotional difficulties or fail to find someone who understands them. The characters in Otome Game often provide psychological support, encouragement and understanding for female players, thus becoming the emotional support for women (Pan, 2024). This virtual emotional relationship can bring comfort and warmth to women.

3.4 The Emotional Impact of Otome Game on Users

The relaxed and pleasant plot in the Otome Game, such as dating, traveling, etc., can help female players relax and feel happy. The plot of Otome Game often involves interpersonal relations, such as conflicts between friends, communication skills and so on. Through story setting and character interaction, female players can learn and improve their emotional

intelligence and interpersonal skills in real life (Hao et al., 2025). The game can also reflect the gradual change of women's views on mate selection, from the original trend of conforming to parents, only choosing the right spouse to choose according to their own will, no longer go with the flow. At the same time, their own requirements are no longer arbitrary, such as the appearance of their spouse, personality, family history and so on (Han, 2023). With the increasing awareness of gender equality in today's society, the relationship of mutual respect has become the emotional consensus of contemporary women, and the game has well helped women realize such an idealized love model. In the game, the male characters show respect for women, or even hope to be "taught", and are in a passive position in the love relationship, which is in sharp contrast to the image of men as assertive and superior in traditional literary and artistic narratives. In the game Love and Deep Space Xinghui Shen's classic line, "You seem to know everything, so teach me", responds to women's desire to break away from traditional situations and become the dominant party. In Light and Night, the male protagonist Chen Lu once reflected and refuted the traditional idea that "the girl is the most beautiful on the wedding day" : "If the girl is difficult to return to the beauty of the past after marriage, the marriage sounds like a disaster... I want you to be stronger and more confident every day. That's what makes you beautiful. So I see you getting more beautiful every day". The concept of love and marriage conveyed by the game reflects contemporary women's emotions of "the pursuit of gender equality and the desire to obtain due status and respect in love". Each discussion topic of the game is not only seen by women, so the rise of the heat of these topics will affect the whole society to discuss it, and the status of women is also rising in the discussion

4 DISCUSSION

4.1 The Innovation of Women's Games Under Feminism

The traditional system regards men as symbols of power and dominance, and women as passive and submissive categories. The awakening of feminism is a question to the inherent gender power structure, which makes women begin to consciously pursue gender equality, reflect on gender stereotypes, and strive for economic independence and social voice. It is not only a subcultural phenomenon, but also a cultural product under the change of gender concept,

behind which is the manifestation of female main body power and the catharsis of aesthetic desire (Li, 2024). Otome Game are innovative from the female perspective. As the main body of the Otome Game, female players can judge and stare at the male characters in the game, and play the roles that are assumed to be the role of men from different angles, thus challenging the traditional gender narrative and presenting a more open and inclusive gender writing.

4.2 Otome Game Long-Term Development Method

The first is the relationship between game mechanics and feminism. In Love and Producer, further development of a relationship with a virtual lover depends on the acquisition of a game story or new cards. If the company wants to continue to make money in a feminist environment, it will need to eliminate the male gaze from the story and the story of the new cards, and add some depiction of the female protagonist's personal abilities. Secondly, the emotional aspects of female players are also important. As a long-term partner and incentive, players can be accompanied and encouraged here, and even meet the love needs of some players, so that strong women can also experience sweet love (Liu et al., 2021). Therefore, it is necessary for the company to maintain the positive word of mouth of the game in the long term, introduce some effective activities to reward players, and most importantly, ensure that the character image of the male protagonist is fixed, and do not change frequently. The author thinks the above two points can help otome Game to have a long-term development under feminism.

5 CONCLUSION

Otome Game aimed at female gamers have grown significantly in popularity among Chinese women. These games are known for their aesthetic appeal and the involvement of famous voice actors, going beyond mere romantic themes. The emergence of games such as Love and Producer has boosted the female mobile gaming market. The female characters in the game show the female subject consciousness and post-feminist thought, pursuing individuality, autonomy and breaking through the shackles of patriarchy. Resonating with contemporary women who value the idea of female autonomy, they provide a virtual representation of the ideal partner through their narratives and reinforce the idea of female independence. Through multi-modal storytelling,

such as video, images, sound and text, the game creates an immersive gaming experience that allows players to experience different rules of survival in a virtual space. Otome Game provide a "cloud love" experience for single female players, meet their needs for narrative aesthetics and audiovisual aesthetics, meet the psychological needs of female players from multiple perspectives, help them complete self-construction in the virtual society, and establish a new pseudo-social relationship. Through its unique narrative and interaction, Otome Game provide female players with a space for self-identification and social relationship development while entertaining, reflecting contemporary women's pursuit of equality and respect, and becoming a cultural phenomenon that promotes social progress and pays attention to women's realistic rights and interests.

Available online at:
<https://www.cogitatiopress.com/mediaandcommunication/article/view/8662>

W. Z. Han. Relating to how otome games affect female players' perceptions of mate choice. In 2023 5th International Conference on Literature, Art and Human Development ICLAHD, 172-180 (2023).

Y. M. Li. Accelerating social and feminist trends: An analysis of the "emotional structure" behind Otome Game. Sci. Techn. Comm., **16**, 17-21 (2024).

L. Liu, S. N. Zhang, G. Y. Liu, Y. J. Jin, W. Y. Li. A study on quasi-social relationship between players and virtual lovers in Otome Game. Sci. Techn. Comm., **17**, 150-154 (2021).

REFERENCES

Y. F. Chen. The Age of Financial Media: A Study on feminism and Immersive Communication in Otome Games. China Di Cable Te., **05**, 541-544 (2020).

S. C. Ganzon. Playing at Romance: Otome Games, Globalization, and Postfeminist Media Cultures. Ph.D. Thesis, Concordia University, College of Communication (2022).

T. L. Liu, X. Cheng. "Negotiated Resistance" : Female Images in Chinese women's Games. Cont. Youth Res., **01**, 26-36 (2024).

Y. B. Yan, Y. H. Wu, Q. S. Li. A brief analysis of the virtual space shaping and emotional needs satisfaction of Otome Games based on the spatial narrative perspective of emotional communication: A case study of "Light and Night". Sci. Techn. Comm., **16**, 7-11+16 (2024).

M. T. Li, Y. L. Li. Research on the development status of domestic Otome Game under immersive communication. Media Forum, **14**, 7-9 (2024).

L. H. Zeng, J. R. Zhong. Exploring the construction of female subjectivity and sense of identity in Otome Game -- a case study based on Love and Producer. Res. Ch. Cult. Comm., **01**, 105-117 (2022).

Y. X. Wang, Z. Y. Yang. "The untouchable lover"- Research on the emotional satisfaction of single young women in Otome Game. Dig. Publ. Res., **S2**, 106-113 (2023).

X. L. Hu. Research on the Construction of New Female Culture Based on Female Love Games—Take "Light and Night" as an Example. Ph.D. Thesis, Anhui University, College of Communication (2022).

C. Pan. Journ. Otome Game and female love psychology. Pop. Psych., **02**, 24-25 (2024).

G. Hao, R. Q. Guo, Q. Q. You. Parasocial Interactions in Otome Games: Emotional Engagement and Parasocial Intimacy Among Chinese Female Players (2025).