

Emotional Flow in Hybrid ACG Culture: A computational grounded study on Japanese players of Genshin Impact

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Keywords

Cultural hybridity; Affect; Emotion; ACG culture; Genshin Impact; Sentiment analysis

INTRODUCTION

ACG culture¹ naturally exhibits cultural hybridity. Since its introduction to China from Japan, it has varied through integration with Chinese culture. One of the most notable differences is the shift in context from "Otaku" to "Erciyuan" (Chinese equivalent of Nijigen). Among it, game elements as cultural representation constructs and enhance the audience's digital imagination of the relevant culture, as most players lack direct real-life contact with different cultures. The power of digital imagination lies not only in its cultural importance in expressing anxiety and doubt but also in its benefit from the inclusiveness of the Internet (Nardi & Kow, 2010). Such as Genshin Impact, a phenomenal game integrating Chinese and Japanese cultures, has sparked emotional reactions concerning the hybrid ACG culture among players (otakus) from both countries.

Faced with the cultural representation of global-publishing game (distributed imagination, Giddings, 2017), players discuss and share their views on relevant cultural elements in communities and forums, integrating them into the cultural expression and expectations shared by ACG enthusiasts (Grimes, 2015). Therefore, exploring whether the virtual representation of cultural hybridity aligns with gamers' digital imagination is a powerful response to the empirical needs of cultural hybridity research. To explain the cross-cultural communication characteristics of ACG culture and the way Japanese players interact with it, this paper selects Japanese players of Genshin Impact as research objects, analyzing their emotional flow towards the hybrid elements of ACG culture (Liyue and Inazuma, respectively represent Chinese and Japanese cultures) in the Chinese game using a computational grounded approach.

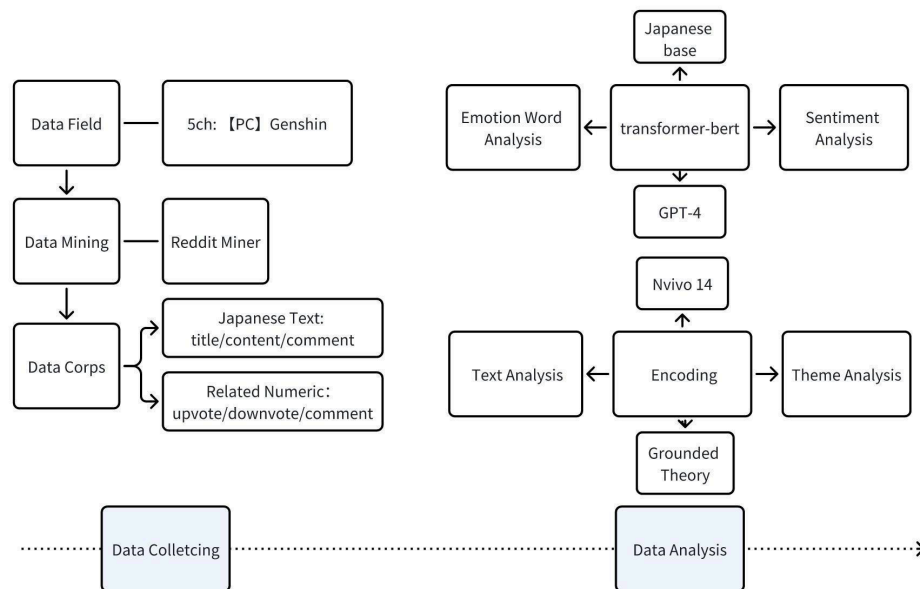
Spinoza posited that thinking perceives the body's interaction with the external world through the flow of emotions, describing changes in the "power of acting" with the term "affectus" (Spinoza, 1677; 1927). He suggested that a person's emotions often

Proceedings of CDiGRA 2024

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dynamically switch between the two most common emotion: joy and sadness (Wang, 2017). In cultural studies, Massumi extended the concept to criticize the differences between image content and effects, arguing that the intensity and duration of a content's impact on the audience can be expressed through emotional flow (Massumi, 1995; 2002). Affect is considered a hidden psychological flow that cannot be directly perceived by human consciousness. However, affect in different communication events can be represented by focusing on corresponding "contours", such as a pause or a change of tone during conversation or computational analysis of texts that imply emotional flow.

As mentioned above, the theory of affect provide a solid theoretical basis for empirical research on emotional flow in cultural hybridity, it helps analyze the attitudes of players towards the integration of digital game through the presentation of emotional flow of gamers. Additionally, with the cultural analysis of the game elements, this research will further explain the triggers of their related affective flow. Utilizing a computational grouded approach, sentiment analysis and emotion word analysis of posts from Japanese online forum(5ch), is conducted, qualitative analysis supplemented.



Overall, the integration of diverse cultural elements and ACG aesthetics into character design significantly enhances the affective engagement of players(Liyue & Inazuma), due to its integration of familiar aesthetic elements (ACG culture). And the cultural inclusiveness(Inazuma) fosters a sense of familiarity and emotional attachment, allowing players to feel a personal connection to the characters. The gameplay mechanics of Genshin Impact, particularly its probability-driven systems like the gacha mechanism and character progression, create a dynamic affective experience for players. The high and low chance associated with the gacha pulls and equipment upgrades drive an affective economy where players' affective investments are pivotal. These mechanics encourage repetitive gameplay behaviors and foster a strong community interaction as players share their experiences, both joyous and frustrating.

Game References

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BIO

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The authors declare no conflict of interest. This study utilizes publicly available data from the Japanese online forum 5channel (5ch). To uphold ethical standards, all data were anonymized during processing; usernames and identifiers were permanently removed, and any direct quotations have been de-contextualized to prevent traceability to individual users. The research involved no interaction with users and presents minimal risk, as it constitutes an observational analysis of existing public discourse. The anonymized dataset is stored securely and will be used solely for the purposes of this academic research.

Endnotes

1 Encompassing animation, comics, and games, is a subculture shared by Chinese and Japanese youth.

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