

An Exploration of Problems and Innovative Development Paths in County-Level Media Convergence: Postprint

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Abstract

With the continuous development of the era, the concept of the “global village” has been increasingly reinforced. Under the trend of global integration, connections between nations and peoples are becoming increasingly close, with networks playing a crucial role in this process. Networks have facilitated interpersonal connections, and their development is inseparable from the promotion and impetus of new media. In various media fields, county-level media also need to continuously develop and integrate in order to enhance convenience in people’s lives. This paper analyzes the problems existing in the current development of county-level media convergence and offers recommendations to address these issues.

Full Text

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An Exploration of Problems in County-Level Media Convergence and Paths for Innovative Development

Abstract: As the era continues to evolve, the concept of the “global village” grows increasingly salient. Under the trend of global integration, connections between nations and peoples have become ever closer, with the internet playing a vital role in this process. The internet has facilitated convenient communication among people, and its development is inseparable from the promotion and advancement of new media. Across all media sectors, county-level media must also continuously develop and converge to improve people’s lives. This article analyzes existing problems in the current development of county-level media convergence and proposes targeted recommendations.

Keywords: county-level media convergence; problems; innovative development paths

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In recent years, thanks to guidance from national macro-level policies, media convergence has been accelerating. In August 2018, President Xi Jinping delivered an important speech on national publicity work, during which county-level converged media was introduced as a concept for the first time at a central-level meeting, heralding a new climax in the development and construction of county-level converged media. In August 2014, the Fourth Meeting of the Central Leading Group for Comprehensively Deepening Reform passed the “Guiding Opinions on Promoting the Converged Development of Traditional and Emerging Media,” and in the following years, media convergence in China has been steadily advancing. Currently, convergence at the central, provincial, and municipal levels has been basically completed. The construction of county-level converged media represents an essential step in China’s media convergence process—the “last mile” of media construction. Only by accomplishing this link can we truly establish a complete and comprehensive media center. County-level media convergence is crucial for connecting government and grassroots communities. According to government data, by the end of 2017, China had planned and constructed 2,851 county-level administrative districts—a substantial number. This vast system makes county-level media the most extensive component in the entire media construction and convergence transformation process. County-level media connects with grassroots communities, representing the foundational link in media construction. It determines whether the connection between media and the public can be established and whether information can be transmitted promptly. This is essential for ensuring that information from higher-level governments can be transmitted to grassroots levels in a timely and accurate manner. In today’s era of continuous internet development, the communication power and influence of grassroots media have been significantly impacted. How to guarantee the credibility, influence, and communication power of grassroots media among the public represents the current dilemma and challenge in grassroots media construction. Reshaping these characteristics is an inevitable requirement for county-level media convergence transformation.

Current Problems in County-Level Media Convergence

1.1 Serious Resource Waste and Prominent Segmentation

Development most importantly requires analyzing existing problems and continuously improving. County-level media possesses tremendous development potential, yet it often fails to fully leverage its advantages or utilize its re-

sources effectively, resulting in serious resource waste. Furthermore, clear divisions and boundaries exist between its various systems and modules, with severe deficiencies in interconnection and convergence, which further hinders resource utilization and development progress.

1.2 Lack of Internal Motivation and External Pressure

Current new media development exhibits strong goal orientation, with staff demonstrating high work efficiency and awareness. Enormous external pressure also drives staff to pursue reform and innovation. This represents the most significant difference between new media and county-level media development. In its development process, county-level media has exposed increasing problems to the public and should confront these issues directly to address them.

1.3 Outdated and Rigid Reporting Methods

Traditional media has developed fixed mindsets and reporting methods over time, applicable to both news and entertainment broadcasting. Such rigid reporting methods can no longer adapt to current era development. New media employs far more diverse and innovative methods in broadcasting such content, making it far more attractive to the public than traditional media.

1.4 Complacency and Lack of Innovation

Traditional media's marketing and promotional methods in county-level media have remained unchanged for a long time, making its competitiveness and innovation far lower than that of new media. This has caused county-level media development to lag or even stagnate, continuously being replaced by new media, which has become a "stumbling block" in county-level media development.

Innovation and Development Paths

2.1 Deep Media Integration: Building the Main Platform for County News and Public Opinion Guidance

County-level media has developed to date, with the television industry representing a relatively stable and well-developed aspect of China's traditional media sector. Its long development history has made it the most accepted medium for grassroots audiences. Two problems stand out most prominently: resource waste and segmentation phenomena. The continuous development of new media has exerted tremendous influence and impact on county-level media. However, how to respond to these challenges and continuously adapt in the context of the new era requires deep integration.

