# Social "relearning" in the post-epidemic era: A study on the communication effect of social observation variety programs ——Taking "Fifty kilometers Taohuawu 2" as an example

**Keyue Hu[1*], Huan Ren[2], Luxi Liang[3]**

**[1]School of Art and Media, China University of Geosciences, Beijing 100038, China**

**[2]Central China Normal University,Wuhan 430079,China**

**[3]Zhejiang University, Hangzhou 310058, China**

**[*]Corresponding author E-mail: 1398652936@qq.com**

**[*]Corresponding author E-mail: 1398652936@qq.com**

**Abstract:** In the past two years, the isolation norm under the COVID-19 pandemic has made many people accustomed to living alone and not adapt to return to group life, and how to cope comfortably in real social scenarios has become a topic of public discussion sparking concern, then social observation variety program was born. 50km Taohuawu2(Taohuawu2), which started broadcasting in June 2022, stands out for its differentiated positioning content that fits the current social situation and group social experiment. This paper takes "Taohuawu2" as the research object, starting with the use and gratifications approach and the "adversarial" decoding stance of Hall's three "hypothetical stances", and uses literature analysis, case analysis, and questionnaire survey to explore the special social observation variety show. The results of the study indicate that the social observation variety show has a special content mechanism and the actual communication effect in the social scene. The results indicate that social observation variety program, with its unique expression mechanism of content dissemination, forms a communication effect that promotes emotional connection and social imitation, meeting the social learning needs of audiences.

**Keywords:** Social observation variety program, Communication effect, Use and gratifications approach, Adversarial decoding.

## 1 Introduction

Since 2022, society has gradually entered the post-epidemic era, and people are gradually adapting to co-exist with epidemics for a long time. Sudden epidemics not only pose a threat to life, but also pose a degree of psychological threat. In the post-epidemic era, home work and isolation increase the time people spend alone, while also increasing the sense of discomfort in returning to group life. In a Weibo top search that "why young people don't like to visit

relatives", many netizens gave the answers that it is difficult to communicate with each other during the epidemic, and communication frequency decreases, which increases the sense of alienation and creates an instinctive fear of socializing with relatives, which provides thought for the study of social psychological changes.

Against this background, variety shows based on "socialization + observation" have become a platform for people to “relearning” socialization. By showing the daily life of the guests, the variety programs bring them closer to the audience; by simulating various life scenarios and presenting them in different scenarios, they bring people an immersive experience; by the observer group’s interpretation of the behaviors and psychology of the guests, they create a dialogue with the audience who are not present, and complete a spiritual baptism with a profound emotional identity, triggering empathy. “slow variety programs” have a vitality that returns to life, follows the heart, and resonates with the public, inspiring people to think about real life. The media has the responsibility to exert the main spirit of “slow variety programs” and produce more valuable programs. The main case study of this paper is "Taohuawu2" which expands on the previous programs by building a realistic and vivid group community, exploring different ways of socializing, and showing the many faces of group interaction. We observed that the social variety programs represented by "Taohuawu2" responded to people's social needs in the post-epidemic era, with many social scenes contrasting with real life, providing a certain paradigm for people to socialize. In this regard, we are curious: what kind of special content mechanism does the social observation variety program have? Can this special mechanism produce actual communication effects in social scenarios? What are the specific communication effects?

## 2 Overview

### 2.1 Review of Uses and Gratifications Approach

The study of use and gratifications approach began in the 1940s, and in the 1950s, the American sociologist Katz first introduced the concept of "use and gratification" to examine the psychological and behavioral utility of mass communication by analyzing the audience's motivation for media exposure and the need for gratification from these exposures. As advanced technology provides viewers with more and more media choices, motivation and gratification have become one of the most critical factors in audience analysis[1].

Scholars have also dissected that the program meets viewers' psychological search for truth and knowledge, as well as their desire for voyeurism and recognition, based on use and gratifications approach[2]. In the study of the audience of "My Little One", Li Xiaodong points out that audiences' psychological motivations are diverse and influenced by social and psychological factors, and that the behavior of audiences' exposure to any medium is a process

of satisfying their own psychological needs. Different programs can bring different psychological effects to audiences, mainly the satisfaction of interpersonal utility, self-affirmation utility, and environmental monitoring utility[3]. Wang Xi also points out in the survey of the observation variety program "The Shining One" that the reason for the high attention of the program, besides the high appearance level of contestants, the high flow of investment group guests, and the high participation in the workplace topics, the most important thing is all the audience's need for self-awareness[4]. Yang Jie shows in the research of TV dating shows that "snooping" on others' privacy is also valued as a "means of exchange", based on human social needs and group pressure[5].

