A Study on the Body Consumption of TV Variety Programs in the Perspective of Consumer Society

Wen-xin SUI

The College of Literature and Journalism, Sichuan University, Chengdu, Sichuan, China

Keywords: Consumer society, Television variety programs, Body consumption.

Abstract. With the advent of consumer society, as the most influential propaganda media, TV advocates group consumption, perceptual consumption and current consumption. As the best form of television consumption, TV variety show gradually showing the characteristics of consumption in shaping the perfect body image and promoting individual to input themselves. Through body consumption, the public can gain pleasure, release desire and finally the body itself becomes a symbol of consumer goods. In this paper, through the content analysis of current variety show, the performance of body consumption of variety show can be drawn which provides a theoretical basis for the benign development of variety shows.

Introduction

The arrival of consumer society is an indisputable fact. The great expansion of material, the vicious circle of growth, the prevalence of fetishism and the proliferation of symbols proclaim that we are already in the consumer society. Consumption has become a systematic act of symbolic operation. Mass media, especially the TV media undoubtedly become the best transmission carrier of consumer culture. As a typical type of TV programs with consumption and entertainment, the consumptive study of TV variety shows has the typical meaning.

The cultural consumption of the post – industrial age concerned about the secular life scenes and focus on perceptual entertainment and images. The consumption does not lie in the construction of reason, but in the sensual carnival; not in the production of meaning, but in symbolic consumption; not in the spirit of ascension, but in secular expression.

Our body is a highly restricted expression medium which is subject to cultural discipline, thus reflecting the social cultural patterns. The body in the consumer society is the carrier of hedonism and desire. As the best carrier of visual culture, the body consumption of TV variety show becomes a symbol of the consumer goods. The child's body, the body of the idol, and the exposed body are full of the screen which seem to say “Buy it, you will have a perfect body and perfect life”. Then the body caught in a crisis of identity and self-lost.

Causes

The popularization of mass culture and media economy has promoted the development of kitsch culture. As a consequence, elegant culture gives way to pornographic, violent, peeping, vulgar mass culture. Under the commercial competition, the social sense of responsibility and mission of the media has been weakened and kitsch culture has become a channel for the media to obtain huge gains and for audience to release pressure. Audiences who under the kitsch culture’s “brainwashing” appeared spiritual and moral decline, thus kitsch culture increasingly weakened the audience's own enjoyment. As the Baudrillard said, the cultural gives way to the commodity, the spirituality gives way to the consumption and the criticism give way to the vulgarity. Kitsch culture became the main source of cultural consumption of variety programs. The boundaries of kitsch culture and entertainment gradually dissipated, and the lofty status of artistic traditions gradually disintegrated.

Identity Crisis and Self Lost

As an external presence in life, the body represents a life attitude and individual identity. Others through the body's dress to determine their social status and survival value. When the body away from
the flesh with more symbolic value, others are prone to create identity crisis and self-lost in their body. Television and other dominant visual media are constantly reminding that soft and elegant bodies, attractive faces are the key to happiness, and even the essence of happiness.

Through the updated image, TV media constantly improve the standard of the ideal body and the consumer is always in the process of chasing. Consumer society encourages consumers to industrialize the body to change the imperfect appearance, change the time erosion of the appearance and reshape the beautiful young body appearance. Ordinary and aging is completely unacceptable, personality and young is eternal. When consumers spend a lot of money still cannot change the fate of ordinary and aging and then they will fall into self-lost.

**Show Off and False Happiness**

There is a dual practice in the consumer society: the practice of the body as capital and the practice of the body as idols (or consumer goods). In both cases, it is important that the body obtain unreserved economic and psychological inputs. Economic input perform in the shopping impulse and psychological input perform in show off psychological which bring the false happiness. The beautiful body is “sanctified” as a sign in the consumer society and can be priced like advertising goods, which value is proportional to the degree of beautiful, sexy and nude. Body, especially the perfect body has become the most popular goods in consumer society which achieve a secular carnival within the body.

TV variety show is the best carrier of body consumption because it exactly match the body consumption in pleasure, entertainment and carnival. It is television that influence the audience to transform the body and allow the audience to believe that the body can be maintained or even modified. It is television that let the audience to believe that the body is the most important items which can be exchanged by money. By the purchasing force, the deconstructed body can achieve the requirements of reshaping the body. By showing off, the deconstructed desires can obtain the false happiness. “The culture of consumption exposes the image of beauty everywhere in order to arouse people's jealousy and desire, and this instigation is only for two purposes: to earn wealth and to maintain the status.” The essence of all the body image in variety show is to earn wealth though evoking the consumer's desire.

