

Study on the Reference Significance of the Success of South Korean Variety Shows for China's External Culture Communication

-- Taking the New Journey to the West as an Example

Zijun Guo

International Language School of Korea University, Korea

Abstract

In the 1990s, as South Korean TV shows and entertainment programs spread to China, the trend is called "Korean Wave". "Korean Wave" culture affected many fields in the social development of China. Especially, South Korean variety shows flooded in China mainland and kept the heat for more than a decade. Based on the analysis of the characteristics, spread strategies and influence of the South Korean variety show *New Journey to the West*, this paper tries to put forward some suggestions on how to improve the influence and quality of Chinese variety shows and spread Chinese culture overseas better.

Keywords

South Korean Variety Show; *New Journey to the West*; External Culture Communication.

1. A Summary of the Characteristics of South Korean Variety Shows

In the 1960s, South Korean variety shows rose with various forms like music, outdoor exploration, tourism, role play, etc., which drew wide attention all over the world. South Korean variety shows also became an important carrier of South Korean external culture communication, making outstanding contributions to its culture spreading to foreigners. Taking the *New Journey to the West* as an example, this paper tries to explore and summarize the characteristics and communication mode of South Korean variety shows.

1.1. The Programs are Close to Common People

"In this multicultural era nowadays, the popularization trend of elite culture has become inevitable in history." [1]. In January 2015, the variety show *New Journey to the West* starred by Kang Ho Dong, Lee Soo-keun, Eun Ji Won and Lee Seung Gi was launched, which created a new model of South Korean variety shows through broadcasting on the network platform. *New Journey to the West* took game clearance mode as the basis, and adventure tourism as the theme, in which the host was given free rein, and the random interaction with the audience was real and interesting. In the first season, the four members began their first journey Xi'an with only RMB50 funds to each of them, and had to get to the designated hotel by themselves. The people who arrived first can assign punishment to those who arrived later. In a foreign country, the remaining power of mobile phone was less than 10%, which made the participants had no choice but turn to the audience without mobile phone translation and navigation functions. They were faced with the dilemma of language barrier and unfamiliar living environment like every ordinary people who came to a strange country. They just started an "embarrassing trip" without the help of assistants and fans. This design not only got full of variety effect, but also shortened the distance with the audience.

1.2. Flexible Program Length to Adapt to the Audience

In the past, the variety show is fixed with a duration between 60 minutes and 90 minutes for one section. With the development of information technology, the audience is difficult to focus on one thing. When watching the TV series with a length of 70 or 80 episodes, the audiences always directly express on the bullet comments that "won't watch for it's too long", "watch series with double-speed ". In addition, people are always busy, and most young people can only watch some "dinner variety" during three meals time. To cater to the fragmented time of the audience, the *New Journey to the West* divides the video into short clips. Each clip lasts 5-15 minutes with highlights and laughs respectively. Totally different from the original variety shows that always take as much as one hour for one series, it can meet the different needs of the audience, which can be called as a bold innovation.

1.3. Diverse Themes and Ideas of the Programs

South Korean variety show *New Journey to the West* borrowed unique idea from *Journey to the West*, a world-known Chinese novel. The first shooting location was Xi'an, so the Korean popular culture crashed into Chinese culture, which made the audience felt fresh when it was broadcast. The characteristic of South Korean variety shows is to provide different story frames without too much script setting. For example, in the *New Journey to the West*, the idea of the program is innovative, giving consideration of both fun and intelligence, with its own characteristics for each theme setting. South Korean variety shows have various elements of outdoor sports, interviews, music ballads, puzzles, etc., with varied types and abundant themes. Some of them also added documentary shooting techniques.

