

IS BBC'S TOP GEAR SUITABLE FOR CHINA? WHY HAS IT FAILED TWICE?

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Abstract

This research is about BBC's Top Gear and its suitability in Mainland China. Top Gear is the world's most popular and longest-running motoring program, which is an outstanding example of how car culture has been carried forward by the media since its launch. China, with the world's biggest population and the leading car market, should be the most suitable country for Top Gear.

However, there were two attempts for localizing Top Gear in China, both have failed. If one adaptation fails, it can be blamed on luck, but failing both times implies a deeper problem. Is BBC's Top Gear suitable for China? Why has it failed twice? In this research, I have summarized the history of Chinese car culture by reading books and watching documentaries, completed a qualitative research by interviewing people associated with Top Gear China to collate the problems they encountered, and surveyed over 3,000 Chinese Top Gear viewers through questionnaire and online poll to find out their preferences and opinions. I even met Richard Hammond, to gain insight of the program from the creator himself.

There are many reasons for Top Gear China's failure: the lack of audience, the interference of capital, the censorship, and most importantly - the cultural differences between China and the UK, all of which prevented Top Gear from being localized well in China. In the end, the BBC's Top Gear can be borrowed, but it is more important for us Chinese to make our own localized car programs.

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Table of Contents

Abstract.....	ii
Introduction	1
1.1 Background of China’s car market and car culture	1
1.2 Top Gear in China over the years.....	2
Literature Review	5
2.1 Car Culture has Influenced Chinese Life	5
2.1.1 The Twisted Road of Chinese Car Culture	5
2.1.2 China “overtaking at corners” in the field of electric vehicles.....	9
2.1.3 Chinese people have their own preference for cars.....	10
2.2 The influence of Mass Media on car culture	11
2.2.1 McQuail's Typology	12
2.2.2 Interpersonal Communication Theory.....	13
2.2.3 Social Learning Theory.....	13
2.2.4 Cultivation Theory.....	13
2.2.5 Examples of Mass Media influenced Car Culture	14
1.Top Gear to Morris Marina & Reliant Robin.....	14
2.The Fast and Furious franchise to street racing	14
2.3 The History, and the Excellence of Top Gear	15
2.3.1 The History of Top Gear	16
2.3.1.1 “The Classics”(1977-2001)	16
2.3.1.2 The Relaunch and Steady Rise(2002-2009)	17
2.3.1.3 The Heyday (2010-2014).....	18
2.3.1.4 The End of an Era (2015)	19
2.3.1.5 The Post trio Era and the New Beginning (2016-present)	19
2.3.2 The Excellence of Top Gear	20
1. Female Involvement	20
2. Entertainment above all.....	21
3. The Stig	21
4.Only the unexpected, not the impossible.....	22
5. Hard work pays off	22
6. Developing With Times.....	22
Methodology	24

3.1 Quantitative Research	24
3.1.1 Participants.....	24
3.1.2 Online Survey Questionnaire.....	25
3.2 Qualitative Research	25
3.2.1 Interviews	25
Results and Discussion.....	27
4.1 Data analysis	27
4.1.1 Poll	27
4.1.2 Online Survey.....	30
4.2 The Formation and decline of Top Gear China.....	36
4.2.1 Timeline.....	36
4.2.1 Sino-British Differences	38
4.2.2 Capital Intrusion and Force majeure.....	40
4.2.3 Presenter's performance and localization.....	41
Conclusion	43
Reference	45
Appendix.....	49
Online Survey Questionnaire	49
Consent form for the interviews	51

Introduction

Top Gear's struggle in China are closely linked to the country's car culture. For many years, the promotion of car culture in China remained quite slow, as the country's car industry started late and did not generate enough heritage. However, with the rapid development of China in recent years, it has taken less than 2 decades for the Chinese people to go from "not knowing anything about cars" to "almost every family being able to afford a car". There is a huge demand for car culture and motoring program in China, but all will be lost if localization is not done properly.

1.1 Background of China's car market and car culture

China is currently the world's largest automotive market, with 360 million motor vehicles in the country as of June 2020, including 270 million privately owned cars. There are 440 million licensed driver, accounting for a third of the total population(China Business Industry Research Institute, 2020). Since the implementation of China's "reform and opening up" policy in 1978, automotive transportation have gradually become a part of modern Chinese life. However, as China's automotive industry was constrained by its recent history, not only by a long-standing patent blockade by other countries, but also by the fact that state-owned manufacturing plants were not allowed by the government to sell cars to the general public, most of the popular automotive activities that existed for many years in Western countries, such as motor racing, tuning, road trips, classic car collecting and restoring, were difficult to find in China until the early 1990s. For example, the world's first purpose-built racing circuit was Brooklands, built in England in 1907; while China's first permanent circuit was the Zhuhai International Circuit (ZIC), built in 1996 - a gap of 89 years between the two.

The tuning market is also in its infancy in China, although as the 'factory of the world', China's auto parts industry has become a leader in the past decade, with relevant data showing that China's auto parts exports rose from US\$12.959 billion to US\$53.03 billion between 2009 and 2019, with a compound annual growth rate of 16.95% (Foresight Industry Research Institute, 2020), but Despite this, the automotive tuning industry has remained in a "grey area" in China for a long time, with a very narrow scope of tuning. According to Article 16(1) of the Road Traffic Safety Law of the People's Republic of China, no company or individual shall assemble a motor vehicle or alter the registered structure, construction or characteristics of a motor vehicle without permission. Although there are still some Chinese enthusiasts who modify their vehicles privately, it can sometimes be difficult to escape regular police inspections and MOT test.

The Chinese policy towards classic cars is also very unfriendly, most classic cars that already in China will be banned from the road if they have exceeded registration and can not be renew. Imported classic cars cannot legally enter China unless they are registered as "exhibits" under the permission of an Automobile Museum, and obviously cannot be driven on public roads.

Although the development of car culture has long been restricted in China in many ways, as car consumers have become younger and younger, the quest for individuality in cars has become more pronounced. After many reforms, China has become a diverse and tolerant country, and the market is gradually changing to consumer-oriented, so it is incorrect to say that "car culture does not exist in China", but it is and will remain at a stage of development.

1.2 Top Gear in China over the years

A critically acclaimed television show and global intellectual property, Top Gear has influenced car culture over the years among older, middle-aged and younger viewers alike. In addition to the original show, which began in

1977, a rebooted version hosted by Jeremy Clarkson, Richard Hammond and James May, and the current revamped version hosted by Chris Harris, Paddy McGuinness and Andrew Flintoff, Top Gear also has several official worldwide versions in different countries, including Top Gear Korea, Top Gear France, Top Gear U.S., Top Gear Australia, and Top Gear China, which is the main subject of this dissertation.

Top Gear's distribution in mainland China has been a grey area for a long time, before the “Chinese YouTube” - bilibili.com buying the licensed rights to BBC Top Gear in 2017, there are only two ways for Chinese viewers to watch the show legally - go to pay per view channels like BesTV, Extreme Car TV for some clips rerun, or buying Official BBC DVDs, but people hardly done so, as the not everybody is willing to pay for TV shows in China.

Most Chinese viewers would download pirated videos or watch them on social media through self-organized subtitling groups, which themselves were big contributors in the distribution of Top Gear in China during the early days. With their help, despite the limited broadcast, Top Gear still developed a strong presence among the Chinese car enthusiast, which had drew the attention from the BBC worldwide and several Chinese production teams.

Chinese television stations had produced two adaptations of Top Gear, one called <Top Gear 最高档> - pronounced Zui Gao Dang, direct translation is “the top of gears”(hereinafter called Top Gear China 2011), which aired on Hunan TV from April 4th, 2011 to November 27th, 2011. It was developed and co-produced by Hunan TV and Shixi Media, as China's first car entertainment motoring program, but just ran for only one season to get cancelled.

The other, known as <巅峰拍档 Top Gear> - pronounced Dian Feng Pai Dang, direct translation is “extreme partners” (hereinafter called Top Gear China 2014), which aired on Shanghai Dragon TV from November 12th, 2014 to December 21st, 2015. It was title-sponsored by Red Bull China, produced

by a collaboration between Chinese and British team, with a very generous budget.

Compared with Top Gear China 2011, Top Gear China 2014 was vastly superior in terms of commercial layout, program budget, staff selection and cooperation with the original BBC team, but even though it ended abruptly with just 2 seasons without noticeable success.

The bad results of the two Chinese versions of Top Gear has led to discussion at mainland and abroad that Top Gear is not suitable for China(YICHE, 2014), but since China has the world's largest population and the largest car market, a good car program must exist. And since bilibili.com had bought the official licensed Top Gear from the BBC, more young Chinese people are becoming Top Gear fans.

Whether is China's cultural environment deemed not suitable for Top Gear, or the two Chinese adaptations have encountered unresolved problems in the production process, this dissertation will take you to the answer - whether Top Gear is suitable for China?

Literature Review

2.1 Car Culture has Influenced Chinese Life

The Oxford Dictionary defines "car culture" as "a society or way of life characterized by excessive use of or reliance on motor vehicles", it usually be a part of subculture, but has gradually becoming an important part of modern lifestyle. Over the years, cars and their culture have proved to be central to human life, from the most intimate relationships to the widest sense of global crisis, and capable of inspiring passions of epic emotions (Miller, 2001: 3).

The development of China's automotive industry as well as its car culture has been severely limited by the country's recent history. The narrow vision of the feudal era, the invasion by foreign powers, internal political struggles and uneven regional development were all factors. Nevertheless, after the reform and opening up, China's automotive industry has developed rapidly and with great potential, providing a breeding ground for car shows like Top Gear.

2.1.1 The Twisted Road of Chinese Car Culture

The birth of the automobile was an important representative of the second industrial revolution in the west, although the main inventors were from Europe and America, China also played a role in the early development of the automobile.

南怀仁 Nan Huairen, or Ferdinand Verbiest from Belgium, was one of the most influential European missionaries to China in the early years of the Qing dynasty. He was skilled in mathematics and mechanics which were appreciated by the Kangxi Emperor, then he was given the official position of

Supervisor of the Qintian which equivalent to a departmental cadre(Mungello, 2005).

