Social Gender Performance in the Algorithmic Age: The Discipline of Emotional Labor and the Negotiation of Digital Identities in Chinese "She Variety" on TV

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Abstract

Drawing upon social gender performance theory, this paper investigates the discipline of emotional labor and the negotiation of digital identities in Chinese "She Variety" on TV within the context of the algorithmic age. "She Variety," as an emerging genre of television programming, not only showcases the diverse roles and subjective consciousness of women in contemporary society but also reflects the multiple influences of algorithmic logic, commercial interests, and traditional gender norms on the construction of female images. Through textual analysis of several representative "She Variety" programs (such as Sisters Who Make Waves) and examination of online comments, this study finds that female participants engage in complex emotional labor, demonstrating both conformity to traditional gender roles and challenges to patriarchal norms. Simultaneously, they actively negotiate their identities in the digital media environment, striving to construct autonomous and diverse digital selves. The paper argues that in the algorithmic age, Chinese "She Variety" has become a significant arena for the negotiation of gender relations. It plays an important role in feminist media communication, contributes to the reshaping of gender culture in the new media era, and offers a new perspective for understanding the transformation of gender dynamics in contemporary China.

Full Text Article

Keywords: Algorithmic Age; Social Gender Performance; She Variety; Emotional Labor; Digital Identities

Introduction

The proliferation of digital technologies and the rise of the algorithmic age have profoundly reshaped media production, distribution, and consumption (Couldry & Hepp, 2017; Seaver, 2017). Within this context, a new genre of television programming, known as "She Variety" (*Ta Zongyi*) on TV, has emerged in China, attracting significant attention and sparking widespread discussion.

Characterized by their focus on women's lives, experiences, and perspectives, "She Variety" programs often feature all-female or predominantly female casts and explore diverse topics relevant to contemporary Chinese women, including career, relationships, family, and personal growth. This genre not only reflects the growing economic and social power of women in China, as highlighted in recent studies on women's consumption and empowerment (Wang et al., 2024), but also resonates with the broader cultural phenomenon of the "She Era" (Ta Shidai), signifying a shift towards greater female visibility and empowerment in various spheres of Chinese society, including the rise of "she power" in entrepreneurship (Evans, 2008; Zhang & Jurik, 2021).

Against this backdrop, this paper investigates how social gender performance is manifested in the algorithmic age, with a specific focus on the discipline of emotional labor and the negotiation of digital identities within the context of Chinese "She Variety" on TV. Drawing upon social gender performance theory, particularly Judith Butler's (1990, 1993) conceptualization of gender as performative, this study examines how femininity and womanhood are constructed, represented, and contested on screen and in the digital sphere. The notion of gender performativity posits that gender is not an inherent or fixed attribute but rather a fluid and dynamic process that is continuously constituted through repeated acts and performances (Butler, 1990). "She Variety" provides a valuable lens through which to examine the performative nature of gender in contemporary China, as it showcases how women navigate, negotiate, and sometimes challenge dominant gender norms and expectations. Furthermore, this paper employs Erving Goffman's (1959) dramaturgical perspective to analyze the "front stage" and "back stage" performances of female participants and explore how they manage their self-presentation in a mediated environment.

In addition to social gender performance theory, this study draws upon the concept of emotional labor, as developed by Arlie Hochschild (1983). Emotional labor refers to the management of feelings to create a publicly observable facial and bodily display, which is often required as part of a job (Hochschild, 1983). In the context of "She Variety," female participants frequently perform emotional labor, such as displaying enthusiasm, empathy, or vulnerability, to meet the demands of the program and engage the audience. This paper also draws upon Laura Mulvey's (1975) concept of the "male gaze" to analyze how the camera, editing, and narrative techniques in "She Variety" may objectify and commodify female participants, reinforcing patriarchal power dynamics. Meanwhile, Raewyn Connell's (1987, 2005) theory of hegemonic masculinity is employed to analyze how "She Variety" may reinforce or challenge the dominant norms and expectations of gender in Chinese society. Also, this paper is informed by Angela McRobbie's (2009) feminist media studies, especially her critiques of post-feminism and neoliberal femininity, which offers a critical lens to examine how "She Variety" navigates the complexities of gender, consumerism, and media representation in contemporary China.

Furthermore, this research builds upon the growing body of scholarship on digital identities and online interactions (boyd, 2014; Turkle, 2011). The rise of social media and online platforms has provided new spaces for individuals to construct, negotiate, and perform their identities (Zhao et al., 2008). In the context of "She Variety," digital technologies play a crucial role in shaping the representation of female participants and facilitating audience engagement. This study examines how female participants utilize digital platforms to interact with fans, manage their public image, and negotiate their identities in the online sphere.

This study focuses on a selection of popular and representative "She Variety" programs (see Research Methods for a detailed list of programs and selection criteria). These programs cover a wide range of formats, including talent competitions, reality shows, and talk shows, providing a diverse and comprehensive sample for analysis.

Through a combination of textual analysis, discourse analysis, and case studies, this paper addresses the following research questions: (1) How is social gender performance manifested in Chinese "She Variety" on TV in the algorithmic age? (2) How is the emotional labor of female participants disciplined by algorithmic logic, commercial interests, and social gender norms in these programs? (3) How do female participants negotiate their digital identities in the online sphere, particularly in the context of fan interactions and online discussions related to "She Variety"?

By addressing these questions, this paper aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of the complex interplay between gender, media, and digital technologies in contemporary China. The findings of this study will shed light on the ways in which social gender norms are reinforced, challenged, and negotiated in the context of "She Variety," offering insights into the evolving landscape of gender representation in Chinese media. Furthermore, this research will contribute to the theoretical development of social gender performance theory, emotional labor theory, and digital identity studies by applying these frameworks to a new and dynamic media phenomenon. Ultimately, this study seeks to provide a nuanced and critical analysis of the role of "She Variety" in shaping and reflecting the ongoing transformation of gender dynamics in China, contributing to broader discussions on gender equality and female empowerment in the media and beyond.

Research Methods

This study employs a mixed-methods approach, combining textual analysis, discourse analysis, and case studies to investigate social gender performance in Chinese "She Variety" on TV within the algorithmic age. The research is guided by an interpretive paradigm, aiming to understand the meanings constructed around "She Variety" within their specific social and cultural context.

Data Collection

The study draws on a purposive sample of influential Chinese "She Variety" programs, including *Sisters Who Make Waves* (Season 1-5), *The Daughters of Chinese Villages* (2024), *Viva La Romance* (Season 1-6), *Working Mum* (Season 1-2), *SuperDiva* (Season 1-9), *Meeting Mr. Right* (Season 1-4), *My Little One* (Season 1-3), *The Moon is Shining* (2024), and *Listen to Me* (2021). These programs were selected based on their popularity, diverse formats (talent competitions, reality shows, talk shows), and representativeness of the genre. Data sources include video recordings of the programs, official promotional materials (posters, trailers, social media posts), and online discussions related to the programs (comments, posts on Weibo, Douban, Zhihu, etc.). Automatic speech recognition (ASR) technology (Google Speech-to-Text API) was used to transcribe audio content into text. Irrelevant information (e.g., advertisements) was removed, and the text was annotated based on speaker, scene, and time.

