

Patriotic Education for Young People in the Era of Pan-Entertainment: A Narrative Review

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Abstract

The phenomenon of “pan-entertainment” is predicated on the value principle of entertainment supremacy. The integration of entertainment elements into all facets of society has been precipitated by several factors, including the operation of commercial capital, the trend of individual atomization, and the coupling of various ideological trends. This phenomenon has resulted in the entertainment industry adopting a more significant role in society, extending beyond its traditional function to encompass a broader value concept and lifestyle. Consequently, it has become a primary driver in shaping the ideological qualities, values, and future social behavior patterns of adolescents. However, the relative lag of the pan-entertainment carriers, the secularization of the content, and the sentimentality of the form have precipitated a crisis in the leading power, regulatory power, and cohesion of patriotic education for young people. This has also resulted in a diminished capacity of patriotic education to permeate the mainstream ideological recognition and spiritual and cultural life of young people. The mainstream influence of patriotic education can be reshaped from aspects such as the creation of a positive environment, the optimization of supply content, and the innovation of narrative methods, with a view to comprehensively cultivating the patriotic awareness of young people.

Keywords: patriotic education, pan-entertainment, young people, challenges, responses

1. Introduction

The theoretical roots of the phenomenon of pan-entertainment can be traced back to Neil Postman, a master of American media studies. In his work *Amusing Ourselves to Death*, he proposed that “politics, religion, news, and commerce are all willing to become vassals of entertainment... The result is that we have become a species that dies of entertainment” (Postman, 2015, p.4), and it describes the current situation where the discourse power once characterized by rationality, order and logic has been replaced by superficial and fragmented discourse power that is out of context. As research deepened, pan-entertainment has been broadly defined as “the mindset and attitude of treating non-entertainment matters or activities as entertainment, manifesting as excessive craving for entertainment and the entertainment-driven transformation of society and culture. It constitutes a cultural phenomenon centered on consumerism and hedonism, primarily mediated by modern media, which panders to users through ‘vulgarity, vulgarity, and vulgarity’ to achieve instant gratification” (Xiang, 2015, p.51). A nation’s culture represents its unique spiritual wealth and serves as a vital source of national cohesion and creativity. Patriotism education constitutes a crucial pathway for inheriting and promoting national culture. Youth embody the future of the nation and the hope of the people, making patriotism education a frontline battleground for shaping adolescents’ ideological character, values, and future social behavior patterns. Patriotism education, therefore, played a vital role for the country, society, and individuals, but the latent penetration of pan-entertainment into youth patriotism education, as well as its comprehensive erosion and undermining of the educational environment, the youth’s perception of educational content, and narrative structures, meant that the notion of patriotism education was confronted with new risks. Therefore, under the trend of pan-entertainment, how to represent and alleviate the crisis of patriotic education for young people has significant theoretical and practical significance.

2. The Evolution of the Pan-Entertainment Trend in the Contemporary Era

The formation of the trend of pan-entertainment is the result of the manipulation of commercial capital, the evolution of individual social psychology, and the combined effect of various social trends of thought. The rise of this trend of thought has not only brought about the vigorous development of the entertainment industry, but also caused profound changes in people's lifestyles and values.

2.1 Commercialization of Culture: Fueling the Alienation of Entertainment

In its original sense, entertainment is an activity that meets people's psychological needs of seeking pleasure and avoiding pain, pursuing beauty and goodness, and achieving emotional resonance in a fast-paced and high-pressure life. It reflects people's values, aesthetic concepts and lifestyles, in the face of painful reality, our "entire mental activity seems to be determined to pursue happiness and avoid pain, and is automatically regulated by the principle of pleasure alone" (Freud, 1989), however, with the strong injection of commercial capital, entertainment has overreached its boundaries and has been distorted into a tool for increasing capital value. On the one hand, due to the entertainment industry's excessive pursuit of traffic and click-through rates, cultural products are overly simplified and sensationalized. Consequently, their consumption attributes have been exaggerated at the expense of cultural value. They resort to exaggeration and creating topics to attract the attention of audiences and the media. As a result, the consumption attributes and entertainment functions of cultural products have become extreme. "The mass production, replication, and vulgarization of cultural products have become the realistic landscape of pan-entertainment" (Liu, Y.,2022,p.173). On the other hand, this excessive commercialization phenomenon has caused the entertainment industry to lose its original cultural value and humanistic care, turning it into a purely commercial activity. Under the influence of cultural commercialization, developing individuals gradually give up the pursuit of meaning and value. In the process of seeking pleasure, the brilliance of wisdom and rationality fades away, leaving only the illusory pleasure.

