

Research on the Path to Enhancing Mainstream Public Opinion Influence through Convergence Innovation in TV Commentary Programs (Post-print)

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Abstract

In the context of deep media convergence, for television media to occupy the main position of public opinion propaganda both online and offline, it must attach importance to and effectively leverage the important role of commentary programs; this also constitutes an opportune period for commentary programs to regain their former glory. Television commentary programs need to strategically position themselves around consolidating and strengthening mainstream public opinion, establishing a primary platform for the dissemination of new ideas. Based on certain dilemmas existing in the development of television commentary, this article explores convergence innovation strategies and pathways for television commentary programs through collaborating with print media to create high-quality commentary programs, integrating internet thinking into commentary programs, pioneering diversified forms of commentary programs, and forming synergistic communication forces with new media platforms, thereby enabling television commentary programs to truly respond to the call of the times, lead value orientation, and fulfill the functions of mainstream media in enhancing cognition and guiding public opinion.

Full Text

Preamble

Title: Research on the Path of Integrated Innovation of TV Commentary Programs to Enhance Mainstream Public Opinion Influence

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Abstract: In the context of deep media convergence, television media must prioritize and effectively leverage the important role of commentary programs to occupy the main battlefield of online and offline public opinion guidance, representing a critical opportunity for commentary programs to regain prominence. TV commentary programs should strategically align themselves with the goal of consolidating and strengthening mainstream public opinion, establishing themselves as primary platforms for disseminating new ideas. Based on existing dilemmas in TV commentary development, this article explores integrated innovation strategies and pathways for TV commentary programs through: collaborating with print media to create high-quality commentary content, integrating Internet-oriented thinking into commentary programs, developing diversified program formats, and forming synergistic communication efforts with new media platforms. These approaches enable TV commentary programs to truly respond to the call of the times, lead value orientation, and fulfill the functions of mainstream media in enhancing public cognition and guiding public opinion.

Keywords: Deep media convergence context; TV commentary programs; Integrated innovation; Mainstream public opinion; Influence

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Commentary represents the banner and soul of media, and TV commentary programs constitute a high ground for television media. They serve as the most direct and powerful means of communicating the Party’ s guidelines and policies, promoting mainstream values, guiding public opinion, advancing advanced culture, and leading social trends. The establishment of CCTV’ s News Commentary Department in the 1990s inaugurated a golden decade for Chinese television news commentary, with local stations following suit nationwide, making commentary programs highly anticipated viewing for hundreds of millions of TV audiences. However, as commercial economy developed, marketization triggered an entertainment wave across the nation, placing commentary programs

in an awkward position. Many television stations even dismantled their commentary departments, with only a handful of programs continuing to survive. The rise of self-media and the impact of short videos, coupled with increasingly fast-food-style information consumption, have reduced the probability of audiences receiving opinion-based information. TV commentary programs have continuously attempted innovation. For instance, following the “Entertainment Restriction Order,” Hunan Satellite TV’s “News Open Class” emerged as a TV news commentary program that attracted significant attention upon launch, featuring innovations in audience targeting, program format, and interactivity. Nevertheless, the program was ultimately forced off the air due to uneven commentary quality and limitations in participant qualifications, with low ratings becoming the primary bottleneck hindering the development of news commentary programs [1]. This demonstrates that news commentary programs still require further efforts to break through in today’s television ecosystem.

In the context of media convergence, TV news commentary programs should follow the trend, respond timely, and actively strategize to create new brilliance in their development. New communication forms such as live streaming and short videos have permeated people’s lives through fragmented information flows. Mainstream media must both uphold its principles and demonstrate superior capabilities, providing accurate and pertinent viewpoints to unify audiences’ ideals, beliefs, values, and moral concepts, thereby forming concentric circles online and offline.

1. Development Dilemmas of TV Commentary Programs

1.1 Low Ratings and Difficult Innovation Progress

Traditional TV news commentary programs face intense impact from online culture in both production models and discourse systems. Driven by ratings and commercial interests, some TV media have launched various variety and entertainment programs, while TV news commentary programs—the “soul” and “banner” of media—have been increasingly marginalized. The proliferation of self-media and short videos, along with increasingly fast-food-style information, has reduced audiences’ receptiveness to opinion-based information. TV commentary programs have persistently attempted innovation. For example, following the “Entertainment Restriction Order,” Hunan Satellite TV’s “News Open Class” emerged as a TV news commentary program that attracted considerable attention at launch, featuring numerous innovations in audience positioning, program format, and interactivity. However, uneven commentary quality and limitations in participant qualifications forced the program off the air, with low ratings becoming the primary bottleneck in news commentary program development [1]. Evidently, news commentary programs must still strive harder to achieve breakthroughs in today’s television ecosystem.