Data Analysis

1. Textual Analysis: The study analyzes visual and narrative elements of the programs to examine how gender is represented and performed. This includes analyzing camera angles, editing,

mise-en-scène, narrative structures, and character representations, paying particular attention to potential reinforcement or challenge of the "male gaze" and gender stereotypes.

2. Discourse Analysis: This study examines the language used in and around "She Variety," focusing on how gender ideologies are constructed and negotiated. The analysis focuses on:

Keywords and Themes: Identifying recurring keywords and themes related to gender, emotion, and identity through the use of Jieba and SpaCy for text segmentation.

Sentiment Analysis: Using sentiment lexicons (e.g., NRC and the Chinese sentiment lexicon from the Chinese Academy of Sciences' Institute of Automation) to analyze the emotional tone of the discourse.

Discourse Power: Analyzing the frequency and duration of speech acts to examine power dynamics among participants.

Narrative and Interactional Analysis: Examining narrative structures, roles assigned to female participants, and interactional patterns (e.g., politeness strategies, forms of address) to understand how they reinforce or challenge gender norms.

Gender Ideology Analysis: Situating the programs within the broader context of Chinese society to analyze how they engage with prevailing gender ideologies.

Case studies of specific programs (e.g., *Sisters Who Make Waves*) and episodes will be conducted to provide in-depth analysis of particularly relevant instances of gender performance and emotional labor. The data analysis will involve an iterative process of coding, categorization, and interpretation, drawing on both deductive (theory-driven) and inductive (data-driven) approaches.

She Variety under Algorithmic Logic: A Stage for Social Gender Performance

In the age of algorithms, the production, dissemination, and consumption of media content are profoundly influenced by algorithmic logic (Couldry & Hepp, 2017; Seaver, 2017). As an emerging genre of television programming, "She Variety" is also intricately linked to the rise and development of algorithms. If *Super Girl*, as a representative of TV talent shows, initiated the era of "mass participation" in Chinese television, then *Sisters Who Make Waves*, as a representative of "She Variety," can be seen as a continuation and upgrade of this trend in the algorithmic age. In the former, "participation" was mainly reflected in the audience's voting via text messages to decide the fate of the contestants. In the latter, "participation" is manifested in a broader digital field, where the audience interacts with the program content, female guests, and other viewers through bullet chats, comments, likes, and shares, thereby participating in the process of social gender performance. In this sense, if the "gender performance" in traditional variety shows was primarily reflected within the program, that is, in the image and interaction of female guests, then the social gender performance in "She Variety" presents a "cross-media" characteristic. It not only occurs within the program but also in the digital field outside the program and is deeply influenced by algorithmic logic. Therefore, "She Variety" provides an excellent stage for us to understand the social gender performance in the algorithmic age. This section will explore the composition and characteristics of this stage from the two levels of algorithm-driven production of "She Variety" and the cross-media dissemination of "She Variety."

Algorithm-Driven Production of "She Variety": Quantification and Recombination of Gender Elements

While the production of traditional variety shows relied more on the experience and judgment of the production team, in the algorithmic age, the production of "She Variety" increasingly depends on data and algorithm-driven approaches. If the former production logic can be summarized as "director-centered," then the latter can be described as "algorithm-driven." This is not to say that algorithms have completely replaced the role of humans but rather that algorithms have an increasingly significant weight in program production and profoundly impact all aspects of the programs. Specifically, algorithms can "discover" or "predict" audience preferences and market trends through the analysis of massive data, thereby providing "guidance" or "suggestions" for program planning, guest selection, segment design, and topic creation. In this process, gender elements are often quantified into various data that can be recognized and processed by algorithms, such as age, occupation, personality, appearance, and talents. Through the "black box" operation of algorithms, these elements are recombined into various attractive female images and relationships. In this sense, if gender elements in traditional variety shows were more reflected as a "qualitative" difference, such as "gentle woman" or "masculine man," then gender elements in "She Variety" are more reflected as a "quantitative" difference, such as "30+ sisters" or "female classmates with stories."

One important manifestation of the algorithm-driven production of "She Variety" is the selection of female participants. In the *Sisters Who Make Waves* series, the quantitative use of female participants' "age" is utilized to the extreme. The program uses "30+ women" as its core "selling point" or "memory point" and selects well-known female artists over 30 years old with different professional backgrounds, personalities, and talents as guests, such as Jing Ning, Yuqi Zhang, Qian Wan, and Hanyun Zhang (Season 1), Ying Na, Bichang Zhou, Rainie Yang, and Ou Wang (Season 2), Cyndi Wang, Jessica Jung, Gillian Chung, and Charlene Choi (Season 3), and Lijun Chen, Wei Qi, Jie He, and Xin Liu (*Ride the Wind 2024*), to attract audiences of different age groups and preferences. Behind this selection strategy is the algorithmic quantitative analysis and precise matching of female age, occupation, talents, and popularity, as well as the precise "positioning" and "feeding" of different audience groups, especially female audiences. By analyzing user data, such as user's age, gender, region, viewing history, and search records, the algorithm "calculates" which combinations of female guests are most likely to gain maximum attention and commercial interests and makes "optimizations" and "iterations" accordingly (McRobbie, 2009). In this process, the age, occupation, and personality of female guests are all transformed into data that can be recognized and processed by algorithms. They are no longer individuals with flesh and blood, emotions, and stories but "data points" or "symbols" that can be quantified, calculated, and combined.

In addition to the selection of guests, algorithms also profoundly influence the design of segments and the creation of topics in "She Variety." Taking *Sisters Who Make Waves* as an example, many segments in the program, such as the initial stage, performances, quizzes, and eliminations, are designed to maximize the display of female guests' talents, personalities, and conflicts, thereby creating topics and "explosive points." The design of these segments is often based on the analysis and "prediction" of user data by algorithms. For example, by analyzing user behavior data when watching similar programs, such as fast-forwarding, rewinding, pausing, commenting, and liking, algorithms can "discover" which types of performances, conflicts, and topics are most likely to attract users' attention and design program segments that better fit users' "tastes" accordingly. Furthermore, in *The Daughters of Chinese Villages*, the program team utilizes

algorithms to select representative rural female figures, such as "new farmers" who are "knowledgeable in agriculture," "skilled," and "talented." Based on audience feedback, the team adjusts the program's content and narrative to highlight the "power of women" in rural areas (Hall, 1997). Amplified by algorithms, these female images are disseminated through various media platforms. The show strives to balance the aesthetics and values of different groups. By igniting audience enthusiasm and anticipation for the program, it also subtly influences their self-perception and positioning, transforming this power into a significant driving force for rural revitalization. The algorithm-driven production method enables the program to more accurately capture audience preferences, enhance the program's watchability and market competitiveness, and reflect the program's attention to social issues such as female empowerment, cultural inheritance, and rural revitalization, thereby triggering broader social resonance and discussion.

