Final Year Project Dissertation

The Influenced Factors of Cultural Themed Programs Popularity among College Students

BY

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Submitted to

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    I would like to express my gratitude to all those who helped me during the writing of this thesis.

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Abstract

Cultural themed programs attract significant attention in China these five years, and more and more people from different groups become keen on them, even participating in the activities provided. Although it seems to get a large amount of recognition in the professional area and own the promotion and support from the government, cultural themed programs have a long way from becoming the mainstream of the variety shows market. This dissertation aims at research about the influencing factors of the popularity of cultural themed programs among college students. It uses semi-structured interviews and content analysis to achieve the influence degree and respondents' attitudes, thereby summarizing the influencing factors from various aspects. The researcher assumed that the celebrity guests, market environment, cultural knowledge involved, emotion resonances and social relationships may affect the popularity in this project, and the result indicated that cultural knowledge involved in the programs has the most significant influence, while the effect of celebrity guests can be positive and negative depends on their images, relevancy, and so on. Other factors have positive influence in certain degrees. The research tries to provide reference suggestions to the producers in the market today.

Keywords: cultural themed programs, popularity, Uses and gratification theory

1. Intro and Objective

1.1 Statement of the problems

In recent years, cultural themed programs, such as the "National Treasure" and the "Readers", have become popular considerably and rapidly in China, which has led to a large number of discussions on the Internet, even among the whole society. In 2013, cultural themed programs took root in China; in 2014, a large number of cultural themed programs were presented and developed gradually; in 2015, they became mainstream on the TV screen. After years of exploration and efforts, the traditional cultural variety show mode suitable for society is becoming more and more mature, the depth and breadth of communication are increasing as well. Actually, it has become an effective way for young people to embrace traditional cultures.

In this research project, cultural themed programs refer to the cultural variety shows with art, culture, and history as background, which convey certain cultural connotations and mainstream values. They are widely spread on TV, the Internet, and other forms, including speech, recitation, competition, performance, and other forms.

The goal of this study is to conduct a research about the factors that influence the popularity of cultural themed (TV) programs among college students in the aspect of communication, as well as divide the contributing factors into cultural value involved, market environment, emotion resonances, social relationships, and celebrity guests five categories. Thus, this project tries to figure out the relationship between these elements and the preference of the audience.

This dissertation is likely to be applied to the production process of cultural themed programs in the market today and devoted to the shape of celebrities in the future. Also, it would allow the audience or public to choose the more excellent cultural themed programs to enjoy, providing them a broadened and clear criterion for judgment. They can quickly tell what the show is illustrating or selling to us, why the show is attractive, as well as what they need to focus more on.

Through the internship and courses in communication, a critical issue in the media industry could be pointed out. The profit-oriented promotional measure has dramatically affected our value as a society, and people are no longer likely to spend much time to read or study something. Especially, the youth are no longer pay much attention to books and magazines. However, there is a demand that conveys the traditional Chinese culture to us. Thus, cultural themed programs have stood out in recent years, and they have made an effort to convey a more "mainstream", more traditional, and more positive value to the audience, even the whole society. This kind of show becomes popular out of expectation and gather a large number of audiences rapidly.

Through the research of the contributing factors of their popularity, cultural themed programs can be promoted and improve more effectively and efficiently, attracting more audiences. This possibly enables more people to pay attention to traditional culture, as well as get rid of modern non-nutritional entertainment programs.

1.2 Objectives of the study

Firstly, the cultural themed programs come across their encountered development bottlenecks nowadays. Many different types of cultural themed programs are presented in front of the audience, but they convey the same content and techniques. Many programs follow the previous routine and cannot continue to innovate. The limitation of the audience limits the further spread of cultural themed programs.

Thus, the contributing factors to their popularity are significant for them to develop effectively, attracting the largest group of audience, young people at around twenty to thirty. This provides a more explored market for cultural themed programs. By analyzing the influencing degree of elements, it can evaluate audience's preference. To find out what the audience precisely interested in enables producers to have a deeper understanding of the market, as well as find a new impetus for this industry to create better market environment and satisfied public discussions. This could be applied to diverse programs, and even other forms of cultural activities, creating a new phenomenon for the near future.

Secondly, it contributes to the development of celebrities. As we can see, cultural themed programs become more and more popular among young people, and celebrity guests may bring a positive effect on it. In other words, participation in this kind of show is likely to have a particular influence on the image of celebrities. It helps celebrities to explore fans from a different perspective.

2. Literature review

2.1 Cultural Themed Programs

There is not a specific definition of "cultural themed programs" now; however, people have provided several accurate criterions already. For instance, Dai (2018) suggested that cultural themed programs should "take Chinese traditional culture as the core content of a column" and "The form of the program gives consideration to culture, interaction and entertainment, and conforms to the basic characteristics and tonality of the variety shows."

Also, based on the White Paper of Chinese Cultural Themed Programs presented by Byte Dance in 2018, the popularity of these shows can be illustrated by the viewing rate, the number of discussions, amount of playback on the video website. It provided a ranking of popularity among many cultural themed programs in China as well, such as "Chinese Poetry Conference", "The Reader", and "The National Treasure".

2.2 Celebrity endorsements

This project may apply some communication theories and prove their views. At first, celebrity effect or celebrity could be a significant part of the influenced factors in this dissertation. According to Business dictionary (2019), celebrity endorsement "is a form of advertising campaign or marketing strategy used by brands, companies, or a non-profit organization which involves celebrities or a well-known person using their social

status or their fame to help promote a product, service or even raise awareness on environmental or social matters." Also, Paul & Janelle (2005) suggested that advertisers believe that using celebrity endorsers will foster, in the mind of the consumer, a match or connection between the celebrity and the endorsed brand. Despite advertisements, all media or public activities favor celebrities to enhance their popularity, such as celebrity endorsement stimulating consumption, celebrities in charity events leading attention to vulnerable groups, and so on.

