

# Symbolic communication in cultural television programmes

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**Abstracts.** Television performs the fundamental role of spreading information and transmitting culture as a method of mass communication because it is a significant carrier of both. It reflects both the social ambitions of society as a whole and the way that society is currently developing and functioning. It seems that only exciting TV shows can no longer entirely satisfy audience needs after multiple rounds of the program's carnival-like eruptions, and too much entertainment has made viewers less aesthetic. Finding programs that may actually satisfy audience requirements has thus become a breakthrough for the advancement of television in the future.

## 1. Introduction

Through the two fundamental functions of "what is conveyed" and "how it is expressed," the symbol connects man to his outside world and becomes his way of being. [1] It serves as a means of conveying knowledge in the process of comprehending and changing the world while simultaneously laying the foundation for subsequent symbolic meanings. This paper would like to draw on the role of symbols in mass communication to analyze the symbolic communication of some cultural program texts as a study since the use of symbols as a tool to analyze the development of television programs is still in its infancy.

## 2. Typical symbolic types of cultural television programmes

### 2.1. Ritual symbols that deepen cultural connotations

Rituals, in their broadest sense, include everything from everyday greetings to religious events. Media rituals are viewed as a cultural practice in the television communication industry, in which the majority of television viewers use television media symbols to feel invited to some large event or grand event, ultimately presenting the viewer with a combination of symbolism and performance. [2] Rituals, like blessings, are symbolic of people's hopes of achieving their wishes through prayer.

Ritual symbols are frequently used in television programs, such as in the introductory show before the start of a show to warm up the audience, or at the end of a show when the presenter thanks the audience to signal the end of the show. In "The New Palace," the presenters utilize less ritual symbols because the show is a mix of live-action filming in the Forbidden City and scene recreation

in the green room, but most portions still use ritual symbols.

### 2.2. Character symbols that convey the content of the programme

Guests in cultural programs play an important role as cultural information transmitters. The linguistic symbols in a television program are closely related to the guests, and many of them are expressed through them, including expressions and body language. As a result, the performance of the guests has a direct impact on the audience's perceptions and the program's ratings. Celebrity guests can significantly reduce the audience's acceptance of any program. A good program, the appearance of character symbols, can cause people to associate with a program, which is where the program succeeds. [3] For example, when we talk about Wang Han, the audience can associate it with "Everyday Up".

This is related to the "star effect," which is a powerful influence in film and television. Artists who have gained a certain amount of social influence through their own efforts are also a reflection of their own value, and artists who are highly popular in the film and television industries are commonly known as "flow stars," as their valued fans can make good data for their fans on various platforms, introducing a lot of data and resource flow, hence the term "flow". They are also referred to as 'flow'. To keep up with the times, "flow" is also used in cultural programs.

### 2.3. Sound symbols that explain cultural connotations

In his doctoral thesis "Interpretation of the Meaning of Television Communication Symbols under the Construction of Three Relations," Tang Jianjun, a Fudan University scholar, divided the television symbol system into linguistic symbols and non-linguistic symbols.

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Cultural programs' vocal symbols are frequently embodied in the programs as commentary, simultaneous sound, quasi language, and music sound. [4]The correctness of meaning expression is closely related to the correct use of symbols to represent the object. Human intervention can reveal the connotation more fully and has a connection to the subjective role. Because of the differences in living and contact environments, each person's understanding and association of sound symbols will produce different meanings. The voice symbol is primarily reflected in cultural television commentary.

Commentary, also known as voiceover, is used in television programs by the broadcaster's voice, and the commentary is the text display. Commentary refers to the voice of television language that appears outside of the image. Commentary is a very critical language form because it uses audio language to express current social life, express creative intention, and convey meaning to the audience. In comparison to the picture, the commentary is more abstract and flexible, which can achieve the effect of four or two thousand pounds and compensate for the picture's lack of freehand brushwork. [5]For example, in the cultural television show National Treasures, the first person is used to explain China's 5000-year-old Chinese civilization. The line "How young are we, we'll be 5000 years old" strikes a chord with the audience.

### **3. Analysis of the symbolisation process of cultural television programmes**

Symbolisation is, in some ways, the process of interpreting perception, and it is a common way for people to cope with experience. [6] In general, we can say that an object has been symbolised when we assign some meaning to it based on first-hand experience. Human interpretive action is important in signification. Stuart Hall's 'encoding-decoding' approach is a key theory of knowledge for exploring the process of symbolisation in television in Encoding/Decoding.

The human being is the key to 'encoding' and 'decoding' here, as the traditional one-way linear model is no longer used and is being phased out due to the subjective nature of each television audience. His presentation makes it clear that the people who send and receive information at both ends of the symbolic communication spectrum encode the content that will be transmitted by television. The producer of a television program encodes the program and broadcasts it to the audience, who then decodes the message based on their own socio-cultural background, gaining meaning.

Because each audience member is an individual with a dynamic nature, each person will interpret the meaning encoded by the television producer differently based on their own knowledge and cultural reserves. It is thus a challenge for television producers to convey the content and meaning of an encoded television program to the audience and to get the audience to decode it in the manner desired, which is the challenge confronting the television signification process. Following the encoding or decoding process, meaning is divided into three categories. First, the meaning of the program producer's encoding, which is the

"intended meaning" that the program most wants to show to the audience.[7] Second, after editing the content of a television program, the text can be used on its own. The second is the "textual meaning," which can be displayed independently after editing the TV program's text content. Third, the viewers' understanding of the TV program after watching it, i.e., the "interpretative meaning". If the viewer can complete the entire process by watching the program, we can say that the decoding of the symbol has been completed.

