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A Preliminary Analysis of the Innovation and Development of Radio and Television Directors in the Context of Media Convergence: Taking Radio and Television Directors in Traditional Media as an Example (Postprint)

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Abstract

In the contemporary era where new media are bursting with vitality and dynamism while emerging media technologies continue to mature and develop, media convergence has become an inevitable trend of the times. Consequently, for radio and television directors in the new era, how to undertake thematic creation and content planning, audio-visual communication and converged form presentation, as well as technological and interactive design applications for converged media works, has emerged as a crucial research topic. This paper examines the innovations and developments of radio and television directors in response to these challenges by focusing on the impact of emerging media on traditional media in the converged media era, and by analyzing relevant practical case studies.

Full Text

A Brief Analysis of Innovation and Development of Radio and Television Directors in the Context of Media Convergence: A Case Study of Radio and Television Directors in Traditional Media

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Abstract: In today's era where new media are bursting with vitality and emerging media technologies continue to mature, media convergence has become an inevitable trend of our time. For radio and television directors in this new

era, how to conduct thematic creation and content planning for converged media works, audio-visual communication and presentation of integrated forms, as well as the application of technology and interactive design, have become important topics. This paper focuses on the impact of emerging media on traditional media in the era of media convergence, and analyzes the innovation and development of radio and television directors in response to these challenges by examining relevant practical cases.

Keywords: media convergence; radio and television director; creation and planning; policy support; communication and creation

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1. Overview of Media Convergence

Media convergence is a practical product of media development in the contemporary era. In 1978, American scholar Nicholas Negroponte first proposed the term “media convergence,” arguing that it refers to the integration of various media forms and technologies. As the name suggests, “converged” media emphasizes the “convergence” aspect, highlighting its primary characteristic. Today, in a broad sense, converged media represents a new form of media that fully utilizes all media carriers to achieve enhanced communication effects. It can efficiently integrate existing media resources, organically combine traditional and new media forms, and enable media communication to better adapt to the needs of modern society. In the face of the overarching trend of media convergence, traditional media such as television have inevitably encountered certain collisions and tests. The media convergence era continuously creates converged media forms characterized by technological aggregation, making converged media communication in this era more intelligent and proactive. This, of course, poses new challenges to the program planning and production capabilities of radio and television directors. How radio and television directors can ride the waves in the era of media convergence has become a decisive factor in revitalizing programs.

Meanwhile, major traditional media outlets have also reduced newspaper pages, established radio and television director positions, and built all-media matrices. On the basis of focusing on their primary responsibilities, they have explored a new news-bearing model integrating “two micros and one terminal” (Weibo, WeChat, and client applications). The development of China Youth Daily in recent years serves as a telling example. In 2017, China Youth Daily announced its restructuring, discontinuing its weekend print edition, which once again triggered industry-wide discussions on “all-media development.” Media transformation has become the focal point of future development work for main-

stream media, with central media outlets thoroughly “reforming” through the “central kitchen” model—breaking previous departmental structures, establishing new coordination mechanisms, and adding new editorial teams centered on program creation. Three years later, with the deepening development of media convergence, by 2020, China Youth Daily restructured again, further reducing newspaper pages while announcing the launch of version 4.0 of its client application. More branded programs were unveiled in the new version of the client, and this time, the industry discussion on media convergence has focused on cultivating “converged media talents” for branded programs. News about the reduction of newspaper pages has gone unnoticed. Thus, the impact of new media on traditional media is evident.

Under the impact of new media, how should traditional mainstream media respond to turn crises into opportunities? What should radio and television directors who choose to work in traditional media do to continue standing at the forefront?

