



The Attention of Young People in Historical Cultural Variety Shows

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Abstract. In the past five years, historical and cultural variety shows have been popular among young audiences in China, and have also promoted the development of cultural consumption such as cultural and creative products. At present, the academic community has accumulated some research on this: at the text level, a large number of studies have been studied from the perspective of narrative and symbols, and analyzed the narrative mode, narrative perspective and narrative space of the program respectively. However, the existing research analyzes the program text separately from the audience's feelings and does not connect it into a complete communication chain. Based on the Harold Lasswell's 5W model of communication and Bourdieu's theory of cultural capital, this study analyzes how such programs can lower the threshold of understanding traditional culture through innovative narrative methods, visual symbols and multi-platform linkage, and meet the cognitive, aesthetic, emotional and social needs of young audiences. It also reveals that the participation of the audience promotes the accumulation and conversion of cultural, social and symbolic capital, which helps to popularize traditional culture. However, problems, including homogenization, excessive entertainment and superficial participation, still exist. In order to achieve sustainable development, these programs should balance innovation and inheritance, and try to guide the audience to deeply participate in and understand learning.

Keywords: Historical Cultural Variety Show, Lasswell's 5W Model of Communication, Bourdieu's Theory of Cultural Capital, Traditional Culture.

1 Introduction

This study focuses on the realistic background that historical cultural variety shows have received wide attention from young people in the past five years, with outstanding ratings and driving the development of cultural and creative consumption. Traditional culture has changed from boring and remote to easy to be accepted by young people, and the program form has developed from lecture and competitive to the integration mode of "variety + drama + science and technology". This boom Guided by the national cultural policy and jointly promoted by the demand of the youth market. This research is very meaningful for understanding the cultural acceptance psychology of young peo-

ple, promoting the popular dissemination of traditional culture, promoting the development of cultural tourism and creative industries, and improving the theory of cultural variety communication. This research is mainly carried out from the aspects of program narrative strategy, audience acceptance motivation, diversified communication mechanism, social value and industrial effect. At the same time, it focuses on creative homogenization, traffic orientation, shallow participation and other practical issues for reflection. The literature analysis method is used to find and read relevant information and literature, and the current situation of cultural variety research and the theoretical achievements of communication and cultural capital are sorted out; combined with the text analysis method to interpret the content, narrative and symbols of typical programs such as "National Treasure" and "China in the Classics"; and based on the Lasswell 5W communication model Type, Bourdieu cultural capital theory carries out framework analysis. The advantage of this method is that it can well analyze the whole chain of program communication, the logic of audience participation and the capital transformation mechanism, which is conducive to the systematic promotion of research. The ultimate research goal of this research is to reveal the path of historical cultural variety to reduce the threshold of interpretation of traditional culture, the intrinsic motivation and communication mechanism of youth acceptance, summarize its social value and industrial driving effect, point out the development dilemma and put forward the optimization direction, and provide a communication interpretation path for understanding the interaction between youth and cultural traditions. It also provides reference for the innovative development of historical cultural variety shows and the effective dissemination of traditional culture.

2 Literature Review

Cultural programs can also be regarded as a cultural product, and innovation is crucial. Scholars Jeffcutt and Pratt believe that the content production of cultural products has "innovative" characteristics [1]. Feng Zhen also believes that the core of the cultural industry is content innovation [2]. The core transformation of the narrative strategy of the program in recent years is reflected in the narrative perspective and narrative structure. The current program no longer uses God's perspective to make general speeches, but is brought in through the perspective of "star guardians" or "small people". According to the views of Zhou Sihan and other scholars, the audience has "image expectations" when watching the program. The participation of stars just activates this expectation, because it breaks the stereotype of historical themes, the influence of the star himself can also attract more attention for the program [3]. For example, in "National Treasure", Zhang Guoli, as the commentator No. 001, connects the whole story. From the previous life of the cultural relics to the present life, it can also bring the distance between the audience and the cultural relics closer, combined with expert comments and on-site explanations, such as the views of Liang Junjian and Huang Xing scholars, "The use of this multi-dimensional narrative technique not only deeply explores the text The specific history behind the object and the cultural connotation it contains reflect

the cross-time dialogue between 'things' and people, material carriers and cultural values, so that the historical information and cultural spirit carried by the national treasure are gradually three-dimensional and vivid in the hearts of the audience" [4]. Wang Yun and other scholars also have analysis of "dramatic expression" and "space shift", which shows that this kind of narrative can pull the audience into the historical scene in physical and psychological space [5]. It can be said that the unique perspective and innovative structure enable the program to successfully turn "history" into "story".

