

# From "Watching Films" to "Performing Films": The Ritualistic Communication and Identity Construction of Social Media "Movie Viewing Reports"

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## Abstract

In recent years, social media platforms, through features like "movie viewing reports," have shifted film consumption from private viewing to public performance. However, users' display of viewing behavior is not merely a simple recording and sharing. Based on digital ethnography on Douban and Xiaohongshu platforms and in-depth interviews with 16 users, this study finds that "performing films" involves users' strategic construction of self-identity based on platform templates and algorithmic rules. It reveals a paradox of cultural capital in the digital age: cultural distinction originates from individual enthusiasm for pursuing unique taste, yet it must be realized and confirmed by embedding it within the platform's preset visual order, interactive conventions, and algorithmic scripts. The findings of this study contribute to a further understanding of flexible identity performance strategies and how users negotiate individual expression and collective identity within algorithmically mediated ritualistic practices.

**Keywords:** performative viewing, Algorithmic Taste, media rituals, Visibility Capital, platform society

## 1. Introduction

Empowered by Web 3.0 technologies, film consumption is undergoing a profound transformation from a singular viewing act to a composite cultural practice. The latest data from the China Internet Network Information Center (CNNIC) shows that in 2023, the scale of online audio-visual users in China reached 1.04 billion, with 68.5% of users sharing their viewing records via social platforms [1]. Since its launch in 2016, the participation rate for Douban's annual movie report function has increased by an average of 23% annually, resulting in 4.3 million personalized reports in 2023 [2]. Concurrently, the page views for the "Movie Nine-Square Grid" topic on Xiaohongshu exceeded 1.8 billion, and the use of Douyin's "Movie Report" special effects surpassed 700 million times [3]. These phenomena signal the shift from private viewing to public performance, forming a three-dimensional practice of "viewing-quantification-performance," evolving movie viewing reports into digital rituals that combine identity performance, social interaction, and cultural capital accumulation.

Existing research primarily follows two paths: first, audience analysis within film studies [4], which focuses on viewers' interpretive strategies for texts; second, media use studies in communication [5], exploring the social context of viewing behavior. Although recent studies have begun to pay attention to the impact of digital media on film culture [6], significant limitations remain: first, a focus on film explanations on short video platforms while neglecting systematic investigation of viewing reports; second, a lack of analysis of the shaping role of platform technical architectures; third, a failure to reveal the complex relationship between datafied performance and identity construction. As van Dijck [7] stated, current research still lacks sufficient understanding of "how platforms mediate cultural practices."

Based on this, this study introduces three theoretical perspectives—dramaturgical theory, cultural capital theory, and the ritual view of communication—and proposes the concept of "performing films," referring to the practice where users transform viewing behavior into public performance through datafied means. The study aims to answer the following questions: How do movie viewing reports construct cultural capital through specific symbolic practices? What kind of complicit relationship exists between platform algorithms and user performance behavior? What impact does this datafied performance practice have on contemporary youth's identity construction? By reviewing core concepts such as "cultural capital [8]", "media rituals [9]", and "digital performance [10]", this

study proposes a "performative viewing" theoretical perspective to systematically analyze the internal mechanisms and power relations behind the shift of viewing practices from private consumption to public performance in the social media era. It provides a new theoretical lens for understanding how digital platforms mediate cultural consumption and reshape identity, while also offering empirical evidence for grasping the new modes of cultural capital accumulation and their social distinction functions in the digital age.

## 2. Materials and Methods

### 2.1 *Film Viewing Performance from a Dramaturgical Perspective*

Goffman's dramaturgical theory views social interaction as a theatrical performance, where the "front stage" is the space where individuals manage impressions [11]. This theory provides a suitable framework for analyzing users' strategic performance in film viewing on social media. First, the platform itself constitutes a "perpetual theater" [12], where users' sharing of viewing data becomes a front-stage performance. Second, the visualization and standardization templates of viewing reports (e.g., Douban annual charts, Xiaohongshu nine-square grids) provide users with ready-made "performance scripts." At the same time, functions like likes and comments construct the "actor-audience" interaction mechanism [13].

