

'Borderless Mockery and Satire in "South Park"'

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Abstract

South Park is a famous American animation created in the 20th century. As a satire animation that has been broadcast in more than 20 countries around the world, South Park has gained a large number of loyal fans. However, while being welcomed by the teenager and adult audience, South Park has also been opposed by a large number of parents because of its violent and bloody scenes and. Moreover, the animation South Park has also been opposed by many politicians due to its relentless ridicule toward political events. This essay will be based on the social background of the animation South Park to analyze why this animation can be so popular and discuss the particularity.

Keywords

South Park; American animation; Adult; Children; Bloody scene; Satire.

1. Introduction

South Park, an American adult animation produced by Comedy Central since 1997 and broadcasted in more than 20 countries, created a unique distorted aesthetic style and an endless satirizing dialogue form (Ma, 2014). Its satirical plot arrangement, 'borderless mockery' style, and the exceedingly ironic scenes, made it widely supported by many young radicals and become one of the most famous adult animation in US and in the world. This essay will introduce the background of South Park and analyze why this animation can be loved by young generations. The social impact and the unique style of South Park will also be discussed. And finally, this essay will conclude the contributions made by South Park and discuss the future development of the animation industry. South Park is unique. Firstly, as an adult animation, South Park is extremely unsuitable for children, which made it different from the other satirical animation in the same period of time, such as The Simpsons. In South Park, there are too many violent and bloody scenes, which arouses parent's enormous opposition (Stabile, 2003). Secondly, as a black humor animation, South Park puts great efforts on making mockery of the harmful social practices and atmosphere, and the producers added various elements to satire all kinds of bad social phenomena. To create an epitome of complicated social problem in America and the other countries, the producers skillfully converted the real social problems into a 'seemingly' naive animation (Ma, 2014). But South Park has never targeted any country when satirizing its social problems. This sincere but 'annoying' practice can be seen as a 'borderless mockery' toward all of the bad social problems.

2. Social Background of South Park

The creation of this unique long-life 20-year-old animation deeply rooted in its cultural background, the United States in the 20th century. As Benjamin (2009) stated, it is obvious that the 1990s was a period of rapid cultural boom in the US society. During this era, America cultural industry vigorously grew, and a large amount of film and television works were poured into the theatrical market. Accompanied by the rapidly growing film making technology, the film and television industries greatly enjoyed the unprecedented development opportunities.

However, with the collision of various advanced thoughts in 1990s, more and more younger generations have gradually become dissatisfied with the old plot of the former program, and then tried to seek a breakthrough in the production of animation industry. Moreover, America, as a multi-ethnic country, has also provided an open and inclusive social atmosphere for art creation (Christopher, 2002). Therefore, many intelligent young film and television producers started to add creative elements into their works to vent their dissatisfaction toward the social problem, and this kind of creation work has also won the appreciate of younger generations. No matter in which country, there are always a group of young radicals in favor of violence and bloody scenes, and the South Park has made a good use of it.

As an animation, South Park's producers has never avoided to add the violence, pornography and sharp satire scenes into the animation. However, it is the sharp satirical scenes of social problems in the South Park that arouse the resonance of young people, and to some extent, the satire, violence and bloody scenes in South Park are largely fit with these young radicals in the spirit, and that's why this animation is so popular with them. On one hand, South Park relies on its innovative plot arrangement and creative form to win the appreciate from the audience and the other animation manufacturers. On the other hand, South Park was also rated as a TV-MA (adults only) program by the American television rating system because of its violence and bloody scenes (Penny, 2013). However, none of these can prevent South Park from becoming a popular animation for younger generations, and to some extent South Park has also create a new animation style for the American animation industry.

