

# Analysis of the Discourse Characteristics of Slow Variety Show Hosts from the Perspective of Brand Building -- Taking the Fourth Season of "Say Hello to Life" as an Example

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**Abstract:** With the development of the times, people's spiritual needs are growing, the traditional "fast variety show" can no longer meet the spiritual life of urban youth, "slow variety show" into the public's vision and flourish. This paper takes the fourth season of the slow variety show "Say Hello to Life" as an example, starts from the brand building perspective of the slow variety show, analyses the discourse characteristics of the hosts Sa Beining and Neghmet Rakhman through the three aspects of the speculative philosophy of personalised expression, the spatial construction of discourse expression, and the transmission of the value of the cultural symbols, and finally sums up the roles and shortcomings of the discourse expression of the hosts of the slow variety show under the brand building perspective, which provides some reference for the branding and the discourse expression of the slow variety show of other slow variety shows.

**Keywords:** Slow variety show; The brand building of television programme; Discourse expression

## 1. Introduction

With the continuous development of digital technology, the trend of convergence between traditional media and emerging media is increasing, which meets the growing spiritual needs of people and at the same time gives rise to new types of programmes. Against this backdrop, traditional variety shows, in which "amusing to death and flow is king", have caused aesthetic fatigue among audiences due to their fast pace and homogeneity. At the same time, "slow variety show" gradually entered the public's field of vision and developed into a variety of forms. As a matter of fact, "slow variety show" is relative to the traditional "fast variety show", it does not set up complicated game links, excessive scripted intervention, and the character of the character. On the contrary, "slow variety show" puts the guests in a relatively relaxed environment, allowing them to present the most natural state. This kind of programme format focuses on showing the real life and emotional experience of the guests, so that the audience can feel the beauty of life in a relaxing and pleasant atmosphere, for example, "Back to field", "Say Hello to Life", "Become a Farmer", "The Chinese Restaurant", "The Inn" and so on. These programmes "reflect the more obvious characteristics of emotional ties, focusing on emotional communication and interaction, pursuing the aesthetic interest of simplicity, nature and freshness. To a certain extent, they provide audiences with spiritual pleasure and satisfaction, in line with the current audience's desire to slow down the pace of life and ease the psychological demands of work pressure"<sup>[1]</sup>. As a result, it brings a strong flow experience to the audience and attracts a large number of viewers.

"Say Hello to Life" is a new youth life sharing programme co-produced by CCTV-3 and CCTV COM, and launched by the Central Committee of the Communist Youth League at the same time, and it is the first life simulation "slow variety show" programme on CCTV. The first season of "Say Hello to Life" has been critically acclaimed since it went live in December 2019, and the show is now in its fourth season. In the fourth season, CCTV host Neghmet Rakhman partnered with Sa Beining to form the "Village Gala" creative team, joining hands with celebrity guests from all walks of life and other CCTV hosts to complete the programme design. The speculative philosophy conveyed by the personalised discourse expression of the two hosts in the programme, as well as the spatial construction of their discourse expression and the transmission of the value of cultural symbols played a key role in the brand building of television programme, which is of certain research value and reference significance for other variety show hosts.

## 2. The brand building of slow variety shows: A "spiritual utopia" of flow experiences

### 2.1. Variety shows and brand building

The success of "Say Hello to Life" can be seen in part as a success of its brand building. "Brand building" is an economic concept, meaning that enterprises in the market competition, through a series of strategies and means, to make the brand in the minds of target consumers to form a unique, distinctive, positive image, so as to achieve the purpose of improving the brand's market competitiveness and market share. In short, "brand building" is the process of positioning a brand to create a brand image. In TV variety shows, the brand building of variety shows is to make a clear positioning of the type of programme, produce programme content for the precise persona, so that it can produce a better branding effect in order to achieve high ratings. On CCTV COM, "Say Hello to Life" is categorised as a variety show, and its synopsis positions it as "a new youth life sharing programme". In "Slow variety show": An Innovative Mode for TV Variety Shows", Yin Jun and Liu Yao categorised the domestic phenomenal "Slow variety show" and concluded that existing phenomenal "Slow variety show" programmes can be broadly classified into three types: traditional cultural programmes, life simulation programmes and outdoor travel programmes.<sup>[2]</sup> With this concept in mind, "Say Hello to Life" is clearly positioned as a life simulation programme. The successful creation of its brand image is inextricably linked to its own clear positioning and unique style content.