Digital media expands the explanatory dimensions of dramaturgical theory [14]. Social media users often construct idealized identities by curating content [15]. The uniqueness of viewing reports lies in: firstly, creating an "illusion of data authenticity," making manipulable statistics appear as objective records; secondly, achieving "visualization of cultural capital," conveying aesthetic taste through curated lists; thirdly, forming "algorithmic complicity," where platforms subtly guide the direction of performance through recommendation systems hinting at the preferences of the "ideal viewer."

Existing research mostly focuses on the ritualistic nature of cinema viewing [16], paying insufficient attention to "post-viewing" performance practices in digital environments. This study finds that users construct a "digital front stage" through Douban viewing time statistics, Xiaohongshu nine-square grids, and other means, and utilize functions like "visible only to me" to conceal inconsistent records, thereby completing role crafting. Platform algorithms (e.g., "Guess You Like") and social cues (e.g., "Friends Are Watching") jointly create the "theatrical effect" of performance.

This study advances the digital extension of dramaturgical theory in two aspects: first, pointing out that the digital front stage is highly editable, allowing users to adjust content at any time; second, revealing algorithms as a new type of "audience" that participates in and shapes performance through data feedback. Furthermore, quantified viewing data becomes a "digital business card" that users repeatedly refine, demonstrating a turn towards precision and design in performative behavior. These findings not only enhance the explanatory power of dramaturgical theory in the platform society but also open new paths for exploring social performance mediated by algorithms.

### 2.2 *The Visual Transformation of Cultural Capital*

Bourdieu, in *Distinction*, proposed cultural capital theory, arguing that differences in artistic appreciation are essentially symbolic mappings of social space [17]. This theory provides a key framework for this study, with its explanatory power mainly manifested in three aspects: First, users' curatorial behaviors in viewing reports (such as selected film lists, art film tags) are a form of "taste performance," aligning with the logic of cultural distinction emphasized by Bourdieu. Second, platform badge systems (e.g., Douban's "Senior Cinephile") and labeling systems transform abstract cultural capital into visible data symbols, creating new paths for capital accumulation. Finally, interaction data, such as likes and favorites among users, form a quantifiable capital exchange mechanism, allowing for the precise measurement of the "symbolic struggle" proposed by Bourdieu [18].

Existing research mostly focuses on the classification of cultural capital forms, intergenerational transmission, and its digital turn. Scholars like Lareau et al. categorize cultural capital into embodied, objectified, and institutionalized forms, but have not foreseen its transformation in the digital age. With the development of the digital era, scholars like Hanquinet and Savage have begun to focus on digital cultural practices, but mostly concentrate on traditional art forms, such as music and fine arts [19], with limited attention paid to film as an art form. In summary, existing research lacks focus on platform mediation, failing to explain how algorithmic recommendations reconstruct the accumulation paths of cultural capital; it also neglects the visual presentation of cultural capital on data interfaces (e.g., viewing statistics), lacking a quantitative dimension; furthermore, exploration of intergenerational differences is shallow, without systematic comparison of digital capital display strategies across age groups.

Based on this, this study constructs a "platform cultural capital" framework, proposing a three-dimensional model of "algorithmic mediation - data visualization - intergenerational strategies," which extends Bourdieu's theory to

the context of platform society and reveals the interplay of intergenerational capital in the algorithmic age. This framework fills the gaps in existing theories and provides a new paradigm for interpreting digital cultural stratification. When viewing reports become datafied class "passports," cultural distinction becomes more concealed and precise under algorithmic governance.

### *2.3 Communication Practice as Ritual*

James Carey's ritual view of communication breaks through the linear model of the traditional "transmission view," understanding communication as a symbolic process through which reality is produced, maintained, and transformed [20]. Against the backdrop of the rise of the platform society [21], the theoretical connotations of the ritual view have undergone three transformations: In terms of the subject dimension, users shift from passive participants to active performers, completing the identity transition from ritual adherents to co-constructors by editing report templates. In the spatiotemporal dimension, ritual scenes shift from fixed time and space to fluid fields of time and space. For example, Douban's "Annual Report Season" constructs "mediatized time nodes" [22] through countdown posters, etc., (granting synchronic meaning to individual behaviors). In the power dimension, platforms encode commercial logic into cultural rituals through automatically generated functions, such as "Annual Top Ten" [23], thereby forming an algorithm-driven, ritualized process.

