

Strategies for Enhancing the Influence of Prefecture-Level Traditional Media Under the Omnimedia Perspective: Postprint

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Abstract

The media industry has undergone rapid development propelled by scientific and technological advances, with diverse new media forms flourishing by capitalizing on this momentum, thereby ushering the communication market into an all-media era. All traditional media have encountered impacts, with local traditional media suffering more severely. Constrained by geographical limitations, prefecture-level traditional media inherently wield weak influence; to enhance their impact, transformation and innovation are imperative. Deep integration with new media is required to expand development space, excavate regional advantages and distinctive characteristics, and cultivate characteristic brand programs to drive development through branding. This paper, based on an analysis of how prefecture-level traditional media confront weakened communication capacity and credibility within the all-media perspective following the transformation of the communication market, proposes several recommendations regarding how prefecture-level traditional media can pursue innovative development and enhance influence, with the aim of providing references for prefecture-level traditional media in their quest for development.

Full Text

Preamble

The all-media perspective represents a developmental stage in the media industry where “media” encompasses not only familiar mainstream outlets such as newspapers, magazines, radio, and television, but also all communication platforms including audio-visual, film, publishing, internet, telecommunications, and satellite communications—covering every sensory channel through which people receive information visually, aurally, and tactilely. In this environment, audiences can freely choose when and how to receive information based on their

preferences and needs, while media organizations can select the most suitable reporting formats and distribution platforms to expand their influence and meet diverse audience demands, thereby achieving comprehensive coverage and optimal communication effects that enhance their appeal, influence, and dissemination power. However, under this new communication landscape, local traditional media at the prefectural and municipal levels face constrained development, often appearing merely as electronic or audio versions of traditional outlets or as platform-shifted versions of newspaper and broadcast content, without positioning new media as information distribution platforms that complement and improve upon traditional media. To address this, local traditional media must fully leverage the dissemination advantages of new media to enhance their integrated communication capabilities.

2.2 Segmenting Audience Markets for Precise News Dissemination

Media competition fundamentally revolves around competing for audience attention—how effectively media can market their content to audiences. The renowned communication scholar Wilbur Schramm proposed a “probability formula for message selection” : the likelihood that information will attract attention and be selected is directly proportional to the value of its content and inversely proportional to the time and effort required to obtain it. In other words, the less time and energy audiences expend, and the higher the value of the news information they receive, the greater the probability that the media will be noticed and chosen. Currently, local traditional media cannot match central media’s authoritative voice in guiding public opinion, nor can they compete with new media’s speed in securing “first-hand materials” and becoming “primary sources.” Consequently, audiences can neither obtain the first-release information they seek nor receive authoritative interpretations from these media, leading to declining attention to news content—a primary reason for the shrinking market share and diminishing influence of local traditional media in recent years.

To reverse this trend, local traditional media must transform their communication philosophy by segmenting audience markets and implementing precise information dissemination. In practice, this requires: (1) Conducting effective communication based on audience needs. Media must strengthen research into audience psychology and needs, making audience satisfaction the foundation for enhancing influence and ensuring survival. This involves shifting the communication philosophy to a people-oriented approach that prioritizes audience needs, adjusting news content according to evolving audience demands—even refining newspaper columns and radio/television program positioning to consider audience needs and maximize communication effects. (2) Achieving “three closenesses” from content to form. As local propaganda departments, prefectural and municipal traditional media must not only report on Party policies but also focus on the vital interests of the masses, addressing hot spots, diffi-

culties, and focal points in social life. By speaking for the people and adopting communication methods and expressions that audiences find appealing—moving away from didactic approaches to more conversational styles—media can attract greater audience attention. (3) Taking audience feedback seriously. In the all-media environment, audience demand for news information has become diversified. Undifferentiated content pushes often fail to attract attention and may even cause audience alienation. Media must collect feedback to genuinely understand audience interests and preferences, segment audiences accordingly, and deliver precisely targeted news information to ultimately enhance media influence.

2. Strategies for Local Traditional Media to Enhance Influence Under the All-Media Perspective

How can local traditional media at the prefectural and municipal levels enhance their influence? By actively integrating with new media to leverage complementary advantages; segmenting audience markets for precise information dissemination; focusing on social livelihoods to improve content quality; conducting in-depth reporting to add substance to news; and transforming communication methods with emphasis on innovation and transition, media can continuously improve their attractiveness, dissemination power, and competitiveness to gain more audience attention and achieve the goal of enhancing influence.

2.1 Leveraging Media Convergence to Enhance Integrated Communication Capacity of News and Public Opinion

In communication studies, integrated communication is also known as cluster communication, primarily involving fusion and innovation across content, concepts, methods, business formats, and mechanisms among various media to form synergies that make news and public opinion propaganda more timely and targeted, effectively meeting current audience demands for differentiation. Against the all-media backdrop, deep media convergence has become the main trend for the survival and development of the media industry. Prefectural and municipal traditional media lack the first-mover advantages of new media and self-media on the internet. To reverse this situation, they must proactively engage in deep cooperation and integration with various new media, leveraging new media's experience and advantages in information dissemination to enhance their news release capabilities and utilizing new media's strong dissemination power for integrated communication.