3. The Particularities of South Park

As discussed earlier, South Park is most popular with young people is because what this animation expressed is the most of young radicals in favor. However, compared to animation work of the same period, South Park has its own advantage. Another famous animation, 'The Simpsons' is also considered a very successful animation around the 1990s (Kelly, 2008), but The Simpsons have rarely got an extremely enthusiastic response. Compared to The Simpsons, there's no choice but to say that no matter in the animation art craft or in the broadcast time arrangement, The Simpsons are much superior to South Park. By focusing on the content of these two animations in more detail, it can be easily found that The Simpsons is more focused on depicting the daily lives of ordinary American families (Colin, 2010). Therefore, the audience from the other countries could be unfamiliar with the traditional American family lifestyle shown in the episodes, and that's easy to understand why this animation is more popular in America. However, by contrast to The Simpsons, the animation South Park has added more elements about all kinds of social problems around the world, such as the conflict of religious belief, the controversy about homosexuality, the criticism of the U.S. - Iraq war, and the immigration problems. Thus, it can be seen that the issues discussed in South Park are always the general interests around the world, and that can explain why South Park can always win the audience's love no matter in which country. Furthermore, as Travis (2018) stated, what distinguishes South Park from the other black humor animation is the producer's attitude toward political issues. South Park is famous for its undifferentiated satire on the social problem, and the undifferentiated here is intended to hold a consistent attitude towards any country without intentional devaluation. At the same time, the undifferentiated irony scenes in South Park have also aroused oppose by many countries. In some episodes, South Park expressed its positive attitude toward the legalization of same-sex marriage and marriage equality. However, in many Muslim countries, the concept of open marriage will absolutely not be accepted. Moreover, South Park's insidious criticism and satire of many authoritarian countries have also led to it being banned in these countries. In short, the unabashed ridicule

and satire scenes in South Park have made it suffer much criticism, but the producer's frank attitude has made this animation better cater to the taste of the public.

Although South Park has been resisted by many countries because of its boundless and infuriating ridicule, this animation is still popular among young people, and its comic effects have also won the appreciation of many animation manufacturers. In addition to that, South Park has also made many innovations during the process of broadcasting around the world. South Park has been broadcast in more than 20 countries and regions around the world, in order to make the animation better fit in the cultural background of the broadcast regions, the producers have made many efforts (Chester, 2012). For example, the Taiwan version of the South Park has added many local elements into the plots, the animation background has changed into Taiwan, and Taiwanese is also used in the dubbing. Moreover, South Park has also transcribed to its script, which can make it better adapted to the other countries' cultural backgrounds. There's needless to say, South Park's efforts are not in vain, in 2007, Time magazine has put this animation on the list of "100 best TV shows" and praised it as the sharpest satire in the 'United States in the past decades' (Ma, 2014). Besides, the outstanding influence of South Park has also caused an enthusiastic response in the animation industry, many animation producers began to imitate the form of South Park, likewise shorten the episode time and inject current affairs into the animation plot.

Although the animation South Park is controversial all the time, and many principles contained in its episode are still worth pondering. For example, South Park has criticized the attitude of Islamic countries towards women more than once, and this has also aroused the social repercussions of many countries. Although such a social problem has not been well solved up to now, the practice of South Park is still worthy of people's respect. Furthermore, although South Park is famous for its borderless mockery all the time, it also has many warm and tolerant moments (Ian, 2005). In the episode 'Big Gay Al's Big Gay Animal Sanctuary', South Park tries to bring the perspective of children and pets to help people understand and accept homosexual groups, and this gentle approach has won the support and appreciation by the America Comedy Central. What's more, this episode is also being used in teaching younger students to realize and learn to accept homosexual groups. Generally, the controversial animation South Park has both received audience's praise and resistance, however, it's hard to admit this is not a successful animation because its social influence and theme depth are far greater than the majority of animations in the same period.

South Park has stood out from many animations in the same period with its unique style, what's more, its funny plot arrangement has also made it gained many loyal audiences. Objectively speaking, South Park's unique contribution to the animation industry is it dares to directly satire all kinds of social problems, no matter it helps its ratings or not. What's more, South Park can bring the audience into its plot from the perspective of children, which enables adults to reconsider the social problem and break their stereotypes. The innovative practice of South Park is unprecedented in the history of animation, and the success of South Park is largely coming from its unique production form, such as its compact production and output style, as well as the timely plot arrangement. Moreover, talking about the development of the animation industry, with the improvement of animation technology and the popularity of the Internet, it is not difficult for people to watch their favorite animation at any time and anywhere. In addition, all kinds of new media platforms on the Internet have also created many good opportunities for animation communication.

4. Conclusion

As Chester (2012) stated, the animation industry's development is still mainly dependent on the market demand. Therefore, in the fierce competition animation market, each animation

distributor needs to make their works stand out. More importantly, a high-quality animation can not only see the quality of the animation itself, whether it can make the audience accept and like is also another key issue. Generally speaking, the global animation industry has great development potential, besides, with the promotion of globalization and the popularity of the Internet, the animation industry will have a greater development market in the future. This essay mainly introduces the creative background of the animation South Park and its unique style, what's more, this essay also mentioned the public's views on South Park and the impact of this animation. In the end, as the writer of this essay, hopefully, the animation industry will get huger development space in now and future.

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