



Sincerity First: The Way to Break Through for Acquaintance Variety Shows——Taking *Go for Happiness* and *Kuai Le De Da Ren* as Examples

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Abstract. With the rapid development of new media, people’s requirements for variety shows have gradually increased. It should be noted that whether shows meet the increasing spiritual and cultural needs of audiences is attached much importance to. The program producers explore and open up new modes to launch diversified shows. Thereinto, the acquaintance party has received widespread attention in recent years. The broadcast of a variety show named “Go for Happiness” unexpectedly became a dark horse in 2022. Furthermore, its success has led to the exploration of the acquaintance variety on many platforms. However, the subsequent shows were mediocre. Until the summer of 2023, “Kuai Le De Da Ren” airs rave reviews injecting new vitality into the acquaintance variety art. This paper starts with the common points of these shows and discusses key elements for the breakthrough of acquaintance variety shows, so as to provide the basis and ideas for the future production of similar programs as much as possible.

Keywords: Acquaintance variety show, sincere-oriented planning, Go for Happiness, Kuai Le De Da Ren

1 Introduction

In recent years, the advanced development of online video platforms has promoted the continuous eruption of reality shows and facilitated diversified content production ^[1]. In parallel, the improvement of the audience’s aesthetic level and spiritual pursuit indicates that the program routine with fake sensationalism, script design, and excessive advertising is no longer feasible. In this context, acquaintance socializing has increasingly become an important role in the production of variety shows on major video platforms. Specifically, acquaintance socializing performs the intimate relationship between guests, i.e., a unique tacit understanding, and the more natural and real the interaction, the more obvious the variety show effect ^[2]. This year, several reality shows with “Acquaintance Party” as the main selling point have been launched, such as “Shi Hao Peng You De Zhou Mo”, “Peng You Qing Chi Fan” and “Kuai Le De Da Ren”. In such cases, it is necessary to actively learn from the production experience of other programs and discuss how the current acquaintance variety shows make breakthroughs,

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such as how to skillfully use the advantage of “acquaintance relationships”, innovating program forms effectively, meeting audience needs accurately, increasing public memory points, and then, achieve double harvest of ratings and word-of-mouth [3].

2 The application of acquaintance relationships in shows

Before the appearance of “Go for Happiness”, there were already many variety shows based on acquaintance relationships, such as “J-Style Trip”, “Oh Youth”, “Wo Men Shi Zhen Zheng De Peng You”, “Gui Mi De Wan Mei Lv Xing” and so on. In South Korea, acquaintance relationships have been used earlier and more widely. Guests in the popular variety shows, “Running Man”, “Infinite Challenge” and “Kang’s Kitchen”, have established popular family team relationships through years of cooperation [4]. This series pattern can greatly reduce filming costs, enhance the audience’s sense of identity, and enhance audience stickiness. However, similar domestic programs take advantage of acquaintances aiming at reducing costs and increasing efficiency. Most programs’ scales are maintained at the small and medium-sized levels, with the purpose of creating greater value through limited program investment. From the aspects of program types, theme structure, etc., variety shows based on acquaintance relationships can be roughly divided into three categories [5], showing as follows.

Acquaintance gathering. The highlights of such programs are basically around reminiscence and sentimentalism [6]. The stars and their friends are gathered together to look back by playing games, eating, drinking, and chatting. “Summer Melody” invited four contestants of the “2009 Super Girl” to a sister party after so many years. “Our Inn” invited Yi Sha and Chen Yao to start a business together and recreate the brilliance of “Tongfu Inn”.

Acquaintance traveling. In the context of traveling, friends not only complete tasks but also feel the fun of life. Tacit and natural interaction, as well as the original friendship between them, can bring positive effects to the program. “Natural High” is a friend outdoor tour program initiated by Teng Shen. The guests of “Tiao Jin Di Li Shu De Lv Xing”, composed of Nan Bowan seniors, feel the humanistic characteristics, through study tours. “Kuai Le De Da Ren” is about a girl and her friends who self-planned and produced their team-building reality show. In addition, the explosive variety “Go for Happiness” in the summer of 2022 is also a musical travel variety show inviting the “0713 group”.

Acquaintance cooperating. Two or more friends co-hosting is the soul and core of such programs, and it has also become the preferred method of many producers today. “Back to Field”, “Welcome Back to the Sound”, and “Go Fridge” are known as Jiong He’s variety shows of his circle of acquaintances. Besides, “Mao Xue Woof” is a scene-based reality show partnered by Buyi Mao and Xueqin Li. They entertain friends at home and nag with friends.