In the practice of viewing reports, the ritual view reveals how individual behaviors are transformed into collective cultural practices through symbolic performance. Users publishing data using standardized templates participate in a "cultural performance" [24] centered on identity and belonging. Couldry points out that digital platforms create new ritual spaces [25]. This study further finds that platform templates constitute the "standardized scripts" of rituals, while algorithms establish the "sacred standards" of evaluation through lists such as the "Annual TOP100." Interactions such as likes and favorites among users form a cycle of emotional energy [26], constituting a key link in the interaction ritual chain.

Existing research mainly develops along three directions: platform mechanisms (e.g., the gamification design of Weibo's "Movie Medals"), user behavior (e.g., young people achieving taste distinction through "reports and reviews" [27]), and cultural critique (e.g., the "McDonaldization of aesthetics" resulting from the datafication of film taste [28]). However, there are significant shortcomings: first, a lack of diachronic investigation of "annual reports" as periodic rituals; second, neglect of comparative research across platforms and intergenerational differences.

Based on this, this study innovatively proposes an "algorithmic ritualization" analytical framework, focusing on examining the differences in ritual practices among users of different platforms and generations, revealing how platforms transform commercial surveillance into user-willingly-participated cultural practices through interface design. It also pays attention to the subversive effect of "anti-report" subcultures (e.g., intentionally generating vulgar film lists) on ritual authority, thereby expanding the dimension of resistance in the ritual view and deepening the understanding of the evolution of communication rituals in the platform society.

## **3. Methodological Design**

### *3.1 Implementation of Digital Ethnography*

This study adopts a qualitative research approach, combining digital ethnography and in-depth interviews to form a strategy of triangulation. Digital ethnography is used to capture public performance behaviors in natural settings, while in-depth interviews delve into users' subjective motivations and strategic considerations, providing a comprehensive understanding of the complex cultural phenomenon of "performative viewing" from both practical and meaningful perspectives.

#### **3.1.1 Platform Selection and Rationale**

This study selects Douban and Xiaohongshu as research platforms, primarily based on their platform attributes and functional representativeness. Douban is based on a "Books, Films, Music" community, where users emphasize aesthetic taste and in-depth film reviews; Xiaohongshu, with its positioning of "Marking My Life," features more visual and consumption-oriented content. The significant differences in user demographics between the two platforms provide an effective comparative perspective for the study.

In terms of functionality, both platforms have mature mechanisms for generating and sharing viewing reports (e.g., Douban annual reports, Xiaohongshu movie nine-square grid templates) and have formed active sharing communities with high data accessibility. The research focuses on the original performance practices of individual users, excluding marketing accounts, institutional accounts, and commercial promotional content.

The specific observation scope includes Douban's "Movie Marking Addiction" group, annual chart topic areas, and user content containing the hashtag #My Annual Movie Report#, as well as popular posts and related topics on Xiaohongshu obtained through keyword searches such as "movie viewing report" and "movie nine-square grid."

### 3.1.2 Observation Period and Data Collection

The observation period for this study spanned from November 2024 to February 2025, encompassing the peak period when platforms release their annual viewing reports and users intensively share them, thereby effectively capturing ritualized communication practices within "mediatized time nodes." Using purposive sampling, a total of 300 user-generated posts (150 from Douban and 150 from Xiaohongshu) were collected as analysis samples, covering visual texts (report screenshots, cover designs), written texts (captions, film list comments, comments), and interaction data (likes, favorites, reposts).

### 3.1.3 Data Analysis Methods

The collected data will be imported into qualitative data analysis software (e.g., NVivo) for directed content analysis and multimodal analysis. The coding scheme will be constructed around the research questions, including: visual symbol coding (e.g., aesthetic style of reports, layout order, etc.), textual strategy coding (e.g., curatorial logic of film lists, self-labeling, etc.), and interaction ritual coding (e.g., interaction patterns in comments, community terminology, etc.).

## 3.2 In-depth Interview Design

To compensate for the limitations of ethnography in directly accessing user motivations and perceptions, this study supplements ethnography with semi-structured in-depth interviews to explore the inner world and life experiences of individual users in depth.

### 3.2.1 Sampling Method and Interviewees

A combination of purposive sampling and snowball sampling was used to recruit information-rich respondents. The core criterion for selecting respondents was: active users who had proactively published movie viewing reports on the Douban or Xiaohongshu platforms. Ultimately, 16 users were successfully interviewed until theoretical saturation was reached.

