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## A Review of Broadcasting Media Convergence Research in 2020: Postprint

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### Abstract

The year 2020 marked a critical juncture in the evolution from “media convergence” to “deep media convergence,” with broadcasting media, as a crucial component thereof, receiving extensive attention from researchers. Scholarly attention has been particularly devoted to the theoretical dimensions of broadcasting media convergence, technological applications and platform construction, business models and development strategies, as well as development strategies for local broadcasting media. This paper collects, examines, and reviews journal articles from 2020 on broadcasting media convergence research in China via the CNKI Chinese Journals Database, aiming to delineate the research landscape of this field for that year.

### Full Text

#### A Review of Research on Broadcast Media Convergence in 2020

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**Abstract:** The year 2020 marked a critical juncture in the evolution from “media convergence” to “deep media convergence,” with broadcast media serving as a vital component that attracted widespread attention from researchers. Scholars focused particularly on the theoretical dimensions, technological applications and platform construction, business models and development strategies, and local broadcast media development strategies. This paper collects, reviews, and critiques journal articles from 2020 on broadcast media convergence in China through the CNKI Chinese Journal Database, aiming to outline the research landscape of this field in 2020.

**Keywords:** media convergence; broadcast media; deep convergence; CNKI Chinese Journal Database; all-media

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Since media convergence was elevated to a national strategy in 2014, its development has steadily advanced, entering a stage of deep convergence by 2020. Against this backdrop, media organizations nationwide have continuously developed media convergence and innovated integration strategies. The number of academic papers on media convergence surged after 2014, closely related to the “Guiding Opinions on the Convergence Development of Traditional and Emerging Media” passed at the fourth meeting of the Central Leading Group for Comprehensively Deepening Reform in August of that year. In 2020 alone, a search for “media convergence” as a keyword on CNKI yielded 1,501 results.

As a crucial link in this process, broadcast media has become the focus of both academic and industry attention. This paper searches CNKI for 2020 literature related to media convergence, using “media convergence \* broadcast” as the theme and including “media convergence” and “broadcast” as keywords. After excluding irrelevant work summaries, meeting notices, and other articles, a total of 423 valid papers were retrieved. Among these, research on municipal-level media convergence was the most numerous, accounting for 27% of the total literature.

## 1. Research on Media Convergence Policies

Research on media convergence policies primarily involves national strategies and related policies, with content focusing on policy interpretation from a national strategic perspective and analyzing the macro-level layout and deep convergence development direction. The year 2020 was a key node in the evolution from “media convergence” to “deep media convergence.” On June 30, 2020, the 14th meeting of the Central Committee for Comprehensively Deepening Reform reviewed and approved the “Guiding Opinions on Accelerating In-depth Media Convergence Development,” emphasizing “promoting media convergence to develop in depth” and proposing the requirement to “create a batch of new mainstream media with strong influence and competitiveness.” In September 2020, the General Office of the CPC Central Committee and the State Council issued the “Opinions on Accelerating In-depth Media Convergence Development,” clarifying the overall requirements for deep media convergence development and signaling that China’s media convergence had entered “deep waters.” These 2020 policy documents pointed out the development direction for the industry, constituted the real-world context for academic research, and provided references for development paths and strategies in media convergence studies.

Some scholars also interpreted these policies. Huang Chuxin reviewed media convergence-related policies in recent years, discovering that China's relevant guidelines and policies have continuity and high consistency, and proposed future paths for deep media convergence based on the "Opinions on Accelerating In-depth Media Convergence Development," addressing the transformation and upgrading of traditional media, the all-media matrix at the national, provincial, municipal, and county levels, media operation systems and mechanisms, and the construction of new mainstream media.

## 2. Research on Development Paths for Broadcast Media Convergence

Under the top-level policy design, broadcast media at all levels have carried out sweeping reforms and integration. The academic community has conducted extensive research and discussion on development paths for broadcast media convergence, covering technological applications, business models and strategies, talent management and system reform, and development strategies for media convergence at the central, provincial, municipal, and county levels. Among these, studies analyzing media development trends and key paths from a national perspective were relatively few in number but high in quality, providing valuable references for both academia and industry. The most prominent and representative research came from Xu Lijun of Wuhan University. In the article " 'New Four Modernizations' : Future Trends and Key Paths for China's Media Development," the author identified four important trend changes for China's media industry under media convergence: videoization, MCN-ization, Tech-ization, and servitization, involving media development direction, transformation paths, and profit solutions—topics worthy of in-depth academic tracking and research and important strategic decision-making references for the industry. Jiang Xian-jia and Gao Fuan, in "Research on Development Trends and Paths of Broadcast Media Convergence in the All-Media Environment," analyzed the current status and problems of broadcast media convergence in three stages within the all-media context, and discussed development trends and paths from perspectives including conceptual renewal, internet thinking, process optimization and platform reconstruction, smart broadcasting, business management, and compound talent cultivation. They proposed "reconstructing living room culture," suggesting that topical and emotional television content provides family members with subjects for discussion and reflection, that watching television not only promotes good communication among family members but also increases TV ratings to a certain extent, thereby extending the vitality of television media. These articles provided detailed analysis of future development paths for broadcast media in the context of convergence and have been highly cited, offering referenceable ideas and directions for other researchers.