In 1672, as a gift to the Kangxi Emperor, Nan Huaiwen has designed a 25.6-inch-long steam-powered trolley, which is believed to be the earliest record of a 'self-propelled car' in China(Curious Expeditions, 2007), although its authenticity cannot be established by cross-examination.

More than two hundred years later in 1901, at the peak of the second industrial revolution, the first appearance of automobiles in China was recorded, when a Hungarian man named Leinz brought two Oldsmobiles from Hong Kong to Shanghai to register as "horse carriage"(YesAuto, 2021).

Then in 1902, also as a gift from an official to the then ruler of China, Empress Dowager Cixi, a 1901 Duryea Surrey became the most famous car of its time(Bowers Museum, 2017). However, the car did not catch on as the Qing dynasty was so class-divided that Empress Dowager Cixi did not want a driver in the same cockpit as her.

After another 10 years, following the Xinhai Revolution, the Qing dynasty was overthrown and the Republic of China was established, by which time cars were gradually introduced into the lives of the upper classes in the major Chinese cities, mainly Shanghai and Tianjin. In fact, at this time, the development of car culture in China was not too far from that in Europe and North America, with brands such as Studebaker, Mercedes and Lincoln being used as taxis and buses in Chinese cities.

China's automobile manufacturing industry started slowly, almost 2 decades late than that of Europe and the United States during the same period. In 1928, Shenyang Mortar Factory, a military factory in northeastern China, started to build automobiles, kicking off China's local automobile manufacturing industry.

In 31 May 1931, the first locally made Chinese car - 民生牌 Minsheng Type 75, was born with engine, electrical and tyres from the United States, but the price was 40% cheaper (Schenau, 2011). However, during the 1930s, The Republic of China was plunged into internal and external crises, just four months after the birth of the Minsheng Type 75, the Japanese Kwantung Army suddenly invaded Shenyang and took over the factory by force, ending the development of Chinese car manufacturing right after it's start.

For the next 20 years, China was caught in a bitter struggle and its automotive development stagnated. While In Europe and the U.S., most car factories turned to the production of weapons, companies like Volkswagen, Porsche, Toyota, GM, Triumph and Renault, all played an important role in WWII.

After the war, production resumed in major car factories and car-related cultural activities returned to popularity in Europe and North America. Most of the returned American troops had brought the best of European cars, promoting the development of motor sport and car design, which started the 'golden age' of car culture (Leffingwell, 2017: 23). But at this time, China was still in a state of civil war and was unable to revive its automotive industry.

The relaunch of the Chinese automobile industry came after the founding of the People's Republic of China, when Chairman Mao announced the establishment of the First Automobile Work (FAW) on 15 July 1953. This was followed in 1956 and 1958 by the launch of China's first truck, the 解放牌 Jiefang, and the first sedan, the 红旗 Hongqi. However, cars at this time was not for civilians - the Jiefang trucks made an important contribution to China's First Five-Year Plan and were responsible for modern industrialization, the Hongqi cars were for government officials (First Automobile Works, 2011).

By this time the European and American car industries had gradually and steadily revived its former glories. American car design was greatly influenced by the start of the space race, which it began to launch large,

luxurious, flashy sedans; European cars were also developing rapidly, with factories represented by Renault and Volkswagen beginning to launch small, cheap cars, while sports car brands represented by Ferrari and Porsche were developing new types of technology through motor racing.

From 1966 to 1976, due to the turmoil of the Cultural Revolution, the Chinese automobile industry was again stagnant for 10 years. And during this decade, France, West Germany, Italy, Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxembourg signed the Brussels Treaty Organization, the European Communities (later European Union) was formed and the import and export of cars became easier as the economies of European countries came closer together. In addition, with the success of the strategy of building factories overseas, the Japanese automotive industry, which was close to China, grew ever stronger, a large number of Japanese cars were exported to the USA and Europe(Greenhouse, 1989).

After decades of lagging behind due to the turmoil of recent history, China's automotive industry finally entered a period of stability after the 1980s. With the reform and opening up, China's coastal regions developed at a rapid pace. In the four years from 1984 to 1987 alone, China imported a total of 640,000 cars at a cost of 26.6 billion yuan; on the other hand, it joined forces with overseas car companies to set up joint venture brands, the first of which included Beijing Jeep, SAIC Volkswagen and Guangzhou Peugeot.

Nearly 40 years later, in 2021, the Chinese automotive industry finally has the strength to compete with Europe and the United States. Even with the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, from January to November 2020, China's auto production and sales completed 22.372 million and 22.470 million respectively(Foresight Industry Research Institute, 2020).

Despite its late start, the car culture in China is also slowly improving. With Chinese brands such as GEELY, NIO and BYD becoming more and more influential in the world, the Chinese automotive industry still has a lot of potential for growth.

2.1.2 China “overtaking at corners” in the field of electric vehicles

At the beginning of the millennium, China's "863" major science and technology project during the "Tenth Five-Year Plan" period (2001-2005) set a strategy of transforming the energy of motor vehicles, starting with petrol and gradually moving towards the goal of hydrogen power. Since the “Eleventh Five-Year Plan”(2006-2010), the Chinese government has proposed the "Energy Conservation and New Energy Vehicle Strategy", which focuses on the development and industrialization of new energy vehicles, mainly pure electrics(Wei, Liu, Kokko, 2012).

One of the strategies for China's automotive development is to "overtake the competitors at the corner", which means that due to the late start of Chinese automotive industry, it can't overtake other countries with traditional approach, but can do so by taking the lead in the field of electric cars.

By 2021, China is already the world's largest electric vehicle market, and the government is promoting electric vehicles through various forms of subsidies, and has set limits on the development of internal combustion engines (ICE), including slowing down licence registration, restricting travel area and pushing ICE vehicles off the market(Find Energy, 2021).

The shift from ICE to electric vehicles has influenced the will of most Chinese car consumers. Many of them will go for electric because of the convenience of obtaining a licence and the availability of subsidies. In this kind of environment, the car culture is also changing, with an 'electric car culture' taking shape, which should be the perfect timing for a car show such as Top Gear to broadcast.

2.1.3 Chinese people have their own preference for cars

The development of China's car culture is influenced by geographical factors and therefore the Chinese demand for cars has a localized character.

Chinese consumers have a preference for joint venture brands as local manufactures have copied European and American designs for a long time and the quality of their products is not outstanding enough.

Geographically, as most German brands have their joint venture plants located in northern China, while Japanese brands are located along the coastal areas, northern Chinese usually prefer German brands (e.g. Volkswagen, Audi), while southerners (mainly Cantonese) prefer Japanese brands (e.g. Toyota, Honda and Nissan). As China's Dongfeng Group (one of the parent companies of the Renault, Citroen and Peugeot's joint venture) is located in Hubei in central China, so it is known as the "French home base", where most of the French joint venture cars are sold (Harwit, 2001).

Like the U.S., China has a wide network of highways, so larger sedans are more popular, while hatchbacks and superminis, which are popular with Europeans, are not selling as well.

For a long time the Chinese government had a "one child policy" where a family could only have one child, but in recent years this policy has been lifted and with more newborns in Chinese families, sales of SUVs and even MPVs have started to surge. In addition to this, as most Chinese who travel by car prefer to sit in the back, foot space in the back is highly valued and many models have been launched in China with extended wheelbase versions, such as the Audi A6L and BMW 530 Li.

Both Top Gear and The Grand Tour were filmed in China once, due to cultural differences, some Chinese viewers felt that the two episodes did not present a good picture of Chinese car culture and were racially biased. This will be explained in more details in the "Results" section that follows.

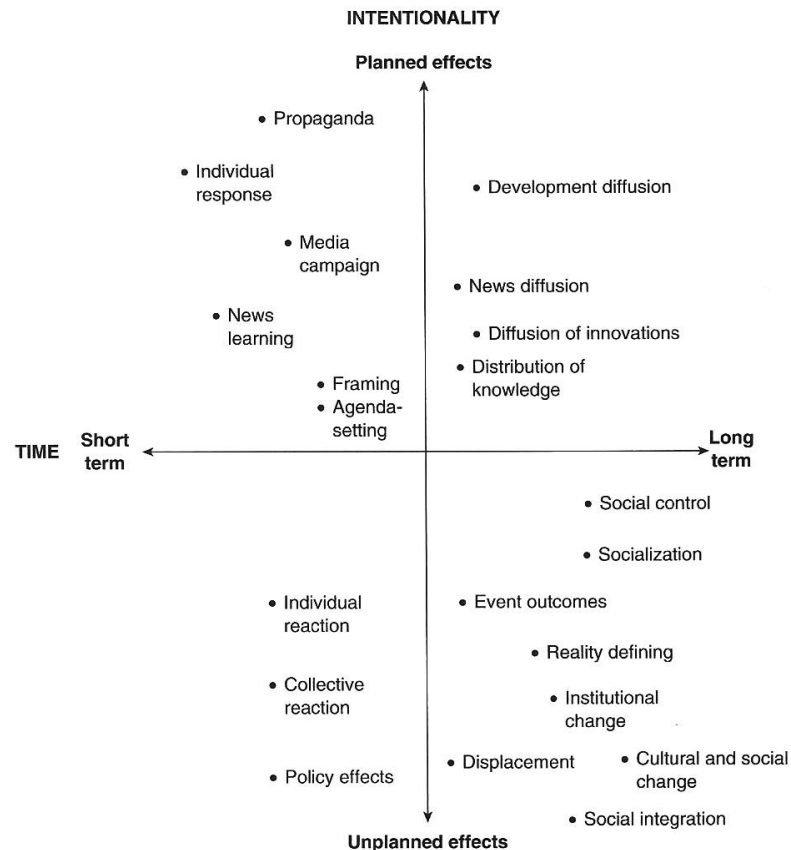
2.2 The influence of Mass Media on car culture

The broadcast of Top Gear belongs to the category of mass media, which refers to media organizations that are intermediate between professional communicators and the general public in the dissemination of information. It refers to communication organizations that reproduce and transmit information, as well as their publications and film and radio programs.

