

# Innovative Presentation and Convergent Development of Legal Programmes in Modern Communication Contexts

Ye Jiali

Broadcasting and Anchoring School, Communication University of China, Nanjing, China  
13833320422@163.com

**Abstract:** Legal programs are increasingly moving towards innovation and integration in modern communication contexts. This paper examines three key areas: a retrospective analysis of the content and form of legal programs, the innovative presentation of these programs, and the development of program convergence. It explores perspectives, subject matter innovations, program branding, and personal IP creation. Additionally, it considers the migration of reality TV formats and the integration of programs with audiences, current trends, and multiple program genres, which open new horizons for the development of legal programs.

**Keywords:** Legal program, Creative presentation, Integration, Reality show

## 1. Introduction

As a primary venue for legal awareness and education, legal programs have traditionally been rigorous, objective, and formal. They are crucial in promoting legal education, reinforcing the rule of law, and stabilizing social security. However, these programs' single format and content have increasingly posed challenges for their development. With the advent of media convergence, many programs are exploring new paths toward diversity and integration. This paper addresses these questions by analyzing both traditional and emerging legal programs, focusing on the essence of their innovative presentation and integrated development. It further refines specific strategies for implementing innovation and convergence in legal programming.

## 2. A retrospective on the content and format of legal programs

As vehicles for disseminating and popularizing the law, legal programs aim to enhance audience awareness of legal necessities by analyzing typical cases, thereby providing practical legal knowledge. In China, the legal system was initially reflected in news programs, where presenters, through detailed case explanations, highlighted the authority of the law and its importance to the community. In 1980, CCTV introduced a program that included a segment on the legal system. By the mid-1980s, Shanghai TV launched a legal column, marking the transition of legal programs from central government media to a broader national audience. During this period, legal programs increasingly focused on case narratives, helping viewers understand legal provisions and principles in real-life contexts. From 1994 to 1998, television stations airing legal programs nationwide grew from over 50 to 150. <sup>[1]</sup> Entering the 21st century, China's legal programs have matured significantly, achieving notable improvements in both quantity and quality. By incorporating elements such as documentaries, interviews, and reality shows, these programs have enhanced their entertainment value and interactivity, thereby improving audience legal literacy while increasing the programs' attractiveness and influence. They have become a crucial means of legal education.

Since their development, numerous legal programs have sparked significant national interest and can be broadly classified into four categories: case-based, individual features, courtroom documentaries, and law enforcement stories.<sup>[2]</sup> The content has evolved from focusing on single-issue legal literacy to a more diversified approach, incorporating various artistic styles and narrative formats, thereby increasing viewer engagement. Some programs have successfully attracted large audiences through animated characters and live-action sitcoms, while others use storytelling and relatable language to present legal details vividly.

It is evident that while retrospective case storytelling is often more engaging and aligned with audience aesthetics, many programs have developed homogeneous content and structural forms. Over time, this lack of differentiation has led to decreased market competitiveness and stagnation in the development of legal programs. Looking forward, it is crucial for legal programs to explore new directions and innovate to remain relevant and practical.

### **3. Innovative presentation of legal programs**

In inhomogeneous development within the legal program market, breakthroughs and innovation are essential for programs to stand out. Program makers need to focus on iterating their perspectives and subject matter, offering diverse viewpoints and current topics. Additionally, in an entertainment-driven society, program branding and the creation of individual intellectual properties (IPs) are crucial for guiding the program's direction and popularity. The rise of reality TV formats has also introduced new possibilities for legal programs.

#### ***3.1. Iterations of perspective and subject matter***

##### ***3.1.1. Variety of viewpoint options***

Most mainstream legal programs present a third-party perspective, drawing audiences into the case through the host's narration. However, some programs offer a one-sided view, focusing solely on the police's process of solving a case without exploring the individuals' perspectives. Many programs also tend to favor high-profile, unresolved cases to attract attention, which can lead to audience fatigue due to limited perspectives.

