

Role Positioning and Innovation Path of Cultural Program Hosts

Li Muci

*Broadcasting and Hosting, Soochow University, Suzhou, China
18970076202@163.com*

Abstract: *The role of the host in cultural programs is continuously evolving and is of significant importance. This essay explores the role positioning and innovation pathways for hosts of cultural programs, examining their multiple roles, including content linkage, narrative participation, and cultural dissemination. Hosts can achieve personal growth by pursuing innovative approaches—such as enhancing cultural literacy, increasing the use of media technology, and strengthening emotional identity. These innovations not only drive program development but also improve the effectiveness of cultural program dissemination.*

Keywords: *cultural program, host, role, innovation*

1. Introduction

China's five thousand years of culture are rich and enduring. As a crucial element of media communication, cultural programs aim to spread culture and foster cultural understanding. They play a vital role in transmitting and preserving traditional culture, enhancing the cultural literacy of the audience, and promoting cultural exchanges. Traditional culture has been revitalized through diverse forms of expression and new technological means. As the soul and core of these programs, the role and innovation pathways of cultural program hosts are essential to the quality and impact of the programs. This essay examines the role positioning and innovation pathways of cultural program hosts, aiming to enhance the quality of cultural programs and promote cultural exchange and dissemination.

2. The development of the role of the host of cultural programs

2.1. Role in linking the flow of the program

Early cultural programs in Chinese television history began in the early 21st century, such as CCTV10's "The Lecture Room," which premiered in 2001. Initially, the program relied heavily on the self-presentation of experts and scholars using a "one table, one person, one microphone" format. This setup emphasized a formal, academic atmosphere with a podium, audience, and other traditional elements, creating a strong sense of classroom ritual and intellectual gravitas. While this format effectively highlighted the programs' educational and cultural functions, it neglected the entertainment aspect. As a result, the role of the presenter was primarily confined to linking segments.

This format inadvertently placed cultural programs of the time in a one-way output model with limited content variety. Reflecting on this period, the roles of cultural program hosts were relatively superficial, and their impact within the programs was minimal. The programs lacked interactivity, failing to establish an effective communication bridge with the audience. Consequently, early cultural programs had a narrow audience base, primarily appealing to viewers with specific educational backgrounds and cultural interests. To make cultural programs both "meaningful" and "interesting," the role of the presenter becomes crucial, offering new guidelines for the development of cultural presenters.

2.2. Role in presenting cultural knowledge

Since the 18th CPC National Congress, a series of measures to revitalize the cultural industry have been implemented, guiding the creation of audiovisual programs. In this context, numerous knowledge competition programs focused on traditional culture have emerged, such as "Heroes of Chinese Characters," "Chinese Character Dictation Conference," "Chinese Poetry Conference," "Chinese Riddle

Conference," and "Chinese Idioms Conference."^[1] These programs combine culture and competition to showcase the charm of culture through contests, meeting the audience's dual demand for cultural knowledge and entertainment. However, these programs also place higher demands on hosts. At this stage, cultural program hosts are no longer limited to merely connecting segments; they must also energize the atmosphere, convey the program's concept to the audience, actively promote traditional culture, and disseminate knowledge throughout the entire program.

In the "Chinese Poetry Congress," the host introduces the theme of each episode through poetry recitation. For instance, at the opening of the "2023 Chinese Poetry Congress," host Long Yang began the program by reciting Wang Anshi's "YuanRi," which illustrated themes of new joy, new dreams, and new hopes. Similarly, in the "Chinese Character Dictation Conference," hosts not only read out the rules and procedures but also announce the contestants' words and provide necessary explanations. In one episode, when the host announced the words "comb and grate" and a contestant inquired if "grate" referred to a barber's tool, the host was responsible for clarifying the term. Such explanations during the competition help participants and spectators better understand the content. Introducing culturally knowledgeable hosts has revitalized these programs. Hosts now need not only deeper cultural literacy but also the ability to adapt flexibly to changing roles within the program. They must be authoritative while establishing excellent interactive relationships with the audience to enhance the program's immersion and enjoyment.

2.3. The role of interpreting cultural stories

A series of initiatives by the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China on the inheritance and promotion of outstanding traditional Chinese culture has ignited a powerful engine for the creative transformation and innovative development of Chinese culture across society. Against this cultural backdrop, exceptional cultural programs such as "China in Classic," "National Treasure," and "China in the Story" have emerged and become significant means of disseminating culture and building cultural confidence. These cultural programs innovate the narrative transmission of traditional Chinese culture through scenographic interpretation, thus revitalizing China's classical heritage. For example, by employing a "drama + culture" production model, these programs transform ancient Chinese texts into compelling cultural resources with a solid narrative identity. Each episode focuses on one of the most influential classical works, interpreting the stories behind these texts through dialogues between the ancient and modern worlds, thereby bringing the classics to life and making them relevant to contemporary audiences.

