



## Analysis of Categorization of Animation Script Writing's Target Audience

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### Abstract

In the current cultural market environment, animations take an increasing share in television audience and theatrical box office earnings year by year and commercialization and marketization of animations has become an inevitable trend in the development of animation industry. The influences of market factors play a more and more important role in script writing, and therefore, the market factors can't be ignored during the script writing. There should be definite object of target audience in animation script writing and the proper positioning of target audience is the first factor that should be identified in the creation of animation script. Categorizing animation audiences on the basis of their psychological and physical development, aesthetic ability and aesthetic expectations has great guiding significance for the animation script writing.

**Key words:** Animation script; Target audience; Categorization

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The rapid development of economy produces transverse multivariate generalized effects on the society and at the same time, calls the depth of modern consciousness field. During the present animation creation, market as the leading factor is increasingly clearly established. Unlike early animation creation, influences of market factors play a more and more important role in script writing, and therefore, the market factors can't be ignored during the period of script

writing. At present, animation script writing by no means is any writer's individual behavior irrespective of external circumstances. On the contrary, the influences of market factors on the animation creation require the writers to analyze the present situation of the market, follow the market rule, cater to the market demands, establish the creation concept and design the animation script in market-oriented environment at the stage of script writing. The core factor influencing the market is audience and hence how to consider the audience factor in animation script writing is of great significance for animation art perfection and animation industry development.

### 1. CURRENT SITUATION OF NO CATEGORIZATION OF ANIMATION SCRIPT WRITING'S TARGET AUDIENCE AND ANALYSIS OF THE EFFECTS

The development of Japan's animation industry, and creation in animated movies and innovation in animation technologies by some animation giants, such as the United States' Disney, Paramount Pictures and DreamWorks, have changed the old concept "animation is the art for children", broken the age limit of animation audience in the world, and greatly broadened the scope of animation audience groups. It is generally recognized by the academia that the thinking set that children is the fixed animation audience has been shaken and animation art has been a popular art form for adults. Therefore, the study into animation audience can't be restricted to children and teenagers, and the common aesthetic consciousness of animation audience should be explored with all human beings being the target.

As abundant products that can meet the needs of different people are a prerequisite to market prosperity, to prosper the animation industry, the animation script writers must conform to the basic economic law, meet the demands of market, and create different

types of animation works to adapt to the aesthetic needs of different groups of people (Xu, 103).

In the present animation market, most of animation scripts without defined target audience and proper positioning of them and even without considering the target audience as a factor in script writing are eliminated in elutriation and filtering of the market environment. Without clearly positioned target audience, such scripts have no accurate market positioning. As a result, the artistic value and market value of them are negatively prophesied at the early stage of creation in the audience-orientated market. "For animations, the positioning of artistic images depends on the study on audience's cultural psychology; the selection of promotion and propaganda depends on the accurate understanding of cultural consumption (Han, 2009)." Deviation from proper audience positioning will directly result in huge loss of animation attendance and even produce serious negative effects on the healthy growth of children. Thus, how to take a large share with the elutriation of market tide, how to have clear target audience positioning in the stage of animation script writing and how to always take it as the core guiding factor during the whole process of animation creation are very important.

In current animation script writing, the positioning of target object is single and the target audience's psychological and physiological development and rational analysis and classification of aesthetic habits, aesthetic taste, aesthetic ability and aesthetic expectation are not fully considered. Instead, the animation audience is simply positioned as children so that the animation script writing deviates and is limited in various aspects such as creation concept, story design, character design and detail expression for simple and blurred audience positioning at the initial stage of creation. Because of simple and blurred audience object, the animation themes are repeated mechanically in selection. The themes focus on repeated performance of legends and allusions, mechanical narration of inspirational stories and body fight without any implication, while ignoring the aesthetic purport and consumption demands for animation of broad audience outside of children. As a result, to a large extent, animation script writing is not in a position to pave the way for successful animation works, but causes the works to lose at the starting line, and reduces the potentially existing audience, thus failing to meet the broad masses of young children and adult's demands for animation.

