

An Analysis of the Role and Qualities of Presenters in Cultural and Tourism Variety Shows

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ABSTRACT

In recent years, the integration of culture and tourism has emerged as a pivotal direction for cultural dissemination and industrial development, ushering in a golden age of flourishing cultural tourism variety programmes. As the central narrative hub of such shows, presenters must not only shoulder multifaceted roles but also possess comprehensive, high-calibre core competencies. This paper examines cultural and tourism variety programmes broadcast by China Central Television (CCTV), including The Grand Variety Show, 100 Places to Visit in This Lifetime, Extraordinary Journey, Hello, Good Times, and Joy of Travel. Through case analysis and logical structuring, it systematically explores the multifaceted role positioning of presenters in such programmes, identifies the core competencies they should possess, and proposes strategies for enhancing these competencies.

KEYWORDS

Cultural and tourism variety programmes; Presenters; Roles and competencies

1 Introduction

The integrated development of culture and tourism represents a strategic approach to preserving, promoting and passing on China's outstanding traditional culture through the organic fusion of cultural elements with tourism platforms, thereby achieving economic transformation and upgrading alongside cultural inheritance and innovation. As a vital vehicle for advancing this integration, cultural and tourism-themed variety programmes on radio and television have become both an industry trend and a defining feature of our era. With the public's spiritual yearning for 'poetry and distant horizons', such programmes have flourished. Presenters, as the core element of these shows, must not only guide audiences in appreciating beautiful landscapes but also delve deeply into the cultural essence of regions during their travels. They should reflect on social life, focus on societal values, and inspire emotional resonance and spiritual engagement among viewers. This paper examines the cultural and tourism variety programmes produced by China Media Group, including "Grand Variety", "100 Places to Visit in This Lifetime", "Extraordinary Journey", Hello, Good Times, and Joy of Travel as case studies. It examines the multifaceted roles of hosts in cultural tourism programmes—as experiential guides, cultural interpreters, atmosphere creators, and value co-creators—alongside their core competencies: professional expertise, personal charisma, cultural insight, and sense of responsibility. The aim is to reveal the success formula of outstanding hosts in this genre, offering valuable insights for future programme development and talent cultivation in cultural tourism broadcasting.

2 The Diverse Role Positioning of Presenters in Cultural and Tourism Variety Shows

In cultural and tourism variety programmes, presenters no longer serve as single-function performers but instead embody multifaceted roles. This integration of diverse roles constitutes the core of their work.

2.1 Experience Facilitator

As cultural tourism programmes shift from showcasing landscapes to immersive experiences, presenters—bridging the gap between the show and its audience—have evolved into "experience guides" who weave together cultural tourism experiences and emotional resonance. Under traditional formats, presenters typically delivered pre-written narration designed to describe visuals and supplement background knowledge, prioritising accuracy and formality over personality. Today, their core role centres on personal cultural tourism experiences and expression. The lens captures not merely scenery, but the presenter's genuine reactions within specific contexts: the awe at discovering breathtaking vistas, the heartfelt moments during exchanges with locals, the subtle expressions while savouring local delicacies. These unvarnished moments form the programme's most precious emotional thread. Simultaneously, presenters serve as guides for cultural tourism variety shows, using their authentic experiences to draw viewers in and create an immersive sensation. This demands formidable improvisational skills, enabling them to weave fresh observations into cohesive narratives that foster emotional resonance during virtual cultural tourism. For instance, in Zhengda Variety, alongside studio interview hosts, 'travel explorers' were introduced. These hosts visited iconic destinations, sharing their cultural

and tourism experiences to immerse viewers in the world. In '100 Places to Visit in This Lifetime', regular hosts Nigemati, Sister Moon, Yang Fan, and Wang Bingbing embark on a reality-show format, exploring one location per episode with distinct themes centred on scenic beauty, cuisine, culture, and local life. Through firsthand experiences, they guide viewers in discovering each destination's unique charm. Additionally, Extraordinary Journey sees host Ma Fanshu guiding viewers through immersive local experiences, allowing audiences to savour unique natural landscapes and the slow-paced vibrancy of everyday life without leaving home. Indeed, the role of the "experience guide" is pivotal in enabling cultural tourism programmes to forge a profound connection between viewers and the allure of distant horizons.

