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## Postprint: A Study on the Transformation of Broadcasting Production Systems Under Media Convergence

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### Abstract

With the coordinated planning and collaborative advancement of cable television network upgrades and transformations, and the continuous improvement of internet and digital technologies, traditional radio and television program production methods are undergoing constant changes alongside the evolution of technological means. In the integrated development of broadcasting and television media control mechanisms, major television stations operate under different production system models. Broadcasting and television institutions, in exploring transformation, have begun to integrate new production systems, while emerging media are also adopting the centralized distribution approaches of television station center systems. Both are respectively adapting to the trends of audience segmentation and differentiated communication, accelerating the construction of their respective new patterns for guiding public opinion to accommodate changes in China's principal social contradictions. Research findings indicate that the traditional production center system should emulate the independent production system in terms of creative freedom; the independent production system should engage in professional analysis to enable developed works to more comprehensively reach audiences, thereby expanding their recognition and credibility. Changes in emerging media communication methods have also prompted producers to explore diversified and efficient production models. Moving forward, how to achieve rational planning, construction, and management of broadcasting and television networks in the 5G era through the integration of existing resources has become a critical issue that the broadcasting and television industry must address.

## Full Text

### 2. Characteristics of Traditional Production Systems Under Media Convergence

Traditional broadcasting production systems embody a centralized philosophy of “concentrating efforts to accomplish major tasks,” reflecting characteristics of the planned economy system with rigid time concepts and formulaic creative approaches. In terms of creative ideology, they typically operate within explicitly defined frameworks and maintain a sense of solemnity. Regarding copyright ownership, programs are generally broadcast on the station’s own channels, with content belonging exclusively to the broadcaster. All internal review and production copyrights maintain monopolistic and authoritative control.

#### 2.1 The “Workshop Director” Role of Traditional Broadcasting Producers

The role of traditional producers is positioned as “workshop directors,” inheriting control systems from the industrial revolution era with vestiges of planned economy characteristics. China’s television stations commonly operate under a central studio system within channel structures, completing program production according to top-down assignments from channel leadership, meeting production schedules, and fulfilling rating targets. Team members are assigned to specific roles with clear divisions of labor. During pre-production planning, mid-production process rehearsals, script breakdowns, filming outlines, host scripts, and seamless coordination, all personnel complete their domain-specific tasks within reasonable timeframes. In the final stage, teams integrate materials through non-linear editing to complete broadcast coordination, ensuring smooth transmission of each episode. In the control room, producers typically also serve as chief directors.

In recent years, major satellite television stations have undergone institutional reforms with varying characteristics, but generally implement separation of production and broadcasting as their core, fundamentally aiming to enhance internal productivity. Regarding production systems, the independent producer system emphasizes “business management.” Specifically, producers hold several key authorities: personnel selection and employment rights; team member assignment rights within production projects; daily work arrangement authority for team members; and regular performance evaluation rights. Traditional broadcasting production grants producers certain financial powers: the authority to reasonably increase program budgets; and the flexibility to use funds for additional compensation or bonuses for hosts, directors, on-camera reporters, cinematographers, and other team members. Generally, project bidding rights for traditional production systems belong to specific production stages, with no redistribution rights for revenue, and final content review authority remains with the channel.

## 2.2 Ownership Issues in Traditional Broadcasting Production

Under the traditional production system, program distribution follows an internal allocation model. Programs produced in-house are sold to the station's own channels, with general productions serving only the corresponding broadcast slots and rarely possessing secondary distribution rights, aiming to achieve production completion and rating targets. However, under the separation of production and broadcasting, traditional broadcasting production has innovated its distribution methods. For example, the reality show *Extreme Challenge* was produced by Shanghai Oriental Television's central studio system, belonging to in-house production. The program was distributed to iQiyi, Youku, Tudou, and other platforms, implementing a new form of production-broadcasting separation.

## 2.3 Program Distribution Production Methods in Traditional Broadcasting

The program distribution production method in traditional broadcasting involves internal allocation. Programs are self-distributed within station channels, typically serving only the corresponding broadcast time slots, with few secondary distribution rights, aiming to achieve production completion and rating targets. However, under production-broadcasting separation, traditional broadcasting production has made innovations. For instance, the reality show *Extreme Challenge* was produced by Shanghai Oriental Television's central studio system, belonging to in-house production. The program was distributed to iQiyi, Youku, Tudou, and other platforms, implementing a new form of production-broadcasting separation.

