

An Analysis of Development Strategies for Hosting Styles in Variety Shows in the Era of Converged Media

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ABSTRACT

Within the diverse landscape of television variety programming, the distinct categories, communication objectives, and audience characteristics of various programme types confer uniquely tailored roles upon presenters. An accomplished presenter possesses a diverse range of linguistic artistry, with some employing witty and clever eloquence to create a light-hearted and enjoyable atmosphere; Some people inspire audiences and stir their passions with impassioned language; Some individuals, with incisive and distinctive insights, directly address societal issues, prompting audiences to engage in thoughtful reflection. In summary, a presenter who can distinctly shape their personal hosting style is better equipped to master the rhythm of variety programmes. This article aims to explore the foundational elements of constructing a TV variety presenter's stylistic positioning, delving into how they discover a suitable style that suits them, thereby assisting presenters in clearly defining and establishing their individual hosting style.

KEYWORDS

Converged media era; Variety shows; Professional competence

1 Introduction

In the era of integrated media, the innovation of television variety programmes in China has advanced with the swiftness of a sudden storm. Programme design increasingly focuses on delivering leisure and entertainment, precisely capturing the public's need to release stress amidst the fast-paced rhythms of modern life. No longer confined to traditional didactic formats, the programme centres on entertainment to enhance its appeal. The introduction of interactive elements—such as real-time comments and live connections—has forged a bond that deepens the intimacy between viewers and the show, creating a more profound emotional connection between the two. Online variety programmes have demonstrated a particularly astute understanding of audience psychology, enabling the hosts' personas and presenting styles to be personalised and tailored. They have skilfully identified a positioning that resonates emotionally with viewers. Variety programmes are undergoing unprecedented transformation and innovation. This shift is not only evident in content formats but has also brought about profound changes in the role and presenting style of hosts.

2 Communication Characteristics of Variety shows in the Converged Media Era

2.1 Multi-platform Dissemination

Previous variety programmes presented a one-way mode of communication, with audiences adopting a passive role in reception. However, upon entering the converged media environment, variety programme production teams must confront the challenges posed by multiple platforms. This signifies that variety programmes will no longer be confined to television broadcasts, but will instead be disseminated simultaneously across various media channels, including online video platforms and social media. This cross-platform dissemination strategy has significantly broadened the audience reach, enabling the influence of variety shows to grow exponentially. For instance, some programmes can incorporate on-demand functionality on their websites while simultaneously broadcasting live ^[1]. Additionally, the programme team could actively utilise social media platforms such as Weibo and Douyin to produce well-crafted short videos and behind-the-scenes footage to attract younger audiences. Such multi-dimensional and diversified dissemination methods not only enhance the programme's visibility but also effectively cater to the viewing preferences of diverse audiences, thereby maximising the programme's social impact.

2.2 Enhanced Interactivity

Viewers have evolved from passive recipients of information into active participants in programme creation through multiple channels. For instance, bullet comments provide an opportunity for immediate feedback, enabling audiences to express their opinions while engaging in real-time interaction with variety show hosts, thereby fostering a dynamic, interactive community. Moreover, numerous variety shows have incorporated online voting mechanisms, granting viewers the power to choose and directly influence programme outcomes. This unprecedented level of audience participation significantly heightens viewers' sense of immersion and bolsters their loyalty. Interactive engagement is also woven into the programme's preliminary planning. Some variety shows are actively incorporating audience ideas and inviting them

to participate in programme development, transforming viewers from mere spectators into content creators^[2]. This initiative not only stimulated the creative thinking of the audience and enriched the programme's content, but also significantly boosted its popularity by aligning more closely with viewers' preferences and expectations. This approach breaks down the barriers between the audience and the variety show, forging a closer symbiotic relationship between the two.

