

# Research on the Influence of CCTV Documentary City 24 Hours on Audience Subjectivity

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**Abstract.** As an art form with reality as the core, how to make the audience have a sense of participation and play their subjectivity is a subject worth research and discussion. In recent years, under the rapid development and innovation of China's TV documentary industry, excellent documentaries such as "A Bite of China", "I Repair Cultural Relics in the Forbidden City" and "City 24 Hours" have been produced. However, it is undeniable that China's documentary industry needs to improve more from the audience's perspective to gain a higher national degree. Therefore, this paper studies the influence of the CCTV documentary series "City 24 Hours" on the audience's subjectivity. This paper mainly studies the limitations of the documentary 24 Hour City in stimulating the subjectivity and making the audience produce "semantic democracy" for the narrative object. This includes serious labels, a lack of detail and engaging narratives, and even the mining and creation of traditional elements and online celebrity landmarks. The exploration of this series of problems and the implementation of countermeasures will be the only way in the development process of the documentary.

**Keywords:** Audience Subjectivity, City 24 Hours, Documentary Development.

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1. Research Background

The entry point for traditional city documentaries is frequently the tourist attractions and typical buildings of a given city, or they may be told from a famous person's point of view. These approaches are combined with grand narrative modes that emphasize urban style and cultural history to elaborate on the city's origins, evolution, and current appearance [1]. However, in recent years, excellent domestic documentaries have appeared at this historic moment. They actively share vivid and compelling Chinese stories with the world, demonstrating China's swift development and change, using the international communication voice of documentaries, and fully promoting the theme of The New York Times [2]. This is also consistent with the importance of expanding the city's image construction.

The CCTV documentary "City 24" in this wave of "people-oriented" narrative documentaries restored the texture of the city and created its own distinctive style by establishing the interaction between people and the city [3]. Because it builds the city from the perspective of tourists and local residents, this very "fireworks" narrative injects flesh and blood into the documentary.

### 1.2. Literature Review

Li proposed that the most notable aspect of "City 24 Hours" is its "all-around shooting" perspective, which displays urban style in several spatial dimensions while attentively presenting the lives and cultures of modern urban dwellers [3]. Shan examined how "24 Hours" depicts the traits and themes of China's five top cities, observes urban growth and feelings, and shares various tales and cultures [4]. Xie found that this documentary's protagonist is an ordinary citizen, which shows the face of the city from a brand new perspective. Among them, some typical elements deeply touched the audience's heartstrings and inspired them to think deeply about the future development of the city [5]. After a deep study of the narrative of the 24th City Edition, Sun Jiamin tries to find a way to break this inherent pattern in order to tell the "story better" and to attract the audience more effectively [1].

In the research, Ba put forward a new view: the variety of content structure of the visual text can help the audience to understand the life of ordinary people better through the emotion and recognition of resonance and memory, providing the audience with a sense of reality, familiarity, presence, and attention, and can invisibly close the audience and the psychological distance between the characters in the documentary [6].

Most scholars have their research about the attention to social groups and the subjective consciousness of the creators, usually taking the theme and emotional symbols expressed by the creators as the entry point. In contrast, a few scholars have studied the construction of the city image and the “nodal” spatial narrative.

### 1.3. Research Framework

This paper highlights the connection between the 24 Cities documentary series and the audience. Use the audience to get rid of the sense of manipulation and awaken their subject consciousness while creating meaning, pleasure, and social consciousness in the process of interpretation.

First, this paper will elaborate and analyze the content outline of the CCTV program “City 24 Hours” and the audience subjectivity theory proposed by John Fiske. Secondly, this paper integrates the two concepts to discuss the recreation process of meaning and emotion in the TV text “City 24 Hours”.

Secondly, this paper talks about aspects of the production and dissemination of the 24 Hours of the City documentary series that are not conducive to the audience receiving information and playing their subjectivity.

Thirdly, for these problems, this paper will summarize the reasons.

## 2. Case Description

In May 2019, the CCTV documentary “24 Hours of the City” was officially launched. This season includes five cities: Zhengzhou, Wuhan, Shenzhen, Chengdu, and Xiamen, and each city has one episode of 50 minutes per episode. The documentary uses 24 hours as a gradual time structure, dividing time periods and gathering hundreds of small people who can be a station master on duty, a maintenance worker at the Yangtze River Bridge, a breakfast shop owner, and an Internet employee, which form a relatively independent story.