Hence, this project supposes that the same phenomenon is shown in cultural themed programs. Not only cultural themed programs, but other shows also prefer famous guests to make viewing rates increase. Therefore, this project raises the question of whether the celebrity guests can attract the audience in cultural themed programs.

Celebrity endorsements are associated with another fundamental theory in communication, which is the Elaboration Likelihood Model. Richard Petty and John Cacioppo (1986) illustrated two significant routes in persuasion, which were the central route and peripheral route. In this research, it also indicates that the audience prefers cultural themed programs also use these two routes to make choices. For instance, the depth of the content, skills, or effects in production may probably relate to the central route, while the famous or favorite guests who are invited and recommendations from other audiences are more connected with a peripheral route.

Thus, celebrity endorsement belongs to a cue in the peripheral route in this case. Furthermore, there can be a hypothesis that the more celebrity participation in the cultural themed programs, the more popular that program is.

2.3 Uses and Gratification Theory

In the way of the Uses and Gratification Theory, the research can analyze the reasons why the cultural themed programs achieved so much popularity as well. Blumler and Katz (1974) suggested that what people do with media rather than what the media does to people. This theory discusses the effects of the media on people and explains how people use the media for their own needs and get satisfied when their needs are fulfilled. Also, it classifies the needs into five different categories, such as Cognitive Needs, Affective Needs, Personal Integrative Needs, Social Integrative Needs, and Tension Free Needs.

In this project, the popularity is evaluated from the perspective of audiences as well. After collecting comments and interviews, we can divide the contributing factors into the following categories. First, people have a need to acquire knowledge of traditional cultures, which is a significant key point in cultural themed programs, referring to the Cognitive Needs in the Uses and Gratification theory. Katz (1974) pointed out that people will use diverse media for learning about some knowledge, information, and facts. Through watching the programs, the audience acquired the knowledge of Chinese history and culture, understanding the reason why it was endowed with value and inherited. Second, people prefer discussing the common topics with friends, while cultural themed programs provide opportunities to satisfy the audience's Social Integrative Needs. We require socializing with family, friends, and other people in

society. People may watch these shows because their friends watch it, and they may have something in common to talk about. For instance, the first quarter of "National Treasure" became a hit topic on microblog in 2017, and the audience participated in the topic discussion through different media means. Also, there was an upsurge of visiting museums offline. The audience pays attention to the program, and finally reaches the reality participation, realizing the social integration from online to offline. Third, it also meets the Tension Free Needs and Affective Needs. Cultural themed programs enable people to escapism from the real world, as well as to relieve tension and stress. In many shows, amazing audio-visual and gorgeous visual elements, such as plays, songs, recitations, stimulate the audience's senses. Various forms of performance create a sympathetic atmosphere, rendering a refined phenomenon, making the audience produce emotional resonance.

Despite for the resonance in the shows, market environment is another crucial factor of Affective Needs. "With television being the electronic media, the spread content of our society is incoherence and lacking of context, so is simple, short, trivial and entertaining. People come out of the "Interpretation age" and into the " Entertainment era". Junk information pours in our daily life at an unprecedented speed. (Neil, 1986)" In recent years, under the guidance of market economy, China's variety shows have been over-entertained. Dai (2018) considered that entertainment programs once have dominated the screen, and the programs with high similarity have been overflowing, resulting in aesthetic fatigue of the audience. The interactive form of traditional culture program shortens the distance between the public and the elite culture, and also meet

the aesthetic needs of the audience.

As for Personal Integrative Needs is about self-esteem. People use media to reassure their status, gain credibility and stabilize. Cultural themed programs provide materials for the construction of cultural identity. They aim at enhancing the audience's interest and pride in Chinese history and culture, and meet the audience's needs for their own cultural identity. The broad global vision of the ancients is connected with the theme today, therefore, it guides the audience to experience the strength and self-confidence of the country.

2.4 Research Questions

This dissertation is to find out what factors influence the popularity of cultural themed programs. Also, is that the celebrity guests, market environment, cultural knowledge involved, emotion resonances and social relationships have a positive relationship with the popularity of cultural themed programs?

3. Methodology

3.1 Influencing Factors and Research Target

This dissertation suggests influencing factors are culture involved, market environment, social relationships, emotion resonances, and celebrity guests of cultural themed programs, and the effect of them is the popularity of shows. Liu (2019)

presented in the People's Daily that the primary audience of cultural themed programs is young people at around twenty years old. Thus, the research target group is set to college students in UIC, which are at around the most considerable audience age, and all of them stay in a similar cultural environment.

Due to the large study population and research objective, research target should not be randomly chosen, because it cannot achieve satisfying data in this project. Thus, the way of picking up the interview would be purposive and subjective in this case. The researcher will invite those people who are keen on cultural themed programs in order to find out the factors in shows they like. In this way, the reason of popularity can be more accurately reflected. Although this way associates with higher risk, because the units to be observed are selected on the basis of the researcher's judgment about which ones will be the most useful or representative, it enables the researcher to achieve more sensitive and effective responses.

3.2 Interview Design

To understand why college students prefer themed cultural programs, "Discussion on the potential education of cultural themed programs to contemporary college students -- Based on the investigation of Nanjing University" (Zhang, Wang & Ye, 2019) provided great inspiration for this dissertation. It made an effort to analyze the contributing factors to the popularity of cultural themed programs today. Hopefully, the experience of its research design provides a reference, and this project may add more

possible answers for choices in some variables and scales.

