

Research on the Innovative Development of Online Variety Shows in the New Media Era

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Abstract: In the new media era, with the rapid development of Internet technology and the deep integration of various media, the pattern of the media industry has undergone disruptive changes. Under the influence of Internet thinking, audiences are becoming increasingly important, and the choice of content for programmes is characterised by a 'small but specialised' approach, rather than the 'large and comprehensive' approach of the mass communication era. In recent years, there has been an explosion of phenomenal online variety shows, which has led to intense debate and consideration of the production models of popular vertical online variety shows in the industry. Based on this, this paper conducts a detailed investigation into the development of China's online variety shows, summarises the characteristics of China's online variety shows, and explores the new path of innovative development of China's online variety shows from a multi-dimensional perspective.

1. Introduction

Internet variety shows refer to variety shows broadcast on the Internet platform. At present, online variety shows have not only become an important part of online audiovisual programme products, but also an important driving force for the development of China's online audiovisual industry and the prosperity of cultural undertakings. Since 2014, major online audiovisual platforms, including Akiyip, Youku Video, Tencent Video and Mango TV, have been launching self-produced online variety shows, and although the number and types of programmes are numerous, the quality and social benefits of the programmes vary. In particular, due to factors such as content entertainment, audience personalisation and fan stratification, there are only a handful of online variety shows with high quality content, high social ratings and a long-life cycle, and many online variety shows are almost always short-lived, unable to maintain the sustainable development of the programmes themselves. Since 2017, with the inherent requirement for long-term quality development and government management guidance, domestic variety shows have embarked on a new phase of purified quality, orderly and stable development and rational ecological development. A number of variety programmes focusing on vertical areas have emerged and have become an instant craze. With audiences constantly segmented, programme topics have shown a trend towards vertical development, breaking through the previous homogenisation problem and seeking to create pop-up programmes, presenting a new normal. Vertical online variety shows are digging deeper

into many fields, such as "China's Hip Hop", "This! Street Dance", "Summer of the Band", "Hot Blooded Street Dance", "This! It's Dunking" and so on. While verticalisation is important, there is also a need to dig deeper and find new strategies that are more contemporary and in line with mainstream values.

2. Deeply cultivated, vertically segmented programme content

One of the most important features of online variety shows in the age of the split is that they are very interactive, breaking away from the one-way dissemination of information in the mass era. The audience is no longer just a passive recipient, and has a wider and more flexible choice. As a result, online variety shows in the age of segmentation have become more focused on audience segmentation and "small but specialised" content. "Smaller" refers to a narrower selection of content, no longer catering to the majority of audiences with "big and comprehensive" content. "Small" does not mean "narrow", but rather a segmentation of a certain industry or a certain geographical area, and a precise targeting of the target audience. "Specialised" means professional, and this "specialisation" not only includes more detailed professional fields, expertise and professional skills, but also reflects professional attitudes and professionalism, which is also the "eye-catching tool" for online variety shows in the age of segmentation. This is the "eye-catcher" of the niche era.

The popularity of China Hip Hop in the summer of 2017 has shown many varieties show producers the unlimited potential and value of niche, vertical variety shows, and has set a new trend for the original production of domestic online variety shows. It has also set a new trend-setter for the original production of domestic online variety shows, pointing the way forward and providing a strong internal driving force.

3. Celebrities combined with ordinary people, breaking the "star" theory

It is not uncommon nowadays for network variety shows to rely on celebrities to gain attention and ratings. There are two main categories of guest selection for online variety shows: the first is stars who have a large fan base and a lot of buzz, but this type of star has a character set up for the show, but the viewer is left with the illusion that the character is the star himself. The process of creating a star is a long one, requiring huge human, material and financial resources, and star resources are limited. In the process of constantly changing the stars to participate in variety shows to gain the attention of the audience, the so-called reality shows, where the "show" is more important than the "reality", i.e. the stars "act" themselves. In the long run, this is not conducive to the long-term development of the celebrities themselves, which is why it is necessary to break the "star" theory.