To foster innovation, legal programs should embrace diverse perspectives. Introducing the viewpoints of the parties involved—such as victims, suspects, and their families—can reveal the personal stories and emotional conflicts behind the cases, offering viewers a deeper understanding of their impact and consequences. This approach not only enhances the authenticity and emotional appeal of the program but also fosters empathy and reflection in the audience.

Additionally, incorporating multiple perspectives, such as those of police, legal experts, and social scholars, allows for multi-dimensional analysis and discussion of cases. This diversity enriches the program's professionalism and authority while helping viewers assess cases from various angles, thus increasing legal awareness and social responsibility.

Legal programs can also use reenactments to dramatize the case development, detection process, and legal proceedings. This technique offers viewers an intuitive and immersive case experience, making the content more engaging. However, reenactments must be carefully based on factual accuracy to maintain the program's authenticity and rigor while avoiding exaggeration or fictionalization.

##### ***3.1.2. Contemporaneity in the choice of subject matter***

Many of China's legal programs focus on the 'criminal investigation' category, providing typical and targeted content related to criminal events and legal knowledge. However, as society progresses, understanding contemporary needs is crucial for the success of legal programs. The question, 'What does today's society need?' has become a key criterion for selecting relevant topics.

Recent issues such as school bullying, workplace harassment, and domestic violence have emerged as significant concerns requiring community attention and in-depth discussion. These incidents not only impact the physical and mental well-being of victims but also highlight gaps and deficiencies in social governance. Legal programs can address these subjects to raise public awareness and advocate for enhancing and enforcing relevant laws and regulations.

In the digital age, cybercrime has become a critical area of concern. Beyond traditional fraud, issues like cyber violence, infringement, and privacy breaches are increasingly severe. Legal programs can educate viewers on the characteristics and dangers of cybercrime and provide self-protection strategies and legal remedies through case analyses and expert insights. This approach enhances public legal awareness and cybersecurity knowledge, creating a more law-abiding and secure online environment.

To further align with current societal needs, professional legal programs should also cover civil, labor, and economic law topics. This broad approach ensures that audiences are well-informed and capable of effectively protecting their rights and interests in various situations.

Additionally, in disseminating current hot events, audiences tend to gravitate towards news that captures their attention, necessitating more stringent screening criteria by communicators. When editing and broadcasting selected topics, the focus should be on emphasizing and profoundly analyzing the legal principles and implications of the cases. It is essential to go beyond superficial presentation and performative aspects to provide substantive and insightful content.<sup>[3]</sup>

### ***3.2. Programme branding and personal IP creation***

In the era of integrated media, the success of a legal program in gaining broader recognition is closely tied to effective program branding. A brand, represented by the program's logo or name, not only reflects the program's positioning but also conveys its values to the audience. Building a strong brand requires a high-quality 'product.' Legal journalists and program producers are increasingly adopting the role of 'product managers,' shifting their focus from solely content production to market development and user engagement. This involves paying greater attention to the market value of content and understanding audience needs.<sup>[4]</sup>

Legal programs should emphasize content diversity and innovation to establish a distinctive program brand through differentiated competition. Combining legal content with other popular topics can create varied program formats such as 'Legal+Entertainment,' 'Legal+Education,' and 'Legal+Life,' catering to different viewer needs and expanding the audience. For example, launching legal talk shows that present legal knowledge in a light-hearted and humorous way or interactive legal reality shows that enhance audience participation can make the content more engaging and accessible.

Personal IP, or the personal image and brand of the legal journalist or presenter, is crucial to the program's success. A host with a distinctive personality, professionalism, and high viewer affinity can build trust and a strong identity with the audience, thereby enhancing the program's brand value and influence. The host's expertise, presentation skills, and personal charisma significantly impact the program's popularity. By training and selecting hosts with unique styles and professional qualities, they become more than just content deliverers—they serve as a bridge between the audience and the program. Drawing on successful practices from entertainment programs, hosts can display more extraordinary personal charisma and emotional engagement, enhancing the emotional resonance with the audience.