As new media continues to develop, county-level media's information and cultural transmission methods have become increasingly diversified and multi-channel. Moreover, the strength of traditional media such as county-level radio and television stations, newspapers, and websites is very dispersed, with limited

technical capabilities and communication capacity. Considering these factors comprehensively, county-level media faces significant challenges in public opinion communication, important information services, and ideological and cultural guidance. Currently, Rugao Television Station is actively following directives from the county party committee and government, combining new demands and expectations from county residents in the new era to conduct news reporting and ideological and cultural transmission with more proactive attitudes, stricter requirements, and more advanced methods. By integrating new-era technologies and requirements, it strives to establish radio and television cultural work as the central work of rural construction, further consolidating the leading and core position of county-level media in local characteristic culture, and exerting its important dominant force.

2.1.1 Comprehensive Media Platform Integration The new radio and television station integrates the original county-level radio and television station, the original news publicity center, and the government information center. This step represents a leap across old and new traditional media and is also a crucial and key step. Rugao Cultural Broadcasting and Television Media Group is located in Rugao, Jiangsu, a city praised as the “Pearl of the Yangtze River.” The company’s development direction is a comprehensive media group integrating multiple communication methods, including broadcasting and television. The group’s development has a solid media foundation, upon which it has opened up multiple industrial platforms such as advertising and performance, forming a favorable development pattern.

2.1.2 Deep Integration of News Dissemination Methods First, according to the requirements of all-media convergence, break the limitations and siloed operations between various communication methods, and integrate broadcasting, television, newspapers, websites, and other communication methods. Achieve transformation and development under the support of new concepts, new operations, and new strategies, excavate and deeply utilize inherent resources, improve resource utilization efficiency, and realize value-added development. During development, implement the principle of “unified content, differentiated functions,” establish “News Center, Program Center, Technology Center, and Chief Editor’s Office” under the editorial committee, and realize a “three centers and one office” structure. Innovate and integrate communication methods and means based on the concepts of big media, big news, and big patterns to respond to new-era challenges. Second, integrate various resources, including not only sound, screen, newspaper, and network but also online and offline resources. Establish a central control room for news production to achieve converged development of various traditional media such as broadcasting and newspapers, as well as new communication media such as WeChat and other apps. Establish unified work standards and reporting mechanisms, standardize the entire process from reporter assignment to classified editing to production and broadcasting, and form a news reporting process of “dispersed collection,

centralized editing, and classified broadcasting.” Third, fully leverage the advantages of multi-channel communication convergence for group-based, large-scale operations. According to the basic framework of “television + broadcasting + newspaper + website + new media,” integrate communication across multiple media. Highlight the advantages of different communication methods to achieve mutual supplementation and influence, forming a resonant communication effect that maximizes impact.

2.1.3 Adjustment of News Reporting Strategies Media convergence must consolidate and strengthen traditional media’s advantages in comprehensive, authoritative, public, and adequate news reporting. Communication forms and methods are constantly changing. To correctly grasp and transmit the government’s voice, we have conducted reasonable planning and preparation. Focus on strengthening columns to form a reporting model with “year-round major columns leading and phased reports coherent.” The planning process must be comprehensive and forward-looking, with reports focusing on the overall situation, in-depth analysis, and content and news closer to people’s lives. Skillfully play the role of public opinion supervision in guiding emotions and the commentary function in leading thoughts. Continuously enhance the thematic nature, guidance, and influence of news reporting to serve the overall situation, the economy, and people’s livelihoods.

2.2 Deep Integration of Station and Network: Seizing Smart County and Beautiful Rural Construction

Based on traditional radio and television transmission networks, how to organically combine the three networks (internet, broadband network, and wireless communication network) to achieve media convergence and ultimately occupy multiple platforms and terminals represents one future development direction for county-level media. The “station” refers to the county-level radio and television “station,” while the “network” refers to the radio and television “network”—these two are inseparable. This process requires business interaction, mutual development assistance, and institutional and mechanism-based interest integration. Only through shared interests can business interaction become more harmonious. We must have sufficient understanding of the relationship between county-level radio and television stations and networks, and standardize network construction technical standards to achieve optimal large-scale network operation.

2.2.1 Building the “Beautiful Cloud” Platform The so-called “Beautiful Cloud” is essentially a cloud platform characterized by high integration and collaborative operation. The “Beautiful Cloud” platform will not only utilize modern internet technologies but also appropriately configure central data processing centers and network units. Additionally, it can maximize the utilization of county-level network resources, construct county networks, and achieve goals such as cloud computing, cloud broadband, and cloud services. Based on “cloud”

platform construction, obtain big data resources, establish databases, and ultimately achieve resource sharing. Unify external network exits to effectively control online public opinion.

