Sound Matters: A Case Study of Marvel's Avengers in Digital Film Promotion and Cross-Platform Audience Perception

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Abstract:

Taking *The Avengers* as a case study, this paper delves into the dissemination mechanisms and user perception traits of sound content in digital film and television promotion. Employing text analysis, comment summarization, case comparison, and in-depth interviews, it systematically categorizes the expressive forms, communicative functions, and user response patterns of sound elements across diverse platforms. The research reveals that sound symbols—such as iconic soundtracks, character voices, and sound effects—elicit varied emotional identifications and communicative behaviors in cross-platform contexts. These variations are notably shaped by platform-specific attributes (e.g., interactivity on social media vs. immersive playback on streaming sites) and user demographics (including age, media usage habits, and fan engagement levels). By unpacking these dynamics, the study enriches theoretical frameworks on the sonic dimension in communication studies. It offers actionable insights for crafting targeted, sound-based promotion strategies in the digital age, enhancing the effectiveness of cross-platform film and television marketing.

Keywords: sound communication; sound symbols; digital film and television communication.

1. Introduction

Nowadays, we are in the digital era, and film and television publicity have also evolved from the previous one-way communication to a multi-modal, two-way, interactive, and integrated communication mode. Among them, the cross-platform publicity matrix has formed a three-dimensional communication network of cinema, social media, and long-form

video platforms. At the same time, technological innovation and development have enabled audiences to enjoy multisensory experiences in cinemas, such as those featuring Dolby Atmos. As a result, part of digital film and television promotion cannot be ignored. In the Marvel series of films to be studied in this paper, the opening and closing credits, soundtracks, hero appearance music, and sound effects have also become the iconic sounds in the Marvel Universe ISSN 2959-6149

series of films that are loved and welcomed by the public, adding colours to the cool superhero fights and other images in the films. This paper will analyze the sound content in Marvel films from the perspective of communication studies, highlight the gaps in sound studies on the sound dimension in communication studies, and provide strategic support for sound content in digital film and television promotion.

2. Literature review

2.1 Sound Design Research from a Cinematic Perspective

Most of the research on sound design for film and television focuses on the narrative function, emotional arousal, and aesthetic value of film sound. For example, Michel Chion (1994) put forward the 'Audio-Vision contract'. which emphasizes the synergy between sound and screen, and believes that sound is not an accessory but a key factor in actively shaping the audience's perception [1]. It emphasises the synergy between sound and picture, arguing that sound is not an accessory, but a key factor in actively shaping the audience's perception. In Song Ting's 'The Color Complementary Function of Film Scores from To Kill a Mockingbird'[2], it is also introduced that in the era of black-and-white silent films, the auditory function of non-song and dance film soundtracks achieves a substantial balance with the visual expression, and gives a multidimensional colour perception to monochromatic images through the multisensory associations of sound and vision. In Zhang Ying and Xu Jinghan's 'Form, Perception and Dynamics: Organic Thinking in Film Sound Creation'[3], it is likewise mentioned that the inseparable interrelationships between various types of sound elements in a film, between the sound and the picture, as well as between the viewer and the projection environment have been formed to varying degrees, "and thus become a unified, self-referential whole consisting ofmany parts and individuals ", forming an organic fusion. Thus, from a cinematographic point of view, sound is not an accessory to the picture, but rather, together with the visual, constitutes the audience's multi-sensory experience.

2.2 Cross-platform communication from a communication science perspective

Most of the researches from a communication perspective focus on the transformation of film and television promotion from unidirectional communication to multimodal interaction, and Kress & van Leeuwen's framework of 'multimodal discourse analysis' has been widely applied to the study of film promotion, i.e., the synergistic effect of sound, image, text, and other symbols. In Xu Meiling's 'The Value of Short Video in Film Marketing - An Analysis Based on the "5W" Model' [4], it is mentioned that with the rapid development of the short video industry, it provides new opportunities for the dissemination of the basic content of films, 'fast dissemination speed', 'high quality', 'high quality', 'high quality', 'high quality', and 'high quality'. The characteristics of 'fast transmission speed', 'small overall capacity', and 'strong audio-visual effect' greatly promote the effective promotion of films. Compared with the traditional flat promotional posters, short videos mobilise people's multiple senses, realise the double enjoyment of vision and hearing, deepen the audience's impression of the film, and enhance the communication effect of the film.

