

Research on the Role Functions and Communication Strategies of Cultural Programme Hosts in the Context of Media Integration

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ABSTRACT

With the acceleration of media convergence, cultural programs have become a vital vehicle for preserving China's outstanding traditional culture and promoting mainstream values. This paper focuses on the role functions and communication strategies of presenters in cultural programs. Employing case study methodology, it examines representative programs such as *China in the Classics*, *The Chinese Poetry Competition*, and *The Readers* to systematically explore the core functions and practical approaches of presenters within a media convergence environment. In response to the opportunities and challenges presented by media convergence, presenters must enhance their communication effectiveness through strategies such as deepening content, innovating formats, reconstructing discourse, and extending their roles. This paper further proposes an optimised approach involving collaborative efforts between presenters, production teams and platforms, thereby providing theoretical reference for innovation in cultural dissemination.

KEYWORDS

Media convergence; Cultural programs; Host; Communication strategy

1 Introduction

The emergence of the concept of cultural confidence and the resurgence of traditional Chinese culture have positioned cultural programs as highly effective channels for telling China's stories and constructing cultural memory. From the poetry craze ignited by *The Chinese Poetry Competition* to the cultural heritage boom spearheaded by *National Treasure*, and on to the cinematic expression pioneered by *China in the Classics*, cultural programs have achieved innovation through innovative formats. Throughout this process, the host, as the program's central figure, plays an irreplaceable role in guiding viewers' understanding of the content, bridging cultural divides, and innovating cultural expression ^[1].

Media convergence has profoundly reshaped the communication ecosystem, while also imposing new demands on the pathways of communication delivery. The traditional host model of the media era is gradually being replaced by omni-media professionals. Sai Beining's dual role in *China in the Classics* as both programme director and embodiment of the "contemporary scholar" demonstrates a profound transformation in the host's role. Similarly, Zhu Guangquan's cross-disciplinary approach in *Urban Charm Record*, blending journalistic rigour with internet slang, signals a significant shift in how presenters are positioned ^[2]. Hosts are no longer confined to being mere conveyors of information; they must now become multi-dimensional interpreters of culture. This presents entirely new challenges for both professional expertise and communication strategies.

This study primarily employs case analysis and textual analysis, selecting cultural programs with significant influence in recent years as samples. By deconstructing the role practices of presenters within these programs, it distils communication strategies suited to the converged media context. Simultaneously, drawing upon communication studies theory, we conduct an in-depth analysis of the functional positioning and innovative pathways for hosts.

2 An analysis of the core role functions of cultural programme hosts

2.1 The "translators" and "interpreters" of cultural information

Cultural programs frequently deal with substantial amounts of highly specialized knowledge that presents significant barriers to comprehension. Hosts must translate profound cultural concepts into accessible language, thereby bridging the gap between expertise and the general public. In *China in the Classics*, host Wang Jianing employs idioms such as "Leather Thongs Binding Wooden Strips Break Three Times" to vividly illustrate the formation and evolution of the *Book of Changes*. Through expert interviews, he translates specialized archaeological discoveries—such as the silk manuscripts from the Mawangdui Han tombs—into accessible historical narratives for the audience. This capacity for knowledge transformation manifests not only at the linguistic level, but also demands that hosts grasp the cultural essence to achieve cognitive-level "decoding" and "re-encoding".

The interpretative function demands that hosts transcend superficial knowledge transmission to delve deeply into

cultural connotations and spiritual values. Dong Qing's poetic interpretation in *The Reader*, centred on the theme of 'encounter': 'When cold meets warmth, rain is born; when spring meets winter, the passage of time unfolds; when heaven meets earth, eternity is born; when person meets person, life is born' —transforms abstract philosophical concepts into tangible emotional resonance^[3]. Similarly, in *China in the Classics*, Sa Beining, embodying the role of a "contemporary scholar", traverses time to converse with Fu Sheng, thereby rendering the spirit of safeguarding classical texts tangible as a profoundly moving force of character.

Against the backdrop of evolving media technologies, presenters are transitioning from monolingual interpretation towards multimodal symbol transformation. For instance, in *Chinese Archaeology Assembly*, host Wang Duanduan employs XR technology to utilise virtual archaeological settings as a 'translation interface', converting stratigraphic sections and artefact motifs into dynamic three-dimensional models to achieve immersive knowledge decoding. Within the international communication sphere, hosts must also serve as cultural decoders. When comparing Eastern and Western painting traditions on CCTV's *Encountering Civilizations*, host Ren Luyu interpreted the Chinese painting aesthetic of "negative space" as "the poetry of space", while drawing parallels with Western oil painting's principles of perspective. This approach effectively dismantled cross-cultural cognitive barriers to a significant degree.

