

The Impact of Radio and Television Directors' Innovative Thinking on Television Program Quality (Postprint)

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Abstract

This paper primarily investigates the influence of cultivating innovative thinking among radio and television directors on television program quality. Grounded in practical realities and supported by a review of relevant literature, this study provides a theoretical foundation. The paper emphasizes the significance of fostering innovative thinking and explores pathways for its cultivation among radio and television directors. Through perspectives spanning message-based news programs, feature-based news programs, and commentary-based news programs, as well as the conceptual evolution from “Internet+” to “TV+” and “News+”, the paper enumerates innovative practices in recent television programming. It calls upon directors to draw inspiration from historical experience, thereby producing more high-quality television programs that enrich the spiritual world of the populace.

Full Text

The Impact of Innovative Thinking in Radio and Television Directing on Television Program Quality

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Abstract: This paper examines how cultivating innovative thinking among radio and television directors influences television program quality. Grounded in practical realities and supported by relevant literature, this study emphasizes the importance of fostering innovative thinking and explores pathways for its development. Through case studies of recent television innovations—spanning

message-based news programs, feature news programs, commentary news programs, and the evolution from “Internet Plus” to “Television Plus” and “News Plus” —this paper calls on directors to draw inspiration from historical experience to produce more high-quality television programs that enrich the spiritual lives of the masses.

Keywords: Radio and television directing; innovative thinking; television programs; Internet Plus; Television Plus; News Plus

1. The Importance of Cultivating Innovative Thinking

Over the decades since the development of radio and television broadcasting, these media have delivered vast amounts of information and knowledge to audiences, enriching people’s spiritual worlds while achieving tremendous growth themselves. Today, however, as more media platforms enter the public consciousness, television programs increasingly emphasize content and format innovation. To stand out and gain public recognition, programs must possess genuine strength, align with popular aesthetics, and—most importantly—promote correct values through broadcasting. For Chinese television programs to become global programs, they must not only cater to domestic audience preferences but also promote traditional Chinese culture and leverage new technologies to show China to the world.

2.1 Modern Expression of Traditional Culture

For Chinese television works to succeed internationally, they must authentically embody Chinese national characteristics, particularly those aspects of outstanding traditional culture with universal significance that can be accepted by all nations and possess timeless appeal—the very source of inspiration for cultural workers. As contemporary audiences become younger and their needs more diverse, television directors must understand their target viewers’ tastes, knowledge structures, psychological needs, and lifestyle habits. Chinese television should pursue independent innovation based on traditional culture, carefully editing program plots to elevate program quality while promoting traditional humanistic spirit and aesthetic sensibilities. This approach ensures programs remain popular while also educating and inspiring audiences, enabling television programs to achieve their maximum value.

For instance, CCTV’s *Classic China* program focuses on outstanding Chinese cultural classics, employing an innovative “dialogue across time and space” format that combines drama and film techniques. The program uses a “theatrical + cinematic” approach to trace origins and draw extensive references, spanning five thousand years of civilization from its origins to modern inheritance. With profound vision and broad vision, it traverses temporal dimensions to complete a dialogue between the 21st century and the past, making history come alive in

an authentic and meaningful way.

Similarly, *Thank You, My Home* takes family traditions as its main subject and family members as its carriers, aiming to rediscover the cultural value of family traditions and reshape family concepts through exploring folk culture. Li Xinyan, director of CCTV's Chinese International Channel, explained in an interview that the program uses the oral traditions of elders as an entry point to unfold each guest's "family tradition inheritance."

Another example is *Walking Alone for Thousands of Miles—China in Heritage*, produced by Zhejiang Satellite TV. The program features Shan Jixiang as its initiator, who joins Huang Jue, Ma Boqian, and Yan Hexiang to form the "Cloth Shoe Men's Group." The four men travel to over ten World Heritage sites across China, experiencing local cultures firsthand and engaging with local scholars and heritage application experts to uncover the stories behind China's World Heritage sites. Without elaborate plot settings for emotional catharsis, the program allows authentic Chinese World Heritage culture to evoke humanity's most primal emotional responses through multiple senses. Viewers receive this heavy yet meaningful gift and are moved to consciously join the ranks of protecting China's intangible cultural heritage. Through ongoing exchanges and integration of viewpoints between Shan Jixiang and visiting guests, the program reveals the most touching stories behind intangible cultural heritage.

2.2 Combining Professionalism and Artistry

In today's era of flourishing television programs, creativity alone is insufficient. Competition among television programs also requires talent acquisition and quality improvement, adherence to professionalism and artistry, and enhanced program quality to meet the demands of cinematic quality and deep reflection. This represents a new requirement for television directors in the new era.