2. The Overall Strategy of South Korean External Culture Communication

2.1. Relatively Complete Development System of Cultural Industry

After putting forward the strategic slogan of "Building up the Nation with Culture" at the end of the 20th century, South Korea constantly promoted the development and prosperity of cultural industry in an all-round way. Based on this, South Korea established the industry development system of cultural industry earlier. Strictness and professionalism is the "foundation" of South Korean film and television industry. During the shooting period, no matter for the "big name" masterful actors, or the popular stars with big fans base, they all must be in the crew on standby all day, and "rolling acting" (rolling acting refers to that one actor acts in multiple plays at the same time [2]) is strictly forbidden. If an artist causes serious bad impact for the negative news, the TV station will even consider to never cooperate with the artist. Strict requirements and fierce competition help to produce many high-quality programs.

2.2. Make Use of Multiple Media and Carriers for Culture Communication

South Korean external culture communication strategy integrates a variety of carriers such as TV programs, Korean traditional clothing and diet, Korean style makeup, which involves all aspects of social life and influences many Asian countries such as China, Japan, Thailand and so on. It makes full use of network media and TV stations like KBS, SBS, and MBC, which can play a benchmark role, creating a series of influential and well-known TV series and variety programs such as *Running Man*. "In *Running Man*, Korean culture has been presented in a panoramic way, and it is a powerful promoter of Korean cultural communication, as well as a model for Korean TV variety programs in overseas cultural promotion." [3]

2.3. Integrate the Use of Homologous Cultural Affinity and Full Exploration of its Own Cultural Characteristics

The history of cultural exchange and communication between China and South Korea can be traced back to around the first century A.D. Our confucianism culture has a great impact on

South Korea including its TV programs. When watching South Korean TV series or variety shows, Chinese audiences always easily have a feeling of familiarity and closeness, so the programs are more acceptable. Meanwhile, with its unique regional characteristics and national spirit, South Korean culture stimulates the exploration passion of foreign audiences, which has obtained good effect on its external cultural communication. [4]

3. Enlightenment to China's External Culture Communication

3.1. Build up Our Own Brand Representatives

It is of great significance for Chinese traditional culture to "go out" by combining people's spiritual and cultural needs in China, giving full play to the advantages of our excellent traditional culture, building up a number of variety brands with Chinese characteristics and forming the brand effect of "created in China". For example, programs like *NATIONAL TREASURE* and *New products in Forbidden City*, creatively integrated variety shows with Chinese culture, and presented Chinese traditional culture on the screen to propagate splendid and excellent Chinese traditional culture. China's external culture communication gets promoted in a harmonious atmosphere by using these "intelligently made in China" and "Chinese brands".

3.2. Stick on Our Cultural Confidence and Creatively Carry out External Culture Communication

Chinese culture has a long history with profound foundation, and the vast territory as well as the multi-ethnic solidarity and prosperity also make our culture more unique and diverse at the same time. More and more foreign tourists not only wonder at the beautiful natural scenery in China, but also have an intense interest in Chinese cultural customs. Therefore, we should firmly seize the opportunity of the times, stick on cultural confidence, keep pace with the times and be bold in exploration and creativity when choosing the external cultural communication carriers and creating works. It's necessary to deeply explore and flexibly use Chinese excellent traditional culture, get rid of the old ways of blind imitation, seek dialogue and cooperation, and creatively carry out external cultural communication based on the core of Chinese culture combined with the international external communication mode. [5]

3.3. Adhere to Build a Community of Shared Future for Mankind and Break through the Communication Dilemma

In the process of external cultural communication, China also encountered the communication dilemma due to various reasons like ideology, but we insisted on seeking development in twists and turns. The "ideology" we said today refers to a system made up of thoughts, beliefs, concepts, values, etc. In addition, ideology usually serves a social group, and is a belief shared by a social group with values as its core content. Ideology is an important factor playing role in the external culture communication in China. We insist on culture exchange and common prosperity all along, and insist on building a Community of Shared Future for Mankind in various fields such as economy, society, culture and so on. Meanwhile, we should actively give play to the folk's power in the external culture communication and exchange, guide We-media with positive energy, and make better use of the whole national power, as well as the strength of every single individual to well spread Chinese culture.

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