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Advancing Media Convergence in Depth: Post-Print of the Practical Exploration of Integrated Development at Rugao City Converged Media Center

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Abstract

Advancing the construction of county-level converged media centers requires accelerating integration across multiple dimensions, including mindset and concepts, institutional mechanisms, platform development, process management, talent, and technology. This paper presents an in-depth analysis of the exploratory initiatives undertaken by the Rugao City Converged Media Center—a key project promoted by the Publicity Department of the CPC Central Committee—which leverages its first-mover advantages and remains committed to upholding fundamentals while pursuing innovation. The analysis focuses on its efforts in optimizing top-level design, strengthening technical platform support, constructing an all-media matrix, ensuring multi-layered financial guarantees, and enhancing assessment and guidance, with the objective of offering valuable insights for broader practical implementation.

Full Text

Promoting In-Depth Media Convergence: A Practical Exploration of the Rugao Media Convergence Center's Development

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Abstract: Accelerating the construction of county-level media convergence centers requires deepening integration across conceptual thinking, institutional mechanisms, platform construction, process management, and talent development. This paper presents an analytical case study of the Rugao Media Convergence Center, a key pilot project promoted by the Publicity Department of the

CPC Central Committee. By leveraging its first-mover advantages and committing to innovation while upholding principles, Rugao has explored optimization of top-level design, technology platform support, construction of a full media matrix, diversified funding guarantees, and strengthened assessment guidance. This analysis aims to provide insights for broader practical implementation.

Keywords: Innovation while upholding principles; Media convergence; In-Depth development

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Promoting the integrated development of county-level media represents a major strategic deployment by the Party Central Committee to consolidate the ideological and cultural front and strengthen mainstream public opinion. As a county-level media convergence center prioritized by the Publicity Department of the CPC Central Committee, the Rugao Media Convergence Center has, in recent years, leveraged its advantage of integrating city-wide media resources under unified operation. It has focused on fulfilling its mission to “hold high the banner, gather public support, nurture new talent, promote culture, and showcase China’ s image,” striving to build a mainstream media with strong communication, guidance, influence, and credibility. This has further consolidated the shared ideological foundation among Rugao’ s 1.45 million citizens and powerfully driven the city’ s high-quality economic and social development.

The construction of Rugao’ s media convergence center has progressed through three distinct stages since its inception. The first stage was physical integration. In 2010, the city merged its radio and television station, news media center (Rugao Daily), modern distance education center, Rugao Grand Theater, and puppet art troupe to establish the Rugao Cultural Media Group—a forward-looking innovation that represented the earliest implementation of its kind among county-level media in Jiangsu Province. The second stage was preliminary integration. From 2010 to 2017, the center focused on achieving “accuracy,” “novelty,” “micro-content,” and “speed,” exploring ways to optimize communication channels, improve content quality, and expand industrial operations, generating significant influence in the industry. The third stage has been in-depth integration. Since 2018, particularly after General Secretary Xi Jinping’ s explicit directive at the National Conference on Propaganda and Ideological Work to “solidly advance county-level media convergence center construction to better guide and serve the masses,” Rugao has capitalized on its early-mover advantage in “physical” integration. The center has accelerated convergence across conceptual thinking, institutional mechanisms, platform construction, process management, and talent technology, forming a distinctive “four unifications” model: early brand integration, effective unified management, resonant single voice, and high-efficiency integrated operations. Currently, the Rugao Media Convergence Center operates multiple communication platforms

including radio, television, newspapers, and new media, while also establishing diverse industrial ventures such as trading companies, art training centers, cinemas, and performance businesses, creating a robust structure where news propaganda and industrial operations advance in parallel.

1. Optimizing Top-Level Design

Building a media convergence center is an entirely new endeavor. To address this challenge, Rugao established a dedicated “Leading Group for Media Deep Integration Development Reform.” Following deliberation and approval by the Standing Committee of the Municipal Party Committee, the *Implementation Opinions on Promoting the Deep Integration Development of Traditional and Emerging Media* was issued, with the municipal Party secretary personally overseeing the initiative to optimize top-level design, clarify objectives and tasks, and strengthen planning guidance. After multiple rounds of discussion with the Municipal Establishment Office, the center established a four-center integrated operational framework comprising an administrative center, news center, business center, and technology center. This structure both fully leverages the mainstream media’s role as the “throat and tongue” of the Party, maintaining correct political orientation, public opinion guidance, and value direction to unify thinking and gather public support, while continuously enhancing the quality of industrial operations through lawful and compliant business activities that increase dynamism and stimulate vitality.

