

The Influence Mechanism of Emotional Value of New Media Healing Content on Users' Psychological Attachment and Rewatching Behavior

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ABSTRACT

In an environment marked by information overload and accelerating social rhythms, young people frequently experience emotional pressure, loneliness, and mental fatigue. Healing content-such as slow-life vlogs, nature scenery videos, and gentle graphic narratives-has become an important medium for emotional regulation. Existing studies have studied the cultural characteristics and psychological functions of therapeutic content, but there is little evidence that emotional value establishes emotional connection with users and urges them to watch it over and over again. Based on the media attachment theory, this study regards the emotional value of treatment content as three things: companionship, relaxation and comfort. We established a mediation model with psychological attachment as the main factor. We collected the questionnaire data of 426 people aged between 18 and 35, and analyzed them by reliability and validity test, correlation analysis, regression analysis and mediation guidance methods. The results show that emotional value and its three parts are helpful to establish psychological attachment among users. Psychological attachment acts as a complete connection between emotional value and re-viewing. In other words, emotional value does not directly lead to watching again, but it helps to watch again and again by strengthening psychological attachment. These findings well explain the different parts of emotional value and reveal the whole path between emotion and repetitive behavior. This provides a clear theoretical framework for studying the emotional communication and behavior of media users.

Keywords: Healing Content; Emotional Value; Psychological Attachment; Rewatching Behavior; Media Attachment.

1. INTRODUCTION

The rapid popularization of mobile internet and the continuous iteration of new media platforms have reshaped the media landscape and daily life practices of young people. Lightweight content forms, including short videos, vlogs, graphic notes, and lifestyle documentaries, have penetrated every corner of daily life, providing convenient access to information and emotional satisfaction. In contemporary society, young people aged 18 to 35 are facing multiple pressures from academic performance, career development, interpersonal communication, and future uncertainty. The accelerated social rhythm, information overload, and increasingly superficial interpersonal interaction have gradually led to widespread emotional problems such as anxiety, mental exhaustion, loneliness, and emotional fatigue. To relieve inner pressure and obtain psychological comfort, more young users have begun to take the initiative to seek and consume healing content. Different from entertainment-oriented, utilitarian, or highly stimulating content, healing content focuses on emotional soothing and psychological comfort. It creates a peaceful and warm "spiritual shelter" for users through soft and comfortable visual elements, gentle and relaxing audio design, slow and stable narrative rhythm, and positive and gentle value expression. In recent years, healing content has shown a high growth trend on mainstream platforms such as Douyin, Xiaohongshu, and Bilibili, with a large number of followers, high interaction frequency, and significant repeated viewing behavior, which has become an important part of youth media consumption and emotional life.

Against this background, scholars at home and abroad have carried out multi-dimensional discussions on healing content from the perspectives of cultural studies, psychology, and communication. From the perspective of cultural studies, healing culture is regarded as a response to modern social alienation and pressure, representing the self-care consciousness and emotional adjustment needs of young people^[1,3-4]. From the perspective of psychology, existing studies have verified that healing content can effectively reduce individual negative emotions, improve positive emotional experience, and help stabilize mental state^[6,9-10]. From the perspective of communication, researchers have studied production logic, symbolic

expression, platform recommendation mechanism and motivation of healthy content users^[8,11]. However, although there are many achievements in the existing research, there are still three problems. First of all, the definition of emotional value is not clear. Many studies think that it is just a concept, and there is no clear size and standard measurement tool, so it is difficult to describe the emotions that health content gives us well. Secondly, people don't know much about how the psychological attachment of users is formed. Few studies use the average attachment theory to explain how users establish a stable connection with healthy content^[2,5]. Third, there is insufficient data about how emotions lead to behavior. Few studies have shown how emotional value leads users to watch content many times through psychological attachment^[12-14]. Therefore, our research wants to see whether the three dimensions of emotional value will affect the behavior of watching again through psychological attachment.

In order to fill the above research gaps, this study focuses on the therapeutic content of new media, focusing on the main variables of emotional value, and makes an in-depth investigation on its influence mechanism on users' psychological attachment and repeated viewing behavior. The specific objectives of this study include four aspects: first, to clarify the structural dimension of emotional value of healing content and form a stable and effective measurement system; Secondly, test the influence of emotional value and its three dimensions on users' psychological attachment; Third, examine the mediating role of psychological attachment between emotional value and repeated viewing behavior; Fourthly, build a comprehensive influence mechanism model to broaden the theoretical perspective of emotional communication. Through quantitative empirical research, this study aims to reveal the internal logic of therapeutic content consumption and provide a solid empirical basis for understanding teenagers' media behavior and emotional needs.