1.2 Ambiguous Definition of TV Commentary Programs

During the era of absolute dominance by television media, CCTV's "Focus Interview" directly addressed social hotspots with clear viewpoints and approachable hosting style, becoming a phenomenal commentary program that spawned numerous imitators and established a paradigm for TV commentary. However, many commentary programs failed to fully absorb the essence of "Focus Interview," with most local TV news commentary programs dedicating substantial time to presenting news facts and only briefly commenting at the end. Such programs' pacing and discourse language fell far short of commentary program requirements, making it difficult to leverage the philosophical and 思辨性 (critical thinking) characteristics that commentary programs should possess and challenging to achieve depth and height. This "more narration, less commentary" format has weakened the advantages of commentary to some extent and constrained its development. Subsequent innovations in program formats have also raised classification and definition issues. For instance, some talk shows are conversation programs in form but communicate viewpoints at their core, making them classifiable as commentary programs. Similarly, some newspaper reading programs center on personalized commentary delivered by hosts. Programs that disseminate opinion-based information can actually be categorized as commentary programs, yet in relevant commentary program awards, categories like "Best Commentary Program" and "Best Commentary Program Host" have expanded program boundaries, further enhancing the prosperity of commentary programs.

1.3 Contradiction Between Multi-interaction and "Concentric Circles" Formation

Television has long employed popularized communication methods, causing TV news commentary to be unable to compete with newspapers in depth and revealing a huge gap with new media in terms of real-time interactivity. Audiences can participate in commenting on news events alongside guests and hosts through new media platforms, which can somewhat change opinion communication patterns and extend the temporal and spatial boundaries of commentary. However, many commentary programs equate interactive thinking with program format, overusing interactive methods while offering few valuable commentary messages. Content tends to become fragmented and lacks logical coherence, reducing commentary programs to vulgar verbal spats. The overall structure of news commentary programs becomes unsystematic, and hosts struggle to control the commentary scope. For some professional topics, audiences cannot effectively communicate with experts, resulting in wasted program resources. Some interactive statements can even mislead audiences and fail to play an effective positive guiding role [2]. This damages the authority and credibility of commentary programs, as diversified expression and fragmented communication dissolve the formation of "concentric circles" and fail to effectively fulfill media's leading role in values and concepts.

2. Pathways for Integrated Innovation in TV Commentary Programs

To enable mainstream media to sound the strongest voice of the times and help them occupy the public opinion battlefield, commentary programs should play a greater promotional role and explore new development pathways in both content and format.

2.1.1 Secondary Creation by Drawing on Print Media Resources

The earliest integration of TV commentary programs with print media (news-papers, magazines, etc.) manifested in TV newspaper reading programs, which process print media content for secondary dissemination. Jiangxi Satellite TV's "Magazine World," launched in 2007, exemplifies this approach. With the slogan "Read Magazines, Observe the World," the host reads magazines and comments on selected topics in an accessible, humorous manner, interpreting content related to people's lives based on magazine illustrations and text. This approach leverages the professional advantages of print media—broad subject matter and in-depth commentary—while combining television's audio-visual integration strengths to form a unique style in program segment design, structure, and content arrangement that remains popular among many viewers to this day.

2.1.2 Jointly Creating Commentary Programs with Print Media

For a long time, different media types operated independently. Print media possesses strong advantages in commentary talent reserves, providing robust support for commentary programs in planning, writing, and other aspects. In the context of media convergence, TV commentary programs should better identify integration points with print media, making multi-angle, three-dimensional, and deep-level commentary the core of programs rather than the traditional narration-dominated approach. By fully leveraging the strengths of both print and television media, they can create uniquely distinctive new commentary programs that rejuvenate the viewership demographic, guide young people's viewing habits, and satisfy audience demand for opinion-based information. TV media needs to learn from others' strengths to enhance its influence and credibility with a more professional and authoritative brand image.

2.2 Application of "Internet Plus" Thinking in TV News Commentary Programs

2.2.1 Enhancing Interactivity In the media convergence context, various programs continuously innovate in format and segments. Commentary programs, which typically prioritize content over packaging, need to explore new pathways of upholding principles while innovating to expand their influence. "China Public Opinion Field," China's first converged media commentary program, provides excellent reference for TV commentary innovation. After its

launch, the program' s ratings exceeded 1% for 18 consecutive periods, innovatively achieving three-screen interaction among television, Internet, and mobile phones. Audiences can participate in topic discussions in real time, with their messages and comments displayed promptly on the big screen, achieving innovative multi-screen 联动 (linkage) interaction that presents diverse viewpoints while reflecting the program' s communication 主旨 (main theme) and leading value orientation. This innovative broadcast format provides a new model for TV commentary program development.