The second type of guest is a 'vegetarian' who is not well known to the audience, or a guest who has a small range of influences, and this type of guest creates conversation and conflict on the show. In the long run, production teams are less and less interested in the high quality of the programme's content and are more inclined to invite guests who deliberately create heat to participate in the programme, which is not conducive to the long-term development of the programme.

On 20 July 2017, the Notice on Making TV Up-Star Integrated Channels into Guided and Cultured Communication Platforms set out new requirements for variety shows: to determine the choice of guests to participate in the programmes based on their content and to increase the proportion of ordinary people participating in reality shows. Although the new requirements are aimed at star channels, they are also a wake-up call for online variety shows. Many reality shows have lost sight of the "real" and the "human", with the "show" component outweighing the first two, and have simply pursued a lavish line-up of guests to the detriment of the original purpose of the

show. This time, the State Administration of Press, Publication, Radio, Film and Television issued a notice encouraging more vegetarians to participate in the programme, making them the protagonists of the show, while the stars only act as helpers for the vegetarians to realise their dreams. However, online variety shows also carry a commodity component, and it is difficult for investors to see the value and potential of a show if it is purely vegetarian and no stars are present. In conclusion, the combination of stars and vegetarians is a trade-off, and has been a major trend in recent years. The combination of stars and vegetarians has significantly increased the enthusiasm of all people to participate in the programme, and is an effective means of exploring vertical niche online variety shows for the masses.

4. Keeping the right and surprising, reconstructing the cultural ecology of online variety

Young people have always been dynamic and active in their cultural practices, and they are always willing to take on any challenging task rather than conforming to the mainstream culture. It takes courage to break with the norm, and the courage of pioneers is the catalyst for the birth of new cultural phenomena. Young people do not create new cultural phenomena out of nothing, but by rearranging and combining elements from existing clothing, discourse, audiovisual preferences and character worship, for example, by splitting and deconstructing music or language, or by spoofing or appropriating it, in order to create new meanings. In the age of new media, young people are using the internet to make their cultural phenomena more widely known and noticed, taking over public perceptions with an unstoppable force.

With the continuous development of purely online variety shows, "spoof", "secondary yuan", "pop-up", "fujyoshi", "otaku" and "nerd" have become popular. "otaku", "moe" and other youth subcultural elements are constantly being collaged and recreated, and these elements are gradually being accepted by the public in a "stealthy" way in many pure online varieties shows. These elements are gradually accepted by the public. The "radical", "new" and "entertaining" characteristics of youth culture are also evident in purely online variety shows. "Radicalisation" means that young people often use extraordinary means, such as demonstrations or "death in the face", to pursue what is reasonable and good in their world. This radicalisation is already a departure from the social order and patterns. The "newness" is a result of the young people's constant intuition for fashion trends and pioneering areas. They are not satisfied with the status quo and are always on the cutting edge of fashion in order not to live a dull and boring life. The term "entertainment" refers to the cynical or self-deprecating way in which young people interpret social events, often for the sake of momentary freedom and pleasure, at the expense of deeper reflection.

Youth culture is most broadly understood as all social and cultural phenomena related to youth. There are many different definitions of youth culture, but whatever the definition, it can be distinguished from all other social cultures in terms of its basic constituent elements such as bearers, expressions and value orientations. Youth culture is an integral part of social culture, and all the cultural traits expressed by the youth group, such as their ideology, way of thinking, life style, discourse practices, cultural interests, cult of personalities, political participation and many other aspects, all belong to the youth culture. Youth subculture, on the one hand, is understood as an equivalence between youth culture, i.e. as the idea that youth culture can be equated with youth subculture, and on the other hand as the content of youth culture, which can be collectively referred to as youth culture. Youth subcultures are born out of resistance to and deconstruction of the dominant culture of society, with youth groups often using more exaggerated and alternative methods to break the popular stereotypes of things in order to catch the eye of the audience. With the rapid development of internet technology, the openness and virtual nature of the internet has become more conducive to youth expression in the rich world of the internet, with new things such

as internet buzzwords, pop-ups and trolls popping up all over the place, and as a result, online variety has become a major venue for the accelerated development of youth subculture. The aesthetic standards of young viewers will become higher and higher, and to impress them with good productions, they must have cultural connotations and convey a positive value that is recognised by young people. For example, "This! Street Dance" is a competition and selection of street dancers. Street dance itself has its own culture and spirit, and good street dancers can feel the positive energy brought by street dance and transform it into their own energy and pass it on to more people. Although street dance is a foreign culture, "This! Street Dance" is a sincere exploration of the Chineseisation of street dance.

