

The Production and Dissemination of Laughter: A Detailed Exploration of Fu Hang's Stand-up Comedy Videos on Douyin from the Perspective of Cultural Industry

Xuan Liu^{1,a,*}

¹China Agricultural University, Beijing, 100000, China

a. 877632444@qq.com

*corresponding author

Abstract: Many Internet media outlets refer to 2021 as the "Year of the Boom of Chinese Stand-up Comedy." The rapid development of stand-up comedy culture can be attributed to its chain-like creation and distribution mechanism. Comedy, rooted in jest and banter, allows individuals to unmask each other and revel in the happiness of free expression. However, behind this lighthearted facade lies the commodification of happiness, performance, and even the audience, all driven by the forces of capital and industrialized comedy production. This article examines Fu Hang's talk show videos on Douyin platform, employing text analysis, data analysis, and media criticism theories related to the cultural industry. By analyzing Fu Hang's content, related videos, and audience engagement, this paper explores the commercialization embedded in the production and dissemination of his talk show videos. Ultimately, Fu Hang's stand-up comedy videos on Douyin exemplify how "laughter" is industrially produced in a manipulative, mechanical and commercial way.

Keywords: Talk Show, Fu Hang, Douyin Commodity

1. Introduction

In recent years, the "stand-up comedy craze" sparked by the variety show "The Comedy Conference" has become a notable cultural phenomenon. It lasted for five years until it was suspended in 2023 due to violations. That year, House, a stand-up comedian from Xiguo Culture, used inappropriate remarks during a performance, causing widespread controversy. Subsequently, Xiguo Culture was required to suspend its performances in Beijing, Shanghai, and other places and was fined over 10 million yuan. This incident not only led to a complete halt of Xiguo Culture's live shows but also affected the image and reputation of the entire stand-up comedy industry. Despite these challenges, the stand-up comedy industry showed remarkable resilience and began to recover in 2024 with the launch of new variety shows such as "The King of Comedy Solo Season" and "The Stand-up Comedy and Its Friends" These programs successfully reignited public enthusiasm for stand-up comedy. Among them, Fu Hang won the championship in "The King of Comedy Solo Season" and became an overnight sensation, entering the public eye and becoming a benchmark figure for "laughing", "funny", and "stand-up comedy." On the Douyin platform, videos related to Fu Hang's stand-up comedy saw a sharp increase, and Fu Hang gained many "laughing" fans with his humorous content and jokes.

This study aims to explore the production and dissemination of humor in Fu hang’s stand-up comedy videos on Douyin, analyzing the mechanisms behind their creation, the strategies employed in their dissemination, and the cultural factors that contributed to Fu Hang’s rapid rise to prominence.

2. Literature Review

The year 2021 is widely regarded as the "Year of the Explosion of Chinese Stand-up Comedy." A keyword search for “stand-up comedy” yielded 234 valid articles published since 2021, with 50 selected for further reading and analysis.

Recent studies primarily focus on stand-up comedy programs, analyzing their text content and value concepts of stand-up comedy in China at present. One major research direction investigates the language expression in stand-up comedy, using linguistic or pragmatic theories to analyze humor generation mechanism. For example, Huang's "Discussion on the Social Functions of Code-switching from the Perspective of Sociolinguistics: Taking the Fifth Season of 'Stand-up Comedy Conference' as an Example" [1]. Another research direction examines the textual and thematic aspects of stand-up comedy, emphasizing its connections to audience reception and societal narratives. This category often links stand-up comedy to contemporary youth or the "Z Generation," portraying it as a medium reflecting the spirit of contemporary youth. Representative works include Dai and Sun's "Research on the Empathy Effect and Trigger Mechanism of Z Generation Stand-up Comedy Programs" [2]. Research from the perspective of cultural industry remains limited. A search on CNKI identified only two relevant articles. Qiang's "Happy Industry: The Cultural Production Mechanism of Domestic Stand-up Comedy from the Perspective of Cultural Industry" explores the patterned language production mechanism behind stand-up comedy, a representative of young comedy in China [3]. Guo's "Analysis of the Current Situation of Domestic Stand-up Comedy from the Perspective of Adorno's Cultural Industry Theory" discusses its characteristics and interaction with public audience [4]. Additionally, Srikrishna Vasupradha’s research explores the commodification of content, connecting it to capitalism and the role of talk show as platforms for celebrity branding or rebranding through a political economy of communication approach with Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) [5].