At some point, contestants in television talent shows began arriving with personal stories. While audiences' compassion is easily stirred, leading participants to often portray themselves as victims and emphasize their tragic experiences, this is not what viewers truly want to see. Facing strict competition mechanisms, many "exceptions" emerge, but these do not constitute genuine appeal. For example, Wang Yuheng (nicknamed "Water Brother") from *The Brainiest* demonstrated extraordinary abilities by identifying one specific cup among 520 identical cups of water. After the guest selected a cup for him to observe and then replaced it among the others, Wang located it with precision, even noting that "the water had been rotated by 15 degrees." This astonished the audience and earned thunderous applause. What makes his story compelling is that despite having a right eye pupil that cannot focus or zoom due to trauma, and left eye vision dropping from 1.2 to approximately 0.4—with doctors warning of potential glaucoma—he revealed these challenges only after the judges had scored him, not before. This embodies true positive energy.

Another example comes from Dong Qing' s statement on *The Reader*: “Why should we cry for fragments of life when our entire life is deeply moving?” Yet in *The Reader*, audiences do not feel tragedy but rather hope for life and longing for living, experiencing the beauty of life through the television program.

2.3 Adhering to Composite Value Principles Beyond Entertainment

For Chinese television programs to innovate successfully, they must gain audience recognition and widespread dissemination. Audience “applause” emphasizes a program' s social (artistic) attributes, while broad dissemination emphasizes its economic (commercial) attributes. Focusing only on applause while ignoring dissemination leads to low ratings and insufficient advertising revenue, preventing long-term growth and strength. Television programs must balance social and economic benefits. While entertainment can immediately attract viewers, programs cannot be entertainment-oriented or forget their responsibilities. If television programs blindly pursue amusement, they lose their proper value guidance function. Entertainment can be combined with public welfare, people' s livelihood, and reality. Adhering to composite value principles transforms entertainment from superficial “fun” into heart-warming “knowing smiles” that promote truth, goodness, and beauty while incorporating calm reflection and profound understanding.

For example, the dating show *If You Are the One* might appear to be merely a matchmaking program, but host Meng Fei notes that even though discussions of romance and relationships may seem repetitive, each participant' s feedback differs. While connecting men and women, the program simultaneously promotes correct views on love and marriage. Love should not be a sensitive topic; rather, it accompanies most of people' s lives. In an era when various distorted views of love emerge, *If You Are the One* remains committed to its original mission, making it particularly valuable.

3. Effective Attempts at Television News Innovation

Against the backdrop of the “Internet Plus” era, traditional media centered on television faces severe challenges from video portals. Only by fully leveraging its advantages in resource control, content production, copyright ownership, and advertising investment, and by actively innovating and integrating with the Internet and new media, can television rejuvenate itself.

3.1 Message-Based News Programs: Balancing Timeliness and Multiple Perspectives

3.1.1 Major Political News: Comprehensive and Multi-Angled CCTV, through its utilization of exclusive resources, consistently takes the lead in reporting major events and attempts to create a large-scale media flagship by using news products as entry points. The diversification of reporting

methods and improvement of media technology were fully displayed in the *Moment·2019 Grand Parade* coverage. This live broadcast employed cinematic spatiotemporal structures and used the most advanced special equipment and filming methods for the first time: erecting a movable lifting tower at the center of Jinshui Bridge; using mobile filming vehicles to follow along the parade route; deploying cable cameras closer to the central area; adding gyroscopes to leading mobile filming vehicles; and establishing close-to-ground camera positions for the first time. Throughout the broadcast, audiences experienced both consistent majesty and joyful harmony, as well as innovation that kept pace with the times; both magnificent spectacles and touching warm moments; collisions between national spirit and modern multicultural expression, and comprehensive integration of technologies like 4K, 5G, and AR across multiple screens and channels.

3.1.2 Breaking News Coverage: Advancing While Retreating Live broadcasting has traditionally been a weak point for Chinese television news media in covering breaking events. However, in 2015, Dragon TV's live coverage of the Paris terrorist attacks was rapid and timely, earning industry recognition. "Rumors stop with transparency, trust comes from openness." Particularly during major emergencies, when rumors spread and public sentiment becomes unstable, the Party and government must step forward as the backbone of the masses and the pillar of society. Issuing authoritative voices from the Party and government at the first moment is the bounden duty of mainstream media.

The text communication and in-depth report *36 Hours, All for 11 Miner Brothers!—A Record of the "11·19" Fire Accident Rescue at Liangbaisi Energy Company of Shandong Energy Feic Mine Group* won second prize in the 30th China News Awards. This 36-hour life-and-death rescue operation attracted high social attention, with all 11 people rescued, becoming a uniquely successful case in China's coal mine fire rescue history that vividly illustrates the significant advantages of the socialist system with Chinese characteristics. The report employs narrative storytelling with an objective tone, using stories and three-dimensional details to "unfold naturally." It uses two narrative threads: a clear timeline marked by clocks at the command center, and a hidden thread of family stories connected by telephone calls, with both threads running throughout from beginning to end.