2.3 Personalised Customisation

By leveraging data-driven insights, variety show production teams can precisely discern the unique preferences and focal points of diverse audiences, thereby tailoring bespoke solutions for them. For instance, production teams could create imaginative programmes tailored to the fashion-conscious younger generation, incorporating elements of popular culture and style. For middle-aged and elderly viewers who favour tradition and value quality of life, the production team has placed emphasis on historical culture and wellness. Personalisation extends beyond the content planning of programmes, encompassing adjustments to presentation methods, broadcasting strategies, and other aspects. For instance, certain video platforms hosting variety shows may recommend relevant entertainment programmes or highlights to users based on their viewing history and personalised settings. This intelligent push mechanism enhances the immersive viewing experience for users while broadening the audience reach, thereby achieving the dual objectives of increasing viewer satisfaction and amplifying the programme's influence.

3 Evolutionary Trends in the Hosting Styles of Variety Shows in the Converged Media era

3.1 Individualisation and Diversity

In the era of traditional media, constrained by factors such as communication technology, the presenting style of variety shows tended to be rather uniform, primarily aiming for "dignified composure" and "steady propriety" while lacking distinctive personal flair. In the era of converged media, an overwhelming volume of information fills the audience's field of vision, rendering a single presenter style insufficient to capture viewers' attention. Audiences, particularly younger viewers, are increasingly focused on personal experiences, seeking programmes that offer distinctive styles to evoke a profound emotional resonance. Therefore, in the context of converged media, presenters of variety shows must break free from traditional mindsets and boldly showcase their individuality and style. For instance, in the programme *Stories of China* broadcast by China Media Group, presenter Wang Jianing has adopted a style distinct from his previous work. She is no longer merely a programme presenter, but engages with guests and viewers in a more approachable and lively manner, showcasing her humorous and intelligent side. In the cultural variety programme *National Treasures*, host Zhang Guoli has won the hearts of viewers with his profound knowledge and witty, humorous style of delivery. In today's new media landscape, the role of the presenter has evolved from being a mere programme executor to one that involves deeper participation in the planning and production of programmes^[3]. For instance, in the programme *Classic Poetry Recital*, Sa Beining not only served as host but also personally participated in the creative planning of the show, adding more personalised flair and innovative elements to the programme. Given the distinct positioning of different programme genres, the requirements for presenters also exhibit diverse characteristics: for instance, competitive shows typically call for enthusiastic and energetic hosts, whereas interview programmes favour those who are composed, reserved, and adept at listening. This trend towards diversity has breathed new life into variety shows and provided presenters with a broader platform to showcase their talents.

3.2 Enhanced Interactivity

Within the broader context of the converged media era, the style of variety show hosts is undergoing profound transformation and development. Accompanied by rapid technological advances, the integration of traditional and emerging media has established unprecedented interactive bridges and platforms between programme hosts and audiences. This interactive model has evolved from a one-way information output to a multidimensional and instantaneous two-way communication format. Presenters must possess more comprehensive professional skills and expertise to navigate the ever-evolving media landscape. They must not only enhance their verbal expression and communication skills, but also master various new media tools and platforms such as Weibo, Douyin, and online livestreaming, in order to establish a close connection with their audience. For instance, in the recently acclaimed variety programme *The Band's Summer*, host Ma Dong utilised platforms such as Weibo and Douyin to share preview clips and behind-the-scenes footage, successfully attracting significant audience attention and generating widespread discussion^[4]. Moreover, during the live broadcast segment, he utilised streaming software to engage in real-time interaction with viewers, addressing their queries and responding to comments. This approach not only enhances the programme's entertainment value and sense of participation but also allows viewers to become more deeply immersed in the broadcast. Presenters must not only deliver strong performances on television but also monitor online interactions in real time, seamlessly integrating these contributions into the live broadcast as appropriate. Concurrently, presenters must possess enhanced data analysis capabilities, enabling them to monitor audience feedback and interaction metrics in real time. This allows for timely adjustments to programme content and presenting style, thereby meeting viewers' demands

and preferences. In the era of converged media, the hosting style of variety shows is evolving towards greater openness, interactivity, flexibility and diversity. Presenters are no longer mere conveyors of information but have become the central hub connecting the programme, the audience and various media platforms.