It is worth noting that the algorithm-driven production of "She Variety" is not entirely "positive" or "progressive." On the one hand, the "black box" operation of algorithms often makes the production process of the programs more opaque and difficult to understand and may even contain stereotypes and "objectification" of women. For example, algorithms may "discover" or "reinforce" certain stereotypes about women based on historical data, such as "women are more emotional," "women are more suitable for performing arts," and "relationships among women are more complicated," and utilize and amplify these stereotypes in the production of the programs (Connell, 1987). On the other hand, the "optimization" and "iteration" functions of algorithms may also make the production of "She Variety" more "homogenized" and "formulaic," thus limiting the innovation and diversity of the programs. For example, if algorithms "discover" that a certain type of female guest or a certain type of program segment is more likely to gain high ratings, then program producers may tend to replicate and imitate these "successful" models while ignoring other possibilities (Goffman, 1977). From a broader sociocultural perspective, algorithms simplify women into various labels and stereotypes, which not only weakens the diversity of women but also undermines their value as independent individuals, neglecting women's agency and creativity in social, economic, and cultural development.

In conclusion, the algorithm-driven production of "She Variety" is a microcosm of media content production in the algorithmic age. It not only reflects the powerful influence of algorithmic technology on media content production but also reveals the complex process of quantification and recombination of gender elements under algorithmic logic. In the production of "She Variety," algorithms are both an "empowering" force, making program production more precise and efficient, and a potential "limiting" force, making program production more formulaic and potentially reinforcing gender stereotypes. Therefore, we need to maintain a critical reflection on the algorithm-driven production of "She Variety," recognizing both its positive aspects and its potential risks and challenges.

Cross-Media Dissemination of "She Variety": Gender Performance in Digital Fields

If the algorithm-driven production of "She Variety" mainly focuses on the gender representation within the programs, then the cross-media dissemination of "She Variety" expands the scope to a broader digital field beyond the programs themselves. In the context of media convergence, "She Variety" is no longer limited to a single television platform but achieves cross-media communication and interaction through cooperation with online video platforms, social media

platforms, short video platforms, and so on (Jenkins, 2006). While traditional TV variety shows adopted a "point-to-point" or "point-to-multipoint" one-way transmission model, "She Variety" presents a "networked," multi-directional, and interactive communication model. In this communication model, the audience is no longer just passive recipients but can actively participate in the production, dissemination, and consumption of the programs. They interact with other audiences, program producers, and female guests through bullet chats, comments, likes, shares, and derivative works. In this process, gender images and gender relations are no longer unilaterally constructed by program producers but are jointly negotiated and produced by multiple subjects in the digital field.

An important manifestation of the cross-media dissemination of "She Variety" is its popularity on online video platforms and the discussions it triggers. Taking *Sisters Who Make Waves* as an example, the program not only achieved extremely high click rates on Mango TV but also became a hot topic on social media platforms such as Weibo, Douban, and Zhihu. While watching the program, the audience is also keen to express their views and feelings on these platforms and interact with other viewers. For instance, on Weibo, topics related to *Sisters Who Make Waves* often exceed tens of billions of views, and the number of discussions reaches millions or even tens of millions. These topics include not only evaluations of the program's content and female guests but also discussions on broader social issues, such as women's age, career development, and relationships. Furthermore, on Douban, many viewers write lengthy program reviews, conducting in-depth analyses from multiple perspectives, such as program production, female image, and gender relations. These reviews often demonstrate a high level of professionalism and critical thinking, reflecting the audience's deep engagement and critical thinking about "She Variety" (McRobbie, 2009).

In addition to online video platforms and social media platforms, "She Variety" also actively utilizes the communication advantages of short video platforms to expand the programs' influence and attract younger audiences. For example, *Sisters Who Make Waves* opened an official account on Douyin (TikTok), releasing a large number of short video content such as program clips, behind-the-scenes footage, and guests' individual performances, attracting tens of millions of followers and likes. Many viewers also spontaneously edit clips of the program's highlights into short videos, upload them to platforms such as Douyin and Kuaishou, and add their own interpretations and comments. These short videos often quickly go viral, become online hotspots, and further promote the dissemination of "She Variety". For example, in *Ride the Wind 2024*, Qi Wei, with her unique stage performance and personal charm, has gathered a large online following. Her debut performance of "Seven" not only received high click-through rates on the Mango TV platform but was also widely disseminated and discussed on short video platforms such as TikTok, attracting the attention and likes of a large number of fans. Furthermore, the program *The Moon is Shining* documents the real lives of 12 young women on the vast grasslands of Inner Mongolia, showing their journey of self-reliance and personal growth. The program releases carefully edited short videos on platforms such as Douyin, quickly attracting a large audience. These short videos not only showcase the magnificent scenery of the grassland but also highlight the strength and resilience of the female guests when facing challenges. The short video format allows more young viewers to easily access the program's content and actively interact in the comment sections and bullet chats, forming a vibrant viewer community. This cross-media dissemination strategy not only

enhances the programs' visibility and influence but also extends the gender performance of "She Variety" to a wider digital field, triggering more diverse discussions and interactions (Deuze, 2007).

It is worth noting that the cross-media dissemination of "She Variety" also makes its gender performance more complex and diverse. On the one hand, different media platforms have different attributes and user groups, which leads to differences in the way "She Variety" is presented and discussed on different platforms. For example, television platforms focus more on the integrity and watchability of programs, while online video platforms emphasize user interaction and participation. Weibo is more likely to trigger large-scale discussions and controversies, while Douban focuses more on in-depth and professional analyses. On the other hand, different audience groups also have different backgrounds and interests, and their interpretations and participation in "She Variety" also vary. For example, younger audiences may pay more attention to the entertainment and topicality of the programs, while older audiences may pay more attention to the social significance and values of the programs. Female audiences may be more likely to empathize with the female guests in the programs, while male audiences may interpret the programs from different perspectives (Connell, 2005). This diversity and complexity make the gender performance of "She Variety" no longer a unidirectional and homogeneous process but a multi-directional and heterogeneous process, a process full of negotiation, debate, and even confrontation.