To sum up, most of the existing studies on the cinematographic perspective of sound in films focus on the relationship between sound and picture and the aesthetics of films, but lack the research and analysis of cross-media publicity of sound content in the digital era; most of the existing studies on the communication perspective of sound content in films focus on the 'multimodal discourse analysis',i.e., the relationship between sound and picture, and the analysis of multimodal discourse. Most of the existing studies on the communication Perspective of sound content in film focus on 'multimodal discourse analysis',i. e., the synergistic effect of sound and picture, and there are fewer studies on the communication effect of the sound content itself.

3. Research design and methodology

This study selects samples such as promotional videos and clips from Marvel's The Avengers series, and uses text analysis, platform comment induction, case comparison, and semi-structured interview methods (see Table 1 for information about relevant interviewees) for analysis, aiming to explore the communication characteristics, user feedback, and audience perception experience of their sound content.

- Sample selection: Marvel's Avengers series of promotional videos and their clips on multiple platforms; 15 Avengers film clips and sound content were selected.
- Text analysis method: classify the sound content (voice/soundtrack/sound effects) and extract communication features;
- Platform comment induction method: analyse user feedback keywords and emotional tendencies on YouTube, Shake, Weibo, and B station, and analyse 20 comments with over a thousand likes under the hottest videos.
- Case comparison method: comparing the dissemi-

nation effects and user preferences of different types of sound content;

• Interview method: semi-structured interviews were used to ask questions about their feelings about watch-

ing Marvel movies and their evaluation of sound content through online chats, to analyse the sound perception experience of different audience groups and supplement qualitative understanding.

Table 1. Unstructured Interview

Numbers	Ages	Genders	View film features
Fan 1	21	Female	The Avengers series of films are watched in cinemas and are chosen for their high audio-visual quality (IMAX, Dolby).
Fan 2	20	Male	Loyal fans of the Marvel franchise, who have followed the Marvel films from the time Avengers 1 was released from 2012 to the present day
Fan 3	22	Female	The first Marvel film watched was Avengers 4
Fan 4	25	Male	In his spare time, he would follow the Marvel film's second creation videos on the platform

4. Research findings and analyses

4.1 Analysis of sound content dissemination mechanisms

4.1.1 Classification of film types and functions

In film, sound can be broadly classified into soundtrack, character line speech, sound effects, etc. In the semiotic perspective, the images, words, music, actions, and other symbolic styles in the film can be analysed by semiotic theories. At the beginning of the 20th century, the modern semiotic theories came into being, and Saussure put forward a series of new concepts of semiotics from the point of view of linguistics, and he emphasized that what the linguistic symbols are connected with is not the names of things, but the whole composed of the audio images of the linguistic symbols represented by the "able reference" and the concepts represented by the "reference". He emphasised that what is connected by linguistic symbols is not the names of things, but the whole composed of the acoustic image of linguistic symbols represented by "can-indicators" and the concepts represented by "referents"; can-indicators The concrete material forms of symbols are perceived by people through their senses, while Referents are the mental cognitions or concepts formed by people on the objects pointed to by the symbols[5]. In the Avengers film series, "can refer" is the physical form of sound.

