

# Exploring the response to "de-hosting" from the perspective of integrated media

**Tian Peiqi**

*College of Biological and Environment, Zhejiang Shuren University, Hangzhou, China  
18258859772@163.com*

**Abstract:** *With the advent of the era of integrated media, variety and news programs have been "de-hosting" to varying degrees. The article explores "de-hosting" and finds that objective causes of "de-hosting" are "apparent de-hosting", not really "de-hosting". At the same time, through in-depth analysis of the underlying causes of "de-hosting" in various contexts, it is encouraged for hosts to adopt a positive attitude towards "de-hosting," and strategies for self-improvement, co-creation of programs, and "IP-based" transformation are proposed in order to provide reference countermeasures for hosts in the current situation of "de-hosting."*

**Keywords:** *Integrated Media Vision; De-Hosting; Apparent De-Hosting; Solution*

## 1. Introduction

With the development of radio and television programs, the hosts have always had a pivotal role in the program. Specifically speaking, the program is a bridge for the host to deliver information, and the host is the "soul" of the program. The host control the rhythm, pace, and tone of the program, and even affect the program's ratings as well. However, in recent years, there has been a "de-hosting" of many programs. The host no longer seems to be the center of the program, and some programs don't even have a "host". The present stage of the host's dilemma needs to be urgently broken.

## 2. Conceptual explanations

### 2.1. What is "de-hosting"

To understand what "de-hosting" means, we should first define what a "host" is. In the "General Theory of Programmers", it is explained that: A program host is in a specific program situation of a mass communication campaign, communicative behavior with real personal and conversational speech, and who leads, facilitates, and reflects the intent of the program through direct and equal communication<sup>[1]</sup>. On the one hand, "host" can be understood as an identity, title or designation, and as a group of people who possess this skill, such as host Dong Qing, host Sa Bening. In another sense, the term "host" can also refer to a type of role in a program that serves as a host.

Similarly, "de-hosting" can be discussed from these two perspectives. It also can be understood from the point of view of the host's identity as: The phenomenon of identity dilution in the program as a result of the host's shifting identity or invisibility; Understanding from the perspective of the host's function: Functional fade caused by reduced frequency, time, and space of host appearances<sup>[2]</sup>. In this paper, de-hosting caused by objective reasons is called "apparent de-hosting", which is not true de-hosting.

### 2.2. Apparent de-hosting

Apparent de-hosting as the name suggests, only appears to de-hosting. But in essence, hosts are still needed on the program. Taking crossover hosts as an example, it is not difficult to realize that the program still needs someone to take up the position of "host", but just who is going to take up the position? And what makes crossover hosts the hosts of choice for these types of programs?

While professional host have the advantage of a voice look and standard pronunciation, crossover host often have some qualities that professional host do not have. Coupled with the fact that audiences

have an unknown expectation of a crossover host, they want to see what kind of surprises that crossover host will bring to them. The educational variety show "The Strongest Brain" invited Jiang Changjian, a professor at Fudan University, as the host, who is wise, elegant and cultured as the nature of the program, which makes him the best choice for the host of "The Strongest Brain". Comedy variety show "Joyful Comedians", music variety show "Sound into the hearts of the people", street dance variety show "Hot Blood Street Dance", etc., have also invited crossover hosts. These types of programs are all variety shows, but they are divided into different categories within variety shows. Examples include comedy, music, etc., which narrows down the qualifying scope of the category. It means that the program has added a "specialty-specific" component. However, the traditional host does not have the corresponding professional background, they could not show the excitement of the program better, resulting in the professional host of the "apparent de-hosting".

### **3. "De-hosting" - exploring its origins**

#### **3.1. Objective reasons for the "apparent de-hosting"**

##### **3.1.1. The program setting leads to a reduction in the "role" of the host**

In recent years, there have been a variety of reality TV shows, in which the phenomenon of "de-hosting" has emerged. For example, in the variety show "Running men", the main characters of the program are several regular and temporary guests. It is not a particular presenter who is responsible for stringing the session together, but the director (the voice-over or X-man) who guides to the next session by issuing tasks. Although there is no "host" on the program, but the host's function of "moving the program along" has been replaced by the director (the voice-over or X-man). Then we can recognize the director (the voice-over or the X-man) as the host who is not in front of the camera.