## 3. Characteristics of Emerging Media Independent Production Systems Under Media Convergence

The independent producer system originated in the UK as the "Independent Producer System," referring to a program production framework where broadcasting institutions delegate partial program production to independent production companies or independent producers. In China, the former has evolved into a "production-broadcasting separation" model cooperating with private production companies, while the latter is what we now call the "independent producer system."

As the dividends from broadcasting separation gradually disappear, what follows is multi-faceted competition from self-produced brand content by satellite channels, satellite channels, and program production companies. Channel competition pressure has made the integration of in-house production and independent producer systems an inevitable trend. In 1983, the Ministry of Radio and Television proposed a "vertical and horizontal division, primarily horizontal" leadership system and a "trinity, vertical functions" operational mechanism, initially establishing China's television system and explicitly stipulating that all

television stations belong to state ownership.

### **3.1 The “Product Manager” Role of Emerging Media Independent Producers**

The role of independent producers is positioned as “product managers,” adapting to free-market competition systems with market economy characteristics. China’s independent producer system is program-creation-centered, conducting activities around all aspects of program production, promotion, and marketing, typically producing programs on a seasonal basis to complete audience click-through rates and advertising placement tasks. Team composition is producer-centered, with producers having full authority to build teams.

### **3.2 Ownership Issues in Emerging Media Independent Production**

Under the independent producer system, content review authority remains with the channel, but producers are granted more rights in project bidding and revenue redistribution. Due to changes in production mechanisms, the relationship between independent producer system columns and relevant station departments has shifted from passive coordination to active collaboration.

The independent producer system is a modern program operation and industrial management mechanism born from internet competition environments, possessing keen market responsiveness and rapid adaptability. In teams centered on independent producers, they hold financial management authority, maximizing resource mobilization, stimulating team vitality, rapidly responding to market competition, and cultivating excellent television talent.

Channels implement special reward and punishment policies for independent producer systems to ensure motivation and professional responsibility. First is project operation rights: under independent producer management, project managers are responsible for column creativity, production, budgeting, marketing, and management. Second is performance compensation: channels distribute performance bonuses to columns according to deputy producer standards. Independent producers must distribute performance bonuses to the entire team based on project progress and results, with project managers making specific allocations according to division of labor. Additionally, reward and punishment measures are crucial. During column operation, independent producers conduct project evaluations based on ratings, revenue generation, and media convergence performance. Failure to meet targets results in penalties for project managers, while meeting targets brings rewards.

Independent producers have relatively independent authority over fund usage and autonomy. They can prioritize using station equipment, studios, and other program resources within the channel. As the first person responsible for programs, they enjoy decision-making rights. Revenue from advertising oversales, program derivatives, media convergence market development, and industrial operations can be partially used for program development and team bonuses.

### 3.3 Internet-Thinking Operation Methods of Emerging Media Independent Production

**3.3.1 Understanding Market Trends, Integrating Teams, and Internet-Thinking Creation** Under the independent producer system, to achieve optimal programs and maximum revenue, producers must connect with market demands while ensuring content safety, considering audience preferences, and utilizing the best available market resources and most professional teams. The independent producer system extends team work to all aspects of television product operation. To effectively respond to fierce market competition, clear and reasonable rating targets should be established with 完善的惩罚制度 to release the vitality of the independent producer system, thereby increasing television program market share and influence to meet the practical development needs of television stations.

Product management consciousness is one method of internet-thinking operation. Producer-managers possess independent autonomy to achieve self-financing, personnel employment, program production, and comprehensive marketing. They realize video self-production, such as Li Dan' s show *Roast Season 1* and Ma Dong' s *U Can U Bibi*, implementing a self-production and self-sales mindset for their respective broadcast platforms. Creatively, they typically have their own director planning teams and pre-planning for hosts and guests regarding the entire program process. In terms of funding channels, creators must secure their own title sponsors and supporters. For program production, they rely on major self-media platforms for distribution and IP sales to maximize program value. In marketing, self-produced programs leverage star effects and emotional appeals to attract their target audience, typically using WeChat public accounts and Weibo topic agenda-setting for promotion.

**3.3.2 Unified Responsibility-Rights-Interests, Clear Rewards and Punishments, and Mobilizing Production Enthusiasm** Independent producers possess more autonomy than ever before while bearing greater responsibility and pressure. Because responsibilities, rights, and interests are fully aligned and linked, producers and their teams exhibit high enthusiasm and passion, as their personal benefits are closely tied to program operations. Both punishment and reward mechanisms are substantial. Ratings and influence-oriented assessments drive producers and their teams to continuously consider innovation. It is evident that the independent producer model more effectively mobilizes employee enthusiasm, not only accelerating innovation and reform in the media industry but also avoiding the shortcomings and deficiencies of traditional production models.

