

A Preliminary Analysis of the Pathways for Convergent Development of Municipal Television Stations and New Media: Postprint

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Abstract

The rapid development of new media has profoundly transformed the modalities through which individuals access information as well as their lifestyle and work patterns, exerting a substantial impact on city television stations. How city television stations can progress in a more favorable direction within the context of new media is a question that merits deliberation by all television practitioners. As new media continues its rapid development, traditional media has encountered tremendous challenges, rendering the integration of city television stations with new media an imperative future trajectory. Capitalizing on opportunities and pursuing reform and innovation constitute the key to strengthening the guiding force and impact of city television stations as mainstream media. This article investigates the trajectory of joint development between city television stations and new media, aiming to provide valuable recommendations for practitioners in the field.

Full Text

Preamble

Analysis of the Path for Integrated Development of City Television Stations and New Media

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Abstract: The rapid development of new media has fundamentally transformed how people access information and altered their daily routines, presenting significant challenges to city television stations. How these stations can evolve positively within this new media landscape is a critical question for media professionals. As new media continues its swift expansion, traditional media faces unprecedented disruption, making integration between city TV stations and new

media platforms an inevitable future direction. Seizing opportunities and implementing transformative reforms are essential for city TV stations to strengthen their influence and guiding power as mainstream media. This article explores pathways for integrated development between city TV stations and new media, offering practical recommendations for industry peers.

Keywords: city television stations; new media; integrated development; localization; client applications

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1. The Impact of New Media on City Television Stations

New media refers to communication forms that utilize advanced network technologies to deliver information and facilitate interaction through mobile devices such as smartphones and tablets. The emergence of the internet has completely transformed the previous situation where television programs could only be watched on TV sets, thereby affecting the market share of broadcast television. City TV stations, which already suffered from relatively low viewership, have experienced continuous audience decline. From the perspective of audience aggregation, the internet has significantly fragmented city TV stations' viewer base. The internet offers substantial advantages in news transmission speed, information capacity, and reception formats, as well as in video distribution, large-scale event promotion, and television drama marketing.

Since the 1980s, city television stations—which include provincial, municipal, and prefecture-level stations—grew rapidly under the “four-level television operation” and “four-level mixed coverage” policies. However, these stations have long struggled in the gap between CCTV and provincial satellite channels due to limited capital, capacity, and talent, as well as constraints in program planning and production quality. The rapid growth of new media has introduced additional challenges, creating a two-pronged pressure on city TV stations.

First, new media has further fragmented the already disadvantaged audience base of city TV stations. The rise of internet TV, digital television, and other new media platforms has divided audience attention. Emerging digital applications such as WeChat, Zhihu, and news apps have attracted increasing numbers of users who can watch videos and access current events anytime and anywhere via mobile devices. This has segmented city TV stations' audience, which is increasingly trending toward an aging demographic. Second, the monopoly of

television stations as the sole channel for broadcasting content has disappeared. These dual challenges from both traditional competitors and emerging platforms have intensified the difficulties facing city TV stations.

2. Challenges and Opportunities

2.1 Challenges Facing City Television Stations

The rapid development of new media has continuously weakened the influence of city TV stations, resulting in audience loss and declining advertising revenue—an unprecedented shock to the industry. Young audiences, in particular, have migrated en masse to new platforms. They can access diverse video content and current news on their mobile phones, while using WeChat, QQ, and other new media as daily communication tools. In contrast, television broadcasting follows fixed schedules that limit viewing times.

According to the “2019 National Broadcasting and Television Industry Statistical Bulletin” released by the National Radio and Television Administration on July 8, 2020, traditional broadcast advertising revenue decreased while new media advertising revenue grew significantly. In 2019, national advertising revenue reached 207.527 billion yuan, an 11.30% year-on-year increase. Traditional broadcast television advertising revenue was 99.885 billion yuan, down 9.13%, whereas new media advertising revenue obtained by broadcast and television organizations through the internet reached 82.876 billion yuan, up 68.49% year-on-year.[?] These figures fully demonstrate how the internet has divided and impacted television advertising revenue.

2.2 Opportunities for City Television Development

Although new media has diverted some audience traffic from city TV stations, the two are not inherently opposed. From the current perspective, city TV stations must focus on integrated development with new media, leveraging new media’s strengths to compensate for their own weaknesses. They should firmly seize technological development opportunities and actively explore every possibility for integration.

The integrated development of traditional and new media represents a crucial strategic decision by the Party Central Committee. The development of internet and digital technologies provides a feasible space where the internet, telecommunications networks, and broadcast television networks have achieved compatibility and interconnectivity. People can now surf the internet using their televisions, and an increasing number of people use emerging media to obtain information. The triple-network convergence strategy points the way for city TV stations’ integrated development, enabling them to utilize emerging media forms and creating new opportunities for their development in the new media era.[?]

3. Core Characteristics of New Media

3.1 Strong Interactivity

Traditional television media suffers from one-way transmission in its delivery methods, means, and formats, leaving viewers to passively receive information without adequate channels for interaction. New media audiences not only autonomously select information but can also interact with content that interests them.

3.2 High Real-time Capability

Traditional television broadcasting follows largely fixed schedules and struggles to achieve real-time transmission. Today, people typically obtain first-hand news through Weibo or various news applications. Users can upload videos to the internet in real-time using their mobile phones, instantly informing large numbers of people about current events. To meet this challenge, traditional television media must conduct relevant research and experimentation, shifting from the previous “content-centric” approach to the current “content + channel” model. On one hand, they must continuously improve content through program innovation; on the other hand, they must collaborate with companies like Tencent and Bilibili to enhance operations, thereby securing a position in fierce market competition.

