The Generation Mechanism of Virtual Love

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Abstract

Virtual love has developed rapidly in recent years. From its appearance in August 2014 to November 25, the keyword search volume of "virtual lovers" rose to 24,688 times. At the peak of Taobao.com, 4,474 stores sold this service at the same time, and more than 60% of the "virtual boyfriends" for female customers were. And this year, searching for related terms such as "tree hole" on Taobao WeChat official account will find some virtual love merchants that have even begun to take shape. After decades of development, virtual love is no longer just a novel word or concept, but a business model that uses emotion as a commodity. So what exactly is virtual love? With the development of virtual love, the question of why virtual love arises and how does it persist. At present, the research on virtual love in academia is in the initial stage of exploration, and the research content is mainly carried out around the current situation of virtual love, industry issues, young people's love concept and other related aspects. The research on virtual love is often related to emotional economy or Emotional labor is discussed as a general category, or the results are reversed without going deep into its core mechanism. The generation mechanism and surviving power of virtual love and the unique nature of emotion as a business model of physical absence are often ignored. This paper will start from the characteristics and attributes of the physical absence of virtual love, and discuss the generation mechanism and survival mechanism of virtual love, so as to further understand the nature and possible development of virtual love.

Keywords

Virtual love physical absence emotional economy emotional symbol.

1. Introduction and Literature Review

In fact, virtual love is an emotional commodity that is physically absent and different from other emotional economies. Compared with online dating, soul and other emotional models, it has a commercial nature; compared with star chasing, offline maid shop and other models, it has the characteristics of physical absence; compared with virtual business forms such as female-oriented mobile games such as love and producers, the body is absent The three-in-one model, virtual love is the communication between real people. Therefore, virtual love is fundamentally different from any emotional economic model. How should the physical absence of virtual love be defined? We will discuss further below.

1.1. The Role of the Body in Emotional Relationships

"Virtual love" has the word "love", but it lacks the most basic condition for the existence of a relationship - the body. The body is generally considered to be indispensable in traditional love relationships, and the body is the cornerstone of all life activities, including love, of course. The ancient Greek Plato's idea that the soul dominates the body is expressed as "reason controls people's thinking activities, passion controls rational emotions, desire dominates the body's tendency to seek pleasure and avoid suffering"; Nietzsche's "body is life and will to power" the view that "the soul is nothing but a word for something in the body". "The reason in your body

is richer than the reason in your highest intelligence". All of this means that from the early days of philosophy, the body played a dominant role in emotional relationships.

But with the development of the Internet, the body is no longer indispensable in a romantic relationship. The most typical is the proliferation of online dating, as well as the type of physical absence love that will be discussed in this article. There is a lack of face-to-face communication between lovers, as McLuhan pointed out in his masterpiece "Understanding the Media: The Extension of Man": All technology is an extension of the physical and nervous system to increase strength and speed. Technology, that is, the Internet can play a role in a relationship in place of the body. Although some senses such as touch are still limited, online dating, star chasing, female-to-mobile games, virtual love and other forms of physical absence-type love appear at least Part of the possibility of this view is demonstrated. So what exactly is body-absent-type love-like research?

1.2.   Research on Love-like Love in the Form of Physical Absence

The birth of network media provides a new space for human's social interaction activities, and produces a new type of social interaction mode, that is, virtual social interpersonal communication. Compared with the traditional form of love, the author divides the form of love according to whether the body exists and whether it is present, such as the traditional ordinary love; the body exists but not present, such as soul, online dating, Jiayuan and other real-name systems or embodiment. There are four types of pseudo-presence love; body does not exist but is present, such as women falling in love with paper people such as mobile games; body does not exist and is not present, such as virtual love, and there are four types of body-absent love. It is worth noting that the above-mentioned forms of love are all two-way, such as star chasing, but emotional contributions are not included in the discussion. The four types are classified with the body as the entry point, and naturally the body will also be used as the entry point to carry out research.