2. Origins of Media Convergence

In recent years, the continuous emergence of new media has brought both opportunities and challenges to traditional media. In an era of explosive information demand and rapidly updating public opinion, media convergence has emerged as the times require. With changes in media operation patterns, traditional media that rest on their laurels will be eliminated by the times. Based on comprehensive observation of current industry development, claims such as “television is dead” and “the death of newspapers” are not unfounded. Taking CCTV’ s “Anchor Comments on News Broadcast” as an example, news broadcast hosts have stepped down from the screen, abandoning their usual serious demeanor to create content more appealing to young people on short video platforms such as Kuaishou and Douyin, resulting in a surge in topic discussions. In 2018, the merger of CCTV’ s three channels reconstructed the original “scattered” communication model and strengthened integrated development among the three channels. New media attributes continue to push the envelope, which will inevitably lead to monotonous and homogeneous television programs in practical operation. Ultimately, television programs that make it to the big screen will become uniform, losing market competitiveness and vitality for sustainable development.

However, how exactly has media convergence become an inevitable trend of our times? Examining its essence, the author has analyzed and sorted out the development 脉络 of media convergence, summarizing the following three reasons:

2.1 Rapid Development of Media Technology

“Science and technology are the primary productive forces.” Undoubtedly, scientific research has provided powerful technical support for media. In recent

years, the rapid development of the internet, the swift rise of AI intelligence, and the arrival of the 5G era have all brought about rapid changes to the media industry. Compared with traditional media, these new media technologies share common characteristics of high digitization, strong interactivity, and transcendence of time and space—features that precisely expose the drawbacks of traditional media in modern information dissemination. Traditional media previously adopted linear communication, where communicators engaged in one-way exchanges with imagined audiences. Moreover, traditional media had limitations and constraints of time and space. Looking back at the traditional media era, traditional media communication possessed strong authority and relatively stable content productivity. Both traditional and new media have their respective advantages and disadvantages, relying on and complementing each other. Therefore, achieving media convergence represents the optimal model for maximizing media benefits.

2.2 Audience Demand and Era Progress

In the traditional media era, audience information sources were relatively singular. Radio, television, and newspapers all output information to audiences in a one-way format, and what information audiences could receive depended entirely on traditional media dissemination. Similarly, with the further development of the era, the upgrading of electronic devices, and the rise of the internet have all made information sources more extensive, while audience information demand has also increased year by year. Compared with the traditional media era, the interactivity and mobility of modern information have been greatly enhanced, better meeting and adapting to audience information needs. However, the information carried by new media is overly redundant, and media convergence can better utilize the information integration and content productivity of traditional media to make information dissemination more authoritative and reliable. Therefore, the arrival of the media convergence era is essentially also a response to the needs of expanding audience demand and era development.

2.3 Policy Support in the Media Convergence Era

The development of media convergence in China also enjoys strong policy support. General Secretary Xi Jinping emphasized the need to accelerate the integrated development of traditional and emerging media, make full use of new technologies and applications to innovate media communication methods, and occupy the commanding heights of information dissemination. This demonstrates that China's policies and regulations continuously promote media convergence and development. Reform and innovation are the core of the spirit of our times, fully encouraging and supporting media innovation and development, which is also a true reflection of the core of the contemporary spirit of the times.

3. Challenges and Opportunities Coexist in the Media Convergence Era

Undoubtedly, the demand for radio and television directors has surged during the integrated development process of traditional media. For radio and television directors who choose to establish themselves in traditional media, challenges and opportunities coexist. Taking China Youth Daily as an example, in addition to the “two micros and one terminal” mentioned earlier, in recent years it has also established a presence on Kuaishou, Douyin, Bilibili, and other new media platforms, and has specifically established a video studio, selecting traditional text journalists to transform into directors and fully building competitive video “brand” IPs, such as the “China Youth Talk” series of video programs with over 800 million exposures across the entire network. While relying on the advantages of traditional media’s own platforms, the platforms have become more diverse, but the tests and pressures on radio and television directors have also increased: how to adapt to technological innovation and push forward? How to stand out among the vast sea of television programs? How to seize the high ground of topical content?

In contemplating these three questions, the author believes that this comprehensively tests three capabilities of radio and television directors.

3.1 Innovation Capability

If radio and television directors lack sufficient innovation capability in program creation, cannot familiarize themselves with the internal operation modes of various emerging media, and cannot innovate according to platform attributes, this will inevitably lead to monotonous and homogeneous television programs in practical operation. Ultimately, television programs that make it to the big screen will become uniform, losing market competitiveness and vitality for sustainable development.