In conclusion, the cross-media dissemination of "She Variety" has opened up new spaces and fields for social gender performance. If the algorithm-driven production of "She Variety" mainly reflects the influence of algorithmic logic on the quantification and recombination of gender elements, then the cross-media dissemination of "She Variety" more reflects the participation and shaping of gender performance by different media platforms and different audience groups. The cross-media dissemination of "She Variety" is not merely a "top-down" process but a process in which various forces and voices are intertwined and influence each other. In this process, different media platforms, different audience groups, and different gender concepts collide and negotiate, jointly constructing the meaning of "She Variety" and shaping the social gender landscape of contemporary China. This includes challenges to traditional gender concepts and the display of femininity under the logic of neoliberalism. At the same time, we also see women's exploration and negotiation of their identities in cyberspace. For example, the discussion of women's age in the *Sisters Who Make Waves* series and the focus on rural women in *The Daughters of Chinese Villages* all reflect women's efforts to seek self-worth and diverse development in contemporary society. Looking to the future, with the continuous development of media technology and the continuous innovation of the "She Variety" genre, we can foresee that future "She Variety" will present more diverse and complex forms of gender performance. Simultaneously, we also need to maintain a critical reflection on the cross-media dissemination of "She Variety," recognizing both its positive aspects and its potential risks, such as the manipulation of gender issues by commercial interests and the harm of cyberbullying to women. Only in this way can we better understand the role and significance of "She Variety" in the transformation of social gender in contemporary China and better promote gender equality and women's empowerment. In future research, we need to pay more attention to the cross-cultural communication of "She Variety" and the interaction between "She Variety" and other media forms, such as movies, TV series, and online dramas, so as to more comprehensively grasp the cultural meaning and social impact of "She Variety."

Emotional Labor and Media Representation: Shaping Female Images in "She Variety"

While the algorithm-driven production and cross-media dissemination of "She Variety" provide a macro perspective for understanding social gender performance in the algorithmic age, the emotional labor and media representation in "She Variety" offer a micro perspective for delving into the mechanism of shaping female images. Emotional labor, as a form of "management of feelings to create a publicly observable facial and bodily display" (Hochschild, 1983), holds a prominent position in "She Variety." Female guests not only showcase their talents and personalities but also perform various forms of emotional labor according to the requirements of the production team and the expectations of the audience. These include expressing joy, sadness, anger, affection, competitiveness, etc. These emotional labors are not only part of the self-presentation of female guests but also an important component of program production, as well as an interactive process with social gender norms. Media representation, on the other hand, refers to the way in which media presents and constructs reality. It not only reflects reality but also shapes it (Hall, 1997). In "She Variety," the shaping of female images is influenced by both the emotional labor of female guests and the media representation strategies of program production. The two work together to construct the unique female group portrait in "She Variety." This section will explore the mechanism of shaping female images in "She Variety" and its relationship with social gender norms from two aspects: the discipline of emotional labor under the gaze and requirements, and the construction of the female group portrait between "authenticity" and "performance."

The "Gazed" and the "Required": The Discipline of Emotional Labor in "She Variety"

In "She Variety," the emotional labor of female guests is often under the dual discipline of being "gazed" and "required." On the one hand, as "performers" in the programs, female guests have their every move exposed under the lens, receiving the "gaze" of the production team and the audience. This "gaze" is not a neutral observation but a way of watching with power relations. It often places women in the object position of "being watched" and scrutinizes and judges their appearance, body, emotional expression, and so on (Mulvey, 1975). On the other hand, as participants in the programs, the emotional labor of female guests is also "required" and "guided" by the production team. In order to create program effects and attract audiences, the production team often makes various requests for the emotional expression of female guests, such as requiring them to show specific emotions in specific situations or requiring them to interact with other guests in specific ways. These "requirements" are both explicit, such as the direct instructions of the production team, and implicit, such as the setting of the program script and the guidance of post-production editing. Under the dual effect of being "gazed" and "required," the emotional labor of female guests is no longer a spontaneous and natural expression but a disciplined and performative labor. This kind of labor not only needs to meet the needs of program production but also conforms to the expectations of social gender norms for female emotional expression.

In the "gaze" of "She Variety," the appearance and body of female guests often become the focus of attention. For example, in *Sisters Who Make Waves*, although the production team emphasizes the talents and abilities of female guests, the audience's discussion of their appearance and figure has always been a hot topic. Many female guests also consciously or unconsciously engage in

"appearance management" and "figure management" to meet the mainstream aesthetic standards for women. For instance, in the program, we can see many female guests dieting, exercising, and even performing difficult dance moves on stage in order to maintain their figure. These efforts can be seen as women's pursuit of their own beauty, but they can also be seen as a response to the "gaze," an internalization and compliance with social gender norms. In *Viva La Romance*, the program places female guests in a constant state of being "gazed" through long-term tracking and close-up shots. Whether it is their daily life, emotional interactions, or appearance, they are captured by the camera and magnified for the audience. For example, in a certain season of the program, in a romantic dinner scene by the sea, the camera not only captured the wives' elegant manners and exquisite makeup but also emphasized their body curves and skin conditions through slow motion and close-ups. This emphasis on female appearance and body not only satisfies the audience's voyeuristic desire but also reinforces the social "discipline" of female appearance. While appreciating these images, the audience may also internalize the aesthetic standards conveyed by the program, that is, women's beauty needs to be reflected through delicate appearance, slim figure, and appropriate manners (McRobbie, 2009).

In addition to appearance and body, the "gaze" in "She Variety" also extends to the emotional expression of female guests. In many programs, female guests are required to exhibit specific emotional states to create program effects or drive plot development. For example, in the performance segments of *Sisters Who Make Waves*, female guests often need to express different emotions according to the mood of the song and the atmosphere of the stage, such as passionate, sad, sexy, or gentle. The expression of these emotions needs to be coordinated with the song and the stage, but it also needs to meet the audience's expectations of female temperament. Furthermore, in *Meeting Mr. Right*, female guests are required to show their romantic side in front of the camera, including various emotions such as sweetness, quarrels, being moved, and disappointment. Although the authenticity of these emotions is difficult to verify, they undoubtedly add drama and watchability to the program and satisfy the audience's desire to peek into the emotional lives of women. In *Working Mum*, the production team requires female guests to show a strong, optimistic, and positive side in the process of balancing work and family to convey positive energy and values. For example, in one episode, a working mother maintains an optimistic attitude and actively seeks solutions when facing the double pressure of heavy workload and her child's illness. Although this "positive" display of female emotion has a certain encouraging effect, it may also mask the difficulties and challenges that women face in real life (Connell, 1987).

Furthermore, the emotional labor of female guests in "She Variety" is often intertwined with the construction and performance of gender. Taking a telling example from Sisters Who Make Waves, in the first season, during the fifth public performance, Jing Ning's team performed poorly, ranking last. In this performance, Ning Jing's team chose Yixing Zhang 's song "Lotus". Despite the elaborate stage design, which included wire work for their entrance, archery special effects, shields, and water sleeves, the team ultimately received only 455 votes, placing them at the bottom. After the results were announced, Jing Ning, who had always presented a strong "big sister" image, broke down in tears backstage and even proposed the idea of disbanding the team. This scene sparked widespread discussion after the program aired. This performance was a huge blow to Jing Ning's team, especially for Shengyi Huang and Bing Bai , who were eliminated after this round.

