

Development Status and Optimization Strategy of Variety Shows in China

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Abstract: The development time of Chinese variety shows is not long. Since the founding of New China, since 1990, Chinese variety shows have officially started, and before that, it was a long period of foreshadowing. The second stage, May 1966, was the beginning of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution. In 1990, the comprehensive start of Chinese variety shows was officially ushered in, and the concept of "variety shows" was also confirmed in the 90s and officially became a civilian entertainment program. As of 2003, the growth stage of China's variety show development has completely ended, and since 2004, China's variety show industry has fully exploded. Now the network society is very developed, variety shows are not limited to watching on TV, video software on mobile phones can also be used to watch variety shows at any time. Since the viewing time is not limited, the program groups no longer have to worry about the problem of not having time to schedule the program, and the program can be broadcast at any time, and the audience can watch it at any time. At present, there are fewer and fewer amateur variety shows, and there are more and more star variety shows, among which there are also many that are recorded and played in the form of amateur contact with stars as a way to make them popular. In recent years, travel, slow life, detective, room escape, cooking, cooperative competition or adventure, Cabaret Audition are particularly prominent.

Keywords: Chinese variety shows, development status, optimization strategy

1. Introduction

In this era of rapid development, China has a large population and rapid progress that has led to fierce competition, and people are working or studying non-stop, intending to stand out from countless competitors to get jobs or study opportunities in advanced universities. At this time, watching variety shows has become an important item for people's pastime, because its real, close to life, can bring people happiness and other properties have become an indispensable part of people's entertainment life. This article will be divided into three parts, the first part is the development process of Chinese variety shows, introducing the development history of Chinese variety shows, the second part is the current situation of Chinese variety shows, introducing the form and content of today's variety shows and their impact on people's lives, the third part is the development vision and improvement strategy of Chinese variety shows in the future, puts forward the dilemma and improvement methods of current Chinese variety shows, and envisions China's future variety shows. This paper is conducted by reviewing previous papers and other scholarly materials.

As a mainstream and suitable program form for all ages, variety shows have vigorous and tenacious vitality, in the continuous development and innovation, variety shows continue to break through old things, bring people a refreshing experience, and then in the process of watching variety shows, people can also contact a lot of things that are difficult to get rid of in their busy lives. This paper aims to analyze the advantages and disadvantages of Chinese variety shows, and propose corresponding strategies for the shortcomings, so as to contribute to creating a better future for Chinese variety shows.

2. The Development Process of Chinese Variety Shows

The definition of variety shows is: variety shows usually refer to the use of various forms of characteristics to produce content that can meet the aesthetic needs of the audience, and then widely disseminated through television [1]. A variety show is a form of entertainment that usually encompasses performances of many natures and is usually broadcast only on television. Most variety shows will invite live audiences to participate in the recording, but there are also live broadcasts.

The development time of Chinese variety shows is not long. Since the founding of New China, since 1990, Chinese variety shows have officially started, and before that, it was a long period of foreshadowing. On March 17, 1958, China's first black-and-white television set was born in Tianjin Communications Radio and Television Factory, and after the 80s of the 19th century, television sets were officially popularized [2]. Under the premise of material security, people began to pursue spiritually. At the beginning of the period from 1958 to 1990, in addition to news, social education and other programs, literary and artistic programs were an important part of the content of the program. At this time, most of the cultural and artistic programs were simple situations in the live broadcast of theatrical performances, but the brave and innovative TV program producers had begun to explore and innovate new forms of cultural embodiment. On June 26, 1958, Beijing Television carried the first theatrical broadcast, which featured theatrical performances by disabled soldiers. This is the germ of Chinese variety shows, laying a solid foundation for the development of later variety shows. In 1959, people became more familiar with this format, and in this year, five drama evenings to celebrate the new China were held one after another, followed by 1960, Beijing Television rehearsed and broadcast a comprehensive cultural Spring Festival Gala for the first time, which paved the way for the grandest and most important variety show in China in the later period, the Spring Festival Gala [3].

In 1961, some of the milestone programs in the development of Chinese variety shows - the Laughing Gala - were born, which brought joy to the audience in a novel form, and in 1962 broke the traditional tradition, increasing the proportion of sketches and reducing the proportion of crosstalk. Although The Laughing Gala disappeared due to the increased expectations of the audience and the social factors of tightening the thinking at the time, it was still a brave new attempt and a key step to change the fate of domestic programs [4].

