

## Innovation and Development of Television News Programs in the Context of Media Convergence (Postprint)

**Authors:** Lei Huijuan

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### Abstract

The development of media convergence has endowed television programs with greater developmental possibilities, yet this very possibility also imposes higher demands on the development of television news programs. The reshaping of television news programs by media convergence is process-wide; therefore, achieving genuine innovative development in television news programs necessitates systematic thinking, commencing from the “5W” elements of news communication. Additionally, television news programs must also possess the determination and courage to make painful but necessary sacrifices to achieve continuous innovation in program content and sustained expansion of the talent pool.

### Full Text

## Innovation and Development of Television News Programs in the Context of Media Convergence

**Author:** Lei Huijuan (School of Media, Minsheng College, Henan University, Kaifeng, Henan 475000)

**Abstract:** The development of media convergence has created more possibilities for television programs, but these possibilities also impose higher demands on the development of television news programs. Media convergence reshapes television news programs across the entire production process. Therefore, achieving genuine innovative development requires a systematic approach, starting from the “5W” elements of news communication. Additionally, television news programs must demonstrate the resolve and courage to continuously innovate content and expand their talent pool.

**Keywords:** media convergence; television programs; news programs; 5W; systematic thinking

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Has the winter of television news programs truly arrived? This is a shared concern among all television media practitioners and a reality that all media professionals must confront following the tremendous impact of media convergence on traditional television. However, we should also recognize that while the television media industry appears to face major challenges such as declining influence and severe drops in advertising revenue in recent years, some outstanding local stations like Hunan TV and Zhejiang TV have successfully integrated into the transformative wave of media convergence, meeting audience demands and achieving counter-trend growth despite the industry downturn. Moreover, since most television stations and programs have relatively limited development in media convergence, the competitive intensity among traditional television media in the converged television space has paradoxically decreased. This presents a valuable opportunity for “corner overtaking” for certain stations and programs.

Media convergence is an evolving concept representing the process of traditional media accommodating continuously emerging new media forms. As long as new media development does not stagnate, the process of media convergence will never end. Each new task in media convergence development actually presents fresh opportunities for television media growth. Seizing just one such opportunity can significantly enhance industry competitiveness and achieve substantial development. Therefore, the continuous evolution of media convergence also provides more possibilities for television media to “overtake on the curve.”

Furthermore, the innovative development of television news programs in the media convergence era has unique advantages. Under restrictions on news-gathering rights, news programs represent the most distinctive advantage of traditional television media, confining competition for converged news programs within the limited sphere of traditional television outlets and preserving a final “pure land” for traditional media in the new media era. Consequently, news programs can be considered the “battleground that must be contested” for television media to achieve innovative content development in media convergence. Even against today’ s backdrop of pervasive content entertainment, quality news content remains what users seek. A famous assertion in journalism theory states: “Propaganda pursues audiences, while audiences pursue information.” In today’ s context of rapid new media development and commercialized media content, this can be rephrased as: “New media and commercial content pursue users, while users pursue information.” Since news information, particularly hard news, directly affects people’ s decision-making in production and life, the absence of quality news information can cause unexpected problems in daily life. Therefore, quality news content will never lack readers. Taking the 2021 National Two Sessions coverage as an example, the Weibo hashtag #NationalTwoSessions generated an average daily reading volume exceeding 10 billion times since the sessions began. According to data from the People’ s Daily Public Opinion Information Center, on the first day of the sessions, a total of 2,491,230 news items related to the Two Sessions appeared across the

entire internet, demonstrating the powerful appeal of excellent, important news content.

The so-called media convergence reform, in the author' s view, involves traditional media using new media forms to better present traditional media content. However, media convergence reform is far more than mere innovation in content presentation forms. An excellent media organization should function like a human body, where completing any action requires coordination among all bodily components, and any lagging component affects overall coordination. Therefore, innovation in news programs within media convergence should also be a systematic project. To better accomplish the task of innovative development for converged news programs, it is necessary to analyze the requirements for television news program innovation from the foundational “5W” model of news communication plus a feedback loop.

### **1.1 Who: Innovations in Communicators for Television News Program Media Convergence**

Media convergence development imposes greater demands on television news program editorial teams. Under converged media technology requirements, many television organizations expect editorial staff to “single-handedly support an entire program,” achieving 全能 (all-around capabilities) in reporting, writing, editing, broadcasting, and distribution, with more personnel moving from behind the scenes to the front stage. This represents one aspect of communicator innovation in television news programs. On the other hand, with advances in AI technology and bionic technology, communicators for television news programs may no longer be limited to humans. The launch of Xinhua News Agency' s “AI Artificial Intelligence Anchor” signals a transformation in communicator identity from humans to robots. Actively adapting to this change and providing behind-the-scenes support services for robot anchors represents an important future task for television news programs [1].