2.2 Cultural Interpreter

Cultural tourism transcends mere spatial movement; it embodies temporal traversal and cultural dialogue. This necessitates that hosts of cultural tourism programmes evolve from "experience guides" to "cultural interpreters". Therefore, presenters must cultivate cultural literacy in their daily lives while undertaking extensive preparatory research for specialised programmes. This involves mastering diverse cultural knowledge—including historical contexts, geographical landscapes, cultural evolution, and social customs—of their destinations. Through on-site interactions with local figures and meticulous observation of details, they must deliver accessible interpretations. This enables audiences to acquire cultural knowledge through virtual travel experiences, bolstering cultural confidence and ensuring the enduring legacy and advancement of China's splendid civilisation. For instance, during the broadcast of 'Zhengda Variety Show' featuring Yangshuo Town in Yangshuo County, Guilin City, Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, the travel explorers provided in-depth interpretations while experiencing local guidance. These included: bamboo rafting and outdoor pursuits, the intangible cultural heritage of dragon boat parades, the cultural wisdom of the Longji Terraced Fields, and the ethnic distinctiveness of the 'Thirteen Villages of Longji'. This not only delighted viewers visually but also enriched their intellectual and cultural understanding. It is evident that the hosts' profound cultural interpretations elevate the programme into a premium vehicle that combines cultural dissemination with intellectual guidance.

2.3 Atmosphere Creator

In cultural and tourism variety shows, to achieve a cheerful and relaxed programme effect, the host must assume the role of "atmosphere creator". The core purpose of this role is to bridge the screen distance between viewers and the on-screen scenes. Through personal expression and interactive design, they transform the programme into a warm, immersive experience, cultivating an atmosphere brimming with laughter, positive energy, and artistic flair. Consequently, the host's sense of humour, approachability, and ability to stir emotions become paramount. These qualities allow audiences to feel profoundly relaxed and spiritually uplifted during their virtual cultural journeys. For instance, in Hello Time, host Sa Beining successfully engaged viewers through his approachable style and witty repartee, earning widespread affection. When discussing the forecast rain, he quipped, "We are currently experiencing rainfall, with sweat pouring down like rain." His exaggerated dance moves accompanying Xie Na and his imitation of a swimming turtle also elicited laughter from the entire studio. This demonstrates how presenters, as atmosphere creators, imbue cultural tourism variety shows with unique charm. They enable audiences to appreciate the beauty of travel through laughter, absorb cultural nourishment in a relaxed manner, and ultimately foster emotional resonance.

2.4 Value Co-Creators

French scholar Pierre Bourdieu revealed in his theory of "cultural capital" that symbolic cultural resources must be transformed into social practice to gain real power^[1]. Cultural and tourism variety programmes not only showcase natural landscapes and humanistic traditions, but also bear the profound mission of conveying social issues, awakening public consensus and practical action. The host's pivotal role in this process lies in being the value co-creator who bridges the programme and its audience. This demands that presenters transcend mere content delivery to become pivotal conduits linking programme ethos, audience perception, and societal action. Through judicious value guidance, they elevate viewers from passive consumers to active practitioners of values, thereby advancing social civility and development. For instance, in Hello Time, host Nigemati explicitly stated: 'This season centres on environmental protection, aiming to raise awareness through our programme. Every small act of kindness plays a vital role in safeguarding sea turtles and preserving our environment.' This demonstrates how presenters, as value co-creators, generate resonance between programme values, audience actions, and societal significance – the very essence of cultural and tourism variety shows.

3 An Analysis of Core Competencies for Presenters of Cultural and Tourism Variety Shows

The multifaceted role of hosts in cultural and tourism variety programmes demands comprehensive and high-calibre capabilities. An outstanding host of such programmes must possess a composite core competency framework.

3.1 Professional Competence

Exceptional professional competence constitutes the fundamental requirement for hosts of cultural and tourism variety programmes. Firstly, outstanding verbal communication skills are essential, encompassing not only fluency, standard Mandarin pronunciation, extensive vocabulary, vivid metaphorical expression, and well-judged humour, but also the ability to adapt language to suit the specific context, ensuring it aligns with the environment and cultural tone. Secondly, formidable on-site control and improvisational skills are essential. Presenters must be able to adapt their content flexibly to the prevailing atmosphere, naturally command the entire production, and adeptly handle unforeseen incidents – even transforming them into compelling programme highlights. The role of mediator extends beyond facilitating interactions between guests and between guests and the audience. It entails mediating across multiple dimensions: between technology and humanity, past and present, localities and distant lands, reality and imagination^[2]. Thirdly, hosts require solid interviewing and research skills. Thorough pre-production research forms the foundation for high-quality programming. Like journalists, hosts must delve into the background of topics, draft interview outlines, and ensure deep, effective communication. Fourthly, regional cultural literacy is essential. Cultural tourism programmes feature diverse locations—natural landscapes, historic cities, intangible heritage sites, and ethnic minority communities—requiring hosts to cultivate regional knowledge for credible cultural interpretation. Fifthly, hosts must develop cross-disciplinary capabilities and multifaceted media literacy. An outstanding cultural and tourism programme host should command influence and reputation across the cultural tourism sector, traditional media, new media platforms, and among the broader audience^[3]. Presenters in the new era must also understand planning, master operations, and excel at editing. By continuously learning new media technologies, data analysis, visual aesthetics, and production techniques, they enhance their comprehensive capabilities to become all-round talents.