3.3 Balancing Professionalism and Entertainment

Against the backdrop of the integrated media era, the hosting styles of variety shows are evolving towards greater diversity, professionalism and depth. With societal progress and technological advancement, the public's cultural literacy continues to rise, placing higher demands on variety programming. Audiences no longer seek entertainment value alone, but increasingly value the cultural significance and value orientation embodied within programmes. Against this backdrop, the role of variety show hosts has also been evolving, transforming from mere 'mood setters' into 'knowledge disseminators' and 'value guides'. Against this backdrop, the role of variety show hosts has also been evolving, transforming from mere 'mood setters' into 'knowledge disseminators' and 'value guides'. For instance, in the cultural programme *National Treasures*, presenter Zhang Guoli must not only possess a solid grounding in historical and cultural knowledge, but also be able to convey this knowledge to the audience in a vivid and engaging manner. For instance, in the popular science programme *The Genius*, host Zhu Guangquan must not only manage the on-stage atmosphere but also possess a deep understanding of cutting-edge technologies such as artificial intelligence and machine learning. This enables him to accurately interpret expert opinions and translate complex scientific concepts into language accessible to the general public. Moreover, in today's era of social media prevalence, presenters must also possess cross-platform operational capabilities. This trend not only raises the professional bar for hosts but also places greater societal responsibilities upon variety programmes beyond mere entertainment—such as disseminating knowledge, promoting culture, and guiding values. In the era of integrated media, the hosting style of variety shows is evolving towards greater professionalism, depth, and diversity, balancing expertise with entertainment. This not only meets the audience's increasingly sophisticated cultural demands but also lays a solid foundation for the long-term development of variety programming.

4 Development Strategies for the Hosting Styles of Variety Show Presenters in the Converged Media Era

4.1 Strengthening the Cultivation of Professional Skills

In the rapidly evolving landscape of new media, the role of variety show hosts has undergone significant transformation. With demands for diverse competencies growing ever more stringent, the cultivation of professional expertise remains an indispensable foundation. For future variety show hosts, it is essential to build upon traditional skills while continually broadening and deepening their professional expertise. First and foremost, as a presenter, the most fundamental broadcasting skill is one that requires diligent practice to achieve fluency, accuracy and appeal. Take Dong Qing as an example: the fluent delivery and precise pronunciation she demonstrated while hosting *The Reader* left a profound impression on audiences. This was the result of her long-term dedication and accumulated expertise. Moreover, in the fast-paced and highly interactive environment of live variety shows, the presenter's ability to think on their feet is absolutely crucial^[5]. To enhance on-the-spot improvisation skills in variety shows, relevant training should be prioritised, with practice conducted through simulated live scenarios to improve presenters' adaptability and flexibility. For instance, the programme "Challenge the Impossible" on China Central Television tests the presenters' adaptability and verbal expression through intricate set designs and highly demanding challenges. During the programme, the presenter must not only commentate on the contestants' performances but also respond promptly to interactions with the audience and guests, demonstrating exceptional command of language. Furthermore, mastering the programme's pacing is crucial not only for its overall effectiveness but also for the visual impact of the entire show. To ensure the programme flows smoothly and naturally, the presenter must possess a keen sense of rhythm. For instance, the popular variety show "Avenue of Stars" has accumulated extensive experience in pacing control. As the programme's host, Nigemati adeptly manages the timing of each segment, ensuring every guest's performance and commentary receives appropriate airtime. This not only enriches the programme's format but also allows viewers to enjoy the show in a relaxed and pleasant atmosphere. In the converged media environment, presenters must proactively acquire skills in converged media technology and communication knowledge, familiarising themselves with the characteristics of various emerging platforms and audience psychology to better navigate the rapidly evolving media landscape. For instance, Huang Xiaoming, host of *Riding the Wind 2024*, not only showcases his presenting talents on traditional television platforms but also actively adapts to various new media platforms. He showcased his humorous and down-to-earth side on short-video platforms; in live-streaming sessions, he demonstrated quick-wittedness and the ability to engage with viewers; on social media, presenters have bridged the gap with audiences by sharing behind-the-scenes stories and personal reflections. This multifaceted approach embodies the new demands placed upon presenters in the era of integrated media.

