



Technology construction and player demonstration: A Study of Simulation Game from the Perspective of Mediatization Theory

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Abstract. The popularity of Simulation Games reflects the mediated survival status of young people in the Internet era. From the perspective of mediated survival, this paper explores how young gamers develop the interact with technology in simulation management games and jointly construct mediated reality. The results show that the simulation management game simulates the real world by building a digital space, creating a beautiful scene to attract young people into the game space. Players can achieve an immersive experience of the game through instant access and disconnection of the game; Create a new order of game socialization through online socialization; By simulating real labor, building their own home symbol, and obtaining a mediated survival parallel to reality. The simulation game reflects the unique media-based survival experience of youth as "digital natives".

Keywords: Mediatization; Simulation Game; media labor; socializing.

1 Introduction

In recent years, digital media such as WeChat, Weibo, TikTok, and mobile games have shaped a variety of activity circles, and these media have provided online living space for young people. Online simulation games provide young people with a completely different way of life from industrialized societies so that users can "restart their lives" and experience a "game life" that is completely self-led. "As a reflection of the real world, business simulation games are simulacrum of society"[1]. The research object of this article, "There Are Families in the Depths of Taoyuan", is a simulation management game with warmth and healing as the main body, in which the "Taoyuan Mountain Village" in which the player lives is far away from the hustle and bustle of the world, full of rural fireworks, and is a paradise surrounded by green mountains and green waters. However, the Peach Blossom Paradise in the game is not a real Peach Blossom Paradise after all, can the youth group return to the cloud, and can the purpose of the online retreat be realized? Why do young people choose to enter the game life and mediate survival? How does the simulation game use technology as a means to construct a living space and reshape the living conditions of young people, and what kind

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of social psychology and game logic does this game construction reflect? This is the issue that this article is going to focus on.

2 The Mediatization of Living Space and Media Labor

"Mediatization" was first proposed by the Swedish media scholar Kent Asp in 1986, benefiting from the rapid development of media technology, it has received extensive attention from the academic community, and various terms such as mediation, mediatization, mediaization, and medialization have emerged. In his article "The Mediatization of Society", the Danish scholar Carward pointed out that "mediatization" is a broader concept than "mediation", and is a longer social process in which social and cultural systems and interaction patterns are changed due to the increasing influence of media. [2] The concept of media has been continuously generalized in the development of technology, and "mediatization" has taken on a broader meaning. Social mediatization reflects the social implantation of media logic, "The emergence of Internet information technology has triggered the "mediated turn" of society and the mediating of labor. [3] Among them, it is worth noting that under the current situation of squeezing real living space, people have turned to seek online living space, and there has been a mediated turn in the living space.

In Kurdley and Hepp's view, mediatization studies imply the process of changing communication practices about the real world, and this theoretical tradition focuses on "how a particular medium acts on the process of communication interaction in individual reality, and how this 'mediated' mode of communication constructs a new 'social reality'" is called the "social construction tradition" [4]. Yang Nuannuan and Lv Yixin studied the current situation of mediated survival of the elderly group in China from the perspective of new media and found that the mediated survival of the elderly group is different. [5] Some scholars have also reflected on the relationship between technology and people from the perspective of mediatization. The above research reveals that mediated survival has been immersed in all aspects of people's production and life, and has an immeasurable impact on our living conditions. Steven Shaviro proposes that post-cinematic emotions can be superimposed by digital technology and the neoliberal economy, giving rise to new ways of making and expressing life experiences.[6]

Marx first put forward the concept of labor process and labor control in *Capital*, and he pointed out that "capitalist production is essentially the production of surplus value"[7]. To obtain higher surplus value, capitalists monitor the labor process of producers and form labor control. In the era of the platform economy, digital technology has changed all aspects of the labor process, and the labor force, labor objects, and labor materials have all shown a trend of digitization. The problem of labor control of media platforms in the mediated society is prominent, and understanding the labor of media platforms based on the labor process theory can better connect the mediated problem with the labor process, and understand how media technology is embedded in the production, life and entertainment of users.