Ide, the American philosopher of technology, divides the body into three categories, namely, the body constructed by the physical body, the body constructed by technology, and the body constructed by culture. The physical existence of traditional love and the presence of love need not be repeated. Online dating, soul and other bodily pseudo-presence love is the existence of the body constructed by the physical body but absent, and the body constructed by the culture is present instead. In this form, the cultural body is virtually present, and the communicator needs to use the intermediary of "imagined, idealized, and constructed body" to realize the communication between the real body and the information, that is, some real-name information of the communicator is required. According to the real information provided by the other party, the contacts construct a cultural body similar to the party's physical body through voice and video. In this form of love, the lover is a purely emotional exchange. In the form of love represented by women's mobile games, where the body does not exist but is present, it is no longer pure emotional communication. Virtual love is the absence and presence of the body. There is no physical body and no technical body. There is only a cultural body. This cultural body is imagined by the virtual love buyer. It does not exist and will not be present, but this imagination must be To a certain extent, it reflects the real needs of their hearts. Mead's symbolic interaction theory has such a point of view that the "self" is regarded as an internalized identity consciousness gradually formed in the interaction with others. The "one" or "self" generally completes the performance of the "body" by constructing the "body" by the symbolic self, while the "other" or the "other" generally places more imagination on the "body", so as to achieve A step-by-step construction of the "body". Virtual and reality are intertwined, imagination and construction are intricately intertwined, and even a dynamic cycle of continuous strengthening is formed, so that emotions are nurtured, continuously heated, and the soul is deeply immersed in it.

Whether it is the virtual presence of the body or the virtual body, it requires a deep integration of technology and bodily experience, that is, the physical body and the social body as a guide. The virtual love to be studied in this article is a kind of love in which the body is completely absent. This is the embodiment of Mead's symbolic interaction theory in the actual situation. The virtual lover does not need to provide real information, and does not need to build a digital virtual technology body. All interactions are constructed by the contacts themselves.

2. Research Ideas

Virtual love is still relatively mysterious to the public. This article will explore the generation mechanism of virtual love from the relatively obvious feature of virtual love's physical absence, and explore its survival mechanism from its commercialized emotional relationship. Then combine the two to try to discuss the nature and possible development of virtual love&

3. The Generation of Virtual Love in the Past and Present of Virtual Love

3.1. Prerequisite: Possibility of Plato-like love

Platonic love, also known as spiritual love, is a kind of spiritual love between people named after the Western philosopher Plato. In layman's terms, it means the desire for pure emotional communication regardless of appearance, body, family background and responsibility. Such emotional forms are particularly attractive in this materialistic and stressful environment. The emergence of virtual love is closely related to this.

The birth process of virtual love is the formation process of platonic form. At first, virtual love appeared in the form of artificial alarm clocks, game play, and chat. However, with the deepening of its development, buyers are no longer satisfied with the relationship of just playing and chatting. Emotional dependence gradually emerges. The relationship between the two parties is similar to a couple, and the form is more and more Plato-like. The definition of the relationship only based on companionship is no longer accurate. People find that by paying a little money, they can freely vent their emotions, get the feeling of being loved and loved, come and go freely, and get emotional satisfaction with the least amount of time and energy. Businesses found business opportunities from this, and they found that many people in modern times long for this pure emotional exchange without additional responsibility. The virtual love came into being, and its form was gradually fixed in the commercial development.

Usually, the virtual love service is conducted by the virtual love service provider and the buyer through chat software such as WeChat, QQ, etc. to communicate in love with text and voice as the main media. The two sides are in different spaces, there is no possibility of any physical contact, and they don't even know the other's appearance, body, family background and other external conditions. They only desire pure emotional satisfaction and pursue spiritual communication. &&&&&& Therefore, virtual love is essentially a platonic role-building and playing. Buyers often beautify themselves through some details and emotional biases to gain praise and sympathy from service providers while narrating the facts. This low-cost way of shaping their self-image will make them obsessed. This is no longer virtual in the form of "Internet" as a carrier, but a virtual virtual with "content" as the main body. Where both parties are real people, one party appears as the other party's ideal symbol, forming an emotional relationship on the Internet. This has clearly deviated from the original intention of Plato's pure feelings of love, although the form is still there.

3.2. Realistic Conditions: The Possibility of A Digital Body Brought About By the Development of the Internet

The body is especially important in emotional relationships. However, the emergence of physical absent emotional relationships proves that with the development of interconnection,

this certainty is no longer infallible. The digital body (technical or cultural) can already replace the physical body to play most of the role in emotional relationships.

