

Innovative Development Strategies for Grassroots Media in the Context of Media Convergence: Postprint

Authors: Zhao Wenquan

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Abstract

For a considerable period, grassroots media has served as the primary channel for the general public to receive social information and as the principal means of relaxation during leisure time away from busy work schedules. With the arrival of the networked and digital era, network technologies and digital technologies have directly brought about significant changes in the media industry, engendering profound transformations in the working methods, working environment, and work content of grassroots media. Against the backdrop of media convergence, how grassroots media should develop has become an important subject collectively explored within the current industry. This paper analyzes the characteristics of media information and the importance of media convergence in the convergence context, and subsequently examines concrete strategies for promoting the innovative development of grassroots media from multiple perspectives, aiming to better facilitate grassroots media's adaptation to the new convergent environment, its prompt self-adjustment in response to societal changes, and the continuous creation of new developmental achievements.

Full Text

Innovative Development Strategies for Grassroots Media in the Context of Convergence

Abstract: For a long time, grassroots media served as the primary channel for the public to receive social information and a main source of relaxation amid busy work schedules. With the advent of the networked and digital era, internet and digital technologies have fundamentally transformed the media industry, revolutionizing the working methods, environments, and content of grassroots media. In this convergence context, how grassroots media should evolve has become a critical issue for collective exploration within the industry. This paper

analyzes the characteristics of media information and the significance of media convergence in the new landscape, then proposes specific strategies from multiple perspectives to foster innovative development of grassroots media. The aim is to help grassroots media adapt more effectively to the converged environment, adjust to societal changes, and continuously achieve new developmental milestones.

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Author: Zhao Wenquan

Since 2014, General Secretary Xi Jinping has delivered multiple important speeches on media convergence, setting a new direction for media integration across the nation and accelerating its momentum. Today, society at large demonstrates an increasingly powerful and rapidly accelerating trend toward media convergence. As various information and digital technologies are continuously applied to media work, the integration between media and new technologies deepens. However, a comprehensive review of the convergence process reveals numerous challenges, particularly regional development imbalances. Compared with the rapid convergence of urban media, the integration of regional grassroots media remains in its infancy. Given the extensive national coverage of grassroots media, their innovative development and accelerated convergence are crucial, affecting the overall progress of media integration nationwide.

1.1 Faster Processing and Dissemination of Media Information

Society has entered the networked era, where media information spreads with exceptional speed under the support of internet technology, reaching all regions of the country within minutes and enabling near real-time information access. When the Jiuzhaigou earthquake struck in 2017, many users received news 推送 about the disaster just 25 seconds after it occurred. The 524-character report, accompanied by four images, was automatically generated by a robot using information from big data platforms—a product of deep integration between network technology, digital technology, and media that helped people obtain information instantly.

1.2 Fragmentation of Media Information

With the growing popularity of smartphones, many people install various apps to access social information through push notifications. Mobile devices offer greater convenience than televisions or computers, allowing users to access information anytime and anywhere—during commutes, leisure time, or breaks—without temporal or spatial constraints. This consumption of information during fragmented time slots constitutes what we call fragmented reading, yielding

fragmented information. App platforms automatically push relevant content based on user preferences, compressing information to ensure quick comprehension.

1.3 Diversification of Media Information Dissemination

In the past, people obtained information primarily through traditional media such as television and local newspapers. Today, access channels have diversified significantly to include not only television and newspapers but also websites, public accounts, microblogs, and news apps accessible via computers and smartphones. Many official media outlets have embraced this trend by establishing official microblog accounts and WeChat public accounts to push information in real time. The convergence era has fostered increasingly diversified dissemination methods, facilitating rapid access to social information and enhancing convenience in daily life, work, and study.

1.4 Grassroots-oriented Production of Media Information

Previously, users could only passively receive information from traditional media. However, with the integration of digital, intelligent, and network technologies, users have become not only information consumers but also producers and disseminators. As news events occur daily, individuals can use various platforms to express their views and opinions, influencing others with their perspectives. News production has thus assumed a grassroots orientation, with the public able to voice opinions online—an manifestation of strengthened public discourse power.