2.2 Individual Atomization: Accelerating the Proliferation of Pan-entertainment

Individual atomization refers to the gradual loss of original social connections and interpersonal interactions among individuals in modern society, leading to a state of isolation and self-enclosure. On one hand, accelerated life rhythms, complex social relationships, and detached human interactions have increased individuals' demand for personal space. This space allows them to regulate their emotions and express their individuality. Yet within communal social structures, individuals remain entangled in the interplay of multiple interests and identities. Thus, contemporary individuals "strive for independence by breaking free from tradition, yet become isolated amidst tradition's collapse. Caught in the tension between independence and isolation, they experience 'alienation from both self and others.' This atomizing tendency drives them to urgently seek outlets for escape and release" (Liu, X.,&Yang, X.X.,2017,pp.40-41). The sensory stimulation offered by mass entertainment precisely satisfies this need, crafting a utopian spectacle society for individuals. On the other hand, within virtual realms, subjects grappling with loneliness and craving emotional fulfillment more readily find solace. During this atomization process, individuals express their pursuit of non-mainstream values through "loose, homogeneous groups... expressing pursuit of non-mainstream values creates a field, while socially endorsed disclaimers easily dilute individual social responsibility" (Jiang, M.M., & He, X.,2022, p.81). This inevitably leads subjects, caught between individual atomization and real-world anxieties, to immerse themselves in the entertainment world seeking greater comfort, gradually becoming both creators and maintainers of the online "entertainment world". Thus, individualization increasingly "questions and tends to break people's traditional life rhythms..." The standard life history gives way to the self-created life history (Beck, U., & Beck-Gernsheim, E., 2003, p. 88).

2.3 Coupling of Social Ideologies: Fueling New Forms of Pan-Entertainment

Postmodernism originally sought diversity, yet its theoretical characteristics of de-authorization, decentralization, and fragmentation have disrupted existing mainstream structures and narrative modes. This has led to the emergence of concepts such as value relativism, moral relativism, and historical nihilism", which has to some extent fueled the proliferation of a "pan-entertainment" cultural ecosystem (Ye,F.,2024,p.35. The fast-food entertainment model, characterized by "the present moment is all that matters" and "sensuality reigns supreme" in value choices and ideology, has gradually eroded ultimate values. Culture no longer has a distinction between the refined and the popular. They are all mixed in the diverse information of society, content with eclecticism and the superficial lack of depth, and rejoicing in this pleasant illusion. (Featherstone, 2000,p.11)On the one hand, the trend of pan-entertainment intertwines with consumerism, excessively emphasizing personal gain and promoting hedonism in certain entertainment programs or content. For instance, leveraging celebrity influence and advertising campaigns, it entices massive fanbases to preemptively purchase products endorsed by stars or influencers, plunging them into a vortex of symbolic consumption and refined self-interest. On the other hand, it merges with historical nihilism and populist ideologies, attempting to steer the public toward separatism and extremism. Some irresponsible media outlets or individuals may disseminate

erroneous historical information and concepts. In pursuit of clicks and attention, some content creators may resort to mockery or parody when addressing topics related to the nation, ethnicity, and history.

