

Innovative Pathways for Banner County-Level Converged Media Centers in the All-Media Context: Postprint

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Abstract

Currently, the construction of county-level media convergence centers represents a critical link in the process of media integration development. Effectively advancing such construction constitutes not only a new task and requirement put forward by the central government, but also an inevitable choice and opportunity for the future development and expansion of traditional media. Under this mandate, county-level media convergence centers must learn to carry out innovative work centered on the “Four Centers,” and through continuously promoting innovation in concepts, methods, and grassroots work across multiple dimensions, enable themselves to achieve better development in the future.

Full Text

Innovative Paths for County-Level Media Convergence Centers from an Omnimedia Perspective

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Abstract: Currently, the construction of county-level media convergence centers represents a crucial link in the process of media integration development. Focusing on the construction of these centers is not only a new task and requirement proposed by the central government, but also an inevitable choice and opportunity for the future development and expansion of traditional media. Under these requirements, county-level media convergence centers must learn to carry out innovative work centered around the “four centers,” continuously promoting innovation in concepts, methods, and grassroots work to achieve better development in the future.

Keywords: omnimedia perspective; innovative paths; sound mechanisms; broaden industrial chain; integrate resources

On August 21-22, 2018, General Secretary Xi Jinping delivered an important speech at the National Conference on Propaganda and Ideological Work, stating that “we must solidly advance the construction of county-level media convergence centers to better guide and serve the masses,” thereby outlining the developmental direction for county-level media convergence from a national strategic perspective. On September 20-21 of the same year, the Publicity Department of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China convened a field promotion meeting on county-level media convergence center construction in Changxing County, Huzhou City, Zhejiang Province, establishing specific goals and implementation pathways. On November 14, the fifth meeting of the Central Committee for Comprehensively Deepening Reform reviewed and approved the “Opinions on Strengthening the Construction of County-Level Media Convergence Centers,” clarifying the fundamental approach to construction. On January 15, 2019, the Publicity Department and the National Radio and Television Administration jointly issued the “Construction Standards for County-Level Media Convergence Centers” and “Provincial Technical Platform Specifications for County-Level Media Convergence Centers,” providing operational guidelines and construction norms. Currently, media organizations across various counties and banners nationwide are continuously exploring reforms, yet numerous problems persist during this process. This article discusses and analyzes the innovative paths for county-level media convergence centers from an omnimedia perspective.

1. Challenges and Opportunities Facing County-Level Media Convergence Centers in the Omnimedia Era

With the arrival of the media convergence era, county-level media convergence centers face critical challenges and opportunities for transformation and development. From an omnimedia perspective, numerous deficiencies remain in their development process. Addressing this situation requires a comprehensive analysis of the challenges and opportunities they face, along with corresponding construction strategies tailored to their specific circumstances, thereby effectively promoting the healthy development of county-level media convergence.

1.1 Challenge Analysis

In recent years, China has intensified its efforts to restructure the media industry, attaching great importance to news propaganda work and proposing numerous developmental strategies. Through the integration of traditional and new media, the media convergence era has presented new challenges for county-level media development. As the core channel for propaganda work at the county and banner level, media convergence enables more efficient resource integration

through convergence technology. Simultaneously, communication models have become more diversified, not only strengthening information dissemination but also achieving comprehensive media coverage. However, with evolving times, self-media has gained increasing favor as it effectively utilizes people's fragmented time, aligning well with public work and rest schedules to provide better services and experiences. The popularization and application of self-media have changed how the public receives information, significantly impacting the development of county-level media convergence. Currently, during the convergence process, county-level media centers are gradually losing their standing among the public due to insufficient staffing in new media departments and deeply entrenched traditional concepts among veteran employees.

1.2 Opportunity Analysis

The continuous development of internet technology has ushered China into the big data era. Supported by scientific and network technologies, traditional media now faces a crucial opportunity for transformation. Media organizations can leverage new technologies and concepts to actively expand their information dissemination channels while enriching content formats to enhance their influence. Moreover, in the new era, as industries become increasingly segmented, the trend of prioritizing user needs and experiences has emerged across various sectors. Emerging media has capitalized on this by focusing on audience needs to provide better services and experiences. In this context, county-level media convergence can adopt this operational philosophy to continuously optimize and upgrade their information dissemination models, channels, scope, content editing, management systems, and service levels. Doing so can effectively guarantee the work nature and service efficiency of media convergence, leading to greater public satisfaction.