Jing Ning's tears can be interpreted from multiple perspectives. Firstly, from the perspective of emotional labor, Jing Ning's crying can be seen as a manifestation of "emotional breakdown." As the team leader, she bore the responsibility of leading her team to victory, and the poor performance undoubtedly put her under immense pressure. Throughout the program, Jing Ning had consistently displayed a strong, confident, and even somewhat dominant image, the maintenance of which in itself constituted a form of emotional labor. However, in the face of failure, her long-suppressed emotions finally erupted, and tears became an outlet for her emotional release. This scene also highlights the complexity of emotional labor in "She Variety": on the one hand, the program requires female guests to project a positive, strong, and independent image; on the other hand, it captures their vulnerable and sensitive moments to create a sense of "authenticity" and "drama." This aligns with Hochschild's (1983) argument that emotional labor can be alienating, as it requires individuals to suppress or manage their true feelings to meet external demands.

Secondly, from the perspective of social gender performance, Jing Ning's crying challenged the traditional notion of "femininity." In traditional gender norms, women are often perceived as weak and emotional, while men are seen as strong and rational. Jing Ning, through her "big sister" persona in the program, had demonstrated leadership and control that transcended traditional feminine traits. However, her tears revealed a "vulnerable" side, thereby deconstructing the "strong" image she had previously constructed. This scene also triggered a debate among the audience about whether female leaders can show vulnerability. Some viewers believed that Jing Ning's tears showed her authentic side and brought her closer to the audience, while others argued that as a leader, she should have controlled her emotions and not cried in public. This controversy itself reflects the discipline and constraints imposed by social gender norms on women, echoing Butler's (1990) notion of gender as a performance that is constantly being negotiated and contested.

Moreover, Jing Ning's crying is also related to the program's narrative strategies. Through editing and post-production, the program team highlighted Jing Ning's tears and accompanied them with sentimental music and comments from other guests, thus turning this scene into a dramatic "highlight." This approach, on the one hand, is to increase the program's ratings and topicality; on the other hand, it also reflects the program's "consumption" and "utilization" of female emotions for entertainment purposes.

In addition to talent competitions, reality shows focusing on intimate relationships also provide a rich ground for examining emotional labor. Viva La Romance offers a compelling example of how emotional labor is performed and negotiated within marital relationships. In the program, female guests are often observed engaging in emotion work to maintain harmony, express affection, and manage conflicts. For instance, the interactions between Ming Xi (奚梦瑶) and her husband, Mario Ho (何猷君), in a certain episode, illustrate the complexities of emotional expression in intimate relationships. While Mario Ho attempted to express his love through gifts and services, Ming Xi desired more "quality time" together. This discrepancy highlights the individualized needs in emotional expression and the importance of understanding one's partner's preferences. It demonstrates that emotional labor in intimate relationships is not merely about performing socially expected actions but also about genuine understanding and responding to the partner's emotional needs. This situation resonates with Hochschild's (1983) concept of emotional labor, extending it beyond the workplace to the realm of personal relationships, where the "management of feeling" (p. 20) becomes crucial for relationship maintenance.

Further examination of another couple, Qianyu Wu (吴千语) and her boyfriend, Brian Shi (施伯雄), in the same program, reveals the significance of "deep listening" and "empathic understanding" as forms of emotional labor. In one scene, when Qianyu Wu recalled her childhood experiences, Brian Shi listened attentively without interruption or judgment, providing a space for her to express her feelings freely. His subsequent response, "Your mother must feel guilty now," demonstrated not only his emotional attunement but also his ability to offer a new perspective that could facilitate her emotional processing. This interaction underscores the therapeutic potential of empathetic listening and understanding, which can foster deeper emotional connections within intimate relationships.

The interactions between Ming Xi and Mario Ho also shed light on the importance of "perspective-taking" in emotional labor. When Ming Xi felt overwhelmed by work pressure, Mario Ho did not simply offer advice or comfort. Instead, he tried to understand her situation from her perspective and took concrete actions to support her, such as taking care of their children. This "supportive action" not only addressed her immediate needs but also conveyed a deeper level of understanding and empathy. It exemplifies how emotional labor, when performed thoughtfully and responsively, can strengthen relationships and contribute to mutual well-being. These cases in Viva La Romance demonstrate that empathy and understanding are not only core strategies of emotional labor but also key factors in maintaining intimate relationships.

In addition to being "gazed," female guests in "She Variety" also often face the "requirements" of the production team, which are often closely related to social gender norms. For example, in *Sisters Who Make Waves*, although the production team claims to "show the independence and confidence of 30+ women," in the actual operation of the program, there are still many stereotypical requirements for women. For instance, the production team requires female guests to learn complex dance moves in a short period of time to demonstrate their "feminine charm." It requires them to play "gentle," "considerate," and "understanding" roles in the team to maintain the harmony of the team. It also requires them to show a "generous," "tolerant," and "unforgiving" attitude when facing conflicts to meet the social expectations of "good women." In *My Little One*, the "requirements" of the production team for female guests are more reflected in the guidance of their views on marriage and family. For example, the production team arranges for female guests to date different men and observes their reactions. It invites the fathers or mothers of female guests to the studio to comment on their daughters' performance and express their expectations for their daughters' marriage and family. Although these "requirements" are under the banner of "care" and "love," they are actually conveying traditional gender concepts to women, that is, women's ultimate destination is marriage and family, and women's value needs to be reflected through men and family (Butler, 1990).

In conclusion, the emotional labor of female guests in "She Variety" is both a kind of "self-expression" and a kind of "social performance." The emotions they display in front of the camera are both authentic and performative, both a display of themselves and a response to social gender norms. The dual discipline of being "gazed" and "required" makes the emotional labor of female guests complex and contradictory. They need to meet the needs of program production, but also to meet the social expectations of women. They need to show their individuality, but also to abide by the rules of the program. This complexity and contradiction are precisely the key to shaping female images in "She Variety." It is also this discipline and negotiation that makes the female images in "She Variety" diverse and complex. However, we also need to recognize that this diversity and complexity often unfold within a certain framework, which includes not only the commercial logic

and technical means of program production but also the gender concepts and power relations in the social culture. In the following analysis, we will further explore how "She Variety" constructs the female group portrait between "authenticity" and "performance" and analyze the relationship between this construction and social gender norms.

Between "Authenticity" and "Performance": Constructing a Female Group Portrait in "She Variety"

If the "gazed" and the "required" constitute the disciplinary mechanism of female emotional labor in "She Variety," then the tension between "authenticity" and "performance" constitutes the core driving force for the construction of the female group portrait in "She Variety." On the one hand, as a type of reality show, "She Variety" pursues the presentation of the "authentic" state of female guests, such as their daily lives, their emotional expressions, and their interactions. This "authenticity" is not only an important source of the programs' attractiveness but also the basis for the audience's resonance and identification. On the other hand, as a type of television program, "She Variety" inevitably contains elements of "performance," such as script design, scene arrangement, and post-production editing. This "performance" is not only a necessary means of program production but also an important guarantee of the programs' effect. The construction of the female group portrait in "She Variety" unfolds precisely in the tension between "authenticity" and "performance." Through the skillful use of "authenticity" and "performance," the production team satisfies the audience's expectation for "authenticity" and realizes the construction of female images in the programs.