## 2. CATEGORIZATION OF ANIMATION SCRIPT WRITING'S TARGET AUDIENCE

Animations can be categorized differently from different angles, "the typological animation refers to a relatively fixed aesthetic habit formed by a certain group of people within a certain period of time with the higher degree

of industrialization and commercialization of animation creation and production, which requires the animation script writers to segment market based on the needs of different groups of people and create animations according to the demands of specific group of people so as to meet the market demands and form a relatively stable categorization-based technique of expression with respect to the theme, story pattern and audio-visual techniques (Xu, p.103). The consumption demands for animation of different groups of audience and individual aesthetic experience are closely related to the individual living environment, life experience, knowledge structure and thinking ability. For the purpose of positioning animation audience, all-around thorough research and analysis should be conducted on the animation culture, cultural accomplishment and appreciating ability, foothold of aesthetic interest of target audience before script writing, because these factors constitute the various animation aesthetic experience of the animation audience. It is important to make specific arrangements of specific links in scrip writing after knowing well the basic information of target audience. There is a close relationship between typological animation and animation market. We often classify animation categories based on animation themes or topics. However, target audience groups can be regarded as a basis for classification of animation in the light of basic recognition of typological animation.

Due to the psychological and physiological development status, audiences of different ages have substantially different demands for animations. In the environment of market-oriented animation creation, the audience's consumption demands determine the initial positioning of animation script in early animation creation. With psychological and physiological development status and consumption demands for animation of target audience in animation script writing taking different groups as target object being classification standard, animation script writing with audience being the angle of categorization can be divided into the following three categories:

### 2.1 Animation Script Writing With Young Children Being Target Audience

Young children's animations play an important role in young children's growth and education, psychological development, character shaping and knowledge acquisition. However, at present, in the young children's animation market, audience positioning in most of children's animation is fuzzy, the animations suitable for children are not necessarily suitable for young children and there are very few excellent animations especially for young children's early education. The recent widely popular animated cartoon series "Boonie Bears" and "Pleasant Goat and Big Big Wolf" that are market-orientated in script writing indeed achieve great success in terms of TV ratings. But the setting of part plots and characters' language and performance of criticized violent

actions undoubtedly have a huge negative impact on young children.

According to the experience of education workers and research materials on psychology, we regard children aged 1 to 3 years as young children based on their psychological development. As for the 1-3 years old children's psychological education, the matters meriting attention and principles that need to be followed in animation script writing are entirely different from the writing requirements for psychological education of other age groups and of other types of movies and television scripts. Most script writing theories believe that for the script, the story is the key. "All good movies almost focus on the development of a specific event or activity, and it is the event that promotes the development of the story" (Sydney Field, 2012). But for young children's animation script writing, the events are secondary and then what is the most important? I think it is the function. Sydney Field believed that in screenwriting, dramatic needs of characters should be identified, that is a writer should first know what the story he or she is to write and what the characters in the story want to do. But for the young children's animation script writing, the plots are not the key and the animations lay more emphasis on actions of roles, novelty of models, tension of colors, context setting, etc., and intend to convey some factors of functional nature through them. Excellent young children's animations will play an important and irreplaceable role in the process of young children's growth, and serve as both torchbearer and little playmate. Therefore, in young children's animation script writing, the functional positioning of above factors also should be clearly understood.

The entertainment function of animations is beyond all doubt and animation itself is a part of children's entertainment activities. Young children's education is accomplished in the games and entertainment and the happiness given to children by animations is intuitive and simple, so animation scripts should be written in a manner to make any elements completely understood by children. The real world created by adults can't cater to the special thinking habits of young children. But the animations suitable for young children can create a amusement space that truly belong to them as these animations are created under the condition that the young children's physiological and psychological development level are scientifically understood and various factors are taken into account. In writing the scripts of animations for young children, relatively simple entertainment should be emphasized in character model design, action design and dialogue design, and the interesting cognition, games that can be easily stimulated and simple and straightforward humors should be contained so as to establish the special enjoyment relationship of interactive games between animations and young children. For example, the train in the *Thomas & Friends*, little Lebi, Youyou, strawberry,

fish tank, and train in domestic film television series *Lebi & Youyou* and *Teletubbies* produced by British BBC, featuring beautiful and colored models, exaggerated and interesting roles, amusing actions and dialogues that can be easily imitated, have great appeal to young children.