3. Challenges and Manifestations of Youth Patriotism Education under the Trend of Pan-Entertainment

Patriotic education encompasses instruction in national history and traditional culture, education on national spirit and contemporary ethos, teaching about national achievements and development, national security education, and patriotic practical activities. Therefore, a core mission of patriotic education for youth is to “guide people toward forming a correct understanding and identification with their nation, ethnicity, history, and culture, and to cultivate patriotic sentiments based on this understanding and identification” (Zhao,J.B.,2018,p.73). However, under the impact of the pan-entertainment trend, its outdated delivery methods, mediocre content, and emotional expressions have led to youth’s value orientations becoming increasingly entertainment-oriented and non-mainstream, while their spiritual pursuits show a tendency toward mediocrity and simplification.

3.1 *The Relative Lag in Pan-entertainment Platforms Undermines the Environment for Fostering Patriotic Education*

People obtain material resources and spiritual energy through the only existing, perceivable and experience-exchanged daily life world (Husserl,1982). Therefore, in the era of smart media, this world also includes cyberspace platforms, utilizing their rich resources, diverse interactions, and rapid dissemination to bridge the gap with young people. This has transformed digital platforms into new environments and tools for cultivating patriotic education among youth. However, as vehicles for nurturing and disseminating ideas, these platforms also exhibit relative lag, exerting multifaceted negative impacts on the environment for patriotic education.

Firstly, on online platforms, creators prioritize traffic and “desire the sole and uncontested goal” (Bauman,2002, p.111), which has led to a deviation or misunderstanding of patriotism among young people. Amidst the vast sea of entertainment-oriented information, young people often pay insufficient attention to in-depth content concerning national history, ethnic culture, and patriotic spirit. This directly leads to a superficial understanding of patriotism. Furthermore, the diverse and unregulated content on these platforms exposes youth to conflicting viewpoints, stances, and interpretations when encountering patriotic themes. The disparity and contradictions among these sources may confuse young people, even causing them to question patriotism. Simultaneously, the low barrier to online access and the uneven quality of user-generated content—often influenced by personal biases and emotions—facilitate the spread of inflammatory and extreme rhetoric.

Secondly, online platforms have been infiltrated by external forces, exposing young people to Western culture and diverse values. In recent years, Western concepts like “universal values” and ‘neoliberalism’ have entered the public consciousness. “Entertainment discourse has mutated into a tool for ideological struggle... These social trends, disguised as entertainment discourse, confuse audiences” (Yang, Z.W.,2020, pp.181-192), creating opposition to mainstream values. They promote content aligned with their own culture while completely blocking content that does not, attempting to undermine young people’s sense of national identity and thereby negatively impact their patriotic sentiments. This increases the difficulty of patriotic education in distinguishing right from wrong, making accurate choices and guiding mainstream values (Seton-Watson,1977). Simultaneously, amid the convergence of multiple value systems, young people often struggle to access complete and accurate information about patriotic education. This impacts their ideological perspectives and value orientations, leading to “political discourse, economic discourse, cultural discourse, and moral discourse being largely fragmented and reconstructed, thereby causing young people to drift away from the authority of mainstream ideological discourse” (Shao,F.Q.,&Liu,A.,2023,p.21).

Thirdly, the incomplete regulatory framework for online platforms has led to a decline in patriotic sentiment and a lack of patriotic action among young people. Online platforms “lack effective mechanisms for monitoring public opinion”(Wang, L.H.,&Wen, X.P.,2020,p.109), making them susceptible to becoming channels for spreading misinformation. Patriotic education “primarily aims to inspire the emergence and expression of patriotic sentiments, thus promoting the transformation of emotional patriotism into rational cognition” (Li, H.J.,&Long, 2023,pp.11-14). Information on online platforms, however, lacks systematic oversight procedures and mechanisms. When young people browse such content, they may only gain partial, incomplete knowledge and perspectives, making it difficult to develop a comprehensive, deep understanding of patriotism. This, in turn, impedes the cultivation and elevation of their patriotic sentiments. Simultaneously, online platforms lack an evaluation system for young people’s patriotic sentiments, failing to provide personalized analysis and services for their emotions and cognition.