Hosts in the program assume dual roles: they act as "players in the theater," guiding the audience through an immersive narrative experience, and as "contemporary individuals," encouraging viewers to connect with the reality of traditional culture. This dual approach helps to promote the core values of the national spirit embedded in the program.^[1] Hosts of these cultural programs are expected not only to possess solid professional skills and deep cultural knowledge but also to have a certain degree of performance ability. The roles of the hosts are becoming more diversified; for instance, in "China in the Canon," hosts interpret canonical stories from the perspective of "contemporary readers," interacting with historical figures across periods. This situational interpretation style enhances the audience's sense of immersion and engagement, allowing them to experience the charm of traditional culture in a lively and captivating manner.

3. Role positioning of cultural program hosts

In today's hosting communication activities, relying on a single role is no longer sufficient to meet the demands of the times. To align with the new era of hosting communication patterns, the role of the host has diversified. By adopting multiple roles, the host can create a more varied program format and enrich the content, thereby attracting more viewers, enhancing the program's appeal, and improving the effectiveness of cultural communication. In "China in Classics," host Sa Beining has embraced multiple roles, providing the audience with a rich, engaging audio-visual experience. This multifaceted approach is a crucial reason for the program's high acclaim. This paper will specifically analyze Sa Beining's varied roles in "China in Classics."

3.1. Connecting with the audience and integrating program content

In cultural programs, one of the most fundamental and crucial roles of the host is to connect the

content and communicate with the audience. The host must identify their position with the characteristics of the program and, through personalized expression, effectively convey the core content and values to the audience while establishing a solid interactive relationship. In the opening of "China in Classics," Sa Beining employs objective narration to introduce the theme of each episode. Throughout the program, he uses subtle language to link the content of different segments, thereby guiding the direction of the program. For instance, in the third installment of "China in Classics," which focused on the "Records of the Grand Historian," five classic works were discussed. Sa Beining quoted original passages from the canon to briefly introduce the various stories, creating a cohesive narrative and establishing effective communication with the audience. In conclusion, the role of hosts in cultural programs as "communicators with the audience and content connectors" demands not only a high level of professionalism and cultural literacy but also creativity and adaptability. Hosts must continually explore new methods and means of expression to provide the audience with an enhanced viewing experience.

3.2. Connecting the past and presenting as participants in the narrative

The first episode of "China in Classics" centers on the theme of the "Shangshu" and tells the story of the "Book Protectors," represented by Fusheng of the Qin Dynasty. In this episode, Sa Beining, a "contemporary scholar," engages in a dialogue across time and space with Ni Dahong, who portrays the ancient scholar Fusheng. This dramatization presents the audience with a narrative that "connects the ancient and the modern." The host is not just a passive observer but an active participant in the narrative. The program also features a crucial character, the contemporary reader, who plays a significant role in bringing the ancient text into the modern era. When Fusheng asks the contemporary reader, "What impact did the book have on later generations?" the contemporary reader responds, "Sir, I'll show you."

This approach elevates the entire program, allowing ancient figures to experience the modern world and witness the impact of their contributions on contemporary society. It also serves as a reminder to modern audiences of the importance of cultural self-confidence and the need to preserve and promote these great classics. This form of construction not only helps the audience grasp the profound ideas within the canon but also enhances their emotional connection with traditional Chinese culture through resonant storytelling.

3.3. Appreciating the arts and being a purveyor of culture

The seventh installment of "China in Classics" focuses on the "Chu Ci." During the episode, Qu Yuan asks Sa Beining, "I heard you mention the Orange Ode. Have you ever read it?" Sa Beining responds, "The Emperor's heaven and earth gave birth to this wonderful orange tree. These trees, adapted to the southern soil and water, are endowed with heaven's order, remaining forever rooted in the land of Chu. Although Mr. Qu writes about the orange tree, he conveys to the world the importance of loving one's homeland." Hosts who delve into the canonical meaning and appreciation of such texts can integrate these elements organically into cultural variety shows. This innovative approach to cultural communication enhances the connection between China's television and media culture industry and global cultural interactions. It promotes the development and growth of China's cultural industry while helping to establish a new pattern in the diverse and complex cultural landscape of the modern era.^[2]

Hosts of cultural programs need to possess a deep cultural heritage and a keen appreciation of art, enabling them to accurately convey the spiritual essence of canonical texts while interpreting and appreciating these texts from an artistic perspective. They should not only have solid professional knowledge but also excellent language skills and the ability to interact effectively with guests and the audience. For example, in the program, Sa Beining asked Wang Luoyong, the actor portraying Qu Yuan, "Mr. Wang, I understand that you have spent a long time in Wuhan, and children in Hubei may have a unique emotional connection to the 'Chu Ci' and Qu Yuan." This intimate question prompted the actor to offer a deeper interpretation of Qu Yuan, creating a program atmosphere rich in cultural heritage yet maintaining a personal touch.

In "China in Classics," Sa Beining inspires the audience to appreciate and embrace Chinese culture by narrating the stories of canonical books and interpreting their deeper meanings. As a custodian of culture, his efforts and dedication have facilitated the transmission and development of the cultural essence embedded in these canonical texts.

4. Innovative path of cultural program hosts

4.1. Investing in cultural literacy

Cultural programs' audiences often have a higher level of cultural awareness and set higher standards for the quality of radio and television programs.^[3] As purveyors of culture, hosts of cultural programs must have exceptional cultural literacy. They need a thorough understanding of the cultural background, historical origins, and artistic values related to the content of their programs, and they should continually enrich their own cultural knowledge through study and reading.