Compared to questionnaires that have been done by many researchers, this project aims at more in-depth information about the attitudes of respondents. Therefore, the chosen respondents would be asked whether they want to accept an interview about this topic and leave their contacts. After having all the feedbacks, about fifteen people would be invited to conduct an interview. The length of it would be settled down about twenty minutes for each student, and it is likely to be a semi-structured interview by telephone or face to face. Meaning, it has a guideline for a few questions, with follow-up ones based on answers. Different from the structured interview, semi-structured allows follow-up questions according to the example applied, or more in-depth discussion about some elements came up with, which helps the researcher understand what factors respondents precisely focus on, and what content they exactly want to convey. Also, it gives the researcher a chance to explain some substances, and this may reduce many misunderstandings due to word choices or expressions.

Moreover, the Likert scale can provide a guideline on respondent's attitudes towards factors as well, and it allows the researcher to clarify the degree of importance of these variables affecting the popularity of these programs. For instance, the more cultural value satisfied the audience, or the more famous and favorite guests, the more popular the shows are likely to be.

Although the semi-structured interview is time-consuming and is easily affected by interaction, which can lead to biases, it would be appreciated the high response rate of the conversation. In addition, it can clarify the questions to respondents, as well as avoid

"do not know" feedbacks.

3.3 Content Analysis

The outcome of the interview will be analyzed in NVivo, collecting the keywords and calculating the frequency, coding based on the assumed influenced factors.

A typical example is a report from Zhou and He (2019) "Comprehensive evaluation of cultural themed programs based on text emotion analysis". The show "National Treasure" presented by CCTV was regarded as an instance in this article. They take the network comment data of the program as the research object. They used web crawlers to capture comment data, as well as adopted long-term memory network (LSTM) emotional classification, with text relevance analysis to calculate the correlation of core words and LTP to analyze dependency grammar. Through the knowledge map of "National Treasure", they analyzed the emotional data of online reviews, and established the audience feedback analysis mechanism. Eventually, they explored the quality level of cultural themed programs and the communication effect of leading the Chinese cultural heritage. This dissertation may not use web crawlers and complex language analysis systems; however, the principle of categories, method of analysis and data collected online can be applied as references. This is not only for the respondents, but also expands to the comments online. Besides, the knowledge map can be used in this project to present the data more directly and visually.

This method can be used in the interview as well, which may allow the researcher to

learn more about the attitudes of respondents in depth. Similarly, the frequency of words would be recorded, classified, and analyzed in different contexts in this project.

4. Discussions

4.1 Relevancy between Celebrities and Programs

Proper choice of celebrity guests will bring popularity to cultural themed programs. "I see my favorite star participate in a program, and naturally pay attention to and watch the program." Interviewee I said. The interviewer asked questions to understand the attitudes towards guests in the programs. This project divided it into "Viewing intention", "Relevancy", and "Celebrities and Professionals" three categories. The responses pointed out that people would be attracted by celebrity guests in programs, but they care about "Relevancy" most.

When the interviewees were asked whether they would watch a cultural themed program because of their favorite celebrity guests, most of them gave affirmative answers. Only 2 out of 16 said "no" who preferred paying more attention to the content of a show. Also, people have similar opinions as for attracted by the celebrity guests turning to the loyal viewers. If the show's theme, content, and form particularly appeal to them, they will continue to watch it when the guests are absent. Otherwise, they choose the periods of the guest.

There was a five Likert Scale used at first in "Relevancy". Generally, "1" stands for "totally or strongly disagree" and "5" stands for "totally or strongly agree". The

statement "The celebrity guests in cultural themed programs should be connected with the themes" was presented. The average score of the result is "3.938", which is extremely close to "agree". Then more in-depth questions about what impressions or images are suitable for these shows were given. Respondents focused on the perspective of "cultural deposits", "image on the screen", "professional skill", and "private behaviors".

First of all, "cultural deposits" is one of the crucial factors. Interviewee N pointed out, "I hope that the celebrity pays attention to and understands Chinese culture in daily lives, rather than speaking to manuscripts". Then interviewee L gave an example. He talked about that the "National Treasure" was more suitable for people with knowledge like Chen Jianbin and Hu Ge. They were keen on Chinese culture on social platforms and particularly learned traditional culture for filming. But rapper, who takes part in some singing programs, was not a nice choice. He thought, "Everyone has their label."

Besides, some respondents suggested that if a guest who once played an ancient role performed a sitcom in the cultural themed program, others could better understand the ancient culture, which was more persuasive. Respondent N talked about that "When performing works related to traditional culture, actors or singers must know about relevant background knowledge, and even learn some related etiquette cultures and language styles, which is a kind of accumulation for themselves." When the "screen image" is more linked with traditional Chinese culture, the more sense of substitution will be brought to the audience.

"Professional skill" of celebrity guests also significantly affects the effect of

performance in programs. Respondent E used "Everlasting Classics" as an example, and he thought that the singing skills of the guest must be guaranteed, and they should have a specific accumulation or understanding of ancient poetry as well as have their own views and understanding. Only when celebrities have a high professional level accumulation can they present excellent works, impress the audience, and make the audience attracted by the charm of traditional culture.

On the contrary, Interviewee P pointed out, "If his behavior is contrary to the culture we admire, I think it would be ironic for him to come up." Audience cares about the "private behavior" of celebrity guests as well. Interviewees considered that it is not advisable for celebrities to violate laws and disciplines, such as drug-taking, whoring, tax evasion, or bad morality. "This kind of behavior will make me feel that celebrities are not cultivated, which is not in line with the values of traditional Chinese culture. It is not persuasive to promote culture itself, right?" She said.