The second stage, May 1966, was the beginning of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution [5]. This revolution made it difficult for Chinese culture and art to advance at this stage. However, in such a difficult period of time, the Chinese television industry has completed the trial broadcast of color TV and has become more refined in broadcast technology. The third stage, the end of the Cultural Revolution in October 1976, television culture and art quickly recovered and more innovative, because the cultural revolution people's television entertainment vacant for ten years (during the Cultural Revolution, television was only used as a propaganda tool), after the end of the revolution, people's demand for television entertainment skyrocketed, the improvement of technology has promoted the innovation of television program form and content, and the number has increased at the same time. This turning point has made a good paving for the later derivation of the form of variety shows and its vigorous development. In 1983, the Spring Festival Gala, an important variety show,

first appeared in the public eye, which swept the country for a while and led to a number of evening programs. The format of the Spring Festival Gala was novel, the program participants were luxurious, and the audience could call to participate in the program interaction or on-demand the program, including the tea house. Such an innovation has indeed brought a new era of television programs and made a good start for the development of later variety shows. Although after the broadcast of the Spring Festival Gala, the innovation of the program entered a bottleneck period, but in just ten years, Chinese variety shows have made a new leap [6].

In 1990, the comprehensive start of Chinese variety shows was officially ushered in, and the concept of "variety shows" was also confirmed in the 90s and officially became a civilian entertainment program [7]. Most of the variety shows in the early 90s were quizzes, puzzles, and had strong interactivity. At this stage, there are two groundbreaking variety shows, one of which is "Variety Show", which normalizes the evening program similar to the Spring Festival Gala, integrates the artistic characteristics of various categories, and promotes the program process by inviting two literary and artistic units to fight each issue. The second is "Zhengda Variety Show", which is also produced by CCTV at the same time as "Variety Show", which takes tourism culture as the starting point, introduces the characteristics of the world to the audience through guessing, and has a world view, broadening the audience's horizons without losing interest [8]. Since 1990, the host's identity in the variety shows has also changed, not only simply and formatted the curtain, but into his own style, in a humorous form throughout the show, requiring stronger expression ability and on-the-spot adaptability. This hosting style continues in variety shows to this day, and it is a style with strong variety shows hosting characteristics, which frequently appears in many interactive or puzzle programs.

In 1997, the development of variety shows entered a new stage, and game entertainment variety shows participated by stars were born, while puzzle games participated by ordinary people are still developing. In addition, marriage and dating and reality TV variety shows have entered the exploration stage. In this year, one of the most important programs in the history of Chinese variety shows was born - "Happy Camp". Created by Hunan Satellite TV, the program completed the transformation from traditional TV literature and art to a real civilian variety show, incorporating the audience's aesthetics and preferences into the program design, and truly becoming a program prepared for the joy of the people. The main body of "Happy Camp" is a program where stars participate in the game competition, create laughter, attract star fans, and shorten the distance between the audience and the star by showing more aspects of the star, and use the audience's fresh curiosity about the star's personality and behavior under the stage to achieve the purpose of increasing the ratings. It can be said that starting from "Happy Base Camp", Hunan Satellite TV is at the forefront of the development of Chinese variety shows, and analyzing its early programs can find that Hunan Satellite TV's variety shows are very young, and it has invested a lot of money to innovate programs and make the program fine and luxurious, in line with the audience's expectations and aesthetics. At the same stage, reality shows have also had initial development, this type of program originated from European and American countries, aiming to achieve dramatic effects through people's real reactions and coincidences, record real human nature, and resonate with the audience, while its realism is easy for the audience to substitute themselves and get new life experiences, which is very eye-catching and popular. However, such programs are difficult to grasp the scale, such as the "Perfect Vacation" program launched by Hunan Economic Television, which was eventually stopped due to human controversy.

As of 2003, the growth stage of China's variety show development has completely ended, and since 2004, China's variety show industry has fully exploded, with various forms, contents, continuous innovation, and a hundred flowers. In 2004, Hunan Satellite TV's "Super Girl" swept the country, opening a new era of national talent shows, although the show still exists for only four years,

but it is still an indelible important step in the history of Chinese variety shows, and it can be said that it has a major impact on the later talent shows. At this stage, blind date programs are also becoming more and more developed, and the program based on "Do Not Disturb If You Are Insincere" invites amateurs to make friends on the program, which is authentic and interesting, especially welcomed by middle-aged and elderly groups, and has become the conversation of the group after tea. Unfortunately, such shows have been tepid among young people due to false or deliberately vulgar for the sake of eyeballs, resulting in poor reviews, and the overall decline has gradually declined.