Consequently, young people struggle to translate patriotic sentiments into action. While existing studies have acknowledged platform lag as a barrier (Shao & Liu, 2023), few have analyzed how external ideological infiltration and inadequate regulation interact to exacerbate this issue—this review addresses this gap by proposing a multi-layered environmental governance framework. Young people may devote more energy to personal entertainment and consumption, overlooking the importance of translating patriotic sentiments into concrete actions.

3.2 The Vulgarization of Pan-entertainment Content Disrupts the Discourse of Patriotic Education

Patriotism is a unique cultural phenomenon, often characterized as “specific cultural endowments such as particular spiritual traditions, emotional experiences, moral norms, and psychological patterns” (Huang, S.H., & Cong, T., 2023, p. 73). Meanwhile, the pervasive entertainment culture, with its relativism and nihilism, along with its fragmented and vulgar content, undermines the discursive expression of patriotic education. This leads to a de-sacralization among youth regarding national historical development, mainstream culture, and political life, directly affecting the substantive expression of patriotic education.

To start with, young people's superficial understanding of historical development amid pan-entertainment is widely documented. Guided by the “entertainment supremacy” principle (Xiang, 2015, p. 51), mass media simplifies history into fragmented, consumable segments, stripping its complexity (Liu, 2022, p. 173). Pivotal historical figures and events are trivialized via “spoof” videos and dramatized adaptations lacking critical reflection (Chen, 2018, p. 6), fostering a “fast-food style” of historical consumption (Zhang, 2009, p. 171).

This leaves youth confined to surface-level perceptions, unable to grasp history's multi-layered nature (Zhao, 2018, p. 73). Unrealistic portrayals of revolutionary figures in film and television prioritize entertainment over accuracy (Li & Long, 2023, pp. 11-14), trivializing predecessors' sacrifices (Fu & Qin, 2023, p. 76) and perpetuating biases (Shao & Liu, 2023, p. 21). While prior studies acknowledge this issue, few integrate commercial capital-driven production (Grand View Research, 2025), atomized consumption (Liu & Yang, 2017, pp. 40-41), and ideological erosion (Ye, 2024, p. 35).

Next, the smart media platforms exacerbate the crisis of segmentation, creating a “barrier” between young people and mainstream culture. To cater to the entertainment demands of young people, various media platforms may produce and disseminate a large amount of similar entertainment content. As Dick Heberdigg explained, due to the popular form of subculture, the mainstream ideology has to recognize it (Hebdige, 1979). And the entertainment culture of the youth, just like subculture, coerces the mainstream culture's recognition for profit and thereby gain the right to develop. The homogenization of culture leads to the submersion of mainstream culture in a sea of homogenized entertainment content, making it difficult for its uniqueness and value to be fully reflected. Young people are more likely to be confined to the fields they are interested in, such as anime, Korean dramas, idol chasing, and games, and have difficulty accessing and understanding the mainstream culture in patriotic education. At the same time, segmentation leads to the subculture of communication and expression among young people. The discourse systems and communication methods within each segment are not understood by the general public, and their circulation is limited. This subcultural communication method prompts young people to “regard the cultural landscape they receive and advocate as the ‘universal consensus’ of the segment, constantly weakening the influence of social moral consensus within the segment, and unknowingly falling into moral nihilism”.

Finally, the vulgarization of topics selected by online media leads to the de-sacralization of political life among young people. Online media often tend to choose vulgar topics that are entertaining and stimulating. Even political issues are simplified into light and pleasant entertainment topics and even used for teasing and mocking. Major events “have become the moral high ground for factionalism and tools for online brawls” (Li, Y.Z., 2021, p. 75). By presenting political issues in an entertaining way, young people may become tired and indifferent to political life due to long-term exposure to vulgar content. At the same time, when a large amount of vulgar content floods the internet, serious topics such as politics and society are often marginalized and submerged by various entertainment news and gossip. Young people, influenced by this, inevitably reduce their enthusiasm and interest in political participation, further weakening the status of political issues in their hearts and affecting their determination to participate in national work and contribute themselves.