Another example is the Hunan TV variety show "Escape Room", the program consists of several celebrities as regular guests to challenge a theme of escape room every period. The flow of the program advances as the guests continue to successfully navigate through the levels, with the occasional voice-over or "the man in black" appearing to deliver the "intelligence" needed to navigate the levels. There is no "host" on the program. The program featured an off-camera voice (or the man in black) for a certain number of episodes, which we can likewise regard as a host not appearing on camera; And the other installments that didn't even feature an off-screen voice (or the man in black) come down to that same due to the flow of the show's setup. Plus, the point of the program itself is the interesting performance of the guests in the game, so there is no need to add an additional "host" position. Therefore, neither of the above two programs can be interpreted as a complete "de-hosting", but rather as an "apparent de-hosting". Due to the innovation of the program format and the setting of the program flow, the frequency and duration of the host's appearance, as well as the need to add segments, have decreased.

##### **3.1.2. Transformation of the host's identity**

In the past, program hosts only conducted tandem segments and some simple interactions during the program. For example, the host of the CCTV Central Station "Variety Show", "Zhengda Variety Show" and "Qu Yuan Miscellany" seldom participate in the performances<sup>[3]</sup>. Hunan TV Country Life Variety Show "The Desired Life". In this program, regular guests He jiong and Huang Lei play the role of "mushroom house owners" to entertain the temporary celebrity guests. There is no "host" in the program, but in fact the role of host falls to each of the regular guests. They come in to tweak the schedule and "move the show along." For example, after dinner, He would organize games, chores or talent shows for everyone. In this program, He Jiong, Huang Lei, and other fixed guests are both hosts and they ensure the continuity and completeness of the program. The seeming absence of a host in "The Desired Life" is actually due to a shift in the host's identity, which leads to the "apparent de-hosting".

Then there is the Hunan TV variety show "Star Detective", featuring Sa Beining and He jiong. Also in the program, there is no host role, but the roles of "Detective" and "Detective Assistant" are set up in each episode. The two assumed the function of hosts as they guide the rest of the guests on the program in searching for evidence, discussing and voting. At the end of the program, Sa and other guests will all summarize, sublimating the theme of the program and reflecting the intent of the program. It's obviously that the guests on this show function in a diverse way, as a collection of roles such as host and actor. This form of hosting is more life-like, natural, and flexible, breaking the audience's understanding of the traditional host's hosting style<sup>[4]</sup>.

The "apparent de-hosting" caused by such objective reasons is not that the host is no longer needed. But reflects that various programs are constantly innovating and developing in the rapidly changing media environment, and audiences have greater choice in selecting program types.

### **3.2. The underlying reasons for "de-hosting"**

#### **3.2.1. From Virtual Hosts to AI Hosts**

A virtual host is using digital technology to create and designed to the professional standards of a live host. Images of simulated human beings sufficient to interact with users through digital media such as radio, television and the Internet. In 2001, Tianjin TV's "Science and Technology Weekly" featured China's earliest virtual host - "Yan Dongfang", which was dubbed later and hosted the program together with a real host. In 2004, the head office of the film channel, the launch of the virtual host "Xiao Long", the use of post-dubbing synthesized voice, independently hosted the "Light and Film Weekly". The virtual host can convey information for us, but it is always a three-dimensional animation, and the styling, expression and movement can not comparable to a real host.

As AI technology develops further, In 2020, Xinhua News Agency and Sogou launched the world's first 3D version of the AI synthesized anchor "Xin Xiaowei". Although it's not a real person, its facial expressions and movements are closer to those of a real person than those of the virtual hosts above. During the Spring Festival in 2024, AI host people Xiaoyu and Xiaoyu independently hosted the Hangzhou news broadcast, with expressions, movements and demeanor almost indistinguishable from real people, and even imitating the tone of voice of real people.

It is obvious that from the initial rough 3D animation to the AI digital human that resembles a real person, from the stiff and mechanical reading of news to the reporting with a human tone added, although AI digital hosts do not have human brain thinking, to some extent, they have already been able to replace some hosts who only know how to introduce and are unwilling to think.