3 Research Methodology

Through in-depth participation in the game, the researchers conducted a five-month online ethnographic study (from the beginning of August 2023 to the end of December 2023) on "There is a Home in the Depths of Taoyuan" to investigate the problem of the game's place construction. At the same time, the author recruited interview subjects on active player platforms such as Xiaohongshu and Weibo, and after the screening, interviewed a total of 14 in-depth players of "There Are Players in the Depths of Taoyuan", and the interview process followed the "information saturation principle". To protect the privacy of the respondents and avoid any concerns of the respondents, the respondents are anonymized.

4 Analysis and Findings

4.1 Integrating Real-world Experience: Constructing a Mediated Living Space

Recommendation and Attraction: The "Co-Migration" of Space

Some scholars see "communication, media, space, and place as a dynamic process of mutual construction, and an internally ever-changing whole." [8] As a game to create an online pastoral life, "There Are Families in the Depths of Taoyuan" assumes the responsibility of transferring the indispensable factors that make up real life, such as scenes, labor, and social interactions, to the media space. "Several players have stated that the game has created a paradise like their "second life".

Like all TV shows that need marketing and promotion, "Someone in the Depths of the Paradise" uses the beautiful and laid-back pastoral style as a promotional point to attract a large number of players into the game. 'I want to live a kind of leisure life in the countryside, and the name of this game is 'There Are Homes in the Depths of the Peach Garden', which reminds people of Tao Yuanming's 'The Story of the Peach Blossom Spring'" (S11). Before coming into contact with the game, players often had the hope of living in the 'Peach Blossom Spring', hoping to escape the pressure of modernity and experience Tao Yuanming's life of "planting beans in the south of the mountain". The promotion of the game operator in the media and the sharing of many players on social media has become the entrance for players to enter the 'paradise', and players have become a part of the "media space" in the satisfaction of imagination and entertainment expectations.

Simplifying and Healing: Online Pastoral Scenes

The fulcrum of human existence is no longer limited to the real world but also exists in the space presented by the medium. The simplified action in the game is not only the folding of the process of the action but also the time required for that action. "I've always wanted to play a farming game, to be able to farm and decorate. (S4) In the Simulation Game, there are no longer high-rise villas and busy traffic in reality, players live in small mountain villages that have not been domesticated by industrial machines, no

longer need to go to school, work, and will not grow old because of the growth of time. The simple story setting leaves behind the pressures of social life and immerses the player in an undomesticated agricultural society. It is worth noting that in the game's narrative, crops no longer ripen in seasons, wheat can be harvested in two minutes, soybeans grow in five minutes, rice matures in twenty minutes, and cotton that is not easy to grow matures in only five hours. Behind the reduction in time is a reduction in labor, and players can fill their warehouses with just a click of the screen.

In the operation of the game, the medium not only simplifies the growth cycle of the crop but also simplifies the laws of nature. When the spring, summer, autumn, and winter in the game become a simple symbolic change, the laws of nature are no longer binding, and the player gets rid of the shackles of nature and transcends heaven and earth, and the game space becomes a kind of "de-order" existence, and the game uses a meta-narrative of a small-scale peasant society to relieve the player of the pressure brought by the development of modernity.

4.2 Rebuild Your Life: Simulate Survival in the Game

Mastering Time: Disengagement and Connection with the Medium

The time of human use of media and the disconnection of media often reflect the subjectivity of human beings towards media. In the simulation management game, the time spent by players to immerse themselves in the game and the practice of players actively detaching themselves from the game are intertwined, reflecting the compromise and resistance of players in the game process.