Table 1. Basic Information of Interviewees (N=16)

Number	Platform	Age	Gender	Occupation	Self-Identity Labels	Annual Viewing Volume	Report Publishing Frequency	Interview Duration	Interview Method
D01	Douban	29	Female	Publishing House Editor	Art film lover, Auteur cinema	150+	Annual report, Monthly records	45min	WeChat
D02	Douban	33	Male	Internet Programmer	Sci-Fi/Fantasy fan, Tech geek	80-100	Annual report	50min	WeChat
D03	Douban	25	Female	Postgraduate Student	Hidden gem excavator, European cinema	200+	Annual report, Daily marking	45min	Tencent Meeting
D04	Douban	31	Male	Director	Independent film supporter, Realist	120+	Annual report, Long review with images	40min	Tencent Meeting
D05	Douban	27	Female	Museum Curatorial Assistant	Visual aesthetics enthusiast, Regular	100-120	Annual report, Film festivals	60min	WeChat

Number	Platform	Age	Gender	Occupation	Self-Identity Labels	Annual Viewing Volume	Report Publishing Frequency	Interview Duration	Interview Method
					Jiangsu-Zhejiang-Shanghai film festivals				
D06	Douban	26	Male	University Teacher	Classical film lover	100-120	Annual report, Film festivals	45min	WeChat
X01	Xiaohongshu	22	Female	Undergraduate Student	Atmosphere film lover, Korean film fan	50-70	Annual report, Nine-square grid	80min	WeChat
X02	Xiaohongshu	26	Female	Graphic Designer	Visual-centric, Composition matters most	60-80	Quarterly nine-square grid	50min	Tencent Meeting
X03	Xiaohongshu	30	Male	Brand Marketing Manager	Social sharing enthusiast, Trend follower	40-60	Annual report	55min	Phone
X04	Xiaohongshu	24	Female	New Media Operator	Romance film expert, CP fan	100+	Monthly favorite list	50min	WeChat
X05	Xiaohongshu	28	Female	Primary School Teacher	Animation film specialist, Healing type	90-110	Annual report, Nine-square grid	45min	WeChat
X06	Xiaohongshu	26	Female	PhD Student	Healing type	110+	Annual report	55	WeChat
M01	Dual Platform	35	Male	University Junior Faculty	Cinephile culture, Cross-platform sharer	180+	Annual report (both platforms)	50	Tencent Meeting
M02	Dual Platform	23	Female	Undergraduate Student	Aspiring filmmaker	250+	All reports	50	Phone
M03	Dual Platform	32	Male	Freelance Writer	Queer cinema, Horror films	130+	Annual report, Themed lists	45	Tencent Meeting
M04	Dual Platform	29	Male	Internet Worker	Cross-platform sharer	100+	Annual report, Themed lists	50	WeChat

### 3.2.2 Interview Guide and Core Dimensions

The interview primarily revolved around core dimensions, including the production process and motivation, perception of platform algorithms, identity construction and capital accumulation, community belonging and distinction, and views on "anti-reports," while also collecting demographic information. The guide remained open, allowing new topics to emerge and be promptly supplemented and refined.

### 3.2.3 Interview Implementation and Ethics

Interviews were conducted via Tencent Meeting, WeChat voice calls, or phone calls, with an average duration of approximately 40-60 minutes. They were recorded with consent and transcribed verbatim. The research followed ethical norms. Before the interview, respondents were briefed in detail on the purpose, privacy protection measures, and data usage, and signed informed consent forms. All respondent information was anonymized (using codes instead of names).

## 4. Findings

### 4.1 *The Three Layers of Ritualized Production*

Carey's ritual view evolves into an operational, hierarchical symbolic production practice in the platform society. This study finds that the ritualized production of viewing reports is not homogeneous but presents three layers from surface to depth, collectively constructing the cultural sacredness of the performance.