### 2.2 Overview of observational slow variety programs

Observational slow variety programs are reality shows that show the daily lives of guests and their behavior and status under specific situations and rules under the camera, emphasizing the real experiences of guests and viewers[6], while viewers look at the people and events of the program from a third perspective[7]. The development of observational variety programs began in 2008 with the Japanese program "Life-Changing One-Minute Profound Conversation", and since 2013, Korea has also launched programs such as "We Got Married", "In the Same Bed" and "Heart Signal". China's observation variety program was developed by local adaptation based on Japanese and Korean programs. As early as 2015, there were social reality observation programs in China, such as Guangdong TV's "What Would You Do" and Hunan TV's "The Thump Thump of Conscience". Since then, observation variety programs have emerged and gradually developed into genres, such as "The Daughters' Love", which explores parent-child emotions, "Viva La Romance", which focuses on couples' relationships, "Heart Signal", which presents social love, "Summer Refuge", which focuses on living alone, and "Fifty kilometers Taohuawu", which observes group living. Among them, the Tencent Video launched group life observation reality program "Fifty kilometers Taohuawu" has opened up a new track of observation variety program in 2021, which is a new social experiment[8].

The emergence and development of domestic social observation variety program has attracted research from multiple perspectives in academia. Zhang Yu analyzes "The Daughters' Love" from the perspective of audience psychology and acceptance, pointing out four aspects that construct the program's characters and story direction, including the emotional paradigm formed by emotional ratios, intergenerational emotional communication, a new vision of family mirroring relationships, and the audience's psychological expectation horizon[9]. Xu Min further points out that the main reason for the popularity of "The Daughters' Love" is that it meets the psychological needs of the audience, including voyeurism, emotional empathy and knowledge-seeking psychology[10]. Wu Keqin combines the social observation variety program boom with Goffman's dramaturgy theory, suggesting that with the development of the Internet and the enrichment of variety program content, private topics are gradually entering the public space, and to a certain extent, "backstage forward" is realized to satisfy the audience's privacy

psychology[11].

In general, the current research on social observation variety programs is focused on program production, narrative mode, audience psychology and program issues, but there are few studies on program communication effects, lacking of analysis on the communication mechanism and strategy of social observation variety programs.

# 3 Method

### 3.1 Research questions and hypotheses

Under the epidemic situation, the social observation variety show represented by Taohuawu 2 has aroused heated discussion. Among them, a video called ' Song Dandan embarrassed 9 minutes ' boarded hot search. Many young netizens resonate strongly with the conflicts and contradictions of social scenes in social observation variety shows. In response to this phenomenon, this study proposes the following questions : What is the special content mechanism of social observation variety shows ? Can it produce actual propagation effects in social scenarios ? What is the specific communication effect ? And put forward the research hypothesis :

H1: The more frequently you watch social observation variety shows, the better the communication effect.

H1a: The more frequently you watch social observation variety shows, the higher the attention to social topics;

H1b: The more frequently you watch social observation variety shows, the more positive you are about your social reality;

H1c: The more frequently you watch social observation variety shows, the more you tend to generate social action in reality;

H2: The more immersive the social observation variety show, the better the communication.

H2a: The more immersive watching social observation variety shows, the higher the attention to social topics;

H2b: The more immersed in watching social observation variety shows, the more positive the social mentality in reality;

H2c: The more immersed in watching social observation variety shows, the more social actions tend to occur in reality.

### 3.2 Sampling Survey and Questionnaire Design

This paper uses the questionnaire method to study, design four parts of the problem, a total of 19 questions. The first part is to investigate the media contact and contact habits of the audience, covering the dimensions of viewing time, duration, frequency, participation in

discussion and sharing. The second part is to use the Likert scale to measure the audience 's social cognition, social attitude, and social behavior satisfaction. The third part is to investigate the audience 's expectations for future social observation variety shows. The fourth part is to investigate the demographic characteristics of the audience.

With the help of the questionnaire star platform, this questionnaire is distributed to the audience of ' Taohuawu 2 ' through the channels of Weibo group, circle of friends, WeChat group and so on. A total of 207 questionnaires were collected. According to the screening question ' Have you ever watched ' 50km Taohuawu 2 ' social observation variety show ? And 14 questions of attention test, the final valid data 165 copies.