Including the soundtrack, character lines, etc., "referent" is the symbolic meaning of semiotics. For example, the electronic sound effect when Iron Man's armour is activated, its "mechanical buzzing" sound effect (energetic reference) corresponds to the "sense of technology" and

"Iron Man's identity", which becomes the sound symbol of the character's symbols; the sound symbols of the characters in the film are "Iron Man" and "Iron Man". The classic soundtracks in films, such as the brass melody of Marvel's theme song "The Avengers" and the piano piece "A Love Before Time" at Iron Man's funeral in "The Reunion 4", the former brings a sense of heroism and collectivism to the audience through the energetic references of the soaring melody. The former, through the energetic reference of the soaring melody, brings the audience a sense of "heroism" and "collectivism", and has become the sound symbol of the Marvel series of films; the latter, with the sad and soothing melody, transforms the "sadness of sacrifice" and "human warmth" into a sound that can be used as the basis for the "heroism" and "collectivity". The latter, with a sad and soothing melody, transforms the "sadness of sacrifice" and "human warmth" into audible emotional symbols that resonate with the picture, deepening the spiritual theme of "heroic dedication" of the film. To sum up, in "The Avengers", as a physical carrier, the sound "can refer to" is linked and

echoed with the symbolic meaning of "can refer to" through the designed auditory form. As a symbol, the sound content is not only an auxiliary to the picture, but also a medium to independently convey information and content - the audience can understand and feel the narrative background and emotional connotations behind the sound through identifying the characteristics of the sound reference, making the sound become one of the core symbolic elements of the film's "production of meaning". The audience can understand and feel the narrative background and emotional connotation behind the sound through identifying the characteristics of the sound, which makes the

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sound truly become one of the core symbolic elements of "meaning production" in film.

4.1.2 Media Characteristics and Technological Empowerment in the Communication Chain

In addition to the creation of sound content in the film itself, technological innovations have created better conditions for the presentation and promotion of sound content, with IMAX, VR\AR, and digital audio technologies providing audiences with a better viewing experience when watching a film in the cinema. Meanwhile, as early as 20 years ago, American scholar Nicholas Negroponte predicted that the digital technology revolution would profoundly affect real life, giving people a new state of existence - digital existence (Fnlsj Flyldnidni)[6].

According to QuestMobile statistics, the scale of China's Internet video users has shown a

trend of rapid growth, in which the number of Internet video users (OTT) has reached 1.083 billion, and the scale of monthly active users of smart devices is 362 million[7]. In addition to the technology of film production and cinema screening, social media communication, the technology of platform algorithms, and the big data push mechanism have become the driving force for the dissemination of the sound content of The Avengers, which in turn promotes the promotion of the film. Cyber theorist Pierre Levy proposed the concept of "collective intelligence", which is similar to the domestic interpretation of the concept of media Convergence platforms, referring to the cultural field formed by virtual communities that make full use of their knowledge and skills, as well as other comprehensive capabilities. In the "Marvel Superhero Movie" fan culture community, it is manifested in the fact that fans collaborate to contribute to the common goal of understanding and interpreting the text of the film, forming a knowledge and culture community[8]. For the dissemination of the film's sound content, fan participation still plays a driving role on media platforms.

For example, users on platforms such as Jittery Voice and Shutterfly have spontaneously edited the highlights of The Avengers, such as the bloodshed scene during the "Avengers Assemble" and the touching image of Iron Man's deathbed, and then widely disseminated them after matching them with appropriate music and special effects. On the Jittery Voice platform, a clip of the assembly lines of "Avengers 4" gained 600,000 likes and 40,000 comments, and the blood-boiling lines were shown in the form of a short video, which brought a wave of traffic on the video platform for "Avengers 4"; and the challenge of "Imitating the voice of your favourite superhero" released several 10 clips, which were widely distributed. A challenge of "imitating your favourite superhero's voice"

has been released several 100,000+ likes videos, and a video imitating the sound of Spider-Man spitting silk has brought about a widespread use of the classic lines and sound effects of the heroes in the movie through the witty performance of the fans. In addition, the platform's algorithm accurately pushed these sound contents to potential audiences based on the user's interest tags, bringing explosive communication effects for the film's promotion.