The first layer is the sense of ritual in visual order (i.e., front-stage performance). Platform-standardized viewing templates constitute the "front stage" in Goffman's theory, providing users with "scripts" that require no professional knowledge. Most users (e.g., X02, X05) create within the framework, conveying a signal of "careful preparation" through a unified visual order (e.g., neat layout, coordinated color scheme), declaring their qualification to participate in the ritual. The second layer is personalized micro-manipulations within the template (i.e., identity anchors). While adhering to the ritual script, users anchor their unique identities through meticulous micro-manipulations. They choose cover images representing personal aesthetics (D03: "I would pick the most niche but perfectly composed movie poster as the cover"), adjust the order of the film list to create a narrative (D01: "I put the year's best at the end, like telling a story"), or use specific community jargon in their captions. This is an effort to strive for individual meaning within the common ritual through "constrained creativity." The third layer is the curatorial aesthetics of "imperfection" (i.e., capital flaunting). The highest level of ritual production manifests as a carefully designed "imperfection." Veteran users (e.g., D04) intentionally avoid popular blockbusters recommended by algorithms, instead opting for obscure films that are often difficult to find resources for. By demonstrating the ability to access scarce cultural resources, they transform intangible capital into visible symbols, occupy a higher status in the ritual, and realize what Bourdieu termed "distinction."

### 4.2 *The Gradient Display of Cultural Capital*

Users' performance strategies show gradient differences based on their stock of cultural capital, and the platform's datafication mechanisms reinforce this visibility.

Novice users engage in quantitative capital flaunting. The performance strategies of novice users (e.g., X01, X03) focus on the visible numbers themselves, such as annual total viewings, check-in days, and viewing hours. They tend to fully publish all data charts generated by the platform, with their core motivation being to gain initial community recognition through quantified achievements (e.g., X03: "Seeing that I watched over 200 hours felt quite accomplished, wanted to show it off"). Their cultural capital has not yet been internalized into a stable aesthetic system.

Intermediate users engage in taste and knowledge performance. Intermediate users (e.g., D02, D05, X04) focus on "curation," demonstrating their knowledge system and aesthetic judgment through thematic categorization of film lists (e.g., "Annual Healing List," "Feminist Film Special"), in-depth short reviews, and authoritative film source labels, relying on recognition within specific cultural circles to accumulate capital (D05: "I look forward to someone commenting 'The host has great taste'").

Expert users engage in the construction of cultural authority. Top users (e.g., D01, D04, M02) often act as "opinion leaders." Their reports often appear as long articles or videos, critiquing platform algorithms or popular tastes (D04: "My report is meant to counter big data recommendations, to show everyone what truly good films are"). By deconstructing the ritual itself, they establish cultural authority. Their form of capital is closest to what Bourdieu called "institutionalized cultural capital," i.e., possessing the power to define what constitutes "legitimate culture."

### 4.3 *Identity Performance under Algorithmic Complicity*

There exists a "complicity" between user performance and platform algorithms. The algorithm acts as a "director," providing and reinforcing the performance script. Users' awareness and utilization strategies of algorithms show hierarchical differences.

Table 2. Differences in Users' Perception of and Coping Strategies towards Platform Algorithms

User Type	Perception of Algorithm	Typical Coping Strategies	Interviewees
Novice	As "administrator" or "referee"	Compliance and Conformity: Tend to watch and mark popular films recommended by the algorithm to obtain "good-looking" data.	X01, X03
Intermediate	As "curation partner" or "resource library"	Selection and Utilization: Actively use the algorithm to search for specific genres, but critically filter its recommendations, using them as material for self-curation.	D02, X04
Expert	As "an opponent to dialogue with or even contest"	Domestication and Resistance: Intentionally rate niche films disliked by the algorithm highly to "train" it; or use anti-algorithm strategies (e.g., deliberately rating commercial films low) to assert taste and perform symbolic resistance.	D04, M02

Respondent D02's candid statement summarizes this complicity: "I know it wants me to mark more, interact more, but I need it to help me remember what I've watched. We're using each other."

#### 4.4 The Ritualized Discipline of Platform Time

Platforms transform linear physical time into culturally significant ritual time through "mediatized time nodes," imposing ritualized discipline on user behavior.

Users are highly sensitive to the "annual report time window." M01 described: "As soon as late December arrives, I start anticipating and refreshing Douban, checking if the annual report is out. It's like a year-end ritual; without it, the year doesn't feel properly concluded." Platforms reinforce temporal discipline through technical means, such as countdown posters and splash screen animations, thereby incorporating users into a unified rhythm.

