

Research on the Digital Promotion and Marketing Model of Slow Variety Shows in the Era of Internet Media

Yixiao Hong

College of Arts, South China
Agricultural University, Guangzhou,
Guangdong, 510642, China
yuki.77oo11@gmail.com

Abstract:

In recent years, slow variety shows, as an important genre in the variety market, have gradually gained widespread attention due to their emphasis on life experiences and emotional resonance. However, in the contemporary digital context, their dissemination and marketing still have certain shortcomings. This research shows that at the industrial level, slow variety shows are squeezed by platform traffic logic, with relatively limited commercial monetization channels and significant homogenization of programs. At the individual level, there are constraints on the expressive space of creators, and the interaction between guests and the audience is also somewhat insufficient. In response to these issues, it is crucial to focus on the dissemination model of slow variety shows, promote them actively using platform algorithms on the industrial side, and deeply explore the long-tail value of programs. On the program side, differentiation should be driven through upgrades in topic content, refined audience operations, and coordination with private domain IPs. The breakthrough of slow variety is an inevitable response to the demands of the times. By seizing the development opportunities endowed by the times, it also promotes the entire variety market towards a sustainable and healthy direction.

Keywords: Slow variety shows; digital transmission; marketing dilemmas; audience operation; IP private domain

1. Introduction

With the arrival of the digital age, internet media has long become the main avenue for people to access information and enjoy entertainment. However, at the same time, digital media represented by short videos

and social platforms is continuously reshaping the spatiotemporal structure of information distribution, making “fast-paced and highly stimulating” the current mainstream content trend. Against this backdrop, slow variety shows, particularly experiential and cultural varieties, have a more relaxed pace, simpler nar-

ratives, avoid intense competition in segments, and do not pursue tension and excitement, creating a unique charm of “slowing down and focusing on life experiences” amidst the fast-paced tide. Slow variety shows break away from the fixed patterns of traditional variety shows and instead focus on the people in the show and the scenery in front of them, allowing viewers to truly relax and enjoy the program, thereby accumulating a considerable audience.

However, as an emerging program format, it is still in the stage of continuous exploration. With the continuous development of Internet technology and the diversification of digital communication methods, the digital communication and marketing issues of slow variety shows are gradually emerging. How to achieve precise dissemination on digital platforms and how to establish deeper connections with audiences through innovative marketing models are issues that slow variety shows need to face when faced with multiple difficulties, such as a mismatch of platform algorithm preferences, difficulties in commercial monetization, and disconnection between dissemination rhythm and media logic.

This paper will focus on “Research on the digital communication and marketing model of slow variety shows in the era of Internet media”. It aims to provide theoretical support and practical solutions for the future innovative development of slow variety shows by analyzing the digital communication channels and existing marketing difficulties of slow variety shows. By deeply analyzing the difficulties faced by slow variety shows at the industrial and individual levels, and combining them with typical cases for demonstration, it proposes targeted optimization strategies, striving to promote the vigorous development of slow variety shows, an emerging program format, in the future Internet era.

2. The Current Status of Digital Communication and Marketing of Slow Variety Shows in the Era of Online Media

2.1 Definition and Main Characteristics of Slow Variety Shows

“Slow variety shows” are a different type of show than traditional “fast variety shows. Compared to fast variety shows, slow variety shows slow down their pace and downplay the intense competition of traditional variety shows. They prioritize “experiential, emotional, and healing” experiences, highlighting everyday narratives and the genuine expressions of human connection. This innovative programming concept has made slow variety shows stand out in this fast-paced era and has won the favor of a large number of viewers. Over the past few years, slow variety shows have brought a refreshing, soothing, and unique

audio-visual experience to the variety show market, and have gradually generated a variety of genres under this “slow mode”. Relevant research has roughly divided early slow variety shows into three categories: traditional culture, simulated life, and outdoor travel. Although this division was based on the limited program samples at the time, it still reveals the diversity of slow variety shows in subject matter selection. It is precisely this type of differentiation and audience base that makes slow variety shows stand out in the competition in the variety show market and become an important marketing resource that platforms and brands pay attention to [1].

2.2 Analysis of Digital Transmission Paths

2.2.1 Content platform communication

The core content of slow variety shows is primarily released first on online video platforms such as Tencent Video, iQiyi, and Youku. These platforms provide access to viewers and also push relevant programs to potential audiences based on user interests and viewing history. The recommendation mechanism relies on users’ viewing history, interest preferences, and interactive behaviors, enabling slow variety shows to quickly reach audiences interested in topics such as lifestyle, food, and travel, thus achieving “long-tail dissemination” of content [2]. Furthermore, the slow variety show platform supports simultaneous multi-channel releases. For example, a program can be simultaneously released on the video platform, official app, member-only area, and mobile short video portal. This multi-point release allows the program to be seen by more people and increases initial exposure. At the same time, the producers will also pay real-time attention to data such as playback volume, interaction volume, and comment popularity, and optimize content and promotion strategies based on audience feedback to make program dissemination more targeted.

