

From Instrumental Rationality to Value Rationality: the Transformation Road of Chinese TV Programs

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Abstract: Entering the new era, national identity and cultural self-confidence have penetrated into the daily life of the people. Simple shallow entertainment has been unable to meet the spiritual needs of the audience. Homogeneous content has caused aesthetic fatigue, and the creation of high-quality content has once again returned to the public. vision. From the perspective of the dialectical thinking of instrumental rationality and value rationality, in the past, the content homogeneity of TV programs has gradually changed to original and diversified content, putting social benefits first, and more prominent cultural self-confidence.

1. Introduction

The concepts of instrumental rationality and value rationality were put forward by German sociologist Max Weber. Instrumental rationality emphasizes the “means” to achieve goals, so as to maximize utility; while value rationality emphasizes the pure motivation and value beliefs of goals. From the point of view of communication, two different rational thinking, to a certain extent, affect the communication content of Chinese TV programs.

The social functions of traditional media make it more social responsibilities than new media, and it is difficult for the content of the program to attract a large audience, while the new media has produced a large number of “popular” programs with the help of relatively less binding Internet platforms. “Idol”, “hype”, “scandal” and other phenomena emerge in an endless stream, and the entire film and television industry has fallen into an impetuous era of content-based traffic. In 2021, the State Administration of Radio, Film and Television will carry out the rectification of the chaos in the “rice circle” and the “clean and bright” operation, which will cool down the “traffic” and let more people start to calmly think about what is really needed in this era. At the same time, with the “out of the circle” of “The Reader”, “China in Classics” and Henan Satellite TV's 2021 “Chinese Festival” series, traditional culture has been pushed into the public eye again and has received a lot of praise.

Judging from the current development trend of TV programs, the dissemination content dominated by instrumental rationality is gradually returning to value rationality. In this process, traditional media and new media need to find their own new program positioning as soon as possible and embark on the road of transformation.

2. Program Production under the Logic of Instrumental Rationality

2.1 Prominence of “Instrumental Rationality” Thinking.

In “Communication: The Blind Spot of Western Marxism”, Canadian communication scientist Smythe put forward the “audience commodity theory”, which is explained by communication theory, that is, how the media and advertisers turn audiences into exchangeable commodities, and also reveals The cruel reality of capitalism: the audience seems to relax by watching TV in their leisure time, but it is actually an invisible labor, a labor based on attention. The media turns the audience's attention into commodities sold to advertisements business, and profit from it, which is often referred to as the attention economy. From the perspective of “audience commodity theory”,

the ultimate goal of TV program producers is the audience's click-through rate and pageviews, in exchange for a large amount of capital investment from advertisers, and creating “popular” programs and topics has become a shortcut to obtain traffic; For the audience, aside from the identity of “digital labor”, the really valuable content is whether they like and are willing to accept the content of the program. The degree of liking for the content determines the audience's stay watching time, that is, the concentration time. Based on the above two points, in order to enhance self-economic value or avoid being eliminated in the market competition, TV program producers blindly cater to the audience's taste has become the most direct choice. With the support of new technologies such as big data and algorithm recommendation, the rational thinking of tools is becoming more and more prominent. Content producers use the data calculation of users, the use of scandals, CP speculation and other eye-catching means and shallow entertainment that stimulates the senses to expand the broadcast volume, to maximize economic benefits, and forget the original intention of making programs. Although the instrumental rational logic orientation of TV programs is a choice made under the development of the times, at present, the development of TV programs under the instrumental rational logic relies too much on “means” and pursues “purposes”, which leads to the lack of “goodness”. , was questioned for not adapting to the development of society and people. Paying too much attention to the “instrumentality” of TV programs and misunderstanding the “connotation” of TV programs is contrary to the new requirements of the development of the new era. Based on this, the rational return to the value of TV programs has become an inevitable choice.