#### **3.2.2. Audience aesthetic enhancement**

"Next up, please enjoy ....." "Next one is that....." It's an old-fashioned opening line for traditional hosts. While there have been many changes and advances in the way hosts on the program crosstalk in recent years, the nature of the program is still skewed towards simple crosstalk. In the kaleidoscopic age of multimedia and rapidly evolving technology, audiences expect to see "more than that" from host. Sa Beining, host of the cultural variety show "China in the Canon", transforms into a scholar who travels through the millennia to talk to the sages. Incorporating the host's role as part of the program's content is innovative and something new that audiences want to see. So in the progress of time, the traditional announcer is stuck in the past.

During a local station's Spring Festival Gala in 2018, one of the hosts was mouthing off about a sponsor and made a slip of the tongue by broadcasting it as a competing party, so you can imagine how serious the consequences were. Luckily, a battle-hardened host saved the day in time to recoup that loss and help the slurring host. Today, in the era of fusion media, the audience's attention is already distracted by various new media platforms, which is a blow to traditional media. Against this backdrop, it is clear that if one lacks the ability to even correctly and clearly broadcast the sponsor's name, one will not be able to capture the hearts and minds of the audience, much less those of the producers. Hosts with poor stage improvisation and a lack of business skills will eventually be abandoned by the times and the audience.

## **4. Strategies for responding**

"De-hosting" is a positive feedback from the audience, environment and era to the host during the historical development of the media, a positive feedback from the communication environment to the communicator, and a transitional state of the media in the process of development. Times have evolved and the needs of the audience have naturally changed with them. However, in essence, due to the "mouthpiece" nature of the host, there will not be a complete "de-hosting" of the phenomenon. At the same time, different media organizations need a voice of their own, and the presenter is the "mouthpiece" as well as the best carrier of this "voice". Hosts do not have to worry too much, and can not give up, but should actively face the status quo, in line with the changing times, and look for new strategies in a timely manner.

#### **4.1. Keeping up with the times and upgrading oneself is fundamental**

"De-hosting" is the choice of the times, so host should also keep up with the pace of the times. Host should have the appropriate business skills, but also need to strengthen their overall ability to shape. CCTV's Zhu Guangquan's "If the earth doesn't explode, we won't take a vacation; if the universe doesn't restart, we won't take a break" has successfully made its way out of the circle. What behind his catchy and rhyming lines in the program is his profound literary knowledge. The best lines from the past in the program are not made overnight, but are accumulated over time and over many years.

In December 2023, Sa Beining, host of the program "Open Talk", interviewed guest Academician Wang Zhizhen. Near the end of the program, Sa Beining found an extra piece of black foreign matter on the stage, he picked it up and found that it was actually the sole of Academician Wang's shoe, and said: "We used to think it was a myth when we heard about a scientist who had seven identical outfits because he didn't want to waste his time picking them out every day," Sa Beining again raised the remains of his shoe in his hand "It's true." In the face of unexpected events on the stage, Sa not only relieved Academician Wang with a high level of emotional intelligence, but also let the audience feel that "this pair of broken shoes is the most cutting-edge fashion in the scientific circle; and this kind of indifference that doesn't care about material enjoyment is what scientists should be." Sa fully sublimated the main idea of the program, and the audience was deeply impressed by this ability to improvise and be highly emotional.

Nowadays, the competition for hosts is getting tougher and tougher, and the "de-hosting" of host is further developing. Both the knowledge base and the ability to improvise make new demands on the host. At the moment, hosts improve themselves and solidify their fundamentals in order to better hold the microphone in their hands.

#### **4.2. Join the Program as a Co-Creator**

"De-hosting" requires hosts to have more skills, and hosts have to take the initiative to transform and upgrade themselves by joining programs as co-creators in more diverse capacities. In 2017, CCTV's host Dong Qing made her debut as a producer creating the cultural variety show *The Reader*. The program invites different guests to "read" their own stories, which is in line with the program's slogan of "reading to move people's hearts". After the broadcast of the program, it set off a wave of "reading", large or small reading booths appeared in the campus in the streets and lanes. What we see outside the reading booths are readers with books, and what is left inside the booths are moving and beautiful stories. When Dong Qing was interviewed about the reason for the explosion of *The Reader*, she said: "My summary is that it takes two 'determination', the determination to make it and the determination to make it a masterpiece." Dong Qing has her own "determination", sticking to her own heart and letting the audience see her heart.