2. Technology Platform Support

In constructing its media convergence platform, Rugao has prioritized practicality. Building upon the established “Rugao Media Convergence Production Command Center,” which integrates functions including command and dispatch, production and distribution, performance evaluation, and security protection, the center developed the “Ruyi Cloud” platform. This platform transformed previously dispersed production systems for television, newspaper layout, new media editing, and radio-television broadcasting into a collaborative, integrated production environment. Since its launch, the Ruyi Cloud platform has enabled true converged production across the entire workflow—from topic selection and planning dispatch to multi-platform content sharing, from on-site reporting to multi-format editing, and from traditional articles to one-click converged media distribution. The platform has also achieved technical integration with Jiangsu Provincial Station’s “Litchi Cloud” platform, further expanding its influence. This year, the Rugao Media Convergence Center will prioritize implementing projects such as a high-definition production and broadcasting network and a new radio-television tower to solidify the technical foundation for all-media product dissemination.

3. Building a Full Media Matrix

Emphasizing a mobile-first strategy, the Rugao Media Convergence Center has developed mobile new media platforms including the “Ru e-Media” mobile app and digital interactive multimedia screens, creating a comprehensive, full-format, full-coverage communication system. The center has extended its “News + Government Affairs” function by integrating the city’s “Online News Spokesperson” platform into the “Rugao Release” mobile app, effectively serving as a “reservoir” for grassroots public opinion and a “dam” for social sentiment. It has extended “News + Services” to achieve dual integration of information dissemination and public services, and “News + Mass Activities” to conduct public welfare campaigns with all-media promotional support, making events widely known. Additionally, the center has established presence on mobile platforms including CCTV “News +,” Litchi Cloud, WeChat, Douyin, People’s Daily, Toutiao, and Xinhua Live Cloud, utilizing popular formats such as graphic livestreaming, video livestreaming, short videos, VR panoramas, and H5 to distribute editorial content across all media channels.

The center’s converged teams have demonstrated exceptional capability in field reporting. On June 13, 2017, the Rugao Cultural Media Group dispatched a converged reporting team to cover the “Love Journey to Daliangshan,” documenting the story of Zhong Jianjun, owner of “Zhong’s Beauty Salon,” who donated 280,000 RMB to build a hope primary school in impoverished Daliangshan, Sichuan. The multi-platform coverage achieved comprehensive success. On the first anniversary of the school’s opening—coinciding with Zhong’s 42nd birthday—he returned with his staff to visit the children. Touched by the scene, the converged reporting team spontaneously decided to livestream the event. Using just a mobile phone and selfie stick on a mountain nearly 3,000 meters above sea level with unstable network signals, newspaper, radio, and television journalists collaborated with new media editors to sustain a six-hour livestream that captivated audiences back in Rugao, generating 83,584 views and 1,200 RMB in tips.

During the Rugao International Marathon in March, the center deployed a record 36 journalists for comprehensive converged coverage, with all staff participating in planning, gathering, editing, distribution, and evaluation. One WeChat post achieved over 100,000 views within seven hours through rich photos, short videos, and text. The center has also embedded its converged reporting team in poverty alleviation efforts, dispatching them to Yang County, Shaanxi—Rugao’s designated support partner—for the large-scale converged news campaign “Rugao Witnesses the Crested Ibis Hometown, Hand-in-Hand Toward Prosperity.” The campaign showcased the fruitful results of Rugao-Yang cooperation, with livestreams on CCTV News Mobile, Xinhua Live Cloud, and Broadcasting Cloud accumulating 600,000 total views. Leveraging the Jiangsu Provincial Advanced Theoretical Propaganda Collective “Yao Chengming Theoretical Armament Studio,” the center created the “Rugao Release” new media theoretical propaganda platform, offering online micro-columns such as “Theory

Guru Micro-Lectures,” “Zhi Shui e-Commentary,” and “Palm Winter Training” in internet-friendly language, promoting the Party’s innovative theories into ordinary households. On May 30, the center launched the converged news campaign “Traces of Time—Archives Enter Families,” combining archival collections with family memorabilia through personal and group interviews, policy explanations, experience sharing, and hands-on workshops. The two-hour livestream attracted 83,600 viewers to this traditionally niche field. When a 6.0-magnitude earthquake struck Changning County, Yibin, Sichuan, at 22:55 on June 17, Rugao Media Convergence Center journalists immediately interviewed Sun Chao, a Rugao native teaching in Yibin who experienced the disaster. Their coverage of Sun’s swift return to school and organization of student evacuation “exploded” across Rugao residents’ social media circles. Today, when Rugao citizens encounter difficulties, their first instinct is to call the Rugao Media Convergence Center’s news hotline.