### **1.2 Say What: Content and Form Innovation in Television News Program Media Convergence**

Traditional television news program broadcasting was one-time and fleeting. Without dedicated recording and rebroadcasting, this content would never reappear before users. However, with media convergence development and the decline in traditional television viewers, an increasing proportion of television program viewing occurs through repeatable online platforms. This not only imposes higher quality requirements on television news programs—content must withstand repeated viewing and scrutiny—but also demands that program formats align with the fragmented, lightweight, and easily shareable characteristics of online dissemination [2]. Furthermore, television news programs require richer forms and stronger interactive effects to adapt to internet media, particularly mobile media dissemination needs.

### **1.3 In Which Channel: Channel Innovation in Television News Program Media Convergence**

Traditional television news program dissemination relied on television media's proprietary channels, meaning that what to broadcast, how many times, to whom, when, and on which channel were all determined by the news program itself or its parent television station, reflecting strong autonomy. However, media convergence development requires television programs to broadcast on other internet platforms, with dissemination channels and reach depending on platform screening or algorithmic recommendation models. Different platforms have different content preferences and recommendation algorithms, and content that fails to meet platform requirements often yields unsatisfactory dissemination results. Although researchers generally consider algorithms to be “black boxes,” television news programs can still develop some understanding of algorithmic operation patterns based on long-term relationships between content input and dissemination outcomes. Only by better adapting to the varying requirements of different dissemination channels can television news programs achieve effective improvements in dissemination impact.

### **1.4 To Whom: User Group Innovation in Television News Program Media Convergence**

Although media convergence development imposes higher requirements on television news programs, it also enables extensive provincial, municipal, and county-level television media to break through geographical limitations and broadcast news programs to users nationwide. This transforms television news program user groups from local residents to anyone interested in local content. To expand this group's scale, television news programs should adopt more universal themes that resonate with users from different regions to achieve better dissemination effects. Simultaneously, internet development has enabled various niche groups to aggregate closely, with individual relationships within these groups being tighter than among the general public, creating stronger possibilities for interpersonal dissemination and rapid content diffusion within specific circles. Therefore, these groups also represent important targets for television news program development.

### **1.5 With What Effect: Desired Communication Effects in Television News Program Media Convergence**

As the “mouthpiece,” traditional television news programs primarily undertake local propaganda work, often featuring substantial “hard propaganda” content. However, in the media convergence context, traditional “hard” discourse clearly can no longer meet the needs of converged media dissemination. Only through “softening the hard,” interesting and substantial communication can satisfactory effects be achieved. Moreover, because personalized dissemination in the new media environment partially dissolves the public nature of communication, exacerbating group polarization and reducing social “consensus,” television news

programs in the converged media environment must achieve more “uniting hearts and gathering strength, shaping customs and educating people” communication effects to enhance social stability.

### **1.6 Feedback: User Opinion Innovation in Television News Program Media Convergence**

Feedback constitutes an important component of news content dissemination. According to the “uses and gratifications” theory, whether users’ media usage behavior satisfies their information needs greatly influences their future media usage behavior. Therefore, if media can obtain user satisfaction levels with information services, it undoubtedly proves extremely beneficial for future media development. Traditional television news programs had limited means of obtaining feedback, and the inherent one-way nature of mass communication often prevented user feedback from directly and realistically changing television news programs. However, converged media technology transforms previously hidden user opinions into components of user big data, making it more convenient for television news media to obtain user feedback while also requiring greater attention to such feedback. Beyond focusing on direct user comments, attention to data such as click-through rates, forwarding rates, completion rates, and reading duration can make user feedback more valuable.

## **2. Strategies for the “5W + Feedback” Elements in Media Convergence Television Program Innovation**

### **2.1 Who: Television News Program Communicator Innovation Requires Greater Traffic Thinking**

Media convergence has brought more television news program communicators from behind the scenes to the front stage, while AI figures have also become important components of communicators. The increase in group size means intensified competition, requiring communicators to possess more distinctive competitiveness. Taking CCTV as an example, the network has vigorously cultivated “internet celebrity” news anchors in recent years. The emergence of popular communicators like Kang Hui and Wang Bingbing has endowed their participating news programs with built-in traffic, significantly enhancing dissemination effects—an important aspect that other television news programs can learn from.

Furthermore, according to Paul Levinson’s “toy, mirror, art” theory, the adoption of new technology inherently carries a traffic halo. Therefore, being the first to adopt new technology enables television news programs to seize the initiative in dissemination. It can be said that future selections of television news program communicators must embrace greater traffic thinking. Communicators with traffic may not necessarily be good communicators, but communicators without traffic certainly cannot become good communicators.

## 2.2 Say What: Television News Program Content Innovation Requires Greater “Internet Sensibility”

Most traditional television news programs are relatively long and substantial, which clearly does not meet the fragmented dissemination needs of the media convergence environment [3]. The rapid development of short videos has further reduced people’s attention spans on individual videos. Research indicates that most users’ attention span on a single video does not exceed 60 seconds. Therefore, for television news programs to achieve good development in the media convergence environment, they must adapt to the internet’s demands for “short, flat, and fast” content—that is, selecting content with greater “internet sensibility” for online dissemination [4].