McLuhan once divided human communication activities into three stages: the period of oral communication, the period of written communication and the period of electronic communication. In the oral communication stage, it is obvious that people can only communicate face-to-face, and the body is obviously indispensable in emotional communication. At the stage of text dissemination, people have the realistic conditions for physical absence love, and people can communicate with two people in different spaces by means of flying pigeons and passing books, such as "Ling Chuan Chi Su reported a lover". Being able to communicate opens up the possibility of building a cultural body, and two people can build an emotional relationship. However, virtual love still lacks the conditions for establishment. Virtual love is not just an emotional exchange between two acquaintances, but selects a stranger through the Internet to establish a two-way emotional relationship, and it is possible to change the other party at any time. It is different from the randomness of the drifting bottle style and the specificity of the one-to-one style. Through the characteristics of the Internet, which is not limited by time and space, it can satisfy the choice of finding a needle in a virtual love haystack and bidirectional singleness. People have a digital body in the Internet. The virtual love is based on this point. After making a choice in the Internet of Nuoda, the buyer of virtual love establishes a virtual love relationship with one or several people. The smooth communication of the embodied digital body forms the cultural body.

Electronic media such as the Internet have brought tremendous changes to social life and the relationship between people. Just as Lippmann believes that the mimetic environment created by newspapers and other mass media [[]] will affect the people at a certain level, the wide application and development of the Internet, mobile communication, and smart devices have made the virtual world the most important part of human real social life. one of the important components. Such a virtual world allows people to abandon their bodies and form a world of thinking. In the future, with the development of technology, technology and media will not only change our living environment and way of life, but also the relationship between people, and even the definition of human beings may be changed. Virtual love is one of its experimental forms.

3.3. Key Factors: The Support of Emotional Economy and Emotional Labor

The Platonic form of love is a prerequisite for its production, and it caters to people's desire for pure love. The digital body is the real factor that it can produce. Without the Internet, there is no medium for virtual love. And its commodity attributes are obviously the key factor for it to take root in the market and flourish. Upper decision decided by the economic background. All relationships begin when people are willing to pay for it. This is the same as the krypton gold in female mobile games and the fan economy in star chasing, which are all manifestations of the prevalence of emotional economy.

Emotional economy refers to taking people's emotions as needs and satisfying certain emotional needs of people by purchasing consumption-related goods or services. In the past, when newspapers and other mass media dominated the mainstream, it was the era when Marx's so-called productive labor dominated society, but in this era when electronic media such as radio and television became the dominant social media, unproductive labor, To a certain extent, it can also be understood that Negri's immaterial labor began to dominate. Over the years, the rapid development of the Internet and media technology has provided technical support; the acceleration of urbanization has brought people's more independent lifestyles, more individualistic and diverse life concepts, more alienated and indifferent interpersonal relationships, and the lack of emotional level of urbanites. strong emotional needs; the diversified consumption forms and fragmented consumption patterns brought about by

economic development, as well as the flexible consumption that will inevitably appear in the increasingly fast-moving consumer goods upgrading, make immaterial consumer goods with emotional factors more and more The more economic value; and with the development of society, under the premise that people can meet basic needs such as physiological needs and safety needs, spiritual needs are gradually being paid attention to. All promote the surging development of the emotional economy. Once people have strong emotional needs and have nowhere to vent, once they have the economic foundation and technical conditions to vent, the market of emotional economy will be ignited immediately. Virtual love is a typical emotional economy, with love fantasy as the selling point, emotional communication as the content, and material transactions as the support. Riding on the east wind of the emotional economy, it leaps forward. And unlike the emotional economy on production lines such as female-to-mobile games, virtual love is a two-way communication between people, which cannot be mass-produced and cannot be replicated. This inevitably speaks to the term emotional labor, which is a double flower of the emotional economy. In "The Coming of Post-Industrial Society", Daniel Bell believes that the growth of the service industry means that "communication" and "daily contact" will become today's core working relationships. In a society where service is the main work, the importance of emotional labor is constantly highlighted. The main content of virtual love is communication and exchange, which coincides with the above point of view.

4. The Rooting of Virtual Love: The Survival of Virtual Love

4.1. Constant Demand: Under Normal Circumstances, There Are Four Main Types of Consumers in Virtual Love

Because of its Platonic-like form of love, virtual love meets the needs of some people, and the development of the Internet provides its technical support, and the principle of emotional economy provides the possibility of theoretical development. However, an economic form or even an industry is easy to create, but difficult to operate. Demand and supply can be said to be indispensable. So how does virtual love survive?