4.1.3 Cross-platform and cross-media linkage characteristics

The Avengers series has constructed a complete sound content dissemination system through the layout of multi-platform content linkage, such as movies, episodes, and short videos, and the sound dissemination in different media has its characteristics: cinema combines Dolby sound and powerful sound projection technology to create an immersive and good viewing experience, episodes focus on the role of sound narrative and strengthen the connection between sound details and storyline, and short videos focus on exciting as well as classic sounds to condense the essence through short video forms to achieve the fission dissemination of sound content. Focus on the wonderful as well as classic sound, through the short video form to condense the essence, to achieve the fusion dissemination of the sound content. For example, the sound of Iron Man beating iron in the film symbolises the identity of Iron Man; the theme song of the film has become the iconic music of Marvel films; whenever these sounds are played, they can quickly evoke the audience's identity of the characters and their emotional resonance with the theme of the film's heroes.

For the series, Marvel's spin-off series "Loki" launched on the Disney+ platform, not only linking and continuing the sound of the film, but also expressing the inner activities of the characters through sound effects. For example, whenever the timeline changes, the series expresses the distortion of the timeline and hints at the plot through the ambient sound effects, and at the same time, suggests the character's inner loneliness and isolation through the reverberation.

For short videos, audiences can be pushed to clip their favourite movie clips through the platform algorithm, with the classic soundtrack and sound effects in the movie, so that the movie can achieve explosive dissemination of sound content through the secondary creation of users.

This kind of linkage of film, drama, and short video strengthens the audience's memory of the classic sound of the film through the multi-form portrayal of a hero IP, expands the scope of the film's dissemination, and the different forms of sound content also enrich the narrative level of the Marvel storytelling system. This mode not only

gives full play to the communication advantages of different media, but also maximizes the value of IP through the organic linkage of different sound elements.

4.2 Perception dimensions

Audiences experience multifaceted satisfaction from sound content in The Avengers, which can be categorized into three types: perceptual, emotional, and social gratification.

4.2.1 Satisfaction of Perceptual Needs

American spectacle films such as The Avengers, The Fast and the Furious and Avatar create stunning fantasy images and strange feelings through various high-tech film technologies, which cultivate the audience's "spectacle" aesthetics of films, the audience expects to be able to see visual wonders beyond their aesthetic horizons and a world of simulation that is as if they were in the film. The aesthetics of "spectacle" have been cultivated in the audience[9]. Along with the innovation of digital technology, the sound presentation of "spectacle" films in cinema has become more and more realistic and immersive. On the Shake platform, an Avengers Assemble line sound clip video has received 670,000 likes, and a lot of audiences in the comment section mentioned: "When Team America shouts out: "Avengers!", the shock of the line, the classic Marvel music "The Avengers" plays, and the heroes appear one after another and collectively rush forward."

"I remember when I watched Avengers 4, the scenes and sounds in it were very rich, both the quiet, touching atmosphere when the heroes sacrificed their lives, but also a lot of very intense fight scenes, so I was very glad that I chose to go to a Dolby sound quality theatre."(Fan1)

In the film, sound also plays the function of suggesting the role and plot, and this kind of Sound content can often help the audience identify the plot of the film.

"I hadn't watched any Marvel films before Reunion 4, so I didn't know much about the storyline, especially in Reunion 4, but I still remembered that there were a lot of sound effects in the film that hinted at the timeline going back and forth, and the ambient sounds of different planets, and that was very helpful for me to identify the scene transitions. Recognising the scene transitions helped a lot."(Fan 3)

4.2.2 Emotional Satisfaction of Audience by Sound Content

In his book The Bias of Communication, the Canadian historian and communicator Innis classifies communication media into those that favour time and those that favour space. Any medium of communication has either the property of longevity to control time or the characteristic

of ease of transmission to control space. Time-biased media, such as oracle bones and stones, are durable and suitable for long-term preservation, which is conducive to the perpetuation of the culture they transmit throughout history, while space-biased media, such as the modern Internet, are conducive to the wide circulation of information at the same time due to the ease of transmission. In a recent study, the media of communication are classified as either time-biased media or space-biased media[10]. In the classic IP, such as The Avengers, it carries a lot of love for the film and their affection for superheroes, and the affection comes from the time-based nature of the film series. Many of the soundtracks and lines in the films have been around since Avengers 1, such as Marvel's theme song and Iron Man's line, "I am Iron Man."Therefore, when lines that appeared in the film years ago when watching the film appear again in the film.