It is necessary to provide an effective way for young children to satisfy their desire for cognition of things and emotional communication and it is due to all characteristics of young children that satisfaction of emotional needs always means conveyance of the most important information by a good animation. Therefore, the emotional conveyance is the kinetic energy positioning that can't be ignored in young children's animation script writing. In modern society, as the young parents are faced with huge pressure from family life and social work, they have less and less time to have emotional communication with children, the way of communicating emotions shows a fast-food style and the education for young children tends towards a utilitarian preaching omitting the emotional communication. At the same time, the natural interest in animations of young children causes the young parents to place more space for emotional communication between children and animations. Owing to the restriction of realistic factors and psychological drive of young children, a "partner" relationship can be naturally and quickly established between the young children and animations. Young children in the growing period have no obvious value judgment and the enjoyment value of animations is more reflected in young children's awareness of emotions through character models, personality and body language, and maintenance and perfection of the children's inherent emotional awareness of truth, goodness and beauty in their early childhood. Therefore, animations serve as the tool and assume the responsibilities for helping young children pursue ideal life state. It is a kind of appropriate art form through which young children can contact with the ideal life.

The educational function as a basic function of animation art has very important social value. Cultivating young children using animations as medium is an important way which contains transfer of various kinds of knowledge good for young children's growth. Basic sensory cognition of things, imparting cultural knowledge and development of behavioral habits are the main content of the educational function of animations. Under the influences of present market factors, the successful animation scripts integrate the dull and monotonous didactic content into vivid and interesting animation performance. As a result, young children like to watch them and more willing to accept them. The function of animations is better than the blunt inculcation. For example, lively and interesting children's songs can be often adopted in the animations because they are simpler and can be understood more easily in terms of educational function, and can effectively capture the young children's interest and attention. However, at the

present time, children animations in our country mainly give priority to subjective didactic themes, so there exists a great deficiency in children's understanding of language, cognition of things and sensory control. "We are so excessively anxious to tell them how to do that there is not enough time to really observe what to say and what to do. Our behavior is done based on an assumption that children will be at a complete loss as to what to do without our teaching and instruction (Huang, 2008)." Preaching blindly will only make the script look dull and lack of visual expression. Consequently, the animations will not attract children's attention, and children can't really understand the connotation of the story; what's worse, children will lose the opportunities to cognize the most basic behavioral habits and things. Young children's intellectual or conceptual activities are mainly adjusted through sensory motion and representation, and the preschoolers can gradually learn to adjust their intellectual or conceptual activities by relying on logical thinking, logical concept, judgment and reasoning. Therefore, in writing the scripts of animations for young children, the writers should cater to the market demands, consider the possibility of modern children's psychological development and take the factors that young children may learn from the present society and that affect their psychological development level as forward-looking guidance.

The writers of young children animation scripts should focus on integrating interestingness, emotionality and knowledge, pay equal attention to artistic methods and scientific methods, stimulate young children's ability to cognize shapes, colors and music and strive to provide imitable versions for young children so as to achieve the purpose of developing their preliminary aesthetic ability and refining their minds.

## **2.2 Animation Script Writing With Children Being Target Audience**

Children audience is a group between young children and adult audience. They have a special aesthetic demand for animations because of the psychological and physiological development status specific to this age stage. Therefore, the particularity of children audience should be fully considered during the stage of animation script writing, and the special setting of children audience should be reflected in scripts. Compared with young children, children audience are more perfect and mature in cognitive ability and thinking mode. They have the ability to think independently and show the initiative to observe and recognize things consciously. Their cognition of things changes from simple concrete thinking to relatively complex abstract cognition. Correspondingly, animations' attractions for children audience change from bright colors and exaggerated models to interesting plots. Hence, in script writing, it is essential to complete the mission of helping educational cognition and providing entertainment by following certain rules and narrative logic, and

narrating simple stories. Children audience have polarized outlook on right and wrong compared with adult audience, and their understanding of issues is confined to the absoluteness—they are right or wrong. Accordingly, when they make judgments about the morality of characters in animations, they think they are right or wrong and good or bad. Children audience's simple cognition characteristics require animation script writers to pay attention to the single side of personal characters, and single line of storytelling, and uniqueness of spiritual awareness. Children audience have more vivid imagination and more intense curiosity than young children. So the writers must produce reality-based innovative and imaginative works based on the deep understating of national culture and child psychology. Animation script writing with children being target audience can be regarded as a work that can fully prove a writer's imagination and creativity and self-control ability.