2.2.2 Careful Planning of the “Smart Network” The essence of the “Smart Network” is a physical network that can connect the entire county’ s networks. Through this network, cable networks, local WIFI networks, and wireless communication network resources can be better integrated. Additionally, it can make services more convenient, information sharing more extensive, and security monitoring more effective, further realizing integrated urban-rural services, smarter social management, and more intensive public resources. Apply Internet of Things technology to rural areas, enable all county residents to access information networks, and unify public information resource construction. Furthermore, fully integrate radio and television systems to establish network construction in county urban areas and central villages, providing prerequisites and integration for rural information construction across Rugao’ s vast county area.

2.2.3 Seizing the Mobile Terminal After building the “Beautiful Cloud” and “Smart Network,” it is also necessary to better integrate traditional and new media to achieve new breakthroughs in the “mobile terminal.” Additionally, integrate television, broadcasting, smartphones, and telephones to develop a mobile client app that combines news, video, entertainment, dining, and learning functions, thereby achieving explosive growth in user numbers.

2.3 Integrating Public Services and Industrial Development

Whether public infrastructure or public cultural services, media is required to serve their extension into rural areas. Additionally, new urbanization and employment issues for transferred urban populations also require supporting media services, including public opinion guidance and cultural orientation. Therefore, we must emancipate our minds, seek truth from facts, give full play to the advantages of various media according to their own strengths, achieve media complementarity, further improve public service levels, and thus promote further development of county-level media convergence. County-level media must promote economic transformation and upgrading, further change the “dual” structure, promote integrated urban-rural development, and enable better development of the county’ s modern social system and governance system, making channels more stable and smooth to achieve the goal of better serving the masses.

For the public, county-level media convergence is a new concept developed in recent years without a determined model. It cannot simply follow other media’ s strategies but requires innovation based on actual media development and the era’ s background to reasonably build new media platforms with local

characteristics. With scientific and technological development, “triple-network convergence” will inevitably usher in a thriving development situation.

2.3.1 Enriching Public Service Content For example, a county-level television station in Rugao City, Jiangsu Province, has invested heavily in radio and television network construction in recent years, achieving digital two-way transformation for tens of thousands of users. Additionally, it has installed optoelectronic transmission equipment, with two sets of optical terminal equipment for every 20 households. Farmers have basically achieved wired networking, except for remote households. The goals of “every village connected” and “every village heard” have been achieved, and public services are striving toward “every village used” information cloud platform construction. Through this information platform, television-based “party affairs, village affairs, and financial affairs” have been made public, making it more convenient for villagers to conduct business. Consequently, villagers no longer limit television use to watching dramas, movies, and news but have become accustomed to using television to access information for conducting business. Moreover, the village has built a “every village watched” high-definition video system, striving to build safe and beautiful villages. Across the county, multiple high-definition cameras have been installed to improve various management levels in rural areas. Simultaneously, following directives from higher-level authorities and based on local rural characteristics, the county has targeted the development of broadcasting system construction. After implementing these comprehensive public service projects, the multi-level service system goal of county-level radio and television centers, township customer service centers, and village convenience centers has been achieved, making grassroots news publicity more efficient and convenient.

2.3.2 Fully Developing Smart City Projects “Building a civilized city and achieving prosperity for the people and strength for the city” has become a widely publicized slogan in recent years. Building “smart cities” has gradually become a development goal for major cities and counties across China, and Rugao City is no exception. Rugao City must leverage the advantages of radio and television media on one hand and make full use of network resources on the other hand to strive for “beautiful rural” construction. In this process, resources should be fully integrated, data should be fully analyzed and utilized, and data’s industrial advantages should be fully exploited. Specifically, three aspects can be addressed. First, build a reliable transmission network. The “triple-network convergence” of communication networks, radio and television networks, and the internet has gradually become a reality. Radio and television digital network resources have significant advantages, and transmission networks are being upgraded and updated—this is the development background for “triple-network convergence.” Therefore, to achieve better media convergence development, wireless network coverage must be expanded to create a multi-functional information network that enables interoperability between wired and wireless networks, faster and safer bandwidth, and more intelligent transmission. Second, build a more stable

and secure database. Based on Rugao City's current radio and television "cloud platform," strive to develop cloud computing technology to promote database construction for service support platforms and data resource management platforms, enabling data access from various townships and departments, building information storage and processing centers, and ultimately achieving seamless system integration. Third, establish a multi-functional citizen convenience card for residents, also known as a city smart card, which can be applied not only in social security and medical health fields but also in urban public transportation and financial payment fields. It is a smart card that combines medical insurance cards, bus cards, and water, electricity, and gas payment cards.

In recent years, county-level media convergence has been accelerating, driven not only by policy orientation but also by the general direction of media development. To successfully achieve county-level media convergence, convergence approaches must be continuously reformed and innovated. Building new mainstream media is the general trend, and news publicity must be combined with multiple service functions to strengthen the mainstream public opinion field.

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

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