**Main Performance**

As a visual media, TV’s images and symbols have a strong function of anesthetic spirit, especially reflected in the entertainment of television. Through the superficial entertainment, television, especially variety shows make the audience experienced endless pleasure. The sensational story, aesthetic narrative, shocking picture, fragmented information, nonsensical funny and physical pleasure completely broke the audience's sense of defense, the audience is willing to at the mercy of the program, and never tired of immersed in the variety shows. Per capita daily TV viewing time and audience size and length of time are as follows:

![Figure 1. 2011-2015. Per capita daily TV viewing time.](data:image/png;base64,iVBORw0KGgoAAAANSUhEUgAAAIoAAADJCAMAAAAfvd7mAAAgAElEQVR42u3d33f8AAAAABJRU5ErkJggg==)

Data Source: CMS Media Studies
The Fading of Childhood - The Physical Consumption of Children

In the book *The Disappearance of Childhood*, Nick Bozeman said, “Our electronic information environment is letting the children ‘disappear’”, which is the best portrayal of current popular parent-child programs. As the most popular parent-child programs, *Where Are We Going, Dad?* has amazing business value so that more and more stars with their children participate in the program. Then the child became a child star and the father get much fame and fortune. As Neil Bozeman said, “the boundaries between children and adults are disappearing.”

Frequently exposure to the spotlight, the child’s privacy began to disappear and their learning time is replaced by a variety of announcements. The child star are like Truman in the movie of *The Truman Show*, they are born to play, to entertain others. They live in the virtual world which created by the media. They never know what the real world is like, they never have the right to choose their own lives. These child have lost their normal childhood, and countless greedy advertisers are keeping a close eye on their clothes, food, toys, or anything that could bring commercial value to advertisers. The body is no longer belong to their own, but occupied by advertisers. Behind the fishing gold of children, their childhood has gone.

Perfect Body - Beautiful and Perfect Life

The body image can express pleasure, send joy, evoke desire so that the perfect body has become an important element of television variety shows. Modern people always agree with the young, beautiful, sexy body and consider that with the perfect body they can have a more perfect life. Television variety show is undoubtedly the best channels of modern people to appreciate and to pursuit the perfect body. People who has a perfect body in the TV variety show are spiritually happy and materially rich. The perfect body seems to be associated with love, romance, incense cars, villas which become the guarantee of perfect life. People in the TV and out of TV reach a consensus that if you have perfect body, you will have a perfect life.

The propaganda of the body in consumer society is “beauty = feeling good = successful” and the concept of body in variety show is “beautiful = perfect life”. The media has spared no effort to promote the importance of perfect body. The body image in the program always be young, sexy and beating without ugliness, aging and disease. The ugliness and aging of the body becomes unbearable. The consumer starting pursuit the perfect body which used by the variety programs to stimulate consumption. The lens strongly rendering that you can also have “your dream body” to obtain the perfect life.

Exposure of the Body – Self-Identity and Imitation of Superiors

When the traditional body image is not enough to stimulate the desire of the audience, the stimulus can only be achieved by the exposed or grotesque body image. The body found the way to be charming in the form of releasing the desire. People exposed their original private information in front of the public, thus eliminating the difference between “shelter” and “open”. The body has been completely liberated which manifested in games, pornography and even sexual freedom in the variety
show. The twisted body, ugly body, male and female closed body have been attract the audience's attention. From a psychological point of view, the private space is more easily to lead people's desire to spy, so the TV show use the body to attract the audience has become an important means of its business operations.

TV stars show their sexy body and the general public's body is also increasingly exposed. The image of the star's body obtain attention and praise and the image of the general public's body can also get satisfaction. Body, especially women's body, constitute the advertising carrier of goods. Sexy clavicle, fullness of the chest, slender waist and slender legs all can be seen in the variety show and can be extended to the real life in the public body. Individuals in the general public gain recognition of others through physical exposure, so physical exposure can make the individual feel good, feel confident and loved by other people. The body is sold, the beauty is sold, and the porn is sold.

**Conclusion**

As the public’s favorite and convenient consume form, we must affirm the entertainment of variety show. TV variety show release the individual's pressure and the negative social emotions, so we must affirm the positive side of the variety show. The successful operation of television variety programs has promoted the operation of TV media and promoted the development of the society and economy, so we must affirm the consumption of variety programs in some degree, but it is undeniable that the variety show’s over-consumption reduced the whole culture of TV culture.

With the evolution of television entertainment, SARFT (The State Administration of Radio Film and Television) and domestic scholars have been aware of the negative impact of entertainment and they cries for rational entertainment. The government has introduced a series of policies to limit the entertainment of variety shows. But only limit the number and time of program is not enough, the nature of the program has not changed.

Consumer society has become one of the inevitable trend of social development, variety programs need to reduce their own consumption on the basis of maintaining their own stable development. Under the environment of media development of “big data, big media” and the trend of cultural pluralism, the connotation of the development of variety show cannot be confined to the single dimension of “image consumption”, but should take cultural connotation, value transmission and social effect as pluralism Metrics. The win-win of economic and social benefits is the highest standard of television variety show. To meet the social and cultural needs, combine with the development of the whole media pattern, establish a sense of innovation and have a high degree of social responsibility, promote the innovation of television variety programs is the key to success of variety program.

**References**