The presentation of "authenticity" in "She Variety" is first reflected in the display of the daily lives of female guests. For example, programs such as *My Little One* and *Meeting Mr. Right* show the state and emotions of female guests in their daily lives by tracking their solitary living and dating processes. These programs often choose representative life scenes, such as cooking, cleaning, shopping, and dating, to show the personality and lifestyle of female guests. Although the filming and editing of these scenes inevitably contain certain "performative" elements, they still provide a window for the audience to peek into the "authentic" lives of female guests. The audience can glean the personality, hobbies, and values of female guests through these "authentic" details and develop an emotional connection with them. In *The Moon is Shining*, the program documents the five-month real life of 12 young women on the grasslands of Inner Mongolia. By showing their self-reliance, herding, and responses to natural challenges, the program presents the tenacity and strength of women in the face of a harsh environment. These "authentic" scenes not only allow the audience to see women's ability to survive and adapt under extreme conditions but also allow the audience to have a new understanding of the traditional image of women (Connell, 2005).

In addition to daily life, "She Variety" also attempts to present the "authentic" reactions of female guests in specific situations. For example, *Sisters Who Make Waves* stimulates the genuine emotions and reactions of female guests through high-intensity training and cruel competition. In the program, we can see the anxiety, frustration, and unwillingness of female guests when facing pressure, and we can also see their joy, excitement, and pride when they achieve success. These "authentic" emotional expressions can often move the audience and trigger their resonance. Furthermore, *Viva La Romance* observes the performance and interaction of wives in unfamiliar environments by letting them travel without their husbands. Although the production team will set

some travel themes and tasks, to a large extent, the reactions and interactions of the wives are spontaneous and authentic. These "authentic" interactions not only show the friendship and tacit understanding between the wives but also show their respective personalities and ways of dealing with things. In *Working Mum*, the production team observes the performance and reactions of female guests at work by setting various workplace challenges and tasks. For example, the program will require female guests to complete a marketing plan within a limited time or to conduct crisis public relations when facing customer doubts. These "authentic" workplace situations not only test the professional abilities of female guests but also show their adaptability and emotional management skills under pressure (McRobbie, 2009).

However, we also need to recognize that the "authenticity" presented in "She Variety" is not completely objective but a kind of "authenticity" constructed by the media. On the one hand, the production team will select and process the material during the filming and editing process to highlight certain aspects of the content and cover up or weaken certain aspects. For example, in *Sisters Who Make Waves*, the production team often uses editing to strengthen the competitive relationship between female guests and weaken their cooperation and mutual assistance. Although this selection and processing are to enhance the drama and watchability of the program, it may also lead to the distortion and misinterpretation of "authenticity" (Goffman, 1959). On the other hand, the performance of female guests in front of the camera may also be affected by "camera awareness." They may consciously or unconsciously adjust their words and behaviors to meet their own or the production team's expectations. For example, in *My Little One*, some female guests may deliberately show their "virtuous" side in front of the camera, such as cooking and doing housework, to meet the social expectations of "good daughters" and "good wives." Although this kind of "performance" may be unconscious, it still has an impact on the audience and may reinforce certain gender stereotypes (Butler, 1993).

In conclusion, the construction of the female group portrait in "She Variety" is a process of continuous negotiation and balance between "authenticity" and "performance." The production team satisfies the audience's expectation for "authenticity" and realizes the construction of female images through the presentation of "authenticity" and the arrangement of "performance." The female images in "She Variety" are both diverse and stereotypical, both challenging traditional gender concepts and maintaining the existing gender order. This complexity and contradiction are precisely the charm of "She Variety" and the reason why it has triggered widespread discussions. The shaping of the female group portrait in "She Variety" also reflects society's expectations and imagination of women, as well as how this shaping affects female audiences' self-perception and identity construction. This construction of the female group portrait between "authenticity" and "performance" also provides a unique perspective for us to understand the living conditions and social situation of contemporary Chinese women. In the algorithmic age, as an important cultural phenomenon, the shaping and dissemination of female images by "She Variety" not only reflect current social gender concepts but also participate in the reproduction and transformation of social gender concepts. Therefore, we need to maintain a critical focus on "She Variety," not only to see its positive aspects, such as the display of diverse female images and the emphasis on female subjectivity, but also to see its potential risks, such as the stereotyping, commodification, and instrumentalization of women. Only in this way can we better understand the role and significance of "She Variety" in contemporary Chinese social and cultural life and better promote the

development of gender equality. Future research can further explore the audience reception of "She Variety," such as how female audiences of different ages, educational backgrounds, and regions interpret the female images in "She Variety" and how "She Variety" affects their self-cognition, emotional models, and social behavior.

Interaction Between "Screen" and "Fingers": Negotiating Digital Identities Related to "She Variety"

While the previous two sections mainly discussed the production and presentation of "She Variety," this section will shift the focus to the reception and consumption of "She Variety," especially the negotiation of digital identities related to "She Variety." In the algorithmic age, digital media platforms have become important venues for people to obtain information, express opinions, and participate in social interactions, and they have also become important spaces for gender identity negotiation. For "She Variety," its influence has long surpassed the TV screen itself and extended to the vast cyberspace. The audience is no longer just passively watching the program in front of the TV but can watch the program, post comments, participate in discussions, and interact with other viewers on online platforms through terminals such as computers and mobile phones. Through these behaviors, they construct and negotiate their own digital identities. The interaction between "screen" and "fingers" refers not only to the connection between the virtual and real worlds inside and outside the screen but also to the interaction between the audience and the program, the audience and the audience, and the audience and themselves. This section will explore the negotiation of digital identities related to "She Variety" and its relationship with social gender performance from two aspects: the emotional connection and identity formation in fan communities, and the negotiation of diverse female identities in cyberspace.

"Resonance" Inside and Outside the "Screen": Emotional Connection and Identity Formation in Fan Communities

Fan communities play an important role in the viewing and discussion of "She Variety." They are not only loyal viewers of the programs but also active disseminators and reproducers of the program content. The formation of fan communities stems not only from a shared love for the programs but also from an emotional identification with the female guests in the programs. In fan communities, fans express their love for the programs and support for the female guests in various ways, such as ranking and controlling reviews for them on Weibo, writing long reviews for them on Douban, and making derivative videos for them on Bilibili. These behaviors not only enhance the emotional connection between fans and the programs but also promote identity formation among fans. In the process of participating in "She Variety," fans not only gain entertainment and recreation but also find like-minded partners and establish a community relationship based on common interests and emotions.