**3.3.3 Facing Converged Media and Cultivating New Broadcasting Talent** Independent producer system columns have relatively independent and free development space, requiring tight planning, production, and promotion of

all television product stages, designing upstream, midstream, and downstream processes. Therefore, columns need to continuously cultivate production personnel who understand markets and possess media literacy suitable for converged media environments.

Hunan Satellite TV began experimenting with the “independent producer system” during the early days of *Happy Camp*, which became more widely recognized when Hong Tao’ s team produced *I Am a Singer*. Teams like Hong Tao’ s, Long Mei’ s, and Liao Ke’ s are all independent producer system studios within Hunan Satellite TV. Through clear reward and punishment measures, the station has objectively created competition among them, while competition and comparison across multiple studios in program creativity and ratings have also facilitated their respective growth, bringing the independent producer system into a virtuous cycle.

In program production practice, the team value of independent producers continuously increases, allowing television talent to emerge and be cultivated. Only by continuously establishing concepts of daring innovation and breakthrough can we explore scientific and reasonable contemporary television operation models.

#### 4. Comparison Between Traditional and Independent Production Systems

The integration and collaborative application of traditional and independent production systems have become creative mechanisms for both broadcasting and emerging media. Emerging media production systems require the platform and resource support of broadcasting media, while broadcasting media needs to learn the enthusiasm and internet thinking of emerging media production systems.

##### 4.1 Traditional System: External Separation of Production and Broadcasting; Independent System: External Adherence to Traditional Principles

The traditional production system implements external separation of production and broadcasting while internally adopting independent producer systems. The independent producer system externally adheres to the principle of maintaining audience and rating foundations, while internally unifying responsibilities, rights, and interests with clear rewards and punishments to mobilize program innovation enthusiasm.

After producing four seasons of *The Voice of China*, Zhejiang Satellite TV ceased copyright importation after 2016 and instead launched original creations under the independent producer system, implementing a new production-broadcasting separation model. Hunan Satellite TV, leveraging strong production capabilities and brand effects, created phenomenon-level programs such as *I Am a Singer*, *Where Are We Going, Dad?*, and *Divas Hit the Road*. Mango TV transitioned

from “content is king” to “integrated symbiosis,” placing all exclusive content on Mango TV, PC terminals, and home OTT platforms for integrated marketing across four platforms—PC, Mango mobile TV, internet TV, and IPTV—with interchangeable resources and services, enabling audiences to enjoy comprehensive media services anytime, anywhere. Evidently, Hunan Satellite TV’s production system adheres externally to traditional principles of ratings and audience attention.

#### **4.2 Traditional System: Programs Understand the Market; Independent System: Programs Face All Media**

Traditional production systems understand the market, with media-savvy production personnel demonstrating effectiveness and comprehensive qualities. Independent production system programs face all media, dare to innovate, and focus on adapting to contemporary audience viewing patterns.

CCTV’s excellent programs such as *Dancing with My Life*, *China’s Good Songs*, *The Amazing Race*, and *The Reader* mostly adopt a combined model of in-house and independent production. If this model represents a rapid pathway for large-scale variety shows, then implementing the independent producer system will become a long-term mechanism for program innovation and development, gradually remedying the shortcomings of traditional production models—insufficient innovation motivation and scarcity of high-level production teams—making “continuous internal blood production” an inexhaustible driving force for program innovation and enhanced communication influence.

#### **4.3 Traditional System: Possesses Allocation and Usage Rights; Independent System: Possesses Producer Rights**

Allocation and usage rights: Television program producers possess attributes including broadcasting, media, public welfare, political, and economic characteristics. Production rights include: creative autonomy, project bidding rights, team building rights, fund allocation rights, revenue sharing rights, and resource usage rights.

Traditional production possesses government-allocated usage rights. Government departments and media enterprises maintain close associations. For example, among listed media companies, Hunan TV & Broadcast Intermediary is controlled by the Hunan Provincial Radio and Television Bureau; Time Publishing and Media and Wanxin Media are controlled by the Anhui Provincial People’s Government; and Publishing Media is controlled by the Liaoning Provincial People’s Government.

Independent production possesses producer rights. Producers enjoy greater freedom in scheduling and innovation. System innovation can be achieved through two approaches: first, transplantation and adaptation of production systems; second, system design and self-construction.

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

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