4. Paths for Integrated Development of City TV Stations and New Media

In the new media era, city television stations must follow the trend and integrate new media through their own resource consolidation. While CCTV and many provincial TV stations have already achieved media matrices through convergence, city TV stations with insufficient resources in capital, technology, and talent cannot reach similar levels in the short term. Therefore, how can city TV stations implement internal transformation, achieve mutual benefit with new media, and find a path to growth? The author proposes the following approaches.

4.1 Transforming Content Transmission Formats

City television stations employ linear transmission for information delivery, whereas new media operates non-linearly. Therefore, when providing broadcast content to new media platforms, city TV stations must reorganize the information and change the original programming format to make it suitable for new media playback.[?] First, they should enhance interactivity in their broadcasts.

One reason for new media' s success is its strong interactive nature. Adding interactive elements between broadcasts and viewers can attract more audiences. Second, they should improve timeliness. Another characteristic of new media is real-time capability. City TV stations' news programs can learn from internet programming features by adding hourly news segments and broadcasting at regular intervals throughout the day to increase timeliness. Finally, they should utilize new media for promotion and dissemination. City TV stations' reach has traditionally been limited to local and surrounding areas, but new media breaks these geographical constraints, enabling city TV stations to broadcast internationally and build their brand.

4.2 Fully Utilizing Social Media Platforms to Expand Integration

Each channel should establish an official platform for interaction and communication with the public. This approach not only expands the channel' s coverage among audiences but also increases its visibility and completes the interactive communication loop with viewers. Dedicated teams can be formed for new media promotion and marketing, covering everything from opening official accounts to channel promotion, fan management, and real-time interaction between studios and social platforms—all requiring clear planning and processes. In this area, city TV stations have inherent advantages. For example, some television programs encourage viewers to scan QR codes on screen to participate in prize-winning activities, maintaining engagement even when programs are not broadcasting. Official platforms can upload clips from upcoming programs to build suspense and stimulate audience interest, or allow viewers to comment on channel platforms, sharing their opinions or content preferences. This feedback can inform program planning and modifications to better attract audiences.[?]

4.3 Leveraging Mobile Devices to Expand Integration Domains

Urban taxis, buses, and other public transportation represent growth space for city TV stations' mobile television. This is a unique advantage for city TV stations. Therefore, they should develop practical development strategies and implement reasonable management controls to firmly occupy this territory. In implementation, they must carefully research public viewing habits on mobile and building television systems, planning content based on audience needs.

4.4 Accelerating Mobile Client Development to Enhance Integration Capacity

Due to their mobile convenience, smartphones have become the most frequently used communication devices. With widespread smartphone adoption, mobile phones have become essential daily life tools. Actively participating in mobile client development and collaboration represents a new direction for city TV stations. Several city TV stations have already developed successful mobile clients, such as “Smart Wuxi,” “Wireless Suzhou,” and “Wireless Xuzhou” established by Wuxi, Suzhou, and Xuzhou Broadcasting Media Groups.[?]

Taking “Wireless Suzhou” as an example, this urban lifestyle application created by Suzhou Television includes features such as traffic conditions, violation inquiries, light rail services, train tickets, movie ticketing, telecommunications, water utilities, weather, TV shopping, petition reporting, digital libraries, Weibo super topics, tip-off zones, news, bike-sharing, live streaming, ride-hailing, public transportation, and online games. City TV stations with adequate resources can learn from the “Wireless Suzhou” model and actively collaborate to establish their own mobile applications. These apps can deliver local news and lifestyle information, enabling users to listen to radio, watch videos, and read magazines on their phones.

Another successful case is Foshan Television, which adheres to a “mobile-first” strategy and integrated progress, focusing on new transmission, strong interaction, and robust incubation. First, it has given industrial development vitality to existing brand IPs, such as the “Pearl River Image Ambassador,” “50km Hiking,” and “Beautiful Mother” cultural and creative products. Institutionally, it has established a documentary company to market traditional documentary advantages (classic works include *A Bite of Shunde* and *The Story of Eels*), transforming “cultural creative brands” into “cultural industry brands.” Second, it has concentrated on promotional power: in November 2019, it launched the Cantonese video aggregation platform “Xingmu Video” app, producing over 200 Cantonese videos daily and achieving 3 million downloads within six months. Technologically, it focuses on 5G+4K/8K+VR, striving for excellence in equipment and talent reserves. In resource linking, it connects social resources through platform services.

4.5 Emphasizing Broadcast Localization and Strengthening Interaction with New Media

With numerous platforms available for news consumption and an overwhelming variety of content, it remains difficult to access small-scale or localized information about community events happening around us. City TV stations’ greatest advantage lies in their locally distinctive reporting content. For example, Foshan Television’s *Xiaoqiang Hotline*—a people’s livelihood news program—has remained an enduring local success for over a decade. Such people’s livelihood programs exist in every city TV station. These programs focus on local grassroots culture, combining traditional media professionalism with grassroots-era originality. Using social platforms or mobile software to communicate with audiences, explore their preferences, and incorporate these interests into program planning creates a virtuous cycle. In the co-development of city TV stations and new media, city TV stations must reformulate and reshape themselves, prioritizing public needs to find suitable growth paths amid fierce competition between new and traditional media, thereby expanding their own media territory and creating a better future.[?]

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

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