When the sound effects and soundtracks are used, it will evoke their memories of the film and their affection for Marvel. For example, a video on the platform about the sharing of the super-combustible BGM of Marvel movies has harvested a lot of comments, in which many fans mentioned, "When I hear this song, I think of Iron Man's final snapping of his fingers to say his lines, and I feel nostalgic for my childhood heroes, and I can't help but want to shed tears. "When I hear this song, Thor's hammer flies into my hand."

"Whenever I hear the Marvel theme song or the hero's entrance music, I can feel a lot of images from the film flooding into my mind, and those images make my blood boil every time, and it feels like it can evoke every boy's superhero dreams when he's watching the film."(Fan 2) Therefore, the sound in the film brings the audience not only the "coolness" generated by the cool sound effects in the battle scenes, auditory stimulation, and the emotional demand for blood, but also creates the IP logo through the classic sound, which in turn stimulates the audience's memories and feelings when they watch the film, and creates emotional resonance.

4.2.3 Social fulfilment of sound as a group signifier

On social platforms, we can see a large number of discussions about the Avengers film, for example, the piano melody "Marvel Studios Fanfare" in the opening animation of the Marvel animation has become the "auditory code" of the fan community, and different groups share their feelings and emotions about the film the recognized and identified through the sound. By recognising and identifying with the sound, different groups share their sentiments and feelings about the film, forming a social bond and satisfying social needs.

For example, the discussion of the Marvel theme song on

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the music platform is all about sharing one's deepest feelings about the plot of the film, and there are hundreds of discussions under each hot comment, forming a fan community on the music platform.

"Usually work is busy, but leisure time to open the social platform can always see some of the Marvel film mixtures, sometimes see will also be shared with the friends who watched the film together, every time we discuss the content of the film or see the comment area, there are so many and I like a certain hero and have the same feelings about a storyline comments, feel like finding family, memories also instantly come up. Memories come flooding back instantly."(Fan 4)

To sum up, audiences are not just passive receivers of sound content in films, but actively combine their needs to find sensory enjoyment, emotional resonance, cognitive symbols, and social topics... At the same time, the same sound content in a film can also satisfy the multiplicity of audiences' needs, e.g., The Avengers as a Marvel film, for example, "The Avengers" as the theme song of the Marvel film not only allows the audience to seek emotional resonance through the melody, but also establishes a social bond through cross-media communication, while the multiple appearances of sound symbols also strengthen the audience's memories, which ultimately forms a benign interaction of demand-satisfaction.

5. Discussion and Conclusions

5.1 Indirect Influence of Sound Content on Film Box Office and Word of Mouth

With the continuous development of the film market, traditional marketing methods can no longer meet the needs of modern audiences, and the use of social media for word-of-mouth communication, cooperation with brands to launch co-branded merchandise, and other film marketing can attract more audiences and enhance the competitiveness of the film market[11]. Through the above analysis, we can find that the dissemination of sound content is multi-path and cross-media. In terms of the film itself, the soundtrack, sound effects, lines, etc., highlight the role of sound in strengthening the viewing experience, shaping the identity of the characters, and IP symbols appearing many times. However, outside of the film itself, audience's discussions on social media also influence the film's word-of-mouth and box office. For example, when viewers share their viewing experience on social media platforms, the sound effects and soundtrack, and shocking comments mentioned will affect the expectations of potential viewers. In "The Revenant 3", the breathing sound and ambient sound recalled by the exterminator

after snapping his fingers caused a series of discussions, in which some viewers interpreted it as "the silence of the disappearance of life" and the complexity of the character of the exterminator, which enhanced the film's word-of-mouth and texture, and formed the transformation of good word-of-mouth to the public's purchase of tickets at the box office to improve. At the same time, sound content (mainly sound effects and lines) in the film to support the narrative function or the arrangement of sound eggs, so that many viewers comment on the "Avengers" series of films, the details of the attention to detail, rigorous, and then play a role in the boxoffice and word of mouth to improve.