2.2.2 Social interactive communication

In addition to being published on platforms, the dissemination of slow variety shows on social media is also very important. Production teams will release short videos, behind-the-scenes clips, or stories on platforms such as Weibo, Douyin, Bilibili, and Xiaohongshu. Through viewers’ active sharing and forwarding of these snippets, secondary dissemination is generated, which creates word-of-mouth effects and social bursts. For example, “Let’s Farm” uses a combination of “long videos + short videos + live broadcasts” to release individual clips and short farming videos on social platforms, showcasing the key moments of half a year of winter farming and the growth changes of the members more comprehensively and clearly to the audience. In addition, slow variety shows are good at using topic tags, challenges, or user-generated content to

inspire viewers to create their own content, stimulating everyone's enthusiasm to participate. This interaction not only extends the program's lifecycle but also enhances audience stickiness and sense of belonging. Slow variety shows focus on the small details of life and emphasize emotional transmission, making it particularly easy for viewers to empathize and be willing to share actively. This makes digital dissemination not just an information transfer but extends into experience and interaction.

3. The Marketing Dilemma Faced by Slow Variety Shows in the Context of Online Media

3.1 Difficulties at the Industry Level

3.1.1 Traffic logic conflict

The algorithm-driven traffic flow of internet platforms is inherently at odds with the dynamics of slow variety shows. Platform algorithms favor fast-paced, high-octane content, while capital seeks short-term returns. This often leads to slow variety shows, which rely on emotional engagement, being underestimated in terms of both their distribution and commercial value, making it difficult for them to gain sufficient exposure. To cater to market demand, slow variety shows have gradually become products of "homogenization, general marketing, and scripting", and their qualities have been eroded by excessive commercialization [3]. At the same time, scholar Sudan also pointed out that when the industry is overly dependent on celebrities and imitation models driven by traffic, slow variety shows lose their originality and cultural heritage, and can only "drink poison to quench thirst", ultimately aggravating aesthetic fatigue [4]. It can be seen from this that the difficulties encountered by slow variety shows at the industrial level are essentially a deep conflict between "slow value" and "fast logic": if the "slow value" is lost, it is not a slow variety show, and if it is not adapted to the "fast logic", it will be difficult to gain traffic.

3.1.2 Limited commercial monetization

Slow variety shows require time to develop emotional value, while commercials typically seek immediate exposure and impact, putting them at a disadvantage when it comes to attracting investment. Product placement is limited for slow variety shows, and overly frequent or abrupt placements can undermine the immersive and authentic feel of the program. Thirdly, slow variety shows lack IP derivative development. Scholar Xue Shengxin pointed out in his research that while some TV variety shows have achieved breakthroughs due to their novelty through the integration of "program+e-commerce+mobile terminals,"

most slow variety shows have still failed to establish a sustainable IP derivative system. Some program teams over-rely on the star effect and neglect the development of the program's core values and cultural symbols, resulting in insufficient subsequent monetization of the IP [5].

3.1.3 Serious homogenization phenomenon

There are more and more slow variety shows, but most of the content is very similar. The serious homogeneity phenomenon has locked its innovation space at the industry level, causing slow variety show marketing to fall into an "involution" dilemma. Many programs are similar in form and content, forming a clear "honeycomb" phenomenon of "slow variety shows", most of which revolve around similar models such as "celebrity opening homestays and restaurants" [6]. The high degree of homogeneity of this content not only stifles original motivation but also makes it difficult to implement differentiated digital marketing strategies, continuously dilutes brand value, and ultimately leads to the dual dilemma of weak investment attraction and audience loss. Furthermore, homogeneous competition has driven up marketing costs and sharply reduced the return on investment of digital marketing. Major platforms have gradually adopted similar standardized marketing strategies, including Weibo trending searches, Douyin challenges, and KOL outreach. This repetitive and oversaturated marketing campaign has weakened the long-term influence of program brands and further hindered the healthy development of slow variety shows in the digital landscape.

3.2 Dilemma at the Individual Level

3.2.1 Limited space for creative expression

Creators often need to compromise between policies, the market, and audience expectations when expressing themselves, lacking sufficient space for free expression. Although there are significant differences between fast variety shows and slow variety shows in terms of rhythm and presentation form, their creation and dissemination must always be market-oriented [7]. In the online media landscape, a market-driven approach inevitably leads to a focus on traffic. The primary distribution and marketing channels for slow variety shows are video platforms and social media. Platforms, with the initiative to distribute traffic and recommend content, generally favor content that easily generates buzz and sparks discussion. However, the narrative nature of slow variety shows, which emphasizes "daily" and "spontaneous" expression, naturally conflicts with the platforms' drive for buzz and traffic. This directly leads to a dilemma for creators, who are constrained in topic selection, narrative, and character development. This dilemma reflects the eternal tension between cultural creation and the logic of capital.