In addition, as the cultural scholar Jan Assmann said, "Memory relies on the space imagined, while the culture of recall adds symbols to the natural space, and it can even be said that the whole natural scene can become a medium for cultural memory." It reflects the importance of symbols, and symbols are divided into language symbols and non-verbal symbols. Language symbols are line narration, and non-verbal symbols are pictures, music, clothing, stage, etc. In this section, the author will focus on analyzing the latter. In the "National Treasure" program, the actors wear exquisite traditional costumes and practice rigorous ancient etiquette. As scholar Xia Ying said, these visual symbols mark that cultural variety shows have changed from the previous "text reproduction" to "meaning mobilization", from static "knowledge viewing" to dynamic "identity generation". It plays a role in the construction of national memory and cultural community [6].

The program "National Treasure" has 1.349 million fans on the Bilibili website (as of March 6, 2026). According to general observation, a large part of the audience is young people. Judging from the motivation for seeking knowledge, the audience hopes to learn historical knowledge from the program. Zhou Sihan and others call this phenomenon "text expectation" - the audience expects to get valuable information from it before coming into contact with the program. Cultural programs make it easy for the audience to understand through the narrative presentation of serious history, expert interpretation, star interpretation, etc., and can learn in a more relaxed way, which is very satisfactory. Their needs [3].

In addition, emotional motivation is an important factor that drives the audience to continue watching. In the process of watching the program, the audience has emotional resonance, is moved by the story, and has a sense of national pride. Liang Junjian and others pointed out that historical variety shows awaken the audience's historical consciousness through narrative, so that the audience can become cultural practitioners from bystanders, and realize "the awakening of historical consciousness" and "shaping of cultural consciousness" [4]. When the audience is moved by Su Shi's repeated emotion, but open-minded life benefits the people, and is proud of his respect for the inscription "Zhaizi China", this emotional experience itself becomes the core driving force of watching. Sociologist Michel Maffesoli pointed out that the "emotional community" has become an important way of generating the social community. He proposed that "a rational 'sociality' has been replaced by an empathetic 'sociality', which is composed of a series of atmospheres, feeling and emotion to express" [7].

Xie Qingguo and other scholars pointed out that cultural variety shows connect a wider range of secondary subjects into a larger social emotional community through empathetic communication. It is emphasized that through the occurrence and deepening of sympathy, the relationship of the receiving subject is constantly closely connected,

and through the communication of sympathy, it is turned into specific relationship communication behavior and cultural communication behavior, promoting the connection between different subjects with others and society, and also promoting the connection between the subject and culture [8].

Social motivation also drives the audience's viewing behavior. Following Zhou Si-han and Zeng Zhihua's expectation vision theory - the audience not only expects the content itself, but also expects that the content can be transformed into social capital [3]. Wang Yun and others' analysis of "dramatic expression" can also show that the topicality of the program provides material for discussion. In this process, the audience not only meets the needs of learning, but also meets the needs of social interaction using content and gains identity [5].

In summary, the viewing behavior of young audiences is driven by multiple reasons. Knowledge-seeking motivation meets cognitive needs, emotional motivation evokes cultural identity, and social motivation promotes content sharing. These four motivations together constitute the psychological basis of "young people love to watch historical variety shows". As Liang Junjian and others said, the program builds a "historical cognitive mechanism" through narrative, so that the audience can complete the transformation from passive acceptance to active recognition in multiple satisfactions [4].

3 Analysis

The dissemination of historical and cultural variety shows does not start from social media, but starts from the big screen. The prime time broadcast of CCTV Comprehensive Channel and Variety Channel provides authoritative mainstream media endorsement for the program. When analyzing the "dramic expression" of cultural variety shows, Wang Yun and others proposed that such programs build a sense of ritual through specific narrative methods - the formation of this sense of ritual is closely related to the broadcast mode of the TV screen. The audience watches the program at a fixed time and on a fixed channel, which is itself a kind of cultural participation with a sense of ritual [5].