# 4 Results

Through Pearson correlation analysis: H1a was established ( $r = 0.182$, $p = 0.019^*$ ). The more frequently you watch social observation variety shows, the more attention you pay to social topics. H1b does not hold ( $r = 0.124,0.112$ ), and there is no correlation between viewing frequency and social mentality. H1c is established ( $r = 0.245$, $p = 0.002^{**}$ ). The more frequently you watch social observation variety shows, the more likely it is to generate social actions in reality. In the verification of H2, only H2c was established ( $r = 0.204$, $p = 0.009^*$ ), indicating that the more immersed the social observation variety is, the more inclined it is to generate social action in reality.

## 4.1 Basic information description of the sample

The proportion of male and female viewers of ' Taohuawu 2 ' is not much different. Most of them are women, accounting for 53.9%. There are relatively few men, and the 19-35 age group accounts for the vast majority. The audience's education can cover mainly from high school to undergraduate, and the field coverage is relatively average, accounting for more than 20% of the data and the gap is not large. It can be seen that there is no obvious professional barrier to the program, which has a certain relationship with its popular and flat output mode. Audience distribution in various regions of the proportion of uniform ( except the northwest region accounted for only 1.73% ), are around 20%, indicating that the program achieved a certain degree of regional broken circle.

## 4.2 Analysis of Program Watching Behavior

From the descriptive analysis, most people watch ' occasionally ', accounting for 50.29 %, ' generally watch within one week after each update '. The viewing time is concentrated at 7-9 pm, accounting for 20.81%. Many people have sharing behavior after watching, and only 15 % have not been recommended at all. Most of the audience will have multiple viewing behavior,

which re-scrub 1-3 times accounted for up to 54.91%.

About 96 % of the audience watching ' Taohuawu 2 ' will have ' participation behavior ', in ' barrage ', ' send comments ', ' not speed watch ', ' to participate in the discussion of topics related to Weibo ', ' to join the program talk ', ' to join the program ' s bean petal group ' 6 categories of behavior, ' all have ' accounted for 27.17 %, accounting for ' 2-4 ' the highest proportion, 32.95 %. It can be seen that the content of social observation variety shows can well stimulate the audience 's willingness to participate, and the audience 's viewing immersion is high.

Among the viewers who watched ' Taohuawu 2 ', most of them had stable interests and tendencies in social observation variety shows, and only 6.36 % had not watched all other similar variety shows.

### 4.3 Analysis of Influencing Factors of Social Learning Behavior

Audience pay more attention to social interaction, with an average of 3.71. The A4 option has a clear preference for peer social attention, while the A2 option is only 3.42, indicating that the audience is relatively less willing to discuss social topics with others.

The average viewer ' s social attitude is only 3.32, which is generally positive. B1 and B3 options score higher, indicating that most of the audience to participate in social activities, to solve related problems in a more positive attitude; The B2 score of only 1.74 shows that despite the positive tendency of the audience, there is still more panic anxiety when participating in social activities.

The average social behavior of the audience is 2.75, which is lower than the median of 3, indicating that watching social observation variety shows has an overall tendency to reduce the social behavior of the audience. In particular, the C4 score is low, indicating that the audience 's resistance to accepting social invitations from friends is still strong, and the behavior of online social networking has a certain degree of ' compensation ' for offline social behavior.

The third part shows that the audience 's expectations for social observation variety shows are high, with an average value of 3.72. The score of D5 option is as high as 3.84, indicating that ' looking for identity ' is a strong expectation ; At the same time D2 score is higher than the average, indicating that audience expectations of ' social strong ' are high.

## 5 Discussion

### 5.1 Accompanying Learning : Emotional Topics Promote the Formation of Field

Social observation programs construct a text-centered social interaction network by strengthening the function of topic interpretation and emotion sharing, so as to provide multiple social opportunities for the audience.

First, the true presentation of the content of the spread under the hot topic. The observation

variety show chooses the social issues that people generally experience in real life and can achieve extensive empathy to guide the content of the program[12], thus forming a key discussion topic in the society and arousing the psychological identity of the audience; At the same time, it promotes emotional venting or provides solutions in the discussion of interpersonal communication, forming an interactive ritual chain. Secondly, variety show units show different types of social character, so as to explore the differences in the way of communication between people in terms of friendship, love, affection and so on. Everyone involved in the program has distinct personality characteristics, and some collisions and fusions occur in the real mimicry environment. The real simulation of the whole link of the social chain provides the audience with a ' presence ' experience, so that they can find similar social situations in their daily life and provide a paradigm for social behavior.