3.1.3 People's Livelihood News: Detailed, Popular, and Interactive People's livelihood news is deeply loved by audiences for its unique civilian perspective and effective interactive results, serving as a mainstay for provincial and city television stations. Major mainstream media have long been rooted in "major people's livelihood issues," strengthening the timeliness and relevance of people's livelihood news programs. However, within limited scopes, news resource sources remain relatively singular, and content dilemmas remain widespread.

Accompanying changes in the public opinion environment, various channels have proposed requirements for being “fast, close, and deep.” This has improved reporting timeliness while expanding reporting models. For example, during hot weather, Zhu Guangquan delivered this golden line: “The heat makes you walk out for half your life and return fully cooked, with salt and pepper hanging on your body; the sun makes you walk out for half your life and return still a young Bao Qingtian.” When cold, he said: “The white areas on the map aren’t not cold, but already cold enough. If you’re sleeping soundly under your blanket, then everywhere beyond the bed is a distant place, everywhere your hand can’t reach is a foreign land, and going to the bathroom is a business trip to a remote frontier.” During holidays, he quipped: “If Earth doesn’t explode, we don’t take breaks. If the universe doesn’t restart, we don’t rest. In wind, rain, and holidays, we’re all here waiting for you.” This sketch-style news delivery has attracted numerous fans, with many viewers developing a fondness for weather forecasts.

3.2 Feature News Programs: Integrating Multimedia with Innovative Styles and Content

Feature television news programs have performed excellently over the past five years, with various forms continuously emerging. Big data messages integrated through multimedia methods have achieved further development, demonstrating new progress in content, data mining, and visual processing.

For example, around Spring Festival, CCTV’s *Evening News* collaborated with Baidu to launch a special data news report titled “*Data Talks About New Year*.” The program aired from the 23rd day of the twelfth lunar month to the third day of the new year, totaling 10 episodes of 5-7 minutes each, comprehensively utilizing data from 16 government departments and corporate organizations, with Wen Jing serving as the “data observer.”

Another example is CCTV’s special report on the “Belt and Road Initiative,” which uses China as its base to explore the Silk Road, achieving micro-expressions of major themes and concrete representations of abstract topics. This creates a similar type of news theme domestically, applying big data and visualization technologies. The program used two supercomputers to process over 100 million GB of data during six months of production, employing advanced data visualization technology. Under the guidance of the National Surveying and Mapping Bureau, more than 200 three-dimensional maps were produced to more accurately track connections and differences among countries and regions along the Belt and Road.

3.3 Commentary News Programs: Moving Toward Personality, Professionalism, and High-End Quality

With the rapid development of the Internet and the rise of Weibo and WeChat, people have entered an era of “citizen journalism” and universal commentary

across all media. The content selected for commentary news programs is no longer static. Discovering truth and breaking free from frameworks has become what audiences most desire and what media professionals must prioritize.

CCTV' s *News 1+1* selects the latest, hottest, and fastest news topics from current affairs, policies, public issues, and breaking events to restore news truth and interpret events, using concise and sharp news orientation to present the most unadorned journalism. During live broadcasts, expert commentary has become normalized, while host commentary emphasizes a civilian perspective and highlights in-depth viewpoints. Many local news commentary programs feature distinctive personal characteristics and focus on combining information with commentary, receiving considerable praise. The height of news commentary stems from new ideas and viewpoints generated from news facts. Going to the front lines to obtain first-hand information and then winning through novelty, depth, and accuracy is key.

3.4 From “Internet Plus” to “Television Plus” and “News Plus”

The rapid development of new media has created a reverse mechanism for traditional television news, causing changes in the connotation and expansion of television news editing. The operational model of traditional television news is changing, gradually establishing new development models adapted to the current state of China' s media industry.

Regarding new media integration, many channels have attempted to integrate Internet genes in the early stages of message collection and processing, achieving good results. If interactivity is the most important innovative factor brought by “Internet Plus” to traditional television media, then cloud, network, and terminals provide the “infrastructure” for the comprehensive development of traditional television media. The book *Internet Plus: From IT to DT* published by Alibaba Research Institute argues that new infrastructure relying on “Internet Plus” can be summarized into three components: cloud, network, and terminal. “Cloud” refers to cloud computing and big data; “network” refers to the Internet and Internet of Things; “terminal” refers to terminals and Apps. This view also applies to the integration and development of television and emerging media. In the “Internet Plus” era, the transformation of traditional television media should adopt cloud computing and big data technologies to improve content production processes and dissemination models. Based on the Internet and Internet of Things, television should achieve intelligence and mobility, enabling multi-terminal cross-screen dissemination across computers and mobile phones, as well as developing new audio-visual media programs represented by applications.

From the perspective of network dissemination, the integration of television media and emerging media is mainly manifested in “Internet Plus,” which gives rise to “interactive video” that will truly launch television' s “second media era.”

Conclusion

Traditional television program models are transforming into new models. Under the impact of the era's torrent, television program directors should also timely shift their thinking and actively practice innovation. It is hoped that radio and television directors can draw inspiration from past experience to produce more high-quality television programs that build a rich spiritual world for the masses.

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

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