2.2 "The "guide" and "architect" of the cultural arena

Through meticulous process management and thoughtful topic steering, the host crafts a cultural space imbued with a sense of ceremony, transforming the audience from passive recipients into active participants. In *National Treasure*, Zhang Guoli serves both as host and "Guide No. 001". His opening line – "We are a young programme. How young, you ask? Well, we're about five thousand years young" – not only defines the show's positioning but also builds cultural identity through ritualised expression. In *China in the Classics*, Sa Beining employs close-up shots to immerse viewers in historical contexts, creating an immersive cultural experience.

The construction of the cultural space is also reflected in the host's balancing of the depth and breadth of the discussion. Lin Nian champions the concept of "slow dialogue" in cultural interview programs. By extending camera dwell times and allowing breathing space for speech, he elevates the craft demonstrations of intangible cultural heritage practitioners beyond mere performance, transforming them into profound expressions of cultural substance. In *Behind the Headlines* with Wen Tao, the host assumes the role of a "cultural traveller", sparking intellectual exchanges through impromptu conversations with guests to jointly construct an open and inclusive cultural space for shared understanding.

For Gen Z audiences, the program pioneered an innovative participatory format. In *Dance Through the Ages*, the host assumed the role of "Dance Ambassador", guiding viewers through a triple-layered experience of narrative, dance and real-time interactive comments. This enabled the audience to immerse themselves in cultural identity within the virtual Tang Dynasty marketplace. Such practices validate French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu's "field theory": presenters innovate narrative approaches within the field of cultural communication, thereby reconfiguring the rules governing cultural production.

2.3 The "guardians" and "transmitters" of cultural values

In the face of the wave of entertainment-driven content, presenters must uphold cultural authenticity and ethical standards, promoting China's outstanding traditional culture amidst the collision of diverse cultures. Zhang Guoli's declaration in *National Treasure* to "guard history and safeguard Chinese civilization" not only conveys the historical value of cultural relics but also awakens viewers' sense of belonging to their cultural roots. Bai Yansong's interpretation of 'hometown' in *The Reader* — "it's the place you longed to leave every day in your youth, yet yearn to return to daily as you grow older" — elevates homesickness into a shared cultural memory.

The host also shoulders the social responsibility of promoting cultural literacy and aesthetic education. In *China Poetry Competition*, the host and team of scholars jointly explored the imagery and connotations of lines such as "Where we part, old roads lie," subtly enhancing viewers' aesthetic appreciation and cultural confidence.

In the face of cultural misinterpretations, presenters bear the responsibility of correcting misguided perceptions. During the program *The Forbidden City*, Wang Xudong, Director of the Palace Museum, addressed the issue of historical inaccuracies in Qing dynasty palace dramas. Drawing upon tangible evidence from artefacts, he emphasised that "the creation of historical dramas must uphold the fundamental cultural integrity of the narrative."

2.4 A "bridge" and "catalyst" for cultural interaction

In the era of media convergence, presenters must bridge the gap between experts and the general public, facilitating the two-way flow of cultural resources. Wang Jianing demonstrated keen critical awareness during the interview segment of *China in the Classics*. By posing the question, 'Does the *The Book of History*'s abundance of firsts prove the wisdom of

selecting it as the inaugural episode?', he guided Professor Meng Man into an in-depth exploration of the philological significance and cultural symbolism of the character “典”. This approach not only satisfied the audience's thirst for knowledge but also broadened the program's intellectual horizons.

The host also serves as a bridge for cultural dissemination both online and offline, catalyzing public discourse on cultural topics. The role of “cultural innovation product developer” in Upped new,old palace enabled Deng Lun and Zhou Yiwei not only to explore the stories behind artifacts, but also to bring Palace Museum culture into everyday life through cultural and creative products, realizing the concept of “bringing the Palace Museum home”. The program *I Am the Presenter: Sharing Anhui's Story with the World* sees contestants conducting field visits to explore Huizhou culture and producing distinctive short films. This transforms the presenters from mere contestants into ambassadors for local culture, driving the regional culture beyond its traditional boundaries to reach wider audiences ^[4].

The second season of *China in the Classics* incorporated audience demand mapping analysis, with host Wang Jianing adjusting interview angles based on real-time data feedback. For instance, targeting younger viewers, the programme highlighted “The Wisdom of Interpersonal Relationships in *The Book of Rites*”, achieving precise delivery of knowledge. In the realm of “culture plus technology”, host catalyse the reconstruction of cultural universes. In CCTV's special program *Fantastic Creatures of the Mountains and Seas*, hosts transformed into primordial mythical beasts through motion capture technology, enabling audiences to participate in the reconstruction of civilization within virtual spaces. This pioneers a new paradigm for participatory cultural heritage transmission.