In this process, the sound content is not a decisive factor that directly affects the box office of the film, but through different mediums and different angles of communication, making it an essential part of the enduring Marvel films in the long run.

5.2 Problems and Limitations of Sound Distribution Mechanisms

5.2.1 Technical adaptation is difficult to meet

The sound content of the Marvel series of films is highly dependent on high-end technologies such as Dolby Atmos and IMAX sound, but at present, such high-end cinema technology is not yet fully popular, which will lead to a high discrepancy between the audience's feelings and the expected 'audio-visual feast' in the process of watching the film. For example, if the complex sound effects of the hero's fight in the film cannot be shown, it will weaken the expressive power of the sound and affect the audience's recognition.

5.2.2 Cultural differences in sound expression

As a cultural vehicle, films are often embedded with rich local cultural elements, such as

specific historical allusions, folk customs, or popular slang expressions. When these elements are directly copied into another cultural environment, the meaning may be blurred or even completely lost, making it difficult for the audience to catch the punchline or the deeper meaning.

Meaning of the film[12]. In The Avengers, Star-Lord's exclusive BGM "come and get your love" comes from the 1973 American band Red Bones, which belongs to the classic funk rock, but due to cultural differences, audiences from other cultures may not be able to understand the appropriateness of this song and Star-Lord, as well as the reason why it matches the image of Star-Lord, and then they may not be able to feel the director's intention. Therefore, sound symbols dominated by Western culture have certain limitations in cross-cultural communication.

5.2.3 Visual Focus Cuts Sound Attention

The cool special effects scenes, wonderful star casts and grand story backgrounds in Marvel films will to a certain extent cut down the audience's attention to the sound content of the films, resulting in less discussion and dissemination of the sound content of the retelling columns on the platform, which focuses only on some classic sound tracks, and fails to form the sound content into a focus of dissemination and discussion.

5.2.4 Aesthetic fatigue

Although films such as The Avengers have become the classic soundtrack of the Marvel series, the recent release of the Marvel series of films has not led to discussions about the soundtrack. At the same time, the sound effects and soundtracks in the film have formed the programmed design of the hero blockbuster, such as the intense explosions and collisions repeatedly used in the battle scenes. With the introduction of the new heroes in the franchise, there are fewer innovations in the film in terms of sound, which is prone to aesthetic fatigue of the audience.

To sum up, there are problems such as technical adaptation, cultural differences, insufficient attention, and aesthetic fatigue in the sound content dissemination of the Avengers series of films, which will indirectly affect the film's reputation and box office in the long run. Future Marvel films can improve the communication effect of sound content using optimizing technology, enriching cultural diversity, and innovating sound types. This paper analyses the communication mechanism of the sound content of the Avengers film series and the audience's perception dimension, combines the theoretical perspective of communication science, makes up for the gap in the study of the sound of the film from the perspective of communication science, highlights the fact that sound is not only dependent on the picture communication but is an indispensable part of the independent function, makes up for the gap of the cinematographic study on the independent sound is too little, and points out that there are deficiencies in the communication of sound content, which will help to improve the sound quality of the film. It also points out the deficiencies of the current sound content dissemination and provides a reference for the future film sound dissemination mechanism.

However, there is still a lack of further quantification of the relationship between platform algorithms and voice communication, as well as research on how cross-cultural sound communication should meet the needs of different cultures, which can be further explored in the future.

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