For many years, the mass media have had an important role in spreading and improving the perception of car culture. Due to the speed, scope and high impact of the mass media, Top Gear and other car-related medias, have deep influences in the accumulation of car culture. The following are examples of the concepts it spreads, its characteristics, and its impact.

2.2.1 McQuail's Typology

McQuail's typology is created by a renowned communication theorist in the field of mass communication research called Denis McQuail, based on the intentionality and length of time of media effects, he has organized the effects of mass media into a chart as below (Anon., 2016).



“The way media select, process and shape content for their own purposes can have a strong influence on how it is received and interpreted and thus on longer-term consequences” (Mcquail, 2010).

Top Gear is a motoring program with 44 years of history, mostly with unplanned intentions of the broadcasting other than entertainments. It can be situated in McQuail's chart at right below, it is about social integration and cultural change.

2.2.2 Interpersonal Communication Theory

Theories of interpersonal communication are concerned with the ways in groups of people communicate with each other, in Top Gear's case - car enthusiasts.

Identity management is important in interpersonal communication, which pays significant attention to intercultural relationships and how they affect the relational and individual identities of those involved. Top Gear's broadcasting is aiming towards car enthusiasts, in the process it became a symbol of car culture - whoever watches Top Gear regularly can be considered as a car enthusiast(Foss, 2008). Watching Top Gear have give you a new type of identity, which allows you to be a part of a bigger group.

The interaction between car enthusiasts is symbolic, and it comes from the socio-cultural perspective that lies on the creation of share meaning through interactions with other car enthusiasts. By doing so, people are motivated to act based on the meanings they assign to car culture.

2.2.3 Social Learning Theory

Social learning theory was pioneered by Neal Miller and John Dollard(1950), who discovered that individuals did not need to act personally to learn a behaviour, they could learn from observation from the media. In 1963, Albert Bandura expanded on this concept, stating that audiences could learn behaviour from observing fictional characters(Bandura, 1963).

2.2.4 Cultivation Theory

Not all media effects are immediate or short-term. In 1969, George Gerbner created the theory of cultivation, which suggests that the media fosters a 'collective consciousness about the elements of existence'. If audiences are

exposed to repetitive themes and storylines or actions, over time they may expect them to be reflected in real life (West, Tuner, 2010).

2.2.5 Examples of Mass Media influenced Car Culture

1. Top Gear to Morris Marina & Reliant Robin

According to the above theory, Top Gear's influence regarding car culture is subliminal, and what viewers see the presenters doing on TV, they want to reflect in real life.

Morris Marina and Reliant Robin are two dated British cars which constantly be used as insults on Top Gear. A running gag throughout the series involved Morris Marina was dropping a piano on its roof, and for Reliant Robin, it will flipped over every time the car was featured.

The Marina and the Robin was dubbed “the worst of cars”, however, because these two cars were so memorable on Top Gear, it actually became a part of its symbolic elements. There are enthusiasts buying Marinas and Robins not for their quality or performance, just for their appearance and symbolism of Top Gear.

2. The Fast and Furious franchise to street racing

Motorsport has been around since the dawn of the automobile. However, not all motorsport is legal, in fact most races held on the road are illegal. After the 1960s, illegal street racing gradually became a headache for police in various countries. Drag racers in the USA and Tōge racer in Japan are groups that are strictly monitored by the police.

Illegal racing and their enthusiasts have always been on the fringes of society, they are a counter-cultural group, which values and norms of

behaviour are very different from the society and diametrically opposed to mainstream cultures(Yinger, 1960).

However, on 22 June 2001, illegal car racing, which was in the grey area for a long time, was brought to the big screen with the Fast and Furious franchise. It eventually became a global success, earning over \$200 million at the box office. Since then, illegal drag racing has gone from a dangerous social fringe to pop culture, with more and more people attempting to race on public roads.

The average speed of drivers who received speeding tickets increased significantly on the weekend following the release of The Fast and the Furious. Comparing the three weekends before the release of each film to the three weekends after, the speed at which people received tickets increased by almost 20%, from a speed limit of 16 miles per hour to an average of 19 miles per hour(Anupam, Hicks, 2018).

Based on the cultivation theory, the similar Need For Speed video game series also influenced car culture to a great extent. The tuning culture, which the game promotes, effectively made more teenagers be interested in American Muscle cars and Japanese JDM culture.

2.3 The History, and the Excellence of Top Gear

Top Gear has been a key contributor to the transformation of car culture from niche to popular, with a 44-year history since its creation in the late 1970s. It has several revisions, more than 30 presenter changes, an eponymous car magazine, lots of publications and DVD series, and several licensed editions overseas.

From its earliest days as a small regional car review program, to a national motoring show, to global fame and a leading figure in British and global car culture, Top Gear's success is worth examining.

2.3.1 The History of Top Gear

The history of Top Gear can be divided into 5 periods, namely

1. The Classic Period (1977-2001)
2. The relaunch period and steady rise (2002-2009)
3. The heyday (2010-2014)
4. The End of an Era(2015)
5. The Post trio Era and the New Beginning (2016-present)

2.3.1.1 “The Classics”(1977-2001)

Top Gear was first created as a local car review show, running for half an hour per episode with a “magazine” format.

In 1977, producer Derek Smith approached BBC Midlands with a proposal to produce a motoring show about new car reviews, road safety advocacy and other hot topics relating to cars. The BBC Midlands then appointed Smith to produce Top Gear at Pebble Mill Studios in Birmingham, with nine episodes in the first season. Then Smith recruited two presenters from local TV station, Angela Rippon and Tom Coyne to host, thus making Rippon the first female car show presenter in history(Khan, 2009).

The show was only made available to BBC Midlands viewers at first, but since 1978, BBC realized the popularity and importance of a motoring show concerning the ever-growing car industry, so it has decided to broadcast Top Gear across the United Kingdom. The show has increased its variety too, not only covering new car reviews, but also MOT tests, traffic jams, holiday drivings, and exciting motor sport events such as 24 Hours of Le Mans and Lombard RAC Rally.

From 1980-1990, Top Gear was well received both from the audience and the car industry, with more and more first-hand information being produced, which led BBC moving it to Channel 2 - a national channel. During this

period, a platoon of new presenters joined Top Gear, most notably are Jon Bentley, Chris Goffey, and later ex-Formula One driver Tiff Needle, classic car dealer Quentin Willson, and an upcoming young star with signature sarcastic humor and brutal honesty, by the name of Jeremy Clarkson.

In 1993, the BBC launched the eponymous motoring magazine *Top Gear*, which featured columns and reviews from the show's presenters and other industry insiders. In 1995, BBC also launched Top Gear CD albums and a selection of VHS sets.

Ultimately, the Classic Top Gear got cancelled in 2001 after Jeremy Clarkson left in 1999, despite the audience still liking the show. Most of the show's presenters and production crew members moved to Channel 5 to create a new show called Fifth Gear, while Jeremy Clarkson and fellow producer Andy Wilman try to convince the BBC to relaunched Top Gear in a completely new format(BBC News, 2001).

2.3.1.2 The Relaunch and Steady Rise(2002-2009)

Shortly after Clarkson and Wilman's pitch, the BBC decided to give the new format a chance. The new show, while still called Top Gear, has ditched the once favorable magazine format, turned into a studio-based reality/talk show mix-up. The ideas that Clarkson and Wilman came up includes:

- 1.One permanent location designed to do hot laps and other challenges, with additional locations across Britain and abroad.
- 2.Review the latest sports and performance cars on track, hire a professional driver to do timed laps, and set up a ranking board afterwards.
- 3.Interact with viewers in the studio to talk about the latest automotive news and interesting stories.

4. Invite celebrity guests to participate in each episode of the show, to talk about their experience, preference of cars, then let them do a timed lap in a reasonably-priced car, and set up a ranking board afterwards.

The production of the relaunched Top Gear began in mid-2002, because all the presenters once worked with Clarkson on the original program had left the show, they have to recast the host line up. For having the same personality and an excellent sense of humour, west midlander Richard Hammond joined in, along with Jason Dawe, but he was quickly replaced by James May in Season 2.

With the popularity increasing, the show's presentation style began to transformed rapidly, from sensible car review to humorous(sometimes outrageous) approach of supercar road trips, cheap second hand car challenges and race between a car and other means of public transportation(Shunk, 2008).

The budget, on the other hand, is increasing every season too, which enabled the trio to do more unexpected and dramatic segments. In 12 February, 2006, Top Gear aired its first special episode - the Winter Olympics Special, which let the trio went to Norway to do a series challenges involving cars and Winter Olympics sports, it had received 5.22 million UK viewers - the highest of the season. After that, more specials were produced, including USA special, Polar Special, Botswana Special, Vietnam Special and Bolivia Special, all received generally positive feedbacks.

2.3.1.3 The Heyday (2010-2014)

From 2010 onwards, Top Gear went into full bloom, the trio have perfected their hosting style, the content of the program has also been set up very consistently, with 10 mins of test drive and hot laps, 30 mins of main content(usually challenge or road trip), 10 mins of live news in the studio, and 10 mins of "star in a reasonably priced car".

In the book of Guinness World Record 2013 Edition, the series was listed for being the world's most-watched factual TV program. More than 350 million people from 212 countries watch the series, and that doesn't even include people watching via illegal downloads, due to the fact that Top Gear was also the most illegally downloaded TV program in history(Cupler, 2012).

2.3.1.4 The End of an Era (2015)

But as the show became more successful, the BBC's control over Top Gear, and Jeremy Clarkson in particular, became more overwhelming. Clarkson, being the controversial person himself, has caused a bit of stir over the years: caught on camera for saying racist words several times, went to Argentina to put on a controversial license plate referring to the Falklands War, and most famously, has alleged committed verbal and physical abuse against one of the show's producer Oisin Tymon.

Jeremy Clarkson's contract with the BBC was ultimately terminated on March 25th, 2015. Richard Hammond and James May, as well as Andy Wilman soon left the show, stated that they would not continue working on *Top Gear* without Clarkson.

The trio have subsequently signed a deal with Amazon Prime to do a similar show with the format called the Grand Tour, which was also a success.