3 Communication strategies for cultural program hosts in the context of media convergence

3.1 Content deepening: from “broad culture” to “deep culture”

In the face of a fragmented communication landscape, presenters must enhance their professional expertise to become specialists within specific cultural domains. Prior to hosting *Urban Charm Record*, Zhu Guangquan conducted in-depth research into the historical context of Fuzhou's Three Lanes and Seven Alleys, enabling him to distil profound cultural significance when detailing architectural features ^[5]. Lin Nian spent a week studying relevant techniques in advance of interviewing intangible cultural heritage practitioners, even personally experiencing the weaving process. This thorough preparation enabled her dialogue to transcend superficial interviews, delving into the cultural DNA underlying the craft.

Storytelling and the exploration of detail are key pathways to deepening content dissemination. In *The Reader*, Dong Qing employs a narrative framework centred on “one person, one passage” to organically interweave guests' personal experiences with classic texts. For instance, the story of Wuhan liver disease patient Tiantian recounting how “Wu Mengchao gave her a second lease on life” lends a contemporary interpretation to the traditional value of “the physician's compassionate heart”. The documentary *I Repair the national treasures* focuses on the daily details of artefact conservators who dedicate their entire lives to a single craft, transforming the concept of “craftsmanship” into a tangible value that resonates with younger audiences. AIGC effectively supports knowledge graph construction. The presenter of Zuo Zongtang's *Recapture of Xinjiang* utilized AI to organize cross-disciplinary knowledge on late Qing military systems and frontier policies. When narrating the Battle of Ili, they accurately linked geopolitics with ethnic relations, lending greater systematic coherence to the historical narrative.

3.2 Form innovation: multi-screen interaction and immersive experiences

Media convergence provides presenters with diverse technological means to expand the boundaries of communication. The program *China in the Classics* employs AR panoramic studio technology, achieving innovative applications such as multi-angle screen 3D stitching and infrared tracking within a 12-square-metre stage space. This enables the realistic presentation of Sa Beining's ‘time-travel’ scenes ^[6]. This technological empowerment not only heightens visual impact but also transforms abstract historical contexts into cultural spaces offering immersive experiences.

To adapt to the trend of fragmented communication, presenters must distil cultural highlights to achieve cross-platform dissemination. In program *Urban Charm Record*, Zhu Guangquan distilled Fuzhou's cultural essence into the pithy phrase “three mountains, two pagodas, one river” – a short video soundbite perfectly tailored for mobile dissemination. Upped new,old palace has created charming short videos centred around the imperial cat Luban, using youth-oriented symbols to lower cultural accessibility barriers. Related cultural and creative products have sparked a wave of check-ins across social media platforms. Henan TV's “*Qingming Mysteries*” program has launched “plot blind boxes”, where viewers scan cultural and creative products to unlock bonus short dramas, achieving “consumption as dissemination”.

3.3 Discourse reconstruction: balancing approachability and professionalism

In the context of media convergence, presenters must abandon didacticism and foster dialogue. Zhu Guangquan masterfully blends the rigour of news broadcasting with the creativity of internet slang. When introducing Fuzhou fish balls, he quipped, “You’ll either be woken by hunger or by the aroma of fish balls,” preserving the professionalism of cultural interpretation while enhancing the appeal of his delivery. In the program *China in the Classics*, Sa Beining engages with experts and scholars in a conversational style, rendering profound texts such as the *Book of Changes* accessible to a wider audience. The museum is very busy have transformed five millennia of history into an “endless-style comedy”. The host employs playful terminology like “SSR-grade artefacts” and “uncheon clearing” to narrate the archaeological process, with bullet-screen interactions reaching unprecedented levels.

Personalized expression has become pivotal for presenters in shaping cultural brands. Dong Qing’s intellectually warm delivery in *The Reader*, Long Yang’s dignified and commanding style in *Chinese Poetry Competition*, and Dou Wentao’s signature blend of “unconstrained philosophical musings” in *Behind the Headlines* with Wen Tao all exemplify this approach. This differentiated approach aligns with the program ethos while catering to niche audience requirements, liberating cultural dissemination from uniformity. Nostalgia in *Memory* pioneers a new narrative for the silver generation by inviting elderly viewers to record ‘audio postcards’ in their local dialects, generating personalized audio archives via cloud technology.

3.4 Character extension: cross-screen communication and community management

Hosts must transcend the traditional constraints of programme time and space, extending cultural influence through social media. During the broadcast of *The Reader*, Dong Qing shared a “Reading Guide” via Weibo, analyzing textual contexts and guiding audiences towards deeper engagement with the material; programme guests also amplified the discourse’s reach through online interactions. Contestants from the program *I Am the Host: Sharing Anhui with the World* have released hand-drawn short videos showcasing Huizhou architecture on tiktok, transforming the professional competition content into a cultural topic accessible to the general public.