#### **3.1. The symbolisation of cultural emotions**

One of the ideas and themes that is always implemented in the program is "finding new things with old things," where we are led by the guests to experience the history and glory of old objects (cultural relics), while using our modern approach to make them new and creative products that will be passed down.[8] For example, the cultural program "The New Palace," which focuses on treasure hunting, not only allows viewers to experience the history and civilisation of the 600-year-old Forbidden City by transmitting cultural emotions to everyone through cultural artifacts, but it also inspires viewers to be creative. Cultural emotions are symbolically conveyed to the audience through the "Heritage - Innovation" approach. For example, in the ninth episode of the second season of "The New Palace," experts from the Forbidden City led the audience and guests on a tour of how cultural relics from the Forbidden City were moved to the south. This episode shows how much the people of the Forbidden City cared about their cultural relics and how much they loved their families. So, in the "New" session at the end of this episode, the creative designers used the "dragon" element on the Nine Dragons Wall, the yellow color of the entire Forbidden City building, and the jade seals used by the emperors to show how determined the Chinese sons and daughters were to protect the lifeline of Chinese traditional culture during the relocation of cultural relics to the south and to send a good wish for Ch.

#### **3.2. The symbolism of the programme format**

When cultural symbols are used as program identifiers, their original connotations and meanings are ignored, and the entertainment aspect of the program is used to attract viewers. Cultural programs, such as knowledge competitions, have been a popular genre for viewers for many years, attracting them with their diverse formats and intense competition mechanisms; however, the symbolism of culture in such programs is only a symbol that distinguishes them from other programs with a 'entertainment' connotation. The transmission of cultural connotations is not the program's primary goal; form over content is the hallmark of cultural programs in the knowledge competition genre, where the audience's attention is drawn to the competition through a shell of cultural symbols.

In comparison to other genres, the key aspect of cultural programming is the transmission of the program's cultural connotation to the audience, as well as whether the

audience decodes the cultural symbols when the program is symbolised. In "The New Palace", the programme's theme is "release the new theme mission - find new clues - new cultural and creative products". The purpose of symbolizing the program format is to better support and spread the program's cultural connotation. When viewers watch the show, they learn more about the cultural significance of following the hosts and guests in their search for creative elements and completing thematic tasks than they do about the cultural artifacts based on the show's referential symbols.

### **3.3.Symbolisation of cultural scenes**

A set is the layout of the location where the plot of a television show takes place. As technology advances and large sums of money are invested, the setting of programs becomes more beautiful and realistic, revealing a modern and high-tech feel. Scene symbols are systems that have been given symbolic meaning in the field of semiotics and are no longer physical spaces visible to the masses. We are presented with a variety of imaginations and feelings through the various scene symbols set up in the program, unknowingly entering the scene and indulging in the situation set up by the TV programme, accompanying the scene symbols to break down the meaning of the text.[9] In some cultural programs, for example, by combining real and imaginary cultural scene symbols, the audience can decode and acquire knowledge and culture while watching the program by immersing themselves in the cultural scene symbolised by the program makers. Of course, due to the audience's diverse knowledge and cultural background, such symbolisation of cultural scenes may be poorly decoded.

## **4.The path of symbolic communication of cultural TV programmes**

### **4.1.Breaking down rigid symbol systems and optimising programme symbol systems**

A problem worth investigating is how to better understand the program needs of the audience while avoiding aesthetic fatigue. From a semiotic standpoint, improving a program's symbol system is an important way to innovate the content and spread the meaning of the program. During my research, I discovered that nearly all Chinese programs suffer from rigid symbol system rigidity. A mature symbol system appears to help speed up the running of the program, but it also reduces the likelihood of the program makers including innovative elements in the program.

### **4.2.Focus on the reproduction of the body while focusing on the extension of the explanatory items**

Relying on the momentary impact of a program to sustain the long-term stability of that type of television program can only achieve short-term results and cannot sustain the

long-term stability of that type of television program. As a result, when creating a television program, it is critical to consider not only the appeal to the audience, but also the function that the program can perform and the ideas that it can convey to the public. [10]Based on semiotics, it is critical to consider not only the program's body and object, but also how to expand the program's interpretative aspects. Cultural programs, as an important part of television programming, have their own distinct charm, and the ideas they convey to the audience should have a broader sense of identity and resonate with the audience. As a result, when expanding their interpretation, cultural programs should focus on cultural symbols.

### **4.3.Bringing back the meaning of the programme and opening up the symbolic process of television communication**

The audience's understanding or interpretation of the symbol's meaning is the final stage of symbolic representation. The symbolic process in cultural programs is divided into three stages. First, the program producer creates the cultural connotation that the program wishes to convey through coding, which is a relatively independent form of text. [11]Simultaneously, the coded textual content is presented on the television set via the medium of communication, and the viewer watches the television programme to form an understanding of the program's content and to obtain the textual meaning of the program, i.e. the cultural connotation that the program wishes to present.

## **5.Conclusions**

Therefore, the following three aspects must be dealt with in order to deal with the communication of meaning: firstly, the programme producers should deal with this difficulty in the process of creation from the cultural background of the general public and through a popularised form of programme presentation [12] ; secondly, how best to encode the meaning of the text into the television programme through technology and coding is a great test for the television programme producers. Thirdly, only when the audience can successfully understand the profound cultural meaning in the programme does the existence of cultural meaning take on real significance and the symbolic process truly enters a new phase.

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