After the first broadcast on the big screen, the long tail effect of the program on the video platform is equally crucial. Guo Yuwan took "National Treasure · Exhibition Season" as an example to analyze the communication strategy of the program: the program was launched synchronously on major online platforms such as "yangshioin, CCTV.com", Bilibili, Youku, Tencent Video, etc.", and achieved extensive coverage through multi-platform linkage. Take Station B as an example, the official account of "National Treasure" uploaded complete programs and tidbits, with a cumulative number of views of more than 100 million. As Guo Yuwan said, the new media platform has "breadned the communication channels" and transformed the program from a "TV program" to a "cultural resource that can be retrieved at any time" [9].

What really realizes the "breaking circle" spread is the short video slice on the social platform. As mentioned above, the "highlight clips" of "Only Blue and Green" and other programs are widely spread on TikTok and Weibo. Guo Yuwan pointed out that the

program is "publicized and promoted on Bible, Douyin, Weibo, Douban and other platforms loved by young people" [9]. These slices lower the threshold for viewing, and users can spend very little time to feel the charm of the program. Short videos assume the function of "diversion" to direct the potential audience to the complete program. In summary, the big screen establishes authority, the small screen provides a lookback, and the short video is responsible for diverting traffic. The three channels have their own functions. As Guo Yuwan said, this diversified communication matrix enables the program to reach audiences with different media usage habits and maximize the communication effect [9].

Bourdieu believes that everyone exists in society and is in a certain capital relationship, including economic capital, cultural capital and social capital. The three major capitals have both their own value attributes and additional symbolic attributes. People's social status and social value depend on the type and proportion of capital.

From the perspective of cultural capital theory, the audience's shallow participation behavior corresponds to the accumulation of "specific forms" of cultural capital. Bourdieu pointed out that the specific form of cultural capital is manifested in the lasting "nature" of spirit or body. When the audience repeatedly watches programs such as "China in the Classics" and "National Treasures" and expresses their attitude through likes and collections, they are actually gradually internalizing the historical knowledge and aesthetic interests conveyed by the program into their own cultural cultivation. This process of internalization does not require deliberate study; rather, it is naturally accomplished through continuous exposure to media, eventually forming a "preference orientation" toward traditional culture—a spontaneous sense of affinity and closeness.

The middle-level participation behavior corresponds to the accumulation of social capital. Bourdieu defines social capital as "a collection of resources closely related to the possession of a certain persistent network, which provides support for members or 'certificials' to win various reputations". In the Bilibili Danmaku, Weibo Super Topic and Douban group, the audience gradually integrates into a social circle with traditional culture as a link by commenting and participating in topic discussions. Although ordinary audiences do not play the role of bloggers, their interaction in the comment area is also accumulating relationship capital - every time they get likes and every comment they are replied to, they are strengthening their sense of existence and identity in the circle.

Deep participation reflects the transformation logic of capital. Bourdieu pointed out that the three major capitals have both their own value attributes and additional symbolic attributes. When the audience transforms from consumers to producers - creating second-creation videos, writing long reviews, punching in offline museums and sharing on social media - they are actually transforming internalized cultural capital (knowledge reserve, aesthetic ability) into "symbol capital" that can be recognized by others. Take the Bilibili uploader as an example, their secondary creation of "National Treasure" and "China in the Classics" not only shows their cultural literacy, but also accumulates influence in the circle through the number of plays and fans. As scholar Liu Yannan said, the emergence of social media makes the audience no longer passive and atomized individuals, but subjects with active and communication power, and even form groups with certain functions by entering one or more social networks [10].

The participation of the audience is not the end of communication, but the starting point of a new round of communication. Bourdieu pointed out that all forms of capital are ultimately convertible. In the process of communication, the audience can convert the social capital accumulated through participation (attention and number of fans in the circle) into the dissemination power of content - that is, to attract more people's attention. The second-creation video of "National Treasure" and "China in the Classics" of the Bibili may get a higher number of views than the official content. These second-created contents interpret the program in a more down-to-earth way, attracting audiences who were not interested in historical themes. The audience's participation in the dissemination of cultural variety shows is not only the expression of interests, but also implies the construction of social identity. Young people share their love for "China in the Classics" on social media and post photos of museums, which also conveys an identity message - "I am a person with cultural taste". This demand for identity construction provides a continuous impetus for the audience's participation, and also explains why the discussion of cultural variety shows can continue to ferment on social media.