The remaining literature primarily focuses on theoretical dimensions, technological applications and platform construction, business models and development strategies, and local broadcast media development strategies. Research on local broadcast media at the provincial, municipal, and county levels accounts for as

high as 45% of the total.

**2.1 Theoretical Dimensions of Broadcast Media Convergence** The transformation to the internet is the most fundamental link in the media convergence process, determining the basic framework construction of media. The “Opinions on Accelerating In-depth Media Convergence Development” states that “internet thinking is a way of thinking based on internet technology, oriented toward valuing, adapting to, and utilizing the internet, and characterized by collecting, accumulating, and analyzing data to ‘speak with data.’ ” Its core content is “interconnection,” building new bridges for information transmission, practicing the concepts of openness, equality, interaction, and sharing, and constructing a communication system adapted to the internet environment. In research on internet thinking for media convergence, scholars divide it into three orientations: user thinking, platform thinking, and data thinking. Although internet thinking has broadened the horizons and strategies for media convergence, it requires a vigilant attitude. In recent years, issues such as declining media credibility, frequent data leaks, and difficult digital copyright protection have revealed some drawbacks of internet thinking. Currently, academic research on addressing these drawbacks is limited, and proposing practical solutions to these problems is a challenge that both academia and industry must jointly face.

**2.2 Technological Applications and Platform Construction for Broadcast Media Convergence** The arrival of fifth-generation communication technology has provided technical support for the development of the broadcasting industry, with many regions implementing intelligent broadcasting systems such as “5G Broadcasting” and “Smart Broadcasting.” The application of new technologies supports the construction of new media platforms and creates various possibilities for media convergence. Among these, the technological innovation of 5G and its impact on platform construction were key focuses for researchers, accounting for 9% of the total literature. Li Qin, Xu Cheng, and Zhao Fanyu’s “Technology, Communication and Society: The Convergence Development Path of China’s Mainstream Media—A Case Study of 12 Mainstream Media in the Yangtze River Delta Region” holds significant reference value. The article divides the convergence development of China’s mainstream media into three stages: the “Internet Plus” stage, the “Central Kitchen” stage, and the “Immersive News” stage. It analyzes how technologies such as big data, cloud computing, artificial intelligence, online live streaming, panoramic video, and VR promote intelligent media in the “Immersive News” stage, covering all aspects of convergence news production and distribution for mainstream media. The article points out the resistance faced by new media platform construction for mainstream media in the Yangtze River Delta region, including inadequate integration between traditional and new media, improper media technology investment, and unclear management development thinking—factors that have reference value for broadcast media convergence nationwide. Technology is the support for platforms, and platforms are the extension of technology, but both depend on the founda-

tion of funding and talent. While new technologies are widely applied in central and provincial broadcast media, municipal and county-level media convergence still face numerous difficulties in technological application. How to match unlimited technological development and new media platforms with limited resource allocation is an urgent issue for both academia and industry.

### 2.3 Business Models and Development Strategies for Broadcast Media

**Convergence** Regarding business models, the MCN model and the “Broadcast + Live Streaming” model were key focuses for researchers in 2020. The full name of MCN institutions is Multi-Channel Network, which “originally emerged as a structurally ‘intentional’ creation by YouTube, aiming to establish a hierarchical control structure to effectively organize and manage a large amount of fragmented content and its producers, thereby making the entire ecosystem easier to capitalize as a high-quality content distribution platform.” Essentially, it is an “intermediary” between platforms and creators, collaborating with creators to produce unique content and performing business and marketing functions. Currently, MCN models are mainly divided into two types: native MCN and cooperative MCN. The domestic case of native MCN that has attracted attention is Hunan Broadcasting, with considerable research on the “Mango Model.” However, the “Mango Model” lacks universal applicability, as Hunan Broadcasting had a unique positioning early on, and its scale and early construction of an entertainment-oriented business model are difficult for other broadcast media to replicate. Therefore, more models need to be explored to provide survival space for other media. Cooperative MCN is suitable for broadcast media with insufficient internal momentum or resources, such as the strategic cooperation between Heilongjiang Broadcasting and Shell Video to jointly create the short video brand “Dragon Video,” which solved problems of insufficient momentum and lack of resources and provided replicable successful experience for other broadcast media.