Furthermore, this project compared audience preference of "Celebrity guests", who refer to people with high popularity within a certain range, such as actors, athletes, the rich and so on, especially stars in this research, and "Professionals in traditional culture", such as professors in many universities, museum curators, cultural research scholars, and historians. On five Likert-scale, people scored "3.313" and "4.813" on average for each kind. Also, over 80% of respondents chose "5" for "Professionals", whereas most people selected "3" for "Celebrities". There is no doubt that people prefer "Professionals" rather than "Celebrities", and the researcher gave followed-up questions to find out the reasons.

Most of them suggested that celebrities focused on attracting more audiences, thereby transforming their fans to long-term viewers. They play a transitional role in the shows. Respondent E thought, "The popularity brought by celebrities can make more audiences pay attention to the shows. Meanwhile, fans can see different perspective of idols, which is a win-win thing. Celebrities can be media, and good media can make more people pay attention to these cultures!"

There is another perspective; an interviewee told the researcher that it depends on the performance of the stars. If they do not behave well, they should be absent; however, if they have fantastic performance, they can make the program much less serious.

However, professionals can help us understand the culture and explain knowledge for the audience. They are the "guarantee" for cultural themed programs. A respondent pointed out, "They can explain areas you do not know, and most of what he said is credible." Interviewee F said. Moreover, professionals allow these shows to achieve the goal, which is spreading culture. "The purpose of the program is to publicize traditional cultures and our Chinese history, convey some positive energy or knowledge, and all of these need experts, who can use their charm to enrich the programs." Interviewee I indicated.

In a word, not only advertisers use celebrity endorsers to make connections between "celebrities" and "brands" as the view of Paul & Janelle (2005). Cultural themed programs invited celebrity guests to lead audience to the link between "celebrity guests" and "Chinese cultures". If the commercial spokesmen stimulate consumers to buy products, then these program producers use celebrities to attract their fans and other

audiences' interest in the shows and enhance the viewing. The purposes of both are to publicize their "products" through "bundling marketing". However, one product is consumer goods, and the other one is culture.

4.2 "Over-entertainment " and "Contradiction" in Variety Market

"Over-entertainment and Homogenization" and "Contradiction" in entertaining variety shows led people to discover cultural themed programs in recent years, as the similar patterns and selling points made audiences bored. Respondent N told the researcher, "Entertaining variety shows use various means (whether script or editing), creating conflicts to improve viewing rate. They follow the same pattern so that the audience is aesthetic weariness, and they eager to have a fresh, blank new type." Thus, market environment became one of the critical factors that affects the popularity. This project collected some opinions about the variety shows in China from interviewees.

Many interviewees pointed out that there were too many entertainment programs today, whose themes and contents were meaningless and similar. Interviewee A suggested, "On the one hand, major platforms are eager to rely on variety shows to consolidate audiences. Domestic plagiarism is a severe problem, and it is normal for those who copy with heat. On the other hand, the new forms of programs cannot be over examined, and a large amount of investment is easy to lose. The most reliable way is to learn from each other. If the investment is small and the predecessors learn from each other, the emergencies will be reduced." After watching a large number of these

shows, it becomes humdrum and empty. Thus, people turn to cultural themed programs that have more educational significance and culture intension.

Respondent F argued that most of the forms of cultural variety show are quite similar, but there are many contents of culture that can be explored. Chinese cultures are broad and profound. "There are many cultures that can be mined in our country, so there is no need to copy others. Even if they look similar, but the specific core is different."

Moreover, "Contradiction" is another severe issue. Interviewee P said directly, "I am quite disgusted at this mean, which harms the values of the public. It only makes everyone spend more time doing something that does not make sense, knocking on the keyboard and scold." It is not hard to find that the core of entertaining programs is to let audience consume celebrities so that the more contradictions will bring more audiences, and the viewing rate will increase quickly. Audience is often excited at the beginning and tired at the back. It is better to watch some more positive programs, like cultural themed programs.

On the contrary, cultural themed programs are hardly ever the case. Respondent A thought, "I do not think cultural themed shows need heat by making conflicts. After all, this kind of popularity is temporary, and word-of-mouth is always." And interviewee K told us that the protagonist of cultural themed programs is culture, while the protagonist of other shows is people. She prefers this kind of phenomenon, which is more peaceful and comfortable.

The respondent I helped researcher compare two types of variety shows; she pointed out, "It's true that creating conflicts can improve ratings because most people have a

gossip mood. But culture itself has a unique attraction. You can't judge the truth of the clips, it's just a way to kill time. Nevertheless, we can not only learn a lot from cultural ones, but also relax without quarrel between guests."

In a word, more and more people are aware of the "Over-entertainment and Homogenization" and "Contradiction" of variety shows, but it also provides opportunities for cultural themed programs. Under the state of aesthetic fatigue, consumers are bound to distract their attention to some other variety shows.

4.3 The Significances of Culture in the Programs

Cultural knowledge involved in the programs the most significantly influenced the popularity, which is the key that people keen on these shows. Cognitive Needs in the Uses and Gratification theory refers to people using different media for learning about some knowledge, information, and facts. When the researcher asked about "acquire knowledge through cultural themed programs", it presents a definite answer at "4.063" on average, which means people do learn about some cultures presented.

The interviewee D who scored "5" thought that he could understand the histories behind treasures through the "National Treasure". "You will be surprised that China has such exquisite skills and techniques in ancient times!" Besides, "The program mentions an intangible cultural heritage, "cloud bronze mirror", which was created by the wax loss method at that time. This method is now used in some aerospace engineering production." Also, interviewee M used the "Chinese Poetry Conference" as an instance.

"In fact, we do not know much about poetry, and we just recited them when we were young. But this program tells us a lot about the stories behind the poems. For example, where is the place in a poem, and what happened to the poet at that time. This makes me think the original poetry is quite interesting."

