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Sang Culture: A Pessimistic Subculture in The Chinese Cyberspace

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Abstract

Since the reform and opening-up, China's economy has maintained rapid growth. However, since 2008, economic growth has shown a slow trend, and Chinese society is entering a "new economic normal". As China is currently in a period of social transformation, there are problems such as excessive housing prices, a widening gap between the rich and the poor, increasingly severe class solidification, and an unsound social security system. Against such a social background, the Sang culture emerged in 2016, which is opposite to the positive energy ideology advocated by the Chinese mainstream culture. It has the characteristics of negativity, self-mockery, and depression, which the Chinese youth group has dramatically resonated with. Mainstream news media represented by the People's Daily generally regard Sang culture as a kind of youth spiritual opium and a problematic subculture. The popularity of any subculture has its deep-seated reasons. Therefore, this thesis will combine the methods of Critical Discourse Analysis and Qualitative Content Analysis to research the significance of Sang culture on the Chinese internet, which is stigmatized by the discourse of the Chinese mainstream media represented by the People's Daily based on positive energy ideology. The result shows that Sang culture is a kind of self-mockery and helpless expression of Chinese young people. On the surface, it is negative, but it contains a positive attitude. Therefore, Sang culture is more like an emotional performance. As a result, Sang culture, which is negative on the surface but contains positive elements inside, reflects the current social situation and collective anxiety of Chinese youth and mirrors the condition and mentality of contemporary Chinese youth.

Keywords