

Postprint: A Study on the Current Status and Development Strategies of Short Video Communication at the Luancheng District Converged Media Center

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Abstract

Since General Secretary Xi Jinping proposed at the National Conference on Propaganda and Ideological Work on August 21, 2018, to “solidly grasp the construction of county-level integrated media centers,” various regions across the country have embarked on establishing such centers. As one of Shijiazhuang’ s urban districts, Luancheng District is likewise undertaking the construction and development of its integrated media center, currently relying primarily on short videos as the communication modality for information dissemination. However, constrained by factors such as insufficient professional personnel and limited resource investment, numerous issues have emerged in the content dissemination of these short videos. This paper conducts an in-depth investigation into these short video dissemination problems and analyzes current exemplary cases, based on which it proposes corresponding recommendations, with the objective of fostering enhanced construction and development of the Luancheng District Integrated Media Center.

Full Text

Preamble

Title: Research on the Current Status and Development Strategies of Short Video Communication at Luancheng District Media Convergence Center

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Abstract: Since General Secretary Xi Jinping proposed “solidly grasping the construction of county-level media convergence centers” at the National Conference on Propaganda and Ideological Work on August 21, 2018, regions across

the country have embarked on building county-level media convergence centers. As one of the urban districts of Shijiazhuang, Luancheng District is similarly engaged in the construction and development of its media convergence center, currently relying primarily on short videos for information dissemination. However, constrained by insufficient professional personnel and limited resource investment, numerous problems exist in its short video content communication.

This paper conducts an in-depth investigation into its short video communication challenges and analyzes current exemplary cases, proposing corresponding recommendations based on these findings to promote better construction and development of the Luancheng District Media Convergence Center.

Keywords: County-level media convergence; Luancheng District Media Convergence Center; Short videos; Construction path

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Since the initiation of media convergence in 2014, the bridge connecting traditional and emerging media has rapidly evolved, with successful integration across channels, platforms, and media formats. As media convergence gradually enters a deeper phase, General Secretary Xi Jinping explicitly stated at the National Conference on Propaganda and Ideological Work on August 21, 2018, that we must solidly grasp the construction of county-level media convergence centers to better guide and serve the masses. The essence of county-level media convergence center construction and development lies in deepening and extending media convergence, representing a crucial manifestation of serving and guiding grassroots communities. Breaking through inherent ideological barriers, convergence is no longer limited to traditional media integration but requires leveraging new media platforms and capitalizing on their advantages to become effective voices in the new era. Consequently, the first phase characterized by media group “central kitchen” construction has transitioned to a second phase marked by grassroots “county-level media convergence center” construction. County-level media convergence serves as the “last mile” in media integration, holding profound significance from political, economic, social, and livelihood perspectives.

1.1 Filling Media Gaps and Adapting to Development Trends

With continuous scientific and technological advancement, the internet has become an extremely important information dissemination platform. Although China's overall media convergence environment has achieved considerable success, unclear breakpoints and turbulent currents persist in the "deep water zone." The era of new media represents both the best and worst of times. Media technology transformation brings a refreshing new environment. According to CNNIC data, as of June 2020, China's rural internet users numbered only 285 million, less than one-third of total Chinese netizens, creating obstacles for effective information dissemination. The construction and operation of county-level media convergence centers aim to address this national "convergence pain point" during the critical period. As information distribution centers and service providers for grassroots communities at the district, county, village, and neighborhood levels, county-level media convergence construction serves to fill media gaps while adapting to internet-era media transformation trends.

1.2 Accelerating Rural Revitalization and Enhancing Urbanization Rates

Since the reform and opening up, China's rapid economic development has accelerated urbanization, making the urban-rural dual structure increasingly prominent. In recent years, with substantial national investment and construction, grassroots development has significantly improved. On August 11, 2018, the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology released an action plan aiming for 98% of administrative villages to achieve fiber optic access and 4G network coverage by 2020, while Shenzhen and Suzhou began pioneering 5G base station construction. With this action plan's implementation, county-level media convergence construction will possess powerful hardware momentum, greatly benefiting rural revitalization and urbanization rate enhancement, thereby promoting spiritual and civilizational poverty alleviation across rural areas. The year 2020 marked the final year of China's comprehensive poverty alleviation campaign. According to the National Bureau of Statistics' "Statistical Communiqué of the People's Republic of China on National Economic and Social Development 2019," mainland rural household registered population reached 551.62 million at the end of 2019, accounting for 39.40% of the total population, while the urbanization rate of permanent residents reached 60.60%. Despite positive trends, China still has considerable progress to make compared to Western developed countries with over 90% urbanization rates. Moreover, comprehensive poverty alleviation encompasses not only material poverty but also higher-level spiritual and civilizational poverty. Internet penetration rate serves as an important indicator of spiritual poverty alleviation, reflecting rural conditions to some extent. Compared to the 76.4% urban internet penetration rate, the 52.3% rural rate indicates development space for spiritual poverty alleviation in rural China. County-level media convergence construction constitutes