Since 2012, Chinese variety shows have entered a new stage, various types of variety shows compete to broadcast, at the beginning, singing programs flooded again, the most familiar is "The Voice of China", the form of the program is novel, different from previous talent shows, "The Voice of China" only focuses on the evaluation of singing, mentors at the beginning of the stage and the direction of the contestants, after hearing the favorite singing voice, turn around and compete with other mentors for excellent trainees after the whole song, in addition, "The Voice of China" 's mentors tend to be professional singers rather than critics, and the show has didactic sessions, and the mentors are more amiable, unlike the snarky critics who were attacked in Supergirl. In terms of investment in the program, the program team is also investing more and more in variety show production, taking "The Voice of China" as an example, in which the chair that can turn around costs 3.2 million yuan in production costs [9]. But the return of big investment is big revenue, and the cost of naming the show and advertising costs also grow wildly as the show progresses. At the same time, Chinese variety shows have also begun to borrow from Korean variety shows. One of the first and most successful is the program "Where Did Dad Go" launched by Hunan Satellite TV, in that period when the draft was everywhere, resulting in the audience's aesthetic fatigue, such an outdoor parent-child program was born, bringing freshness to the audience. Later, there were stars participating in the show "Run, Brother! The new format and reality show with a plot bring the audience a new experience [10].

At this point, the past of Chinese variety shows has ended, and the development of the show has come to the current stage.

3. The Current Situation of Chinese Variety Shows

Now the network society is very developed, variety shows are not limited to watching on TV, video software on mobile phones can also be used to watch variety shows at any time. Since the viewing time is not limited, the program groups no longer have to worry about the problem of not having time to schedule the program, and the program can be broadcast at any time, and the audience can watch it at any time. Such technology has promoted the development of Chinese variety shows. In terms of content, variety shows are also constantly being updated and iterated. At present, there are fewer and fewer amateur variety shows, and there are more and more star variety shows, among which there are also many that are recorded and played in the form of amateur contact with stars as a way to make them popular. In recent years, travel, slow life, detective, room escape, cooking, cooperative competition or adventure, Cabaret Audition are particularly prominent.

3.1. Travel and Slow Life

The longest duration and the most popular show in the tourism variety show is "Longing for Life", the nature of this show belongs to reality shows, inviting familiar stars to a rural wooden house, grow their own vegetables, cook, and live there, so that the audience can see the way their favorite stars usually live, and meet people's beautiful fantasies about rural life. The show mainly focuses on experiencing life, and the reason why people love this kind of show is that in the busy urban life, people can't even cook a dinner by themselves, and in the show, they seem to be able to feel the fun

of living in the countryside, understand the way to plant seedlings, build a shed, and still see the starry sky in the countryside night without being bitten by mosquitoes and not straining their hands, and even experience the sense of achievement of harvesting.

Another kind of tourism variety show is to record and broadcast with the theme of happy tourism and spreading knowledge. Among them, the more typical is the recently broadcast and completed "Jump into the Geography Book of Travel", this type of tourism variety show, generally invite unpopular or outdated literary and artistic workers who have appeared on TV, but each literary and artistic worker in each program has a good relationship, and is commonly known as the "Acquaintance Bureau". The advantage of "Acquaintance Bureau" is that everyone has seen each other's most embarrassed appearance, so there is no need to worry about face or to maintain a good relationship, the whole show atmosphere is joyful, it is easier for the audience to substitute themselves and friends to travel, imagine the joy of traveling with old friends for many years. During their journey, guests will introduce the customs and folklore of their locality, or a little more academic knowledge (for example, in "Journey to Jump into a Geography Book", the participating guests introduce geographical knowledge about Yunnan along the way). This format is very popular with teenagers, because they learn knowledge while having fun, and watching such programs will not be opposed by parents, so the ratings are often higher [11].

3.2. Detective and Room Escape

In China, detective variety shows are divided into two types, one is that each episode is a new story, such a representative show is "Star Detective", which adopts an immersive interpretation method to immerse the audience in a case. Unlike TV series, such variety shows are not pure interpretations, but the program team gives the background and gives each person a different identity, and the guests reason by themselves to explore the truth. The target audience of this type of show is very wide, whether you want to have leisure and entertainment, watch funny links, watch your favorite stars, want to reason for yourself or want to watch horror and thriller scenes, they will come to watch this type of show. The second type of detective show is a whole season as a big story, and what happens in each episode is a clue to explore the last big event, and the representative show of this type of variety show is "Start Reasoning". Compared with the first type, the second type of plot rhythm is slower, but more detailed, generally appears as a substitute for TV series, viewers who like the second type of detective show usually enjoy the process of finding details, and like to reason about the details seen in the first few episodes before the next episode airs, and gain a sense of achievement in verification after verification.

The variety show form of escape room is relatively single, which is rare in the market, but it is very popular. One of the reasons for this is that the interior landscaping takes a lot of time and money, and it is necessary to constantly design and innovate so that all the mechanisms of the secret room can function normally, and try not to repeat the elements that have appeared before, and its theme must be constantly changed. At present, the most popular escape room variety shows in China are the imgo.tv "Escape Room" and "Escape Room God Version", the difference between the two variety shows is that the guests of the former are mostly actors and singers, while the latter focuses on inviting graduates of famous schools. The difference between the two shows is also obvious, the former is mainly entertainment clearance, the latter is mainly sublimation theme. It can be seen from the development of the show that Chinese escape room variety shows are paying more and more attention to the emotional core and promoting correct values. Viewers who love such shows are mostly teenagers who are curious about new things and like to pursue excitement, or people who have always wanted to try the horror room but can't or dare not try, they use such programs to satisfy their fresh curiosity about the secret room, and at the same time, they are happy to see others frightened to achieve entertainment purposes.