3.2 Personal Charisma

In cultural and tourism variety programmes, the host's personal charm is a vital quality for captivating audiences. It lends warmth to natural landscapes and renders regional cultures palpable. This charm manifests firstly through sincerity: hosts must authentically share their observations and reflections. A benevolent outlook towards the world, coupled with respect and inclusivity for diverse cultures, significantly bridges the psychological distance with viewers, forging an emotional connection. Secondly, it manifests in a keen curiosity and profound empathy. Maintaining a childlike wonder towards the world and a passion for exploring the unknown, while simultaneously considering others' feelings, understanding their emotions, and respecting their cultures and sentiments through genuine consideration, enables viewers to share in these experiences, thereby sparking resonance. Empathy represents the pinnacle of presenting skills. Thirdly, it manifests through tenacious willpower and an optimistic spirit. Travel and programme challenges test both mental and physical endurance, requiring presenters to possess exceptional stamina and resolve while consistently conveying positive energy to inspire and move audiences. Fourthly, distinctive personal styles play a crucial role. For instance, in *Hello Time*, host Sa Beining's humorous and lively presenting style creates a joyful atmosphere, igniting the audience's enthusiasm. In *Joyful Journey*, host Ma Fanshu's sweet singing voice fosters a relaxed ambiance, winning widespread affection. These unique personal styles form the programme's distinctive brand identity, serving as the finishing touch. In essence, the charisma of hosts in cultural tourism variety shows lies in their ability to animate landscapes through distinctive personal traits. Viewers yearn for destinations through the hosts' presence and develop affection for cultures through their narration.

3.3 Cultural Insights

In cultural and tourism variety programmes, the presenter serves as a cultural ferryman bridging the gap between heritage and the general public. Their core competence lies in cultural insight and literacy – a quality that transcends mere knowledge accumulation to enable the programme's profound cultural transmission. This competency can be broken down into three progressively layered core abilities. Firstly, a broad and systematic cross-disciplinary knowledge base. Presenters must possess cross-disciplinary knowledge spanning history, geography, literature, and the arts. This knowledge should not be a fragmented collection but rather a coherent cultural framework capable of connecting diverse fields, laying the foundation for in-depth analysis within the programme. Secondly, precise and vivid cultural translation skills. Cultural tourism content often involves specialised terminology and academic concepts. Directly

adopting such language risks alienating audiences. Presenters must act as cultural interpreters, conveying professional and scholarly knowledge to the general public through accessible, vivid language that makes the subject matter tangible and engaging. Thirdly, a profound and empathetic ability to uncover cultural value. The core of cultural tourism variety shows lies not merely in showcasing culture, but in fostering audience resonance with it. This demands presenters to extract contemporary relevance from cultural phenomena, allowing culture to genuinely enter viewers' lives and emotions, thereby inspiring their spiritual and cultural practices. In summary, the cultural insight demanded of hosts in cultural tourism variety programmes is fundamentally a composite skillset: understanding culture, articulating it effectively, and fostering empathy. This enables hosts not only to guide audiences through scenic landscapes but also to help them decipher the stories behind these vistas. Ultimately, it allows culture to transcend the screen and resonate within viewers' hearts, translating spiritual values into tangible actions within the broader public sphere.

3.4 Sense of Responsibility

In cultural and tourism variety programmes, presenters serve as pivotal bridges connecting media and audiences while conveying positive social values. Their role in guiding values and demonstrating responsibility must permeate the entire programme, manifesting through tangible expressions and actions. Firstly, they should champion cultural confidence. Within the settings of cultural and tourism variety shows, while showcasing the majestic landscapes of the motherland and the endeavours of its people, presenters must also naturally highlight the allure of China's outstanding traditional culture. This transforms such heritage from an abstract concept into tangible scenes that resonate emotionally with audiences, thereby igniting patriotic sentiment and cultural pride. Secondly, they should champion positive lifestyles. Presenters must convey the uplifting ethos of exploration, inclusivity, understanding, and personal growth, while advocating for thoughtful, eco-conscious, and responsible travel. Crucially, they should exemplify through their own conduct an optimistic outlook on life, a passion for living, and a caring attitude towards others. Thirdly, integrating philanthropic principles, cultural and tourism variety shows often combine charitable initiatives with travel itineraries. In such instances, presenters should actively practise and promote these philanthropic endeavours. For instance, in *Hello Time*, hosts Sa Beining and Nigemati established charitable objectives at Huizhou's Turtle Bay in Guangdong by undertaking initiatives such as cleaning turtle pools and educating the public on turtle conservation. This approach of 'leading by example combined with expert commentary' leverages the hosts' influence to urge viewers to engage with social issues like ecological and environmental protection, thereby achieving a genuine unity between the programme's social impact and its communicative value.