2.3.1.5 The Post trio Era and the New Beginning (2016-present)

After Clarkson, Hammond and May's departure, there were speculations on whether the BBC will cancel Top Gear. On 16th June 2015, Radio DJ and car collector Chris Evans was confirmed as the lead of the new Top Gear line up. Before long, American actor and Friends star Matt Leblanc, motoring journalist Chris Harris, as well as ex-F1 team boss Eddie Jordan, automotive

journalist Rory Reid and the late female racing driver Sabine Schmitz would also join Top Gear as co-host.

Despite great efforts and a number of segment changes, the new lineup didn't meet the viewers' expectations. The first episode aired on 29 May 2016 received 6.42 million UK viewers, but the followings struggled badly, with no more than half of the original ratings. Evans resigned after just 1 season, making Leblanc, Harris and Reid as the "new trio".

Unable to spend time with his family due to heavy filming commitments, LeBlanc left the show in 2018, leaving Top Gear to continue the search for new presenters again.

From 2019 onwards, former international cricketer Andrew Flintoff and comedian Paddy McGuinness joined Harris to form the current trio, which had bring new taste to the show. Since their arrival, Top Gear has developed its own style once again, with ratings rising sharply and the latest season (14 March to 4 April 2021) already almost matching the "heyday" of Clarkson, Hammond and May. In which case, Top Gear now has a better future to look forward to.

2.3.2 The Excellence of Top Gear

Top Gear had breaking a lot stereotypes through out the years, thus making it the best motoring show on television.

1. Female Involvement

The main audience for car programs is male, but since its classic days in 1970s, Top Gear has used female presenters several times, which encouraged more female car owners to participate in the show, also back then, Top Gear had filmed an episode about the search for female rally drivers.

Presenters like Angela Rippon, Vicki Butler-Henderson, as well as Sabine Schmitz's appearance, and Jodie Kidd for breaking the lap record, women have a strong presence on Top Gear, which attracts more female viewers to tune in.

2. Entertainment above all

There was a time when car shows were just a man and a car, with the presenter constantly talking about the stats and price and describing the driving experience in professional and even boring terms.

Top Gear has completely abandoned this approach, and although they still discuss the price of cars and how to buy them 'rationally' in the early stages, as the budget increased, it's all about entertainment and showmanship, which allows Top Gear to reach a much wider audience than just consumers who need to buy a car.

3. The Stig

Top Gear's own tamed racing driver The Stig is often referred to as the fourth protagonist outside the of trio. In other car shows, drivers usually talk a lot while driving, but The Stig is a man of few words.

Originally Clarkson and Wilman created The Stig because they couldn't find a driver with both great driving and verbal skills, so they set it up as a silent one(Dunn, 2009). Unintentionally, The Stig became hugely popular and this pantomime like humour expressed in body language became one of the most recognizable symbols of Top Gear, as well as an enduring punchline.

4. Only the unexpected, not the impossible

Race a Bugatti Veyron against a Typhoon fighter jet in a drag race? Try to destroy a Toyota Hilux pick-up in a thousand different ways? Take a Reliant Robin and turn it into a launchable rocket? Driving a diesel BMW 330d in the Britcar 24 hours endurance race? Building a stretched limousine out of a Fiat Panda? Crashed heavily in a 314mph Vampire dragster? With an adequate budget and the right platform, the Top Gear represents only the unexpected, not the impossible.

5. Hard work pays off

Top Gear's location crew usually consists of 20 people, including four cameramen, four sound recordists, a director, an assistant, three post-editors who accompany the team, and the rest are presenters, stunt drivers and on-set securities.

Top Gear shoots on a '100 to 1' principle, meaning that 100 minutes of video is shot on location and only one minute may go into the editing room, thus ensuring that the final broadcast version is well-polished.

6. Developing With Times

The relevance of current time and constantly self-adjusting is why Top Gear is still popular after all the shuffles and changes. During the first season, the hosts were Jeremy Clarkson, Richard Hammond and Jason Dawe, unlike Clarkson and Hammond's humorous and performative style, as an auto dealer himself, Dawe was able to give sensible buyer's guide but was lack of personality, which didn't fit in with the whole vibe of the show. So in Season 2, Dawe was replaced by James May, still sensible, but May's presence is stronger, sometimes he antagonizes Clarkson, which inspires even better chemistry.

From season 2 to season 9, Top Gear has been gradually moving away from the traditional way of reviewing car shows. In the early seasons, James May and Richard Hammond would even give viewers the latest dealer discounts on air, and would urge viewers to participate in online research. This was not conducive to expanding the show's audience. This 'car buying guide' was subsequently abandoned and the length of the challenges/road trips, which were the major part of the show, was increased.

From 15 November 2009 onwards, Top Gear has turned into 1080i High Definition TV format(the former being 576i Anamorphic), and the popularity of its YouTube channel has increased significantly(Lawler, 2009). Since then, Top Gear is not only a well-received TV show, but also an internet phenomenon, the jokes and memes that extended from the show have endured among the youth demographic. To date, Top Gear's YouTube account has 8.06 million subscribers and over 3.33 billion views.

The widespread success of Top Gear UK eventually led to the creation of a number of international versions, each with local production teams and presenters under the license of BBC studios. The first one being Top Gear Australia, then Top Gear Russia, Top Gear U.S., then South Korea, China, France and Italy followed suit. There has been two attempts of Top Gear China, both failed to replicate Top Gear UK's success.

Methodology

This research have both used quantitative and qualitative methods, also done with a diagnostic approach.

3.1 Quantitative Research

Quantitative research is generally conducted in order to produce statistical results for a given research subject as a whole. I have created a questionnaire with 10 questions via wjx.com and distributed it to Top Gear viewers and car enthusiasts on Chinese social medias - Weibo (a news platform like Twitter) and Bilibili (a video platform and official broadcast of Top Gear China), I have also asked specific questions on both platforms using poll function towards more generic audience.

3.1.1 Participants

I have received back a total 583 pieces of questionnaires, and the three specific poll questions each had 3,259, 2,082, and 1,767 of votes.

Participants in this survey were mainly from wjx.com, Weibo and Bilibili, mostly aged between 16-35, mainly male, with account personal preference set as automotive, mechanics and sports. They can be regarded as the typical Top Gear audience in China due to the fact that Bilibili and Weibo are two main platforms of watching Top Gear(official & unofficial).

The specific questions towards more generic audience were set with option that the participant never watched Top Gear, so his/her opinion can be excluded.

Personal data of the participant is not asked without consent, although, more personal data could help to make this survey more structured and detailed.

3.1.2 Online Survey Questionnaire

This questionnaire is consisted with 10 questions, 2 were about participant information (gender and age), 3 were about the original BBC Top Gear, and 4 were about Top Gear China.

The full version of the questionnaire can be found in the appendix.

3.2 Qualitative Research

Qualitative research is conducted to address the state of Top Gear China during the filming process, the internal environment and the conflicting changes. I investigated Top Gear China's production process from 2014-2016 comprehensively from 4 different perspectives (filming, script, PR and sponsorship) by developing field-specific questions and interviewing industry professionals who were involved in the filming/production of Top Gear China.

3.2.1 Interviews

I have organised 4 interviews in this research, these 4 interviewees are:

1. **Qian Wei**, Executive Director of Top Gear China 2014 Season 1 & Chief Director of Season 2, and Special B crew director of Amazon Prime's the Grand Tour China Chongqing special;

2. **Zhou Xiaoyu**, marketing and communications practitioner, PR director of Red Bull China, the sponsor of the first season of Top Gear China 2014;

3. **Wan Xuliang**, Automotive Media Personality, Chief Scriptwriter of Top Gear China 2014 Season 1 and Season 2;

4. **Ching Ye**, Head of Top Gear subtitling group;

Each of them had signed a consent form before conducting the interview and granted me the right to use the interview information. The consent forms can be found in *the appendix*.

Results and Discussion

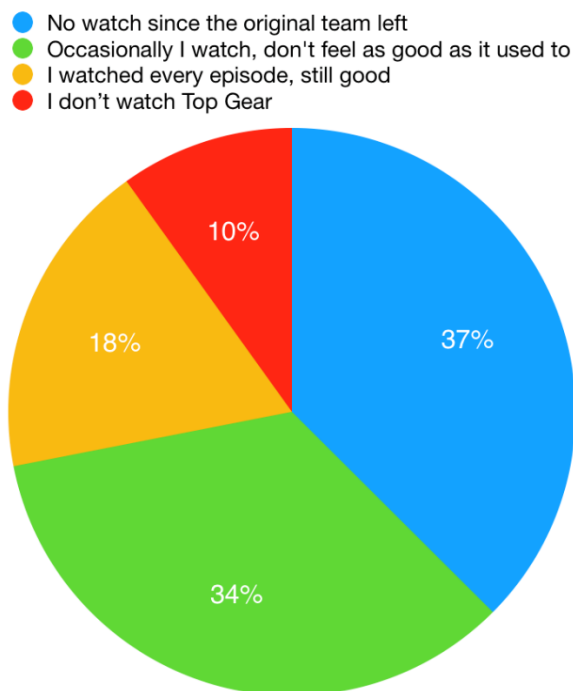
4.1 Data analysis

4.1.1 Poll

1. Do you still watching Top Gear after the departure of Jeremy Clarkson, Richard Hammond and James May?

Total Votes: 3259

- A. No watch since the original team left (1221)
- B. Occasionally I watch, don't feel as good as it used to (1123)
- C. I watched every episode, still good (592)
- D. I don't watch Top Gear (323)



Analysis: More than half of the audience chose to continue watching the show after the original trio left, and of those who did, two-thirds felt the show did not live up to the original standard, with the remaining portion not

watching again. As this was an online poll with generic participants, there were still nearly 10% of those voted who had not watched Top Gear.

Why this question: to find out how important the hosts are to the program. The results show that most viewers think the hosts are more important than the program.