2. Problems in County-Level Media Convergence Work Under the Omnimedia Background

2.1 Difficulties in the Media Convergence Process

Currently, the development of county-level media convergence centers remains in its infancy. Some regions lack platform coordination in operations management, with most media organizations operating independently, lacking interactive connectivity and resource integration, content sharing, and coordinated planning. Additionally, in areas where convergence centers have been established, cooperation often remains limited to news centers and television stations, without forming professional and unified work teams. This results in inefficient inter-platform communication and information sharing, slow information dissemination, and weak timeliness in information release. Furthermore, when facing major events, various platforms struggle to achieve coordinated planning in the first instance, leading to inadequate propaganda and dissemination efforts.

2.2 Insufficient Crisis Awareness Among Traditional Media Practitioners

Examining current county-level media convergence centers, differences in supervisory departments persist. Varying management entities often lead to insufficient support. Therefore, it is essential to emphasize unified reform of management systems and multi-departmental collaborative integration to fully leverage the advantages of group operations. Only through innovative institutional mechanisms and operational models can strong work synergy be demonstrated, enabling rapid processing of public affairs. This solid and stable approach can also effectively promote the successful integration of the “four centers.” Most county-level media convergence center platform operators are either part-time staff or personnel without established positions. Some workers must not only perform their primary duties but also simultaneously handle platform operations, resulting in heavy workloads and inevitable strain. Moreover, most veteran employees lack innovative thinking and crisis awareness in the new era, with their understanding of media remaining rooted in the traditional media era. They lack comprehensive knowledge of emerging information technologies and new media. The absence of professional operations teams and lack of vitality in work leads to content and operational models that fail to meet audience demands.

2.3 Low Platform Dissemination Influence

Although county-level news websites have experienced massive growth across various new media platforms, most suffer from uneven content quality, low standards, and sustainability issues. Some regions maintain multiple official accounts on WeChat, Weibo, TikTok, and other online platforms, yet most face poor management, low user or follower numbers, and weak news dissemination influence. Simultaneously, due to insufficient attention from relevant staff, content is not updated promptly, quality improvement is neglected, editorial innovation is overlooked, and audience perception and experience are ignored. This prevents the manifestation of new media’s diversity and speed, leading to gradual disengagement from the public.

3. Innovative Paths for County-Level Media Convergence Centers

3.2 Improving Management Mechanisms

Personnel team construction and management represent significant challenges in county-level media convergence. Relevant data indicate that some county-level media units face aging staff and severe talent drain. Establishing a scientific and rational talent structure requires reforms in staffing, compensation, training, performance evaluation, and promotion systems to effectively achieve media convergence transformation. Leaders of relevant units must recognize that media competition ultimately boils down to talent competition. They should continuously recruit versatile talents in technology, innovation, management,

and composite fields to build professional media convergence teams centered on technology, products, and creativity. Additionally, talent cultivation must be emphasized through regular training programs, inviting experts for lectures or organizing staff training sessions to broaden media professionals' horizons and perspectives. By continuously improving staff technical skills, theoretical knowledge, and professional competence, they can gradually become versatile talents in the new era, bringing continuous vitality to the convergence center.

3.3 Breaking Information Barriers

To enhance their information dissemination capabilities, county-level media convergence must continuously broaden their information release channels. They can leverage new media applications with massive user bases to promptly release information to audiences or integrate local independent information systems to fully utilize omnimedia advantages, break information data barriers, and continuously expand functional applications of the central platform to improve coordinated governance capabilities in addressing complex issues. Taking Hongshan District in Chifeng City as an example, the local district party committee organization department continuously improved the party-mass service center system, organizing supervision over practical matters handling while the district convergence center conducted public opinion supervision. They launched the column "Come to Us with Difficulties, Hongshan Media Convergence Will Help You" on the "China Hongshan" client platform. By coordinating service resources, building service frameworks, improving service precision, and conducting typical publicity for cases that satisfactorily resolved public feedback, they attracted more audiences, enhanced the credibility and dissemination power of the media convergence center, and truly achieved transparent procedures and results.