First of all, we have to talk about the needs first. As mentioned above, people have huge emotional needs for various practical reasons, and virtual love just caters to this. But these are more abstract, and only by going back to the virtual love itself can we discover the real reason for the existence of virtual love. It is the consumer who is closely related to demand. Through in-depth research on virtual love, in fact, we can divide virtual love consumers into four types according to their contact reasons, communication content, degree of dependence, and impact on reality. Based on the demand for virtual love, the four types are neonatal, avoidant, borderline and love-seeking.

The first type is the new type, which is also the type that is most dependent on virtual love. Their group portraits are generally unsatisfactory with their looks, insecure about themselves and rarely feel the emotions from around them, tend to be irritable or introverted, extremely lack of love and longing to be loved. They have an attitude away from breaking free from reality, longing for the realization of their self-worth online, to be understood, and to be loved. This type of consumer is a long-term and deep customer of virtual love, and is also the core user of virtual love.

The second type is the avoidant consumer. This type of consumption dominates in virtual love. Such consumers are generally faced with huge realistic pressures, such as work, school, mortgage and so on. Take the Hangzhou youths who appeared in the interviews as an example. Most of them are far away from their hometowns to work in other places, and they have the loneliness of foreigners. They do not have communication barriers in real life, and even they may be positive, cheerful and outgoing, but lack friends who can make friends. Therefore, when they encounter some troubles, or encounter some crisis-type pressures such as changes,

lovelorn, etc., they need strong social support, eager to talk and be understood, but in real life they lack the time and space for communication, virtual love The accompany mode provides these people with an opportunity to vent their emotions. Unfamiliar confidants often amplify their desire to confide and express their truest thoughts in their hearts.

The third type is borderline. This type of virtual love is generally just a taste of it. To be precise, they are marginal characters in virtual love. They choose to contact virtual love due to boredom, curiosity, early adopters and other reasons. There is no way to categorize pleasure-seeking audience portraits. People of various personalities, occupations, and regions have them. Also because of its marginality, its parentheses are also very large, and word of mouth can radiate to more people. They have a relatively strong defense against virtual love. After contact, most people think that virtual love has no real gain other than a moment of joy, and it is a waste of money. Most of these consumers usually give up after one or two chats. In the interviews, they generally thought: "It's so boring, what's the point of chatting with a stranger, it's a little embarrassing." And some people who think chatting is interesting will also give up, they think: "Although chatting with them It's very interesting and fun, but it's worth playing a few times if you have to pay. Love is precious, and money is more expensive. No one's money comes from the wind." Happy consumers choose to continue. But they also have an attitude of eating and drinking. For them, this is a three-minute hot pastime. Therefore, for virtual love, they come and go freely, and the experience of virtual love is like the wind in their lives, leaving no trace. However, although marginal consumers are not the core users of virtual love, they are an important part of opening their popularity and guiding new consumers to enter.

The fourth is the love-seeking type. This type of consumer type is, as its name suggests, looking for a relationship. Love-seeking consumers have obviously returned to the essence of virtual love, and they want to experience the beauty of love. However, some people can't find a satisfactory love partner due to their introverted personality or poor appearance and family background; some people want to get rid of the constraints of material conditions, do not want to take responsibility, and do not want to spend energy and time maintaining a relationship; The object is very demanding and wants to experience a fairy tale love. All these can be satisfied in virtual love. Both parties do not know any real information about the other party. All impressions come from one party's self-setting and the other party's self-conception. The communication between the two parties constitutes the image of the other party. This is the fact that information receivers tend to use an attribution attitude and unconsciously project the attributes of their ideal partner on the online communication object, and this "idealized" imagination will continue to strengthen itself and form a dynamic cycle, which is completely Ideal self and ideal object. Of course, in real virtual love, in order to attract customers and allow buyers to better choose service objects, virtual love stores generally ask the service provider to record a piece of audio, and the buyer chooses according to their preferences. However, the virtual thing about virtual love is that all the premises are virtual. The audio may be electronically synthesized, or the sound may be wrong, and the information in the chat may also be true or false. The service provider will also carry out some training, and move closer to the buyer's preferences through the observation of clues in the chat. So all images eventually collapse into virtual constructions, attributed to emoticons. Among such consumer types, the degree of dependence on virtual love is actually not deep. When most people choose to start a virtual relationship, they already have a firm psychological hint in their hearts: this is fake. Most of the love-seeking consumers are not short of love in reality, so it is difficult to fall into the pure love infatuation on the Internet. More often, this can only be one of their experiences.

