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## How to Effectively Plan TV Programs in the Post-Print Era of Media Convergence

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### Abstract

In the era of media convergence, information dissemination has undergone a shift from “people searching for information” to “information finding people.” To adapt to this change, television program planning must endeavor to enhance “dissemination capability, interactivity, decomposability, aesthetic quality, practicality, and watchability,” while also focusing on achieving “low cost and high quality, precise vertical services, and facilitating capital investment,” committed to producing outstanding original programs that conform to the era’s development and possess distinctive characteristics of the times.

### Full Text

#### Abstract

In the era of media convergence, information dissemination has shifted from “people seeking information” to “information seeking people.” To adapt to this transformation, television program planning must prioritize six key attributes: disseminatability, interactivity, fragmentability, aesthetic quality, practicality, and watchability, while simultaneously pursuing low-cost high-quality production, precise vertical services, and facilitation of capital investment (advertising placement). The goal is to create outstanding original programs that align with contemporary development and embody distinctive characteristics of the times.

**Keywords:** program planning; media convergence; new media (self-media); traditional media

## 1. Characteristics of Information Dissemination in the Media Convergence Era

With the rapid development of information technology, online media has emerged prominently and gained increasing popularity, posing significant challenges to television programming [1]. On January 25, 2019, during the 12th collective study session of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee, General Secretary Xi Jinping emphasized: “Promoting media convergence and building all-media has become an urgent task we face” [2]. Before the advent of new media, traditional media such as newspapers, magazines, radio, and television firmly occupied the supply side of information distribution, with a seller’s market dominating information dissemination. However, with the rise of new media, particularly self-media, information dissemination has quietly shifted from a seller’s market to a buyer’s market. Many people, especially young audiences, now selectively access information based on their personal interests and practical needs.

This transformation did not occur overnight but emerged and accelerated alongside the rapid evolution of information technology. Although Motorola no longer dominates the smartphone market, historical records show that as early as December 1999, the launch of Motorola’s A6188—the world’s first touchscreen mobile phone—gradually brought smartphones into ordinary consumers’ lives. This represented a revolutionary technological innovation in hardware, heralding the beginning of intelligent mobile phone operations and paving the way for simple, convenient human-machine interaction that enables person-to-person interaction anytime, anywhere. Subsequently, as smartphones continued to evolve, various applications facilitating communication and interaction sprang up like mushrooms after rain. Taking China as an example, we can clearly observe this accelerating development along a timeline. A decade after the first touchscreen phone appeared, Sina Weibo launched its beta version in August 2009, becoming the first portal website to provide microblogging services. Just one year later, Tencent began planning and developing WeChat in October 2010, officially launching the application on January 21, 2011. In retrospect, Weibo primarily functioned as an interaction platform based on 140-character expressions, while WeChat introduced composite expression and interaction through voice, photos, and images on social platforms. By then, China had established a new model of interaction and sharing on mobile internet terminals, primarily through text, images, and voice communication.

After a period of simple imitation that appeared relatively calm on the surface but turbulent underneath, Douyin was launched in September 2016, achieving rapid user growth in 2017. Against the backdrop of an image-centric era, visual communication has driven the development of visual culture, becoming the most dynamic form of contemporary media that subtly influences all aspects of people’s lives [3]. Society as a whole is entering an era of short video expression and interaction. From a media development perspective, this communication, interaction, and sharing on mobile clients means everyone can potentially become

a chronicler of the times—whether as a text recorder (text journalist), image recorder (photojournalist), or audio-visual recorder.

As information technology continues to innovate and develop, numerous industries in China have risen accordingly, with the emerging media industry becoming a major bearer of the country's information industry [4]. For program planning, the key is to create programs with vitality. To achieve this, original programs must be produced with “closeness to life, service orientation, and watchability” while adhering to the principles of the Party's propaganda and ideological work. In the media convergence era, television program planning should focus on the six attributes of “disseminatability, interactivity, fragmentability, aesthetic quality, practicality, and watchability,” while striving for “low-cost high-quality production, precise vertical services, and facilitation of capital investment (advertising placement)” to create excellent programs that meet the demands of the times and possess distinctive contemporary characteristics.

## 2. Focus Points of Television Program Planning in the Media Convergence Era

In essence, television program planning refers to the creative ideas, approaches, methods, and strategies provided to achieve specific television objectives by leveraging particular television media information and materials. It represents the strategic and future-oriented planning for television programs, columns, channels, and overall media image. In terms of scope, it can be categorized into program planning, column planning, channel planning, and overall media image planning at multiple levels. This discussion primarily focuses on program planning.

Under the innovative, interactive, and sharing characteristics of the media convergence era, the current focus points of television program planning should be the six aspects of “disseminatability, interactivity, fragmentability, aesthetic quality, practicality, and watchability.”

**Disseminatability.** This refers to the ability of a planned program to circulate smoothly among audiences and form a virtuous closed-loop system through timely audience feedback that enables instant program refinement. In the media convergence era, we must follow the dissemination characteristics of the internet age: “With the continuous development of all-media, we now have full-process media, holographic media, all-staff media, and all-effective media. Information is everywhere, reaches everything, and is used by everyone, leading to profound changes in the public opinion ecology, media landscape, and communication methods, and posing new challenges to news and public opinion work” [2]. To address these characteristics, planned programs should possess the potential for explosive dissemination from the outset. To accumulate such potential, the principle of regionalism must be fully considered during program planning. Also known as the local principle, regionalism requires that planned programs maintain close connections with the region (province, city, county)

where the television media is located or the region it influences, exhibiting distinct regional characteristics. This is an essential technique for ensuring the uniqueness of television program planning.