This discipline produces a dual effect. On one hand, it creates a shared ritual moment for the community, enhancing the sense of belonging (X05: "That day, my Moments were flooded with reports; it felt like everyone was attending the same party"). On the other hand, it completes the capital cycle. Through the annual summary, platforms successfully datafy and commodify users' year-long cultural consumption behaviors, laying the groundwork for the next year's algorithmic recommendations and traffic distribution, thus completing the closed loop of ritual reproduction and capital reproduction.

## 5. Discussion

Through the analysis of social media movie viewing reports, this study reveals how the traditional private consumption behavior of "watching films" transforms into a complex, public cultural practice of "performing films" in the platform society. This study will further delve into its underlying mechanisms, internal contradictions, and theoretical implications.

### 5.1 The Ritual Functions of Viewing Reports

Viewing reports is far from a simple data summary; their core lies in performing powerful ritual functions, becoming an important medium for maintaining digital community relationships.

First, time marking and collective memory. Over 80% of interviewees synchronized the act of publishing reports with the transition to the New Year, participating in "mediatized time rituals" (Couldry & Hepp, 2017). Through technical means, such as countdowns and splash screen animations, platforms transform Greenwich Mean Time into culturally significant "Douban Time" or "Xiaohongshu Time." Users shape digital collective memory through synchronized publishing. As D05 stated: "It's like bidding farewell to the old and ushering in the new in the digital age. Not posting one feels like the year isn't complete."

Second, community access and the cultural capital "visa." Viewing reports has become a visible credential of cultural capital, acting as "entry permits" for digital communities. For instance, posts on Xiaohongshu seeking "movie buddies" often require applicants to "attach an annual report screenshot." This indicates that the film's ratings and aesthetic tendencies within the reports become a reliable basis for strangers to establish trust and make social judgments quickly. It functions like a cultural passport, where the "visas" (markings of highbrow/niche films,

specific genre preferences) determine whether a user can gain entry into a particular community of taste. This fully demonstrates that Bourdieu's theory of distinction operates more concretely and visibly in the digital age.

### *5.2 The Tension between Platform Power and User Agency*

The performative practice of viewing reports constitutes a dynamic field of continuous negotiation between platform power and user agency. Platforms exercise "architectural power" through their technical frameworks and the temporal discipline of report cycles. This power does not command directly but shapes the boundaries of possible user behavior by setting the available options.

However, users demonstrate considerable agency within this architecture, generating three core tensions. First, the tension between scripting and improvisation: users simultaneously utilize the platform's standardized "script" while contesting dominance through personalized micro-manipulations, anti-algorithmic curation, and other forms of "improvisational performance." Second, the paradox of data colonization and meaning replenishment: the platform systematically transforms user emotions and tastes into extractable data, effecting a form of "data colonization"; users, in turn, actively infuse this process with emotional value and social meaning, willingly participating in exchange for symbolic rewards, resulting in an unstable collusion between capital logic and the search for meaning. Third, the contradiction between internalized discipline and the pursuit of autonomy: platform rules are often internalized by users as their own logic of action, yet their anxiety regarding "authenticity" simultaneously drives a constant quest for aesthetic self-determination.

User agency does not exist outside power but is precisely manifested through ongoing navigation and negotiation with power structures. This tension profoundly reveals the complexity of the subject's condition within the platform society.

### *5.3 The Contradictions of Identity Construction*

User identity construction is fraught with inherent contradictions and tensions, reflecting the complex dilemmas of self-presentation in the platform society.

First, the interplay between authenticity and performativity. Over half of the interviewees admitted to modifying their reports based on anticipated feedback from others, such as "inflating the rating of a popular film to gain more likes" or "concealing viewing records they deemed 'unrefined'." This reveals a fundamental conflict between the platform's incentive structures and users' authentic expression. Users desire community recognition (and cultural capital accumulation) through performance, yet fear that this performance deviates from the "true self," generating a form of "self-alienation under the algorithmic gaze."

Second, the contradiction between strategic vulnerability and sophisticated identity management. To mitigate the tension above, users develop a refined set of identity management strategies. Among these, "strategic vulnerability" is particularly emblematic. As one respondent (M03) aptly stated: "Intentionally inserting a film like *Tiny Times* into an art film list to show 'vulnerability' makes one seem both interesting and unpretentious." This art of impression management involves proactively exposing a harmless "flaw" to mask a larger performativity, thereby crafting a persona of "authentic expertise" and navigating Goffman's front stage with finesse.

