

A Brief Discussion on How Prefecture-Level City Television Talk Shows Can Break Through in the Post-Print Era

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Abstract

With the development of the Internet and broadcasting, the viewing channels for talk shows have expanded, enabling audiences to access them anytime and anywhere through multiple channels. However, the proliferation of talk shows has intensified competition among municipal-level programs. How to create distinctive features and stand out from numerous programs is a challenge that every municipal-level talk show must confront. Currently, the main dilemmas facing talk shows in China include repetitive topics, similar formats, insufficient host professionalism, and lack of distinctive features, which result in a lack of innovation and limit the sustainability of many programs. Therefore, this paper proposes corresponding suggestions on how municipal-level talk shows can break through, providing references for such programs.

Full Text

Preamble

Research • Media and Development: On How Municipal TV Talk Shows Can Break Through

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Abstract: With the development of the internet and broadcasting, audiences can now access talk shows through multiple channels anytime and anywhere. However, as the number of talk shows proliferates, competition among municipal-level programs has intensified. How to create distinctive features and stand out from the crowd has become an essential challenge for every municipal TV talk show. Currently, Chinese talk shows face major difficulties including repetitive topics, similar formats, unqualified hosts, and lack of distinctive features, which result in insufficient innovation and limited

sustainability. This paper therefore proposes corresponding recommendations for how municipal TV talk shows can achieve breakthrough, providing reference for such programs.

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Currently, talk shows rank among the most popular program genres. In these programs, hosts invite guests to discuss social hotspots and interesting anecdotes, making the quality of guests, hosts, and selected topics critical factors that influence overall program quality and, consequently, ratings. For municipal TV talk shows to distinguish themselves in this competitive landscape, they must produce high-quality programs by carefully addressing scheduling issues, entry angles, on-site atmosphere, and the competence of hosts and guests, thereby ensuring both viewership ratings and audience loyalty.

1. Current Challenges in Municipal TV Talk Shows

1.1 Topic Repetition

With the proliferation of talk shows in China, topics now span politics, technology, marriage, and other domains, with each program claiming its own characteristics and achieving high ratings. However, as the scale of talk shows continues to expand, topic repetition has become increasingly problematic. Major talk shows such as *A Date with Luyu*, *Very Quiet Distance*, and *Day Day Up* often select identical topics simultaneously, with guests repeating the same content across programs. This inevitably leads to audience fatigue and gradually erodes viewer interest, causing stations to lose both ratings and their audience base.

1.2 Lack of Clear Positioning

Due to topical redundancy, many municipal TV talk shows suffer from vague positioning and fail to develop distinctive features. While China Central Television maintains its ratings by consistently producing programs with clear CCTV characteristics—such as *Meeting the Financial World*, *Face to Face*, and *The Masters*, each carefully selecting conversation content and guests to form a distinctive CCTV signature—municipal-level programs often fail to anchor their discussions in local characteristics or community events, nor do they explore profound viewpoints that resonate with audiences.

1.3 Shortage of High-Quality Hosts

Many municipal TV talk show hosts rigidly follow scripts during interviews, resulting in superficial content and dull atmosphere. They are unable to challenge guests' viewpoints or engage with audience members, which lowers program quality and diminishes viewership over time. A qualified host must possess the ability to create program atmosphere, ensuring the talk show remains thematically focused, content-rich, and thought-provoking. To guarantee ratings, municipal TV stations must enhance their hosts' comprehensive competencies through regular training in language organization and news sensitivity to improve their psychological resilience. Only with strong psychological qualities can hosts accurately grasp the minds of audiences and guests, make precise judgments during live broadcasts, resolve unexpected situations, and maintain program quality. Furthermore, hosts should cultivate self-learning habits to improve their professional competence and recognize their social responsibilities, enabling them to conduct interviews with greater care and comprehensiveness.

2. Breakthrough Strategies for Municipal TV Talk Shows

2.1 Highlight Regional Characteristics

To achieve breakthrough, municipal TV talk shows must emphasize regional features and build brand effects that resonate naturally with local audiences. This can be accomplished through unique topic selection, content design, program format, and by tapping into distinctive local cultural resources and values. For instance, Xinzhou City boasts abundant cultural resources including Buddhist culture, Great Wall culture, frontier culture, Yellow River culture, ancient architecture culture, red revolutionary culture, and Xinzhou merchant culture, all of which possess profound heritage and unparalleled appeal. Capitalizing on these assets, Xinzhou Television planned and broadcast two talk show columns, *Xinzhou People Reading Xinzhou Books* and *Xinzhou People Touring Xinzhou Scenery*, which generated significant public impact. By interviewing local writers and their original works and inviting tour guides to explain Xinzhou's magnificent landscapes, these programs seamlessly integrated the city's rich historical culture with its colorful natural scenery, promoting unique local culture and attracting large audiences. Both columns won the "Top Ten Columns" award at the Shanxi Radio and Television Awards in 2013 and 2016.