Additionally, most users browse videos on mobile phones with certain entertainment purposes. The explosive popularity of Zhejiang Satellite TV’s news program *1818 Golden Eye* on the Douyin short video platform demonstrates this user demand. However, news program production should take public interest as the bottom line and cannot blindly cater to users’ entertainment needs [5]. Therefore, in content production, television news programs need to achieve balance among three key points: public interest, moderate entertainment, and “internet sensibility.”

## 2.3 In Which Channel: Television News Program Channel Innovation Requires More Proactive Integration

Although most television news programs have completed integration with the “two micros, one end, and one Douyin”(Weibo, WeChat, client apps, and Douyin) under the media convergence wave, current development levels vary significantly between proactive and passive integration, deep and superficial integration, with different path choices markedly affecting media convergence dissemination outcomes. Programs that proactively integrate with newly emerging channels can naturally seize development opportunities, while passively integrated programs not only face more intense competition but also often achieve unsatisfactory integration results.

New media development never stops, so the media convergence process will not stagnate. The emergence of each new dissemination channel may represent a valuable opportunity for television news programs to “overtake on the curve.” Only by maintaining a positive attitude toward any new channel, refusing to be complacent with achievements in current dissemination channels, actively learning the characteristics of new channels, and actively integrating into new dissemination channels can television news programs prevent falling behind in fierce media competition and seize the initiative by mastering advanced dissemination techniques.

#### **2.4 Whom and Effect: Television News Programs Need to Deeply Cultivate Niche Groups**

In the current network dissemination and mass communication environment, the so-called “niche groups” are actually a relative concept. Any niche group that can “break circles” on the internet and attract attention has essentially formed a considerable user base—the issue of “pseudo-individualization” mentioned in the Frankfurt School’s “cultural industry” theory [6]. These groups are undoubtedly niche among the massive internet user population, but for television media originally serving specific regional users, such groups are undoubtedly “mass.” Winning over these internet niche groups holds significant meaning for the media convergence development of television news programs.

For example, during the COVID-19 pandemic, the slow live broadcast news programs of Huoshenshan and Leishenshan hospitals received tremendous welcome from niche user groups on the Bilibili platform. Psychology has proven the widespread existence of “scopophilia” in human psychology, which is why film and television behind-the-scenes footage always attracts audiences. Following the same logic, television news programs can also implement full-process live broadcasting of news interviews, satisfying niche group viewing needs through “slow live broadcasting.”

The internet provides television news programs with a huge number of niche groups where competition intensity is lower, allowing television news programs to become head programs within these groups with relatively small investment, achieving good dissemination effects and economic returns. Therefore, in terms of user group innovation, what television news programs should do is fully explore and deeply cultivate niche user groups, fully recognizing the segmented and personalized characteristics of the internet, and achieving innovative development by using points to influence the whole.

From the perspective of communication effects, faced with a massive number of content producers, users on various platforms show obvious differentiation trends, meaning that users’ personalized needs have been satisfied to a considerable extent. For television news programs to obtain valuable attention resources and achieve better communication effects, they must establish segmented communication thinking and truly meet the personalized needs of different users.

#### **2.5 Feedback: Television News Program Feedback Innovation Requires Greater Efficiency**

The rapid changes in media convergence user groups and the swift evolution of user demands require television news programs to have richer content feedback mechanisms. The comment functions of new media platforms provide convenience for obtaining feedback, while applying currently mature artificial intelligence recognition technology can make feedback result acquisition more efficient.

Television news programs can leverage relevant semantic and emotional analysis tools to analyze evaluations and changing trends among different content and platform users, enabling advance awareness and proactive response to potential risks. This allows television news program content to always move with timing and trends, occupying the initiative in content production.

## Conclusion

This article employs Lasswell' s foundational “5W” model from communication studies to analyze the tasks for achieving innovative development of television news programs in the media convergence environment and proposes improvement strategies for each element. This also proves the classic assertion by mass communication theory master Denis McQuail: “Traditional mass communication theory is far from obsolete, and the homogeneity between new media and traditional media far exceeds their heterogeneity.”

For television news programs, although media convergence has tremendously changed the ecological environment of media content production, grasping the essential elements in each link of news communication activities and profoundly analyzing what has changed and what remains constant in today' s media environment enables targeted efforts in the media convergence process, achieving 事半功倍 (twice the result with half the effort). Overall, whether the media convergence environment presents more opportunities than challenges or more challenges than opportunities for television news programs depends entirely on their media convergence development level. Only by actively facing risks and integrating into the tide of reform, development, and innovation can television news programs seize the initiative in development within the media convergence environment.

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**Author Bio:** Lei Huijuan (1989-), female, from Zhengzhou, Henan, teaching assistant, research direction: Theater and Film Studies.

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

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