2.1 Breaking Through Bottlenecks in Grassroots Media Development in the Convergence Era

In the convergence era, media content production has begun transitioning from Professionally Generated Content (PGC) to User Generated Content (UGC), creating a vast ocean of information on the internet where traditional media such as radio, television, and newspapers are gradually losing competitiveness. Taking the broadcasting industry as an example, television ratings reveal a severe Matthew effect: the entire market is dominated by a few channels including CCTV, Zhejiang TV, Hunan TV, and Dragon TV. These satellite channels secure premium advertising resources and substantial state funding due to their high-quality programming. In contrast, numerous grassroots media outlets struggle to obtain government or corporate investment due to their lack of quality programs and cannot achieve self-sufficiency through advertising, leading to weakening development and an insurmountable bottleneck. Moving forward, grassroots media must actively integrate with new technologies, 持续推进 deep and sustained convergence, and adapt their forms and content to emerging trends to reverse this situation and break through the bottleneck.

2.2 Digital Technology as the New Direction for Grassroots Media Development

Digital technology has naturally permeated numerous aspects of media production and distribution, becoming a crucial driver of industry transformation. A single new technology application can fundamentally change the entire industry. Media development is closely tied to technological productivity, with production methods continuously evolving alongside scientific progress. The print media era relied primarily on text editing; the advent of photography made news more vivid through images; the television era introduced more flexible and diverse reporting, with video and live streaming becoming mainstream; today's artificial intelligence technology has brought fundamental changes to news production. Digital and network technologies are now applied throughout media workflows, including information gathering, editing, and distribution, attracting user attention and enhancing audience experience.

The media industry generates massive amounts of news daily, including text dispatches, images, videos, and music. Since audience preferences vary widely, AI technology can analyze users' search histories to identify interests and push preferred content. For instance, if a user frequently browses entertainment news on Sohu, the AI-powered backend will automatically push the latest entertainment updates. Providing personalized recommendations through digital technology has become a mainstream trend, significantly reducing search time. Grassroots media should also actively employ digital technologies in information gathering and post-production, creating diverse forms and content to provide visual stimulation and attract users through sensory engagement. By analyzing user needs, grassroots media can deliver more secure, reliable, and scientifically grounded information, enhancing their status among audiences and increasing societal attention. Since many grassroots media remain at a relatively low level of technology integration, they should promptly explore successful convergence experiences and integrate new technologies using existing resources to promote innovative development and better serve users, the public, and society.

3.1 Enhancing Timeliness of Grassroots Media Information

The continuous evolution of network technology has influenced the media convergence process, making post-convergence dissemination methods more diversified, while grassroots media remain stuck in one-way, scheduled broadcasting. This makes development increasingly difficult amid deepening convergence. Grassroots media primarily cover local stories about local people, making timeliness critical. If local news is released later by local media than by other outlets, audiences will inevitably abandon it. Grassroots media should focus their coverage on the local area, centering on stories about local people and events to satisfy audience demand for useful local information. By disseminating news rapidly and achieving first-time reporting, they can capture audience attention, uphold the urgency of timing, and prevent locals from learning about community news through other channels. Grassroots media staff must prioritize this

issue by integrating local information resources and appropriately leveraging network, digital, and intelligent technologies to enhance the timeliness of news editing, processing, and distribution, thereby improving dissemination power and appeal.

3.2 Accurately Engaging Audiences and Improving Service Quality

For grassroots media television programs to achieve high ratings, they must first gain audience recognition, which requires considering audience psychology from multiple perspectives and accurately meeting their needs while maintaining authenticity, thereby improving overall service quality. Currently, many grassroots media produce various programs—food shows, singing competitions, travel programs, educational content, and reality shows—sometimes inviting celebrities to attract traffic and satisfy audience desires to connect with idols. For example, Dragon TV’s highly-rated “Go Fighting!” invites guests with strong variety show presence to join the cast and incorporates live audience participation, giving ordinary people substantial screen time. This not only bridges the gap between audiences and idols but also encourages viewership of their interactions, meeting psychological needs. Many program segments revolve around daily life—cleaning beaches, delivering milk, washing cars—to help participants experience different professions. The show also interacts with audiences in real time via microblog, with each guest equipped with a smartphone to receive tasks, actively integrating network and digital technologies into production. By attracting more participants and promoting positive life attitudes, the program enhances its cultural sophistication. Its popularity is no accident; every segment considers audience psychology, irregularly incorporates ordinary people, and maintains a positive, energy-filled attitude regardless of outcome, aligning with public aesthetic and psychological needs. This audience-centric approach to service quality merits emulation by other grassroots media seeking to create quality local programs.