3.2 Adaptability to Change

If traditional radio and television directors are helpless in the face of challenges and cannot master the latest technological means such as VR, they will inevitably lag behind the latest demands of industry development. In future development, while reducing work efficiency, the program’s audience will gradually be lost. Amidst dazzling variety, programs lacking the freshest user experience will easily fade into obscurity and struggle to stand out.

3.3 Content Creation Capability

Regardless of how the media landscape changes, content remains the scarce product and always the core competitiveness. In the “Smart Converged Media Series Seminar: Converged Media Content Innovation” co-hosted by the Journalism and Communication Department of Communication University of

China, CTR Media Convergence Research Institute, and CCTV's "Television Research" editorial department, it has been continuously emphasized that content innovation remains the core competitiveness for programs and media to remain invincible. Therefore, from the perspective of radio and television directors, they should first continuously adhere to content innovation and work hard on content, which is the key force for program success.

4. How to Achieve Innovation and Development of "Converged Media" Television Directors

After understanding the essential capabilities required of radio and television directors today, how can we specifically cultivate and enhance these necessary skills in a targeted manner to meet the needs of innovation and development in the new media era?

4.1 Pre-production Preparation: Know Yourself and Know Your Enemy

To do a good job in content, one must conduct thorough preliminary data research and content planning work. Taking the program "Everlasting Classics" as an example, during the program's production period, domestic cultural programs received great attention. Prior to this, cultural programs such as "Chinese Poetry Conference" and "Chinese Character Dictation Conference" had emerged, creating a good atmosphere for social culture. Secondly, in content planning, the program deeply innovated the converged media communication model, using the innovative method of "turning poetry into songs and spreading classics" to combine traditional poetry with modern music forms, presenting a new cultural atmosphere for the new era. The program also incorporated AI and H5 technologies, enhancing the interactivity and entertainment of television programs in cross-media interaction. For instance, Guo Lei from China Media Group believes that the greatest innovation of "Everlasting Classics" lies in the transformation of thinking and consciousness, shifting from traditional media thinking to converged media thinking, specifically manifested in the transformation from "audience" to "user." It is precisely because in the "converged media" era, "audience" has begun to transform into "user" that radio and television directors cannot adopt a single-line output attitude toward program content innovation. Instead, they should produce television programs in forms and content that are popular among the people. The content innovation of "Everlasting Classics" was based on China's current social and cultural background, making significant efforts in pursuing traditional Chinese culture and the spiritual belonging of the Chinese nation. Moreover, the program's directors employed numerous "converged media" means, causing the program to attract public attention as soon as it was broadcast. For example, before the program even aired, Wang Junkai's short video of "Song of Tomorrow" made the program popular before its broadcast. Content innovation is the necessary path for directors of major mainstream media platforms, not only for "Everlasting Classics," "National

Treasure,” “On the Way Home,” and “Up, Colorful Youth,” but all demonstrating the transformation of “converged media” content innovation consciousness among directors of mainstream media outlets like CCTV.