2. What do you think is the most missing element in Top Gear China?

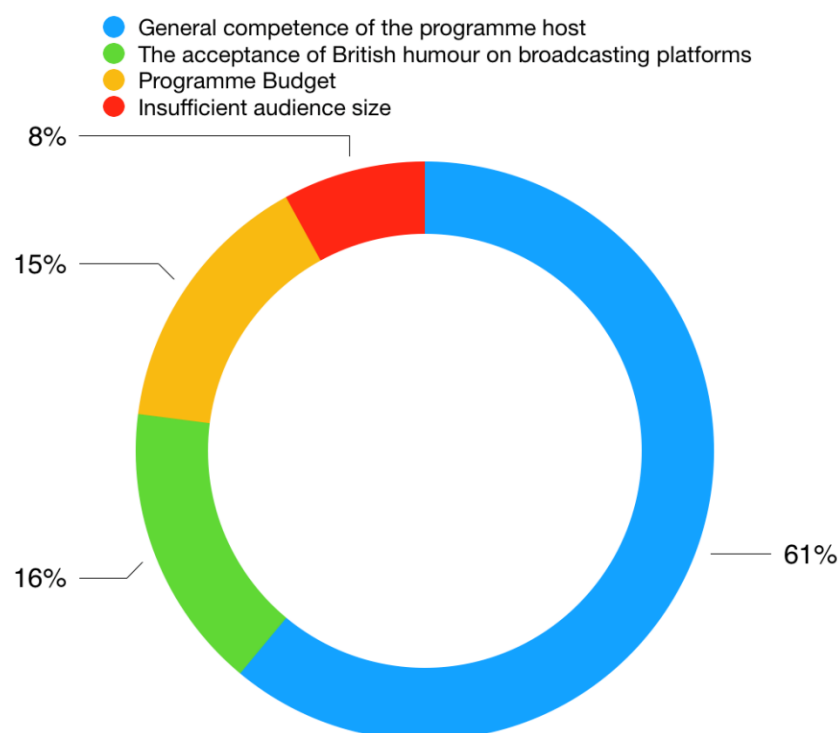
Total Votes: 2082

A. General competence of the program host (1270)

B. The allowance of British humour on broadcasting platforms (333)

C. Program Budget (312)

D. Insufficient audience size (166)



Analysis: More than half of the voters felt that the overall strength of the presenters influenced the ultimate quality of the program, while the remainder felt that the platform's acceptance of British humour and the program's

budget are not as good as the BBC's. A lack of audience also matters, accounting for 8% of the votes.

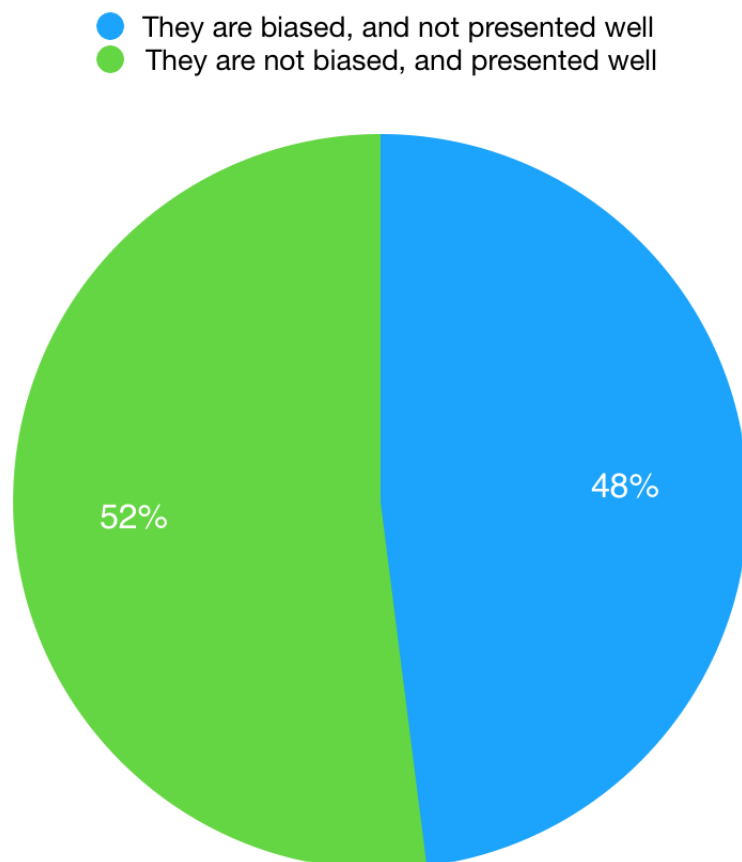
Why this question: To find out what is lacking in Top Gear China. The results showed that more than half of the viewers thought the host was the biggest weakness.

3. When filming the Chinese specials, did Top Gear and The Grand Tour present the Chinese car culture well and was there any racial bias?

Total Votes: 2082

A.They are biased, and not presented well (848)

B.They are not biased, and presented well (919)



Analysis: This is the most sensitive question of the three, and it got a surprisingly interesting result - half people think they're biased towards China, and the other half think they're not. Which it can explain why those 2 episodes had mixed ratings in China and over the world. Also, this question could be improved by add more options like C.They are not biased, and not presented well, and D.They are biased, and presented well.

Why this question: To find out how the Sino-British culture clash is among the audiences. The result showed that there's a serious culture clash.

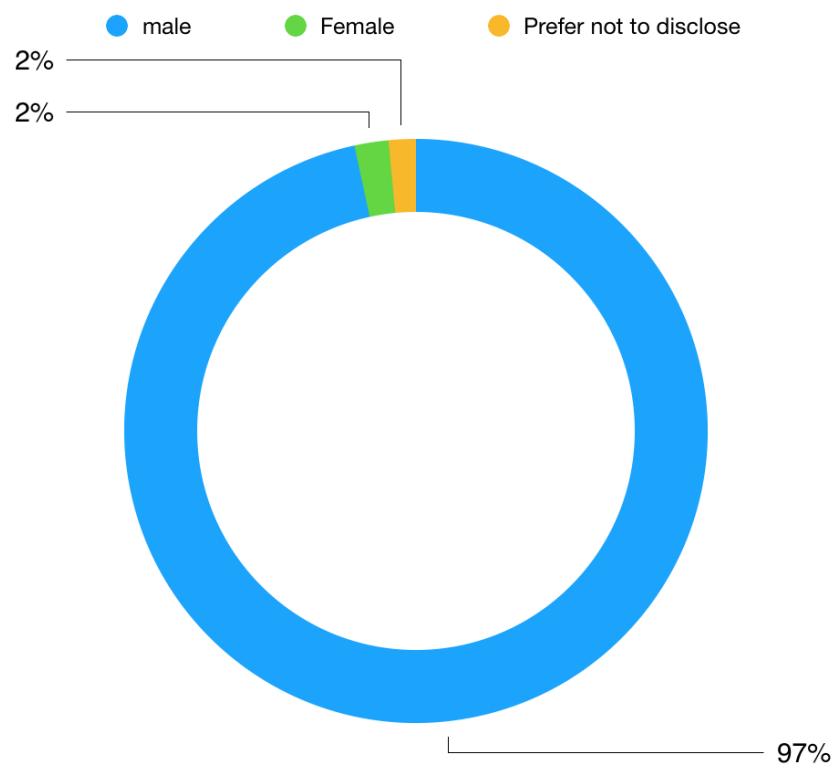
4.1.2 Online Survey

Total number of participants: 531

Male: 513

Female: 10

Prefer not to disclose: 8



Analysis: The majority of survey participants were men.

Participant age breakdown:

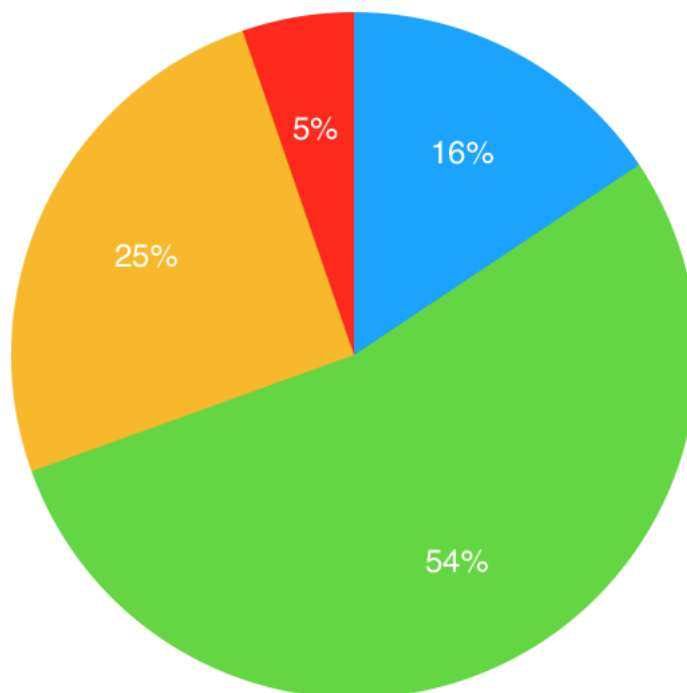
Below 18: 83

18-25: 286

26-35: 134

Above 35: 28

● Below 18 ● 18-25 ● 26-35 ● Above 35



Analysis: More than half of the participants in the survey were between the ages of 18-25, 25.24% were aged 26-35, 15.63% were under the age of 18 and the fewest were above 35, at 5.27%.