Existing literature presents two main gaps. First, limited reflection and critique of stand-up comedy are evident, as most of the research focuses on institutional mechanisms. Second, analyses of the production and dissemination of talk shows from cultural industry perspective are scarce and often overly generalized, taking all domestic talk shows as uniform samples, which lacks specificity. This paper will analyze the process of the production and dissemination of talk shows from the perspective of cultural industry, and reflect on the problems existing in this operation mechanism.

3. Research Methods

This paper select 34 accounts related to Fu Hang 1,013 related videos. These accounts are into three : Fu Hang's personal account, re-creation accounts, and fan accounts. his mainly adopts text analysis and data analysis. By analyzing the content and data of Fu Hang's short videos on Douyin, it provides support for the . sample selection, random sampling method is adopted, account produced popular Fu Hang videos (more than 100,000 likes).

Table 1: Research Samples.

Account Name	Douyin ID	Related Video Pieces	Type
Fu Hang Talk Show	fuhangtuokouxiu	234	Individual
Fu Hang's Secondary Account	fuhangtuokouxiu2	29	Individual
iQIYI Comedy King Solo Season	/	95	Re-creation
Jerry's Laughing Society	70871720772	68	Re-creation

Table 1: (continued).

Midnight Diary	S1252952607	13	Re-creation
Linglong Pagoda Store Department	59647767547	10	Re-creation
Fu Hang Talk Show	like996723	74	Re-creation
Gu Jian Wu - Wang Lv's	BY0403	11	Re-creation
Uncle 7	feng286507	1	Re-creation
Dong Runqi	dongrunqi.	2	Re-creation
Jiang Yang	91559731893	27	Re-creation
Chen Yi	120740041	72	Re-creation
Entertainment God	/	15	Re-creation
Aunt Peach	/	27	Re-creation
Dabandeng Entertainment	/	4	Re-creation
Entertainment Express	/	12	Re-creation
Dahan Takes You to Chase Star	30359939	6	Fan
Fu Hang	87238737032	18	Fan
Passion Fu Hang	94761680115	14	Fan
Fu Hang Special Session	61901428901	24	Fan
I'm Not Fu Hang	96660231891	19	Fan
Fu Hang	22383137301	6	Fan
Fu Hang Black Myth	health0w0	31	Fan
Fu Hang Talk Show	82895928075	14	Fan
Fu Hang [Fan Account]	29586866827	88	Fan
Fu Hang	HXL19811014394	16	Fan
Li Xingyun	79027905523	13	Fan
Autumn Wind~~~~	2216353686	2	Fan
I Have a Little Cupid	79723879	3	Fan
Mr. Hard of Hearing	40552163	2	Fan
Nice	18096175	17	Fan
Never	58077171063	15	Fan
One Cut	42607880314	21	Fan

4. The Production of Laughter: The "Assembly Line" of Happiness Commodities

4.1. Mechanized Text Production: "Fu Hang's Machine"

Analyzing the content posted by the selected accounts and Fu Hang's performance on variety shows reveals notable characteristics in his comedic texts, including formulaic and stereotyped routines, and a Chain-like "Punching Point" Rhythm.

Stand-up comedy performances, including those by Fu Hang, are not spontaneous but carefully structured. Within the industry, text writing follows fixed patterns. Fu Hang frequently employs fixed joke formulas such as "setup + reinterpretation = surprise" and "setup + target assumption = expectation" [6]. For example, in "Comedy King Solo Season," he mentioned, "My first job was at a private club as a BA," setting up the joke, followed by "Yes, it was a security guard" as the reinterpretation, creating an unexpected twist that elicited laughter. Another routine involved self-deprecating humor about being underestimated: "A lick dog can never read the script of a goddess,

but I bounced back. In the script of a lick dog, the lick dog is the protagonist." This setup led into another joke: "From now on, when someone says, 'Fu Hang, I'm breaking up with you,' and you look like an eel. I'll say, 'Hehe, you've wrapped it up! Wrapped it up in my script!'" The audience's expectations were reinforced through structured delivery.