4.2. Provide Professional: Industry Development of Virtual Love

It is not enough for virtual love to have a market. To survive, industrialization is the key. That is how virtual love makes money in a fixed way. The first is how merchants can make money

through virtual love, which is very simple. It does not require production and distribution. It is a secondary sale between merchants and buyers. Take a top-ranked tree hole on the WeChat public account platform as an example. If consumers want to buy virtual lover services, they need to recharge a token called petals or other similar tokens, which is a virtual token. After converting RMB into this virtual currency, go to the store to place an order to buy Serve. In this interface for purchasing services, there will be information about each person, that is, each server's avatar, age, personality, preferences, etc., and their service preferences will also be arranged according to the level. The server will be divided into four levels from low to high: ordinary, gold, town shop, male god, goddess, etc. At different levels, the service type of each server is divided into text-only chat services and voice calls service. Fees vary for different services. Taking an ordinary server as an example, chatting with him in text will cost 10 petals per hour, which is 10 yuan per hour when converted into RMB, and 30 petals when chatting with him by voice. Of course, it can also be purchased by day or by week, commonly known as package day or package week. Not only the different levels of different service providers will result in different prices, but also under the same level, different prices will be divided according to the length of service. There will also be regulations in the store that the service time per day is not less than five hours, that is, the performance standards are stipulated. In terms of the cost of purchasing basic services, if the purchaser, that is, the consumer himself, says he likes the service provider very much, or has some relationship with the service provider beyond the scope of ordinary services, such as further ambiguous relationships, the purchaser may Rewards will be given to the server. To sum up, the way to make money for virtual love merchants is from consumers' orders, which can be basically divided into two types: 1. Basic consumption: ordering and renewal; 2. Advanced consumption: reward.

Secondly, since the initial industry has been formed, it will inevitably be accompanied by the birth of rules. The service provider can accept rewards, but cannot accept private red envelope transfers, transfers, or private gifts, etc. These are considered violations. Once the service provider violates the rules, it may be cleared out of the industry, which is also a way for the platform to protect its own interests. At the same time, the platform will require service providers to achieve an important performance indicator, that is, the amount of renewed orders, because the amount of renewed orders is the long-term continuous income, and this ensures the stickiness of users. To sum up, all the above rules are formulated for the stability and sustainable development of the industry.

 Finally, there are practitioners. In the final analysis, for virtual love, practitioners are the root of attracting consumers to stay and spend money. Virtual lovers are essentially a profitable transaction for service providers. Therefore, as a service provider, the first thing to do is to ensure the quality of service. Of course, in order to ensure their own platform quality and platform revenue, merchants will also conduct a series of training and screening for service providers, such as interview screening and review, offline and online training, etc. We can also find that virtual romances are very work-intensive for providers-as-a-services and rarely involve personal emotions. They will have pre-job training, performance standards, and ranking. The renewal rate and the reward amount are the golden rule for them. In the interviews with some providers who have reached the level of gods and goddesses, it can also be found that they will consciously use some techniques such as telling their own tragic stories to gain sympathy, pointing out that they have performance requirements, and using each other's empathy to induce Inducing consumers to give rewards for their continued orders are also the unspoken rules of this industry and the normal state of their work.

5. Conclusion and Discussion

To sum up, we can find that whether it is the emergence or existence of virtual love, the root cause lies in emotional needs. In essence, it is a phased replacement of emotional relationships. However, due to complex external reasons, it is finally presented in the form of commodities, making such an emotional relationship more stable, more satisfying and even purer.

Emotional relationships go through a process from non-physical to physical, and virtual lovers are actively "de-physical" to replace the "non-physical" modules/stages, but this is not a purely human-to-human relationship. Inter-emotional interaction mode, virtual love is illusory and fruitless after all. Whether it is virtual in nature or the subjective consciousness of consumers, it stays in the virtual stage. However, there will eventually be possibilities between people. In the practice of virtual love, the release and request of feelings are not restricted, and it is easy to form an emotional relationship that is out of proportion. Especially the "de-incarnated" image and the logo that totally caters to one's own preferences. The virtual lover is completely catered to the buyer, and indulges the emotional requirements of the buyer even more. However, the consequence of this kind of emotional out-of-control is that it can no longer adapt to the rules and standards of reality, and it is easy to cause difficulty in integrating into emotional relationships, or fear and escape from real love. If you are too addicted or dependent, you will fall into another kind of nothingness.

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