The fan communities of "She Variety" are often formed around female guests. For example, each guest of *Sisters Who Make Waves* has her own fan group, and these fan groups often give themselves a name related to the guest. For instance, Ning Jing's fans call themselves "Sea King," Wan Qian's fans call themselves "Little Pomegranate," and Zhang Yuqi's fans call themselves "Qi Shi." These fan groups not only actively participate in the promotion of the program during its broadcast but also continue to pay attention to and support the career development of female guests

beyond the program. For example, when a guest has a new work released or a new endorsement announced, her fans will promote and support her at the first opportunity, helping her increase her visibility and influence. The formation of fan communities centered on female guests not only reflects the fans' love and support for them but also reflects the psychological needs of female viewers to seek emotional resonance and identity formation in the viewing of "She Variety" (Jenkins, 2006).

In addition to being centered on female guests, some fan communities of "She Variety" are formed around the program itself. For example, the "group fans" of *Sisters Who Make Waves* are not only concerned about a certain guest but the entire program and the female spirit conveyed by the program. These fans actively participate in all aspects of the program, such as voting for their favorite teams and making suggestions for the development of the program. They also actively disseminate the values and concepts of the program beyond the program. For example, slogans such as "Thirty and powerful, youth returns" and "Ride the wind and waves, I am the brightest" have become the motto of many female viewers. The formation of program-centered fan communities not only reflects the fans' love and loyalty but also underscores the role of "She Variety," as a cultural phenomenon, in shaping and leading the values of contemporary women (Deuze, 2007).

It is worth noting that the emotional connection and identity formation of fan communities are not always positive or progressive. In some cases, competition and conflict among fans may also lead to negative online behaviors, such as insulting each other and malicious reporting. For example, during the broadcast of *Sisters Who Make Waves*, there were many "mutual tearing" incidents between fans of different guests. These incidents not only damaged the harmonious atmosphere of the fan community but also had a certain negative impact on the reputation of the program. In addition, the excessive devotion and fanaticism of some fans may also cause trouble and pressure for female guests. For example, some fans will excessively interfere with the private lives of female guests or morally kidnap them, requiring them to act according to their own wishes. Although these behaviors are under the banner of "love," they actually infringe on the autonomy and privacy of female guests (boyd, 2014).

In conclusion, fan communities are an important part of the digital identity negotiation of "She Variety." By participating in the viewing and discussion of "She Variety," fans not only express their love and support for the programs and female guests but also construct their own digital identities and establish emotional connections and identity formation with other fans. This kind of emotional connection and identity formation has both a positive side, such as enhancing solidarity and mutual assistance among women and spreading positive female values, and a negative side, such as possibly leading to cyberbullying and excessive interference with female guests. Therefore, we need to maintain a dialectical and critical understanding of the fan communities of "She Variety," not only to see their positive role but also to be wary of their potential risks. In future development, we need to guide fan communities to participate in the interaction of "She Variety" more rationally and civilly, exert their positive influence, avoid their negative influence, so as to promote the healthy development of "She Variety" and contribute to building a more equal and harmonious cyberspace.

Resistance" at the "Fingertips": Negotiating Diverse Female Identities in Cyberspace

While the fan communities of "She Variety" more embody the emotional connection and identity formation of female audiences, the broader cyberspace provides a platform for women to express themselves, challenge mainstream gender concepts, and negotiate diverse female identities. During and after the broadcast of "She Variety," various network platforms have become important venues for female netizens to discuss programs, express opinions, and strive for discourse power. Female netizens are no longer just passive recipients but active participants and expressers. Through their "fingertips," they construct their own digital identities outside the "screen" and participate in the reproduction and transformation of social gender concepts. This "resistance" at the "fingertips" is reflected not only in the criticism and deconstruction of certain stereotypical female images in "She Variety" but also in the construction and negotiation of diverse female identities.

In online discussions related to "She Variety," female netizens often critically interpret the female images and gender concepts presented in the programs. For example, during the broadcast of *Sisters Who Make Waves*, although the production team attempted to showcase the independence and confidence of women, some female netizens still pointed out the existence of gender stereotypes and the objectification of women in the program. They believe that the program's emphasis on women's age, focus on women's appearance and figure, and the rendering of competitive relationships among women all reflect the discipline and constraints of patriarchal culture on women. Although these critical voices may not be mainstream, their existence itself reflects female netizens' demands for gender equality and expectations for diverse female images. Furthermore, after the broadcast of *Listen to Me*, some female netizens questioned the authenticity and representativeness of certain "feminist" remarks in the program. They believe that although these remarks sound "satisfying," they may actually be detached from the real lives of most women and may also exacerbate gender antagonism. Although these discussions and debates are sometimes intense or even chaotic, they are themselves a way for women to strive for discourse power and negotiate female identities (Butler, 1993).

In addition to criticism and deconstruction, female netizens also actively construct and negotiate diverse female identities in cyberspace. For example, in the discussion of *Sisters Who Make Waves*, many female netizens expressed their approval and love for the "sister culture." They believe that the "sisters" displayed a female image different from the traditional "girl" culture, a more mature, confident, and independent female image. The rise of this "sister culture" not only reflects the changes in female aesthetic concepts but also reflects women's repositioning of their own social roles. Furthermore, in the discussion of *My Little One*, some female netizens reflected on and criticized the phenomena of "urging marriage" and "urging childbirth" presented in the program. They believe that women's lives should not be defined by marriage and childbirth, and women have the right to choose the lifestyle they want. Although these discussions cannot fully represent the views of all women, they at least indicate that more and more women are beginning to realize the problem of gender inequality and are trying to change the status quo in their own way (Connell, 1987).

It is worth noting that the negotiation of diverse female identities by female netizens in cyberspace is not always smooth sailing but full of challenges and obstacles. On the one hand, traditional gender concepts and social pressures still exist, and women often encounter various obstacles and doubts in the process of pursuing self-realization and gender equality. For example, some female netizens may be attacked and insulted by other netizens when expressing their

dissatisfaction with certain female images in "She Variety," and they may even be labeled as "feminazis" or "pastoral feminists." On the other hand, the anonymity and virtuality of cyberspace also allow some people to unscrupulously make sexist and gender-violent remarks, which poses a threat and harm to women's online participation. For instance, some female guests may suffer from cyberbullying after participating in "She Variety" programs, and their appearance, figure, words, and deeds may become targets of attack (McRobbie, 2009). This kind of cyberbullying will not only cause psychological harm to female guests but also have a "chilling effect" on other women's participation in online discussions.