3.2.2 Weakened interaction between guests and audience

In the age of online media, audiences' aesthetic preferences and engagement have been reshaped by highly interactive media formats like short videos and livestreams. In contrast, the structure of slow variety dictates their lack of interactivity. Behind the relaxed feel and naturally flowing narrative lies a lack of immediate feedback mechanisms. Guests often immerse themselves in scenes from the countryside, travel, or crafting, and the content must be broadcast and released in post-production before reaching the audience. Live variety shows and short video platforms, on the other hand, enable real-time interaction. However, the time-lag nature of the former deprives the audience of a sense of immediate engagement and participation, and also reduces the potential for discussion and discussion, resulting in far less engagement than the latter. In addition, there is a paradox in interactions in the digital age where quantity increases but quality decreases. On the one hand, guests need to cooperate with publicity through platforms such as Weibo and Douyin, but this kind of interaction is mostly standardized content operated by the team, focusing on commercial promotion, and the guests' expressions tend to be conservative and lack distinct personality; on the other hand, the massive barrage and comments makes in-depth communication almost impossible. Most comments are drowned in the torrent of information, and the audience lacks channels for in-depth participation. These factors make it difficult for slow variety shows to form a lasting community atmosphere in digital communication, thereby weakening their competitiveness in marketing and communication.

4. Suggestions for Optimizing the Digital Dissemination and Marketing of Slow Variety Shows

4.1 Industry Strategy Level

4.1.1 Platform algorithm drives dissemination

In the Internet age, content is the foundation and communication is the bridge. For slow variety shows that aim to satisfy niche aesthetics and enter the large variety show market through a small incision, platform algorithms are the key mechanism for accurately reaching the target audience [8]. Compared with the "wide-net" dissemination of traditional TV broadcasts, the platform algorithm recommendation is completely different - it can accurately target potential preference segments of the audience through

labeling based on user interests, viewing habits and interaction data, and then push slow variety show content. For example, users who enjoy short videos about rural life, travel, and food will be more likely to be pushed related slow variety shows. However, this strategy is not without challenges: the platform's algorithm focuses on "high click-through rates and high engagement," which conflicts with the "low excitement and low conflict" characteristics of slow variety shows. If slow variety shows simply cater to algorithms, they risk adding dramatic elements and losing their authenticity. Therefore, maintaining a dynamic balance between "content, algorithms, and audience" is crucial. By meticulously creating short videos and carefully managing hashtags, it can maintain the core value of the show while adhering to the platform's logic. At the same time, it should also focus on exploring long-term mechanisms: on the one hand, satisfy the audience's immediate interests with the fast pace of short videos; on the other hand, provide deep companionship and continuous value through serialized narratives and community extensions. Only by combining short-term reach with long-term sedimentation can slow variety shows maintain their core value in an algorithm-driven communication environment and expand a more lasting market space.

4.1.2 Long-tail value development

Looking at the field of 'slow variety shows', the revenue channels for slow variety shows are limited to a single advertising investment, which can lead to strong control of content by social capital, detrimental to the independent and healthy operation of the content ecosystem. To address the existing difficulties of a single revenue system, on one hand, it can develop long-tail value through content fragmentation and secondary creation. Taking 'Where Are We Going, Dad?' as an example, the daily labor scenes in the 'Mushroom House' and the healing conversations among guests are often edited into short videos by viewers, which are then continuously re-shared on platforms like Douyin and Bilibili, resulting in a large amount of 'secondary creation'. This not only extends the program's dissemination cycle but also allows slow variety shows to continuously reach new audience segments. On the other hand, it is essential to accurately plan the IP development direction around the core content of slow variety shows based on the type of program. The 'Where Are We Going, Dad?' show realizes IP operation by converting pastoral slow living into consumer choices through the sale of derivative cultural products and co-branded agricultural products. The recreation of long-tail value can continue to release potential even after the initial popularity fades, truly achieving an extension of communicative power and commercial value.

4.2 Program Strategy

4.2.1 Topic content upgrade

The theme is the soul of artistic works, and the iteration of the variety market relies on the innovative development of programs. To meet the diverse needs of audiences, slow variety shows should break away from singular life narratives, avoid standardized aesthetics, maintain the genuine quality of 'slowness', and continuously integrate new elements to preserve the depth and richness of the works. Research emphasizes that to optimize slow-paced art, it must rely on cross-boundary integration to enhance its knowledge and cultural attributes in order to satisfy the diverse needs of audiences. For example, 'I Read on an Island' combines the soothing narrative of slow variety with a book club, inviting authors and poets to the island for reading and discussing books. It uses documentary-style filming to evoke emotional resonance in the audience, providing a dual experience of 'spiritual healing + knowledge enrichment'. Its breakout success points to a transformation and upgrade path for slow variety shows, which are currently suffering from severe homogenization and excessive entertainment.