2.2 The Entertainment Content of TV Programs is Relatively Large.

From the draft wave triggered by “Super Girls” to “China in Classics”, which is deeply rooted in traditional Chinese culture, it reflects the hotspots of the creation and transformation of Chinese TV programs since the new era. This transformation not only benefits from the boost of audience demand and market forces, but also relies on government policy regulation and guidance. In the Internet era, subversive changes have taken place in the communication pattern, user structure, and public opinion environment, and user-centered content production has emerged as a “pan-entertainment” feature. “Draft fever” has driven hot programs such as “Blind Date” and “Talent”, which are expressed in various forms, but their essence is the consensus of the TV media “entertainment power station”. It is undeniable that moderate entertainment will add splendor to the content of the program, but in the competition for user resources, excessive entertainment has become the “mainstream”, and the negative effects such as vulgarity and negativity are obvious. The broadcast proportion of life, popular science, and news programs has increased, and the novelty and vulgar materials have softened the news, and its credibility and authority have been threatened. Among them, the most obvious feature of “pan-entertainment” is the talent show. From the original “Super Girl” to the current “Youth with You”, “Creation Camp” and other programs, with the slogan of “Idol Cultivation Department”, the Close the distance between fans and idols, and encourage fans to spend money on the list to let their favorite idols “debut”, under the operation of capital and the blind entertainment carnival of the masses, iQIYI's “milk ticket” incident has completely changed the “pandemic”. The drawbacks of “entertainment” talent shows have been exposed to the eyes of the public, causing widespread concern and heated discussion in the society. In order to vote for your favorite “idol”, over-consumption, “pour milk” has become an industrial chain, behind a seemingly farce, the capital operation is exposed to the public's eyes: the title business “bundles” sales, “Krypton gold hits” The “normalization” phenomenon of the list”, etc. It can be seen that TV programs with excessive entertainment content will affect the social atmosphere and the physical and mental health of young people, which is not conducive to the career development of the TV media industry. The entertainment of the same form reduces the loyalty of the audience to TV programs, and the audience has a mentality of “seeing which program is similar”, and the content of similar programs lacks recognition, which opens the stick between the audience and the brand program. The reduction of audience is not conducive to the long-term healthy development of TV programs.

3. Content Creation after the Return of Value Rationality

3.1 Program Regulations under the “Qinglang” Action.

As the influence of variety shows continues to expand, relevant regulatory authorities have successively issued regulatory policies for rectification. There is a certain lag in the policy itself, and the supervision of program content in the early stage was relatively loose, but as the program content began to have a lasting impact on the society, the 2021 “Qinglang” series of special actions was officially launched. The tough measures of this special action are mainly aimed at Internet phenomena such as “fan circle” rankings and abusing algorithms have also had a deterrent effect on the production of TV programs. Compared with the past, this “Qinglang” operation has stricter restrictions and requirements on talent shows and artists' virtues. The works of bad actors have been removed from the shelves, and the recording of “Youth With You” has been suspended due to the “milk ticket” incident. Judging from the rectification results, it shows the efficiency and toughness of the special action. In addition to the policy documents issued by the relevant government departments, the performing arts industry associations and major communication platforms have all made statements one after another, launching the “Convention on Self-discipline for Building a Clear Online Cultural Ecology”, opposing “traffic first”, refusing to provide platforms for dishonest artists, strengthening Industry self-discipline. In the final analysis, it is not a certain form of entertainment that the regulatory authorities rectify, but content that has a negative impact on the public, especially young people. Effective governance of the network environment enables program producers to effectively control the way they want to achieve their goals through traffic stars, topic hype and other means, no longer blindly catering to the tastes of the audience, which leads to a decline in the quality of content, and does not pursue the effect of dissemination greater than the substantial value of the content. Rethink and create program content that can attract audiences. Through the supervision of policies and regulations and the self-discipline of relevant platforms, staff, and institutions, the two parties work together to promote positive, healthy and uplifting program content and enhance users' sense of happiness and satisfaction.

3.2 Innovative Thinking under “Value Rationality”.

After all, the content of TV programs cannot just pursue economic benefits blindly, and the audience cannot become a commodity used by commercial capital to sell. Data analysis under the long-term instrumental rationality will affect the audience's value judgment. Entering the new era, the return of value rationality makes people start to think about some new questions: What are the inner needs that the current society and audience really desire? As part of cultural soft power, how can TV programs tell Chinese stories and spread Chinese voices? The rapid development of the national economy, the continuous strengthening of comprehensive national strength, and the promotion of international discourse power. Under the guidance of the core values of socialism with Chinese characteristics, “cultural confidence” is deeply rooted in the hearts of the people, and the content of the program has changed from shallow entertainment to deep connotation, opening up cultural programs. development market. Whether it is variety shows, documentaries or TV dramas such as “China in Classics”, “If National Treasures Can Talk”, and “Awakening Age”, different types of TV programs are created based on traditional Chinese culture, and they have received wide acclaim after being broadcast, getting rid of the boring cultural programs. , boring labels, sought after by young audience groups. In addition to the change in content, the TV media, as a communicator, recognizes some of the problems that existed in the past, such as: the sense of superiority caused by the “one-dominant” communication environment, lack of competitiveness and determination to open up the market; and as an advertiser “ Compared with the new media of “Darling”, the advertising revenue of traditional media has been hit hard, and it has fallen sharply, facing operating difficulties; the rigidity of the system and mechanism is not conducive to mobilizing the enthusiasm of the staff, and it is difficult to adapt to the market competition environment. Traditional media seized the opportunity of media integration and expanded their advantages. For example, the staff of traditional media have professional media literacy and educational background, and can strictly abide by industry norms. Their authority and credibility

cannot be ignored, especially during the new crown pneumonia epidemic. The advantages of traditional media have emerged; the background of triple play makes the regulatory authorities have stricter requirements for the media industry. At this time, the policy advantages of traditional media are more conducive to gaining market initiative. In today's network environment, short videos are inevitable, but it is also necessary to recognize that “short” is not only shortening the duration, but also effectively integrating and re-distributing information. And express in a way that conforms to the current trend, firmly grasp the mainstream discourse power of authoritative media, grasp both efficiency and quality, and create a powerful communication platform.