Furthermore, audiences not only watch the cultural themed programs, but they also make a further inquiry online or in the future life. There are 14 out of 16 students showed active about doing some research or finding out further understandings of the content in cultural themed programs they watched. Some of them said that it depends on their interest. Respondent C indicated, "If I do not know something about culture or find it interesting, I will check it online. Sometimes, if I remember something wrong, it can help me correct it." On the contrary, interviewee O is not interested in searching for further information; however, she indicated that whenever the similar or related information shown up in the future, she would pay more attention to it.

Moreover, the researcher collected opinions between different approaches to learning knowledge about cultures. Watching cultural themed programs would be compared with other approaches, such as visiting museums, reading, traveling, and watching a documentary. Compared to "4.125" on average in cultural themed programs, other approaches only achieved "3.688" on average. Meaning, people prefer acquiring cultural knowledge by these shows than others.

Interviewees prefer cultural themed programs because they are more interesting and easier to understand culture or history effectively. Respondent A who gave "5" to cultural themed programs told the researcher, "If I go to tourism or a museum and

nobody explains it, I can only see objects or beautiful buildings, but I do not understand the story behind them. However, if I watch these shows, I can get close to them through the mouth of experts." And interviewee K suggested that the programs told stories in the form of sitcoms, which would give people a sense of substitution and made the audience feel that they returned to that era. Visiting a museum is the role of a latecomer to pay homage to the achievements of predecessors, which might not resonate with the history or communication form as we know that most of the museums are simple glass cabinets, which makes visitors feel estranged.

Also, some respondents pointed out that each approach has its kind, and no one should be better. "TV programs are popular and easy to understand, but sometimes they are not very professional. Reading or courses will be relatively boring, but the depth will be deeper. This way to master the knowledge contains stronger entertainment, while it may be less academic." Interviewee D explained.

However, a few respondents also argued that other approaches brought them more positive impressions. Respondent B thought that watching documentaries would be more serious so that she can receive more information, but variety shows are easy to be attracted by people. "These programs cannot let me remember anything, such as the songs adapted from poems, which I forget after listening to."

In all, cultural themed programs provide an opportunity for the audience to know about Chinese culture, and they may also make people interested in learning this kind of knowledge. People demand an approach to learn about history and culture, while they lack spare time. Reading, visiting museums, and traveling all need time and space

conditions. These shows solve this problem, which is educational but exciting and relaxing. If we have an electronic device, we can watch them in any place and any time, which fits in the rhythm of life among young people nowadays. Through watching cultural themed programs, the audience acquired the knowledge of Chinese history, culture, and value, which satisfies their Cognitive Needs.

4.4 Strong Emotion Resonances in Perception and National Identity

Different kinds of emotions resonances can be brought to the audience in cultural themed programs, such as moved, proud, excited, and all of these can attract people's interest in the programs. Based on the Uses and Gratification Theory, the researcher conducted the interviewed of emotion resonances in three aspects, which are Mood Changes referring to Affective Needs, Self-esteem, and National identity referring to Personal Integrative Needs, and the Ease of spirit referring to Tension Free Needs.

Emotional needs refer to emotional, pleasant, or aesthetic experience. Thus, this project assumed that audiences could realize various emotional led off by watching cultural themed programs. Interviewees gave "3.733" on average for "emotional led off or emotion resonances during these shows". They gave explanation about different kinds of mood changes. Respondent N always felt proud of the culture when she watched the "National Treasure". She told the researcher, "When the experts explain the cultural relics, the stories behind the cultural relics, as well some stories in the process of excavation, they make me feel particularly excited, which is the joy of

opening the dust-laden history." In addition, some interviewees would be deeply moved by the performance on the stage. Interviewee L thought, "I remember a profound plot, that is the reading by Szengova about mother in the "readers". Her reading is full of emotion, and her voice is so powerful, which makes me feel that every word is blocked in my heart. It is incredibly moving, and I cried loudly in front of the TV." Similarly, most of them indicated that the storytelling, stage plays, as well as reading in the shows raise people's resonances.

As for the difference between cultural themed programs and other ways of cultural experience, this research suggested that people make comparisons. Respondent A indicated, "There will be background music, lighting, and the guests saying something sensational in the shows, which may be easier to feel the atmosphere, thereby causing stronger emotions." Moreover, she suggested, "What we see in the program may be partial rationality. If we travel to the field, we will make an emotional supplement out of imagination." Different approaches have different purposes and effects to achieve, while cultural themed programs would be more direct, intense, and more sense of substitution than others.

Besides, self-esteem and national pride in Personal Integrative Needs can be presented. Interviewees mostly agree that cultural themed programs brought them national pride and enhanced their national identity, who scored "4.200" on average for this item. There is a very popular saying that the youth is no longer care about our traditional culture, but prefer learning about others. After interviewing, the researcher finds that young people do not lack the accumulation and interest in Chinese culture.

However, they have few opportunities to have a deeper understanding of it out of class. Cultural themed programs can solve this problem and bring history and culture back to our mind, which is an engaging and positive tendency.

Some of them thought that Chinese culture itself could significantly make people proud and excited, while cultural themed programs provided a "window" for the audience to access it. Interviewee D indicated, "After watching these programs, I will feel proud that we are a nation with profound culture. There are some traditional techniques that were invented by the ancient Chinese and are still in use. They are ahead of the rest of the world. Some excellent cultures can enhance cultural self-confidence. The more we know, the more confident we will be. We usually have no chance, while the cultural themed program is a platform!"