3 Sincerity: the way to break through for acquaintance variety shows

3.1 Sincere Guests of the Show

The level of tacit understanding of guests is the key element towards successful acquaintance variety shows. In the past, some programs were often labeled as embarrassing and contrived shows by the audience. It may result from no trust and no interaction among guests, caring too much about their self-image, so they could not put enough enthusiasm into the filming of the program. Superficial interaction and perfunctory cooperation with the program are not the ways to make reality shows achieve the most basic characteristic, i.e., reality. Obviously, the acquaintance variety show does not demand that the guests should be familiar enough with each other. In order to achieve fresh and living interaction, guests need to be willing to forget the camera in front of the camera and perform naturally and casually ^[7].

The first season of “Go for Happiness” has a Dou Ban (i.e., an evaluation platform) rating of 9.6 points, and the second season, 9.4 points, topping the list of domestic word-of-mouth variety shows in recent years. The show’s guests Xing Su, Yuan Zhang, Yuexin Wang, and others were the contestants of the “2007 Super Boy”, so they were also affectionately called “0713 Re-employment Group” by the audience. Their friendship started 15 years ago. The similar experience of pursuing musical dreams at the same time, and their company with each other have facilitated their warm friendship. It is precisely because of such unique and intimate relationship that they are more relaxed in the program to reveal their hearts, more natural and comfortable to get along with each other, and consequently, it creates an interesting, living, and natural program. Whether it is Wang’s running and vomiting in the wooden man game, Wang and his five champion brothers in the first season, or famous scenes such as reed fireworks flying into the mouth and hilarious word games in the second season, the six guests can lighten a relaxed and pleasant mood with sincere interaction. Based on this, the music composition and chorus of the guests when they were in deep emotion in the two seasons also appeared sincere and moving and received unanimous praise.

“Kuai Le De Da Ren”, derived from Yue Shen’s self-made vlog of “Yeju Family”, currently scores 9.2 on Dou Ban. Thus, it has gained a group of loyal audience before the show, but because three other guests besides Shen are generally not well known, the show is still in a good reputation but has average popularity so far. Yue Shen, Jingxuan Wang, Yuheng Wu, and Yanchen Zhou have not met as long as the “0713 group” from knowing to becoming friends, but they also have a tacit understanding when they interact and get along. In the show, they teased other reality shows that have been filmed into romances. They also cosplayed bicycles and Shen Yue’s mother in an imitation game. Furthermore, the clothes of Shiqi Fan and their car had the same color. These famous scenes help them take the pressure off in front of their friends and let the freak flag fly. In conclusion, they provide each other with enough security, and this sense of security is also one of the most discussed topics among contemporary young people. This is the biggest charm that the acquaintance mode brings to this show.

3.2 Comprehensive Program Planning

The planning of reality shows affects the direction, rhythm, and broadcast effect of the variety show. In order to ensure that the filming process meets expectations, past variety shows provide guests with certain role settings based on a certain script outline, so as to achieve preset effects. But it should be emphasized that the program producer cannot fall into the trap of variety show script. Overemphasizing the drama itself will only inadvertently set up an invisible wall between the guests and the audience, thus, the public gradually loses interest in the program^[8]. Show planning should follow up the whole shooting, and timely investigate the audience's interests. It should not be limited to the framework of traditional variety shows and give guests enough freedom and space. All of these contribute to bringing unexpected effects to the show.

Zhao Hao, the director of "Go for Happiness", has said in an interview, "What the program team has to do is to cover the bottom". Anticipate what guests are likely to do, let them make improvisation, and then the director team has the ability to shoot and get back together. In fact, the program team did just that in "Go for Happiness". Six guests gave up the box lunch and the tent provided by the program group, chose to drive to a restaurant and a hotel, and worked as figurants in Xiangshan Film and Television City to earn living expenses. These activities were not arranged in advance but also required the production team to quickly schedule the transition and make plans. Guests truly became the masters of the show and tried to fight and break the rules. Indeed, their most authentic state was stimulated, fully showing the original charm of individuals and groups, which brought a variety of real expression space to the show. And, it is this authentic quality that has brought the program exceptional ratings results. The first season accumulated 458 million platform plays, and the second season, 1.034 billion^[9].

As a full-service reality show, "Kuai Le De Da Ren" does not take the task as the purpose and there are no fixed sessions and games. If they need to play games to enliven the atmosphere, guests can refer to the game book provided by the program team at any time. The four guests of the "YeJu Family" have great freedom and choice, such as planning and producing the theme song and poster of the show by themselves. In the case of a budget of only 5,000 CNY, they invited familiar artist friends as flying guests with the aim of saving money and even bought fruits using the money of their friends. In the program, the guests proposed to do a backstage-interview column called "You'd Better Be", and the program team was even more responsive. When watching variety shows, the audience can hardly see the traces of the director and screenwriter and fully integrate into the show with the guests and feel their real-life state, just like watching an ultra-long life vlog. As of August 30th, 2023, "Kuai Le De Da Ren" has been online for 66 days and has racked up over 200 million plays on the platform^[10].

