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Research on Innovation in Television Program Planning in the Era of Media Convergence: A Case Study of Health Programs (Postprint)

Authors: He Runzhao

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Abstract

Media convergence technology has significantly impacted the role and value of traditional media. For television health programs to achieve favorable outcomes in the era of media convergence, it is imperative to identify innovative strategies conducive to their sustainable development, explore collaborative innovation, implement differentiated positioning, safeguard program quality, uphold standardized baselines, and pursue integrated dissemination, thereby fostering enhanced development of television health programs.

Full Text

Research on Innovation in TV Program Planning in the Converged Media Era—Taking Health Programs as an Example

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Abstract

Converged media technology has significantly impacted the role and value of traditional media. For television health programs to achieve success in the converged media era, they must seek innovative strategies suitable for sustainable development, exploring collaborative innovation, implementing differentiated positioning, ensuring program quality, adhering to standardized baselines, and achieving integrated communication to promote better development of television health programs.

Keywords: health programs; program innovation; converged media

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Author: He Runzhao

1. Characteristics of Health Television Programs in the Converged Media Era

As science and technology continue to advance, society has entered the converged media era. Against this backdrop, health television programs exhibit new characteristics, primarily manifested in breaking time constraints, diversified communication, and extensive reach.

1.1 Diversified Communication

Converged media represents the integration of multiple media forms, making diversified communication one of its main features. While converged media has impacted health television programs, it has also provided significant opportunities. Specifically, health television programs can leverage depth to gain advantage in the converged media era, continuously innovating and leading new health communication discourse. By utilizing new media communication methods and integrating information, they can tap into “buried treasures,” transforming from “content providers” to “content processors” to form a multi-dimensional health communication platform. This evolution toward diversification provides audiences with higher-quality services.

1.2 Breaking Time Constraints

In the converged media era, television programs can effectively break through time limitations. In 2018, Xinhua News Agency’s CNC, in close collaboration with health authorities, professional associations, and experts from top-tier hospitals, launched “Xinhua Great Health.” The live content covers medical consultations, elderly care, food safety, environmental protection, and other fields, emphasizing interactive Q&A between experts and audiences/netizens, enabling real-time viewing and online problem-solving. In this era, health television programs can not only expand their brand effect but also significantly increase their popularity. The author’s program “Healthy Lüliang” also utilizes WeChat public accounts to immediately release images, text, or micro-videos, with detailed television reports following up later. This approach maintains timeliness while achieving multi-angle, more comprehensive promotional effects.

1.3 Extensive Communication Reach

Through integration with the internet, television programs in the converged media era have achieved substantially expanded communication reach, satisfying the needs of more viewers. A successful example is Beijing Television's "Yangshengtang" program, whose communication platform is no longer limited to television media. By employing various strategies such as WeChat and Weibo, the program has introduced highly interactive features like expert micro-live exchanges. As early as 2015, "Yangshengtang" launched its WeChat public account, with current average article views exceeding 100,000, earning recognition from numerous audiences. In summary, by utilizing various scientific technologies, programs can fully meet the actual needs of traditional television viewers while attracting younger online demographics, achieving further expansion of communication reach.

2. Current Status and Categories of Health Television Programs

2.1 Development Status

Since China's reform and opening up, the economy has maintained rapid growth, significantly improving national living standards and gradually increasing public attention to personal health. According to a WHO survey, only 5% of the global population is truly healthy, 75% are in sub-health condition, and 20% suffer from diseases. Domestically, public health concerns have become increasingly worrisome. To better disseminate health knowledge, television health programs have emerged and proliferated rapidly, spreading health information through various means. Since the 1990s, health television programs have gradually exhibited characteristics of entertainment and specialization, leading to the emergence of popular programs such as "Yangshengtang," "Zhonghua Yiyao," and "Healthy Pathway," which have gained high audience recognition and ratings.

The author serves as producer and planner for "Healthy Lüliang," a health program at Lüliang Television Station in Shanxi Province. This experience provides deep insights into local city stations' health programs. First, local station health programs are constrained by staffing, funding, technical support, production standards, and creative concepts, leaving considerable room for improvement in program packaging, cinematography, post-production editing, and hosting compared to satellite and CCTV programs. Second, the primary function or advantage of local health programs lies in their strong service targeting, enabling timely reporting of health information that local residents are most concerned about and providing medical guidance for nearby healthcare institutions. Third, local health television programs can maximize the advantage of being "small and agile," allowing timely adjustments to promotional direction, planning themes, and reporting formats according to circumstances, events, and situations to meet audience expectations and attention toward health television programs.