Besides, puns serve as another staple of stand-up comedy, though their overuse has been criticized. Li Dan, has commented that excessive puns should be discouraged. Despite this, Fu Hang occasionally integrates puns into his performances. For example, when discussing an animal protection organization rescuing monkeys, he humorously referenced "I you horse," using phonetic wordplay to satirize real-life inequalities. Similarly, He described himself as a "Happiness Management Ape" on his performance tickets, playing on the homophonic similarity between "ape" and "monkey" to enhance comedic effect. While these formulaic techniques successfully generate audience laughter, they also contribute to the standardization of stand-up comedy writing, reducing originality and spontaneity. This rigid, patterned production reflects the characteristics of the cultural industry.

Beyond text structure, language rhythm also follows predefined patterns. Yang Li, another comedian, has emphasized the importance of comedic timing, noting that punchlines should be neither too frequent nor too sparse. The timing of punchlines, referred to as the "punching point," is critical; delivering them too quickly may prevent audience comprehension, while delays risk losing engagement. In stand-up comedy performances, text and rhythm function as an integrated whole, making mastery of "punching" important for "laughter producer."

Fu Hang demonstrates precise control over the language rhythm, adjusting pacing according to the content and emotion of the jokes. When delivering lightheartened anecdotes, his speech is fast-paced, immersing the audience in a happy atmosphere. For example, when recounting experiences of sharing a house, he maintains a rapid tempo with closely spaced punchlines, making the audience laugh continuously. Moreover, he is good at creating contrasts between tension and relaxation within performances. During joke setups, he slows down to create suspense and attract audience attention, before accelerating or emphasizing tone at the punchline to maximize comedic impact. Furthermore, Fu Hang adjusts in real time based on audience reaction. When the audience's mood is high, he will speed up the rhythm, making the laugh points more dense, and further pushing the atmosphere on the spot. Conversely, when the audience needs time to digest a joke, he will slow down the pace, allowing for reflection and reinforcing comedic effect. His delivery resembles a tightly linked chain, where each segment connects seamlessly. The meticulous structuring of punchline placement, rhythmic variations, and natural transitions demonstrate his mastery of stand-up comedy's production framework.

Ultimately, he himself functions as a production tool within the stand-up comedy production industry. His performances align with standardized industry expectations, shaping him into a mechanical "laughter producer," embedded within a broader system of commodified entertainment [7].

4.2. Batch Video Production in the Era of Pan-entertainment: "Happiness Commodities"

Related surveys show that "the 18 to 29 age group is the main audience of comedy... Most young comedy audiences come from households with a monthly income exceeding 10,000 yuan, possessing considerable income and consumption capacity" [8]. Since the audience of talk shows are mostly urban youth, they usually choose to watch talk show performances during their busy life breaks. The talk show thus becomes an emotional outlet, providing temporary relief from the pressures of daily life. Fu Hang's "passion" topic and style are exactly what the audience of talk shows want. Therefore, content produced by the selected accounts reflects and responds to prevailing cultural consumption demands. A keyword search for "Fu Hang talk show" on the Douyin platform reveals that among the

ten most-liked videos, seven are related to the "passion" topic, two focus on "being yourself," and one addresses "love." This distribution suggests that specific themes resonate more strongly with audiences and drive higher engagement.

Table 2: Themes of Fu Hang's Stand-up Comedy Short Videos

Account Name	Like Count (in ten thousands)	Theme
Midnight Diary	293	passion
Dong Runqi	248.6	passion
Autumn Wind~~~~	224.2	passion
Midnight Diary	144.2	passion
Gu Jian Wu - Wang Lv's	140	Being Yourself
Dahan Takes You to Chase Stars	127.2	passion
7 pieces	103.8	passion
Mr. Hard of Hearing	95.1	passion
Entertainment God	82.5	Love
Entertainment Express	70.3	Being Yourself