The fourth season of "Say Hello to Life" creates a warm, calm and philosophical world in the middle of the countryside, providing a life-affirming "spiritual utopia" for fast-paced urban men and women in modern cities. In "From the Soil", Fei Xiaotong states, "From the grassroots up, Chinese society is local."<sup>[3]</sup> The fourth season of "Say Hello to Life" starts with the theme of "Village Gala Season", and each episode focuses on twelve sub-themes of "Village Gala Season", "Dreaming", "Meeting", "Youth", "Village Gala", "Listening to the Wind", "Watching the Clouds", "Grass Roots", "Autumn Leaves", "Choice", "Goodbye", "Epilogue". The twelve sub-themes unfold, leading guests to small villages in Shenzhen, Xilingol League and Yantai, focusing the camera on the countryside and people of China's vast land, and using the unique and charming language of the camera to express the life of the countryside idylls, while integrating the elements of traditional culture and emphasising on the experience and perception of the rural original. In the programme's soothing narrative method and the host's lively discourse expression, the audience has more time to taste the core of the programme, meditate on the philosophy, for the variety show to give a unique meaning of speculative philosophy. Compared with the previous fast-paced variety shows with strong dramatic conflicts, many sources of laughter and highly dense corpus, the camera language of "Say Hello to Life" is more peaceful and beautiful, and the narrative is more soothing, through the art of omission, allowing the audience of generation Z to perceive the true meaning of life and the warmth of life, which has become a major highlight of the "slow variety show" represented by "Say Hello to Life".

The general secretary of the CPC Central Committee has pointed out that it is necessary to "comprehensively promote the revitalisation of the countryside". And the revitalisation of the countryside should not be confined to revitalisation at the material level, but should also be achieved at the spiritual level. The fourth season of "Say Hello to Life" attracts a large number of young viewers to get close to the countryside and understand the countryside, which not only promotes the integration of culture and tourism and empowers the development of the rural tourism industry, but also sketches out an idyllic spiritual map for men and women in the city, and promotes the revitalisation of the countryside with the carrier of the "slow variety show" itself to build up a unique brand image of its own.

### 2.2. A flow experience in slow variety show

In terms of branding, "Say Hello to Life" has created A "spiritual utopia" of flow experiences, bringing audiences a flow experience unique to slow variety shows. The concept of flow theory was originally developed by Csikszentmihalyi, a professor of psychology at the University of Chicago, who described "flow" as "a state of peak enjoyment, energetic focus, and creative concentration experienced by people engaged in adult play, which has become the basis of a highly creative approach to living"<sup>[4]</sup>. In other words, flow is a state of mind in which an individual becomes interested in something, devotes his or her full attention to it and forgets about the surrounding environment, thus losing the perception of time. In the perspective of flow theory, the creation of flow in the slow variety show "Say Hello to Life" is a relatively complex process. In "Flow Experience: A New Exploration of the Development of Slow Variety Show -- Taking "Say Hello to Life" as an Example", Li Haonuo and Li Lingtao analysed

in detail the creation of flow in "Say Hello to Life" from the three aspects of scene setting, programme setting, and feedback setting<sup>[5]</sup>, however, they neglected the irreplaceable role of the hosts as a communication vehicle of the programme.

In the fourth season of "Say Hello to Life", the "Village Gala" creative team of Sa Beining and Neghmet Rakhman, with their combination of energy and calmness, personalised and interactive hosting style, constructed an flow communication space. The values conveyed in their discourse expressions are also of full speculative philosophy significance. They not only realised the host's identity change from "spectator" to "participant", but also led the audience's flow with their own flow, creating an flow "spiritual utopia" for the audience.

### **3. Discourse characteristics of hosts: from "spectator" to "participant"**

#### ***3.1. The speculative philosophy of personalised expression***

The host's "personalised expression" refers to "the host's speech that is appropriate to the context of media communication, while at the same time fully demonstrating his or her personal experience, strengths and personality preferences"<sup>[6]</sup>. For the programme, effective personalised expression is not only conducive to the formation of the host's own unique hosting style, but also has an irreplaceable and important role in the overall tone and brand building of the programme. However, if the "degree" of "personalisation" is not grasped properly, the expression will be arbitrary, and the personalised expression will easily turn into personal speech. Especially in variety programmes, the personalised expression of the hosts is particularly important - the natural entertainment nature of variety programmes requires hosts to pay more attention to their own personalised expression. In the fourth season of "Say Hello to Life", both Sa Beining as the "general director" and Neghmet Rakhman as the "executive director" have their own unique hosting styles, and the roles of "general director" and "executive director" give them more identities other than hosts and give them more room for personalised expression.