4 Strategic Recommendations: Pathways for Enhancing the Professional Competence of Presenters in Cultural and Tourism Variety Shows

The enhancement of cultural and tourism variety show hosts' professional competence requires the combined efforts of the industry, programme production companies, and individuals to establish a collaborative training system. The specific pathways are as follows.

Firstly, at the industry level, a specialised training system for 'cultural tourism and hosting' should be established. Current presenter training predominantly focuses on verbal expression and stage management skills, lacking specific training in cultural interpretation and scenario adaptation for cultural tourism programmes. Industry associations could collaborate with cultural tourism departments and universities to develop this specialised training framework. Firstly, cultural enrichment training should be offered, inviting regional cultural experts, historians, and intangible cultural heritage inheritors to deliver region-specific and theme-based cultural lectures, thereby enhancing presenters' cultural knowledge with targeted relevance. Secondly, scenario-based practical training should be conducted, involving simulated recordings in outdoor settings with contingency scenarios such as sudden weather changes, enabling presenters to develop adaptability and emergency response skills through hands-on experience. Thirdly, case-study sharing sessions should be organised, inviting presenters who have excelled in programmes to share concrete experiences, making the training more actionable.

Secondly, at the programme production level, a bespoke presenter development framework must be established. As the direct employers of presenters, production teams should provide tailored training aligned with the programme's positioning and content characteristics. This begins with proactive research involvement: during the preparatory phase, presenters should not only receive cultural resource packs but also undertake immersive field research at filming locations. Such on-site immersion ensures more authentic cultural interpretation. Secondly, role allocation should be based on presenters' strengths. For instance, those with deep cultural knowledge could be designated as primary cultural interpreters, while those with strong interactive skills could be positioned as key emotional connectors. This complementary division of labour ensures both cultural depth and entertainment value.

Thirdly, at the individual presenter level, proactive capability iteration is essential. Support from the industry and production teams must be complemented by personal endeavour, with presenters actively enhancing their expertise to achieve iterative skill development. This begins with establishing a systematic knowledge framework: building a regional cultural knowledge base through reading specialised works, viewing documentaries, and attending cultural exhibitions, while keeping abreast of the latest research findings. Secondly, they should accumulate practical experience in diverse settings by actively participating in outdoor interviews, cultural charity events, and similar activities. This builds expertise in communicating with varied audiences and handling unexpected situations, thereby enhancing improvisational hosting skills across different scenarios. Thirdly, they must engage in reflective optimisation and summarisation. Following each programme recording, a thorough debrief should be conducted to identify practical issues and formulate improvement plans for subsequent episodes, ensuring continuous growth through this iterative process.

5 Conclusions

As pivotal vehicles for cultural dissemination and tourism consumption, the core value of cultural tourism variety programmes hinges upon the bridging role of their presenters. Hosts of such programmes must embody multifaceted roles: serving as experiential guides, cultural interpreters, atmosphere cultivators, and co-creators of value. They require core competencies encompassing professional expertise, personal charisma, cultural insight, and a sense of responsibility. Enhancing these qualities demands collaborative, iterative efforts from the industry, production teams, and individuals alike. Against the backdrop of cultural-tourism integration, the role and competencies of hosts in such programmes impact not only production quality but also the efficiency and effectiveness of cultural dissemination. An exceptional host steadfastly implements the core principle of 'cultivating tourism through culture and highlighting culture through tourism,' elevating viewers from mere programme consumption to cultural understanding, and from travel aspirations to cultural appreciation. This fosters emotional resonance and the active embodiment of cultural values. Looking ahead, as new media technologies advance and audience aesthetic demands evolve, the format of cultural tourism variety shows will inevitably transform, potentially giving rise to more immersive and interactive programme models. This places heightened demands on presenters, requiring stronger cross-cultural communication skills and technological integration capabilities. It is hoped that this research may offer practical guidance for the development and training of hosts in cultural tourism variety programmes. Furthermore, it is anticipated that more outstanding hosts in this field will guide audiences through the lens to appreciate landscapes, comprehend cultures, and practise values. This will advance the inheritance and innovation of China's outstanding traditional culture while contributing to the integrated development of cultural and tourism sectors.

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