an indispensable component of county-level civilizational construction.

1.3 Stabilizing County Society and Securing County Public Sentiment

From an ideological perspective, management and governance mechanisms at the relatively distant county level still contain certain gaps and deficiencies, potentially creating what German sociologist Ulrich Beck termed a “risk society” and increasing China’s endogenous risks. As crucial grassroots communication platforms, county-level media convergence centers possess natural advantages in being close to grassroots communities and farmers. Their greatest advantage in county-level social information dissemination lies in their ability to speak local dialects effectively, enabling secondary interpretation and dissemination of propaganda content so that the Party’s ideological theories and policy advocacy can be grounded, popular, and engaging. Consequently, county-level media convergence can serve as the Party’s mouthpiece for policy and service information delivery, bridging the discourse channel between official and civilian spheres and fulfilling what Professor Song Zhaokuan described as “linking up and down.” Constructing county-level media convergence centers represents a major initiative for stabilizing county society and securing public sentiment, as well as more effectively and healthily consolidating county-level political power and strengthening the Party’s governance foundation and resources.

2. Basic Paths for County-Level Media Convergence Center Construction

Following the call to open the “last mile” of media convergence, top-down strong promotion has spurred enthusiastic construction of county-level media convergence centers nationwide, yielding numerous successful cases. After categorization and summarization, current county-level media convergence construction primarily follows two basic paths summarized by Professor Zhu Chunyang of Fudan University: “single-soldier diffusion” and “cloud connectivity.”

Single-soldier diffusion involves county-level media convergence centers directly replicating their superior-level media convergence reform measures and “micro-sizing” them for local adaptation. For instance, Changxing County in Zhejiang and Yumen County in Gansu adopted this approach for their county-level media convergence construction. This path provides local media with considerable operational space, allowing them to construct and transform media convergence centers while fully considering their own conditions. It also offers replicable experience for local media still unclear about their construction path, reducing “trial-and-error costs.” However, it should be noted that such county-level media convergence center construction varies due to different local resources and actual conditions, making its success somewhat non-replicable.

Cloud connectivity involves integrating county-level media into higher-level media “media clouds” to complete media convergence center construction “in the

cloud.” For example, the “Zhejiang Media Cloud” developed by Zhejiang Daily Newspaper Group and the “Central Kitchen” of Hunan Daily Newspaper Group both provide such functions for small and medium-sized media to share cloud resources. This construction path, based on the first phase of media convergence construction, facilitates unified technical standards and mutual coordination among media for information dissemination and public opinion guidance, thereby more efficiently completing county-level information services.

3. Current Status and Advantages of Short Videos

Since 2017, the short video industry has entered a white-hot development stage. According to the 46th CNNIC statistical report, as of June 2020, China’s short video user base reached 818 million, accounting for 87.0% of all netizens. Continuous engagement from this massive audience makes short videos one of the most effective information dissemination methods today. Short video communication offers several advantages.

3.1 Thematic Visual Communication

As a high-context culture, Chinese possesses inherent characteristics that make it difficult to understand, while county and rural residents generally have relatively low education levels, experience outflow of youth, and face serious aging phenomena. Lower cultural levels and lack of personnel to “translate and interpret” information make text-based communication difficult to convey effectively. Video combines oral, textual, and visual presentation methods in a comprehensive visual format, offering greater readability and emotional resonance compared to single-form communication.