3.3 Building Culturally Connotative Programs

As China’s international status continues rising, the cultivation and export of traditional culture have gained increasing importance. Programs promoting cultural literacy can not only publicize China’s unique cultural knowledge but also foster greater appreciation for its customs and etiquette. Among traditional media, Hunan TV has maintained high ratings, with many high-quality programs worth emulating. For instance, “Day Day Up,” launched in 2008, is a cultural talk show promoting traditional Chinese culture, etiquette, regional customs, scenic attractions, local cuisine, and cultural morality. While incorporating entertainment and humor, these elements are interwoven with cultural customs and ethical protocols, allowing audiences to learn while being entertained and subtly increasing their knowledge. This approach greatly promotes excellent Chinese culture, offering viewers a culturally rich feast. Since regional traditions and customs vary, grassroots media can develop similar cultural pro-

grams tailored to local conditions, attracting audiences through substantive, meaningful content to boost ratings.

3.4 Cultivating Innovative Thinking Among Grassroots Media Editors

To truly improve grassroots media ratings, particularly for local television stations, cultivating editors' innovative thinking is essential. As program leaders, editors must align program direction with broader social trends and audience needs, satisfying viewing demands while evoking emotional resonance. Additionally, editors should incorporate new elements to achieve continuous innovation and attract broader audiences. For example, CCTV's "Intelligent Interconnection" focuses on AI technology and scientific challenges, showcasing different AI innovations each episode to bring audiences closer to science and demonstrate how technological innovation transforms human life. Each episode captures audience attention, with high-tech applications enhancing technology integration and visual effects. The program's success stems from collaborative efforts, particularly from an innovative editor. Local station editors should actively explore new technologies and elements, inserting them into programs from audience-centric perspectives to attract attention and enhance overall influence through innovation.

3.5 Leveraging Diversified Promotion Methods to Enhance Grassroots Media Dissemination Power

The internet era has significantly transformed the media industry. While emerging platforms like microblog, WeChat, and live streaming pose substantial challenges to grassroots media, we must actively recognize and leverage their advantages—key to survival in the competitive convergence era. First, grassroots television stations can establish official microblog accounts or WeChat public accounts to post trending social topics, attract followers, and build interactive platforms with online communication zones to gather audience feedback and adjust content accordingly, strengthening identification. Second, grassroots media can use reward-based comments and lottery draws to encourage participation. For instance, on Youku or iQiyi, official accounts post questions about programs in top comment positions and conduct random drawings during fixed time slots, encouraging more viewers to comment and provide creative input. Additionally, using emerging media to preview exciting program content and behind-the-scenes footage can promote programs, deepen impressions, help audiences remember broadcast schedules, and attract viewers with compelling trailers, thereby boosting grassroots media ratings.

The convergence era represents an inevitable social development. Grassroots media must keep pace with the times, continuously innovating and changing to minimize the impact of emerging media. Moreover, we should objectively view new technologies and media—not only as challenges but also as opportunities. Therefore, grassroots media professionals must break fixed mindsets, clarify their positioning, and actively improve information timeliness, service quality,

and cultural connotation while learning to innovate by incorporating trendy elements. Finally, they should leverage emerging media advantages to promote grassroots programs and increase public attention. In short, grassroots media must actively apply new technologies to enhance program quality and content, transform outdated, ignored programming, and practically promote innovative convergence development between grassroots media and new technologies.

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(Author' s affiliation: Haidong City Radio and Television Station, Qinghai Province)

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

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