The analysis of this chapter shows that the audience participation of historical cultural variety shows can be systematically explained from Bourdieu's "three capitals" theory. In terms of participation, the audience's shallow participation corresponds to the "specific form" accumulation of cultural capital, the middle participation corresponds to the network construction of social capital, and the deep participation is reflected in the transformation from cultural capital to symbolic capital. In terms of participation effect, the accumulation of individual capital converges into the accumulation of circle capital, which ultimately promotes the public opinion climate from "niche aesthetics" to "mainstream discourse". On the feedback loop, the audience's second-creation content and offline behavior become new communication materials, attracting more audiences to join, forming a positive cycle of capital accumulation and dissemination. Guo Yuwan's "interactive ceremony" echoes Bourdieu's theory of capital - the identity gained by the audience in participation is not only the result of capital accumulation, but also the driving force of a new round of dissemination [9].

4 Discussion

Historical variety shows bring traditional culture from professional academic research to daily public discourse, becoming a vivid display carrier and efficient communication medium of traditional culture. The cultural aesthetics conveyed by the program has extended from the screen to the life outside the screen and penetrated into the daily life of young people, transforming culture from written words to experience-oriented and consumer-oriented life content. At the same time, traditional culture has become a new link for intergenerational communication and a medium for bridging the intergenerational gap.

At the industrial level, these programs stimulate offline cultural consumption, transform the emotional flow of the audience into the passenger flow of the cultural tourism industry, and connect cultural and creative products from the screen to offline scenes.

These projects have turned museums into popular destinations, enhanced the attractiveness of archaeology, cultural relics and other related majors, injected fresh blood into related industries, and transformed short-term popularity into long-term development momentum.

At present, there are still obvious problems in historical and cultural variety shows. At the creative level, serious homogenization and blind imitation have caused the audience's aesthetic fatigue. At the level of communication, traffic logic squeezes cultural logic, and excessive entertainment may dilute the original intention of cultural exchange. At the reception level, superficial participation may replace in-depth cognition, because the audience tends to equate emotional resonance with knowledge acquisition, and it is difficult for fragmented content to form a systematic historical cognition.

In response to the above problems, historical variety shows should adhere to the entertainment spirit of education and entertainment, inherit the core values of cultural memory, and realize real differentiated innovation. At the same time, they should grasp the boundaries of innovation, strike a balance between attracting the audience and respecting history, between pursuing transportation and completing cultural missions, between emotional resonance and knowledge transmission, guide the audience from superficial participation to in-depth cognition, and shoulder the responsibility and mission of spreading the genes of Chinese culture.

5 Conclusion

The research results of this study are: historical cultural variety shows effectively reduce the threshold of traditional cultural interpretation through innovative narrative strategies, visual symbol design and diversified communication mechanisms, and meet the multiple needs of young people's knowledge-seeking, aesthetics, emotion and socialization; the audience participates in promoting the accumulation of cultural capital, social capital and symbolic capital. Transformation, forming a positive communication cycle; such programs promote the popular dissemination of traditional culture, drive the development of cultural tourism and cultural and creative industries, and enhance the cultural identity of young people. At the same time, there are problems such as creative homogenization, traffic squeezing culture, and shallow participation to replace deep cognition. Thus, it is further concluded that historical cultural variety shows have realized the effective dissemination of traditional culture in an educational and entertaining way, with significant social value and industrial value, but it needs to be balanced between entertainment and culture, traffic and mission. This research provides valuable reference significance for the future research of historical cultural variety creation and the popularization of traditional culture, which mainly affects the research of cultural variety communication path, audience participation mechanism, cultural capital transformation and other directions. Future research should focus more on differentiated innovation, in-depth cultural interpretation, long-term communication mechanism and other directions for in-depth exploration, promote the sustainable and healthy development of historical cultural variety shows, and better assume the responsibility and mission of spreading Chinese cultural genes.

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