Under the dual structure of technology and agency, the gamer's use of media is presented as a paradoxical experience: it often takes more time to obtain immersive leisure, and the excessive time invested in games makes people lose the experience of real time. The amount of time a player spends playing is often based on their actual leisure time. "I usually play for three or four hours a day if I'm not working, and then maybe half an hour when I'm going to work." (S9) On the one hand, players will rationally plan their game time according to the actual situation, and on the other hand, the game will intervene in the player's life and become a companion existence. "Under normal circumstances, I get up at 7 o'clock in the morning and start playing, when eating, resting, going to the toilet, and before going to bed, I will open it casually, so to speak, I can play at any time, after all, I have nothing to do now." (S7) The online living space created by the simulation game allows players to relax in the cracks of urban life, and when players return to modern life, they also begin to seek the companionship of the game space and experience life under the dual structure of real space and media space.

Update and Rebuild: A New Order of Game Socialization

Another The evolution of mediatization not only includes the meta-process of media change and change, but also involves the micro process of media influencing people's behavior and social relations. As a simulation management game, "There Are Families in the Depths of Taoyuan" not only simulates the economic operation of the real world,

but also simulates the mode of human interaction. After entering the game space, users will update and rebuild their social relationships according to the needs of the game.

In the game, on the one hand, players will migrate their offline friends to the game." player interaction can realize the accumulation of resources, and "migrate" real-life friends to the game space, which can not only increase social capital, but also obtain production resources through mutual assistance between friends. On the other hand, under the logical framework of the game, the interaction between strange players simulates the widespread interaction in real life, and the "weak relationship" is also "migrated" to the game, realizing the simulation and management of social interaction in the virtual space. In the study, although the social model of media space still reflects the characteristics of "weak connection" of social media, users are also actively establishing a new social order that meets the needs of games. "I will interact with other players, such as giving flowers, giving flowers to others, and teaming up with others to play mini-games such as radish cards." (S12) At the same time, players will join the "Help Group" and share the items they need in the group chat, and other players will spontaneously go to help, so as to achieve efficient social interaction between players.

"Voluntary" Labor: Building Your Own Home

Marx believed that labor will become the embodiment of laborer's subjectivity and free will, but is the "playing work" in the whirlpool of mediation still having free subjectivity, and is its labor the embodiment of free will?

Han Byung-chul called today's society a "merit society", where people are freed from the walls of "discipline" and are increasingly self-controlled. In the game space, "involution" also exists. "I feel like I'm still in the liver stage, I can't get free, I have to participate in all activities conscientiously, I have to play for two hours a day when I travel, and I have to be like a digital worker. (S8) The game is based on the theme of "building your own home", constantly shaping the player's recognition of the game space and creating "labor consent". The labor of the game space can bring more instant gratification to the player, and a simple step can be rewarded. It is worth mentioning that the players in the game voluntarily participate in labor and aim for entertainment. In the process of the game, "labor" and time become the "weight" of the player in exchange for "entertainment", when the player thinks that the more happiness he gets, the longer the game time will be. "I feel satisfied and relaxed in the process of playing, I used to play a lot of games, but after graduation, I gradually have less time for work and entertainment, and I don't have so much energy to play games, so I can relax in Taoyuan." (S4) The mediated space created by simulation management games opens up part of the rights to gamers, and players continue to accumulate resources with their own labor to build their "home" better.

5 Conclusion

From offline living space to online living space, the game survival of young players is a rebellion in the process of continuous squeezing of real space. In this sense, "media" is a means for young players to explore the unknown space and seek a slow-paced life.

Although the mediated survival of game youth has led to the alienation of "leisure", we cannot ignore the subjective initiative of players in the process of playing and the healing nature brought by games as a medium of entertainment. The technical design of the game platform bridges the meaning of the player's dissolution in the "dotted modernization" so that the player can obtain "leisure" in the virtual space of "slow life". The game platform allows players to enter the game through friend recommendation and platform attraction, which is the premise for players to get the game experience. The rural scenes and de-modern life created by the platform allow players to get a "healing" experience, and players symbolize themselves in the visual, auditory, and story-based narratives, becoming participants and constructors of many symbols of the game platform.

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