2.2 Program Categories

Health television programs have increasingly diversified into various categories. Below is a classification based on presentation format and content angle. In terms of presentation format, health television programs can be divided into three types: first, programs aimed at disseminating health concepts or viewpoints; second, interview-centered program formats; and third, integrated Chinese and Western health and wellness programs. In terms of content, they can be categorized into four types: first, health entertainment programs that incorporate entertainment elements to enhance health knowledge dissemination efficiency; second, health service programs that provide professional medical information services centered on healthcare; third, lifestyle health guidance programs that primarily feature guests discussing traditional Chinese medicine knowledge; and fourth, medical wellness programs that typically invite authoritative experts or scholars to provide medical guidance.

3. Principles for Building Health Television Programs in the Converged Media Era

In recent years, health television programs have achieved notable success. In the converged media era, construction principles should focus on the following aspects.

3.1 Incorporate into National Health Literacy Cultivation and Health Industry Development

Traditional health television programs primarily focused on simple commercialization, marketing, and entertainment. In the converged media era, this model and these characteristics can no longer satisfy audience needs. Instead, health television programs should be regarded as important channels for disseminating health knowledge, shaping healthy environments, improving health quality, and creating healthy atmospheres. They should play a significant role in constructing cultural, communication, and knowledge chains for national health literacy cultivation. Additionally, by aligning with national health industry development directions and trends, they should build a sustainable health communication system with television programs as the main carrier, becoming a platform for knowledge practice, dissemination, and cultural cultivation in Healthy China construction to achieve sustainable development goals.

3.2 Incorporate into Bridging Social Intergenerational Cultural Differences and Promoting Social Harmony

Traditional health television programs suffer from serious homogenization, single modes and content, and insufficient innovation. In the converged media era, health and wellness programs should be incorporated as important subjects for broadcast television innovation and excellence, serving as crucial growth points for column and channel competitiveness. By adhering to innovation in column

style, program content, discourse expression, and program formats, they can create more influential health television programs that exert greater effect and value.

3.3 Incorporate into Media Institution Program Format Innovation and Competitiveness Construction

Beyond disseminating medical and health knowledge, television health programs can convey the inclusive peace, yin-yang balance, mind healing, and spiritual pleasure inherent in health preservation culture. Medical culture holds an important position in China's excellent traditional culture, highlighting the tremendous charm of traditional medicine and culture. Television health programs carry a special cultural mission while demonstrating broad development prospects for the future.

4. Innovation Strategies for Health Television Programs in the Converged Media Era

In the converged media era, health television programs should focus on exploring collaborative innovation, implementing differentiated positioning, ensuring program quality, adhering to standardized baselines, and achieving integrated communication.

4.1 Explore Collaborative Innovation

Health television programs in the converged media era need to integrate multiple functions including cultural production, life services, medical popularization, and media communication. During program creation, they should leverage the roles and value of media institutions, medical departments, industry authorities, and professional groups. During collaborative innovation, media institutions can lead the construction of health and wellness program expert databases, topic databases, creative project databases, and professional talent databases. In the converged media era, some local television stations have already seized opportunities with remarkable results. Lüliang Television's "Healthy Lüliang" program employs not only television professionals but also medical professionals as consultants, enabling the delivery of higher-quality content and achieving collaborative innovation.

4.2 Implement Differentiated Positioning

In recent years, health programs have become increasingly homogenized, while converged media technology provides effective pathways for differentiated program planning. Innovation should occur in program scheduling, content design, column style, and program format. Successful examples include CCTV's "Zhonghua Yiyao" program, which has become an authoritative platform for disseminating traditional Chinese culture and medicine to domestic and international audiences over its 20-year development. Additionally, "Yangshengtang"

consistently adheres to the core principle of “spreading health principles and teaching health techniques,” delivering health and scientific wellness knowledge closely related to daily life, earning recognition and favor from numerous groups. Regional characteristics also represent a key aspect of differentiated positioning. Health television programs should fully consider regional audience acceptance habits, local customs, health conditions, lifestyles, and medicinal ingredients to produce popular and practical programs that communicate accessible health knowledge and wellness stories. These should be integrated into lifestyle improvement concepts, traditional virtue promotion, and harmonious family relationship construction to maximize program effectiveness and value.

