

Innovative Path of Host Role in Cultural Programmes

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Abstract: *With the development of the era of integrated media, its impact on the role of cultural programme hosts has become more and more profound. This paper analyses the reasons for the innovation of the role of the host of cultural programmes from the perspective of the aesthetic changes of the contemporary audience and the crisis of the host's weakened role; The role function of the presenter of a cultural programme is also analysed; In order to come up with a better idea of innovation, "China in the Classics" was used as an example to analyse the triple role presentation and two role innovations of the host of the programme, namely, "the host of the programme", "the contemporary reader", and "the audience of history"; Finally, three innovative ideas on the roles of moderators of cultural programmes are proposed: "interview" moderator, "blogger" moderator and "lecturer" moderator.*

Keywords: *Cultural programmes; presenters; roles; innovation; China in the Classics*

1. Introduction

With the development of the era of integrated media, the role of the host of cultural programmes has become smaller and smaller in the programme, and the power of speech has been reduced, and even the role of the host has been abolished in many programmes. As a link between the programme and the audience, and as an important carrier of the dissemination of excellent traditional Chinese culture, the host of cultural programmes holds an important responsibility and mission. In order to achieve sustainability, high quality development and better fulfilment of the responsible mission of the cultural programme presenter, it is necessary to constantly innovate the role of the cultural programme presenter under reasonable premises.

2. Reasons for innovation in the role of the presenter of cultural programmes

2.1. Audience aesthetic changes

With the advent of the era of integrated media, the number of self-media users is increasing day by day, the media content is showing a diversified development trend, and the audience's aesthetic level is also increasing. The content and form of traditional cultural programmes can no longer satisfy the majority of the audience's "appetite", the host as a cultural programme to disseminate the content of the programme "important link", but also to improve their own professional qualities, to create a personalized label at the same time for their own exploration of the new "role of the host". The cultural programme "China in the Classics", which premiered on the CCTV Comprehensive Channel in 2021, is an excellent example of innovation in the role of the presenter. In the programme, the host Bening played the role of a "contemporary reader" with the actors on stage, through such a new role, Bening naturally and deeply conveyed the content of the programme to the audience to complete the programme tasks, which won the audience and the industry unanimous praise. Therefore, in the era of integrated media, if the presenter wants to better convey the programme content to the audience, the presenter and the programme team should take the initiative to make changes, explore new roles and new ways, so as to adapt to the audience's aesthetic changes.

2.2. Role weakening crisis

In the era of integrated media, media content shows a diversified development trend. Various forms of programmes come and go, especially entertainment-oriented programmes, where the role of the host is gradually weakening. The function embodied becomes increasingly minor, and in many programmes,

the role of the host has been cancelled. For example, on November 6, 2021, the cultural dance drama programme 'Dancing Millennium', which was jointly broadcast by Henan TV and the Bilibili platform, adopted a host-free mode. According to major media platform statistics, the programme 'Dancing Millennium' has achieved over 80 million plays on the Bilibili platform, with a rating of 9.9 points. On Douban, it scores 8.8 points, and on Zhihu, 8.9 points. It has appeared in over 400+ hot searches across the internet. The total number of related short videos exceeded 1 billion, the number of pop-ups reached 337,000, and the topic's total reads on microblogs were 2.11 billion^[1]. Such excellent data proves that "Dancing Millennium" is popular among viewers and netizens, and it also proves that the absence of a host does not affect the ratings of the programme. In addition, the current variety shows will be the programme of interesting clips for secondary production released in the new media platform, in order to increase the heat and popularity of the programme, in the secondary production, the programme team will rarely appear in the host of the clip cut into the work, because in comparison, the role of the host is not as good as the guests have more points of interest, characteristics, and can not give the programme to create the effect of the viewers to drive the mood^[2]. The presenter must innovate, change and actively explore new roles that are more suitable for the presenter in such dire circumstances.

3. Role Functions of Cultural Programme Hosts

Cultural programmes are one of the important forms of disseminating Chinese outstanding traditional culture, and as a host of cultural programmes, he or she bears the professional responsibility and mission to disseminate the contents of the programmes and Chinese outstanding traditional culture. In other words, hosts of cultural programmes are important carriers of outstanding traditional Chinese culture, and play an important role in speaking well of Chinese culture, promoting cultural identity and cultural confidence.