4. Diversified Funding Guarantees

Throughout its construction, the Rugao Media Convergence Center has pursued a dual approach of government “blood transfusion” and self-generated “blood production.” The municipal Party committee and government have allocated special funds and established a fiscal investment growth mechanism for the center’s construction and subsequent technology platform upgrades, clarifying that convergence reform is not about shedding burdens but enhancing vitality. They actively encourage townships (districts, streets) and departments to conduct “one-stop” business cooperation with the center for various activities. Simultaneously, the center has strengthened its own “blood production” capacity by integrating commercial advertising platforms across all media to establish a converged media advertising department, implementing unified planning, pricing, and management for commercial advertising. Currently, independent sales of Australian imported wine, joint sailing training courses with the Jiangsu Sailing Association, and animation businesses have become new economic growth points.

5. Strengthening Assessment and Guidance

Following enterprise-style management principles for public institutions, the Rugao Media Convergence Center has designed its compensation system to avoid both the constraints of rigid civil service assessment and the one-sided focus on economic benefits typical of ordinary enterprises. The center implements a three-tier assessment system: municipal Party committee and government assess the convergence center, the center assesses its middle-level cadres, and departments assess individual staff. This comprehensive system adopts a post-based salary structure with dynamic management, where salaries change with positions, fully mobilizing staff creativity and initiative. The center has organized more than ten rounds of all-media business training, converged media expert lectures, and skills competitions, implementing a “mentorship program” to guide

existing practitioners toward becoming all-media reporters, editors, and management talents. This has cultivated a “multi-skilled” all-media reporting team, fully mobilizing staff initiative, enthusiasm, and creativity.

Rugao’s media convergence efforts have received high-level recognition. In September 2018, Rugao was designated as one of the first 57 key supported county-level media convergence centers nationwide by the Publicity Department. In February this year, Politburo member and Publicity Department head Huang Kunming affirmed Rugao’s achievements at the National Media Deep Integration Work Promotion Conference. On February 2, the Nantong Municipal Establishment Office approved the addition of the “Rugao Media Convergence Center” designation. On March 8, the Rugao Media Convergence Center and Rugao Cultural Media Group were inaugurated as the first county-level integrated media institution in Jiangsu Province. Rugao presented its experiences at the Publicity Department’s National Propaganda Cadres “Four Strengths” Training Workshop on March 28 and at the 19th New County Party Committee Propaganda Heads Training Workshop on June 15.

Conclusion

Media convergence is an ongoing journey. Riding this wave, Rugao will adopt more conscientious responsibility, clearer problem orientation, and more proactive reform and innovation to accelerate deep integration and achieve breakthroughs. The center will continue working hard to uphold principled positions, deepen and expand content, transform discourse patterns, and improve work efficiency, earnestly fulfilling its mission of “innovation while upholding principles” in propaganda and ideological work. Rugao aims to build the county-level media convergence center into a news and public opinion communication platform that maintains correct guidance, a talent cultivation platform that leads social trends, an online government service platform offering comprehensive administrative services, a convenient public service platform providing multi-domain livelihood services, a new technology application platform that innovates communication methods, and an investment attraction platform serving economic development. Through these efforts, Rugao will create a national highlight in media convergence center construction and produce a high-quality “Rugao answer” to the challenge of county-level media convergence.

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Zhanjiang Daily's Media Convergence Practice: A Separate Case Study

Zhanjiang Daily has explored multiple development models, including partnering with third parties to develop land for green printing, e-commerce logistics, and cultural industry creative incubation. The organization persists in exploring capital operations, establishing joint ventures in social education, culture, and tourism industries, and leveraging its brand to explore full business formats and extend the media industry chain.

By constructing a converged media platform and mobile government cloud platform, Zhanjiang Daily has built a modern communication and distribution system centered on "two newspapers, two websites, two terminals, and two micro-platforms." Through diverse content products, multiple media platforms, multi-channel distribution, and repeated publishing, integrating video, audio, print graphics, and QR codes, the organization has established a new communication model that produces modern communication products and constructs a new cultural communication industry system.

Zhanjiang Daily has integrated the reporting teams of its daily newspaper, evening newspaper, news website, cloud media, and industrial-economic news center to create an all-media content production center. By consolidating all-media business platforms, the organization has achieved flattened platform architecture and vertical industry management, accelerating the transition from platform-channel convergence to business convergence. This creates strong platforms and robust operations, establishing a complete media ecosystem that ultimately achieves deep integration and unified development across content, platforms, operations, management, technology, channels, users, and e-commerce logistics.

Currently, the newspaper is accelerating its transformation, upgrading, and media convergence development, striving to build a modern cultural communication industry system with newspapers as its main business, complemented by new media, converged media, and multimedia, alongside outdoor advertising, business digital green printing, cultural creative industrial parks, and e-commerce distribution logistics.

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

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