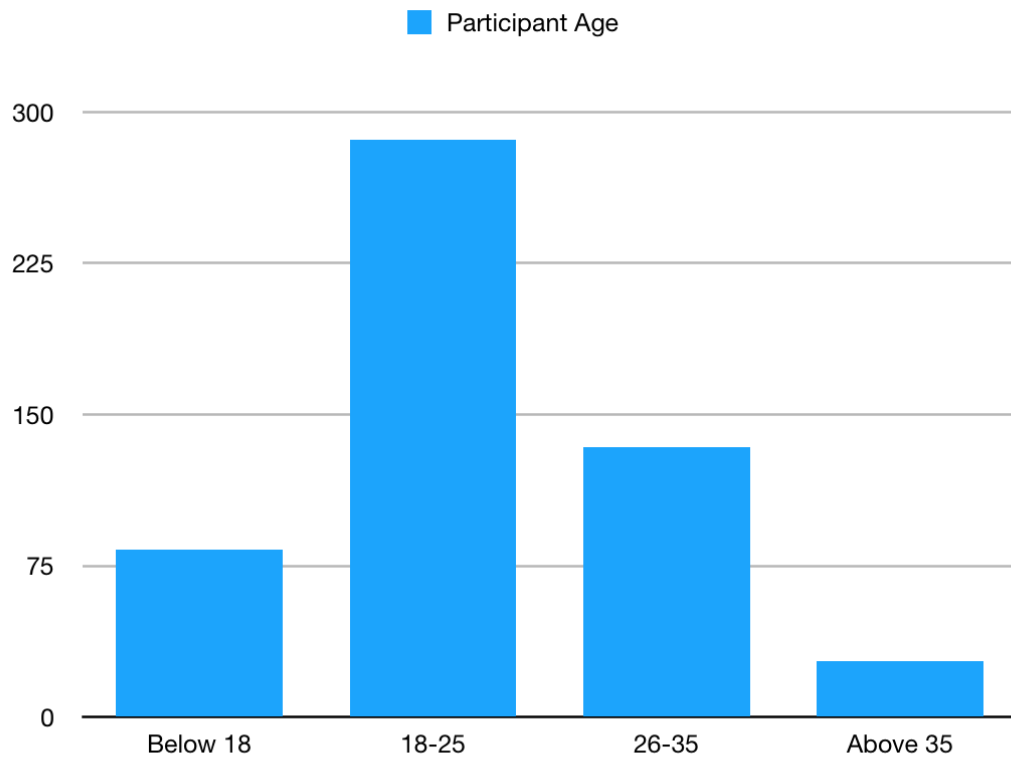
Ways for participants to watch Top Gear:

On Social Media(via bilibili channel or Weibo page) 87.95%

Stream service(BBC Worldwide) 36.91%

On TV 20.72%

Download or DVD 13.18%



Analysis: This was a multiple choice question, and as you can see from the results, participants watched Top Gear mainly from social media, with only a third watching via legal streaming services. As there is only a few TV station in China broadcasting Top Gear, only 20.72% chose to watch it on TV.

How did the participants first hear about Top Gear:

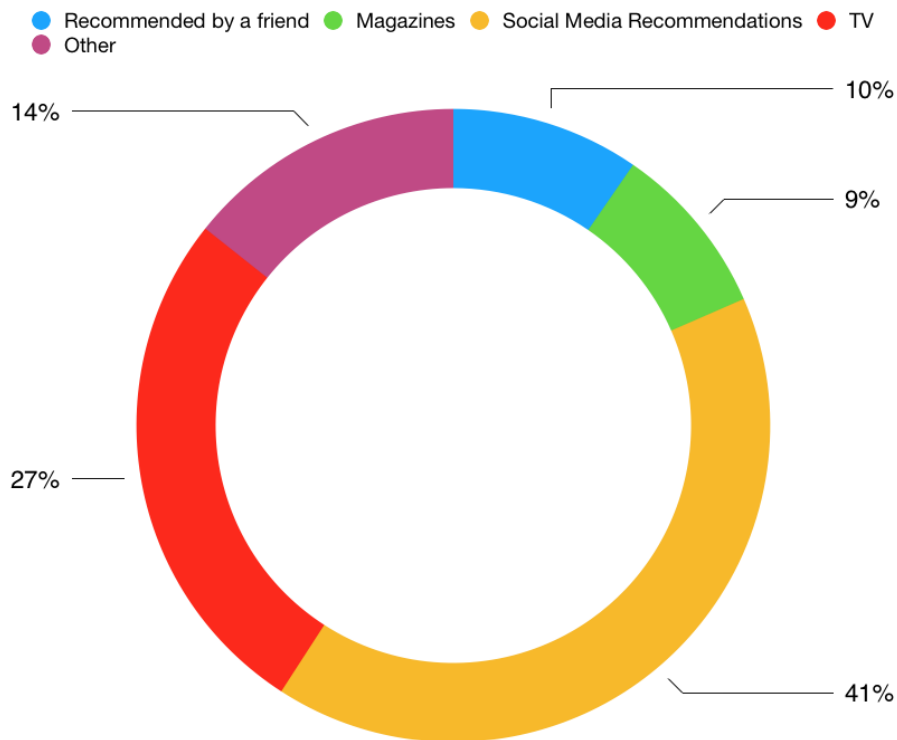
Recommended by a friend 9.6%

Magazines 8.85%

Social Media Recommendations 40.68%

TV 26.55%

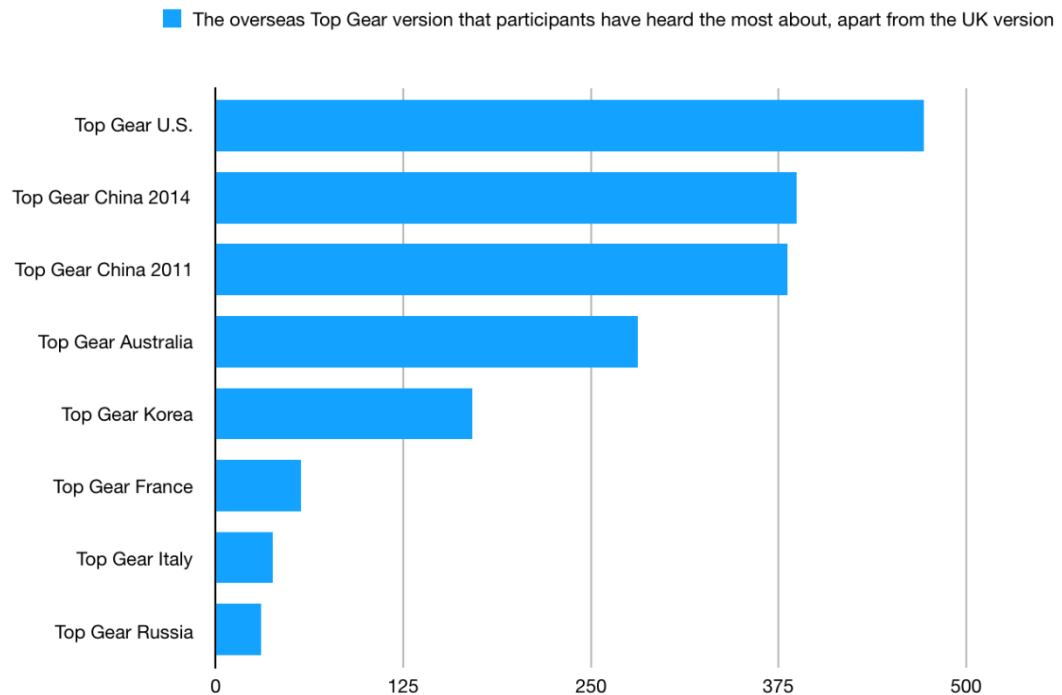
Other 14.31%



Analysis: It is impossible to ignore the role of social media, which was the most prominent way of promoting/watching Top Gear in China in several of the survey questions. The magazine is not as influential in China as it once was, with only 8.85% of participants hearing about Top Gear for the first time from the magazine.

The overseas Top Gear version that participants have heard the most about, apart from the UK version

Top Gear U.S. 80.79%
 Top Gear China 2014 65.54%
 Top Gear China 2011 65.16%
 Top Gear Australia 49.34%
 Top Gear Korea 29%
 Top Gear France 9.42%
 Top Gear Italy 6.03%
 Top Gear Russia 4.52%



Analysis: This is a multiple choice question. Most people have heard of Top Gear U.S. apart from the UK version, has to do with the fact that once some Chinese subtitling groups did the US version with subtitles, which it was introduced on Chinese platforms.

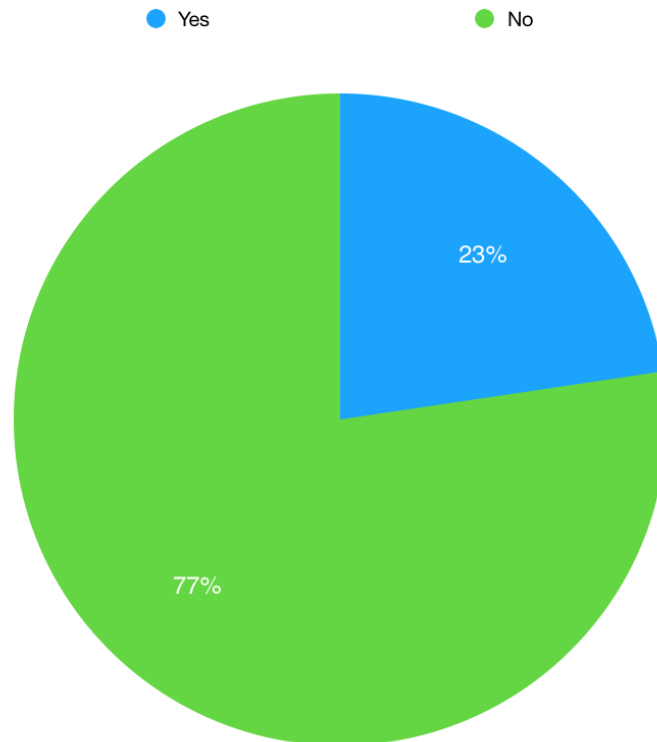
It is alarming that both Chinese versions of Top Gear have equal numbers of votes, but neither is as well known as the American version.

Top Gear Australia is better known than the other versions due to their previous involvement with Top Gear UK (season 16, episode 2). A Korean subtitling team (not related to the show itself) has subtitled the Top Gear Korea with celebrity interviews, so 29% of participants had heard of the Korean version. As for the French, Italian and Russian versions, very few people had heard of them because they were hardly subtitled.

Chinese car market has developed over the past 5 years, if a new Top Gear China with the same budget as Top Gear 2014 came out in 2021, do you think it would be a success?

Yes (132)

No (451)



Analysis: Most people think that even if Top Gear China were to be broadcast today, it still would not be a success.

In Summary: the majority of participants in this survey were male, mostly aged between 18-35. Social media played an important role in their viewing/understanding of Top Gear. More than half of them having heard of Top Gear China but being pessimistic about the show's situation, citing the lack of abilities of the presenters as the main reason for the show's mediocrity, as evidenced by their attitude towards Top Gear UK after the departure of the trio. Most of them believe that Top Gear China will not be a success even in 2021.