3.3 The Sentimentalization of the Pan-entertainment Form Erodes the Narrative Structure of Patriotic Education

Patriotic education is a long-term and continuous process. Its narrative structure is both emotional and rational, rising from emotional phenomena and events to rational cognition and actions. However, the form of pan-entertainment often only focuses on sensibility, only pursuing short-term attention and click rates. This emotional expression form has affected the narrative effect of patriotic education.

First of all, the excessive entertainment highlights emotionalism, weakening the seriousness of the narrative content of patriotic education. This narrative approach of pan-entertainment “destroys the meta-narrative and depth of modernity and advocates a return to vulgarity” (Zhang, A. F., 2009, p. 171). Emotional narratives often exaggerate or fabricate historical events to attract audiences, resulting in young people's understanding of the content remaining superficial, even worse than not knowing the historical events themselves and only remembering the fictional “romantic affairs” of historical figures. Meanwhile, patriotic education usually involves serious themes such as national history, national spirit and social responsibility. However, the form of pan-entertainment often pursues a light-hearted, humorous and

stimulating effect. This emotional expression method can easily make the originally serious narrative content shallow and entertaining. “Even the facts themselves are no longer important, which subverts the basic elements such as rationality and truth that reach a consensus on collaborative cognition and values.” (Chen,C.F.,2018,p.6)

In the second place, the emphasis on pan-entertainment highlights novelty, challenging the authority of narrative discourse in patriotic education. In patriotic education, the authority of narrative discourse is crucial for conveying correct views of history and values. However, the overly entertaining and emotional way of expression may challenge the authority of traditional narrative discourse. For instance, some Internet buzzwords or jokes may interpret national policies and the words and deeds of leaders in a teasing way. Meanwhile, media platforms are accustomed to using celebrities and Internet celebrities as the “face” to spread, promote and successfully sell products. The successful model of idols is often overly exaggerated and exaggerated. Secularized values stimulate them, and the once authoritative and inspiring role models have been replaced by so-called “Internet celebrities”. The vulgarization of online media will drive the core values of young people towards new standards, causing them to neglect the importance of national affairs and the seriousness of patriotism.

Last but not least, the excessive entertainment promotes hedonism and blurs the positive nature of the narrative stance of patriotic education. Patriotic education is a political social practice activity, emphasizing the cultivation of young people’s patriotic feelings, thoughts and behaviors through strategic planning, comprehensive deployment and in-depth education. However, the form of pan-entertainment often neglects or downplays the political stance of the narrative, simplifying complex political issues into entertainment topics, thereby blurring the political nature of patriotic education. When the general material conditions are abundant, young people will pay more attention to the spiritual needs, only thinking about happiness and neglecting the reflection on reality and the exploration of ideals. “The landscape-oriented politics of happiness curbs the paradoxical impulse of traditional mass culture to criticize reality” (Jiang,M.M.,&He,X.,2022,p.82). Young people are immersed in the all-entertainment landscape and lose the positive pursuit of patriotism as well as their own dreams.

4. Countermeasures for Youth Patriotism Education under the Trend of Pan-Entertainment

In the era of smart media, to further clarify the status and development trajectory of patriotic education, it is necessary to abandon the tendency of pan-entertainment and start from aspects such as creating a favorable environment for patriotic education, optimizing supply content, and innovating narrative forms, to ensure that young people can not only enjoy entertainment but also strengthen their patriotic beliefs and enhance the status and discourse power of patriotic education.

4.1 Formulate Policy Guidelines to Construct a Rigorous and Positive Patriotic Education Environment

It is necessary to improve relevant laws and regulations, clarify the legal status and role of patriotic education under the trend of pan-entertainment, and provide legal guarantees for creating a positive and upward patriotic education environment that combines sensibility and rationality.