3.2 Optimized Communication Efficiency

Charles Hill’s “visual persuasion theory” posits that “when vision constructs a certain intention, images can acquire persuasive power, thereby increasing persuasive weight.” As a higher-level communication form than images, video undoubtedly possesses more advanced persuasive efficiency. Moreover, short videos can be repeatedly watched during fragmented time, and the performance form that repeatedly stimulates audience audio-visual senses through multiple appearances can deepen public understanding, using fragmented communication for interstitial cultivation. Additionally, short videos can transcend spatial barriers for long-distance transmission, deepening public understanding through the construction of a video ecological environment.

3.3 Bridging Generational Differences

Aging phenomena exist among residents in counties and rural areas. As “digital refugees,” the aging population struggles to access information in the new media era and faces certain “cognitive barriers” in using new media devices. Video presentation can disseminate operational methods, knowledge information, and

news content through simple and understandable approaches, helping to bridge the generational digital divide.

4. Current Status of Short Video Communication at Luancheng District Media Convergence Center

4.1 Current Status

Since the launch of the Palm Luancheng WeChat official account in November 2015, the Luancheng District Media Convergence Center has implemented a series of reforms and convergence measures: the Palm Luancheng App went online in October 2017; Sohu, NetEase, Dafeng, Weibo, and Douyin accounts opened in April 2018; Toutiao account opened in February 2019; CCTV News+ opened in May 2019; and Jiyun Luancheng launched in November 2019. Currently, the Luancheng District Media Convergence Center owns nine proprietary media platforms, including the Palm Luancheng official account and Jiyun Luancheng App. In 2019, the center was recognized as one of Shijiazhuang's top ten reform and innovation experiences. While constructing a relatively complete media convergence center, Luancheng District Media Convergence Center has actively explored the internal laws of media convergence, using convergence reform to promote media innovation and development while proactively laying out its short video business to create a comprehensive new media matrix for content dissemination through the latest formats.

4.1.1 Launching Exclusive Apps and Video Channels In November 2019, Jiyun Luancheng, an exclusive “news + government affairs + services” App for Luancheng District, launched as an upgraded version of Palm Luancheng. With simpler operation and more comprehensive services, Jiyun Luancheng has attracted a large number of local Luancheng users. Its video function is presented in segmented blocks, including independently recorded news information from the media convergence center, broadcast television information, daily life knowledge, public service advertisements, and online courses, with each video lasting approximately two minutes. Each video is accompanied by brief text introductions below, while individual videos incorporate sub-functions such as commenting, forwarding, collecting, and related news, enriching App functionality and facilitating users' daily needs.

4.1.2 Opening Douyin Accounts with People-Oriented Content In addition to its exclusive App, the Luancheng District Media Convergence Center has opened an official “Palm Luancheng” account on Douyin to broadcast localized daily life content. As a currently popular short video App, Douyin is deeply loved by ordinary users and possesses strong user stickiness. According to a Tencent-published Douyin user research report, Douyin users open the App an average of 13.5 days per month. By choosing Douyin as its official account platform, the Luancheng District Media Convergence Center undoubtedly enjoys inherent advantages that endow the account with certain communication

capabilities.

4.2 Problems

However, the Luancheng District Media Convergence Center's short video content communication still faces certain problems.

The video content in both the locally developed Jiyun Luancheng App and the Douyin-based official account suffers from content mixing to some extent: news information, popular science content, and public service advertisements all appear in the same account without specific tags for content classification. The lack of verticality in video content prevents the cultivation and establishment of user stickiness. Additionally, both video content presentations lack search functionality, which affects user experience to some degree.

4.2.2 Complex Presentation Formats and Lack of Quality Content

Current short video content predominantly appears in vertical screen format, with longer content using horizontal screen. However, the official Palm Luancheng Douyin account employs vertical screen, horizontal screen, and horizontal-to-vertical conversion formats, creating confusion. Chaotic presentation formats inevitably raise user doubts about the account's professionalism. Furthermore, the short videos in this Douyin account feature poor composition and primarily use built-in software music that cannot be reasonably matched with video content, affecting user experience. The lack of quality content results in insufficient user attention and stickiness, leading to inadequate communication power and influence. According to available information, the official Palm Luancheng Douyin account has only approximately 6,000 followers, with an average of only 58 likes per video. Video views in the Jiyun Luancheng App are similarly low.