The General Secretary stressed the need to deeply understand the importance and necessity of strengthening and improving international communication in the new situation, to make great efforts to strengthen the building of international communication capacity, to form an international discourse that matches China's comprehensive national power and international status, to create a favourable external public opinion environment for China's reform, development and stability, and to make positive contributions to the promotion of the building of a community of shared destiny for mankind. And telling a good Chinese story and spreading the excellent traditional Chinese culture are of great significance to building a discourse system of Chinese characteristics in the new era. This requires the host to have good hosting skills, but also need to really understand, learn to understand the excellent traditional Chinese culture, and be able to accurately and naturally the culture in different ways to "speak", "speak" to understand. For example, in the programme "China in the Classics", the host Sabine takes on the stage role of an actor, using the plot, lines, and body, etc. to play with the actors to convey the story of the classics in Chinese history to the audience in a vivid and natural way. Another example is the programme "The Reciter", in which the host, Dong Qing, makes use of her profound hosting skills and knowledge to share the stories of the guests and summarise the essence of Chinese culture from them, so as to spread Chinese culture widely and deeply in a meticulous way.

4. Innovative presentation of the role of the host of cultural programmes

Robert King Merton, a leading American sociologist, has stated in *Social Theory and Social Structure* that "In identified usage, multiple roles refer to a composite of many related roles"^[3]. With the development of the era of media integration, the audience's aesthetics continue to improve, the role of the host continues to weaken, at present, some cultural programmes have made the role of the host of the innovation, such as the "China in the Classics" programme host Sabine, in the programme, Sabine not only acted as a host of the role, but also acted as a "contemporary readers", "the audience of the history of the" triple role. If we want to explore the feasible path of cultural programme host role innovation, it is inevitable that we must conduct a rational analysis of the existing excellent innovative programme host role.

4.1. Presenter

The host of a cultural programme is an important link between the programme and the audience. The host conveys the programme content and cultural content to the audience, drives the audience's emotions, and further enhances the audience's experience of the programme on the basis of the

programme content. This requires the presenter to be professionally competent and to have a real understanding of the content and culture of the programme. At the same time, the host is also the overall string of the programme, the host needs to have a comprehensive understanding of the background of the programme, the links and other content, to guide the programme, coordinate the link between the rise and fall, to ensure that the programme is carried out smoothly and with high quality.

For example, in the opening speech of the host of "China in the Classics", Sabine, in the 3rd-21st episode of the programme "The Records of the Grand Historian", Sabine slowly pulls back the lamp and, in the tone of a narrator, introduces the general content of the programme, the background, and the contents of the Classics that the programme is going to present by means of an objectivity narration. In the opening scene of the History of the first act of the play, Sabine first introduces the Five Emperors Benji Huang Di character for the beginning of the play, after the performance of the first act, Sabine ends with an introduction of the characteristics of the Yellow Emperor and the impact on history, and then naturally introduces the second act of the play, the First Emperor of Qin Benji, as well as the character of the First Emperor of Qin, and then enters into the performance of the second act of the play. The host, Sabine, coordinates the sequence and flow between the plays, starting and ending, as well as driving the plot, subtly guiding the flow of the show and the audience's attention.

4.2. Contemporary Readers

The role of "Contemporary Reader" is one of the innovative examples of the role of "China in the Classics" host Sabine. On the stage, "Crossing over the past and present, dialogue with the sages" is a time-travelling theatre form, which transmits the content of the show to the audience.

For example, in an episode of The Records of the Grand Historian, "contemporary reader" Bening first talks to Yang Yun, the grandson of the Grand Historian Sima Qian, in the "field", thus leading the plot to the pavilion where Sima Qian and his disciples are arranging the Book of the Grand Historian (the Book of the Grand Historian, or the Records of the Grand Historian), and witnesses the moment when the Book of the Grand Historian has been examined and sent to the pavilion. Afterwards, Sabine begins a dialogue with Sima Qian by reciting a fragment of the Five Emperors' Book of History, to which Sima Qian questions, "The Book of the Grand Historian has not yet been released to the public, so how come you can recite it?", Sabine introduces himself as a post-2000 reader and asks, "How did you, sir, complete the magnum opus that is the Records of the Grand Historian", to which Sima Qian replies, "Since I was a child, my father has told me that the revision of history, is the mission of our Sima family." This immersive theatre experience and time-breaking plot design pulls the audience into the "ancient scene". Through the development of the plot and the genuine performances of the actors, the content of the programme and the cultural content are conveyed to the audience subconsciously.