In Taohuawu 2, people need to do tasks to earn contribution value. Wang Sulong example to bring you happiness can get a thousand contribution value, but Song Dandan directly refuted : ' You don 't contribute a thousand, your view of yourself is not particularly accurate. ' As well as people put forward ' Wu Muye playing piano contribution value can be more ', Song Dandan said to Wang Sulong : ' you look at people, look at you. ' This kind of elder-colored overlooking speech sparked a massive discussion on Weibo. Song Dandan is more like a typical traditional parent in this kind of communication space, emphasizing ' other people 's children ' ; wang Sulong plays the role of mediation and active atmosphere, trying to ease the contradiction. In response to the discussion of the controversial point of the program, people have shared their similar experiences and agreed on the view that ' there are different ways of getting along between generations, but there is no need to identify themselves as leaders '. In this process, the audience will pay more attention to the social topics on the Internet and participate in them by watching the program, forming a social learning based on the content of the program.

### 5.2 Need concerns: promote emotional release and meet social needs

According to the Uses and Gratifications Theory proposed by Elihu Katz in his book The Uses of Mass Communications, it is known that audience watch social observation variety shows with the purpose of satisfying their own needs, which is closely related to their social background, personal psychology and other factors, and the satisfaction of their needs is an important result of their exposure to the programs.

As an entertainment variety show, Taohuawu 2 itself has the emotional narrative of a variety show, such as creating conflict, setting the mood, creating a parting, etc. The second season of the show sets more of a framework to try to create more emotional points compared to the first season, and the "exile island" setting leads to a series of social scenes that provide more emotional possibilities for the audience. A group of people gathered for a villagers' meeting, which was supposed to be an "ice-breaker" after an orgy, but instead was a choice of "who will be banished tonight", and this scene would become a regular agenda of every night in Taohuawu. The social atmosphere of the show takes a sharp turn for the worse, and the social

emotions of the viewing audience also take a sharp turn for the worse, creating a "question-and-object" decoding of the framework. Emotionally, people were attached to the comfortable social atmosphere that had been left after the "bonfire party", and Bullet Hell appeared asking the guests to ignore the "exile island" rule. At this time, Song Dandan's act of taking the lead to defy the rules precisely focused the viewers' emotional needs. They think that "Song's behavior" in this scene is their "own behavior", and their own social emotions are released to a certain extent as their sense of immersion and experience increases.

Taohuawu 2 is also more like a social "test bed" for the audience. In addition to the emotional satisfaction of the entertainment program itself in terms of "physical and mental pleasure" and "emotional catharsis", it is more about the satisfaction of social awareness, desire and scrutiny. The results of the questionnaire show that young people between the ages of 19 and 35 are the main viewers of Taohuawu 2, and most of them are in a period of transition in social relationships. For example, they are moving from high school to college, from college to society, or have not yet stabilized in their jobs in a period of changing life scenarios, which makes them have more demand for social content than other people in stable student, work and family situations. The mean value of social concern in the questionnaire reaches 3.71, which shows their high level of demand for social content. The three options A1, A3 and A4 are all higher than the mean value of 3.71, indicating that this type of audience has always had a need to follow social issues and social stories on the Internet, especially those closer to their own peers. Taohuawu 2 meets this need well by building an ideal community that combines art, humanities and technology, inviting 15 guests of different ages and personalities to show the face of group life in contemporary society in a realistic and vivid way, and allowing contemporary people to actively think about the possibility and inevitability of socializing in the harmony of human and nature.

### 5.3 Practical strategies: Imitation and compensation of social behavior

The isolation norm under the epidemic has made many people accustomed to living alone rather than adapting back to the group world, and people are increasingly inclined to spend most of their time on social media, gradually losing their ability to socialize in real daily life. Social observation variety shows are based on this change in audience, and through the presentation of real social scenes in the first scene, and some programs set up second scene observers for communication and advice, and convey to the audience the right approach in facing emotional maintenance and social reality. In addition, social observation variety shows have the function of cultivating the behavior and cognition of the audience. Some behaviors in the program may cause imitation, so the behavior of the guests in the program needs to meet the requirements of healthy values, provide positive role models for the audience, and meet the audience's needs for value construction. In Taohuawu 2, Wang Chuanjun needs to spend the night alone on a deserted island, and his good friends come to see him early the next morning. Wang Chuanjun immediately went to drive away the bugs when he heard Li Xueqin ask if there were any

bugs. He would treat his friends with the coffee beans he ground last night, and he would also carefully take out the most expensive Luosifen he got in exchange for garbage collection and give them to his friends to eat. The presentation of this social scene conveys to the audience the value of "sincerity is always a must" - sometimes there may not be much need for social skills, sincerity is the best way to connect us with others. Through watching the show, audience find their identity and learn social skills, so they can engage in daily interactions and form effective social behaviors.