Compared with animation script writing with young children being target object, animation scripts with children being target object have the characteristics of both mobility and narrativity. Due to the mobility, the animations feature great visual expressiveness and the narrativity means that they have some plots. For producing good animation scripts for children, words giving viewers excellent visual aesthetic feeling must be provided and at the same time, the life aesthetic experience suitable for children should be created in the storytelling. According to Maslow's hierarchy of psychological needs, animation art can meet the highest level of need—self-actualization. Children audience can often obtain sensory pleasure and experience idealized self state emotionally in the process of animation appreciation, which means self-actualization need can be satisfied in mobility and narrativity of animations. Under the guidance of narrative expression of animations' mobile images, children audience stimulate their own sensory and emotional factors and finally obtain "forthright and sincere child interest, hallucination of emotional expression, humorous relaxation, enjoyable personification and concise simplification as well as other several animation experience and illusion that human can't obtain in real life" (Duan, 2004). The animated cartoon series "Boonie Bears", "Pleasant Goat and Big Big Wolf" and other theme animated movies showed in theatre chain are animations with children audience as target object and most series in them can meet the special aesthetic demands of children audience in storytelling or visual expression. They have become successful animation models for children audience with great market value.

## **2.3 Animation Script Writing With Teenagers (Adults) Being Target Audience**

The adult animation audience mainly composed of teenagers are at the highest level in the entire audience in terms of both mental and physical development status, the cognitive competence and accumulation of aesthetic experience. And the animation scripts written for this part



of animation audience should be produced by meeting higher standards and more comprehensive rules on picture showing and purpose expression. Adult animation audience can have a comprehensive understanding of things and give personalized interpretations. Therefore, animation script writers must give the rein to their imagination and work with great care and precision for achieving entertainment of details and profundity of subject, and be skillful in using a lot of artistic expression in techniques of storytelling, setting of characters and depiction of characters. For example, adults can cognize things comprehensively and stereoscopically. So single-sided paper-like characters should be avoided and the writers should create figures with comprehensive characters. Necessary subordinate plots can be performed alternately under the guidance of mainline in storytelling to produce more dramatic story and pictures worth watching.

Compared with young children and children audience, adult animation audience mainly composed of teenagers can obtain more aesthetic experience from animations. The esthetic experience provided by adult animation scripts should include realization of aesthetic appreciation and experience of aesthetic appreciation. The former is generated by adult audience with the change and development of pictures and plots of animations and features instantaneity, variability and self-actualization; whereas the latter are more likely to come from the cultural attainment and life experience of individual audience before the aesthetic acceptance and has the characteristics of innateness, stability and individual difference. Adult audience would be restricted and inspired by the old system of aesthetic consciousness when appreciating animations. Similarly, when a subject faces of an object, he does not feel and cognize it from the very start. Instead, he judges and evaluates it on the basis of psychological structure formed by past experience. Therefore, animation script writers first of all need to fully understand all elements forming the inherent aesthetic consciousness system of the adult audience and know the existing psychological cognitive structure of audience so as to work out animation scripts striking a responsive chord in the hearts of their audience. Only when the objects created in animation scripts accord with the inherent experience of individual audience, can the psychological phenomenon "assimilation" that the audience are assimilated and integrated into the works and can the objects be incorporated into the existing cognitive system of audience and be explained and interpreted according to experiences. However, "when an inner structure in the style of stimulus sharply contradicts with a previously familiar schematic structure, this schema can't affect the present cognition even if it has deep traces in memory (Arnheim, 1985)." That is to say, when the animation scripts deviate from the traditional or past experience of adult audience, the current animation

language won't win support and approval from audience. Thus, in the process of animation script writing, the aesthetic experience, aesthetic emotion and artistic taste of adult audience should be first considered, because these should be factors controlling and dominating the thought on creation of animation screenplay writer and should be a concrete existence corresponding to the creation concept of animation script. And attention should be given to the unique aesthetic of audience in order to obtain profound aesthetic experience of audience in the works. In Japanese animation master Hayao Miyazaki's works, such as "Spirited Away", "City of Sky", "Warriors of the Wind", "Red Pig" and "The Wind Rises" as well as most American animated movies, great effects were made to achieve the entertainment of pictures and profundity of purpose expression, cater to the implicit demands for audience's aesthetic experience, and arouse the aesthetic empathy of audience. As there are more requirements for themes in animation script writing with teenagers (adult) being audience, more attention should be paid to social and real problems in early animation script creation. Great efforts should be made so that the audience can find and interpret the trace of times in the animation's semantic system, reality should be blended into the narration of story and the spiritual world of modern people should be properly interpreted, reflected and guided.

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## CONCLUSION

Clearly knowing the categories of target audience and deeply understanding the psychology of animation consumers can provide directional guidance for animation script writing. Having an accurate understating of the consumption habit of target object can contribute to correct decision making on promotion. In the stage of writing animation scripts, categorization of target audience has prospective guiding significance for animation art creation and animation industry development.

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