4.3. The Audience of History

On the stage of the programme "China in the Classics", Bening plays the dual role of programme host and "contemporary reader". But in addition to hosting the programme and performing, Bening will also take the role of a bystander on stage to witness "historical moments" take place. So, Sabine has an additional role to play as a spectator of history.

For example, in the opening of the programme "China in the Classics", after introducing the relevant characters in the classics, Sabine will watch the "historical figures" introduce themselves. In addition to this, in an instalment of "History", Sabine, like the audience, witnessed the historical moment when the magnum opus "The Book of the Grand Historian" completed its survey and sent the book to the cabinet. In this scene, Sabine has no lines, but simply leads the audience in a shocked look at what's happening from the perspective of a book reader 2000 years later. This historical audience identity of Sabine not only organically adds dramatic space to the show, but also creates a sense of identity for the audience, which leads to a more immersive entry into the theatre content, the cultural content, and increases the audience's sense of engagement and raises their goodwill towards the show.

5. Innovative Paths for the Role of Cultural Programme Hosts

As the process of fusion media industry gradually matures, there are more and more users of major media platforms, and more and more user-generated content is becoming more and more fancy. The consequent diversification of media content, combined with the increasing technological sophistication of the media, has led to an increase in the aesthetics of programmes for the general public. At the same

time, the role of the host is facing a weakening crisis: the power of speech continues to decrease, and functionality is gradually weakening. Many programmes now use non-professional hosts, such as actors or programme directors, to carry out the hosting duties. There is even an emerging phenomenon of programmes cancelling the role of the host entirely. Therefore, innovation in the role of the presenter is something that needs to be explored in order to achieve longevity for the presenter.

5.1. "Interview" style moderators

At present, we know that there are several forms of cultural programmes, lecture-type cultural programmes such as "The Hundred Schools of Lecture", drama film and television-type cultural programmes such as "China in the Classics", and reality TV-type cultural programmes such as "National Treasure" and so on. But few interview-style cultural programmes appear in the public eye, different forms of programmes, their hosts also play different roles and play different functions, and interview-style cultural programmes hosts are equally rare, but also one of the paths we can think about innovation.

Interview-style cultural programme hosts, unlike other existing cultural programmes that are lecture-style and drama-style, the hosts act as both the presenter and actor in the programme roles of the programme. Interview host is to the role of the visitor and the programme guests to conduct interviews, such as in cultural programmes, interview hosts need for the main content of the programme, and specific relevant guests to conduct in-depth interviews, with the way to talk about the content of the programme to "get to the bottom of the matter" for the dissemination of culture, the programme guests can be selected for a single cultural heritage, a single cultural researcher and other culturally relevant role of the study. The interview host's control of the programme and his words and actions will affect the programme's interest and watchability, especially the cultural programmes in the form of interviews, so in the process of interviews, the interview host should maintain cultural rigor, orthodoxy and seriousness, but also through humorous and interesting interview language, relaxed and natural interview attitude to improve the programme's watchability and interest, so as to attract the audience and increase the programme's popularity, which is a great test for the host's professionalism and hosting skills. Through the "grounded" chatting hosts of interview-style programmes, viewers will naturally let go of their stereotypical impression of cultural programmes as "highbrow", thus eliminating the viewers' sense of cultural alienation.

Interview-style cultural programme hosts, in the "chat" hosting at the same time, need to pay attention to the cultural content of the rigorous, orthodox, etc., can be humorous, funny, but should avoid frivolous, pan-entertainment and other factors detrimental to the development of culture, so as to avoid adverse effects on the image of culture.