### ***3.3. Migration of the reality TV format***

In today's entertainment-driven environment, traditional broadcast and lecture-style legal programs often appear heavy and uninspiring, highlighting an urgent need for content innovation. To address this, the legal program market has embraced innovation, transforming broadcast methods, enhancing content interpretation, and incorporating celebrity participation, leading to a shift towards reality TV formats.

Firstly, by using real-life scenarios, case simulations, and interactive games, viewers gain a more intuitive understanding of legal processes and knowledge, enhancing the program's educational and entertaining value. For example, some legal reality TV programs allow viewers to assume roles such as judges, lawyers, and jurors, providing a firsthand experience of court trials and legal procedures. This participatory approach not only captures viewers' interest but also boosts their legal awareness and literacy.

Secondly, the involvement of celebrities in legal reality shows can significantly increase program ratings and visibility, leveraging their influence to broaden the program's reach. Celebrity guests add variety and excitement to the program while helping to convey legal concepts and values in an engaging manner. However, it is essential to balance entertainment with professionalism and authenticity. The core objective of legal programs is to educate and promote the rule of law, so innovation in format and content must ensure the accuracy and authority of the legal information, preserving the educational value of the program.

## **4. Convergence of legal programmes**

Legal programs are progressively moving towards integration and innovation in the context of deep media integration. Aligning with audience expectations is crucial for determining program ratings, which involves addressing relevant topics and incorporating feedback from viewers. Additionally, integrating current hotspots introduces new perspectives and relevance, while the fusion of diverse program formats has become a significant highlight in the field. This approach enhances viewer engagement and program

appeal by combining topical relevance with varied presentation styles.

#### ***4.1. Integrating audience expectations and linking emotions on both sides***

Traditional legal programs often focus on cases that seem distant from most people's daily lives, and many programs feature case reenactments with extensive interpretations. As a result, the audience may view the case more as a 'performance' and struggle to relate, often feeling a subconscious detachment as if 'it's not about me.'<sup>[5]</sup> In the ongoing convergence and development of legal programs, audience expectations have become crucial in determining program quality. Connecting the program with the audience's emotions is a crucial challenge for program makers. Solutions may include incorporating 'Topic Discussions' and 'Online Interpretations' to bridge this gap and enhance viewer engagement.

##### ***4.1.1. "Topic discussion" to enhance user activity***

When planning and producing legal programs, creators should prioritize user engagement, encouraging viewers to watch and participate in discussions about the program's segments. Focusing on the user's emotional experience is increasingly essential in the evolving media landscape. To shift the audience from passive to active participation and meet their expectations, 'Topic Discussions' can be a crucial strategy. For example, programs can preview the main content and discussion topics on social media before broadcast to generate anticipation. During the broadcast, real-time interactive functions can invite viewers to express opinions and ask questions, fostering two-way communication between online and offline audiences. This interactive format enhances viewer participation and underscores the value of their views, boosting the program's accessibility and appeal. Additionally, the program can feature particular discussion segments with legal experts, guests, and audience representatives to explore hot cases and legal issues in-depth. This multi-party discussion format not only enhances the program's professionalism and authority but also provides viewers with valuable legal knowledge and insights.

##### ***4.1.2. "Online Answers" Enhance User Engagement***

As the format of legal programs has diversified, enhancing user participation has become a crucial consideration. Many programs now seek to actively involve the audience, as this interactive approach adds authenticity, visibility, and a sense of closeness to the program.<sup>[6]</sup> Legal experts and hosts can address viewers' questions during the broadcast through real-time interactive platforms. Viewers can submit questions via pop-ups, comments, WeChat, Weibo, and other channels, while experts and hosts provide detailed responses. This format not only addresses viewers' concerns but also makes them feel acknowledged, thereby boosting their sense of participation and engagement.

Additionally, legal programs can incorporate online polls and surveys, allowing viewers to act as 'judges' and express their opinions on case verdicts. For example, in mock court or case reenactment segments, viewers can vote on what they believe is a reasonable verdict. The results of these votes and expert commentary can be featured in the program. This participatory format enhances interactivity and interest, stimulates audience thinking and discussion, and deepens viewers' legal awareness and judgment.