4.2 The Formation and decline of Top Gear China

Top Gear was produced in China with two versions, the first in 2011 for Hunan TV and the second in 2014 for Shanghai Dragon TV.

The main problem Top Gear China 2011 encountered was the lack of budget, as the 4 interviewees mentioned numerous times during the interview. In contrast, the case of Top Gear China 2014 is more intriguing and worth examining - the budget was more than abundant, Shanghai Dragon TV is one of the leading networks in China, they even got help from the BBC team, and yet somehow the show still failed.

4.2.1 Timeline

February 2011: Rumours are that China has signed a deal with the BBC to make a Chinese version of Top Gear, with speculation that China Central Television will be the broadcast platform.

March 2011: After a month of no solid news, a 15-minute "pilot episode" of Top Gear China was leaked on YouTube, turns out that Hunan TV is the platform responsible for broadcasting. The leak was reported by the CNN, the BBC and several Chinese media outlets. Due to the pilot's poor quality, there were widespread speculations of whether China can make a proper motoring show(Beissmann, 2011).

23 April 2011: Developed by Shixi Media, Top Gear China has been launched on Hunan TV every Saturday evening since 23 April 2011, hosted by Huang Zheng (singer), Cao Yunjin (comedian) and Li Rui (professional presenter), as well as Yang Li (Automotive Journalist).

27 December 2011: Top Gear China 2011 was seen as a "shoddy" version, running 30 minutes in length and in 480i (SDTV), with the hosts repeatedly

complaining about the lack of budget on the show. After 30 episodes, this program was never renewed(Sherwin, 2011).

September 2013: 2 years later, a Shanghai-based start-up company began a nationwide call for automotive talent with the goal of producing an “outstanding” automotive program, the start-up's capital came from a real estate company.

May 2014: The BBC announced that it has signed a deal with Honyee Media to produce a local version of Top Gear in China again(BBC News, 2014).

July 2014: The Production of Top Gear China 2014 started, which it had filmed across China, and leaked photos from the shoot began to appear on social media, which featuring the latest supercar: Porsche 918 Spyder, Ferrari F12Berlinetta and McLaren 650S.

13 November 2014: The first season of Top Gear China 2014 premiered on Shanghai Dragon TV at 22:00 - 23:30, categorized as a “big car lifestyle reality show”, sponsored by Red Bull China Vitamin Drink.

The show was Presented by Richie Jen (Taiwanese Singer and amateur racer), Tian Liang (Olympic gold-medalist in diving) and Cheng Lei (Dragon TV presenter). Meanwhile, as part of the promotion, Top Gear China and Top Gear UK are simultaneously available to watch on the Chinese video platform iQIYI, with a one-year copyright, but licensed from BesTV, not the BBC Studio.

21 January 2015: The first season finale of Top Gear China 2014 aired and despite the press released that called the show was "a big hit"(Ritman, 2015), the production team began to reorganize internally to prepare for the second season with a new format.

March 2015: Jeremy Clarkson was suspended by the BBC from *Top Gear* following a "fracas" with one of the show's producers, this subsequently affected the media image of the second season of Top Gear China.

19 October 2015: The premiere episode of Top Gear China 2014 Season 2 aired with a change of chief director and all the hosts except Cheng Lei. The British and Chinese teams collaborated on the filming, with the British team having a deeper control over the quality of the show.

26 October 2015: One of the most highly rated episodes of the show aired. This episode involved three presenters each spending 300,000 RMB (£33,500) on a second-hand supercar to cross the Lop Nor desert. The trio had chosen a Ferrari 360 Modena, a Porsche 911 Carrera 4 and a Mercedes-Benz SL500.

21 December 2015: Despite growing ratings and reviews, Top Gear China 2014 was cancelled after the final episode of Season 2. The Show ended with 217 million views and 11,539,308 audience interactions, although the source of the data is debatable.

4.2.1 Sino-British Differences

The filming of Top Gear China 2014 was a process of mutual understanding and exploration between the Chinese and British teams. During this time, the Chinese team learnt many skills and experiences.

"At that time in Beijing and Shanghai, no Chinese production team knew how to film Top Gear, the concept was familiar to everyone, but the production model was very unique", said Qian Wei, director in Chief of Top China 2014 season 2 during the interview.

"I joined the show in the first season when we were filming the power test session, and I found that the Chinese and British teams were not cooperate

smoothly. There was a real conflict at the creative process, so the show was far from the spirit of the original.”

At the time of working with the Chinese, the BBC Top Gear team had been filming for almost 30 years, the techniques they possessed cannot be passed on through a pdf, so the Chinese had to take their time to figure it out.

There is an overlap of competencies in each individuals of the UK team, with the executive producers, directors and writers all knowing what to do with the production, sometimes one crew member is responsible for multiple tasks.

However, the Chinese team was accustomed to a 'sea of people' approach, where all the tasks are divided into different groups of staffs, with three assistant directors under one chief director, and several camera directors under one assistant director. “Most of the time, each of them didn't know what to do outside of their own tasks”, Qian added, “just expected the rest of the crew to do their jobs properly.”

The British team can shoot two or three power tests in one day, while the Chinese team will require more people and time, but this does not mean that the Chinese team is not competent enough, they also have excellent ideas in the filming process. “The biggest difference between the Chinese and the British is that the British will coordinate and plan everything before the shoot, prepare very well in advance to finish the shoot with high efficiency and make no mistakes, while the Chinese prefer to use their brains on set and improvise.” Qian said.

“The difference is there, we have to overcome it,” Qian concluded, “But in the end, both of us didn't put down our national pride.”

4.2.2 Capital Intrusion and Force majeure

The year of 2014 was a blowout for China's reality shows, each major networks all got shows with over 100 million viewers, and they had very typical features - title sponsorship by major brands, crazy-high budgets, and star-studded lineups.

In order to compete with other networks, Shanghai Dragon TV launched Top Gear China, sponsored by Red Bull China Vitamin Drink, with a production budget of 60 million RMB (about £7 million) and a total budget of 120 million RMB (about £14 million) - even higher than the budget of BBC Top Gear's £1.5 million per episode.

The high budget did not result in a great show, instead, the sponsors and the network had more say than the production crew. Since Chinese networks at the time were often introducing reality shows from Korea, Shanghai Dragon TV thought that a filming style similar to Korean variety shows would be more appealing to viewers - so the first season of Top Gear China 2014 was requested to be filmed in a Korean style, i.e. with celebrity travel as the main focus and cars in a supporting role, sometimes the show would cut the power test segment in order to make more time for celebrity interviews.

Zhou Xiaoyu, then PR director for Red Bull sponsorship and a die-hard Top Gear fan, expressed concern after watching the pilot episode. He felt that the production crew was handicapped - "It's not Top Gear at all," Zhou said, "but there's nothing we can do to change that."

Zhou's point was that in the economic and media climate of the time, the network's decision was paramount, even though they didn't understand the appeal of Top Gear. "You have a 100 million budget show, then it exists to make sure it breaks even," Zhou said, "making it in the style of a Korean variety show will get more viewers to watch, even though it will be painful for the Top Gear fans."

For Shanghai Dragon TV, Top Gear was just one of dozens of foreign IPs they introduced in 2014, one misjudged decision wouldn't affect the network's overall ratings, but the blow to the IP itself was devastating.

However, we can't blame Shanghai Dragon TV too much either, as their decision was based on audience research. Due to the development of the internet, the TV viewing audience in China has been decreasing year after year since 2010. Top Gear China air every Monday night from 10:00 to 11:30, the majority of the viewing population is elderly people aged 60 and above.

"It was force majeure," Zhou concluded his statement, "The production, the network and the sponsors all had their own hardships." In fact, this was the last time Red Bull China has sponsored TV shows, due to a copyright dispute with Red Bull Thailand, Red Bull China has largely failed to promote itself in China in the past few years.

4.2.3 Presenter's performance and localization

Clarkson, Hammond and May are the reason why we tune in to Top Gear, and both Qian Wei and Wan Xuliang, the chief scriptwriter of Top Gear China 2014, admit that the ability of the presenters was what Top Gear China lacks the most.

The three presenters from Top Gear China are celebrities, and Chinese celebrities usually are very distant from the public, so they tend to acting too much while filming, not as approachable as the original trio, even though they're driving the same million-pound super car.

"The sole purpose of the hosts in Top Gear China is to read the scripts," Wan said, "The original Top Gear is heavily-scripted too, but the hosts are also

producers, they have the vision of the production, and can control the direction while filming. ”

“It’s a car show, the understanding about cars certainly matters,” Wan continued, “I’m not saying our hosts don’t like cars, but it takes a little more than just ‘liking cars’, you must understand automobiles inside and out, then you have the ability to make jokes, and do entertainment with them.”

In addition, Top Gear's success in the UK depends heavily on the country's long automotive history, whereas for China, where the industry got a late start, many of the popular segments in the UK version could not be effectively conveyed to Chinese audiences. Morris Marina and Reliant Robin, for example, are not well known to the Chinese.

While the British sarcastic humor can amuse some Chinese, there is no way for Chinese presenters to imitate the British humor or transfer it to the general public. Localization is the key to Top Gear, however, Top Gear China has not done much.

Conclusion

"Is BBC's Top Gear suitable for China?" - I asked this question in all four of the above interviews. Three of them thought it was unsuitable and one thought it still suits. Three to one - a surprisingly consistent answer with the 583 people who participated in the online survey.

So what I've learned from this research is that, on the surface, China has all the required elements for an outstanding motoring show - big population, leading car market, and rapid economic development. But deep inside, there are still lots of improvements to do - the localization, the production process, the media landscape, and most importantly, car culture. Therefore I choose to conclude this question with 2 answers:

1. BBC's Top Gear is suitable for China, but it takes time to wait for the construction of the Chinese car culture industry.

2. While we're waiting, the best thing to do is to make our own localized motoring show, it doesn't need crazy-high budget or to become a global phenomenon, it just need to be the motoring show for the Chinese.

During the interview with Ching Ye, the head of Top Gear subtitling group, he summarized this situation perfectly - "No other country in the world has grown its auto market in as big a leap as China has, if you asked me what would be the leading model of the market in 3 years of time, I can't give you any, it is changing fast. In this kind of environment, no foreign IPs can understand the culture well except ourselves. We need to make our own motoring show, not Top Gear China."