As internet culture develops at a rapid pace, the policies and regulations introduced are not perfect, and if the speed of audit and supervision does not keep up with its development, it will lead to more problems that are difficult to solve. So, while strengthening the ability to audit and supervise programmes and reduce the scale in online variety shows, it is also important to actively promote good local culture from a creative level, to play a subtle role in purifying the programme market and thus correcting the problems of misguided values and aesthetic vulgarity in online variety shows. Being able to reduce the aesthetic vulgarisation of programmes, purify the environment of online variety shows, eliminate untrue online hype and behaviour that induces viewers to consume, and correctly guide the behaviour of social opinion is exactly what is urgently needed in the current online environment. The prerequisite for innovation and development is to adhere to the correct values guidance.

5. Collective immersion, new patterns of interaction

According to surveys, the core audience for variety shows has become younger in recent years, with the post-80s, post-90s and even post-00s becoming the main audience for the shows. Young people are under pressure at work and busy with school, so they cannot find the time to watch programmes on TV. On the other hand, online variety shows are breaking the limits of space, as the viewing terminal is not confined to the TV as a carrier, but is becoming a smaller screen, allowing for the extension of the viewing scene.

As audiences move down in age, the demands of viewers have also changed in a variety of ways. Based on the expectation psychology of young audiences, "seeking newness", "seeking knowledge" and "seeking empathy" have also become elements that they try to get from variety shows. Compared to traditional TV variety shows, online variety shows are precisely targeted at their audience, actively exploring new and valuable topics and content to provide more useful elements to meet the multiple demands of young viewers.

Based on the above-mentioned audience characteristics, online variety shows should use the advantages of their own platforms to strengthen the audience's sense of immersion through the construction of collective rituals and increase their stickiness to variety shows. The construction of a sense of collective ritual cannot be separated from the resonance between the programme and its audience. What the audience lacks most and what resonates most with the largest audience is the resonance point for the construction of a sense of collective ritual. Through the construction of collective rituals, the audience is stimulated to empathise with the programme to the greatest extent possible, and through the empathy generated, the audience's experience is enhanced, and the audience's immersive experience is dependent on a variety of interactive methods.

"This! Street Dance" emphasises the interaction with the audience in a new and innovative way. One of the most important props in the show is the towel. Towels are not uncommon in everyday life, but this time they were brought to the stage by the programme team, giving them a new meaning and becoming an important prop for the audience to communicate and interact with the

programme. In the audition stage, the towel is used as a "pass card", where the mentor gives a towel to a contestant, which means that the contestant has passed the audition and advanced to the next stage of the competition. In the later stages of the competition, the towels are also used as votes in the hands of the audience. If the audience likes the performance of a contestant or a team, they will throw a towel representing the colour of that team onto the stage and the team with the most towels will win. This! is a unique and innovative way of interacting with the audience, truly allowing the audience to experience the atmosphere of the competition.

"This! This is Street Dance" is an innovative use of pop-ups to interact with the audience. Compared to the traditional form of interaction in variety shows, pop-up interaction is new and is a way of communicating between the audience and the show, which is the only way to retain the audience and form a fixed audience base. The development of new media has rapidly given the traditional industry a new dimension. The rapid development of new media has brought challenges to the traditional industry, so it is necessary to innovate to keep up with the times. This! The innovation of the interactive format of "This is Street Dance" is also a product of the development of the times.

6. Conclusion

Although online variety shows have taken a new step forward in the communication process and are showing good momentum in exploring the path of development, they still need to continue to innovate in the process of future development. From relying on celebrities and traffic to win, online variety shows are now relying on content to win, and communication strategies are becoming more and more diverse. This will require production platforms to explore new production ideas on the road to vertical segmentation, while making good use of traditional media, adhering to originality, keeping the right side of the coin and forging ahead on the road to development.

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