2.2 Optimize Program Entry Angles

Municipal TV talk shows must also optimize their entry angles to capture audience attention immediately. Program planners must clearly define interview content and select compelling angles. When interviewing parties involved in major cases, for example, planners must thoroughly understand the case details—neither arbitrarily judging legal decisions nor hastily drawing conclusions. Instead, they should invite professionals to facilitate face-to-face discussions among parties, experts, and audiences. The host should summarize the

case comprehensively, potentially beginning with a 情景再现 (scene reenactment) to immerse the audience emotionally before posing questions to both viewers and experts. Professionals can then address confusions from specialized perspectives, while audience members and parties can seek clarification on their viewpoints, thereby ensuring program ratings. Failure to maintain appropriate boundaries and deliberately sensationalizing cases as social incidents would compromise program authenticity and influence audience judgment, preventing calm and rational analysis of events. This demonstrates that talk shows should prioritize entry angle selection based on content to objectively reflect program authenticity.

2.3 Create Engaging Program Atmosphere

The current dull atmosphere in many municipal TV talk shows negatively impacts ratings. Program planners must prioritize creating an enjoyable on-site atmosphere that resonates with audiences. Only by emphasizing atmosphere creation can audiences perceive the program's thoughtful design, intensify its emotional impact, and follow the program's progression to develop resonance with the topic, thereby enhancing audience loyalty. Many municipal programs feature grassroots individuals as guests, requiring set designs that approximate guests' real living environments to highlight authenticity and allow guests to present their most genuine selves, resulting in more authentic interview content. Attention to detail is crucial, particularly regarding authentic background rendering—including props, music, and dialogue—that enables guests and audiences to quickly immerse themselves in the program atmosphere. Additionally, effective communication with camera operators is essential to ensure they understand filming intentions and apply artistic television lens techniques.

2.4 Control Discourse Rhythm

Municipal TV talk shows typically run from approximately ten minutes to half an hour. Regardless of duration, hosts must control discourse rhythm, highlight key points, and maintain audience engagement within limited timeframes. This involves not only managing interview discourse rights but also emphasizing interaction to prevent visual fatigue from continuous host-guest dialogue. Hosts should first understand the interview objectives to plan concentrated discussions on specific issues within designated time slots, ensuring audiences recognize key focus areas at each stage and prompting them to watch from beginning to end, thereby improving ratings. During longer programs, hosts can incorporate relevant video clips to attract audience attention and further enhance interview atmosphere. Prior to broadcast, interacting with audiences about interview content helps understand their genuine thoughts, allowing hosts to emphasize relevant discussions during the program. This approach both provides answers to audience questions and makes viewers feel valued, encouraging greater attention to future programs.

2.5 Enhance Host Comprehensive Quality

An excellent talk show host must possess the ability to create program atmosphere, ensuring the talk show remains thematically focused, content-rich, and thought-provoking. To guarantee municipal TV talk show ratings, stations must enhance host comprehensive quality. First, municipal TV stations should conduct regular host training in language organization and news sensitivity to improve psychological resilience. Only with strong psychological qualities can hosts accurately grasp the minds of audiences and guests, make precise judgments during live broadcasts, resolve unexpected situations, and maintain program quality. Additionally, stations should organize hosts and production teams to study traditional cultures from various countries to improve cultural cultivation and keep pace with the times. Hosts must also cultivate self-learning habits to improve professional competence, enabling them to handle unexpected situations accurately during live interviews, mitigate program risks, and ensure quality. Furthermore, talk show hosts should continuously enhance their professional ethics, recognizing their social responsibilities to conduct interviews with greater care and comprehensiveness, thereby improving program quality. For television audiences, talk shows represent a novel and engaging format. Therefore, municipal TV talk shows must ensure program quality through careful selection and production to create distinctive local characteristics, establish brand program images, and effectively guarantee audience loyalty.

3. Conclusion

In summary, talk shows represent one of the most popular program genres, prompting major media outlets to increase such programming to attract audiences. However, as the number of talk shows grows, problems of content repetition and lack of depth have emerged, particularly in municipal-level programs that suffer from unclear positioning and limited host competence, affecting both program quality and station development. This paper argues that municipal TV talk shows must highlight regional characteristics, optimize entry angles, create engaging atmospheres, control discourse rhythm, and enhance host comprehensive quality to break through from the competition, improve program quality, increase audience loyalty, and secure their market position.

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