Specifically, local traditional media must actively utilize media convergence to effectively integrate their traditional news and public opinion communication models with various terminals such as the internet and mobile clients. This involves centralized processing and resource sharing of news and public opinion information to generate diverse information products for distribution across various platforms, enabling audiences through different channels to obtain needed

news and information anytime, anywhere, and according to their preferences. For instance, based on media convergence, local traditional media should conduct multi-level excavation and collection of news and public opinion information, performing multi-faceted, multi-angle, multi-level, and comprehensive analysis to create news products with distinct characteristics, different intentions, varying themes, and clear categories for dissemination across newspapers, radio, television, Weibo, WeChat, homepages, short-video platforms, and other media channels. Through one-time collection and multiple processing, media can achieve comprehensive utilization, cluster dissemination, and 错位传播 (staggered/dislocated communication), maximizing satisfaction of diverse audience needs.

2.3 Building a Mainstream Value Communication Ecosystem Through Brand Effects

Branded programs and columns represent competitive advantages of traditional media and the soft power upon which they rely to capture market share. Compared with new media and self-media, local traditional media have developed earlier, enjoy higher local recognition, and possess unique brand advantages, having established strong brand recognition among audiences. However, under the impact of new media, the value of these branded columns and programs is increasingly pressured, particularly among younger generations accustomed to receiving internet information, for whom the brand advantages of local traditional media no longer exist. In the current communication ecology, new media and self-media platforms vary significantly in quality. In their rush to secure clicks and retain traffic users, problems such as false reporting have emerged, providing opportunities for local traditional media to consolidate their brand advantages.

This requires decision-makers at local traditional media to attach great importance to actively transforming and upgrading brand building, using brand effects to enhance overall media attractiveness. As local propaganda departments, prefectural and municipal traditional media hold a stable core position in communication orientation, making mainstream value dissemination their responsibility. In terms of content, they should leverage their strengths and avoid weaknesses by reporting more content aligned with socialist core values, promoting good social customs, and timely interpreting Party and state policies closely related to people's interests. By building a mainstream value communication ecosystem, they can consolidate their media authority while winning audience support and enhancing credibility.

2.4 Enhancing Media Communication Depth Through In-Depth Reporting

Although new media possesses many advantages in information dissemination, it also has obvious limitations, particularly the fragmentation and superficial-

ity of news information. New media fails to conduct deep-level excavation and analysis of news events, leaving news dissemination at the surface and providing only simple accounts of events that keep audiences at the level of “knowing what happened.” In contrast, in-depth reporting meets audience demand for deeper exploration of news events through comprehensive and multi-angle analysis of background and significance, enabling audiences to not only “know what happened” but also “understand why it happened.” Originally innovated by newspapers to compete with electronic media, in-depth reporting is a journalistic form that conducts in-depth excavation and clarification of causal relationships regarding major news events or social issues to reveal their essence and significance through a series of interviews and reports. This reporting format breaks through the one-person, one-place, one-event model, analyzing facts internally while presenting their macro context, conveying a sense of authority and substance to audiences.

Local traditional media can use in-depth reporting to overcome new media limitations, enhance the depth of news communication, and establish media authority.

2.5 Diversified Cooperation with Enterprises Through Media Platforms

Against the all-media backdrop, local traditional media should not limit their operations to the media industry alone but can attempt win-win cooperation across multiple industries to create emerging industries and further enhance dissemination power and credibility. Currently, China’s internet landscape has essentially formed a pattern dominated by several giants including Tencent, Alibaba, NetEase, and Baidu, which have secured first-mover advantages on the internet and mobile internet, with their influence in new media continuously expanding. Local media can attempt regional cooperation with these enterprises by establishing links on these new media platforms to vigorously promote local characteristics and leverage these enterprises’ advantages to enhance media influence, create emerging media industries, and develop new profit models. For example, Tencent’s collaborations with Chengdu on “Dacheng Network” and with Fujian on “Damin Network” represent typical cases of traditional media transformation and development.

To gain competitive advantages in the communication market, local traditional media must absorb and learn from the advanced concepts and experiences of internet enterprises, promoting reform and innovation in internal management systems. This includes establishing modern enterprise mechanisms for business management or creating new media departments with independent operational authority to align with China’s market economic development trends. For local traditional media, they can also rely on their platforms to conduct diversified cooperation with local enterprises, such as jointly establishing investment funds, creating joint ventures, or co-building projects. By providing quality news publicity for enterprises while expanding communication influence through these

partnerships, both parties can achieve mutual benefits and win-win outcomes.

In summary, with the rapid development of internet and information technology, challenges facing the local traditional media industry will further intensify. Meanwhile, as 5G infrastructure continues to advance and mobile networks have entered the 5G era, the media industry will also usher in new development opportunities. Whether local traditional media can seize these opportunities will become key to their transformation and development. How to address challenges, turn pressure into motivation, and successfully achieve transformation and upgrading is a major issue that decision-makers in local traditional media must contemplate. As long as media actively take the initiative, rely on their own advantages, absorb and learn from the successful experiences of new media, self-media, and internet enterprises, integrate news and public opinion communication channels around development goals and strategies, conduct precise communication based on audience segmentation, leverage the influence of branded columns to create unique media appeal, and engage in diversified cooperation with enterprises to enhance competitiveness in communication, they can forge a distinctive path and thereby enhance their own influence.

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

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