2. THEORETICAL FOUNDATION AND CORE CONCEPTS

2.1 Media Attachment Theory

Media attachment theory originates from the integration of classical attachment theory and media use research. Traditional attachment theory mainly focuses on the emotional bond between individuals in real life, while media attachment theory extends this perspective to the field of human-media relationship^[2,5]. The core view of media attachment theory is that users will not only produce instrumental dependence on media devices, functions and information, but also form stable and long-lasting emotional bonds with specific media content, creators, columns and virtual communities. This emotional bond is mainly reflected in three aspects: emotional dependence, sense of belonging and continuous attention willingness. Emotional dependence means that users take media content as an important source of emotional sustenance and relief; sense of belonging means that users obtain identity recognition and group resonance in the process of contact; continuous attention willingness means that users are willing to invest time and energy to maintain contact for a long time. Media attachment is an important internal driving force for users to maintain long-term use behavior, which is highly consistent with the repeated viewing and long-term consumption characteristics of healing content^[11,14].

In the reception context of healing content, the three dimensions of emotional value interact with media attachment. Companionship can effectively alleviate loneliness and gradually transform into emotional dependence; relaxation experiences create a safe psychological space for users, fostering a sense of belonging; and consolation continuously reinforces users' emotional investment in the content. These three facets of emotional value do not operate in isolation but together weave a deeper psychological attachment between users and content, accumulating stable inner drive for repeated viewing. The stronger the user's perception of companionship, relaxation and consolation brought by healing content, the deeper the psychological attachment to the content, and the more inclined they are to watch it repeatedly.

2.2 Core Concepts

Emotional value refers to the psychological comfort, emotional satisfaction, and mood regulation provided by healing content through audiovisual symbols, narrative structure, and value transmission. It is the core utility that distinguishes healing content from other types of content^[6,8]. This study divides emotional value into three dimensions: companionship, relaxation, and consolation. Companionship reflects the reduction of loneliness through virtual presence and emotional connection; relaxation refers to the physical and mental ease, reduced anxiety, and stress relief users obtain; consolation means that users dispel negative emotions through emotional guidance and psychological soothing found in the content.

Psychological attachment is how users are emotionally connected with what they care about. This is not a temporary thing, but a profound and stable bond^[5,11]. Users with strong psychological attachment put these therapeutic contents into their emotional life and hope to keep in touch with them for a long time.

The re-viewing behavior means that the user can review the treatment content many times by himself. This shows how loyal they are. We can see from how much they see, how much they want to see again, and the places they choose to see [13-14]. Users who want to pay attention often recognize and need the emotional value brought by the content. This is very important to understand the vitality and function of the content. Therefore, emotional value is the utility they see in the content, while psychological attachment is a more stable relationship between users and content.

3. RESEARCH HYPOTHESES AND METHOD

3.1 Research Hypotheses

Based on the above theoretical analysis and logical deduction, this study puts forward the following research hypotheses:

H1: The emotional value of healing content has a significant positive effect on users' psychological attachment.

H1a: The companionship dimension significantly and positively affects psychological attachment.

H1b: The relaxation dimension significantly and positively affects psychological attachment.

H1c: The consolation dimension significantly and positively affects psychological attachment.

H2: Psychological attachment plays a significant mediating role between emotional value and rewatching behavior.

H2a: Psychological attachment plays a significant mediating role between the companionship dimension and rewatching behavior.

H2b: Psychological attachment plays a significant mediating role between the relaxation dimension and rewatching behavior.

H2c: Psychological attachment plays a significant mediating role between the consolation dimension and rewatching behavior.

3.2 Participants and Data Collection

Participants were individuals aged 18-35 who had frequently watched healing short videos, slow-life vlogs, or warm graphic content in the preceding three months. This age group is the main group facing academic, employment and life pressure, and is also the core audience of healing content, which is representative and typical [1,3]. The study adopted an online questionnaire survey method, distributed questionnaires through professional questionnaire platforms and social media channels, and strictly screened samples according to viewing frequency and usage experience. A total of 480 questionnaires were collected, and 426 valid samples were obtained after eliminating invalid questionnaires such as missing answers and regular answers, with an effective recovery rate of 88.75%. The sample structure is balanced in gender, age, education level, monthly living expenses and main use platforms, which meets the requirements of quantitative empirical analysis.

3.3 Measures

All variables were measured using well-established scales adapted to the research context, employing a 5-point Likert scale (1=strongly disagree, 5=strongly agree). The emotional value scale consisted of 12 items covering companionship, relaxation, and consolation. The psychological attachment scale contained 6 items measuring emotional dependence, sense of belonging, and sustained attention. The rewatching behavior scale included 4 items addressing frequency, intention, and habit. All scales demonstrated acceptable reliability and validity in previous studies, and could accurately measure corresponding variables [11,14].