Others suggested that the form, performance, or atmosphere in these shows strengthened their sense of substitution and the realism of the history and culture content, which is more likely to lead people to the national pride. "Compared with appreciating the still cultural relics in museums from my perspective, this kind of program touches the audience with performance or technology restoration!" Respondent O pointed out. Also, respondent F used the "National culture" as an instance, and he told the researcher, "The program invites the audience in front of the screen to guard the national treasure with celebrity guests, which makes people have a stronger feeling about "Chinese culture" and our cultural identity, as well as shortens the distance between us and historical civilization."

Furthermore, cultural themed programs are assumed to relax people's minds as well

as provides a comfortable atmosphere, which fits in the Tension Free Needs in Uses and Gratification theory. As for the statement "reducing pressure", respondents gave "4.267" on average. It means that most of the interviewees admitted the tension effect of cultural themed programs.

Interviewee I told the researcher that the tension-free came from achievement. "I like the feeling of answering questions right. For example, when the program talks about a history, where novel or literature I have read, I can answer it with the contestants. The pleasure makes me relaxed." While respondent C and H reduced stress by looking through the history, "After watching the historical and cultural stories mentioned in those programs, people feel that they are so insignificant in a long time, so it is easily to put down. And it will make people feel that the world is beautiful and worthy, not dark or evil." Others indicated that the emotion expression and diversion of attention would made them relax. Interviewee L suggested that the articles or poems with emotional reading in the shows quickly resonated and made people cry, which was a time to release pressure. He thought, "You can pay attention from learning to the shows, feeling the charm of culture. It is enjoyable after work."

For tension free, the researcher let interviewees compare cultural themed programs and entertaining variety shows. Surprisingly, it presents "3.600" and "3.733" for each, which is roughly the same. However, they gave different reasons. Respondent A slightly preferred cultural ones, and she indicated, "I feel that cultural themed program is a kind of entertainment that can not only relax but also absorb knowledge quickly. It seems not as decadent as any others." Whereas respondent F who tended to entertain one's

thought, "Entertaining variety shows lead to the most direct effect, which makes you happy quickly from unhappy mood. It is challenging to focus on learning channels when you are in pressure, and sometimes it is a little tired."

It is not hard to find that cultural themed programs satisfy the Tension Free Needs of the audience in its own way. Compared with other entertainments, it may not only make people laugh or kill time to relax, but it provides the audience with an approach to learn something without pressure. It is a comfortable atmosphere, accessible platform, and relaxing way to release tension.

4.5 Closer Social Relationships among Audience

Social relationship is not a major influencing factor based on this research, and cultural themed programs are not a common topic among young people, while it is possible to find friends with similar hobby online after sharing ideas. Interviewee O told the researcher, "I do not think it is a nice topic among my friends; however, I can talk a lot with people who keen on it like me online. We may become familiar after sharing opinions." It assumed that people have a demand to communicate with others with some common topics based on Social Integrative Needs, and cultural themed programs would be one of them. Hence, this project discussed with interviewees from the aspects of "social topics", "social distances", "build new relationships", and "online and offline Interactive mode".

When the respondents were asked to score that whether these shows would be the

topic of conversations in daily lives, and whether they made the distance between them and the people around closer, they mostly showed neutral, even a bit negative attitudes, which was out of consideration. The researcher got "2.733" and "2.800" on average for these two questions.

Many interviewees told us in common, "I think few people around me like these programs, or they seldom show their interest in it, so I am not sure if they watch it often." Also, some of them thought that there were different between cultural themed programs and other topics in conversation. For instance, respondent I pointed out, "Everyone has different views for history or culture. We express thoughts while we do not necessarily agree with others." Many of them indicated that this topic would involve some professional knowledge, not pure entertaining. Thus, communication between people may be more meaningful, formal, knowledgeable, as well as profound.

However, as for the point "To express opinions about the programs ", about half of the respondents gave positive answers. It seems that this result contradicts with the above answers. Interviewee J usually watches "Culture Quadrium Pro Programs", and he pointed out that he would discuss with his family what the answers were, or what he learned in class with the story of that period. And interviewee H thought, "If I see the clips in the program, such as the songs adapted from poems, they are pleasant to hear and resonate, and I will share them with my friends." Moreover, some people may even create further work by themselves based on these shows; respondent C suggested, "I am pleased to write stories or midi a song after watching it. It is mainly about my feelings about the programs and the derivative creation of the national treasure and

ancient poetry." There is a pattern that people tend to discuss or post their views online rather than offline. To this issue, other respondents indicated that they refused to participate in the discussions because they thought they have nothing to share or nobody to share with.

Surprisingly, when the questions came to "whether a new relationship could be built through cultural themed programs", the result tended to more positive, which achieved "3.600" on average. Many respondents agreed that a new relationship would be easily built with the same hobby, which was culture in this case. "The Internet is convenient today. There are fan groups and special topics to discuss on Weibo. It is not difficult to make new friends after a chat." Interviewee H said. Also, interviewee D told the researcher, "Because I did make friends through cultural themed programs. We used to travel together and visit museums because we both are interested in history."

According to the comprehensive scores and the responses of the respondents, the audience is a relative minority among university students, but in the group of culture history and culture hobbyists, cultural themed programs provide them an approach or to find each other, as well as satisfy their desire in social contact. With the development of the form and content in the shows, more and more young people can join the topic, thereby demanding to share and communicating with others. After that, cultural themed programs would be a better mean that fits in Social Integrative Needs.

4.6 Appreciation of Cultures with Peripheral Factors

The researcher applied the Elaboration Likelihood Model for analyzing the general influenced factors of the popularity of cultural themed programs. We collected high-frequency words based on the questions about "Summarizing the reasons that prefer watching cultural themed programs" at the end of interviews.