4.2.3 Insufficient Professional Personnel and Production Capacity

The Luancheng District Media Convergence Center currently employs over 60 staff members, but only 25 are formally established personnel, most of whom have unclear division of labor, with virtually no dedicated professionals for short video content communication. This lack of professional personnel has resulted in inadequate short video production capacity and insufficient video output. Additionally, short videos on the official Palm Luancheng Douyin account suffer from shaky camera work and insufficient clarity. Rough video quality and scarce professional production have contributed to inadequate communication power of short video content.

4.2.4 Insufficient Publishing Frequency and Limited Resource Investment

Since publishing its first short video on December 11, 2018, the official Palm Luancheng Douyin account has released only 66 short videos over one and a half years, including some substandard content. Compared to approximately 30 annual promotional video productions, short video content publish-

ing frequency is clearly inadequate. Although most promotional video content involves corporate cooperation generating certain economic benefits and thus receives due attention, short videos for the media convergence center's own promotion should also be valued, as they can help external audiences better understand the center, and quality content production can establish greater communication power and influence.

5. Short Video Communication Strategies for Luancheng District Media Convergence Center

Short video communication aligns with current developmental trends. Therefore, in future development, the Luancheng District Media Convergence Center should reallocate some resources toward short video content creation and distribution to attract users with higher-quality content, thereby better supporting the media convergence center. Specific implementation can proceed from the following points.

5.1 Precise Positioning and Targeted Content Communication

Professor Yu Guoming has proposed the concept of “broad convergence,” suggesting that “development should follow a cross-domain, cross-industry logic that transcends content, striving to become a platform-based media serving people's daily lives, where various daily needs can be fulfilled, thereby establishing its indispensability in people's lives.” As a county-level media convergence center, Luancheng District Media Convergence Center should also position itself as a platform-based media serving people's daily lives, focusing on service-oriented content release supplemented by daily life and entertainment content for targeted communication. Additionally, constrained by short video time limits, related communication must achieve “thematic clarity” —not the commonly emphasized “prominent theme,” but rather a “single theme.” Content lasting only a few minutes or even dozens of seconds must be immediately comprehensible.

5.2 Recruiting Professional Personnel to Produce Quality Content

As a media organization serving 360,000 district residents, the Luancheng District Media Convergence Center's staffing is somewhat thin. The lack of professional personnel has contributed to low-quality short video content and insufficient communication power and influence. Therefore, the center should recruit professional practitioners to oversee the entire production process from composition, soundtrack, script content, to editing, focusing on building a professional platform media that publishes high-quality short video content. This will enhance the center's reputation among local residents, and improved image will simultaneously strengthen “credibility, influence, communication power, and guidance.”

5.3 Valuing External Revenue Sources While Building Internal Image

Domestically, the well-developed Changxing Media Convergence Center in Zhejiang produces over 100 short videos annually through external promotional video contracts, generating more than 4 million RMB in economic benefits. Despite certain regional advantages, the Luancheng District Media Convergence Center can still draw lessons from this model. Simultaneously, short video content for internal image promotion should also receive attention, as good self-promotion can attract external promotional video resources, increase revenue, enable recruitment of professional personnel, and create a virtuous cycle of “image building–revenue attraction–personnel recruitment.”

5.4 Learning from Exemplary Cases to Build Its Own Brand

The Changxing Media Convergence Center in Zhejiang began establishment in 2011. By the end of 2018, it had integrated “three TV channels + two radio frequencies + one newspaper + two websites + two micro-platforms and one App” into a county-level all-media communication group encompassing various media companies and communication service companies. The entire convergence center currently employs over 500 staff members with total assets of 900 million RMB. Regarding short video communication, on the evening of September 16, 2018, affected by Super Typhoon “Mangkhut,” some areas in Changxing County experienced small watershed flash floods. At noon on the 17th, the Changxing Media Group editorial board immediately decided to open live broadcast channels, dispatching 10 groups of all-media journalists to the scene for on-site reporting through multiple formats. From this successful case of Changxing County Media Convergence Center, several reference-worthy success factors can be identified for Luancheng District Media Convergence Center’s consideration.

As an important component of Shijiazhuang’s media landscape bearing significant responsibility for information dissemination and ideological guidance, the Luancheng District Media Convergence Center plays a pivotal role. How to better build a county-level media convergence center and maximize its functions of vertical information communication, service provision, and ideological guidance through short videos—the most popular and effective communication method today—remains a question requiring further exploration by the Luancheng District Media Convergence Center.

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

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