In terms of video production techniques, several common strategies are employed. Firstly, these videos adhere to the "five-second golden rule of short videos," immediately presenting "passion" or other key topics while maintaining a fast-paced narrative structure. This approach aligns with the fast-paced lifestyle and viewing habits of modern people, allowing them to experience a concentrated burst of humor and information within a short time. Secondly, editing techniques play a crucial role in enhancing the appeal of Fu Hang's stand-up segments. By accelerating the pacing, incorporating sound effects, and incorporating relevant film and television clips, these videos amplify comedic impact and emphasize key moments, leaving a lasting impression on viewers. Moreover, these videos emphasize interaction. Moments of engagement between Fu Hang and the audience are retained and emphasized, fostering a sense of immersion and reinforcing the perception of authenticity and relatability. From a media consumption perspective, audiences engage with content to fulfill specific needs. In the case of Fu Hang's stand-up comedy videos, the primary motivation lies in entertainment consumption at a spiritual level. Therefore, these videos must cater to audience preferences to attract viewership and sustain engagement [4]. Notably, the production of stand-up comedy videos on Douyin is not centralized under a single account or person; however, most of them share the common characteristics mentioned above, that is, they select the parts that "entertain the masses the most" and use entertainment rendering methods such as background music and special effects to satisfy the audience's desire for cultural consumption.

A standardized approach to content creation is evident in the production patterns of these accounts. Popular theme or type such as "passion" are identified and subsequently reproduced in batches using fixed editing techniques and templates. This process enhances production efficiency, increases content output, and maximizes commercial benefits through higher audience engagement and traffic. The prevalence of these "happy video products" underscores an industry-wide commitment to align with mainstream aesthetic tastes and cater to their needs for relaxation and happiness during their spare time. However, Adorno believes that in this way, culture loses its critical role and becomes a social entity.

4.3. Personal Media Image Production: "Fu Hang Commodity"

In Fu Hang's performances, recurring themes such as "being like a monkey and "passion" play a central role. Through self-mockery and self-motivation, he generates laughter among audiences,

reinforcing his distinctive comedic persona. Video producers further emphasize these elements, embedding them within video content to deepen the audience's perception of Fu Hang's media image. A quantitative analysis of 1,013 related videos reveals that the phrase "Fu Hang is like a monkey" appears 587 times (approximately 57%), while "Fu Hang passion" is mentioned 924 times (approximately 91%). These recurring textual and visual elements contribute to the solidification of Fu Hang's public identity. The metaphor of monkey conveys a sense of closeness and playfulness, while "passion" evokes enthusiasm and vigor. Consequently, Fu Hang is widely perceived as a passionate and playful big boy. This persona comes with an "innocent and approachable" feeling, providing "inherent conditions" for Fu Hang to integrate into popular culture.

From a commercial perspective, Fu Hang's media image is deliberately utilized as a branding mechanism to influence the audience's perceptions and purchasing behaviors. In particular, corporations leverage his established persona to enhance brand resonance and market appeal. For instance, in an advertisement collaboration between Fu Hang and Meituan, the entire background of the picture is surrounded by bananas, an implicit reference to the monkey metaphor. The advertisement is structured as a miniature theater talk show, incorporating key catchphrases associated with Fu Hang, such as "Chinese and English," "Apple," "monkey," and "passion," to seamlessly align with promotional messages like "Buy a new iPhone on Meituan Takeout. It's so cost-effective." The ad further mimics his "dueling wits" with the audience in the front row, naturally embedding "Buy iPhone 16 on Meituan Takeout." The campaign also exploits phonetic similarity between the Cantonese phrase "cost"-saving and "monkey"-saving, as well as Fu Hang's repeated shout of "Passion" for 16 months, corresponding to the 16-month wallet-saving benefit of Meituan Takeout. As a result, the advertisement fully increased Meituan Takeout's unique visitor (UV) traffic for iPhone 16 promotions, contributing to record-breaking sales volume and revenue while strengthening brand positioning.

Additionally, in the offline talk show promotion, Fu Hang's club used the monkey tag to put up the slogan "Civilized Monkey Watching, No Feeding", attracting many fans and passers-by to bring bananas to watch his talk show. The tickets once soared to 1080 yuan (original price 480 yuan). This phenomenon illustrates the extent to which Fu Hang's image has been commodified, transforming him from a stand-up comedian into a personalized money-making commodity, a commodity that is easy for capitalists to manipulate public consciousness. Just as Andy Warhol said, "In the future, there will be no more artists, only stars" [9]. This statement to some extent reflects that in modern society, talk show art is closely combined with business. Under the influence of star effects, talk show actors also need to have the same level of popularity and influence as stars to better achieve the industrialization and commercialization of art. The "Fu Hang commodity" precisely interprets this view.