As a documentary observing Chinese cities, “City 24 Hours” is not satisfied with the texture of the city’s appearance but also tries to explore the whole city’s operation mechanism and touch the social pulse’s fundamental power [3]. These stories constitute the iconic industry of the city and also show the pace of life, attitude, cultural background, and so on. Not only that, but compared with traditional documentaries, it constructs the temperament and personality of a city by carefully carving out the extremely emotional camera language and editing rhythm. The difference in editing rhythm is not only reflected in the cities, such as the “fast” of life in Shenzhen and the “middle” of life rhythm in Zhengzhou, but also in the different 24 hours. Therefore, whether as tourists or as local audiences, they can feel comfortable pleasure and participate in the social consciousness while watching.

This documentary is about the city. The Angle of entry is clever, precise, and very inclusive, through 24 hours to string together the characteristics of a city and life.

Here, a large number of hand-held documentary photographs, a solid record of the real state of the characters. From the perspective of the random shaking of the camera, we can experience the sense of realism brought by the capture and the creator’s insistence on the pursuit of reality. These real and powerful documentary pictures, together with the friendly and warm tone of the explanation, let us have a real and clear, warm memory of these cities that are fuzzy in memory.

### **3. Analysis on the Problem**

#### **3.1. Current Situation Based on the Concept of Audience Subjectivity**

In the TV culture, two key factors are proposed for John Fiske, which determine how the audience can freely interpret television programming and popular culture. First, he highlights the restrictive role of the text itself, namely that it provides the framework for the audience to understand the program. Secondly, he mentions the influence of social forces that shape the audience's values and beliefs, thus forming their views and attitudes towards television programming.

##### **3.1.1 Social subjectivity**

The audience is first "people of" social subjectivity, and the process of acquiring the subject meaning of the audience is the process in which people gradually understand the role of the audience in communication. As a successful TV documentary, it is more important for the audience to find an emotional home and spiritual comfort than to explore the emotional symbols the creators want to show.

Social subjectivity is also based on the audience responding to the text of cognitive vision and feelings. Large audiences have different perspectives on program narrative objects, and different recipients can relate to these strange or familiar "city" resonance and sense of belonging. Let the TV text for the audience; these are necessary.

##### **3.1.2 Text nature subject**

Although the limiting power of the text is limited, it can not be ignored. John Fisk pointed out that "the subject of text nature" is the subject position of the text created and prepared for the audience. That is to say, and when the producers can establish the structure of the text, they can also infer the attitude of the audience in advance so as to guide the audience to produce the corresponding joys and sorrows in the process of accepting the social order in the TV text. While the audience is satisfied with this sense of participation, "semantic democracy" emerges.

#### **3.2. Find Problems**

The "City 24" documentary series builds a unique city image for the audience through all aspects: the generalization of city characteristics, the segmentation of time, the construction of space, the narrative of characters, and unfamiliar vocabulary; all of these enhance the audience.

The reason why the "city" constructed by the TV text can be recognized and sought after by the majority of the audience is inseparable from the existence of an absolute contemporaneous nature (Gadamer) between the works and its current viewers. But there is no denying that the series of documentaries also have some limitations.

##### **3.2.1 The "labeling" is serious, and the city image is not three-dimensional enough**

As a major channel for audiences to perceive knowledge and information, City 24 introduces most urban elements for the public, such as Sichuan "panda", Wuhan "Wuhan dialect", "railway", and "hot and dry noodles". This is undoubtedly to strengthen the audience's existing impression of the city, and the audience does not feel the corresponding freshness in receiving the information.

In addition to the city image construction for urban stereotypes, not enough stereo makes many locals feel that there are not enough ground factors and details in the lack of text, such as in Xiamen about Xiamen University, producers for just for tourists have a long history of a single narrative, and for more audience curious campus life is the point. Although the imaginative copywriting and fresh and atmospheric colors can make the audience fall into it, the lack of textual narration of the story will make the audience feel helpless to be dragged out just after this point.

##### **3.2.2 Fun needs to be explored**

Regardless of the details that can make more people feel when the TV program does not explore the vitality and interest of the narrative object, it will greatly reduce the program's ability.

In “City 24 Hours”, some audiences lack interest in cities with distant geographical locations or different lives, particularly in “Zhengzhou”. In the impression of many southern audiences, the northern region lacks vitality. It has a relatively backward economy, and in the text writing, the director also unsurprisingly used “normal rules” to describe Zhengzhou. “Zhong” is the key word connecting all of the city, which is undeniably clever. Still, on the other hand, it also strengthens people’s stereotypes. As a developing city, it must have more fresh stories or highly innovative industries to be discovered, which also requires producers to jump out of their comfort zone and get rid of the formulaic creation method to truly let more audiences enjoy the pleasure of being created by the program text and themselves when immersed in it.