In 2020, CCTV launched the variety show *Clothing China*. The program focuses on the traditional Chinese art of dress and explores the aesthetic spirit behind it. As the host, this is the first time that Li Sisi has taken on the role of producer for the program. In the third of these installments, Li invited Zhang Haopu, a veteran, to tell a moving story about his collection of more than 500 sets of military uniforms. Li has said that she initially thought that most of the show's audience would be women, but she stumbled upon the museum's military uniforms and thought she could do a show presenting the beauty of prima donnas. By integrating her own thoughts into the program, Li Sisi presents the program in a more diversified way to the audience and shows them that hosts can not only shine in front of the stage, but also have a new world behind the scenes.

We encourage hosts to participate in all preparatory aspects of the program, to gain a deeper understanding of the content of the program, to dig out more information points, and to truly integrate themselves into the program, not only to do a good job of the program, but also to do a best job of the program.

#### **4.3. Try a new approach to transformation - "IP-ization"**

In recent years, CCTV has created a number of hosts IP, such as "national team hosts", "CCTV BOYS", "CCTV paragraph player" and so on. Host IP-ization can be understood as tagging and personalizing them to improve the recognition of the host. Both talented and interesting in one CCTV's host Sa Beining said in a live event, responding to his partner's topic of college bailing out of Peking University, that: "At that time, I was too young to speak out of turn and mention guaranteed admission

to Peking University, so I must clarify this, Not only is undergraduate school guaranteed, but graduate school is also guaranteed."These unexpected words instantly ignited the atmosphere of the live broadcast. "CCTV's raper" Zhu Guangquan since "the earth does not explode, we do not take a vacation" as if turning on the "rhyme switch" is more frequent golden sentences. For example, when talking about temperature changes, he said: "by the influence of cold air, China from north to south to open the 'freezing mode'. It's freezing and painting rainbows on your cheeks as your face goes green and purple and white. And all you can do is dig out your fall coat and pants and put down over it." These rhymes are fun and get the message across correctly. Although it sometimes makes the sign language host sweat in a hurry, it shows the audience that the news can be broadcast this way. And audiences realize that the cultural heritage of the CCTV hosts, successfully stabilized in the minds of them "CCTV's raper" this IP.

Pan Rong, the host of Zhejiang TV, shared a series of stories of the host before and after the stage on social media platforms. For example, the Countdown to Broadcast series is a series of short videos about the host's impromptu responses to various "special circumstances" encountered in the minutes leading up to the start of a live broadcast. Although it may be slightly exaggerated, it is this form of comedy that allows viewers to see a different side of the news anchor and fully closes the distance with the audience.

Whether it's Sa Beining "Beida is Just so so", Zhu Guangquan "CCTV's raper", or Pan Rong "Countdown", they have accurately disseminated information through IP-based forms and received more attention from viewers.

## 5. Conclusions

In today's era of integrated media, instantaneous changes. When confronted with the phenomenon of "de-hosting", analyze the real meaning behind it and understand that "apparent de-hosting" is not the real one. Positively face the real "de-hosting". Dissatisfied with the status quo, we should follow the pace of the times, improve ourselves in time, join in the creation of programs, "IP-ize" ourselves, and look for measures to face the challenge of "de-hosting".

## References

- [1] Ying, T. C. (2013). *A General Theory of Program Hosts*. Wuhan: Wuhan University Press.
- [2] Kong, L. S. & Wang, M. Y. (2020). *Generalization and Dilution: The Transformation of TV Entertainment Program Hosts*. *Modern Communication (Journal of Communication University of China)* (06), 85-89.
- [3] Wang, H. (2019). *Development and Challenges of China's TV Variety Art*. *China Journal of Radio and Television* (07), 128-130.
- [4] Wang, S.Y. (2017). *Analysis of the "De-hosting" Hosting Form of Reality TV Programs--Taking "The Desired Life" as an Example*. *Communication and Copyright* (06), 87-89.