First and foremost, the state should formulate systems and policies to promote mainstream consciousness across the entertainment industry. On the one hand, it is necessary to clarify the definition, review standards, and legal responsibilities of entertainment-oriented content (Dou, 2022), and define patriotic education and publicity goals—promoting a patriotic spirit connotation, emphasizing collectivism and socialist values, and advocating a healthy lifestyle (Zhao, 2018). On the other hand, strengthen publicity, education, and public opinion guidance (Yang, 2020). Establish special funds and incentive mechanisms to encourage high-quality content that integrates ideology, artistry, and entertainment (Shao & Liu, 2023), and organize online activities like knowledge competitions to foster full participation (Li & Long, 2023). While existing studies mention policy needs, few integrate multi-dimensional regulatory and incentive frameworks.

Besides, it is imperative to control and guide capital investment in patriotic education. As Wang and Wu (2021) noted, “The relationship between pan-entertainment and capital and technology is one of mutual driving forces, with capital playing a dominant role” (p. 60). Mere restriction of entertainment itself fails to achieve fundamental governance (Yang, 2020). Thus, on one hand, specific laws and regulations should be introduced to clarify capital’s behavioral norms in the entertainment industry, regulate its use of pan-entertainment means to prevent youth addiction and neglect of national responsibilities, and establish industry associations to strengthen supervision and crack down on illegal capital activities (Shao & Liu, 2023). On the other hand, policy and financial support should encourage capital to flow into patriotic education, supporting R&D and promotion of related projects (Li & Long, 2023), and urging enterprises to develop patriotic cultural products (e.g., films, games) using their resources (Fu & Qin, 2023).

Last but not least, a comprehensive supervision and evaluation system must be established. On the one hand, formulate industry norms and self-discipline conventions for patriotic education content (Dou, 2022), clarify release and

dissemination standards for national affairs and historical culture in cyberspace (Shao & Liu, 2023), and build a sound review mechanism to prohibit vulgar or parody dissemination (Liu et al., 2023). Platforms should respond to social concerns promptly, delete harmful remarks, and avoid adverse information impacting youth (Wang & Wen, 2020). On the other hand, establish a patriotic education assessment system to evaluate implementation effects, hold violating media accountable (Li & Long, 2023), and adjust strategies based on feedback (Yang, 2020).

4.2 Optimize Supply and Create Healthy and Scientific Entertainment Content

First of all, attempts should be made at increasing the proportion of mainstream discourse to showcase the charm of patriotism. There is also need to strengthen the collaboration between various media platforms and mainstream discourse, and incorporate the positive energy works advocated by mainstream ideology into the algorithm's "recommendation pool" (Dou, Y.C., 2022, p.135), and push them to a wider range of young people. At the same time, more cultural elements such as traditional culture and historical stories should be integrated into entertainment content, allowing the audience to appreciate the charm of culture while enjoying the stories and enhancing the cultural value of entertainment products.

Furthermore, aligning with the inevitable trend of stratification and differentiation amid pan-entertainment (Shao & Liu, 2023) is key to accurately engaging the target youth audience. Refining age-based stratification for young people and launching tailored content and products can enhance the relevance of patriotic education (Li & Long, 2023). This includes producing and promoting more real-event-adapted works—such as films, short videos, and music—on youth-popular media platforms, as such content resonates more deeply with their interests (Yang, 2020).

Meanwhile, patriotic education discourse "has taken on a complex form of intersubjectivity, full awareness and full formalization" (Cao, 2023, p. 55), necessitating comprehensive module subdivision based on different subjects, needs, and scenarios. Diversified patriotic education modules—including history education, current affairs commentary, interactive experience, and cultural education—can be designed on online platforms (Dou, 2022). Notably, "subculture" can serve as a foundation for presenting patriotic education content, as it bridges the gap between mainstream values and the youth's cultural preferences (Hebdige, 1979). While existing studies acknowledge stratification in youth media consumption, few have systematically integrated age segmentation, scenario-based modules, and subculture integration.