Table 1. Word frequency and influencing factors in Elaboration Likelihood Model

Words and phrases	Frequency	Reference theories	The route in Elaboration Likelihood Model
Celebrity guests	7	Celebrity endorsements	The Peripheral route
Discussions and recommendations	3	The Social Integrative Needs	
Culture and knowledge acquired and hobbies	36	The Cognitive Needs	The Central route
Atmosphere and pressure	6	The Tension Free Needs	
Form and production	12	Market Environment	
Resonances, moods, and emotions	9	The Affective Needs and The Personal Integrative Needs	

In general, audiences prefer using the Central Route to analyze the advantages and disadvantages of cultural themed programs carefully, rather than simply because the celebrity guests and others recommend, the Peripheral Route to follow blindly. Therefore, it is not hard to find that these shows will be more " slow-type " and "in-depth" for the audience. The simple gimmicks do not readily attract the audience but need to explore its charm slowly and deeply. Also, this is the reason why audiences are stickier to the shows. Thus, word of mouth and the content of the program itself is

considered essential.

Obviously, among all kinds of the influencing factors, "culture" is the most significantly influential factor on the popularity of cultural themed programs. Whether it requires personal hobbies, professional learning, relaxation and decompression, "culture" itself is enough to attract the attention of many viewers. Of course, the production and form of expression different from entertainment type variety show also make the audience refreshing, thus avoiding the problem of excessive entertainment and homogeneity of variety shows in the market today, thereby opening up a new variety road.

Based on the Uses and Graduation Theory, we can find that people's Cognitive Needs have been substantially met in cultural themed programs. At the same time, other needs have also been supported to varying degrees. There are many reasons why these programs attract audiences, but the core is culture. Forms, guests, and performances are indeed all temporary. Therefore, the long-term survival rule of these shows is to spread cultural knowledge, arouse the interest of the audience with more novel forms of expression, and help more people feel the charm of Chinese cultures.

5. Conclusion

According to the investigation and analysis, we can find that people care about the cultural deposits and professional skills of the celebrity guests, as well as their images on the screen. Cultural themed programs should invite more celebrities who pay

attention to Chinese culture as usual and has some related works of the shows, without illegal or immoral behaviors in private. It can not only improve the audience's impression of the program but also brings a positive effect, establishing cultivated images to celebrities. Celebrities aim at "promotion", while professionals aim at "interpretation". Both of them are necessary for a cultural themed program. Also, avoiding the unhealthy experience of entertaining variety shows is significant. Cultural themed programs have a long term to be mature, with a large number of excellent traditional cultures to be discovered.

Besides, the emotional resonances from the program and the way to enhance social relations are also the factors that young people like cultural themed programs. They left books and campus, finding a way that integrates leisure and education. Cultural themed programs have a variety of stage performances that make people cry or excited, which are successful in being able to grasp the emotions of the audience. Also, these programs provide an opportunity for people who love Chinese culture to find intimate friends. The producer needs to invest more energy to explore the characteristics that can attract contemporary young people, and make the audience from a "small crowd" to "public". Word of mouth is an eternal sign of any program. More importantly, it is evident that many people watch cultural themed programs for "Chinese culture", so how to highlight the leading role of it is the critical point. The form can attract viewers, but it cannot keep them. Therefore, bringing the charm of culture to the audience is the initial mission.

Because of the data collection and interview groups, there are a few limitations in this study. The interviewees all study at UIC, who may have a similar background and

experience staying in the same environment. Thus, it is not a typical instance for the group of the young audience. Also, data collection and analysis would be subjective and limited due to conducting research individually. It may bring some basis to the result.

In the future, more and more types of cultural themed programs will show up in the Chinese market. How to make the shows more charming and attractive from the perspective of the audience, especially potential ones, is essential. Cultural themed programs not only need to attract more different types of audience's interest now but also need a more loyal and long-term audience. To expand the influence of the programs and enhance the stickiness of viewers, the producers should make cultural themed programs one of the competitive and sustainable development mainstream in the market.

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Appendix

Table 2. Scores collection in five Likert-Scale

	Celebrity guests			Cognitive Needs			Affective Needs	Personal Integrative Needs	Social Integrative Needs			Tension Free Needs		
	关联度	明星vs专业人士		获知	文综vs其他		情感共鸣	文化自信	社交话题	拉近距离	同好	减压	文综vs其他	
		明星	专业人士		文综	其他							文综	其他
评分	4	3	5	4	5	3	2	4	3	3	4	4	4	3
	4	4	5	3	4	5	4	4	2	4	3	4	4	4
	4	4	4	4	4	3	5	4	3	3	4	4	3	3
	3	3	5	4	5	4	2	5	3	3	4	5	4	4
	5	3	5	3	2	4	5	4	2	1	2	3	2	4
	4	3	5	5	5	4	3	4	2	2	4	5	4	5
	4	3	5	4	4	3	4	4	2	2	4	4	3	4
	4	3	4	4	5	5	4	4	4	4	4	4	3	4
	4	5	4	5	4	3	4	5	3	4	4	4	4	5
	4	4	5	4	4	3	3	5	4	3	4	5	4	3
	4	3	5	5	4	4	3	4	3	3	4	4	4	3
	3	3	5	4	4	4	5	3	3	4	2	5	4	4
	4	3	5	4	4	3	4	4	2	2	4	4	3	4
	4	3	5	4	4	3	3	4	2	2	2	4	3	4
	4	3	5	3	4	4	5	5	3	2	2	5	5	3
	4	3	5	5	4	4		5				4		
平均数	3.938	3.313	4.813	4.063	4.125	3.688	3.733	4.200	2.733	2.800	3.400	4.267	3.600	3.733
中位数	4	3	5	4	4	4	4	4	3	3	4	4	4	4
众数	4	3	5	4	4	3	4	4	3	3	4	4	4	4

Sample Interview Guideline:

Hi, thank you for participating. I am conducting these questions for my final year project in college (UIC). It is an interview about cultural themed programs in China nowadays. And this survey has about 20 questions and should take you about 25 minutes. There are no right or wrong answers, and I am just wondering your opinions.