**Interactivity.** This refers to the ability of a planned program to resonate with audiences, creating an “impulse” for participation, and providing convenient, efficient channels for audiences to engage through various means such as likes, comments, and messages, achieving deep integration with the program. Interactivity is built upon disseminatability—only when a program achieves effective disseminatability can it develop good interactivity. In the media convergence era, expression serves interaction, and interaction further facilitates expression.

**Fragmentability.** This means a planned program contains multiple independent highlights, with each highlight supported by relatively complete logical segments. These segments combine to form a cohesive program with a shared central theme, yet can also be separated and presented to audiences in fragmented form. This new requirement for program planning adapts to the fragmented dissemination characteristic of the internet age. As a traditional mainstream media platform bearing the responsibility of public opinion guidance, television should strive to ensure each independently valuable segment achieves excellence through comprehensive application and processing of visuals, audio, and subtitles. This ensures objectivity and fairness in each fragment (a single image or video clip) to prevent misinterpretation or distortion during fragmented dissemination. By doing so, planned programs can facilitate conversion from large screens (television) to small screens (mobile phones) while also encouraging some audiences to return from small screens to large screens to appreciate the complete program content, sparked by interest generated through fragmented dissemination.

**Aesthetic Quality.** This refers to the ability of a planned program to generate pleasant emotions and positive psychological responses such as joy and happiness—in other words, programs should possess edutainment attributes. It must be emphasized that aesthetic quality should never be equated with pan-entertainment. On the contrary, we must particularly guard against pan-entertainment tendencies during program planning.

**Practicality.** This means a planned program can assist audiences in their daily lives, work, or studies by solving specific problems or difficulties they encounter. This represents a natural demand from audiences and an unavoidable practical purpose for watching television programs.

**Watchability.** This refers to programs featuring practical, aesthetically pleasing content and novel, popular forms that attract audiences to watch, continue watching, and follow regularly. In other words, programs must offer both desired content and popular expression formats. This principle is often described as the watchability or excitement principle, requiring planned programs to be compelling and strongly attractive to target audiences. To achieve this, the principle of closeness must be fully realized. Closeness, also known as confor-

mity, requires that planned programs align with public concerns and cater to the shared psychology of target audiences. This is a technical principle of television program planning and a key to creating watchable programs.

We observe that in practical daily operations, influential programs that have grown rapidly and achieved sustainable development all share these characteristics or possess at least three of them. For example, “Sister Na’ s Help,” a sub-column launched on June 10, 2020, within Hubei Economic TV’ s livelihood news program “Jingshi Live,” adapted to media convergence needs by creating the IP symbol “Sister Na” based on a reporter’ s name, making it memorable and relatable. As the program aims to solve long-standing problems in people’ s daily lives through media intervention and enhanced communication and coordination, its practicality, watchability, and interactivity naturally integrate into the program, achieving good disseminatability after broadcast. The introduction of the IP symbol and full-scene program format also imbue the program with currently popular aesthetic quality and watchability, quickly making it a star sub-column of “Jingshi Live” that achieved excellent ratings on large screens and rapidly attracted followers on small screens. Due to the remarkable success of “Sister Na’ s Help,” “Jingshi Live” launched another sub-column, “Liangliang Talks Medicine,” half a month later, following the same model.

Similarly, “Guarding West Jiefang Road,” an observational reality show by Zhongguang Tianze with 90 million views, employs non-intrusive filming (covert shooting) throughout. Based on complete documentation and through meticulous post-production editing, it presents a popular program that integrates the quality characteristics of documentaries, variety shows, and legal programs. As a program planned by a local (provincial) media outlet, its “disseminatability, interactivity, fragmentability, aesthetic quality, practicality, and watchability” are thoroughly demonstrated through its nearly 100 million views.

### 3. Basic Principles for Sustainable Development of Television Programs in the Media Convergence Era

As science and technology continue to develop, information technology has been widely applied across various fields, gradually forming a state of multimedia coexistence in the media industry and intensifying competition among media platforms [5]. Social transformation also progresses alongside technological advancement, with media content and forms of expression evolving daily. Television programs in the media convergence era will face elimination at any moment if they fail to adapt to technological innovation and social transformation. To maintain sustainable development, I believe three principles must be followed: “low-cost high-quality production, precise vertical services, and facilitation of capital investment (advertising placement).”

**Low-cost high-quality production** is an input-output principle. Also known as the cost-accounting principle, it requires that planned programs achieve low input with high output or minimal input with excellent output. On the basis

of maximizing control over human, material, and financial resources, programs should produce high-quality 精品 content that matches the economic strength or financing capacity of the television media, avoiding overreaching beyond one' s means.

**Precise vertical services** constitute an audience-first principle. Also known as the purpose principle from the audience (user) perspective, it requires that planned programs identify a specific service population (or industry/field) as the target audience, and conduct vertical presentation, analysis, and critical thinking on specific phenomena (or industries/fields) from surface to depth and from rough to refined.

**Facilitation of capital investment** is an advertising attraction principle. It requires that planned programs possess one or multiple advertising placement points, enabling target clients to naturally promote their products, enterprises, or concepts through the program, ultimately attracting advertising funds or even operational capital investment to ensure sustained and adequate capital support for long-term program development.

These three principles constitute the lifeline for program survival and development. Violating them may lead to programs being abandoned midway or even “dying in the womb.”

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

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