## **4. Suggestions**

### **4.1. Focus on the Construction of the Details of the Story**

With the development of The Times and the changes in the audience’s aesthetic appreciation, the simple introduction of the urban landscape is no longer in line with the taste of today’s audience. Today’s documentaries focus on the main body of “people” [7]. And they carry the city’s unique geography, history, culture, spirit, and personality of the masses.

To improve the accessibility of the documentary series, the producers will first need to put aside the flat narrative and inject more attractive details into it.

So, how will these little stories create a sense of belonging for audiences? In terms of the choice of stories, whether it can change the audience’s impression of the city or strengthen the inherent characteristics is understandable. The most critical thing is that the producer needs to present the existence of each individual with an “exit” attitude. At the same time, the urban space with circulation function can become the real carrier of the collective memory of human society and the breeding and constructing of the sense of identity and belonging [8]. And every story depicting the mutual attraction between people and things will also spark the audience’s hearts.

### **4.2. Find More Perspectives on Mining in the City**

In the first season of “City 24 Hours”, each city is a first and second-tier city with great development potential, so the producers also need to use the development vision to explore more perspectives to improve the viewability of the program, such as the most representative space, the way to balance the viewing needs of local audiences and foreign audiences and so on [9].

#### **4.2.1 Repackaging of the traditional elements**

When some audiences lose interest in the city due to geographical factors or cultural prejudice and other factors, the producers first need to break such stereotypes and transform the original iconic features into new subjects and forms. The Henan Opera introduced in Zhengzhou is no different from most documentaries. It is a monotonous statement from the life in front of and behind the stage of performers and apprentices, which the director would have done like this decades ago.

But making a presentation from the perspective of tourists is a novel perspective. Just as Henan Opera actors who wear Hanfu and play different roles are the leading roles on the stage, the tourists who rent Hanfu to punch in before the traditional buildings are the leading roles in their lives. The construction of such text not only gives people a sense of novelty to traditional literature and art, but also gives the audience a sense of substitution in the main position. This can also better reflect the thinking of film and television creators on the connection between people and the city, as well as on the questions of “city view” and “life view” [10].

#### **4.2.2 Exploration of new landmarks**

To talk about the development of a city, the web celebrity economy driven by young people also contributes greatly. The new landmarks created by the web celebrity economy allow the audience to break the stereotype and see the other side of the city. Take Zhengzhou as an example. Most of the

audience feels that the city has no vitality. But the fact is that “Only Henan Drama Fantasy City” in Zhengzhou has become a new form of watching stage plays in cinemas. This shows that the lack of visibility of the show is not the uninteresting subjects but the more “new” things to be discovered.

In sum, the innovation of “City 24 Hours” lies in that it gets rid of the grand narrative perspective of previous urban documentaries, concentrates on the urban temperament in 24 hours a day, integrates ordinary stories of ordinary people into the images, and integrates innovative thinking in the application of narrative skills and the conception of narrative strategies.

The documentary “City 24 Hours” uses the frame strategically to construct the city image, bringing the framing effect. On the one hand, it contributes to expanding the value of the current Chinese city image issue, connects the characteristic construction of individual city images with the characteristic construction of Chinese city groups, and realizes the value superposition of social issues. On the other hand, it promotes city development from the dual dimension of people and city. Finally, inspired by the experience of constructing a city image in the case of “City 24 Hours”, this paper puts forward suggestions for the development of future city documentaries on organizing civilian materials to construct characteristic city images and establishing macro-framework consciousness to construct nationwide city group image with characteristic city image, in order to complete the organic construction of the whole picture of Chinese city characteristics by means of the dissemination of characteristic city images of scattered individuals Constitutive.

## 5. Conclusion

This paper mainly studies the limitations of the documentary “City 24 Hours” when arousing the audience’s subjectivity and making the audience produce “semantic democracy” for the narrative object. This includes the serious labeling, lack of detail and attractive narrative, and even the excavation and creation of traditional elements and web celebrity landmarks, which producers need further improvement and innovation.

Currently, most scholars in the “City 24 Hours” documentary series mostly analyze and think from the perspective of the program creators to explore how they restore the city’s appearance and build a structured urban space. This paper considers documentary as an art form with reality as the essence and real life as the creation material, so how to let the audience find the emotional home to study the emphasis on authenticity and relative lack of artistic processing. This is not only the problem that the “City 24 Hours” series needs to pay attention to but also the issue the Chinese TV documentary industry must face in sustainable development.

The relevant limitations of this paper are that the audience feedback referred to in the research is limited, and the relevant problems and solutions can be enriched through large-scale audience research in the future.

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