5.2. "Blogger" style moderators

On 22 March 2024, China Internet Network Information Center (CNNIC) released the 53rd Statistical Report on the Development Status of the Internet in China in Beijing, which showed that as of December 2023, the number of Internet users in China reached 1.092 billion, with 24.8 million new users added compared to December 2022, and the Internet penetration rate reached 77.5%. According to the statistics of Douyin, a representative media platform, as of 13 July 2024 the topic of "#Traditional Culture" had a total of 20,275,000 participations and 295.39 billion plays, and the topic of "#Intangible Cultural Heritage" had a total of 1,434,000 participations and 39.44 billion plays. 14.334 million people participated and 39.44 billion times played. Such an impressive data performance and the size of the overall number of Internet users proves the popularity of cultural content on media platforms and the optimistic room for cultural presenters to play on media platforms. Hosts of cultural programmes can actively embrace traffic by disseminating culture as "bloggers" on media platforms.

Vlog-style blogging is one of the forms that cultural programme hosts can experiment with. Firstly, the presenter can set multiple roles for himself in the video, such as a tourist, an enthusiast, and so on. Take tourists as an example, the host according to the programme presented in the cultural content for their own set of filming locations, can be taken in places related to cultural content, such as cultural origins, museums, etc., which not only increases the programme can be watched but also for the content of the programme to add a dash of credibility, to be the programme hot more can be filmed for the programme to bring the good effect of cultural tourism. Secondly, as the host of cultural programmes has positive, serious and traditional role characteristics, when he or she appears on the media platform in the role of a Vlog blogger, he or she will give viewers a sense of contrast, and the

programme will be more likely to gain traffic, and if the host's language style in the programme is more humorous, it will be even more popular with the public. Finally, cultural programme hosts appearing in the network as Vloggers should design their own personal IP labels, thus increasing their own attention and programme popularity.

At the same time, the content of the new media platform has the characteristics of changeability and transience, the programme team needs to pay attention to the platform content trends, and constantly innovate the programme and the host, so as to maintain the heat of the programme.

5.3. "Docent" facilitators

With the explosion of cultural tourism, many local museums have become "important destinations" for tourists, and the slogan "For a museum, go to a city" has become popular on the Internet. Museums have not only become a popular tourist destination, but also become a "traffic pool", and "accurate traffic pool". Cultural programmes and cultural programme hosts should collaborate with museums to seize this opportunity and platform. This also provides role innovation options for cultural programme presenters.

Cultural programmes can move the stage into museums and design programme content for the artefacts in the museums for cultural dissemination. The host of the cultural programme in the programme will become a "lecturer" role, for the cultural content and connotation of cultural relics to explain. In the museum's porcelain area, various styles of porcelain from different dynasties are exhibited. Each piece has a story related to its dynasty, and every style has its own design rationale and connotations. A 'narrator' type presenter can explain these details, enhancing the audience's and tourists' understanding of Chinese history and culture. At the same time, the fact that a presenter appearing in a television set actually enters a museum as a docent not only serves as a trigger for the initial marketing of the programme, but also improves the public's impression of, and recognition of, the presenter's role.

During the filming of the programme, there may be too many tourists, but the programme team and the museum should not drive away the tourists or restrict the flow of tourists. The "narrator"-style hosts are intended to cater to the tourists and the audience, but the programme team and the museum should manage the order of the tourists so as to avoid safety problems and disruptions to the filming and production of the programme.

6. Conclusions

Under the background of new media, the hosts of cultural variety programmes are facing the crisis of the audience's increasing aesthetic level and the gradual weakening of their roles. Not only do cultural variety programmes need to be innovative, but so must the cultural programme hosts themselves. For example, the host of "China in the Classics", Sabine, is a typical case of successful innovation in the role of cultural programmes. However, in view of the rapid changes in the media environment, in order to achieve sustainable development and high-quality development of the role of the host of cultural programmes, the role of the host also needs to continue to innovate, so as to improve the role of the host of cultural programmes in the "shelf life", but also for cultural programmes to bring a stronger effect and visibility of the programme, a better dissemination of the excellent traditional Chinese culture, to improve the country's soft power of culture, to improve the national cultural self-confidence, and to achieve the sustainability of the host of cultural programmes, high-quality development.

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