2.2.2 Improving Timeliness Converged media demands efficient news dissemination. After hot events occur, netizens can quickly react through reposting, commenting, and leaving messages, making news occurrence and commentary increasingly synchronized. The fixed broadcast times of TV media programs prevent efficient dissemination of commentary, but new media platforms can be leveraged to promptly voice mainstream media perspectives and seize the public opinion battlefield. Attempts can even be made to broadcast commentary programs live, giving audiences greater viewing anticipation. On January 1, 2021, Sichuan Radio and Television launched a new live commentary program “All-Media Live Room,” broadcasting from 20:30 to 22:30. The program focuses on selecting content from “Sichuan Observation,” narrating stories in a relaxed and humorous expression style while transmitting viewpoints and values, grafting Internet platform content onto TV commentary programs and achieving organic integration through large and small screen linkage. Relying on content from the “News Scene” column and other departments’ news coverage from the same day, the program selects topics with the most discussion space and value, with hosts and commentators conducting thorough discussions. Some topics connect with off-site experts or audience members to participate in commentary, making viewpoints more diverse and grounded. The program directly “observes” breaking news, maintaining the original ecology of the broadcast scene, shortening interpersonal communication emotional distance, and enhancing information credibility. Using connection methods to gather the latest information promptly creates a sense of suspense for viewers, helping cultivate audience loyalty and stimulating their viewing anticipation. Live commentary places higher demands on production staff and hosts, requiring thorough pre-communication with guests and real-time content control.

2.2.3 Using Big Data for Topic Selection and Viewpoint Aggregation

Data constitutes the core of converged media, with user data and information data determining media status to a certain extent. Data journalism involves news media mining big data and presenting it through visualization, and this same thinking can be applied to TV commentary programs. Big data can determine topic selection, more accurately grasping audience psychology and behavior and accurately perceiving social sentiment. Big data can also be used to organize various viewpoints, presenting them across different dimensions such as the gender, age, and profession of viewpoint sources, comprehensively and

three-dimensionally displaying the pattern of commentary viewpoints. This quantitative approach can provide a panoramic reflection of the overall viewpoint situation, achieving innovation in news commentary content and format, using new technology to drive the dissemination of mainstream values, and more extensively and deeply activating the content productivity of commentary programs.

2.3.1 Selecting Audience-Preferred Language Expression Styles

The core value of television media lies in its ability to influence people and the extent to which its broadcast content impacts people's values—this is the core of both traditional and converged media. TV news commentary programs need to actively strategize new pathways for integrated innovation development, absorbing print media's strengths in critical thinking and logical coherence while drawing on new media's advantages in timeliness and interactivity. They must find an appropriate balance between one-way viewpoint transmission and public participation in commentary, making communication methods more interactive. Using big data to collect opinion-based information more fully presents diversified viewpoints. They should achieve diversification and personalization of commentary expression styles, becoming more grounded in reality, life, and the masses, thereby enhancing program visibility.

2.3.2 Cultivating a Large Number of Senior Commentators

Television media needs to strengthen commentator team building, supported by high-quality professional commentators who are politically solid, professionally excellent, broad-minded, and pragmatic in work style. Commentators must uphold principles while innovating, using high-level commentary programs to lead social thought and public opinion. Combining commentators' personal styles to create matching program formats fully demonstrates their personal charisma, forming a TV media commentary program matrix that comprehensively covers different program types and audience demographics. TV commentary program production staff, technical personnel, and communication platforms need to coordinate and cooperate, speaking out promptly on hot news and major events, conducting in-depth excavation and effective guidance, building diversified platforms for TV commentary program communication, cultivating audience loyalty to commentary programs, occupying mainstream public opinion guidance positions, and continuously improving influence and competitiveness.

2.4 Forming Synergy with New Media Platforms While Upholding Guidance as the Priority

The Internet has become the main battlefield for public opinion. TV commentary programs need deep integration and integrated development with new media platforms to form reporting synergy and communication power. Major current affairs commentary, emergency event commentary, and major public

opinion guidance manuscripts should be prioritized for release on mobile terminals to seize mainstream public opinion positions. Whenever hot issues arise, there must be voices; whenever major changes occur, there must be interpretations. This creates a dual-drive model of television media and mobile platforms with integrated communication to enhance communication power. TV commentary and new media commentary content must share the same foundation and standards. New media platforms such as client applications must strictly implement television media standards in guidance and conduct strict review [3]. Regardless of how much communication methods and public opinion ecology change, high-quality content with profound thinking, unique insights, and distinctive values remains scarce.

TV commentary programs should form a staged, multi-platform, three-dimensional matrix communication model, launching new media commentary products that audiences love to see and hear. New media matrix communication and joint pushing can trigger “phenomenal-level” dissemination in some commentary topics, rapidly forming powerful public opinion momentum. Television media must adapt to environmental and audience changes, on one hand strengthening traditional platforms to prevent marginalization, while on the other hand expanding the survival space of new media platforms, actively seeking transformation and innovation in communication methods and program content, and innovatively cultivating more new media commentary products and self-media brands that the public loves, such as CCTV’s “CCTV Quick Review” and “Anchor’s Talk on News Broadcast.” New media and self-media can both become “fermenters” for TV news commentary. Through integrated development, mainstream media can more timely and rapidly disseminate the voices of the Party and government, satisfying the people’s demand for opinion-based information.

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

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