4.2 Post-production Communication: Developing Cross-media Communication Capability

Enhancing “all-media” application capability is an important tool for radio and television directors to achieve program development and converged media communication. In the media convergence era, radio and television directors should also enhance their core “all-media” application capabilities, which requires them to improve their program planning capabilities across television, radio, newspapers, the internet, and other media, and to have comprehensive control over the “central kitchen.” During my internship at China Youth Daily and China Youth Online, I deeply discovered the charm of the central kitchen. As the media convergence center of China Youth Daily, “Converged Media Cloud Kitchen” has promoted deep media integration in resource integration, scheduling of writing and editing, information exchange and communication, and centralized command. Zhang Kun, Secretary of the Party Committee of China Youth Daily, proposed that “Converged Media Cloud Kitchen” clarifies a new positioning for the in-depth development of media convergence, continuously deepening and advancing from “Internet Plus” to “Internet Times,” building a youthful mainstream converged media. Therefore, if one can skillfully utilize the “central kitchen,” it will be a powerful weapon for successful transformation of traditional media professionals. The key to application lies in whether one can realize their own “all-media” application. Today, many media communication technologies are continuously updating, AI is becoming more humanized, and progress in black technologies such as VR, AR, and MR, as well as the upgrading of smartphones, all indicate that to be a good radio and television director in the “converged media” era, one cannot be limited by media technology. For radio and television directors, they must not only complete traditional training programs but also continuously improve their professional qualities in the “converged media” environment, integrate into the trend of media convergence, and have certain application capabilities for various media technologies to achieve comprehensive connectivity and mastery, possessing strong “all-media” control capabilities. They should take advantage of the benefits for their own use and discard the drawbacks to drive forward television program creation.

4.3 Content Creation: Enhancing Internet Plus Thinking

According to the 46th “Statistical Report on Internet Development in China” by China Internet Network Information Center, as of June 2020, China’s internet user population reached 940 million, with 36.25 million new internet users added compared to March 2020, and the internet penetration rate reached 67.0%. Against this backdrop, making good use of “Internet Plus” will be a powerful tool for better program promotion, dissemination, innovation, and breakout. For ra-

radio and television directors, enhancing “Internet Plus” thinking is a booster for achieving innovation-driven television program innovation. Media convergence has gone through three stages in today’s era: from “you are you, I am I” to “you have me, I have you” and then to “you are me, I am you.” It is evident that traditional media such as television should have internet thinking in the internet era, coordinating and applying it selectively. We can discover through development trends that future information communication models will certainly span various terminal devices. Therefore, for radio and television directors, “Internet Plus” thinking is particularly important. For example, CCTV’s program “Voice of the Galaxy” powerfully utilized internet thinking. In the technological network era, the program’s directors built a virtual bridge between the audience group and the program itself through the internet to connect “Voice of the Galaxy” with children and adolescent audiences, effectively realizing “converged media” communication. Through the interactivity of the network and the cross-time-and-space communication of information, the program became more novel and interesting, enabling audiences to better accept cultural input, promoting the integration of China’s traditional culture and world multiculturalism, and creating a strong IP for children’s television programs. By analyzing “Voice of the Galaxy,” we can see that it used web live streaming, multi-platform interaction, and special documentary forms for “converged media” communication, achieving good ratings effects in the later stage. In the program “Everyone is Remarkable” –Youth Speech Conference that I participated in producing, we also used pre-production web live streaming technology and post-production program promotion on WeChat public accounts and mobile client applications, employing special documentary production methods. We skillfully utilized “Internet Plus” thinking, reflecting the characteristics of the “converged media” era in both program production and communication. Therefore, as radio and television directors, in the current era of continuously rising internet technology, we should have more “Internet Plus” thinking, achieve program IP building, innovate program forms, and enable the programs we produce to achieve organic unity of “social,” “economic,” and “cultural” benefits.

Conclusion

In summary, in today’s rapidly developing media landscape, practitioners of radio and television directing in the new era must always be prepared to shatter and reshape their inherent industry cognition, continuously learning new forms of content expression brought about by technological innovation: exploring immersive program expression methods in VR, exploring new program planning and production methods with the participation of AI and other intelligent technologies... Learning is endless. There is no unchanging comfort zone; challenges and pressures can be seen everywhere. However, the only certainty is that in the media convergence era, traditional media will all keep pace with the times, continuously achieving the transformation from niche to mass, from traditional to emerging, and the boundaries between various media are constantly being broken and 磨合. As television directors, we should also possess innovative con-

sciousness, cross-media communication capabilities, and internet thinking to provide better planning, production, and coordination for television programs. In this era, “television is not dead” ; it has merely changed its carrier form. What is needed is for each generation of radio and television directors to “dare to think,” “dare to do,” and “dare to accept” while remaining true to their original aspiration, riding the waves for “radio and television” in the media convergence era.

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

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