3.4 Data Analysis

Data processing and hypothesis testing were conducted using SPSS 26.0 and AMOS 24.0. The analytical procedures included descriptive statistics, scale reliability and validity tests, Pearson correlation analysis, regression analysis, and bootstrap mediation testing with 5,000 resamples. Descriptive statistics were used to clarify the basic characteristics of the sample; reliability and validity tests were used to verify the stability and effectiveness of the scale; correlation analysis was used to preliminarily judge the relationship between variables; regression analysis was used to test the main effect of emotional value on psychological attachment; bootstrap mediation test was used to confirm the mediating role of psychological attachment in the whole model [12-14].

4. RESULTS

4.1 Reliability and Validity

Cronbach's alpha coefficients for emotional value, psychological attachment, and rewatching behavior were 0.901, 0.865, and 0.842, respectively, all exceeding 0.80, indicating good internal consistency. Composite reliability values were all above 0.80, further confirming the good reliability of the measurement tool. The KMO value was 0.903, and Bartlett's test of sphericity was significant ($p < 0.001$), indicating that the data were suitable for factor analysis. The average variance extracted (AVE) for each latent variable exceeded 0.50, suggesting acceptable convergent validity. The square root of the AVE for each variable was greater than its correlation coefficients with other variables, indicating satisfactory discriminant validity. Overall, the measurement model of this study was scientific and effective, and could support subsequent hypothesis testing^[11,14].

4.2 Correlation Analysis

Correlation analysis showed that the total score of emotional value and its three dimensions-companionship, relaxation, and consolation-were all significantly and positively correlated with psychological attachment ($p < 0.001$). Psychological attachment was also significantly and positively correlated with rewatching behavior ($p < 0.001$). The correlation coefficients concentrated between 0.50 and 0.70, showing a moderate to high correlation, which provided a solid basis for the subsequent main effect and mediation effect tests. The significant correlation between variables indicated that there was a close internal connection between emotional value, psychological attachment and repeated viewing behavior, which laid a foundation for further exploring the influence mechanism^[8,13].

4.3 Main Effects

Regression analysis indicated that emotional value had a significant positive predictive effect on psychological attachment ($\beta = 0.668$, $p < 0.001$), supporting H1. Companionship ($\beta = 0.512$, $p < 0.001$), relaxation ($\beta = 0.586$, $p < 0.001$), and consolation ($\beta = 0.543$, $p < 0.001$) all significantly and positively predicted psychological attachment. Thus, H1a, H1b, and H1c were all supported. The results showed that the three dimensions of emotional value played an important role in promoting the formation of users' psychological attachment. The stronger the user's perception of companionship, relaxation and consolation brought by healing content, the deeper the psychological attachment to healing content^[6-8].

4.4 Mediation Effect

Bootstrap mediation analysis revealed that when psychological attachment was introduced into the model, the direct effect of emotional value on rewatching behavior became non-significant ($p > 0.05$), whereas the indirect effect was significant ($\beta = 0.425$, $p < 0.001$), with a 95% confidence interval excluding zero. This indicates that psychological attachment plays a full mediating role, supporting H2. Further dimension-level bootstrap tests showed that the indirect paths from companionship, relaxation, and consolation to rewatching behavior through psychological attachment were all significant, thereby supporting H2a, H2b, and H2c. That is to say, emotional value cannot directly affect users' repeated viewing behavior, but must be transformed into actual viewing behavior through the complete mediating path of psychological attachment^[5,11,14].

5. CONCLUSION

This study takes media attachment theory as the core basis, and systematically explores the influence mechanism of emotional value of new media healing content on users' psychological attachment and repeated viewing behavior through standardized quantitative empirical research. The results demonstrate that emotional value can be reliably measured through three stable dimensions: companionship, relaxation, and consolation. All three dimensions significantly promote the formation of users' psychological attachment. Meanwhile, psychological attachment plays a full mediating role in the relationship between emotional value and repeated viewing behavior. Emotional value does not directly affect the behavior of repeated viewing, but indirectly drives the user's intention and action of continuous viewing by strengthening psychological attachment. This study clarifies the structural dimensions of emotional value and behavior transformation path in consumer comfort content. The results show the complete internal mechanism of "emotional value $\rightarrow$ psychological attachment $\rightarrow$ repeated viewing behavior", and expand the empirical framework of emotional communication and media user behavior research. The research results not only enrich the theoretical system of media attachment and emotional communication, but also provide reliable empirical evidence for understanding the law of media consumption and emotional needs of teenagers^[1-14].

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