3.4 Building a Strong Team

Talent drain, personnel aging, and talent scarcity are primary issues facing county-level media convergence centers. To address these problems, it is essential to innovate and form a scientific and rational talent structure through reforms in staffing, compensation, training, performance evaluation, and promotion systems to effectively achieve media convergence transformation. Leaders must recognize that media competition ultimately boils down to talent competition. They should continuously recruit versatile talents in technology, innovation, management, and composite fields to build professional media convergence teams centered on technology, products, and creativity. Additionally, talent cultivation must be emphasized through regular training programs, inviting experts for lectures or organizing staff training sessions to broaden media professionals' horizons and perspectives. By continuously improving staff technical skills, theoretical knowledge, and professional competence, they can gradually become versatile talents in the new era, bringing continuous vitality to the convergence center.

3.5 Content is King

County-level media convergence must prioritize public needs, keep pace with technological development, actively introduce various advanced technologies, and utilize big data to comprehensively investigate audience preferences and browsing habits to identify potential demands. By focusing on audience needs, they can provide better services. Simultaneously, service models must be continuously innovated by leveraging advanced media technologies to create distinctive project content, improve information service timeliness and efficiency, provide better experiences for audiences, and better guide and serve the masses.

3.6 Broadening the Industrial Chain and Strengthening Cooperation

To meet the practical needs of in-depth county-level media development, county-level media convergence must actively expand the entire media industrial chain and broaden the original convergence scope to improve operational revenue levels. After successfully integrating various platforms, dissemination channels become increasingly diversified, but this diversification does not necessarily enhance actual effectiveness. Therefore, county-level media should deeply explore platforms to truly achieve continuous value growth. Given the resource shortages and uneven development in current county-level media convergence, development alliances should be established to promote close cooperation and exchange across regions. By adopting a “strong-supporting-weak” approach to demonstrate radiation effects, they can accelerate development speed. Additionally, establishing new omnimedia matrices can create agglomeration effects, enhancing the credibility and influence of county-level media convergence to attract increasing investment from advertisers, better generate economic benefits, and drive integrated regional development.

3.7 Innovating Construction Models and Highlighting Regional Characteristics

The internal system of county-level media convergence indeed includes various media-related institutions with strict management models. However, this approach completely abandons operational or editorial work, making transformation and upgrading necessary to unlock hidden potential. In this context, county-level media must pay high attention to the relationship between themselves and their audiences, focusing not only on their own development but also taking a longer-term perspective to identify favorable conditions. In the omnimedia environment, the emergence of various new communication channels has indeed given all audiences the right to express their ideas. Therefore, to gain increasing discourse power and substantial influence and dissemination capabilities, county-level media convergence should provide high-quality services with regional characteristics, catering to local audience preferences and needs while facing grassroots communities to present unique local vitality.

3.8 Integrating Resources and Demonstrating Talent Effectiveness

Under the premise of severe resource constraints, county-level media convergence must fully utilize limited resources to maximize effectiveness. Moreover, the construction of county-level media convergence remains stuck in superficial formalities such as simply hanging signs. This requires connecting with local specific conditions to enhance dissemination capabilities. While material resources are important, the critical nature of human resources cannot be overlooked. Therefore, county-level media should ensure a high proportion of human resources within new media departments. Only by finding accurate positioning, determining future development directions, and truly demonstrating talent effectiveness can they explore a more scientific path in media convergence and attract increasing audience attention, effectively enhancing the practical results of media convergence. This requires county-level media to prioritize their own development, identify existing problems, develop effective solutions, and drive rapid development.

In summary, under the omnimedia perspective, the integrated development and innovation of county-level media have gained new direction. As grassroots units, county-level media convergence centers should focus on integrating the “four centers” —media convergence centers, party-mass service centers, government service centers, and new-era civilization practice centers—while adhering to the goal-oriented innovation of serving the people through practical actions. By constructing the media convergence center platform from multiple angles and dimensions, they can continuously enhance dissemination power, guidance, and influence, thereby effectively promoting better development.

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Note: Figure translations are in progress. See original paper for figures.

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