In this survey, your responses are totally anonymous. You may skip any question that you find intrusive or offensive, but it will help me if you respond to as many questions as you can.

Thank you and I really appreciate your help!

文化类综艺节目 Cultural themed program：
指以艺术、文化、历史等为信息背景，传达文化内涵及主流价值观的人文综艺，形式多样，在电视、网络等广泛流传，具有演讲、朗诵、竞赛、表演等多种形式。如，

《国家宝藏》、《朗读者》、《中国诗词大会》、《经典咏流传》等。

明星 Celebrity：

指在某个领域内有一定影响力的人物。泛指有名的演员、歌手、艺人、运动员等。

文化自信 Cultural confidence：

一个民族、一个国家以及一个政党对自身文化价值的充分肯定和积极践行，并对其文化的生命力持有的坚定信心。

文化认同 Cultural identity：

是一种群体文化认同的感觉，是一种个体被群体的文化影响的感觉。

归属感 Sense of belonging：

又称为隶属感，是指个体与所属群体间的一种内在联系，是某一个体对特殊群体及其从属关系的划定、认同和维系，归属感则是这种划定、认同、和维系的心理表现。

Celebrity Effect

1. 很多文化类综艺节目里会邀请明星嘉宾参与录制。您因为喜欢的明星嘉宾而选择观看某个综艺节目吗？如果会，是持续关注，还是只是选择其中某一期？

2. 您认为名人形象与这些节目主题的关联度有多重要？（非常重要 5——不重要 1）如有，明星有什么形象、设定是会让你觉得他更适合参与这样的节目呢？

（例如其作品是与传统文化有关的荧幕形象、过往经历、或者在中华文化方面人设等。）

　　如有，明星有什么形象、设定是会让您觉得他不适合参与这样的节目呢？

（受教育水平、负面新闻、与中华文化相关负面言论、本身人设相关）

3. 如果在平常关注的文化类综艺节目中，明星嘉宾的加入或常驻，会让您对节目的印象产生怎么样的变化？（形容词分类正面/负面）

4. 在节目邀请明星嘉宾与传统文化领域相关专业人士之间，您会如何选择？

　　（1 表示不喜欢，5 表示非常喜欢，明星嘉宾 1-5，专业人士 1-5）

Uses and Gratification Theory

Cognitive Needs

1. 文化类综艺对您了解中华文化上有帮助吗？

（非常多 5，比较多 4，一般 3，较少 2，基本没有 1）

如有，通过文化类综艺，您对中华文化有什么新的了解？可以举个例子吗？

（事件关键词分类）

2. 节目之后，您会自己去了解或者查询更多关于节目中提到的文化内容吗？

3.你认为通过这类节目获取文化知识与其他途径有什么区别？

（阅读、课程、博物馆、电影纪录片）

4. 比起文化类综艺节目，您通过其他途径了解中华文化的意愿如何？

（1 表示不愿意，5 表示非常愿意，文化类综艺 1-5，其他途径 1-5）

Affective Needs

1. 在文化类综艺节目中，它有引起过你的情绪变化以及情感共鸣吗？

（非常频繁 5，比较频繁 4，一般 3，不太频繁 2，几乎没有 1）

如有，你认为节目里什么环节或者表现形式会引发您的共鸣呢？（举例）

2. 这种感情共鸣与其他文化传播形式有什么区别？（举例/对比）

Personal Integrative Needs

1. 文化类综艺可以帮助您提升自我吗？（非常正确 5——完全不正确 1）

2. 您认为这其中包括建立文化自信,增加中华文化身份的认同感、归属感吗？（非常正确 5——完全不正确 1）

3. 文化类综艺与其他途径相比，有什么内容/形式可以让您建立个人文化自信？

Social Integrative Needs

1. 您是否会在线上或者线下参与文化类综艺节目的讨论和建议发表呢？

如有，频率如何？关于什么内容？

2. 您会认为文化类综艺节目是你社交话题当中的一部分吗？

（非常正确 5——完全不正确 1）

如有，你认为它能够拉近你与身边人的距离吗？

（非常正确 5——完全不正确 1）

3. 与其他节目相比，文化类综艺节目在社交话题中有什么不一样的地方？

4. 你认为可以通过文化类综艺节目找到同好，从而建立社交关系吗？

（非常正确 5——完全不正确 1）

5. 有许多文化类综艺节目会提供二维码、社交平台话题互动，线下朗读亭等等形式，您是怎么看待的呢？又是否会参与呢？

Tension Free Needs

1. 文化类综艺可以帮助您释放压力吗？如有，其中什么内容/表现形式可以让您解压呢？（非常正确 5——完全不正确 1）

2. 相比起其他娱乐性的综艺节目，您更倾向于哪种放松方式呢？

（1 表示不愿意，5 表示非常愿意，文化类综艺 1-5，其他途径 1-5）

Market Environment

3. 1. 有人提出，如今市场上的娱乐性综艺过饱和，内容相近，出现了过度娱乐化的现象，您是怎么看的？您觉得这个与文化类综艺有关系吗？

2. 那么也有人提出，娱乐性综艺节目常常会以故意制造一些矛盾引起收视和制造话题，但是文化类综艺较少这样的现象，您是怎么看的呢？

总的来说，你认为吸引你看文化类综艺节目的原因可以总结为哪些方面呢？