### *5.4 Theoretical Contributions*

This study bridges cultural sociology and platform studies by proposing two core concepts. The first is Algorithmic Taste Performance. This concept integrates Bourdieu's concept of "taste" with Goffman's notion of "performance" within the algorithmic context, positing that contemporary cultural taste is not entirely endogenous to the individual but is co-constructed through ongoing interaction with platform algorithms. The "script" for user performance is heavily guided by algorithmic recommendations, popularity charts, and template designs; conversely, algorithmic judgments are built upon massive datasets of user performance. Therefore, "performative viewing" is a form of taste performance complicit with algorithms, revealing that the operational mechanism of cultural capital accumulation has profoundly shifted from traditional social fields to the algorithmically mediated platform field.

The second is Visibility Capital. Under the dominance of the platform's visual logic, cultural capital must become visible to be recognized and converted. Traditional, deeply embodied cultural capital must be rendered into visible, objectified forms—such as data, charts, and nine-square grids—to participate in social distinction effectively. Consequently, this study proposes "visibility capital"—defined as the capacity to externalize and display internalized cultural capital through platform-approved visual formats to garner attention, recognition, and social currency—as a crucial new form of cultural capital. It is both an extension of traditional cultural capital in the digital age and a result of its operational rules being reconfigured by platform logic.

### 5.5 Practical Implications

The findings of this study also offer important implications for platform design, user practice, and educators. For platform designers, there is a critical need to guard against the risk of aesthetic homogenization driven by algorithmic recommendations and templating. They should consider how technical features—such as supporting "recommendation-free" reporting channels, enabling more flexible personalized editing, and promoting more niche content—can nurture rather than tame user taste, thereby assuming the social responsibility of cultural "curators" rather than "domesticators."

For users, it is advisable to cultivate a reflexive awareness of media use. Users can proactively establish periods of "non-display viewing"—consciously detaching from the instrumental mindset of "watching films for the sake of posting reports" and engaging in consumption devoid of performative intent, purely for pleasure. Safeguarding this aesthetic autonomy is a vital strategy for resisting the excessive encroachment of platform logic and preserving the authenticity of cultural consumption.

For educators, "algorithmic taste" can be incorporated into media literacy education, fostering the next generation's capacity for critical reflection on platform culture.

### 6. Conclusion

Through the analysis of social media movie viewing reports, this study reveals how the traditional private consumption behavior of "watching films" transforms into a complex, public cultural practice of "performing films" within the platform society. The research finds that viewing reports is a form of ritualized production achieved through multiple strategies, including adherence to visual order, personalized micro-manipulations, and anti-algorithmic curation. Users' performance strategies exhibit a gradient differentiation—from "quantitative display" to "authority construction"—based on their cultural capital stock. A complicit relationship exists between users and algorithms, ranging from compliance and utilization to resistance. Meanwhile, platforms successfully implement ritualized discipline over user behavior by creating "mediatized time nodes."

Theoretically, the key contribution of this study lies in integrating dramaturgical theory and cultural capital theory within the algorithmic context, proposing the core concept of Algorithmic Taste Performance. This reveals that contemporary cultural taste is neither wholly endogenous to the individual nor imposed by platforms, but is co-constructed through the continuous interaction between user performance and algorithmic recommendation. Each user's act of marking, rating, and curating serves simultaneously as impression management based on personal aesthetics and as a data source for training and feeding back into the algorithm, thereby collectively shaping dynamic, quantifiable taste boundaries. Furthermore, the visual logic of the platform society establishes a core rule: cultural capital must become visible to be recognized and validated as effective capital. Based on this, the study proposes Visibility Capital, arguing that embodied cultural cultivation must be externalized and displayed through platform-approved visual forms (such as data, charts, and nine-square grids) to effectively participate in social distinction and identity construction. This deeply reconstructs the traditional rules of cultural capital accumulation and display.

Although this study has limitations, including its focus on specific platforms and its primarily qualitative methodology, it provides a significant perspective for understanding identity construction in the digital age. Viewing reports is not merely a new form of cultural consumption but also a micro-political field. They both perpetuate the traditional logic of cultural distinction and accurately reflect the new power relations within algorithmic society, as well as the complex state of human-computer interaction. A deep understanding of this phenomenon not only aids in grasping the evolution of contemporary film culture but also provides a crucial theoretical entry point and practical reference for rethinking technologically mediated self-identity.

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