4.2 Focus on Personal Branding

Crafting an outstanding personal brand not only enhances a presenter's market value and appeal but also provides a broad platform for their career development. The core strategy lies in establishing a distinctive personal brand and style.

Variety show hosts must gain a deep understanding of their own characteristics and strengths in order to cultivate a unique personal brand. For instance, He Jiong has won the affection of a vast audience through his high emotional intelligence, wit and humour, and approachable nature, and has played a significant role in several high-rated variety shows. Through a profound understanding of his own qualities and relentless refinement, he has developed a distinctive presenting style. Social platforms such as Weibo, WeChat and Douyin have established a more direct and interactive communication bridge between presenters and their audiences. This format not only deepens fan loyalty but also provides presenters with valuable insights and creative inspiration. The renowned CCTV presenter Sa Beining serves as an excellent example of sharing personal reflections and daily life on Weibo. This practice not only showcases his intellect and humanistic sensibilities but also strengthens the emotional bond with his audience. Such interactions not only strengthen fan loyalty but also provide them with valuable insights and innovative inspiration. Therefore, presenters should continually enhance their professional capabilities and knowledge base to ensure a competitive edge within the industry. Presenters of variety programmes must pay particular attention to ensuring the quality and coherence of the show, maintaining their distinctive style while remaining adaptable to shifts in audience interests and demands. Moreover, building a personal brand is an ongoing endeavour that requires sustained effort and commitment.

4.3 Expanding Cross-media Capabilities

Enhancing cross-media literacy has progressively become a crucial factor in driving the development of the hosting industry. As leaders in contemporary variety programming, hosts must not only demonstrate exceptional presenting skills across traditional television channels but also excel on conventional broadcast platforms while swiftly adapting to and utilising diverse new digital platforms^[6]. For instance, on live streaming platforms, presenters must possess strong real-time interaction skills, capable of swiftly responding to audience comments and questions to maintain the programme's pace and interactive atmosphere. On short-form video platforms, presenters must convey core messages within limited timeframes while possessing the visual appeal to captivate audiences. For instance, Qi Sijun launched a series of behind-the-scenes clips from *Sisters Who Make Waves* on short-form video platforms. Each video, lasting just one to two minutes, proved concise, vivid and engaging, swiftly amassing a substantial following. The compression of such content and the enhancement of its visual appeal enable presenters to garner significant attention on short-form video platforms. Moreover, presenters must gain a thorough understanding of the characteristics of different platforms and user preferences in order to deliver personalised presentations and services. For instance, Shen Mengchen maintains a consistent personal style and content positioning across multiple platforms such as Douyin and Xiaohongshu. Whether appearing on television programmes, live-streaming online, or engaging with short-video platforms, she consistently demonstrates distinctive personal charm and professional expertise. This unified image cultivation enables her to achieve high recognition and influence across diverse platforms.

5 Conclusion

Overall, the rise of converged media has presented new demands and challenges for the stylistic evolution of variety show hosts. Presenters must maintain their professional standards while adapting flexibly to the transformations brought about by converged media. Enhancing communication and interaction, showcasing distinctive personalities, integrating professionalism with engaging content, and embodying diverse forms of expression are the key pathways through which they seek to define and advance their presenting styles in the new era. Moreover, capitalising on trends such as the decentralised landscape, cross-sector integration, and digital transformation is also an inevitable choice for enhancing the development and cultivation of presenters' styles. Only in this way can one make a name for oneself in the competitive arena of integrated media and create more appealing and valuable variety programmes.

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