Building cultural communities serves as a vital pathway for presenters to achieve sustained outreach. Lin Nian has gathered cultural enthusiasts through online reading groups, regularly recommending books and facilitating themed discussions, thereby transforming the program’s influence from one-way dissemination into multi-dimensional interaction. The program *China in the Classics* has partnered with universities to establish an online community for shared reading of classical texts. As its initiator, Sa Beining regularly participates in thematic discussions to deepen the dissemination of these canonical works among young audiences.

4 Real-world challenges and optimization pathways

4.1 The principal challenges faced

The primary challenge lies in striking a balance between cultural depth and mass appeal. Some programs excessively simplify cultural substance in pursuit of ratings, testing hosts’ professional judgement in preserving cultural integrity through accessible presentation. The adaptive pressures brought about by technological iteration are equally significant. Emerging technologies such as AR/VR and AI virtual presenters demand that hosts rapidly master operational skills and narrative logic, placing heightened demands on their spatial imagination and technical adaptability. The disparity in media usage habits between older and younger audiences further complicates cross-platform communication.

The risks of commercialization and entertainment-driven erosion are becoming increasingly apparent. While cultural and creative development expands avenues for cultural dissemination, an excessive pursuit of sales figures risks reducing program to mere “merchandising platforms”, thereby undermining cultural integrity. This may cause cultural program to lose their spiritual core. The pressure to continuously enhance professional competence remains equally severe. As cultural topics grow increasingly diverse, hosts must continually update their knowledge base. The interdisciplinary knowledge covered in *Urban Charm Record*, encompassing urban planning and intangible cultural heritage crafts, necessitates systematic study.

4.2 Optimization pathways and development recommendations

Hosts must cultivate a commitment to lifelong learning and deep cultural engagement. Zhu Guangquan’s cross-disciplinary success stems from his relentless expansion of cultural horizons, never confining himself to the realm of news broadcasting. At the same time, hosts should remain true to their cultural ethos, such as the sense of conviction established by Sa Beining in *China in the Classics*, ensuring that performance elements serve the cultural authenticity. At

the programme production level, systematic support should be provided to presenters. Firstly, establishing a professional think tank: The Reader engaged a team of literary consultants to furnish presenters with contextual materials, ensuring interpretative accuracy. Secondly, innovating programme formats: China in the Classics' dramatic + cinematic approach provided presenters with diverse expressive avenues. Thirdly, implementing a scientific evaluation system: This avoids prioritizing viewership metrics alone, fostering a professional growth environment for presenters.

Platforms and society must establish a collaborative support network. Firstly, strengthen professional training systems by inviting practitioners to deliver lectures. Secondly, foster a media environment that values depth of analysis; Zhejiang TV's "Z-Media" platform created a dedicated cultural interpretation section for the program but poetry and distance, encouraging profound reflection. Thirdly, refine policy support mechanisms; the National Radio and Television Administration's "Chinese Culture Broadcasting and Television Dissemination Project" provides funding for high-quality program, alleviating commercial pressures.

5 Conclusions

The wave of media convergence has profoundly reshaped the role and functionalities of cultural programme presenters, along with their dissemination strategies. Research indicates that hosts must fulfil multiple core functions: The "Translators" and "Interpreters" of Cultural Information, The "Guide" and "Architect" of the Cultural Arena, The "Guardians" and "Transmitters" of Cultural Values, a "bridge" and "catalyst" for cultural interaction. These functions, while relatively independent, mutually reinforce one another, collectively forming the anchor points of the presenter's value within cultural dissemination.

Faced with challenges such as technological iteration, audience segmentation, and the wave of entertainment-driven content, outstanding presenters are exploring breakthrough strategies through deepening content development, innovating formats, reconstructing discourse, and extending their roles. Sa Beining's portrayal of conviction, Zhu Guangquan's blend of seriousness and entertainment, Dong Qing's poetic interpretations, and Lin Nian's practice of slow dialogue all exemplify a return to and innovation in the essence of cultural dissemination. These explorations collectively point to a central proposition: authentic cultural dissemination lies not in novel forms, but in evoking shared values among audiences through professional expertise and humanistic sensibility.

The future development of cultural programme presenters requires sustained exploration across three dimensions: at the individual level, presenters should remain true to their cultural ethos, balancing specialized and broad knowledge structures through continuous learning; At the dissemination level, the principle that 'technology serves humanity' must be deepened, preventing immersive experiences from devolving into mere technological showmanship; At the societal level, platforms, production houses and policymakers should collaboratively build support systems enabling presenters to shed traffic anxiety and focus on unearthing cultural value. Only in this way can presenters truly become pioneers illuminating the path of cultural heritage, safeguarding the spiritual flame of Chinese civilisation amidst the tide of media convergence.

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