5. The Spread of Laughter: Oriented by Consumption

5.1. Video Account Operation Driven by Profit: "Fu Hang's Traffic Monetization"

Several video accounts related to Fu Hang, particularly those under personal and professional categories, serve as key platforms for expanding his influence and monetizing his popularity. The personal account "Fu Hang Talk Show" (fuhanguokouxiu) mainly edits and produces video clips of Fu Hang's live talk show performances in theaters, and updates the performance times of his offline theaters in the profile section. The main purpose of this account is to increase his online visibility, thus expanding the offline market presence. Another account, "Fu Hang's Little Account" (fuhanguokouxiu2), focus on content about Fu Hang's participation in commercial activities, including self-produced programs and advertisements. In general, these personal accounts aim to

increase his popularity and influence, which in turn drives traffic to his offline events, generating commercial benefits from both online and offline channels.

In addition to personal accounts, professional secondary creation accounts play a significant role in the viral dissemination of Fu Hang's content. These include entertainment marketing accounts like "Tao Yimu" (under iQIYI) and program-specific accounts such as "King of Comedy Solo Season," which promotes the show. These accounts curate short video clips from Fuhang's performance to attract followers and increase engagement. Between August and October 2024, during the airing of "King of Comedy Solo Season," these accounts edited 376 related videos related to Fu Hang, accounting for about 90% of the total content produced during this period. The rise in Fu Hang's popularity during this period, particularly due to his performance on the show, led to an increase in the volume of related content produced by these accounts. These secondary creation accounts "feed" on Fu Hang's traffic, spreading Fu Hang's content to increase their own followers and thereby enhance their commercial benefits.

Fan accounts also play a crucial role in Fu Hang's digital presence. These accounts can be divided into two categories. The first is professional fan accounts, which exclusively focus on editing and sharing content related to Fu Hang's stand-up comedy. These accounts typically amass larger followings due to their consistent content. The second category consists of amateur fan accounts that post a mix of content, with a smaller proportion dedicated to Fu Hang stand-up comedy-related videos. These accounts usually have fewer followers. The followers of the latter are mostly "volunteers," while some followers of the former will set up a product showcase after accumulating a certain number of followers to gain commercial benefits. For example, the account "I'm Not Fu Hang" (96660231891) has all its video content related to Fu Hang's stand-up comedy. Its profile states "Personal Preference." Currently, this account has gained 45,000 followers with two viral videos. After becoming popular, it set up a showcase and listed 120 items to gain commercial benefits.

The combined efforts of these accounts undoubtedly enhance Fu Hang's popularity and online presence. One notable example is the secondary creation account "Midnight Diary" (S1252952607), which released a clip of Fu Hang's performance in "King of Comedy Stand-up Season" on August 28, 2024, which received 2.93 million likes, 82,000 comments, 473,000 collections, 394,000 recommendations, and 508,000 shares. This video is the most popular Fu Hang stand-up comedy-related video on the Douyin platform. With its unique traffic advantage, Douyin is like a conveyor belt in the stand-up comedy cultural industry. Fu Hang and the entities behind his content (i.e. the producers of his variety shows and advertisers) use Douyin to create topics, attract more a wider audience, and stimulate public consumption desire, encouraging them to watch the full paid variety show or purchase products or merchandise.

5.2. Audience of Emotional Marketing Communication: "Audience Commodification"

Fu Hang's stand-up comedy short videos aim primarily at entertainment, offering viewers a humorous and relaxing experience. Through witty language and exaggerated performances, they help the audience relieve life stress. Topics like "passion" or "being yourself bravely" not only entertain but also evoke emotions. The audience does not demand innovation from stand-up comedy culture but rather expect the culture to serve them [10].