In fact, we are. Director Qian Wei and scriptwriter Wan Xuliang are still filming automotive shows, they are entering a new period in career as automotive influencer on Chinese social media. Many content creators on

Weibo and bilibili are producing automotive related contents. Gradually, the Chinese car cultural landscape will be much different.

At the end of the research, I have the privilege to meet Richard Hammond in person. Mr. Hammond is a busy guy, on the brief conversation we had, I told him the dissertation I'm working on, he laughed, said they had done a lot of "silly things", probably not worth researching, but I said to him - "Warmest thank you from China, you showed me that automotive culture can be a devoted career." And the spirit of Top Gear will continue to encourage me and all my fellow Chinese automotive journalists.



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Appendix

Online Survey Questionnaire

1.您的性别是什么？

1. What is your gender?

A.男 Male

B.女 Female

C.不愿透露 Prefer not to disclose

2.您的年龄是多少？

2. What is your age?

A.18 岁以下 below 18

B.18-25

C.26-35

D.35 岁以上 above 35

3.您多长时间看一次 Top Gear?

3. How often do you watch Top Gear?

A.每期不落 Every week

B.经常 Often

C.偶尔 Occasionally

D. 几乎不看 Hardly ever

4.您是如何观看 Top Gear 的？

4.How do you watch Top Gear?

A.在电视上 On TV

B.流媒体服务 On a streaming service

C.下载或 DVDDownload or DVD

D.社交账号 Social media accounts

5.您听说过 Top Gear 中国版吗？

5.Have you heard of Top Gear China?

A.听过并且看过 Heard and watched

B.听过没看过 Heard of it but never watched it

C.没听过 Never heard of it

您认为 Top Gear 中国版最欠缺的是什么？ (this question is for the people who choose A in the above question)

6.What do you think Top Gear China lacks the most?

- A.主持人的综合实力 General competence of the program host
- B.节目预算 Program Budget
- C.播出平台对幽默的接受程度 The allowance of British humor on broadcasting platforms
- D.观众群人数不够 Insufficient audience size

6.您第一次听说 Top Gear，是在怎样的情况下？

6. How did you first hear about Top Gear?

- A.电视 On TV
- B.社交媒体推荐 Social Media
- C.杂志 Magazine
- D.朋友推荐 Friend
- E.其他 Other

7.除了 BBC 的原版 Top Gear，您还听说过哪些 Top Gear 衍生版？ (Multiple choice)

7. Besides the BBC's original Top Gear, what other Top Gear spin-offs have you heard of?

- A.Top Gear 美国版 TG US
- B.Top Gear 意大利版 TG Italy
- C.Top Gear 最高档（湖南卫视）TG China 2011
- D.巅峰拍档 Top Gear（东方卫视）TG China 2014
- E.Top Gear 韩国版 TG Korea
- F.Top Gear 法国版 TG France
- G.Top Gear 俄罗斯版 TG Russia
- H.Top Gear 澳大利亚版 TG Australia

8.除了 Top Gear 之外，您还经常看哪些汽车节目？ (Multiple choice)

8. Besides Top Gear, what other car shows do you watch regularly?

- A.Fifth Gear
- B.Wheeler Dealers
- C.BestMotoring
- D.车叙 Chexu
- E.其他汽车 UP 主拍摄的节目 Other programs filmed by automotive journalists
- F.由汽车杂志策划的节目 Programs filmed by car magazines
- G.我不看其他汽车节目 I don't watch other car shows

9.在 Top Gear 三人组（Jeremy Clarkson、Richard Hammond 和 James May）离开后，您还在关注节目吗？

9. Are you still following the show after the departure of the Top Gear trio (Jeremy Clarkson, Richard Hammond and James May)?

A.还在，每集都看 Still watching every episode

B.还在，但觉得没有以前好看 Still, but I don't think it is good as before

C.不再看了 No

10.如果现在（指 2021 年）又有一档中国版 Top Gear 在进行制作，拥有与 2014 年巅峰拍档相同的预算，您认为这档节目会取得成功吗？

10. If there is another Chinese version of Top Gear in production now (meaning 2021), with the same budget as the 2014 Top Gear, do you think it will be a success?

A.会 Yes

B.不会 No

请问您怎么称呼？

What's your name?

Consent form for the interviews

One in Chinese, one in English

Mr. Qian Wei

Mr. Zhou Xiaoyu

Mr. Ching Ye

Mr. Wan Xuliang

Participant No.

X72

INFORMED CONSENT FORM:

Is BBC's Top Gear suitable for China? Why has it failed twice?

You are invited to take part in this research study for the purpose of collecting data on Top Gear and its development in China, as well as your general experience of watching Top Gear.

Before you decide to take part, you must read the accompanying Participant Information Sheet.

Please do not hesitate to ask questions if anything is unclear or if you would like more information about any aspect of this research. It is important that you feel able to take the necessary time to decide whether or not you wish to take part.

If you are happy to participate, please confirm your consent by circling YES against each of the below statements and then signing and dating the form as participant.

1	I confirm that I have read and understood the <u>Participant Information Sheet</u> for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions	☒ YES	☐ NO
2	I understand my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw my data, without giving a reason, by contacting the lead researcher and the Research Support Office <u>at any time</u> until the date specified in the Participant Information Sheet	☒ YES	☐ NO
3	I have noted down my participant number (top left of this Consent Form) which may be required by the lead researcher if I wish to withdraw from the study	☒ YES	☐ NO
4	I understand that all the information I provide will be held securely and treated confidentially	☒ YES	☐ NO
5	I am happy for the information I provide to be used (anonymously) in academic papers and other formal research outputs	☒ YES	☐ NO
6	I am happy for the interview to be <u>audio recorded</u>	☒ YES	☐ NO
7	I agree to take part in the above study	☒ YES	☐ NO

Thank you for your participation in this study. Your help is very much appreciated.

Participant's Name	Date	Signature
周晓宇	6.19	Xiaoyuzhou
Researcher	Date	Signature
陈哲然	6.19	Zheran Chen.

Consent form

Coventry
University

Participant No.

xw4

INFORMED CONSENT FORM:

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6	I am happy for the interview to be <u>audio recorded</u>	☒ YES	☐ NO
7	I agree to take part in the above study	☒ YES	☐ NO

Thank you for your participation in this study. Your help is very much appreciated.

Participant's Name	Date	Signature
万滑龙		Xulang Wan
Researcher	Date	Signature
陈哲然,		Zheran Chen.

Consent form

Coventry
University

Participant No.

QY1

INFORMED CONSENT FORM:

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7	I agree to take part in the above study	☒ YES	☐ NO

Thank you for your participation in this study. Your help is very much appreciated.

Participant's Name	Date	Signature
清野	6.20	Qing Ye
Researcher	Date	Signature
陈哲然	6.20	Zheran Chen

Consent form



Participant No.

WQ3

INFORMED CONSENT FORM:

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1	I confirm that I have read and understood the <u>Participant Information Sheet</u> for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions	☒ YES	☐ NO
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5	I am happy for the information I provide to be used (anonymously) in academic papers and other formal research outputs	☒ YES	☐ NO
6	I am happy for the interview to be <u>audio recorded</u>	☒ YES	☐ NO
7	I agree to take part in the above study	☒ YES	☐ NO

Thank you for your participation in this study. Your help is very much appreciated.

Participant's Name	Date	Signature
钱巍	6.17	Wei Qian
Researcher	Date	Signature
陈哲然	6.17	Zheran Chen.

Consent form

Coventry University

参与者编号

WQ3

知情同意书

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如果你愿意参加，请在下面的每项声明中圈出“是”，然后作为参与者在表格上签字并注明日期，以确认你的同意。

1	我确认我已阅读并理解上述研究的参与者信息表，并有机会提出问题。	☒ 是	☐ 否
2	我明白我的参与是自愿的，我可以自由地撤回我的数据，而不需要给出理由，我可以在任何时候联系首席研究员和研究支持办公室，直到参与者信息表中规定的日期。	☒ 是	☐ 否
3	我已经记下了我的参与者编号（本同意书的左上方），如果我想退出研究，主要研究人员可能会要求我提供这个编号。	☒ 是	☐ 否
4	我明白，我提供的信息将被安全地保存并得到保密。	☒ 是	☐ 否
5	我很乐意在学术论文和其他正式研究成果中使用我提供的信息（匿名）。	☒ 是	☐ 否
6	我很乐意对采访进行录音。	☒ 是	☐ 否
7	我同意参加上述研究。	☒ 是	☐ 否

感谢你参与这项研究。我们非常感谢您的帮助。

参与者的姓名	日期	签名
钱藏	6.17	钱藏
研究者的姓名	日期	签名
陈哲然	6.17	陈哲然

Consent form

Coventry University

参与者编号

QY1

知情同意书

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2	我明白我的参与是自愿的，我可以自由地撤回我的数据，而不需要给出理由，我可以在任何时候联系首席研究员和研究支持办公室，直到参与者信息表中规定的日期。	是	否
3	我已经记下了我的参与者编号（本同意书的左上方），如果我想退出研究，主要研究人员可能会要求我提供这个编号。	是	否
4	我明白，我提供的所有信息将被安全地保存并得到保密。	是	否
5	我很乐意在学术论文和其他正式研究成果中使用我提供的信息（匿名）。	是	否
6	我很乐意对采访进行录音。	是	否
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参与者的姓名	日期	签名
清野	6.20	清野
研究者的姓名	日期	签名
陈哲然	6.20	陈哲然

Consent form

Coventry
University

参与者编号

XZ2

知情同意书

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6	我很乐意对采访进行录音。	是	否
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参与者的姓名	日期	签名
周晓宇	6.19	周晓宇
研究者的姓名	日期	签名
陈哲然	6.19	陈哲然

Consent form

Coventry
University

参与者编号

XW4

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参与者的姓名	日期	签名
万滑龙	6.19	万滑龙
研究者的姓名	日期	签名
陈亚然	6.19	陈亚然

Consent form

Coventry
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