Last but not least, pay attention to reality and respond to the hot issues that concern the youth group. When confronted with theoretical knowledge and political content from a one-way perspective, young people find it difficult to immerse themselves in them and cannot easily develop a sense of shared honor and disgrace. However, in the context of pan-entertainment, various media platforms can address the practical issues that young people are closely concerned about, such as studies, housing, and labor, starting from the main needs of young people. "Repairing the 'fact' dimension in the mainstream ideological interpretation framework through effective solutions to social reality problems" (Yang, Z.W., 2020, p.190). Social media platforms proactively addressing the real problems of young people and providing official responses will inevitably enhance young people's trust in online media and confidence in the socialist system. At the same time, we should take advantage of the two-way communication function of media platforms and encourage young people to participate in the discussion and dissemination of mainstream discourse by setting up topic discussions and collecting.

4.3 Innovate Narrative Forms and Consolidate the Base for Patriotic Education among the Youth

Transform the way discourse is expressed, converting "rational discourse" and "political discourse" into "emotional discourse" and "popular discourse" that are "understandable, memorable and enjoyable to listen to". By using vivid and figurative language and expression methods, such as Internet buzzwords and short videos, the expression of patriotic education can be made more infectious and communicative.

First, the use of a visual narrative has the potential to enhance the appeal of patriotic education. On the one hand, the use of image narrative has been shown to add affinity and appeal to the theoretical and political expressions in patriotic education (Liu & Zhang, 2023). Skillfully integrating cultural symbols, such as traditional music, dance, and handicrafts, into entertainment content enriches its depth, allowing audiences to perceive cultural charm while finding the content vivid and engaging (Xiang, 2015). Conversely, technologies such as big data, artificial intelligence, and virtual reality have the potential to create immersive, patriotic-themed virtual scenes in variety shows or other entertainment activities, thereby immersing people in a patriotic atmosphere (Dou, 2022).

Offline, the organisation of interactive activities centred on excellent traditional culture – such as history-related games like "Passing the Flower while Beating the Drum" or street interviews with history and culture quick questions—encourages young people's active participation and deepens their cultural understanding (Fu & Qin, 2023). It is vital to maintain a clear distinction between pan-entertainment and patriotic education to ensure that the evolution of educational methods does not devolve into ridicule or commercialisation (Liu & Zhang, 2023, p. 44). While existing

studies acknowledge the value of visual and immersive methods (Yang, 2020), few have systematically integrated cultural symbols, technological tools, and offline interactions.

Second, adopt character narrative and set up “idol” role models. In contemporary times, under the “idol effect”, a large number of fans will emerge. These fans will also demand of themselves by the behavior and standards of their idols, regarding them as “pedestal figures”. Then, under the trend of pan-entertainment, this form can also be adopted to establish heroic figures and role models as idols to promote patriotic culture. In this way, positive energy and values can be conveyed through true and vivid stories, and at the same time, it can inspire the resonance and identification of young people. On the one hand, it is necessary to select those representative figures who can embody the core socialist values as idol role models. These characters can come from various fields, such as technology, art, sports, social welfare, etc. Online media platforms should, through in-depth interviews and reviewing relevant materials, dig out their growth experiences, mental journeys, and stories of striving. These stories should be true and vivid, capable of showcasing the personality traits and spiritual outlook of the characters, while also embodying the core socialist values. Letting young people feel the growth of role models can better inspire their trust and admiration for idols, and then encourage them to study this spirit. On the other hand, do a good job in the “interactive” dissemination of “heroic culture” ... “Breaking the One-way Connection between Past Hero Culture and Youth” (Fu, A.L., & Qin, S.Q., 2023, p.76). To enhance the interactivity between the two, abandon the one-way output of the previous heroic culture, and focus on creating emotional resonance. By telling the stories of the characters, young friends can feel their joys and sorrows, struggles and perseverance, thereby evoking their resonance and identification. This emotional resonance helps to enhance the sense of identity and belonging to the idol role model. In addition, new media technologies can be appropriately utilized to enable young people to have a more intuitive understanding of the characters’ stories. At the same time, elements of popular culture, such as music, movies, and games, can also be integrated to make the stories of idol role models more closely related to the lives and interests of the audience.