In the country's popular cultural programs, exceptional hosts such as Dong Qing, Long Yang, and Sa Beining exemplify deep cultural literacy. Dong Qing, for example, has shared her reading habits in interviews. She has been an avid reader since childhood, particularly of Chinese and foreign literary masterpieces. These reading experiences have not only broadened her knowledge base but also enhanced her literary skills and language expression. Additionally, Dong Qing studied TV Choreography and Direction at the Shanghai Theatre Academy and pursued a Master's Degree in Chinese Language and Literature at East China Normal University. This extensive professional knowledge allows her to incorporate relevant examples, allusions, and quotations into her hosting, enriching the cultural depth of her programs. Despite her significant success in the hosting field, she continues to pursue learning.

Strong cultural literacy is crucial for hosts. They need to persist in their learning, engage with excellent literature, deepen their understanding of historical and cultural knowledge, and cultivate their artistic sensibilities. This ongoing development helps them add highlights to their programs and inject vitality into their presentations.

4.2. Increased use of media technology

The continuous advancement and application of media technology have significantly enhanced the audiovisual effects of cultural programs, introduced more diverse forms and experiences, and spurred innovation. Effective use of media technology allows programs to present more vivid and three-dimensional content, increasing interactivity and entertainment, while digital production processes make production more efficient.

For instance, "National Treasure" exemplifies how media technology can innovate program formats and enhance audience experience. The program leverages new media technology, virtual reality, and artificial intelligence to create an engaging experience. Viewers can participate in real-time voting and share content on social platforms through mobile apps, which boosts interactivity with the program. Additionally, the program employs holographic projection technology to showcase cultural relics and ancient historical scenes. For example, "Qingming Riverside Drawing" is presented through holographic projection, allowing the audience to experience the dynamic Northern Song Dynasty cityscape and daily life, immersing guests and viewers in the historical charm of the National Treasure.

The application of AI technology in the CCTV Spring Festival Gala offers valuable insights and models for cultural programs. For instance, in the program "Mountains and Rivers Poetry Chang'an," AI technology was used to "resurrect" Li Bai, allowing him to recite "Qiang Jin Jiu" alongside tens of thousands of people. In another segment, "Nian Jin," virtual synthesis technology was employed to combine four actors dressed in costumes from different dynasties, synchronizing their hand movements with the symbolic patterns of each dynasty. This showcased the depth of millennium-long cultural heritage. Through media technology, hosts of cultural programs can present content in a more multi-dimensional and dynamic manner, enhancing the efficiency and quality of communication. This represents a significant path for innovation in the field of cultural program hosting.

4.3. Strengthening emotional identity building

The far-reaching influence of the mobile Internet and the impact of an atomized society have, on the one hand, caused individuals to experience identity dilemmas and value nihilism in an information-overloaded, "burnout society." On the other hand, this environment has heightened the importance of reinforcing emotional identity to stimulate empathy and alleviate identity anxiety in media communication.^[1] In today's era, it is crucial for programs to provide viewers with emotional value. Positive emotional value can enhance an individual's well-being and help them better cope with challenges and pressures, whereas negative emotional value may lead to psychological problems and emotional imbalance. Thus, emotional value plays a crucial role in an individual's mental health and

quality of life. The concept of emotional value often discussed today focuses on positive emotional value, which is the ability to evoke good feelings and elicit positive emotions.

Today, TV programs are no longer a one-way output process; hosts need to genuinely listen to and understand the audience's emotional needs so that each viewer can experience warmth and resonance. This involves not only hosting the program but also conveying the emotional power behind each story. Hosts can enhance their emotional connection with the audience through personalized language expression. In "China in the Story," for instance, the host uses engaging language to tell Chinese stories, allowing the audience to feel a deep sense of pride in their heritage while gaining an understanding of the culture. Innovative interaction forms also play a crucial role in strengthening emotional identity. Hosts can leverage new media platforms, such as social media and live broadcasting, to interact with the audience in real-time, listen to their opinions and suggestions, and make them feel valued and involved. This interaction not only increases the program's appeal but also deepens the emotional bond between the host and the audience.

5. Conclusion

Cultural programs emphasize the characteristics of Chinese culture, which has a long history and great depth. This focus supports the inheritance and promotion of excellent traditional culture, enhances people's sense of cultural identity and self-confidence, and strengthens national cohesion and centripetal force. This paper discusses the role positioning and innovation paths for cultural program hosts. In terms of role positioning, cultural hosts should fulfill multiple roles: content linker, narrative participant, and cultural communicator. By improving their professionalism, hosts can achieve high-quality communication of cultural programs. Regarding innovation paths, the first step is to strengthen the host's cultural literacy. The second is to increase the use of media technology, and the third is to enhance the construction of emotional identity. It is hoped that future cultural hosts will clearly identify their roles, continuously improve their own quality, adapt to the changing times, and innovate program formats to achieve high-quality dissemination of cultural programs and address the audience's growing cultural needs.

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