3.3. Cooking

The target audience of culinary variety shows is very wide, suitable for men and women, old and young, but such programs are highly substitutable, so there are no very popular culinary variety shows so far. Among the many culinary variety shows, the performance of "Chinese Restaurant" is still more prominent, attracting the audience by celebrities cooking for amateurs, and most of the people who watch "Chinese Restaurant" are not people who really want to learn cooking, but fans of a guest who participated in the show. Real cooking shows are mostly to show local cuisines or famous dishes to broaden people's horizons, or invite chefs to do cooking teaching. This kind of show is difficult to innovate, but it has always had an audience, so it is tepid, but it has not completely disappeared.

3.4. Cooperative Competition or Adventure

This kind of show has a long history, usually including physical strength, intellectual team games, in the continuous reform, now this type of show has added the elements of the plot, seemingly updated but the core remains unchanged, due to the audience's aesthetic fatigue, the public's attention to this type of program is also declining. At present, this type of show is popular with many people who have not seen the show or fans of the show's guests.

3.5. Cabaret Audition

The tricks of talent shows have always been emerging. Due to its varied themes, for so many years, a highly watched talent show has been produced almost every year. For example, in 2019, the bel canto talent show "Sound into People's Hearts", in 2020, "Sister Riding the Wind and Waves" with female stars who have been or less appeared in front of the public as the winners, and the rest of the major dance, composition, singing and dancing talent shows, novelty is unclear, the audience is mainly middle-aged and teenagers, audiences who love such programs are keen to enjoy the joy of the cultivation process, and love the tension and sense of achievement at the moment when the final voting results are announced. Almost all walks of life can be put into talent shows, so such shows are highly sustainable, and it is more difficult for viewers to develop aesthetic fatigue with such shows.

4. Conclusion

The main dilemmas and solutions for the development of variety shows in China today. Although the production level of Chinese variety shows is constantly improving, it is undeniable that many popular variety shows with strong entertainment have copied or borrowed from variety shows in other countries, and rarely have their own characteristics.

Typical plagiarized variety shows such as "Running Man", "Longing for Life", and "Escape Room" are all borrowed or copied from Korean and Japanese variety shows.

The main reasons for the formation of this plagiarism situation are as follows: First, the domestic market is impetuous, there are many competitors, the audience is demanding, most of the program group is unwilling to quietly study new program forms, most of them are mainly to make money as the main purpose, rather than really to spread culture or bring joy to do the program, therefore, the program group chooses the fastest way to make money - copy the foreign has been successful variety shows. Second, there are many restrictions on Chinese variety shows, so program designers are prone to fall into limited thinking, difficult to find innovative breakthroughs, and as various types of programs are discovered one by one, new program types are more difficult to think of.

First of all, the breakthrough of the first dilemma is to solve the negative impact of the program team not doing research and development, focusing on the purpose of making money. I believe that market supervision should take measures to strictly control the quality of variety shows, so that the

number of programs is reduced and the audience's expectations are reduced, at this time, the program group can only earn more benefits by improving the quality of the program, so that the program content has more connotation, rather than just copying the empty shell for making money.

Second, the breakthrough of the second dilemma is how to innovate. In fact, there are two practical ways to find innovative points in the limit, the first is more inclined to life, entertainment variety shows, program designers experience the life of various industries, find the fun points of various industries and amplify, such as "We Forensic Season at the beginning of the workplace" is to let people pay more attention to the work category of forensics, get joy in the process of chatting with doctors, and feel the unique charm of the profession. If I were to design a variety show in this way, I would take the daily life of the driving school coach as the starting point to do an interview and life variety show. The second is more inclined to knowledge science popular variety shows, which can combine the characteristics of China's long history, rich landforms, and huge population, so that program guests can contact different people or things, lead to knowledge points, or only play an entertainment effect. For the special category of history, new program formats can be invented, referring to 2019's "Shangxin, Forbidden City", which combines historical exploration and product design in the Forbidden City with a novel form. Taking history as a major category, you can also draw inspiration from ancient poetry, novels, and other types of literary works, field research, and make knowledge popularization and tourism variety shows. For example, from the famous Chinese novel "Journey to the West", excavate historical facts and re-walk the path traveled by the four masters and apprentices mentioned in the novel. The third is more need the imagination of the creator to completely explore a new way of planning, the program group can choose an absurd, interesting theme for brainstorming, such as allowing guests to find a figurative expression of an abstract theme in groups, you can choose the way of appearance, at the end of the program, all the works are combined to make a short film.

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