In conclusion, while the previous sections focused more on the production and presentation of "She Variety," this section focuses more on the reception and consumption of "She Variety," especially the negotiation of diverse female identities by female netizens in cyberspace. Online discussions related to "She Variety" provide a platform for women to express themselves, participate in public affairs, and strive for discourse power. Through their "fingertips," female netizens are conducting discussions and negotiations on gender identity, gender relations, and gender equality outside the "screen." Although this kind of discussion and negotiation is full of challenges and obstacles, it is itself a kind of progress, a manifestation of the awakening of female subject consciousness. In this process, female netizens are not only participating in the meaning production of "She Variety" but also participating in the transformation of social gender concepts in contemporary China. The interaction between "screen" and "fingers" is not only a reflection of the influence of "She Variety" but also an important part of the meaning production of "She Variety." "She Variety" provides female netizens with materials for discussion and a platform for expression, and the participation and expression of female netizens also affect the production and dissemination of "She Variety" in turn. This two-way interaction makes "She Variety" an important place for the negotiation of social gender relations in contemporary China. Future research can further explore the interaction mechanism between "She Variety" and cyberspace, such as how "She Variety" uses online platforms for marketing and promotion, how online public opinion affects the program production of "She Variety," and how female netizens negotiate their digital identities in interactions with other netizens. Only by deeply understanding these issues can we better grasp the sociocultural significance of "She Variety" and better promote the development of gender equality.

Conclusion

This paper has investigated the discipline of emotional labor and the negotiation of digital identities in Chinese "She Variety" on TV from the perspective of social gender performance in the algorithmic age. The study finds that "She Variety," as an emerging genre of television programming, not only showcases the diverse roles and subjective consciousness of women in contemporary society but also reflects the multiple influences of algorithmic logic, commercial interests, and traditional gender norms on the construction of female images. The production, dissemination, and consumption of "She Variety" are closely related to algorithmic logic. Algorithms have brought new development opportunities to "She Variety" but have also imposed important constraints on it. In the production process of "She Variety," algorithms participate in the quantification and recombination of gender elements, making the presentation of female images more in line with market demands and audience expectations, but it may also lead to the stereotyping and homogenization of female images. In the dissemination process of "She Variety,"

algorithms promote the cross-media dissemination of "She Variety," making the influence of "She Variety" break through the limitations of the TV screen and extend to a broader digital field, but it also makes the gender performance of "She Variety" present more complex and diverse characteristics.

In the presentation of "She Variety," the emotional labor of female guests is under the dual discipline of being "gazed" and "required." They need to meet the needs of program production but also conform to the expectations of social gender norms for women. In the tension between "authenticity" and "performance," "She Variety" constructs a female group portrait that is both diverse and somewhat stereotypical. The construction of this female group portrait not only reflects the living conditions and social situation of contemporary Chinese women but also participates in the reproduction and transformation of social gender concepts. In online discussions related to "She Variety," female netizens actively participate and express themselves, negotiating diverse female identities through the interaction between their "fingers" and the "screen." This negotiation is both a critique and deconstruction of certain stereotypical female images in "She Variety" and a construction and expression of their own digital identities.

This study also has certain limitations. First, due to the large number of "She Variety" programs, this paper only selected some of them for analysis, and the research results may not fully represent the situation of all "She Variety" programs. Second, this study mainly adopted the methods of textual analysis and discourse analysis, and lacked empirical investigation of the audience reception of "She Variety." Future research can adopt a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods, such as questionnaires and in-depth interviews, to gain a deeper understanding of the audience of "She Variety." In addition, future research can further explore the cross-cultural communication of "She Variety," such as the reception of "She Variety" overseas, and comparative studies between "She Variety" and female-themed programs in other countries and regions.

Despite its limitations, this study still has important theoretical and practical significance. At the theoretical level, this study applies multiple theoretical frameworks such as social gender performance theory, emotional labor theory, and digital identity theory to the emerging media phenomenon of "She Variety," enriching and developing the connotation of these theories, and also providing a new perspective for understanding gender politics in the algorithmic age. At the practical level, this study reveals the important role of "She Variety" in the negotiation of social gender relations in contemporary China, and also points out the potential and limitations of "She Variety" in promoting gender equality. The conclusions of this study help us to understand the sociocultural significance of "She Variety" more deeply, and also provide insights for us to better promote the development of gender equality. Furthermore, the findings of this study have several practical implications for the development of "She Variety" and the promotion of gender equality in the media industry and beyond.

1. Enhancing Media Literacy

"She Variety" programs, while offering a platform for female visibility, should also be viewed critically. It is crucial to enhance media literacy among audiences, particularly women, enabling them to critically analyze media representations and understand the underlying power dynamics. Educational initiatives could be implemented to teach audiences how to decode media messages and recognize the potential biases embedded in seemingly empowering content.

2. Diversifying Content and Representation

Producers of "She Variety" should strive to diversify the representation of women beyond the confines of traditional gender roles and stereotypes. This includes showcasing women from diverse backgrounds, professions, and age groups, and presenting a wider range of female experiences and perspectives. For instance, future programs could feature women in traditionally male-dominated fields, or explore the lives of women from different ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds, thereby challenging the often-narrow portrayal of women in mainstream media.

3. Fostering Authentic Emotional Expression

While emotional labor is inherent in performance, "She Variety" programs should create a space where female participants feel empowered to express their authentic emotions without fear of judgment or penalty. This could involve reducing the emphasis on sensationalized conflicts and highlighting moments of genuine connection and support among women. Programs could also include behind-the-scenes segments that reveal the pressures and challenges faced by female participants, offering a more nuanced portrayal of their emotional experiences.

4. Promoting Gender-Sensitive Production Practices

The media industry should adopt gender-sensitive guidelines for the production of reality TV programs. This includes training for producers, directors, and editors on gender issues, as well as establishing ethical standards for the portrayal of female participants. For example, production teams could undergo workshops on gender sensitivity and unconscious bias, and programs could be evaluated based on their adherence to gender-sensitive guidelines.

5. Encouraging Public Discourse and Engagement

"She Variety" programs can serve as a catalyst for public discourse on gender issues. Broadcasters and online platforms should actively encourage audience engagement and provide platforms for constructive dialogue. This could involve hosting online forums, inviting experts and scholars to comment on the programs, and facilitating discussions on social media. By fostering a more participatory and critical viewing culture, "She Variety" can contribute to raising public awareness of gender equality.

6. Policy Recommendations

Policymakers should consider the role of media in shaping gender norms and promoting gender equality. This could involve supporting the production of media content that challenges gender stereotypes and promotes positive female role models. Furthermore, policies could be implemented to regulate the use of algorithms in content production and dissemination to mitigate potential biases and ensure fair representation of women. For example, policies might encourage greater transparency in how algorithms are used to select and promote content, as well as provide funding for research on the gendered impacts of algorithmic culture.

By implementing these recommendations, "She Variety" programs can move beyond mere entertainment and become a powerful tool for promoting gender equality and social change. They can contribute to a more nuanced understanding of women's experiences, challenge harmful stereotypes, and inspire positive transformations in the media industry and society at large. The

conclusions of this study help us to understand the sociocultural significance of "She Variety" more deeply, and also provide insights for us to better promote the development of gender equality. As a mirror, "She Variety" reflects the changes in social gender relations in contemporary China and also heralds the possibility of future gender relations development. We expect that future "She Variety" will more consciously undertake the social responsibility of promoting gender equality, show more diverse and inclusive female images, and contribute to building a more just and harmonious society.

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