As previously mentioned, video accounts select content that best meet the cultural consumption desires of Fu Hang's audience. After passing through platforms like Douyin, these videos typically elicit a "buying in" reaction from viewers. For instance, a video posted on the personal account "Fu Hang Stand-up Comedy" (fuhanguokouxiu) on September 12, 2024, received 990,000 likes and 11,000 comments. One randomly selected comments are: "@71: You said 'passion!' I can't get a ticket at all!!!!!!". The fan account "Autumn Breeze" (2216353686) posted a video related to Fu Hang's stand-up comedy on October 20, 2024, which received 2.242 million likes and 5.6 thousand

comments. Two randomly selected comments are as follows: "@Ordinary: After watching Fu Hang's stand-up comedy, I was deeply resonated. You say you did poorly in the college entrance exam, he says life has just begun; you say your life is a failure, he says there will always be someone who loves you in this world; you say you envy animals, he will tell you that animals also have their own troubles; friends, life needs passion." The other one is: "It's my turn, passion!" These comments all reflect that the audience watching this video was influenced by Fu Hang's passionate emotions, and they recognized and resonated with this emotional output, developing a sense of identification with him.

Furthermore, during the dissemination of Fu Hang's stand-up comedy, Douyin and video production team collect audience viewing data, including viewing duration, likes, comments, and sharing behaviors to analyze audience preferences. This data-driven approach tailors the production and dissemination of content to better meet audience needs, treating viewers as commodities for emotional marketing. Through interactions such as commenting, liking, and sharing, the audience also become boosters for the dissemination of Fu Hang's short stand-up comedy videos.

5.3. The Entertainment-Industrial Culture: A Complete Industrial Chain

The stand-up comedy videos of Fu Hang on Douyin serve as cultural products, providing entertainment and relaxation to audiences, helping them unwind in the fast-paced life. However, this reliance on light-hearted and entertaining cultural forms risks diminishing the pursuit of deeper, more refined culture, contributing to the phenomenon of "entertainment to death."

As noted, Fu Hang's "passion" slogan resonates emotionally with many viewers. However, some netizens have playfully altered the word "passion" to "python" with comments such as "We want python!" or "Add bricks to life with Java!" The personal account of Fu Hang's stand-up comedy has even liked comments. Although the original intention was to evoke passion, the reinterpretation of "passion" as "python" shifts its meaning from enthusiasm to something cold and digital. This transformation trivializes the concept of "passion," turning a cultural product into a commodity that the audience can freely parody and modify.

In this process, stand-up comedy, originally an art form, becomes a consumable product. The audience, acting as consumers, reshapes the content based on their preferences and provides feedback that influences further production. This creates a cyclical industrial chain: producers create content, the audience engages with it, and producers adjust accordingly. This system ultimately leads to standardized and uniformed mode of expression of stand-up comedy, where individual creativity and the pursuit of profound cultural expression are sidelined in favor of mass consumption and replication.

6. Conclusion

In both production and dissemination, Fu Hang's talk show videos are no longer lofty works of art but have become commodified products integrated into popular culture. Throughout these processes, both Fu Hang and his audience undergo commercialization to adapt to market dynamics. The talk show culture - this "industry of producing and disseminating laughter" - and its various cultural features, as well as its impact on society, warrant further research and reflection.

Adorno once remarked that while people were once not allowed to think freely, today they are permitted to do so but often choose not to, as they merely think what they are expected to think, mistaking this for freedom. Beyond the rise of self-media and advancements in algorithm-driven content distribution, this phenomenon is largely shaped by individual choices.

From the perspective of the cultural industry, the production and dissemination of Fu Hang's talk show videos on Douyin resemble a massive commercial machine that ceaselessly engages in the industrial production of "laughter." Just as the slogan of "The Show Must Go On" of "The Comedy Conference," after a grand show ends, audience return to their mechanically replicated lives while the

"happiness industry" perpetually produces more content. People eagerly anticipate the next show. Within this seemingly harmonious landscape, laughter is mass-produced by the cultural industry. To meet audiences' demands for entertainment and relaxation, Fu Hang, video creators, and the Douyin platform employ the industrial rhetoric of "passion" to shape a unique form of ideological control. However, after a grand show, the concepts are "torn apart and incomplete." This raises a critical question: Can a stand-up comedy show that makes audiences burst into laughter also, as Molière suggested, "be ridiculed by the public" and simultaneously "portraying their flaws" and "striking at vices"? The cultural characteristics of this "happiness industry" and its influence on society merit further examination and reflection.

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