Social observation variety shows provide audience with a platform for social learning, and at the same time, provide audience with social opportunities by creating topics and generating discussions that play their own role as social surrogates. Taohuawu 2 spreads and generates discussions on the online platform, which also shifts the place where audience' social behaviors occur more to online, while the anxiety and panic generated by offline socialization is unavoidable will also be transferred to online to a certain extent. When the program team sent "Song Dandan's embarrassment for 9 minutes" as a publicity point to the hot search, it instantly triggered a widespread discussion on the topic of "elders' socialization". Whether or not they have seen Taohuawu 2, any netizen can find some common feelings in this content at this time. As a result, there are those who criticize the strong social network, those who criticize the network anger of the disadvantaged generation gap, and those who just brush off jokes when they see them. The audience share feelings, exchange ideas and express their views by posting bullet screens, writing comments and participating in topic discussions on Weibo, Douban and other platforms. In this process, no matter what kind of viewpoint, you can find agreement on the Internet, and then join the "battlefield" and enjoy it.

## 6 Summary and Reflection

Overall, Taohuawu 2 constitutes a complete social interaction ritual chains. Based on their own habits and preferences, audience satisfy the demand for entertainment and relaxation while seeking identity in the guests, creating emotional connection and self-examination. It provides a reference for social "re-learning" in the Post-Pandemic and promotes the return to group life.

However, there are still some problems with Taohuawu 2 as a variety show. Firstly, the content of the show lacks a second view of the observation room, and there are only guests to prepare for the show, but no observation room space is set up, so it is difficult to extend the discussion of the topic, and the entertainment content is relatively large and lacks depth. Second, the excessive creation of controversial topics, cutting the emotional connection. On the one hand, the post-editing deliberately creates conflicts to create "watching focus"; on the other hand, it is difficult for the guests to show their true appearance in the situation under scrutiny, and the program team also creates a persona for the guests, which to a certain extent destroys the authenticity of the program.

The efforts made by social observation variety shows to meet the needs of audience are far

from enough. TV media practitioners should improve their media literacy focus on users and optimize content[13]. There is still a lot of room for the creation of social observation variety shows to reflect real social life and achieve the purpose of guiding positive social values.

## References


[1].Weiyan LIU. (2015). A Historical Overview of Uses and Gratifications Theory. Cross-Cultural Communication, 11(9), 71-78.

[2].Niu Xinxin. (2020).Audience psychology analysis of ' heart-moving signals ' under the use and satisfaction theory. New media research(16), 101-103.(in Chinese)

[3].Li Xiaodong. (2022). Audience Study of Observational Variety Shows Based on Use and Gratification Theory - A Case Study of ' My Lady '. Journal of Changsha University (03), 46-50. (in Chinese)

[4].Wang Xi. (2022). An Exploration of Observing Reality Shows from the Perspective of Use and Gratification Theory - A Case Study of ' Shining You '. China Press (08), 22-24.(in Chinese)

[5].Yang Jie. (2022). Analysis of TV dating show planning based on the theory of ' use and gratification '. Editing (08), 143-145. (in Chinese)

[6].Wu Hanjia.(2022).Analysis of Narrative Characteristics of Slow Variety Show -- Take Hello Life as an Example. Frontiers in Art Research(12.0).

[7].Sun Yan. (2019). Watching and Being Watched : A New Expression Space for Reality Shows. Contemporary Television (03), 60-62.(in Chinese)

[8].Lin Pei. (2021). ' Fifty Kilometer Taohuawu ' Outlines the ' Just Right ' of the Mini Community. China Radio, Film and Television (23), 192-193.(in Chinese)

[9].Zhang Yu. (2019). Audience Psychological and Emotional Distance : Psychological Analysis in ' Daughters ' Love. ' Contemporary Television (06), 19-22.(in Chinese)

[10].Xu Min. (2019). An Analysis of the Reasons for the Popularity of Emotional Observation Reality Shows from the Perspective of Audience Psychology - Take ' Daughters ' Love ' as an Example. Southeast Communication (07), 119-120.(in Chinese)

[11].Keqin Wu.(2021).Integration of Public and Private Fields of Emotional Observation Variety Show and its Optimization Strategy——Taking the Reality Show Heart Signal as an Example.(eds.)Proceedings of 2nd International Symposium on Education and Social Sciences (ESS 2021)(pp.111-121).BCP.

[12].Ma Mengdi. (2021). Research on Domestic Observation Variety Shows from the Perspective of Interactive Ritual Chain (Master 's Degree Thesis, Shanxi Normal University).(in Chinese)

[13].Henghe Hu.(2022).Optimized Paths for TV Variety Shows in China according to Paradigm Shift of Uses and Gratifications Approach in the Era of New New Media. Academic Journal of Humanities & Social Sciences(4.0).