#### ***4.2. Fusion of current hotspots, interpretation of new thinking***

Under the influence of the media wave, the instantaneous nature of information has led to increasingly scattered audience attention. At the same time, numerous hot topics have slowed the 'dynamic range' of netizens' engagement. This phenomenon necessitates a new direction in the production of legal programs. Embracing concepts like 'chasing hot spots' and 'rubbing the heat' is essential in contemporary new media operations, aiming to attract traffic and expand influence by tracking and interpreting current hot issues, pain points, and trending events.<sup>[7]</sup> In the era of information explosion, viewers are drawn to various hot topics, and legal programs can capitalize on this by integrating legal knowledge with these events. For instance, when a social event garners widespread attention, a legal program can quickly address it by analyzing the legal issues and social impacts involved, helping viewers understand the legal logic and values underlying the event. Hotspot events often encompass complex legal problems and social conflicts; thus, through in-depth analysis, legal programs can uncover these events' legal principles and social ramifications.

To address legal controversies in hot cases, the program can invite legal experts to provide detailed explanations and discuss the application and interpretation of relevant legal provisions. This approach helps viewers grasp the essence of the law more comprehensively. However, while chasing hot spots can attract attention, programs must maintain professionalism and authority. Ensuring the accuracy and rigor of legal knowledge is crucial, and inviting authoritative legal experts for precise interpretations will

enhance the program's credibility and social influence.

#### **4.3. Integration of various program genres to promote diversified development**

The initial form of legal programs involved integrating them with news, where the host's narration and presentation created a severe and solemn atmosphere aimed at warning the public and addressing social conflicts. With the ongoing integration and development of media, the format of legal programs has evolved in response to changing trends. Increasingly, legal programs are experimenting with blending traditional formats with other types of programming, resulting in innovative and dynamic structures.

Legal programs have been successfully transformed in recent years through their integration with various formats, supplemented by documentary-style narratives. This approach provides viewers with a more relaxed and immersive experience. Fusing legal programs with a variety of shows represents a significant shift from traditional, single-mode formats. The engaging and entertaining style of variety shows attracts a broader audience, including younger viewers, and easily conveys legal knowledge and concepts. For instance, some legal programs invite celebrity guests to participate, enhancing viewer interest and engagement through personal experiences and interactions.

Additionally, incorporating documentary-style narratives adds significant depth and breadth to legal programs. The truthfulness, objectivity, and detailed analysis characteristic of documentaries allow legal programs to explore legal issues and social phenomena more comprehensively. By employing documentary techniques, legal programs can vividly recreate the entire process of a case—ranging from investigation and evidence collection to trial and judgment execution—providing viewers with a thorough understanding of legal procedures. Through in-depth reports and analyses of significant cases, these programs not only uncover the social issues underlying the cases but also examine the application of the law and the fairness of justice, thereby stimulating viewers' reflections and discussions.

Legal programs can also integrate with other types of program formats. By merging with talk shows, these programs can feature in-depth interviews with legal experts and individuals involved in cases, presenting various perspectives and highlighting the multifaceted nature of legal issues. This approach not only enhances the program's authority and professionalism but also provides viewers with a more comprehensive understanding of the cases and legal matters discussed. The fusion of multiple genres injects new vitality and innovation into legal programs, allowing them to better align with audience needs and contemporary trends. Diversification enriches the content and makes the format more engaging, thus attracting a wider audience. Moreover, by integrating with other program types, legal programs can more effectively fulfill their social functions, including popularizing legal knowledge, raising public awareness, and guiding social opinion to promote harmony and stability.

## **5. Conclusions**

In the development of legal programs, the challenge of making the law engaging is a crucial concern for creators. Innovation and integration have become vital to making legal programs stand out. To achieve this, programs need to focus on diversity and relevance in their perspectives and subject matter while exploring the potential of reality TV formats. Building a solid program brand and developing personal IP for program hosts are also essential. Incorporating audience interactions, such as discussion topics and online responses, and aligning with current social hotspots and various program formats can provide fresh insights and drive the diversified development of legal programs.

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