The collision of the different hosting styles of Sa Beining and Neghmet Rakhman's energy and calmness in the programme not only makes the programme more tense and moderately paced, but also creates a spark of speculative philosophy in the collision of rationality and sensibility. In contrast to Neghmet Rakhman, Sa Beining's hosting style is clearly more personalised, both in terms of offence and humour, and is all about "making things interesting", whereas Neghmet Rakhman plays the role of driving the show forward and controlling its pace. The personalised expression of the two makes the narrative pace of the programme as soothing as prose, yet interesting at the same time. At the same time, both of them are both rational and emotional in their emotional expression - it has unique insights on life and philosophy in rationality, and delicate feelings on youth and dreams in sensibility, triggering the audience's thoughts in the collision of the two, and giving a unique discursive colour to the brand building of the programme. For example, when Sa Beining talked about the moon in the programme - from "the moon is round for the programme and for the audience" to "it is round for our heart and for the Chinese dream", the seemingly plain words touched the audience's heart and inspired them to pursue their dreams and think about the Chinese dream.

#### ***3.2. The spatial construction of discourse expression***

The concept of "public sphere" was first proposed by the German philosopher and sociologist Habermas, which refers to the free and public discourse and interaction platform provided by the media for people. In TV programmes, "public sphere" can be understood as a space for expression and communication formed in a particular environment, which is not only limited to the literal meaning of "space", but also a comprehensive concept that includes language, culture, society, psychology and other dimensions. The host's construction of "public sphere" in the programme is a complex and multi-dimensional process, which is inextricably linked to the host's own positioning, hosting style, discourse expression, and so on.

In the programme, Sa Beining and Neghmet Rakhman play different identities in different scenarios while constructing different "public spheres". In the process of preparing for the "Village Gala" and searching for actors, they are the "general director" and "executive director", promoting the progress of the programme through conversational chats, while at the performance site of the Village Gala, they take on the role of "host" in the traditional sense, linking up the flow of the evening through interactive hosting. Correspondingly, their discourse expression varies in different situations: in the "chatting"

scenario, they are obviously more relaxed and their language is more flexible, while in the "hosting" state, they pay more attention to the interaction and communication with the audience, and their discourse patterns are more ritualistic. At the same time, the programme is interspersed with voice-overs from Neghmet Rakhman, telling the true meaning of life underneath the subtle language. Different discourse expressions construct different "public spheres", and the two hosts also in the process of construction, to achieve their own transformation from "spectator" to "participant", to better integrate themselves with the programme, creating the brand of "Say Hello to Life" with the personal characteristics of Sa Beining and Neghmet Rakhman, making it a typical representative of high-quality slow variety shows.

### **3.3. The transmission of the value of the cultural symbols**

The construction of cultural symbols plays an irreplaceable role in the process of cultural transmission. The American anthropologist Geertz, in his book "The Interpretation of Culture", points out that "the concept of culture I espouse, and whose utility the essays below attempt to demonstrate, is essentially a semiotic one."<sup>[7]</sup> The fourth season of "Say Hello to Life" constructs diversified cultural symbols and uses them as a medium of communication, and with the help of the hosts as the vehicle of communication, gives these cultural symbols new meanings through different modes of discourse expression, which conveys the cultural value of the programme.

First of all, the theme of each episode of the fourth season of "Say Hello to Life" represents twelve different cultural symbols. "Village Gala Season", "Dreaming", "Meeting", "Youth", "Village Gala", "Listening to the Wind", "Watching the Clouds", "Grass Roots", "Autumn Leaves", "Choice", "Goodbye" and "Epilogue", twelve words with symbolic meaning through the host's summary, conveying thoughts on life. For example, when talking about youth, Neghmet Rakhman said: "People in their youth do not realize they are in it, always feeling that time is long." In this way, it conveys the sense of cherishing youth and the fleeting nature of time.

Secondly, the symbols containing traditional cultural elements in the programme convey the unending national spirit of the Chinese people. For example, the traditional skills of "Dancing Lion" and "Yingge Dance" convey the indomitable and courageous spirit of the Chinese nation, Cantonese opera conveys the charm of the excellent traditional Chinese culture, and the Long Tune of Nei Mongol conveys the warmth and exuberance of the steppe children, and so on. These cultural symbols use Chinese elements to awaken the cultural memory of the children of China and carry forward the spirit of the great Chinese nation.