3.3 The Road to Breaking the Circle of Excellent Traditional Culture.

The rich connotation of the excellent traditional culture of the Chinese nation provides important and diverse content resources for the media industry in the new era. With the improvement of China's international status and the strengthening of its comprehensive national strength, “cultural self-confidence and cultural awareness” are reflected in the daily life of the masses, the expression form of Chinese traditional culture has been transformed under the new technology of the Internet, and the modern interpretation of “Chinese symbols” has gained global popularity. Brand new writing. From cultural self-confidence to cultural output, to show the inner beauty of oriental culture in a way that modern and contemporary people like to see and hear, the 2021 Henan Satellite TV “Chinese Festival” series of programs adopts the in-depth integration of “local mainstream media + new online media” to break through Circle barriers, create a phenomenon-level cultural IP, and realize the modernization and transformation of TV programs. This is not only the cultural awakening of traditional culture at the group level, but also provides successful experience and inspiration for traditional media to deeply explore media integration. Success is not accidental. Henan, a major historical and cultural province, has insisted on using traditional Chinese culture as the core content of the brand column for many years because of its profound cultural heritage, creating a vigorous media and forming a unique Brand effect, the broadcast TV programs always insist on traditional culture, such as the opera program “Pear Spring Garden”, the cultural competition program “Heroes of Chinese Characters”, etc. During the hot period of the Internet celebrity economy and idol economy, traditional cultural programs were squeezed. Henan Satellite TV rose to the challenge and broke the previous communication method. The application of AR and other technologies strengthens the audio-visual effect, and takes advantage of the network to quickly become popular in a short period of time. With the help of hot topic searches, we will innovate the online and offline cultural industry industry chain, continue to maintain the popularity, and avoid short-lived. The “Chinese Festivals” series of programs combines the commonality of the audience (the memory of traditional festivals) with culture, and through the transmission of cultural symbols, the audience not only strengthens historical memory and recalls the folk customs of their hometown during the process of watching the program, It also enhances the sense of national identity and cultural identity. In general, the innovative practice of Henan Satellite TV plays a leading role in the realization of the goal of cultural power by traditional media.

4. Henan Satellite TV “Chinese Solar Terms” Series

The most popular TV program in 2021 is Henan Satellite TV's “Chinese Festival” series, which innovatively combines traditional festival culture with modern technology, bringing a brand new visual feast to the audience, and has been well received. In the expectation and voice of the audience, on March 19, 2022, another cultural program of Henan Satellite TV's “Chinese Solar Terms” series “The Adventures of the Spring Equinox” was ushered in. Different from “Wonderful Tour” to show traditional culture, “Adventures” focuses more on popularizing traditional knowledge, and carries the tradition in two ways. In the promotional film, Chen Lei, the chief director of “Chinese Solar Terms”, mentioned: “Using the way of storytelling, a solar term, a story, an emotion, and a song, create different adventures in different solar terms.”

Unlike the gorgeous and beautiful ancient dances of Chinese festivals, Chinese solar terms focus on the collision of culture and modern life. From the perspective of “Mr. Solar Terms”, the short

film sees the past, present and future of the world. The stars move, the rhythm of time changes; every five days, every three days, one period; there are four seasons, and the weeks become years. Different from the general time-travel theme, Liu An, who is “anti-travel”, met with children with scientific dreams, and a dialogue between ancient and modern officially started. When Liu once failed the child, he comforted him: “Si Yang is growing, and all things grow.” This also tells the audience in disguise that under the epidemic, we will get better and better in real life. In addition to the profound meaning of the plot, the adaptation of “Where Is Spring” brings the atmosphere to a climax. The short film is entertaining and entertaining for children, and it is not a kind of encouragement and relief for adults.

5. Conclusion

In the process of transformation of TV programs in our country, it is necessary to view the relationship between instrumental rationality and value rationality dialectically. In the process of continuous media reform, we should recognize the significance of instrumental rationality and actively guide it, and at the same time, we must pay more attention to the aspects of humanistic spirit. The pursuit of value rationality, the effective combination of instrumental rationality and value rationality, to maximize the effect of TV program dissemination. The success of Henan Satellite TV has provided experience for the creation of other TV programs, but it is worth noting that advanced technology is only an auxiliary means, and the real value of communication is the value connotation that TV programs want to convey.

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