3.3 Later Period of Shows

The post-production and publicity of each variety show is to directly connect with the audience, and can also receive the audience's feedback most intuitively. Henry Jenkins stated that "fans are no longer merely viewers of popular texts, but active participants in constructing and circulating the meaning of texts"^[11]. The rhythm and style of post-

editing need to meet the type of the show itself and the needs of the audience. The post-publicity should fully understand the audience's expectations of the program, accurately convey the program's concepts, and allow the audience to have a sense of participation in the program's production and promotion as well ^[12].

The post-editing rhythm and meme production of "Go for Happiness" has always been one of the major reasons for this reality show's high scores. The relaxed, funny, and nonsensical editing method accords with the atmosphere of friends' gathering and joking, which greatly relieves the fatigue that slow variety shows may bring to the audience. In addition, all kinds of humorous memes were spearheaded by guests on Weibo and soon spread among the fan base until they became more well-known. The show's planning and production at the beginning were in response to the call of viewers who watched and loved "Welcome to the Mushroom House", including the subsequent online solicitation of the name and travel destination of the show. These are all signs of the show's efforts to involve audiences in the production. In parallel, in terms of post-publicity, behind-the-scenes materials in the show's official, producer, post-production Weibo accounts, as well as private programs of guests all provide the audience with diverse program materials. It extends the broadcast effect of variety shows across different platforms, which can effectively enhance the sense of experience and attention of the fan group. According to the production company, after the program aired, the main TAG "Go for Happiness" had 6.4 billion reads, 3.36 million interactions, and more than 300,000 originals ^[13].

At present, the main TAG of "Kuai Le De Da Ren" has 1.26 billion reads, 5.57 million interactions and 48,000 originals in the two months since its launch ^[14]. It has no more out-of-circle publicity actions in addition to regular multi-platform publicity with the artist teams, so it can learn from the rich successful experience of "Go for Happiness" in terms of post-interaction and encouraging fans to join in the production.

3.4 Positive Values of Shows

The broadcast of variety shows is actually telling stories with the audience, and whether this story is complete, interesting, and sincere will affect the audiences' comments and impression of the show ^[15]. Whether it is through post-rendering or voiceover, many variety shows try to intentionally or unintentionally convey certain values in the process of program creation, in an attempt to meet the needs of the audience and to arouse resonance. However, if the core value is too rigid, the forced performance will be counterproductive and then greatly reduce the communication effect of the show at the level of social value ^[16].

In the first season of "Go for Happiness", the guests decided to be extras for a day to earn living expenses. They show their respect and love for this work in the show. In the second season, the guests were couch surfing at the house of the family farmer. In the show, they also pointed out that the happiness of life derives from hard work, and advocated a grateful and positive attitude. These positive values are naturally revealed in the talking, which adds humanistic concern to the show. In addition, whether it is the habit of composing and singing anytime, anywhere, holding a concert after communicating with a niche band, or taking the initiative to play with strangers, the six guests

showed their love and persistence in music and life. They used music to experience customs, tell life stories, and express sincere emotions. As a result, warmth and beauty are passed on to the audience.

In “Kuai Le De Da Ren”, the guests always mentioned the opportunity for them to meet and become friends, from which the audience can also learn about the process of getting closer to friends on the road to friendship. They are willing to become each other’s guardian angels, discover each other’s brilliance, and ask friends to care more about themselves without scruples. Guests are no different from ordinary people, and they also have conflicts and laughter with friends in daily life. Reveling in connections with life and friends drives the audience to think of their own life and strike a chord. The essence of the show is to call on humans to discover the happiness in the ordinary, capture the flash in common life, and be sincere, happy, and brave adults.

4 Conclusion

To sum up, this article focuses on the topic of acquaintance variety shows. It starts from the two reality shows with a good reputation in the past two years, i.e., “Go for Happiness” and “Kuai Le De Da Ren”. Subsequently, summarizing and discussing the highlights for acquaintance variety shows to gain both good public praise and good audience rating lies in sincerity. The sincerity of the show is reflected in the four aspects, i.e., guests, planning, post-production, and values. Producers need to firmly adhere to the original intention of creation, focus on the content itself, and pay attention to the expression of social value. This gives them the opportunity to bring the audience a unique and excellent audiovisual experience. It is obvious that these two shows still have flaws, e.g., insufficient planning and slightly rough sessions, but their success and a good reputation can provide valuable references for the further production of acquaintance variety shows and facilitate the potential development of domestic variety shows.

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