Thirdly, the programme glimpses the development of the times with unique cultural symbols. For example, from the development of the Greater Bay Area, we can see the mark of the era of Reform and Opening Up; from the selection of the "Village Gala", we can convey the truth that "good programmes are on the stage of the grassroots"; and from the astronomical observatory and space station, we can have a glimpse of the wonders of the universe and the development of science and technology.

The fourth season of "Say Hello to Life" integrates these cultural symbols with Chinese elements into the host's discourse expression, enhancing cultural confidence, stimulating patriotic feelings, and ultimately completing the brand building of the programme itself in the transmission of values.

## **4. Discourse expression of hosts and the brand building of slow variety shows: the roles and shortcomings**

### **4.1. The roles of discourse expression of hosts on the brand building of slow variety shows**

From the perspective of brand building, the host is not only the bridge between the programme and the audience, but also the key to shaping the unique charm of the brand building of slow variety shows.

Firstly, the host's own personalised discourse expression can show the unique language image of slow variety shows, and the uniqueness of the discourse can accurately segment the audience, thus showing the uniqueness of the slow variety shows brand. The fusion of the host's personalised expression with the brand's image adds a unique recognition to the brand building of slow variety shows. They are either humorous or gentle, interpreting the essence and charm of slow variety shows in their own unique ways. This personalised expression not only gives viewers a sense of intimacy and identity with the host, but also prompts viewers to project this emotion onto the slow variety brand, forming a strong sense of brand loyalty and belonging. For example, the relaxed atmosphere of

interaction between Sa Beining and Neghmet Rakhman shows the light and lively mood of "Say Hello to Life", and the friction of thinking creates sparks of the speculative philosophy, making it a "spiritual utopia" for urban youth.

Secondly, the host's spatial construction in discourse expression can clarify the programme's positioning and allow the audience to consolidate the brand image through association. The atmosphere of the programme created by the hosts through discourse expression makes the brand image of the programme closely related to keywords such as "slow", "quiet" and "true", which is crucial to the establishment of the brand image of slow variety shows. For example, when you think of Kang Hui, you may think of traditional programs in the news genre; when you think of He Jiong, you may think of variety shows in the entertainment genre. Then, when you think of the pairing of Sa Beining and Neghmet Rakhman, you can naturally think of the slow variety show "Say Hello to Life."

Finally, the host as a special cultural symbol and communication carrier, to a certain extent, its own cultural value is consistent with the brand value that the programme wants to convey. The host's discourse expression is rich in cultural connotation and humanistic care, and can deeply explore and show the emotional value and cultural significance of the programme. By telling stories and sharing their feelings, they guided the audience to feel the beauty of life and the charm of culture in a relaxed and pleasant atmosphere. This deep-level emotional exchange not only enhances the appeal and infectiousness of the programme, but also further enriches the connotation and extension of the slow variety brand. For example, the fourth season of "Say Hello to Life" showed the original intention of the "Village Gala Season" to the audience through the discourse expression of the hosts, and further consolidated the brand image of "Say Hello to Life" by telling the stories of each guest and each village.

#### **4.2. The shortcomings of discourse expression of hosts on the brand building of slow variety shows**

Of course, on the brand building of slow variety shows, the discourse expression of host falls shortcomings. For example, some presenters are not culturally rich enough and have an empty form but no soul; along with the phenomenon of homogenisation of slow variety shows, the hosts' discourse has also become homogeneous and monotonous; hosts are vague about the programme and their own positioning, making it difficult to develop a branded style; the host is out of balance between commerciality and culture and has poor control over the tone of the programme. It can be seen that only by matching their own image with the programme's brand image and continuously improving their professionalism and cultural literacy can hosts play a positive role in the brand building of slow variety shows and cooperate with the team to create slow variety shows that are enjoyable to the public.

### **5. Conclusions**

As a linguist, the host's own language image and discourse expression are inextricably linked to the programme's brand image. In the fourth season of "Say Hello to Life", Sa Beining and Neghmet Rakhman constructed the "public sphere" of urban youth's "spiritual utopia" with their unique personalised discourse characteristics, which conveyed the unique connotation and cultural value of the fourth season of "Say Hello to Life", and successfully built the brand image of "Say Hello to Life". Their discourse is not only culturally rich, but also briskly paced and well-coordinated, effectively enhancing the audience's viewing experience. At the same time, the hosts focus on interaction with the audience, and the collision of ideas creates a speculative philosophy atmosphere. Together, these discourse characteristics constitute the unique brand appeal of the fourth season of "Say Hello to Life", which provides a strong reference for the brand building of slow variety shows and the discourse expression of slow variety show hosts.

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