“Healthy Lüliang” referenced multiple local city station health programs during its inception. This approach served dual purposes: learning from other programs’ strengths while avoiding homogenization or duplication. First, the program established its overall style, including distinctive external packaging elements such as main color schemes, font styles, and packaging elements that significantly differ from other stations’ health programs. Second, it established an effective program scheduling mechanism. For news items, the program compiles health dynamics from across the city and its counties through Lüliang Broadcast Television News Center’ s communication channels. For key topics, the author personally leads special reporting teams for on-location filming and detailed coverage. For major topics, the entire department (the author’ s department is the Science and Education Department) collaborates on collective creation. Third, the program has opened various channels to enrich content. For media, the most important core value is always content. With good, rich program content, differentiated positioning can be achieved; otherwise, this goal cannot be realized. To this end, “Healthy Lüliang” expands and enriches program content through three channels: first, establishing a news liaison mechanism with multiple administrative authorities including the Municipal Health Commission and major medical institutions to timely understand and report on city-wide health developments and upcoming policies; second, building a database of major medical experts in the city to provide professional guidance and invite them into the studio for health education and science popularization; third, establishing an interactive platform with enthusiastic audiences through the program’ s WeChat public account and groups to absorb public opinions, suggestions, and health topic leads, creating an operational channel featuring public participation, institutional collaboration, and government support.

4.3 Ensure Program Quality

Regarding program discourse content, it should emphasize precision and accuracy, which greatly promotes quality assurance. While maintaining orientation awareness, comprehensive consultation on topics should be conducted through building program expert databases according to Healthy China construction requirements, current wellness focal points, and emerging health hotspots. Scientifically designed content helps avoid random program orientation and facilitates

the formation of standardized, scientific program creativity. Program production processes should receive significant attention. Program design processes and innovative formats should strictly follow relevant standards and requirements, focusing on program connotation, designing program scenarios, incorporating new program characteristics within traditional models, absorbing new program experiences, and developing original programs. Examples include online-offline multi-screen interaction modes, composite models, and organizing traditional Chinese medicine health festivals. Comprehensive packaging design enhances stage effects through post-production editing, forming a program production chain. Selecting the most qualified personnel for positions improves service quality and standards. Professional team construction plays a decisive role in health program quality but also represents the biggest constraint on program development. While highly skilled medical experts may not necessarily excel at media communication, and star effects may not significantly enhance competitive advantage, building a team of excellent medical experts promotes program development, as talent constitutes the cornerstone of sustainable program growth.

4.4 Adhere to Standardized Baselines

Standardization significantly promotes the development of health and wellness television programs, serving not only as the foundation for program operation but also as the key to ensuring scientific validity. In August 2016, the State Administration of Radio, Film, and Television (SARFT) issued regulations strengthening management of medical and health program broadcasting and medical advertising. These regulations emphasize that medical and health programs must not be planned as product advertisements and impose strict requirements on program filing, production entities, and staff qualifications. Strict adherence to standardized baselines requires preventing four types of “transformations” :

First, fundamentally avoiding topic orientation issues and preventing “potential concession” behaviors. Health program production involves targeted creation according to market development, including cooperation with medical institutions, experts, and advertisers. In this context, rights and responsibilities should be clearly defined to highlight principal value orientation.

Second, preventing “privacy showcase” behaviors. From the perspective of medical wellness program planning, controversial topics should be avoided to prevent hype.

Third, preventing “excessive relaxation” situations. As a special science, medicine has particular characteristics, and medical explanations of wellness issues can easily deviate. Particularly for traditional Chinese medicine wellness programs, certain ingredients may become hot-selling commodities after being featured.

Fourth, preventing “stealth replacement.” SARFT explicitly prohibits advertising for pharmaceuticals, health products, cosmetics, medical devices, and

related enterprises. In actual development, how to reasonably avoid soft 植入 and micro-marketing of these products has become a key focus of television station supervision.

4.5 Integrated Program Communication

With the arrival of the information age, information technology has significantly advanced, and new media forms have become primary manifestations. The emergence of new communication methods has diversified public access to wellness information through channels like Weibo and WeChat public platforms. Consistently adhering to integrated communication strategies constructs health program communication media, promoting health content according to different communication methods. Through program promotion, more people can understand wellness content, build wellness culture brands, and disseminate more wellness information. “Health Appointment,” “Healthy Pathway,” and “Health Morning Express” are CCTV’s first health interview programs featuring vivid planning and integration of network television characteristics. Leveraging CCTV’s reputation to intensify promotion, these programs have become health columns integrating network and television advantages, achieving excellent broadcast results.

In summary, in the converged media era, innovation is paramount for health television programs to develop better. During implementation, besides learning from successful innovation experiences, emphasis should be placed on promoting the production and integration of high-quality health content to enhance the influence of health television programs.

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(Author Affiliation: Shanxi Lüliang Broadcast Television Station)

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

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