4.2.2 Refined audience operations

The reach of slow variety shows relies not only on the quality of the content but also on the audience's continued engagement and retention. Because slow variety shows are relatively less interactive, their operational strategies must be refined. In terms of audience management, big data can be used to segment and profile the audience, and provide differentiated content push for groups with different preferences. In terms of emotional connection, slow-paced art has unique value in delicate expression and emotional interaction. It focuses on creating a sense of companionship and a healing atmosphere, and uses social platforms such as Weibo and Xiaohongshu to extend guest stories and behind-the-scenes footage [9]. In terms of interactive mechanisms, more "lightweight interactive" methods can be designed on digital platforms, and by moderately introducing audience voting, UGC creation, etc., the audience can be transformed from "viewers" to "co-creators". "In addition, offline activities such as theme exhibitions and fan meetings can effectively deepen the emotional connection between the program and the audience.

4.2.3 IP private domain linkage

For slow variety shows, IP refers to the program itself, as well as the symbols, guest images, lifestyle concepts, scene styles, etc., that are formed within the program. The IP private domain refers to extending the program's IP into private traffic spaces and forming sustained audience relationships and commercial conversions through

community operations, fan interactions, and product consumption. At the same time, this also sets requirements for brand collaborations: brands need to be highly compatible with the program's tone for in-depth content co-creation, rather than just inserting products in a simple way. In 'The Life We Long For,' it collaborated with the home brand Fotile to launch the 'Creative Kitchen' segment--naturally showcasing product functions while also conveying the lifestyle concept of 'cooking with care'. This kind of deep cooperation raises higher standards for both the producers and the brands--both parties need to collaboratively conceive the points of integration between the brand and the content in advance to ultimately achieve the ideal effect of 'content itself is marketing'.

5. Conclusion

In today's online media environment, slow variety shows are like a refreshing breeze of 'slow living'. Moving from 'fast' to 'slow' is not just about changing the pace; it's a shift from focusing excessively on entertainment and thrills to conveying life values and guiding positive directions. It's not just a new format of variety shows, but represents a whole new production mindset, with its core appeal lying in 'emotional resonance'. However, slow variety shows aren't sailing smoothly in the digital media landscape. Because there's a gap between their creative concepts and audience expectations, they are constantly trying to find a 'balance' between the two, hoping to resonate with viewers through the show's emotional depth and cultural values to ultimately achieve the desired communication effect. In the future, finding alignment with platform algorithms and leveraging long-tail value to maintain influence will be key directions for development. In terms of program strategy, it is necessary to explore flexible business models while also focusing on topic innovation, audience engagement, and IP collaboration to enhance competitiveness and tighten the emotional bond with the audience. The significance of slow variety shows goes far beyond entertainment consumption; the lifestyle attitudes and cultural values they embody respond precisely to the audience's needs for spiritual solace and identity recognition. As long as content innovation also considers social responsibility and combines with new media technologies, slow variety shows can definitely find their place in the digital wave and carve out a more sustainable development path.

References

- [1] Yin J, Liu Y. „Slow variety show“: model innovation of TV variety show. *News and Writing*, 2017, (11): 50-53.
- [2] Yang H. China's variety show market, marketing, and optimization. In *SHS Web of Conferences*, 2024, 193: 01015.

- [3] Ye H, Wang S Q. Analysis of the characteristics and dilemmas of slow variety shows: taking the suspension of „Longing for Life“ as an example. *Journal of Journalism Research*, 2023, 14(16): 149-151.
- [4] Su D. Exploration of the development dilemma and breakthrough path of slow variety shows. *Popular Literature and Art*, 2021, (11): 130-131.
- [5] Xue S X. Research on the digital survival strategy of TV variety shows in the era of integrated media. Master's degree thesis, Northwest Normal University, 2016.
- [6] Ouyang X Y. Research on the development dilemma and solution of „slow variety show“. *Communication Research*, 2018, 2(10): 31+33.
- [7] Du J. On the communication strategy and development path of slow variety shows: taking „Longing for Life“ as an example. *Journalist Cradle*, 2023, (11): 93-95.
- [8] Song X Q, Li Y. An analysis of the dilemma and development path of „slow variety shows“. *Northern Media Research*, 2019, (02): 17-20+41.
- [9] Liangqin J. Optimization path analysis of slow variety art from the perspective of audience demand. *Frontiers in Art Research*, 2024, 6(8).