Regarding “Broadcast + Live Streaming E-commerce,” according to the “2020-2021 China Online Live Streaming Industry Annual Research Report” released by iiMedia Research, there were over 20 million e-commerce live streaming sessions from January to November 2020. Coupled with the impact of the pandemic, the live streaming e-commerce industry has penetrated every corner of people’s lives. Participants in online live streaming e-commerce include not only enterprises and internet platforms but also traditional media represented by China Media Group. Deng Yanling and Gao Guiwu, in “Opportunities and Reflections on Online Live Streaming E-commerce,” analyzed the live streaming model as a path for new and old media convergence. The authors believe that live streaming can bring traffic and popularity to media, that media credibility and host recognition can bring heat and influence to brands, and that the organic combination of brands and IPs can directly drive product sales. The “Broadcast + Live Streaming E-commerce” model, on the one hand, provides new channels for media business operations and expands convergence paths between old and new media; on the other hand, it promotes and responds to the national call

for rural revitalization and poverty alleviation, generating direct and observable economic and social benefits. However, the quality of live streaming products is linked to media credibility—a concern for media but not for commercial live streaming, making it fatal for media. Currently, the “Broadcast + Live Streaming E-commerce” model is still in its initial development stage, and the path for optimizing the model remains to be studied. It is necessary to seek unity between economic and social benefits in practice, achieving both the transformation and upgrading of traditional media and preserving media’s communication power, guidance power, influence, and credibility.

### 3. Research on Development Strategies for Local Broadcast Media Convergence

One characteristic of China’s television development is the “four-level broadcasting system,” namely central, provincial, municipal, and county-level television. As the primary front for grassroots public opinion, local broadcasting plays a crucial role. Provincial broadcast media, relying on advantages in policy, technology, talent, and funding, have rapidly built new media platforms and formed unique provincial and municipal images. Since county-level media convergence received national support in 2018 and has been developing for two years, it has achieved remarkable results nationwide. Researchers’ focus has shifted from overall layout and future prospects of county-level media convergence to existing problems and solution strategies. As county-level media convergence apps gradually enter people’s mobile phones, especially playing control and service functions during the pandemic prevention and control period, they have become effective ways for media to seize discourse high ground and guide grassroots public opinion. Exploring innovative paths for county-level media convergence and talent retention remains a research area with potential.

The development of provincial broadcast media and county-level media convergence has created a “pincer attack” on municipal-level broadcast media, which currently faces the dilemma of “waist collapse,” lacking both the resource advantages of provincial broadcast media and the policy support for county-level media convergence. Therefore, the academic community pays special attention to it, with 115 literature pieces on municipal-level media in 2020 alone, accounting for 27% of the annual broadcast media research literature. Among review articles, “Theoretical Dimensions, Practical Challenges, and Operational Strategies for Municipal-level Media Convergence Development” by Ding Heigen and Kong Lingbowen, and “Current Status, Problems, and Countermeasures for Municipal-level Media Convergence in China” by Huang Chuxin, Shao Sainan, and Zhu Changhua are the most prominent. These two articles point out the current status, existing problems, and development strategies for municipal-level media convergence in China. Ding Heigen and Kong Lingbowen mentioned the social governance function and government service function of municipal-level media—two unique advantages of local media. Therefore, in terms of program production for municipal-level broadcast media convergence, mediation and in-

investigation programs concerning people's livelihood are most popular with audiences and are also the focus of researchers' attention. Secondly, municipal news apps have also attracted researchers' attention. Previously, research on news apps focused on organic linkage with traditional information distribution channels and convergence news production. With the promotion of apps, especially during pandemic prevention and control, municipal news apps have shouldered tasks of public opinion guidance, social governance, and public services, with health codes in some regions contributing to effective pandemic control. Researchers' attention has focused on the governance and service functions of municipal news apps. Functional advantages provide momentum and opportunities for municipal-level broadcast media convergence development, but researchers should remain vigilant about homogenization and explore unique regional cultures and characteristic industries to bring economic resources "in" and cultural brands "out," making resources "come in" and brands "go out."

#### 4. Reflections

The convergence process of broadcast media is a key link in media convergence, with new models and concepts continuously proposed, providing new outlets for traditional broadcasting and offering reference cases for numerous broadcast media. However, the following problems remain to be solved.

First, the definition of research objects needs clearer demarcation. There are differences between business-media convergence and media-organization convergence: the former is convergence in the content production process, while the latter is convergence in media organizational structure. Current research on broadcast media organizational structure convergence is abundant, while research on production process convergence is superficial. There remains considerable research space for the convergence of some broadcast programs, such as opera and children's programs.

Second, the depth and specificity of research need to be strengthened. Some media convergence research exists only on paper, lacking in-depth understanding of actual media conditions, resulting in suggestions that lack constructive content. Moreover, much research consists of general overviews that "briefly analyze" broadcast media convergence, with insufficient targeted research. For example, in-depth research on technological applications for municipal-level media convergence is lacking, and future research needs to be more subdivided.

Third, some topics still have considerable research space. Areas such as broadcast media convergence research under the rural revitalization strategy, rural broadcast program convergence research, and strategic cooperation between broadcast media and universities await in-depth exploration. As media convergence enters "deep waters," the focus of related research is no longer simply "surviving"—the transformation and upgrading of traditional media—but "how to live"—diversified business models. After solving practical survival issues such as talent retention and expenditure, the next step is "living wonderfully." Ho-

mogenization will inevitably lead to a situation of survival of the fittest. There remains considerable research space for the personalized, customized, and vertical development of broadcast media, as well as for exploring regional advantages.

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

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