Third, adopting a “sinking narrative”—a down-to-earth expression method aligned with the general public’s lives and emotions—can enhance the affinity of patriotic education (Yan, 2023). This narrative approach prioritizes perspectives rooted in everyday experiences, centering on ordinary people’s stories, emotions, and living conditions to foster deeper connections. Translating “high-end” theoretical knowledge and professional terminology into accessible language is key, as it helps “clarify the ‘blind spots’ in the discourse expression of patriotic education and increase the proportion of discourse explanations” (Yan, 2023, p. 12).

Additionally, the role of patriotic emotions should not be overlooked. As Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992) noted, the field of patriotic education consists of a network of objective relationships between various positions, and connections forged through emotions are particularly enduring. Patriotic feelings also shape “the ability of a country and society to self-recover, meet challenges and develop again after a crisis” (Xu & Deng, 2020, p. 128). When engaging with hot social events, framing narratives around human nature and exploring the emotional undercurrents can help young people resonate deeply and reflect thoughtfully, making patriotic education more relatable and impactful.

5. Conclusion

Youth represent a nation's future and hope, and patriotic education is foundational to fostering their national identity and social responsibility. Driven by cultural commercialization, individual atomization, and the coupling of diverse social ideologies (Liu & Yang, 2017; Wang & Wu, 2021), the pan-entertainment trend has permeated social life, straying far from entertainment’s original purpose of emotional sustenance. As this review systematically analyzes, pan-entertainment poses multi-dimensional challenges to youth patriotic education: lagging digital platforms undermine the educational environment (Shao & Liu, 2023), vulgarized content disrupts patriotic discourse (Liu, 2022), and sentimentalized forms erode its rational-emotional narrative structure (Zhang, 2009). Collectively, these issues weaken patriotic education’s ability to resonate with the youth’s mainstream ideological recognition and spiritual life (Ministry of National Defense, 2023).

Theoretically, this review contributes to existing scholarship by constructing a holistic “cause-challenge-response” analytical framework. Unlike prior studies that focus on single dimensions—such as content vulgarization (Liu, 2022) or platform regulation (Shao & Liu, 2023)—it integrates commercial capital dynamics, individual psychological shifts, and ideological trends to uncover the structural roots of pan-entertainment’s impact. It also addresses the gap of fragmented countermeasures in existing research, proposing an integrated solution system encompassing environmental governance, content optimization, and narrative innovation. This enriches the theoretical connotation of patriotic education research amid media convergence.

Practically, the proposed countermeasures offer actionable guidance for policymakers, media platforms, and educational institutions. Formulating policy guidelines to regulate capital involvement and strengthen platform supervision creates a rigorous educational environment (Wang & Wu, 2021). Optimizing content supply—by integrating mainstream

discourse with youth interests and real-life concerns (Yang, 2020)—enhances patriotic education’s accessibility and appeal. Innovating narrative forms through visual immersion, role model demonstration, and down-to-earth expression (Yan, 2023) bridges the cognitive gap between patriotic education and youth, transforming it from top-down indoctrination to bottom-up emotional identification.

Notably, youth patriotic education is a long-term, systematic endeavor. Future research could empirically verify the effectiveness of these countermeasures or explore how emerging technologies like AI and the metaverse influence patriotic education narratives. Comparative studies across cultural contexts may also inform localized adaptations. In essence, addressing patriotic education’s predicament amid pan-entertainment is integral to advancing it in the new era. Through systematic governance and innovative practice, we can instill a firm national identity and pride in youth, nurturing responsible citizens with patriotic feelings and a sense of the times. This safeguards national spiritual cohesion and injects enduring vitality into the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation.

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Authors contributions

Hong Du led the conceptualization and design of the study, developed the methodological approach, conducted formal analysis. Yuting Liu and Hong Du drafted the manuscript, and Hong Du revised it. All authors reviewed and approved the final manuscript.

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No additional data are available.

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